

Indian Chronicle

Showcasing India’s tech prowess

The five-day Artificial Intelligence Summit 2026, being hosted by India in New Delhi, provides an ideal opportunity for the country to serve as the voice of the Global South in democratising AI development to make it inclusive and accessible, particularly for developing nations. The mega event brings together delegates from over 100 countries, including global tech moguls, AI founders, policymakers, innovators, bureaucrats, and experts to deliberate on the transformative potential of AI across governance, innovation, and sustainable development. The scale and profile of the summit underline India’s effort to assert a stronger voice in shaping how artificial intelligence is governed and deployed worldwide, particularly at a time when countries are divided over regulation, access, and technological competition. So far, the Global South has remained outside the purview of the agenda-setting deliberations covering AI technologies. India, with a strong digital structure and innovative initiatives, is ideally positioned to push for a narrative focused on equity and global cooperation to ensure that AI becomes a universal instrument for the benefit of mankind. AI must be used to build practical solutions, not just high-end demos. United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has rightly cautioned against AI becoming a tool controlled solely by the most developed countries or dominated by two global superpowers, the US and China. He also highlighted India’s role in shaping a “true multipolar world”, where global influence is not concentrated in one dominant power. The high-profile event comes against the backdrop of India positioning itself as a global hub for digital infrastructure and artificial intelligence, capable of leading the next wave of the technology revolution.

The summit offers a chance to showcase India’s vast tech-savvy population and engineering talent as forces that could tilt the next phase of the global AI race in its favour. The country has digital infrastructure powered by data from over a billion citizens, identifiable through Aadhaar, a biometric ID system. It has a proven track record of scaling technology quickly despite late starts – missing the personal computer boom but becoming a software services powerhouse and leaping from limited landlines to nearly a billion smartphones in under two decades. Among the key initiatives is the ‘IndiaAI Mission’, which aims to build computing capacity, support startups and push AI use in public services such as healthcare and agriculture. India now stands at the forefront of the artificial intelligence transformation, and its strides in AI reflect both ambition and responsibility. By overlaying AI over existing digital identity, payment rails, as well as healthcare, education and governance stacks, India is attempting to compress decades of development into years. In AI competitiveness, it ranks third globally, after the United States and China, according to Stanford University’s Institute for Human-Centered AI. However, the country’s real breakthrough will come from strengthening its research ecosystem, instead of being just a testing lab for Silicon Valley’s algorithms.

KCR's birthday celebrations in Aswaraopet

“Aswaraopet Feb 17: In Aswaraopet village of Aswaraopet mandal of Bhadradri Kothagudem district, the first Chief Minister of Telangana, the founder of our Telangana state, was held. Chandrasekhar Rao’s 72nd birthday celebrations were celebrated with a land ceremony at the house of Kasani Chandramohan in Aswaraopet by cutting a cake and extending his best wishes. Later, fruits and breads were distributed to the patients at the government hospital. Speaking on the occasion, former MLA Tati Venkateswarlu said that he congratulated those who contested and won as ward councilor candidates in the Aswaraopet Municipality elections, felicitated them with shawls, and presented me-

mentos. He also thanked every worker and leader who worked hard for the victory in these municipality elections, urging the candidates not to disappoint everyone. Mandal Party President Jujjuri Venkanna Babu, Aswaraopet Town Party President Satyavarapu Sampoorna, and Mandal leaders and former MPP Jallipalli Sriramamurthy and Kasani. Chandramohan, Kasani. Naga Sesha Padma, Jupally. Ramana Rao, Chamber of Commerce President Sanka. Prasad, US Prakash Rao, Ravikiran, and Vaggela. Puja, former ZPTC Sunnam. Nagamani, Naram.Rajasekhar, Moturi.Mohan, Bali Kiran, Somani. Ramesh, Arepalli. Govind, Chikkam. Madhuri Chikkam. Gopalakrishna, Swaroopa, Lakshmi, Sumalatha, Parvathi, Naveen, Gangadhar, Dharma, Venkanna, and activists and fans participated in large numbers.

An Inspiring Sporting Trio from Bhadradri

Sankara Rao, Mamidi Bhoomika and Modem Vamsi Shine Under city style Gym Coach G.V. Ramireddy

“ “ “ “ “ B h u k y a RanjithNaik,Bhadradri Kothagudem Bureau ,February 17,Indian Chronicle :“Bhadradri Kothagudem district is witnessing a remarkable rise in powerlifting, thanks to the inspiring achievements of three athletes — 73-year-old D.V. Sankara Rao, young lifter Mamidi Bhoomika, and international champion Modem Vamsi. Guiding them on their path to success is coach G.V. Ramireddy, whose dedication and structured training have played a pivotal role in their accomplishments.”“D.V. Sankara Rao, a retired employee of the State Bank of India from Bhadrachalam, has proved that age is no barrier to achievement. After undergoing bypass heart surgery in 2012 and retiring from service in 2013, he began walking and practicing yoga to maintain his health. Encouraged to take up structured fitness training, he joined a local gym under the supervision of coach G.V. Ramireddy.”“With medical guidance and a carefully designed training regimen, Sankara Rao progressed rapidly. Within six months, he began winning medals at district, state and national levels. In 2025, he clinched a gold medal in the Masters-4 (83 kg category) at the Powerlifting India Classic Championship held in Kozhikode, setting a national benchmark. He has also been recognised by prominent record institutions, further cementing his status as an inspiration to the youth.”“Equally impressive is Mamidi Bhoomika, a degree student from Rajupet Colony in Bhadrachalam. In a short span of time, she has secured gold medals at the state level and delivered a commendable performance at national competitions, finishing fourth against strong contenders from across the country. With disciplined training under coach Ramireddy, Bhoomika aims to build a career in sports and secure a position in the Railways.”“From a humble tribal background in Ippagudem village of Wazeedu mandal, Mulugu district, Modem Vamsi has emerged as a world champion. Supported by public contributions, he travelled to Costa Rica and won the gold medal in the 66 kg category by lifting a total of 680 kg — 300 kg in squat, 145 kg in bench press and 235 kg in deadlift. His journey from financial hardship to international recognition has brought immense pride to the region.”“Sports circles in Bhadradri district credit coach G.V. Ramireddy for nurturing talent across age groups, overcoming challenges such as health concerns and financial constraints, and instilling discipline and confidence in his trainees. With continued support from the government and sponsors, these athletes are



No Victory Rallies; Strict Restrictions in Force for Chairperson Election in Kagaznagar

der Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) — equivalent to Section 144 — have been imposed to maintain law and order, said Nitika Pant, Superintendent of Police of Kumuram Bheem Asifabad district.”The SP stated that the restrictions will remain in force until the conclusion of the election code.”Gatherings and Rallies Prohibited”She clarified that no gathering of more than three persons will be permitted at any private or public place during this period. Unauthorized vehicle rallies, tour vehicles, or any form of transportation used in violation of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) are strictly prohibited.”Public rallies, demonstrations, dharnas, hunger strikes, slogan-shouting, or any activity that obstructs traffic on roads and footpaths have been completely banned.”Strict Warning Against Violations”The use of loudspeakers has also been prohibited. The SP further warned that circulating messages on social media that could disturb public peace, or displaying objectionable symbols, placards, or flags, would invite stringent legal action.”No protests will be allowed near government offices or the residences of public representatives.”The District SP appealed to the public, political leaders, and candidates to strictly adhere to election guidelines and extend full cooperation to the police department to ensure peaceful conduct of the elections.

Jeevan Reddy performs puja at Dubbarajanna temple

“Jagtlal Correspondent Ennam Kishan Reddy, February 17, (Indian Chronicle): “On the occasion of Maha Shivaratri, former Minister Tatiparthi Jeevan Reddy visited the Dubbarajeshwara Swamy temple in Pembatla, Sarangapur mandal, Jagtlal district, and performed special puja on Tuesday.”“The temple priests blessed Jeevan Reddy with gotra namadhul and offered him tirthaprasad. He also participated in special puja at Vasavi Mata temple in Pembatla village and Poulasteshwara Swamy temple in Polasa village, Jagtlal Rural mandal, along with leaders and devotees.



“Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), February 17,“Prohibitory Orders Enforced to Maintain Law and Order”Kagaznagar: In view of the Municipal Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson elections, prohibitory orders un-

OC Commission should be established at national level

OC JAC State Vice President Kishan Reddy Jagtlal District Correspondent Ennam Kishan Reddy,



February 17, (Indian Chronicle):“ OC Welfare Association state vice president Ennam Kishan Reddy and Jagtlal district convenor Mahankali Rajanna demanded the establishment of an OC Commission at the national level to achieve the just demands of OCs and implement EWS reservations effectively.”“At a press conference with OC social welfare association leaders, Kishan Reddy and Rajanna stated that OCs are being denied welfare schemes and political positions due to lack of reservations, despite being economically backward.

They expressed concern that some people are misleading the public for political gain regarding the 10% EWS reservations.

“They demanded that the government establish an OC National Commission to implement EWS reservations effectively and ensure OCs are not left behind politically. They announced a protest at Jantar Mantar, Delhi on February 23 to press for their demands.”

“The event was attended by OC JAC Jagtlal district leaders, including Sirisilla Venugopal, Baddam Narayana Reddy, Santa Gautam Reddy, Ayilneni swpna rao, Vuturi Kalyani, Nagiseti Aparna, Vancha Laxmi Reddy, Chetla Janaki, Vani, Padhma Reddy, edamala jeevan Reddy, Rajendhar Sharma, Rajendhar Reddy, Naveen Reddy, Pulluri Sathyanarayana,and others.

KCR's birthday celebrations held in Jagtlal

MLC Ramana cuts cake and distributes sweets

“Jagtlal District Correspondent Ennam Kishan Reddy, February 17, (Indian Chronicle):“ The birthday celebrations of Telangana’s leader and BRS party chief K. Chandrashekar Rao (KCR) were held in Jagtlal. Leaders and workers of the BRS party celebrated KCR’s 72nd birthday with great fervor.”“Special puja was performed at various temples, including Sri Bhakta Markandeya Temple, Dharur Ramalayam, and 37th Ward Hanuman Temple, wishing KCR’s good health and hoping he becomes CM again.”“MLC L. Ramana cut the cake and distributed sweets at the BRS party office and his own office. A blood donation camp was organized at Jagtlal Government Hospital, and BRS workers donated blood. Fruits were distributed to patients at the hospital, and a food program was organized for children at Valmiki



Aavas.”“The program was attended by Jagtlal town president Venkateshwar Rao, 7th Ward Councilor Korukanti Ramu, Ayilneni Sager Rao, Vollem Mallesham, Gaddam Sathish, Haricharn Rao, praveen, Bhoga Gangadher, Gangipelli Shekar,other leaders and workers.

Jeevan Reddy receives call from Congress high command

AICC Secretary Venugopal phones, asks him to come to Delhi

“Jagtial District Correspondent Ennam Kishan Reddy, February 17, (Indian Chronicle):“Congress party senior leader and former Minister Tatiparthi Jeevan Reddy has been asked to come to Delhi by the Congress high command. AICC Secretary KC Venugopal phoned Jeevan Reddy on Tuesday, asking him to come to Delhi immediately to discuss the latest developments in Jagtial.”Jeevan Reddy left for Hyderabad and then proceeded to Delhi. The move comes after Jeevan Reddy’s criticism of the party’s decision to give tickets to BRS workers in the municipal elections, and his allegations that MLA Sanjay Kumar’s faction was given 35 seats out of 50 in Jagtial municipality.”Jeevan Reddy had expressed concerns that his workers were being marginalized and that he was facing threats from MLA Sanjay’s faction. The Congress high command’s call to Jeevan Reddy has sparked interest in the party, with speculation about the future of Jeevan Reddy and the party’s strategy in Jagtial.



RO Water Plant Installed at Uppal Government School by Pooduri Jitender Reddy

Plant inaugurated & saplings planted on KCR’s birthday



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, Feb 17 (Indian Chronicle):“Senior BRS leader Pooduri Jitender Reddy (Uppal PJR) has taken the initiative to provide safe drinking water to students of the Zilla Parishad High School and Degree College in Uppal. Keeping students’ health in mind, he arranged the installation of a 500-litre capacity RO water plant on the campus. On Tuesday, marking the birthday of former Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao, the water plant was formally inaugurated by Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy and BRS Malkajgiri Parliament In-charge Ragidi Lakshma Reddy. As part of the celebrations, saplings were also planted on the school premises. Mandal Education Officer Rama Rao, Principal Ashok, and other staff members participated in the

programme. They appreciated Pooduri Jitender Reddy for installing the water plant at his own expense and advised him to continue his public service efforts with the same spirit. “Grand Celebrations of KCR’s Birthday in Uppal Former Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao’s birthday was celebrated with enthusiasm at the Uppal vegetable market. MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy and Ragidi Lakshma Reddy attended the event and cut a cake. Speakers said Telangana witnessed significant development during KCR’s tenure and expressed that people are eager to see him return as Chief Minister. BRS leaders, activists, women leaders, and party workers from the Uppal division participated in large numbers.

Grand Celebrations of KCR’s Birthday Under the Leadership of BRS Leader Jalli Mohan Sarees and Fruits Distributed to Municipal Workers



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 17 (Indian Chronicle):“Birthday celebrations of Kalvakuntla Chandrashekar Rao (KCR) were held grandly under the leadership of BRS senior leader Jalli Mohan in the Chilukanagar Division area. Former corporator Bannala Geetha Praveen attended the event. “Party leaders, activists, and colony representatives joined together to cut a cake and offered prayers for KCR’s long life and good

health. On the occasion, service activities were organized, including the distribution of sarees and fruits to municipal workers and sweets to the public. A large number of party cadres participated enthusiastically, making the celebrations a grand success. Senior BRS leaders and party members were present and contributed to the successful organization of the program.

Vemula Subhash congratulates Dharmapuri Municipal Chairman



“Jagtial Correspondent Ennam Kishan Reddy, February 17, (Indian Chronicle): “Vemula Subhash, Buggaram Mandal Congress Party President, congratulated and felicitated Vemula Nagalakshmi Raju, the newly elected Chairman of Dharmapuri Municipality, on Tuesday. “Vemula Subhash visited Nagalakshmi’s home and wished her well, expressing hope that Dharmapuri would develop under her leadership, with the support of the new municipal council and Minister Adluri Laxman Kumar. “The event was attended by Sarpanch Panchita Dharmaraju, Neelam Nandini Santos, Gattu Sarada Gangaram, former Sarpanchs Tandri Ashok Rao, Jakkul Srinivas, Bandari Mahesh, Rentam Sridhar, Mamidala Srinu, Srikant, and others.

Arya Vaishya Women Organise Amavasya Food Distribution in Nagaram



“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, February 17, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):“The women members of the Arya Vaishya Sangham organised an Amavasya annaprasadam (food distribution) programme at No. 6 area in Nagaram on Tuesday. With the support of 140 donors, the organisers have been conducting this initiative every month, distributing freshly prepared home-cooked meals to nearly 1,000 to 1,100 beneficiaries. The programme aims to serve the needy with hygienic and nutritious food on every Amavasya. On the occasion, the organisers appreciated Bangaram B. Vinayakumar and his wife Sneha, of Sai Veerabhadra Furniture, for providing the venue and extending volunteer support for the programme. Arya Vaishya Sangham leaders Gunda Venkanna, Linga Nagender, Uppala Prasanna Kumar, Satyanarayana, Linga Amarender, Palavarapu Srinivas and Gattu Satyanarayana were present at the event.

K. Chandrashekar Rao Birth Anniversary: Sports Equipment Distributed to Students- Regalla Satish Reddy



“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, February 17, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):“Marking the 72nd birth anniversary of former Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao, sports equipment and Telugu-Hindi-English dictionaries were distributed to students at the Government Upper Primary School in Gandhinagar, Kapra division. The programme was organized under the leadership of Telangana State Youth Wing leader Regalla Satish Reddy. As part of the initiative, students received sports materials to encourage physical fitness and dictionaries to enhance their language proficiency. Addressing the

gathering, Regalla Satish Reddy said that K. Chandrashekar Rao played a decisive role in the formation of Telangana and contributed significantly to the state’s development. He described him as a leader who realized the long-standing aspiration for statehood and introduced several welfare schemes benefiting people across all sections of society, strengthening Telangana’s progress in development and economic growth. Senior leaders Nagunoori Mahesh, Koppula Kumar, corporator candidate Guda Indrayya, Raju Goud, Suresh Naik, along with local leaders, teachers, and students, participated in the programme.

Fruits Distributed to Patients at Government Hospital on KCR’s Birthday Neradam Bhaskar Goud Plants Sapling as Part of Green India Challenge



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 17 (Indian Chronicle):“On the occasion of the 72nd birthday of former Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao, fruits were distributed to patients at the Uppal Government Hospital under the leadership of former TRS State Secretary, Uppal Assembly BC JAC leader, and Chairman of the Neradam Balayya Bhagyalakshmi Trust, Neradam Bhaskar Goud. As part of the Green India Challenge, he also planted a sapling. “Speaking on the occasion, Bhaskar Goud said that KCR’s movement, determination, and leadership in

achieving the formation of Telangana have earned him a special place in political history. He noted that the decisions taken under KCR’s leadership — particularly in state development, welfare schemes, farmers’ welfare, and infrastructure development — have brought significant positive changes to people’s lives. He extended birthday greetings to KCR, wishing him a long life and good health. He also expressed hope that the state continues to progress on the path of development shown by KCR and wished to see him return to power.

Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy Participates in Special Pujas at Kalabhairava Swamy Temple



temple committee members, and devotees participated in the event.

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 17 (Indian Chronicle):“On the occasion of Amavasya, special rituals were performed at the Kalabhairava Swamy Temple in Uppal Bagayat. Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy participated in the sacred ceremonies. “Speaking on the occasion, he wished that the blessings of Lord Kalabhairava be upon everyone and expressed hope that people live in peace, happiness, and prosperity. He noted that devotees believe worshipping Lord Kalabhairava fulfills their wishes and brings success in life. He further stated that those blessed by the deity reach great heights. “Temple committee representatives felicitated MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy during the program. BRS party leaders, party workers,

Elderly Woman Lured from Andhra Pradesh to Telangana, Robbed of Gold Ornaments



“Kranthikumar Dasari | Pinapaka Constituency | February 17 | Indian Chronicle : In a shocking incident, an elderly woman from Andhra Pradesh was allegedly lured into Telangana and robbed of her gold ornaments by unidentified persons. The victim, Lakshmikanta (65), a petty shop vendor from Velairu village in Kukkunoor mandal of Andhra Pradesh, was reportedly deceived by unknown individuals. According to police sources, the accused gained her trust after staying with her for two days, during which she provided them with food and shelter. On February 14, the suspects allegedly persuaded her to accompany them to Burgampadu mandal in Bhadradi Kothagudem district, Telangana, promising to

provide two bags of rice. She was later taken near the Seetharama Project area at Jinkalagudem within the Burgampadu mandal limits, where the accused allegedly threatened to kill her and forcibly robbed her gold chain, earrings, and anklets. Fortunately, the elderly woman escaped unharmed and later lodged a complaint at the Burgampadu Police Station in Telangana. Based on her complaint, a case has been registered under the directions of Sub-Inspector M. Prasad. Additional Sub-Inspector Nagabhiiksham is examining CCTV footage from various locations in the mandal as part of the ongoing investigation. Police are working to identify and apprehend the accused.

KCR Birthday Celebrations Held Under the Leadership of Former Corporator Gandham Jyothsna Nageshwar Rao



“ “ K I S H O R E VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 17 (Indian Chronicle):““Following the directions of Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy, grand celebrations marking the birthday of former Chief Minister KCR were organized on Tuesday near Hyderabad Public School, Ramanthapur, under the leadership of former corporator Gandham Jyothsna Nageshwar Rao.“On the occasion, leaders cut a cake and distributed fruits. They raised slogans wishing KCR a long life and good health. Speakers recalled his pivotal role in achieving Telangana statehood and praised his visionary leadership and contributions toward the state’s development.“BRS leaders Pasula Prabhakar Reddy, Palakuri Srikanth, Suram Shankar, Chand Pasha, Koppu Nursing Rao, Ramasahayam Srinivas Reddy, Shankar Anna, Thut Narasimha, Ale Ramesh, Manish Sagar, Mandapati Srinivas Reddy, Mallikarjun, Srikanth Goud, Sameer, Salar, Cheguri Srinu, Naveen, Mahender, Ravi, Dandu Santosh, Laddu, Prem, Vamshi, Venkatesh, Jangayya, Nandu and others participated in the program.Women participants including Sandhya, Lakshmi Kurna, Radhamma, Manjula, Sabita and others attended in large numbers.



“Kranthikumar Dasari | Pinapaka Constituency | February 17 | Indian chronicle : Devotees at Sri Lakshmi Ganapathi Temple in Sarapaka are engaged in the traditional preparation of Goti Thalambalu for the upcoming Sri Sita Ramachandra Swamy Kalyana Mahotsavam at the famed Bhadrachalam temple. With deep devotion, participants are preparing the sacred wedding rice by manually de-husking paddy grains using a traditional method known as “goti valadam.” Chanting “Sri Rama Jaya Rama Jaya Rama” throughout the process, devotees are observing spiritual discipline and maintaining hygiene by wearing masks to preserve sanctity during the preparation. Speaking on the occasion, devotees highlighted the unique significance of the

Devotees Prepare Sacred ‘Goti Thalambalu’ for Bhadrachalam Sri Sita Rama Kalyanam



Goti Thalambalu used in the celestial wedding of Lord Sri Rama at Bhadrachalam. They noted that, unlike in most temples, the sacred rice offered during the Kalyanam is prepared by devotees themselves as an act of faith and service. The hand-processed grains are later used in the ritual exchange of thalambalu during the divine wedding ceremony. Devotees from various regions participate in this spiritual activity and traditionally tie the prepared thalambalu as Irumudi bundles on the occasion of Holi. They then undertake a padayatra (foot pilgrimage) to the Sri Sita Ramachandra Swamy Temple in Bhadrachalam, where they take part in the Vasanthotsavam festivities and associated wedding rituals, including the ceremonial turmeric offering. Participants described their involvement in the sacred tradition as a blessing and a spiritually fulfilling experience. A large number of women devotees took part in the programme.

Bowenpally Amavasya food offerings.

““Secunderabad Cantonment. February17 (Indian Chronicle):“Bowenpally Bapujinagar Shri Devi Nalla Pochamma Temple with Amavasya Food donation programs were organized on Tuesday under the auspices of the temple committees at Nallapochamma temples in Jayanagar square. Jampana Pratap, the former Vice President of the Cantonment Board, attended this program as the chief guest and performed Amavasya Pujas in the temples and received Tirdha Prasadas. After that, they started the food donation programs at the temples. After that, Jampana Pratap said that if you donate food on the day of Amavasya, all good things will come. Bapujinagar Nallapochamma Temple Committee Member Ajith Kalyan. Born Narsimha. Srikanth. Rama Rao. Vishwanadh. Jayanagar Square Nallapochamma Temple Committee Members Srinivas Goud. Satyanarayana. Nagesh. Shashidhar Goud and others participated.



Man attempts suicide in Sarapaka; undergoing treatment



““Krantikumar Dasari | Pinapaka Sistankam | February 17 | Indian Chronicle: A man from Sarapaka Medy Colony in Burgampadu mandal attempted suicide, creating a stir locally. The man, identified as Lakavat Venkanna, had earlier worked as an autorickshaw driver in Sarapaka and later moved to Hyderabad in search of better employment opportunities. He was working as a car driver there to support his family. According to family members, Venkanna had recently faced legal complaints and allegations of harassment following a family dispute with his wife. Distraught over the developments, he allegedly consumed pesticide while taking a selfie video. Family members and locals rushed him to the Bhadrachalam Government Hospital, where he is currently undergoing treatment.

Amavasya Annadanam Conducted at Kushaiguda Pochamma Temple



““NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, February 17, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):““An annadanam (community food distribution) programme was conducted on Tuesday at the Pochamma Temple in Kushaiguda as part of the monthly Amavasya observance. The initiative, organised by Maruti Mitra Mandali, drew participation from local residents and devotees. Former Uppal MLA Bethi Subhash Reddy attended the event as the chief guest. He performed special prayers at the temple before formally inaugurating the food distribution programme. Addressing the gathering, he said that such service-oriented activities reflect a strong sense of social responsibility and should continue for the welfare of the community. The organisers stated

that the annadanam programme is conducted every month on Amavasya with the aim of serving devotees and supporting the needy. Among those present were Maruti Mitra Mandali president Gurumanchi Ashok Chary, general secretary Hanumanthu Varaganti, treasurer Macha Babugoud, members Kasula Suresh Goud, Gurumanchi Venugopal Chary and A. Satish, former chairman of Sri Padmavathi Venkateswara Swamy Devasthanam Sankuri Srinivas Goud, Amarachari, Anjaneyulu Yadav, Raghu Goud, and BJP leaders Ravinder Reddy, Ganesh Mudiraj and Vidyasagar, along with other local leaders and devotees.

MLA Payam Venkateswarlu Directs Comprehensive Measures to Prevent Summer Water Scarcity in Pinapaka Constituency

““Kranthikumar Dasari | Pinapaka Constituency | February 17 | Indian chronicle : With the onset of summer approaching, Pinapaka MLA Payam Venkateswarlu has directed officials to implement a comprehensive action plan to ensure that no drinking water shortage arises in any part of the constituency. Chairing a review meeting at his camp office “Praja Bhavan” in Manuguru, the MLA instructed officials from the Rural Water Supply (RWS), Mission Bhagiratha, Panchayat Raj Department, and the Manuguru Municipality to remain proactive and prepared. Mandal Parishad Development Officers (MPDOs), Executive Engineers (EEs), Deputy Engineers (DEs), Assistant Engineers (AEs), and other engineering and administrative staff were present at the meeting. The MLA emphasized the need for advance planning in the mandals of Manuguru, Pinapaka, Aswapuram, Burgampadu, Karakagudem, Gundala, and Allapalli to prevent any water-related hardships during the summer months. He directed officials to ensure uninterrupted supply through pipelines and to keep alternative arrangements such as water tankers and hand pumps ready, particularly in rural areas. He also called for the immediate resolution of technical issues, including pipeline leakages, motor failures, overhead tank repairs, valve defects, non-functional borewell pumps, and damaged hand pumps. Stressing accountability, the MLA assured that necessary funds for repairs would be arranged without delay and warned that works should not be stalled due to financial constraints. Further, he instructed officials to conduct monthly technical inspections of water tanks, borewells, mini water supply schemes, and Mission Bhagiratha pipelines, and to maintain proper maintenance registers. Highlighting the importance of field-level vigilance over the next three to four months, he directed officials to stay accessible and respond promptly to public grievances. If required, water should be supplied through tankers to ensure uninterrupted access to safe drinking water. Stating that providing safe drinking water is the government’s foremost responsibility, the MLA reiterated that preventing water scarcity during summer remains a top priority, and directed coordinated efforts among all departments to safeguard public welfare.



In Noida, couple found dead with gunshot wounds in locked car, cops suspect suicide; kin claims man taunted over caste



GNS News Agency, Feb 17

A man and woman were found dead with gunshot wounds inside a locked car in Noida's Sector 107 on Saturday afternoon. Police said that prima facie, it appeared to be a case of suicide. Police identified the deceased as Sumit (32), a resident of Trilokpuri in Delhi, and Rekha (28), a resident of Salarpur in Sector 101, Noida. A purported WhatsApp message, allegedly written by Sumit, said he was dying by suicide as Rekha had refused to marry him.

"I, Sumit, am going to kill myself and Rekha is responsible for it... She lived with me for 15 years and had promised to marry me... now she is going to marry someone else. That is why I am committing suicide... because Rekha has cheated me..." the message read. Sumit's cousin, Sachin, said that Rekha's family used to taunt Sumit over his caste. "They had been together for over 12 to 15 years. It was Sumit who would drop her to the office and back home.

Sumit had recently brought a flat or both of them as they wanted to stay together after marriage. He had also bought a car for her," he said. "But Rekha's family had been taunting my brother over his caste," Sachin added.

Car in which Sumit and Rekha were found dead. Express Car in which Sumit and Rekha were found dead. (Express)Deputy Commissioner of Police (Noida) Yamuna Prasad said police received information about a suspiciously parked car near Dadri Road, close to pillar 84, under the jurisdiction of Sector 39 police station. When officers reached the spot, they found the vehicle was locked from inside. "During inspection, the bodies of a man and a woman were found inside the car... They had gunshot injuries to the head. A pistol was found in the man's hand," Prasad said. "Prima facie, it appears to be a case of suicide. But the exact sequence of events will be established after post-mortem examination and forensic analysis," added the DCP. Sector 39 police Station House Officer, Dharamprakash Shukla, said, "The couple had been in a relationship for over 15 years and both their families knew about it... They had recently bought a house and both the families attended the house warming..."

"Last evening, a missing person's complaint was filed at Sector 58 police station by Rekha's family. A similar complaint was also filed by Sumit's family at Mayur Vihar police station," he added. In the police complaint, Rekha's family have alleged that she left her office in Sector 62 around 7 pm on Friday but did not reach home. "After receiving the complaint, we had started looking for her. On Saturday afternoon, we learnt about the two bodies. The prime cause of death is still not clear," said Shukla, adding that police do not suspect any caste-related issues.

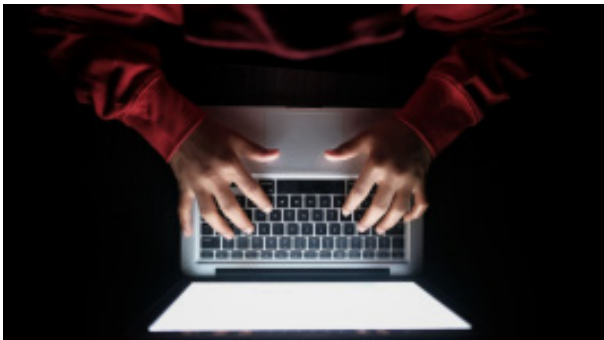
Hoax threats to Noida schools: 6 of cyberfraud gang running illegal online betting ops held

GNS News Agency, Feb 17

The case pertains to several schools in Noida receiving hoax bomb threats on January 23, following which an FIR was registered with the Cyber police station. The case pertains to several schools in Noida receiving hoax bomb threats on January 23, following which an FIR was registered with the Cyber police station. Nearly a month after several Noida schools received hoax bomb threats, the Uttar Pradesh Special Task Force (STF) has arrested six alleged members of an organised cyberfraud gang running illegal online betting operations. The mobile phone suspected to have been used to send the threat emails has been recovered, police said.

The STF identified the accused as Ghaziabad residents Amish Jang Karki, Lekhnath Sharma, and Kedarnath; Agra resident Anant Kumar and Bihar residents Divynashu and Sahil Kumar. Amish, Lekhnath, and Kedarnath are originally from Nepal, officers said. The case pertains to several schools in Noida receiving hoax bomb threats on January 23, following which an FIR was registered with the Cyber police station.

According to the STF, the threat email appeared to have originated from the United States, while a linked recovery email showed connections to Bangladesh and India.



The probe led police to Sahaberi, where the accused were allegedly operating out of a makeshift call centre equipped with a huge number of electronic devices. Police recovered four laptops, 22 mobile phones and several documents during the operation. "During questioning, the accused admitted to running illegal online betting apps and providing technical support services. Officials said the victims were primarily citizens of the US, India and Nepal," the officer added. Several email IDs with "American-sounding names" were found logged into the seized devices. These were allegedly used to communicate with customers and facilitate fraud, police said.

PGI all set to get a new critical care block



GNS News Agency, Feb 17

At present, two major projects, the Neurosciences Centre and the Mother and Child Care Centre are expected to be operational this year. Work on both projects had been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. At present, two major projects, the Neurosciences Centre and the Mother and Child Care Centre are expected to be operational this year. Work on both projects had been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With the long-pending clearance now in place, work on the 150-bed Critical Care Block is set to begin, PGI Deputy Director, Administration, Pankaj Rai confirmed. The delay in environmental clearance had stalled the project for several months, but following approval, construction work has been allotted. The block will come up on vacant land opposite the School of Nursing on the PGI campus. Once operational, it will allow treatment of critically ill and infectious disease patients under one roof, enhancing the institute's emergency response capacity. The Critical Care Block was not part of the institute's original master

plan. However, the COVID-19 pandemic underscored the urgent need for dedicated critical care infrastructure. Recognising this, the Centre approved the project under PM-ABHIM, making it one of PGI's key upcoming facilities.

At present, two major projects, the Neurosciences Centre and the Mother and Child Care Centre are expected to be operational this year. Work on both projects had been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Rai, the Critical Care Block is a strategically important project for the institute and has been under planning for a considerable time. "The facility is expected to significantly benefit patients requiring specialised and intensive care," he said. The project was conceptualised during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the institute faced an unprecedented surge of critically ill patients. At the time, several departments and the Nehru Extension Block had to be converted into COVID care facilities to manage the crisis. Once functional, the new Critical Care Block will cater to patients requiring intensive monitoring and advanced life support, including those arriving at the emergency and trauma centres in critical condition. Experts believe that in the event of a future pandemic or similar public health emergency, the facility will play a crucial role in managing patient load efficiently. The Critical Care Block will function as a multi-speciality centre equipped with intensive care units (ICUs), step-down units (SDUs), isolation wards, oxygen-supported beds and surgical units. It will also include two labour rooms, delivery and recovery rooms, and a dedicated unit for neonatal care and related conditions. Hospital officials said that patients from any department who require advanced critical care and close monitoring will be referred to this block, allowing other clinical areas to function more effectively.

Teachers oppose mandatory TET condition for service, write to PM Modi

GNS News Agency, Feb 17

In response to the Supreme Court's last year judgment mandating the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) as a compulsory condition for continuation in service and promotions for teachers appointed before 2010, members of the Democratic Teachers Front (DTF) convened at Gandhi Park in Garhshankar to voice their opposition to the ruling. Currently, TET is essential for both new appointments and existing teachers to maintain quality education. Teachers with more than five years of service left must clear the exam within two years, or risk forced retirement. In various states, departments are halting promotions for teachers who have not passed the TET, forcing them to take the exam. Under the leadership of DTF representatives Mukesh Kumar, Sukhdev Daanseewal, and Gyan Chand Noorpurbedi, teachers gathered in large numbers and submitted a letter carrying the demands addressed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The memorandum was forwarded through former Rajya Sabha MP Avinash Rai Khanna. The teachers expressed deep concern over the implications of the Supreme

Court verdict, stating that the mandatory imposition of TET as a prerequisite for job security and career advancement has created widespread uncertainty among educators appointed prior to 2010. They argued that the decision has placed the future, seniority, and service stability of thousands of teachers in jeopardy. Speakers at the gathering emphasized that teachers form the backbone of the education system. Any instability in their service conditions, they noted, would directly affect students' academic progress and the overall quality of education. Many teachers, who have devoted years — often decades — of dedicated service to the field, are currently experiencing significant mental stress and professional insecurity as a result of the ruling, the association said. The DTF leaders demanded that the central government introduce an appropriate bill in Parliament to either nullify or suitably amend the judgment in favor of teachers. They urged the government to take necessary legislative steps to safeguard teachers' employment rights and ensure long-term job security. "

ASI to inform Delhi HC if it will hear representation against stopping namaz at Mughal masjid



GNS News Agency, Feb 17

Three-and-a-half years after the managing committee of the Delhi Waqf Board (DWB) challenged Archaeological Survey of India's (ASI) decision to stop namaz at Mughal masjid located inside the Qutub Minar complex, the Delhi High Court has directed the ASI, under the Ministry of Culture, to seek instructions on whether it will hear or respond to a representation that the waqf board had made before it in May 2022. The direction, which came on Friday, was issued even as the Supreme Court, in April 2023, had requested the HC to take up DWB's petition — moved in 2022 — and "decide the same in accordance with law on its own merits as expeditiously as possible".

The petitioner, the DWB managing committee, is seeking that ASI be restrained from obstructing or interfering in offering of namaz at the masjid. The ASI had reportedly stopped the religious practice on May 13, 2022. While the Qutub Minar complex is a centrally-protected and UNESCO World Heritage site, the committee has contended that the masjid does not fall within the protected part of the monument. While the complex was officially notified as a centrally-protected monument in 1914, the petitioner has referred to communications dating back to 1949 — from the then imam of the masjid to various authorities — to establish that the practice of offering namaz in the masjid was prevalent for decades.

It has also relied on a book, Monuments of Delhi, published in 1920, which refers to the mosque being in use at the time. The petitioner has further pointed out that the mosque was notified as a Waqf property on April 16, 1970, and the Act shall have an overriding effect over any other law to the contrary. The committee has contended that the namaz was stopped without any authority in law, and without showing any notification/order or notice, thus violating the principles of natural justice. However, the Centre has submitted that the government's gazette notification declaring the Qutub precincts as protected "prevails over the provisions of the Waqf Act, 1995" and the "land dedicated for pious & religious purpose is not immune from its vesting

MMRDA imposes Rs 5 crore penalty on contractor trio Reliance, Astaldi & Milan Road, Rs 1 crore on general consultant, sets up investigative committee

GNS News Agency, Feb 17

Most multi member ward panels in MMR civic polls saw same party sweep MMRDA imposes Rs 5 crore penalty on contractor and Rs 1 crore on consultant after a parapet segment fell on Metro Line 4, and sets up a high-level probe into construction quality and supervision lapses. In the hours after the incident on the metro line 4, the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) announced a penalty of Rs 5 crore on the contractor for the work's execution, RAJV Milan Infra. This shortform is a stand-in for the main contractor, a joint venture of Reliance Infrastructure and Astaldi SPA (an Italian company), and the subcontractor, Milan Road Buildtech LLP.

Additionally, a Rs 1 crore penalty was imposed on the general consultant, in charge of supervision, a consortium of DB Engineering & Consulting, Hill International Inc and Louis Berger Consulting Private Limited.

It also constituted a high-level committee to investigate the cause of the parapet segment's fall. Headed by director (projects) Basavraj M Bhadragnod, the committee will look into construction methodology, quality control protocols, supervision mechanisms and compliance records. A detailed report would be prepared, said the developmental authority. When asked why the parapet segment fell, an MMRDA official said, "Prima facie, it seems that the fastening of that segment of parapet was cut or wasn't there, which is why it came loose and fell. But the cause behind that will have to be investigated." "Public safety remains paramount. Strict accountability will be ensured based on the findings of the inquiry, and appropriate corrective measures will be implemented to prevent recurrence," said a statement by the MMRDA. Officials added that the project team reached the site immediately after the incident, and that a detailed structural safety assessment has commenced in coordination with BMC, disaster management authorities, local police and fire brigade officials.

with the State". Days after namaz was stopped, the committee had made representations to the ASI, including the director general, as well as to the Mehrauli police station SHO. However, the ASI never responded to the representations.

Addressing the committee's advocate, M Sufian Siddiqui, Justice Anish Dayal on Friday orally remarked, "We are familiar with Qutub Minar complex, this is not a run of the mill situation where an immediate order can be passed. Let them (ASI) take instructions if your (managing committee of DWB) representation can be considered... one of your grievances is that (you were not given an opportunity of hearing before the action was taken)." Siddiqui, however, argued, "Even assuming it (Mughal masjid) is (within the protected precincts)... the statute gives me the power to perform namaz. And the moot question is, what procedure have they followed (to stop namaz)... They've not followed any procedure while carrying out this exercise of arbitrary stoppage of namaz on May 13, 2022."

"Prior to that, it is undisputed that namaz was taking place. So... they have resorted to deliberate falsehoods and prevarications in their counter-affidavits by neither admitting nor disputing that they have stopped the performance of namaz in order to obviate the judicial scrutiny that would have followed from the court." The Centre, through the Ministry of Culture and ASI, in written submissions filed on July 25, 2025 and a reply filed in 2023, has told HC that the "Qutub Minar (World Heritage Site) is not a place of worship" and "since the time of its protection the said monument or any part of it, has not been used for any type of worship," "since no one in continuous capacity offered prayers in the mosque".

According to the Centre, the mosque "is a protected mosque as per the provisions of AMASR Act, 1958", as it also falls within the fenced Qutub archaeological area. The committee has, however, emphasised that there is "overwhelming evidence to prove that the mosque in question was under religious use, i.e., regular prayers were held at the said mosque at the time when the other structures in adjacent area were declared as centrally protected monuments".

The Mughal period mosque, distinct with its 3 bulbous domes and situated on the right side of the eastern entrance gateway to the otherwise Mamluk and Tughlaq dynasty complex, is one of the two masjids situated in the complex, the other being Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque. In 2021, a civil court in Saket had rejected a suit seeking restoration of Hindu and Jain deities inside Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque. However, an appeal was filed before the district court, which continues to remain pending. The stoppage of namaz at the Mughal masjid had come months after the appeal was admitted by the district court.



MLA Mihir Kotecha, who visited the patients, said, "The MMRDA believes the incident has taken place due to the mistake of workers, who have been at work on the stretch yesterday, while the supervisor was not present. The buck doesn't stop at the worker; the supervisor is responsible for ensuring the work goes as per standards. Strict action, even jail time, must be taken on the contractors responsible, and only then such incidents will not repeat again." The authority promised medical assistance to the victims, ensuring their medical expenses would be arranged for. It also added that financial assistance would be provided as per the CAR (contractor all risks) policy, with immediate disbursement. This amount would be around Rs 15 to 20 lakh based on the age of the deceased, hinted an official. A medical team from Fortis Hospital was called in to independently assess the injured and advise on any advanced intervention. The segment of the parapet that fell onto the LBS road below was near pier P196 of the under-construction Metro Line 4 (Wadala to Kasarvadavali in Thane). Nearing the end of construction, the portion was a part of the stretch expected to open later in 2026. The base cost of the project is Rs 14,549 crore.

Karnataka husband-wife duo in the dock: ED attaches properties worth Rs 16.95 crore in probe into cooperative society scam

GNS News Agency, Feb 17

An AI-generated image for a co-operative society probe The cooperative society allegedly sanctioned loans to entities owned by its president and CEO without securing proper collateral (Image generated using AI). The Directorate of Enforcement (ED) Saturday provisionally attached 11 immovable properties valued at Rs 16.95 crore belonging to Srivaibhava Sourhardha Pattina Sahakari Niyamitha president Nagavalli B S, her husband Rajesh V R, and associated entities under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), according to an official press release. The attachment order was issued on February 12 and effected by the ED's Bengaluru Zonal Office, the release said. The properties, comprising land, plots and buildings in Ramanagara, Mysuru and Bengaluru, are alleged to have been acquired using proceeds of crime generated through criminal activities. The ED's investigation was launched based on an FIR registered by the Subramanyapura police station, Bengaluru, against Srivaibhava Sourhardha Pattina Sahakari Niyamitha, Nagavalli, Rajesh and others. The FIR was filed following a

complaint by the managing director of Karnataka State Federal Co-operative Limited. According to the complaint, the cooperative society had sanctioned loans to entities owned by its president and CEO without securing proper collateral. The loans allegedly remained unpaid, resulting in wrongful loss to depositors, the release said. During the PMLA probe, the agency collected records of additional FIRs and chargesheets filed by police against the society and its key officials. Investigators found that Rajesh and Nagavalli had incorporated the cooperative society in 2011 with "dishonest intent to mobilise public deposits and divert them for personal gain", the agency alleged. The agency said its probe revealed that in collusion with other accused persons and entities — many of which were allegedly set up by the couple — they diverted about Rs 65 crore of public deposits, generating proceeds of crime. A significant portion of these funds was allegedly routed through their personal bank accounts and fictitious entities to launder the money. The diversion of funds was allegedly used to purchase immovable properties, make business investments and meet personal expenses, the enforcement agency added.

After Indore water contamination deaths, Delhi Jal Board to intensify inspections



GNS News Agency, Feb 17

The DJB has also been asked to strengthen continuous monitoring of water quality at all water treatment plants, distribution zones, and consumer ends through frequent sampling and testing as per established standards. The DJB has also been asked to strengthen continuous monitoring of water quality at all water treatment plants, distribution zones, and consumer ends through frequent sampling and testing as per established standards. To prevent incidents like those in Madhya Pradesh's Indore, where several people died after allegedly drinking contaminated water, and in Gujarat's Gandhinagar, where a typhoid outbreak has been reported, Delhi Water Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh has directed the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) to take immediate measures to avoid any possible contamination of the Capital's drinking water supply. "The DJB is undertaking regular inspections of water supply pipelines and monitoring water quality in accordance with established norms. Several important measures have already been taken by the DJB in recent months to ensure the supply of clean and potable water to the residents of Delhi," he said in an order issued recently to the Jal Board.

'Aware of the rot': D K Shivakumar cites 'intelligence inputs', says time to change BDA's image

GNS News Agency, Feb 17

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister and Bengaluru Urban Development Minister D K Shivakumar on Tuesday said he was aware of corruption in the Bengaluru Development Authority (BDA), citing his "own intelligence inputs," and stressed the urgent need to change public perception of the organisation. Speaking at the inauguration of a workshop on governance and grievance redressal for BDA employees, Shivakumar said that the time has come to change the Authority's image, which has been tarnished due to "10 per cent corrupt employees".

"It took me six months to find out, through my own intelligence inputs, about the corruption in the system. I am aware of the rot in the system at every stage, and I am also aware of what is working well in the organisation. In this backdrop, we have decided to digitise all the documents. Some may not like this, but we have to change BDA. The organisation is getting a bad name due to some 10 per cent of the employees who are corrupt," he said. Speaking at the inauguration of a workshop on governance and grievance redressal for BDA employees, Shivakumar said that the time has come to change the Authority's image, which has been tarnished due to "10 per cent corrupt employees". Shivakumar speaks at the inauguration of a workshop on governance and grievance redressal for BDA employees. Saying that the BDA and the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) were the face of Bengaluru, Shivakumar said, "What this city needs today is discipline and honesty. Instead of red-taping the files, identify the mistakes constructively and find solutions for them. I am not going to be easy on corruption, and I will take strict action against the culprits. We need to change people's perception about the organisation."

Shivakumar also urged BDA employees to find solutions to people's problems and "not create problems for them". "Find a solution within the legal framework, don't trouble the people," he added. "It took me six months to find out, through my own intelligence inputs, about the corruption in the system. I am aware of the rot in the system at

The minister said that given the critical importance of safeguarding the integrity and safety of the drinking water supply system across the city, he has asked the DJB to intensify regular inspections of all water supply pipelines, particularly in areas where drinking water lines run in proximity to sewer lines, to detect and repair any leaks, damages, or potential points of cross-contamination immediately. The DJB has also been asked to strengthen continuous monitoring of water quality at all water treatment plants, distribution zones, and consumer ends through frequent sampling and testing as per established standards. Further, it has been asked to ensure prompt response to public complaints regarding water quality, odour, taste, or discoloration, with on-ground verification and corrective action within the shortest possible time. Besides, DJB engineers and other officials concerned have been directed to conduct periodic audits of infrastructure to identify vulnerable sections and prioritise repairs/replacements to prevent any mixing of untreated water or external contaminants into the potable supply network. Further, the DJB will also deploy dedicated teams for round-the-clock vigilance and maintenance in high-density and vulnerable areas. "These actions must be implemented with immediate effect and monitored rigorously by the CEO, DJB, including review of inspections carried out, complaints resolved, and water quality test results etc.," read the document. Between December 24, 2025, and January 6 this year, at least eight people died after allegedly drinking contaminated water in Indore's Bhagirathpura. A public toilet without the mandatory septic tank, built over an ageing pipeline near a police outpost in the area, was initially blamed for the contamination of the city's drinking water network. Even as the toilet has since been demolished, the authorities are investigating whether the contamination spread through the local borewell connections.



every stage, and I am also aware of what is working well in the organisation. In this backdrop, we have decided to digitise all the documents. Some may not like this, but we have to change BDA. The organisation is getting a bad name due to some 10 per cent of the employees who are corrupt," he said. (Express Photo) "It took me six months to find out, through my own intelligence inputs, about the corruption in the system.," he said. He noted that engineers from disciplines other than civil engineering and architecture were entering the Town Planning Department, which was why a dedicated Town Planning College was being established in Bengaluru. "We will need to plan our cities and towns well. Other than some areas like Jayanagara, Malleshwaram, Chamaraajpet, etc., there are not many planned areas. All of us are at fault for this. We need to correct these mistakes," he added. Pointing out that Bengaluru's population had grown to 1.4 crore, Shivakumar said the city was not ready for such a population growth. "We need to think of ways to shape the new Bengaluru. A peripheral ring road was planned in 2010, and it could have been done in Rs 26,000 crore had they done it then. Due to the delay, it now costs Rs 50,000 crore. We have worked out a different plan to reduce the costs. We will build the Bengaluru Business Corridor, no matter who opposes it. I have told the chairman that we will not de-notify even an inch of land," he said.

How ChatGPT alert helped Bengaluru retiree avert further losses in 67.1 lakh fake IPO 'scam'



GNS News Agency, Feb 17

A response from ChatGPT — an Artificial Intelligence (AI) chatbot — helped a 77-year-old Bengaluru retiree prevent further financial losses after he was duped of ₹67.10 lakh in a fake stock market investment scam. According to the First Information Report filed on January 3, persons posing as representatives of IIFL Wealth Management approached the victim, a resident of Binnypet, in November last year under the promise to facilitate "pre-IPO allotments in sizable quantities." After being persuaded to sign an agreement, he was asked to make an initial deposit of ₹5 lakh, the police said. The complainant was subsequently informed that he had been allotted 150 shares of ICICI Prudential AMC, which showed a profit of ₹80,000. Encouraged by this, the victim was asked to invest again, this time ₹23.10 lakh, for another Initial Public Offering (IPO). Though he complied, he was allegedly allotted 2.24 lakh shares at ₹45 each, far exceeding the quantity he had sought. When he expressed his inability to pay for the excess allotment, the scammers offered him a loan of ₹36.79 lakh at a 13 per cent interest rate, on condition that he repays ₹42 lakh, the police said. The victim agreed to the arrangement. On January 1, he was instructed to sell the 2.24 lakh shares at ₹125 per share, which showed a paper profit of nearly ₹2 crore. However, when he requested that ₹40 lakh be released to him and the loan amount adjusted from the proceeds, the request was refused, the FIR said. "This is when the complainant got alarmed and started investigating their background in ChatGPT. Complainant was shocked to discover that this was a fraudulent organisation and had a lot of complaints against it," the FIR filed at the Cyber Crime Police Station (CCPS), Bengaluru, noted. The police have registered a case

under the provisions of the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000, Section 66C (punishment for identity theft) and Section 66D (cheating by personation using a computer resource) and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita's (BNS) Sections 318(4) (cheating & dishonestly inducing delivery of property) and 319(2) (cheating by personation (pretending to be someone else)).

Faction war hits Congress bid to get Asifabad municipal chairperson post

GNS News Agency, Feb 17

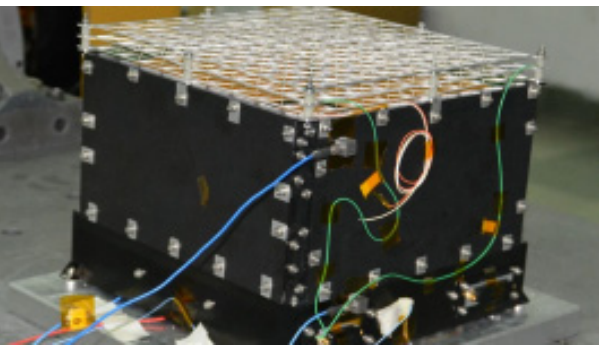
Kumram Bheem Asifabad: Factional wars within the Indian National Congress have hit the party's efforts to secure the posts of chairperson and deputy chairperson of the newly created Asifabad municipality. While the Bharat Rashtra Samithi led with nine wards in the 20-member Asifabad civic body, the Congress won seven wards and emerged as the second force.

However, independents registered victories in four wards. Suspicion prevailed over whether the independents would support either the BRS or the Congress.



While one group is led by former MLC Purnam Sathish, another faction is being led by former DCC president K Vishwaprasad Rao. The two groups are warring to capture the chairperson post of the municipality by poaching the four independents. Shyam Naik, belonging to the Sathish faction, faced criticism for allegedly trying to abduct an independent on the day of counting. The four independents expressed their willingness to support the Congress but opposed the candidature of Abdullah, backed by Sathish, as chairperson. It remains to be seen whether Sathish or Vishwaprasad emerges victorious.

Isro confirms a 'cosmic dust particle' hits Earth's atmosphere every 16 minutes: Why this discovery is critical for Gaganyaan



GNS News Agency, Feb 17

In its maiden experiment to measure minute atmospheric dust particles suspended around Earth, the Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) confirmed on Monday that an interplanetary dust particle enters Earth's atmosphere approximately every 1,000 seconds (or around 16 minutes). Isro developed the Dust Experiment (DEX), a 3 kg instrument that was launched into space onboard the XPoSat mission on January 1, 2024. DEX, created by the Physical Research Laboratory, is the first-of-its-kind instrument designed to detect such high-transient particles. The detection was reported during the experimental tests performed in early 2024. "The 140° wide-view detector of DEX successfully logged signals of orbital debris impact during January 1–9, 2024. While skimming the atmosphere on a 9.5° inclination, the detector registered several hits," ISRO said in a statement released on Monday.

Earth's atmosphere is primarily composed of gaseous matter along with suspended solid particles, or dust, originating from comets, meteors, asteroids, or similar hard-body celestial objects. While gaseous matter supports the formation of life on Earth and provides the air that we

breathe, the dust particles are often classified as dangerous and hold the potential to interfere with the operations of spacecraft and satellites. Interplanetary dust also affects the quality of the space environment and influences space weather, which indirectly affects the Earth. Therefore, studying interplanetary dust particles is critical for safeguarding space assets. At the core of DEX is the dust detector, which works on the hypervelocity principle, designed to capture high-speed space dust impacts with only 4.5 Watts.

Consequences of a projectile impact Depending on the particle, the object or the projectile, its speed and size, the hypervelocity impacts can vary. The consequences of a projectile impact can range from minor dents to catastrophic failures, such as total deorbiting of spacecraft or satellites. When a projectile or solid particle exceeds a speed of 4 km/second, the impact can result in complete disintegration or melting of the projectile, risking the mission's life. Space debris, for instance, is known to travel at velocities estimated to be 14 km/second and even higher for meteors. During the experiment, Isro stated that DEX was able to measure dust flux (rate at which dust travels in the atmosphere) up to 6.5 × 10⁻³ / m⁻² s⁻¹ — a reasonably high rate that confirms the constant bombardment of particles. Understanding and collecting data on interplanetary dust in Earth's atmosphere will also be valuable for planning Gaganyaan missions, particularly for manned missions to space and the Moon. As India prepares for missions to the Moon, Venus, and Mars, the availability of DEX-like instruments will be crucial for studying the atmospheric compositions of these celestial bodies and enhancing our understanding of the universe. The detection and measurements of space dust can add immense value while tracking space weather and space environment, which have direct links to the safety of space assets like space telescopes, satellites pertinent for communication and navigation purposes.

A play that says it as it is: Why 'Jikni' is a bold move that goes against the idea of 'pure' Marathi theatre

GNS News Agency, Feb 17

For generations, Marathi has carried its own hierarchies of language, where one dialect is upheld as superior, while others are asked to make adjustments. On stage, such differences are usually smoothed over in the name of clarity. Jikni resists that impulse by keeping the language on stage tethered to life. In allowing speech to remain uncorrected, the play avoids both sanitisation and spectacle, and simply lets the soundscape of lived experience remain intact. The children speak and sing exactly as they do in their everyday lives and in that refusal to adjust themselves for us lies the deepest nuance of this play. Jikni, meaning "riddle" in the Katkari language, is a musical docu-drama created by Ruchika Khot, Geetanjali Kulkarni and Archana Kulkarni, collaboratively with children from Vadavali and Sonala, adjacent villages in Maharashtra's Palghar district. The play is a slice-of-life musical production exploring the seemingly routine stories from these villages. The production is packed with songs and jingles from everyday life, describing a variety of things – from folktales on fishing to songs about the monsoon and, of course, jiknis – aiming to show life as it is.

The play moves gently through the contours of the children's everyday lives, from friendships and kinship in the village, to the way adults' lives bend around the harvest, and how time itself is measured through the agricultural year. From the fallow months to sowing, reaping, and finally the processing and sale of rice, the play follows a cycle that holds the village together. The play ended with a short heartfelt section – almost in a Brechtian sense – in which a direct conversation was held with the audience, detailing the periods of distress caused due to these activities, following which the actors took their bow. In an era where rural life is frequently aestheticised, moralised or folded into a narrow national narrative, Jikni innocently challenges the romanticised idea of "rural charm", making one confront reality. The music is central and demanding, performed exceptionally by the budding storytellers, who sing complex melodies, play instruments, and coordinate dance performances with remarkable attentiveness. The play was developed at Tarapa, a space that co-founder and actor Geetanjali describes not as an institution, but as an adda. "We never intended Jikni to be a theatrical debut," she says. "We wanted these children to learn and experience life, and to portray their lived experiences." Tarapa, she says, is a space where children play, read, encounter books and musical instruments, and participate in workshops that grow from curiosity, in an attempt to break the curriculum. It is open to people from all age groups to explore art, and this fluidity shapes Jikni profoundly.

Director, writer and composer Khot emphasises that nothing about Jikni was pre-designed. "It was always more about the process and less about the outcome," she says. Songs emerged because the children liked a tune and the



lyrics grew from their own experiences. "When they realised this was their song, they were so proud of themselves, so proud of owning something that was all theirs," she says. A song about the monsoon existed simply because the children described how they play when it rains, which then evolved into a tune. This is why the play never feels extractive. The children are not vessels for a message, nor are they performing someone else's idea of authenticity. As Wasimbarry Maner, Associate Professor at the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), observes, spaces like these offer an alternative to cultural monoliths, especially in a time of growing polarisation and rigid ideas of identity. "They help us find joy in everyday life," he says, adding that the linguistic "imperfections" were consciously preserved. Maner, an active member of Tarapa, was the moderator of the play's audience interaction segment. "No kid knew how to pronounce '?', and that is how we wanted to keep it. They don't need to know how to say it. This is not an attempt at cultural purity." Audience responses echo this sentiment. Veteran actor and the winner of the revered Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, Dr Mohan Agashe's response spoke about a memory. Watching the children perform, he was reminded of dramatist and theatre director Badal Sircar. "I don't know if children today know about Badal Babu, but it is important to understand what theatre does," he said.

Education, Agashe emphasised, does not reside only in books or formal instruction, but is also obtained through art and music. "Think of how a mother narrates a story to her child," he said. "This play has a similar impact. Plays like these are important to educate people in a way that stays with them." For Marathi theatre writer and director Shrirang Godbole, the best part of the experience was its honesty. "What stayed with me was the authenticity," he said. "This is not a borrowed story. It is a lived experience." He insisted that Jikni should not be viewed as "just theatre" but as a window into Sonala village. Perhaps this is where Jikni leaves us – with a question rather than an answer. What happens when we stop asking marginalised voices to sound like us? The songs are sung the way they were learned, the words are said the way they are spoken. Nothing is corrected to make the experience more palatable for the viewer.

Conspirator in sarpanch killing shot dead in encounter in Tarn Taran: DIG

A conspirator in the killing of AAP-backed sarpanch Jarmal Singh in Amritsar two days ago, who was also part of the module involved in plotting the murder of Congress block president Harman Sekhon in Tarn Taran, was shot dead in an encounter with a joint team of CIA staff and Anti-Gangster Task Force (AGTF) near Bhikhiwind in Tarn Taran district on Tuesday, DIG (Border Range) Snehdeep Sharma said.

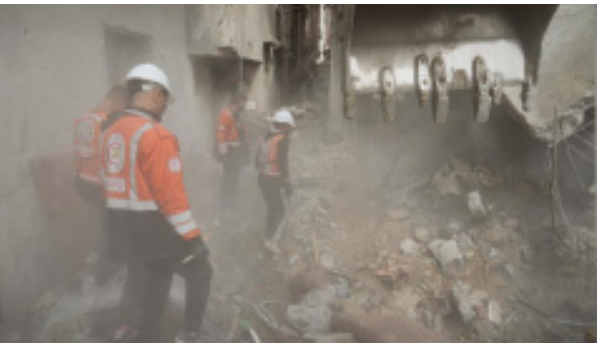
The DIG said the accused, Harnur, alias Noor, a resident of the Kathunangal area, was a close associate of foreign-based gangsters Prabh Dasuwal and Afridi. Sharma said, "Acting on a tip-off that Noor was travelling in the area astride a motorcycle, a CIA and AGTF joint team started following him. When our team intercepted him, the accused abandoned his motorcycle and opened fire at them." "During the crossfire, a bullet struck a police personnel, but he escaped unhurt due to his bulletproof jacket. However, Noor suffered serious injuries and was rushed to a hospital, but succumbed to his injuries," the DIG said, adding a pistol was seized from Noor's possession.

Sarpanch Jarmal Singh, a resident of Valthoa village

in Tarn Taran district, was attending a wedding ceremony at Marigold Marriage Palace in Amritsar on Sunday when some unidentified assailants shot him dead from point-blank range, police said. According to eyewitnesses, the assailants, disguised as guests, attacked the sarpanch when he was eating. After a bullet struck him on his forehead, he fell on the table and was taken to a nearby hospital, but succumbed to his injuries, police said. The DIG said Noor was helping the module involved in plotting Sekhon's murder. Four suspects have already been arrested in the Sekhon murder case. "During their interrogation, it emerged that at the behest of foreign-based gangsters Donny Bal and Prabh Dasuwal, they had earlier planned to target Sekhon during the zila parishad elections held last year, but could not execute the plan," the DIG said.

The DIG said, "Noor was assisting those who conducted reconnaissance of Sekhon, while he himself did reconnaissance of Jarmal Singh. Tarn Taran police have been coordinating with Amritsar police to probe Noor's exact role in the murder case."

Israeli airstrikes kill nine in Gaza, including tent camp, Palestinian officials say



GNS News Agency, Feb 17

At least nine Palestinians were killed in Israeli airstrikes in the northern and southern Gaza Strip on Sunday (February 15, 2026), Palestinian Civil Defence and Health officials said, in what Israel's military called a response to Hamas ceasefire violations. Medics said an Israeli airstrike on a tent encampment housing displaced families killed at least four people, while health officials said another strike killed five in Khan Younis in the south.

"In recent hours, the IDF has begun striking in response to Hamas's blatant violation of the ceasefire agreement yesterday in the Beit Hanoun area," an Israeli military official said, adding that "terrorists emerged from a tunnel east of the yellow line". The official called Sunday's

(February 15) strikes "precise" and in line with international law, and said the Palestinian militant group had committed more than six violations of an October ceasefire, including deploying east of the "Yellow Line" agreed under the ceasefire to demarcate Israeli- and Hamas-controlled areas. "Crossing the yellow line in the vicinity of IDF troops, while armed, is an explicit ceasefire violation - and demonstrates how Hamas systematically violates the ceasefire agreement with intent to harm IDF troops," the official said. Israel and Hamas have repeatedly accused each other of violating the ceasefire deal, a key element of U.S. President Donald Trump's plan to end the Gaza war. On Saturday, the military said it had identified armed "terrorists" near IDF personnel operating in the northern Gaza Strip. The IDF said it continued to destroy underground tunnels in the northern Gaza Strip in accordance with the agreement. It said it observed several gunmen emerging from what it said was a tunnel and entering beneath the rubble of a building east of the Yellow Line. The military said Air Force aircraft had attacked the building and eliminated two gunmen and that it was likely that additional militants were eliminated in the strike. The Gaza Health Ministry said at least 600 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire since the Gaza deal began. Israel said four soldiers were killed by militants in Gaza over the same period.

U.S. military reports series of airstrikes against Islamic State targets in Syria

GNS News Agency, Feb 17

The U.S. military on Saturday (February 14, 2026) reported a series of strikes against Islamic State group targets in Syria in retaliation for the December ambush that killed two U.S. soldiers and one American civilian interpreter. U.S. Central Command said in a statement that American aircraft had conducted 10 strikes against more than 30 IS targets between February 3 and Thursday (February 12, 2026), hitting weapons storage facilities and other infrastructure.

At least 50 members of IS have been killed or captured, while more than 100 IS targets have been struck since the United States began its strikes after the December 13 ambush, according to Central Command. That attack killed Sgt. Edgar Brian Torres-Tovar, Sgt. William Nathaniel Howard, and Ayad Mansoor Sakat, the civilian interpreter.

Meanwhile, the Syrian Defence Ministry said on Thursday (February 12, 2026) that government forces took control of a base in the east of the country that was run for



years by U.S. troops as part of the fight against IS. The Al-Tanf base played a major role after IS declared a caliphate in large parts of Syria and Iraq in 2014. The U.S. military on Friday (February 13, 2026) completed the transfer of thousands of IS detainees from Syria to Iraq, where they are expected to stand trial. The prisoners were sent to Iraq at the request of Baghdad, in a move welcomed by the U.S.-led coalition that had for years fought against IS.

Reza Pahlavi urges world to stand with people of Iran as more than 2.5 lakh people rally in Munich



GNS News Agency, Feb 17

About 2,50,000 people demonstrated against Iran's government on the sidelines of a gathering of world leaders in Germany, police said, answering a call from the son of Iran's ousted shah Reza Pahlavi for cranked-up international pressure on Tehran. Banging drums and chanting for regime change, the giant and boisterous rally in Munich was part of what Mr. Pahlavi described as a "global day of action" to support Iranians in the wake of deadly nationwide protests. He also called for demonstrations in Los Angeles and Toronto. Police said in a post on X that the number of protesters reached some 2,50,000, more than the organisers had expected.

"Change, change, regime change", the huge crowd chanted, waving green-white-and-red flags with lion and sun emblems. Iran used that flag before its 1979 Islamic Revolution that toppled the Pahlavi dynasty. At a news conference, Mr. Pahlavi warned of more deaths in Iran if "democracies stand by and watch" following Iran's deadly crackdown on protesters last month.

"We gather at an hour of profound peril to ask: Will the world stand with the people of Iran?" he asked. He added that the survival of Iran's government "sends a clear signal to every bully: kill enough people and you stay in power." An estimated 350,000 people marched on the streets of Toronto as part of the Global Day of Action Rally, Toronto Police spokesperson Laura Brabant said. At the Munich rally, demonstrators sported "Make Iran Great Again" red caps,

mimicking the MAGA caps worn by US President Donald Trump's supporters. Among those sporting the caps was US Sen. Lindsey Graham, a Republican from South Carolina who gave a speech to the crowd during which he was photographed holding up the headwear.

Many at the rally waved placards showing Mr. Pahlavi, some of which called him a king. The son of Iran's deposed shah has been in exile for nearly 50 years but is trying to position himself as a player in Iran's future. The crowd chanted "Pahlavi for Iran," and "democracy for Iran" as drums and cymbals sounded. "We have huge hopes and are looking forward to the regime changing hopefully," said Daniyal Mohtashamian, a demonstrator who travelled from Zurich, in Switzerland, to speak for protesters inside Iran who faced repression. "There is an internet blackout, and their voices are not going outside of Iran," he said.

About 500 protesters also rallied outside the presidential palace in Nicosia, Cyprus, with many holding up banners with slogans against Iran's government and in favour of Pahlavi. The U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency says at least 7,005 people were killed in last month's protests, including 214 government forces. It has been accurate in counting deaths during previous rounds of unrest in Iran and relies on a network of activists inside Iran to verify deaths. Iran's government offered its only death toll on Jan. 21, saying 3,117 people were killed. Iran's theocracy in the past has undercounted or not reported fatalities from past unrest. The Associated Press has been unable to independently assess the death toll, given that authorities have disrupted internet access and international calls in Iran. Iranian leaders are facing renewed pressure from Mr. Trump, who has threatened U.S. military action. Mr. Trump wants Iran to further scale back its nuclear programme. He suggested Friday (February 13, 2026) that regime change in Iran "would be the best thing that could happen." Iran was also the focus of protests in Munich on Friday, the opening day of an annual security conference in the city gathering European leaders and global security figures. Supporters of the Iranian opposition group People's Mujahedin Organisation of Iran, also known as the Mujahedin-e-Khalq, demonstrated.

China warns U.S. 'plotting' on Taiwan could lead to 'confrontation'

GNS News Agency, Feb 17

Beijing's top diplomat Wang Yi warned the United States against "plotting" on Taiwan, saying it could lead to a "confrontation" with China. Speaking at the Munich Security Conference in Germany, Foreign Minister Wang said that in the future, the United States could adopt a China policy that involves "instigating and plotting to split China through Taiwan, crossing China's red line." "This could very likely lead to a confrontation between China and the United States," he said. He added that he hoped Washington would pursue a "positive and pragmatic" approach, "but we are also prepared to deal with various risks". China claims self-ruled Taiwan as its own territory and has not ruled out the use of force to bring it under its control. The United States has long been the democratic island's most important backer and biggest arms provider, and Taiwan would be heavily reliant on U.S. support in a potential conflict with China. During his Saturday (February 14, 2026) comments,



Mr. Wang also weighed in on Beijing's current relationship with Tokyo, which has been under heavy strain since Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi took office in October. "The Japanese people should no longer allow themselves to be manipulated or deceived by those far-right forces, or by those who seek to revive militarism."

Zelenskyy says U.S. too often asks Ukraine, not Russia, for concessions



GNS News Agency, Feb 17

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy expressed hope on Saturday (February 14, 2026) that U.S.-brokered peace talks next week in Geneva will be serious and substantive, but he voiced concern that Ukraine was being asked "too often" to make concessions in the negotiations. "We truly hope that the trilateral meetings next week will be serious, substantive, helpful for all us but honestly sometimes it feels like the sides are talking about completely different things," Mr. Zelenskyy said in a speech at the Munich Security Conference. The Ukrainian leader said he was feeling "a little bit" of pressure from U.S. President Donald Trump, who yesterday (February 13, 2026) said Mr. Zelenskyy should not miss the "opportunity" to make peace soon.

"The Americans often return to the topic of concessions and too often those concessions are discussed only in the context of Ukraine, not Russia," Mr. Zelenskyy said. However, he added that he hoped the U.S. would stay involved in the negotiations, and that there would be an opportunity for Europe, which he said was currently sidelined, to play a bigger role. Mr. Zelenskyy has in the past expressed concern that U.S. Congressional mid-term elec-

tions could focus the Trump administration on domestic political issues after the summer. Ukraine and Russia have engaged in two recent rounds of talks brokered by Washington in Abu Dhabi, which were described by the sides as constructive but did not achieve any major breakthroughs. Russia said its delegation to Geneva would be led by Putin adviser Vladimir Medinsky, a change from Abu Dhabi at which Russia's team was led by military intelligence chief Igor Kostyukov. Ukrainian sources have previously criticised Mr. Medinsky's handling of the talks, accusing him of delivering history lessons to the Ukrainian team instead of engaging in substantive negotiations. "Weapons developing faster than political decisions to end war" Mr. Zelenskyy decreed that arms are developing faster than political efforts to end the Russian invasion, Europe's deadliest conflict since World War II. "Weapons evolve faster than political decisions meant to stop them," he told the Munich Security Conference, saying that Iranian-designed Shahed drones that Russia launches have become much deadlier as the war drags on. "Putin is a slave to war," Zelenskyy said. Mr. Zelenskyy also said that Russian leader Vladimir Putin was a "slave to war." "No one in Ukraine believes (Putin) will ever let our people go, but he will not let other European nations go either, because he cannot let go of the very idea of war. He may see himself as a tsar, but in reality he is a slave to war," Mr. Zelenskyy said. "Every power plant in Ukraine damaged in Russian strikes" Every power plant in Ukraine has been damaged by Russian attacks, Mr. Zelenskyy said, as Kyiv and its allies accuse Moscow of deliberately freezing Ukraine's population. "There is not a single power plant in Ukraine that is not damaged by Russian strikes," Mr. Zelenskyy said. "Sometimes we manage to deliver new missiles for our Patriots or NASAMS just before an attack and sometimes at the very last moment," he added, calling for speedier arms deliveries for Ukraine's Western-supplied air defence systems.

Rubio strikes constructive tone but persists in U.S. criticism of European allies

GNS News Agency, Feb 17

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio gave a message of unity to Europeans, saying Washington was not looking to abandon the transatlantic alliance but that Europe's leaders had made a number of policy mistakes and needed to change course. Mr. Rubio's overall message of togetherness and emphasis on the long-standing common heritage with Europe at the annual Munich Security Conference was relatively well-received by the gathering of European diplomats and security officials. But he also echoed the Trump administration's criticism of Europe over issues like mass migration and climate change and continued to at times needle European policymakers.



Still, his address contrasted sharply with U.S. Vice-President J.D. Vance's address here a year ago, in which he argued that the greatest danger to the continent came from censorship and democratic backsliding rather than external threats like Russia. "In a time of headlines heralding the end of the transatlantic era, let it be known and clear to all that this is neither our goal nor our wish, because for us Americans, our home may be in the western hemisphere, but we will always be a child of Europe," Mr. Rubio told the crowd. "For the United States and Europe, we belong together."

With Donald Trump's "America First" agenda increasingly seen as "America Alone" by allies and adversaries alike, and the president's first 13 months in his second tenure marked by rifts with Europe, Mr. Rubio tried to make an appeal to stay united. "I am here today to make it clear that America is charting a path for a new century of prosperity, and that once again, we want to do it together, with you, our cherished allies and oldest friends," Mr. Rubio said. The address was notably short on specifics. Mr. Rubio did not mention Russia — Europe's main geopolitical foil — during the roughly half-hour address, nor did he even bring up NATO by name, the continent's main security bloc or offer an expression of U.S. support for the continent's security. That Mr. Rubio's overall message counted as a relief to European officials speaks to the shifting terrain of transatlantic relations in recent years. While the vast majority of high-ranking officials and lawmakers in Washington expressed an ironclad economic and military commitment to Europe before the rise of Mr. Trump, the current administration had upended that norm. In the annual U.S. National Security Strategy released in December, Washington warned that Europe faced "civilisational erasure" and might one day lose its status as a reliable ally.

More recently, Mr. Trump threatened to slap tariffs on European allies for failing to back him in his quest to wrest Greenland away from Denmark, though the transatlantic

crisis over the fate of the world's largest island seems to have abated for now. "The speech seemed soothing and that is great," said one senior European diplomat who requested anonymity to offer his candid assessment. "There are still many questions looming, but I think using emotional notes was a signal that we can still be together in a different formula." Other diplomats and U.S. lawmakers were more skeptical, saying the speech had the same undertones as that of Mr. Vance.

"It didn't have the fiery tone of Vance, but I think it really got to a lot of the same dynamics, but just again, without really laying out the biggest security challenges that we're facing," Democratic Senator Andy Kim told Reuters. "He had the opportunity to talk about Ukraine, Russia, China, other things." Instead, he just talked about mass migration, about these types of internal issues of feeling shame about our history. "Throughout the speech, Mr. Rubio combined praise with subtle criticism. For instance, he spoke of his own forebears in Europe and of Europe's various cultural and architectural treasures, while at times implying that European leaders had turned their backs on worthwhile elements of the continent's past. "We want allies who are proud of their culture and of their heritage, who understand that we are heirs to the same great and noble civilization, and who together with us, are willing and able to defend it and this is why we do not want allies to rationalize the broken status quo," Mr. Rubio said.

Speeches by European leaders to the conference on Friday (February 13, 2026) showed how they are increasingly looking to carve an independent path after a year of unprecedented upheaval in transatlantic ties, while also striving to keep their alliance with the U.S. In his address, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said Berlin had begun talks with France about a European nuclear deterrent, while President Emmanuel Macron said Europe had to become a geopolitical power given the Russian threat would not disappear.

Budget impasse shuts down U.S. Department of Homeland Security

GNS News Agency, Feb 17

The Department of Homeland Security entered a partial shutdown as U.S. lawmakers fight over funding the agency overseeing much of President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown.

Thousands of government workers, from airport security agents to disaster relief officials, will either be furloughed or forced to work without pay until funding is agreed upon by Congress. At the center of the budget dispute is the department's Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), whose agents killed two U.S. citizens amid sweeping raids and mass protests in Minneapolis. Democrats oppose any new funding for DHS until major changes are implemented over how ICE conducts its operations. In particular, they have demanded curtailed patrols, a ban on ICE agents wearing face masks during operations and the requirement that they obtain a judicial warrant to enter private property. "Donald Trump and Republicans have decided that they have zero interest in getting ICE under control," House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries said Friday (February 13, 2026).

"Dramatic changes are needed," Mr. Jeffries told a news conference. "Absent that, Republicans have decided to shut down parts of the federal government." White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt put the blame on the opposition, telling Fox News that "Democrats are barreling our government towards another shutdown for political and partisan reasons." But while DHS faces a shutdown, ICE itself will remain operational, under funds approved in last year's government spending bill. Senator John Fetterman pushed

against his fellow Democrats, saying: "This shutdown literally has zero impact on ICE." The primary impact would land on other agencies, including the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which oversees emergency response to natural disasters. The Transportation Security Administration, which runs airport safety, warned on X that a prolonged shutdown could result in longer wait times and cancelled flights. Negotiations stalled. The shutdown would be the third of Mr. Trump's second term, including a record 43-day government closure last October and November. The government just reopened from a smaller, four-day partial shutdown earlier this month, also over DHS funding. Even if all 53 Republican senators vote to fund DHS, Senate rules require support from 60 of the body's 100 members to advance the budget bill, meaning several Democrats would need to get on board. In response to the Democrats' demands, the White House said it was ready to negotiate over immigration enforcement policy. Senate Majority Leader John Thune called it "an extremely serious offer," but warned Democrats are "never going to get their full wish list." Some concessions were made during the previous shutdown amid Democratic pressure and national outcry after federal agents shot and killed Renee Good, a mother of three, and Alex Pretti, a nurse who worked with military veterans, in Minneapolis last month. Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said federal agents in the city would wear body cameras "effective immediately" in a move that would be later "expanded nationwide." The Senate went into recess for a week starting Thursday (February 12, 2026), but senators could be called back to Washington in case of a rapid leap in negotiations. For the moment,

Playing hide and seek on employment guarantee



The oddly named Viksit Bharat – Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act (VB – G RAM G Act) has attracted a torrent of criticisms in recent weeks. A few commentators have defended it. Most of them are associated with the Central government. Still, their arguments are worth considering. Union Minister for Rural Development Shivraj Singh Chouhan took the lead with two articles in national dailies. He did a great service to the public by presenting the case for the VB – G RAM G Act on behalf of the Central government. Alas, the case is not impressive. Mr. Chouhan claimed that the VB – G RAM G Act provides the same work guarantee as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005, with an enhanced entitlement of 125 days per household per year instead of 100 days. However, as others have already pointed out, this claim overlooks the “switch-off” provision embedded in Section 5(1) of the Act, which states that the employment guarantee applies “in such rural area in the State as may be notified by the Central government”. This discretion defeats the purpose of an employment guarantee. It is like providing a work guarantee without a guarantee that the guarantee applies.

Conditional on the guarantee being in place, the VB-G RAM G Act does extend it for 125 days. But this could have been done under MGNREGA, without even requiring an amendment of the Act. It is no justification whatsoever for the VB-G RAM G Act. Indeed, a few States are already guaranteeing 125 days under MGNREGA. Amplifying the claim that the VB-G RAM G Act is an expansion rather than a restriction of MGNREGA, Mr. Chouhan played up the removal, in the VB-G RAM G Act, of earlier “disentitlement provisions”. In the absence of any explanation, most readers must have wondered what this is about. Since the same point was made by other champions of VB-G RAM G, it is worth clarifying.

When MGNREGA was drafted, a mild concern arose about the possibility of frivolous work applications — that is, applications from people who have no intention to work. Some of them, for instance, might do this in the hope of getting the unemployment allowance instead of a work offer. By way of protection against frivolous applications, a provision was inserted to the effect that if someone turns down a work offer after applying, then they will lose eligibility to the unemployment allowance for a period of three months. This is a weak protection against frivolous work applications, but it does not do any harm. For some reason, this clause was called “Disentitlement to receive unemployment allowance in certain circumstances”. As it turns out, frivolous work applications are an imaginary problem. This problem has never arisen in a serious way in the last 20 years. The disentitlement clause has never been used, and indeed it is quite useless (unlike the separate provision stating that no unemployment allowance is due to someone who turns down a work offer after applying). The fact that the VB-G RAM G Act omits this provision is neither here nor there. Mr. Chauhan’s claim that the VB-G RAM G Act removes “disentitlement provisions that had the effect of denying workers their due” is little more than hot air.

Normative fundingTurning to better arguments, one of VB-G RAM G’s main selling points is the “shift to normative funding as opposed to an archaic demand-driven approach”, as Dr. Soumya Kanti Ghosh, Group Chief Economic Advisor at State Bank of India, puts it. Here, the pretence that VB-G RAM G preserves the principle of employment guarantee is quietly abandoned. Indeed, if there is an employment guarantee, then funding must be “demand-

driven”. Instead, the assumption here is that most States will not spend beyond the “normative allocations” determined by the Centre. That, indeed, is a sensible assumption. The normative allocations are likely to become de facto budget caps, as the critics of VB-G RAM G have argued from the word go.

The advocates of “normative funding” make a virtue of these budget caps. They claim, in particular, that normative funding will help to ensure a more equitable distribution of expenditure across States. This concern arises from an alleged imbalance of MGNREGA expenditure in favour of better-off States. As a matter of fact, there is no statistical correlation, across States, between MGNREGA employment per rural household and baseline poverty rates or per capita expenditure. High levels of per household MGNREGA employment can be found in poor States (for example, Chhattisgarh) as well as in relatively well-off States (for example, Tamil Nadu), just as low levels of employment can be found in poor as well as better-off States (for example, Bihar and Gujarat, respectively).

Of course, one might still wish for a strong positive correlation across States between baseline poverty and MGNREGA employment. It would certainly be useful if poor States such as Bihar and Jharkhand accounted for a larger share of MGNREGA employment and expenditure. But the imposition of budget caps and cost-sharing is hardly going to help them. A much better approach would be to raise MGNREGA wage rates in the poorer States. That is long overdue. Employment guarantee is a bold idea that holds much promise not only for India but for the world. There is nothing surprising in the fact that some of India’s better-governed States are making more effective use of it than the rest. Many social programmes in India, from school meals to maternity benefits, began in south India and were extended to the whole country in due course. If MGNREGA is also doing better in south India for the time being, there is no reason to press the panic button and slap budget caps. After all, the MGNREGA budget is not very large — barely 0.25% of India’s GDP as things stand.

Stray argumentsAnother common pitch for VB-G RAM G is that this new Act will eliminate corruption. How so? The provisions for transparency, social audits and so on are much the same as in MGNREGA. The main innovation is relentless insistence, within the Act, on the use of advanced digital technology. But digital technologies are already being used with abandon in MGNREGA. Further, these technologies have a mixed record, to put it mildly. Some have undermined workers’ rights and sapped their interest in MGNREGA, often fuelling corruption in the process. When workers are fed up with technical glitches (like their wages being diverted to Airtel wallets, as happened in 2017), it is tempting for them to stop working by the rules and to cooperate instead with a corrupt middleman who uses their job cards and bank accounts to siphon off MGNREGA funds in exchange for a share of the loot. Instead of learning from these failures, the VB-G RAM G Act perpetuates blind faith in digital technology. I have tried to be generous to the advocates of the VB-G RAM G Act by focusing on their serious arguments. Some of them, however, also indulge in platitudes and fallacies. For instance, they try to credit the VB-G RAM G Act for provisions that are actually copy-pasted or paraphrased from MGNREGA. To illustrate, consider this statement of Tuhin Sinha, national spokesperson for the Bharatiya Janata Party: “Delayed wages were among the most corrosive failures of MGNREGA, undermining trust in the system. VB-G RAM G addresses this head-on by mandating weekly wage payments, with an outer limit of a fortnight.” Surely, he knows that this “head-on” provision is copied from MGNREGA? Similarly, when Mr. Chouhan claims that Section 20 of the VB-G RAM G Act “strengthens social audits”, he must know that it is more or less identical to Section 17 of MGNREGA. In short, there is little substance in recent arguments for the replacement of MGNREGA with the VB-G RAM G Act. The main purpose of the new Act seems to be to enable the Modi government to run the show and steal the credit, as happened when the National Food Security Act was repackaged as a bunch of Prime Minister’s schemes. Employment guarantee and workers’ rights are on the back seat.

Trump says hiking tariffs on South Korean goods to 25%



U.S. President Donald Trump said on Monday (January 26, 2026) that he would raise tariffs on South Korean goods, including autos, lumber and pharmaceuticals, accusing the country of not living up to an earlier trade pact struck with Washington. The increase would bring tariff levels from 15% to 25%. “South Korea’s Legislature is not living up to its Deal with the United States,” Mr. Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform. He added that he was increasing tariff rates “because the Korean Legislature hasn’t enacted our Historic Trade Agreement, which is their prerogative.” “South Korea’s Presidential office said it had not been informed about the tariff hike plans in advance.

It said Trade Minister Kim Jung-kwan, currently in

Canada, would head to Washington for talks on the issue with U.S. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick. Mr. Trump’s apparent about-face comes months after Washington and Seoul struck a trade and security deal, capping a period of tense negotiations.

The agreement was finalised after Mr. Trump met his South Korean counterpart Lee Jae Myung in October, and included investment promises by South Korea alongside tariff cuts by the United States. Since then it remained in something of a legal limbo in South Korea. Seoul’s Presidential office insisted in November that the deal does not require parliamentary approval, arguing it represents a memorandum of understanding

rather than a binding legal document. Asked whether the tariff deal had been submitted to parliament for approval, a senior official told AFP on Tuesday (January 27, 2026) they were looking into it but did not elaborate. Under the pact, Washington would maintain levies of up to 15 percent on South Korean goods including vehicles, car parts and pharmaceuticals. Crucially, the deal’s terms brought US tariffs on South Korean cars down from a 25% level. Mr. Trump’s latest threat, if enacted, would reverse that. Export painThe auto industry accounts for 27% of South Korea’s exports to the United States, which takes in nearly half of the country’s car exports.

A reversal to a higher tariff level could also put

South Korean exports in a less advantageous position compared with economies like Japan and the European Union, which have both struck deals for a 15% U.S. tariff. The Trump administration has yet to issue formal notices to enact the changes. The U.S. President’s threat targeting South Korea is his latest against key trading partners in recent days. Over the weekend, Mr. Trump warned Canada that if it concludes a trade deal with China, he would impose a 100% tariff on all goods coming across the border. Earlier in January, Mr. Trump also threatened to slap tariffs on multiple European nations until his purchase of Greenland is achieved. He has since backed off the threat. Will speed up voting to enact U.S. investment, says South KoreaSouth Korea’s ruling party said ?on Tuesday (January 27, 2026) it ?is ?ready to work with the opposition to speed up the passage of five ?bills now pending ?in parliament that would allow the ?enactment of ?investment in the United States. A spokesperson for ?the Democratic ?Party said any misunderstanding should be ?cleared up following U.S. ?President Donald Trump’s announcement that tariffs against South Korean goods will be raised to 25% ?from 15% due to ?delay by the legislature ?in Seoul.

Not normal to tolerate Pakistan’s continued use of terror as instrument of state policy: India



In a strongly-worded retort in the UNSC, India said it is not normal to tolerate Pakistan’s continued use of terrorism as an instrument of state policy, as New Delhi hit back at Islamabad’s envoy for advancing a “false and self-serving” account of Operation Sindoor. India’s Permanent Representative to the U.N., Ambassador Parvathaneni Harish, delivered a sharp response to comments made by Pakistan’s Ambassador to the U.N., Asim Iftikhar Ahmad.

Mr. Ahmad spoke about Operation Sindoor, Jammu and Kashmir and the Indus Waters Treaty in his remarks at the U.N. Security Council open debate on Monday (January 26, 2026) on ‘Reaffirming International Rule of Law: Pathways to Reinvigorating Peace, Justice, and Multilateralism’. Mr. Harish said Pakistan, an elected member of the Security Council, has a single-point agenda — to harm India and its people. With Mr. Ahmad telling the Council that Pakistan’s response to Operation Sindoor “established that there can be no ‘new normal’ based on coercion or impunity”, Delhi slammed Islamabad, with Mr. Harish asserting that terrorism can never be normalised as Pakistan wishes to do so.

“We have heard talk from the Representative of Pakistan about the new normal. Let me reiterate again that terrorism can never be normalised as Pakistan wishes to do. It is not normal to tolerate Pakistan’s continued use of terrorism as an instrument of state policy,” Mr. Harish said, adding that India will do whatever is required to protect and ensure the safety and security of its citizens. “This hallowed chamber cannot become a forum for Pakistan to legitimise terrorism,” Mr. Harish said. Mr. Harish said Pakistan’s envoy “advanced a false and self-serving account” of Operation Sindoor, launched by India in May last year, targeting terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in retaliation for the April 22 Pahalgam attack that killed 26 civilians.

“The facts on this matter are clear. Pakistan-sponsored

People don’t perceive U.N. as organisation that delivers on international peace, security: India



Amid ongoing geopolitical challenges, India said the United Nations is not perceived as an organisation that delivers on international peace, and discussions have moved on to “parallel plurilateral frameworks”.

“The multilateralism of universal membership, with the United Nations at its core, is under strain. The challenges facing this organisation go far beyond the budgetary realm. Paralysis and lack of effectiveness in tackling conflicts remain a significant shortcoming,” India’s Permanent Representative to the U.N. Ambassador Parvathaneni Harish said in United Nations remarks to the U.N. Security Council Open Debate on ‘Reaffirming International Rule of Law: Pathways to Reinvigorating Peace, Justice, and Multilateralism’. Mr. Harish said people around the world do not perceive the United Nations as an organisation that delivers on international peace and security. “Conversations and discussions have moved on to parallel plurilateral frameworks, some even involving private sector actors, to bring about outcomes on peace and security outside the United Nations framework,” he said. India’s statement comes against the backdrop of the continued failure of the UN and its most powerful organ — the Security Council — to prevent and resolve global geo-political conflicts and maintain international peace and security.

Amidst this, U.S. President Donald Trump has launched his ‘Board of Peace’ on Gaza, which is perceived as a rival to the U.N. Mr. Trump invited several global leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to join the Board of Peace that will work towards bringing lasting peace to Gaza and embark on a “bold new approach” to resolve “global conflict”. In a ceremony in Davos last week on the margins of the World Economic Forum, Mr. Trump formally ratified the Charter of the Board of Peace — establishing it as an official international organisation.

Mr. Trump will serve as the Board’s Chairman, and the countries that signed and joined the Charter of the Board of Peace are Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bulgaria, Hungary, Indonesia, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Mongolia, Morocco, Pakistan, Paraguay, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the UAE and Uzbekistan. Mr. Harish added that the application of the international rule of law calls for consistency, objectivity and predictability with no double standards. India said the international rule of law should not be weaponised to question state sovereignty and interfere in the internal affairs of states. “International law principles from the colonial era that have helped in self-determination and the emergence of new member states from colonial rule should not be weaponised to attack the unity and territorial integrity of states,” Mr. Harish said. “Contexts and situations are ever changing, and if multilateralism treats outcomes and solutions as immutable and cast in stone and unable to pragmatically adapt to change, it would be an impetus for alternate formats of engagement to emerge,” Mr. Harish said.

Mr. Harish underlined that India upholds the rule of law as a cornerstone of its national governance, enshrined in its Constitution and reinforced through the independence of its judiciary and initiatives that expand access to justice. “These deep roots of the rule of law in India at the national level inform and guide our commitment towards the rule of Law at the international level,” he said. At the Security Council, India asserted that the rule of law is “barren” without enforceability. “The focus must shift from arcane

terrorists killed 26 innocent civilians in a brutal attack in Pahalagam in April 2025. This august body itself called for holding the perpetrators, organisers, financiers and sponsors of this reprehensible act of terrorism accountable and brought to justice. That is exactly what we did,” Mr. Harish said. Mr. Harish’s reference was to the press statement issued by the Security Council in April last year. In the statement in which the 15-nation body had condemned in the strongest terms the terrorist attack in Pahalgam and had “underlined the need to hold perpetrators, organisers, financiers and sponsors of this reprehensible act of terrorism accountable and bring them to justice”, with the Council stressing that those responsible for these killings should be held accountable.

Mr. Harish underscored that India’s actions in Operation Sindoor were measured, non-escalatory, and responsible, and focused on dismantling the terrorist infrastructure and disabling terrorists. “Till May 9, Pakistan was threatening more attacks on India. But on May 10, the Pakistani military called our military directly and pleaded for a cessation to the fighting,” he said, adding that the destruction caused to multiple Pakistani airbases by the Indian operation, including images of destroyed runways and burnt-out hangars, is in the public domain. Hitting out strongly at Pakistan for raising the issue of Jammu and Kashmir, Mr. Harish said Pakistan has no locus standi to comment on matters that are internal to India. “The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir has been, is, and will always remain an integral and inalienable part of India,” he said. On the Indus Waters Treaty, Mr. Harish said India had entered into the agreement 65 years ago in good faith, in a spirit of goodwill and friendship. “Throughout these six and a half decades, Pakistan has violated the spirit of the Treaty by inflicting three wars and thousands of terror attacks on India. Thousands of Indian lives have been lost in Pakistan-sponsored terror attacks,” he said. In the wake of the Pahalgam terror attack, Mr. Harish said India was “compelled to finally announce that the Treaty will be held in abeyance until Pakistan, a global epicentre of terror, credibly and irrevocably ends its support for cross-border and all other forms of terrorism.” Further, India asserted that Pakistan is well advised to introspect about the rule of law. “It could start by asking itself how it has let its armed forces engineer a constitutional coup through the 27th amendment and giving life-time immunity to its Chief of Defence Forces,” a reference to the 27th Constitutional Amendment passed in November last year under Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif that gives Pakistan’s Field Marshal Asim Munir lifelong immunity from any legal prosecution.

constructs to pragmatic solutions and outcomes that positively impact the daily lives of our citizens,” Mr. Harish said. He said the world is changing and transforming at a rapid pace across different domains. The legal and institutional framework governing the international rule of law must keep up with this rapidly transforming landscape. “Continuous review, updation and reinvigoration are imperative to avoid obsolescence,” he said. Emphasising that for multilateralism and international rule of law to remain effective and credible, India said global governance structures must evolve to reflect contemporary realities. “The current architecture of the United Nations, particularly the composition of the Security Council, reflects a geopolitical reality of a bygone era. In light of the profound global transformation of the last eight decades in power dynamics, demographics and the nature of global challenges, there is an urgent and compelling need to undertake comprehensive reform, including expansion in the permanent and non-permanent categories,” he said. He further said that such reform is essential to enhance the Council’s legitimacy and ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness in addressing the present-day challenges. Further, India said identifying and building on synergies among the principal organs of the U.N. would help in advancing the rule of law. “This could result in greater alignment between mandates, avoiding duplication, leading to enhanced impact. Process-oriented reforms are instrumental for achieving these ends. Predictable and adequate resource provision, capacity-building and technical assistance tailored to local contexts are key elements of these reforms.”

Singapore adds India’s Manipal Academy to medical colleges for taking in doctors

Singapore: Aspiring doctors in Singapore can study in another eight overseas institutions, including Manipal Academy of Higher Education in India, as the city-state will recognise degrees from these universities to meet growing demand from the ageing population.

The newly approved schools will help Singapore better meet the growing demand for doctors amid an ageing population, the Ministry of Health (MOH) and Singapore Medical Council (SMC) said in a joint statement on Tuesday. The latest addition of the eight universities brings the total number of recognised overseas medical schools in Singapore from 112 to 120 as of February 1, 2026. The Ministry said it has accepted SMC’s recommendation to add eight medical schools to the Second Schedule of the Medical Registration Act 1997. Besides Manipal, the other universities added to the medical college lists are: Adelaide University in Australia, University of Galway in Ireland, Universiti Sains Malaysia in Malaysia, The Aga Khan University Medical College in Pakistan, Tsinghua University in China, University of Exeter in Britain and City St George’s, University of London in Britain. From 2026, students who wish to pursue a medical degree can apply to these overseas schools, said the statement. “SMC regularly reviews the list of registrable medical qualifications to ensure that foreign-trained medical doctors who apply to practise in Singapore have received training that is comparable with schools in Singapore,” the statement said. It added that many factors are taken into consideration, including the international rankings of the schools, ensuring the language of instruction of the schools is in English, and the performance of doctors from these universities. “The additions (institutions) will allow Singapore to better meet the growing demand for doctors as our population ages, even as we have increased the annual local medical school intake from around 440 students in 2014, to 555 in 2025,” the statement said.

How Venezuela’s oil collapse is plunging Cuba into energy and food crisis



Among the nearly 100 people who died during the U.S. military incursion in Venezuela that led to the abduction of President Nicolas Maduro, there were 32 Cubans who were part of Mr. Maduro’s security detail. Their presence reflects the intricate relations shared between Havana and Caracas.Ever since Venezuela has been ruled by the Bolivarians, a movement led by former President Hugo Chavez, it has forged close ties with Cuba. Caracas has served as Cuba’s main source of imported oil under preferential terms in the “oil-for-doctors” scheme — Venezuela supplying subsidised crude in exchange for medical services, technology, and military assistance.

This was a major salve for a country starved of power supplies because of years of an economic embargo, called a blockade by the Cubans, imposed by the U.S. The subsidised Venezuelan oil allowed Cuba’s oil-dependent power system to function and spared it a huge expense, allowing it to conserve hard currency.But the recent U.S. seizures of Venezuela-linked oil tankers has cut off deliveries to Cuba almost entirely since December 2025. Combined with intensified pressure on the island, this triggered a chain reaction of shortages — prolonged power cuts, fuel shortages, transportation, food supply disruptions.

Cuba’s oil dependency is structural. Electricity generation data shows that oil accounts for 83% of total power generation, with generation from oil rising steadily from about 12,700 GWh in 2000 to 16,500 GWh in 2023.This dependence extends beyond power. Oil products make up 56% of Cuba’s total energy consumption, feeding industry, transport, agriculture, and households. Industrial oil consumption alone exceeded 65,000 terajoules in 2022, while transport and residential use together accounted for over 30,000 terajoules that year.The energy crunch does not just dim the lights; it disrupts Cuba’s food supply chains. The coun-

try imports roughly 80% of its food, and prolonged black-outs interrupt refrigeration that are vital for preserving perishables.In 2022, Venezuela supplied 75% of Cuba’s crude oil imports, with Russia accounting for the remaining 25%. But by 2023, Cuba began diversifying: Venezuela’s share dropped to 58%, Mexico emerged as a significant supplier at 31%, and Russia’s share fell to 11%.

By 2025, Venezuela still supplied a significant share of Cuba’s imported oil, but quantities had shrunk drastically compared with earlier decades. Reuters reporting shows that Venezuela was sending roughly 26,500 barrels per day to Cuba in 2025, covering about one-third of the island’s daily needs — down sharply from historical highs. Mexico supplied about 5,000 bpd, while Russia and other allies contributed only limited amounts. Moreover, Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum has explicitly said that the country is sending the same volumes it historically has, not scaling up output to meet Cuba’s escalating needs.The dire situation Cuba faces is largely a result of the long-running U.S. embargo, which began in 1962 following the Cuban Revolution and the nationalisation of industries, including foreign-owned ones. The embargo was tightened significantly in the 1990s: the Torricelli Act (1992) barred foreign subsidiaries of U.S. companies from trading with Cuba and introduced shipping restrictions, while the Helms-Burton Act (1996) codified sanctions into federal law, stripping the President of authority to unilaterally lift them.The embargo has also resulted in Cuba’s financial exclusion from world trade, since all dollar transactions must clear through American banks. The U.S. redesignation of Cuba as a “State Sponsor of Terrorism” in 2021 deepened this isolation; Cuban authorities have documented over 1,000 instances of foreign banks refusing services between 2021 and 2024.

UNCTAD data shows Cuba sliding from modest trade surpluses in the mid-2000s to deep and persistent deficits. By 2022, the trade deficit stood at \$4.4 billion; it further deteriorated to \$13.9 billion in 2023, the worst figure in the series.With no purchasing power and restricted access to credit markets, Cuba cannot simply buy oil on commercial terms. The collapse of the Venezuelan arrangement following the U.S. invasion has exacerbated Cuba’s foreign exchange crisis and severely crippled its economy.The data for the charts were sourced from the International Energy Agency, U.S. Energy Information Assessment, UN Trade and Development, World Food programme and American Economic Association.

How will U.S. exit affect solar alliance? | Explained



GNS News Agency, Feb 17, the U.S. government announced that it would withdraw from 66 international organisations. The reason given was that these bodies no longer served American interests. Among them were major climate platforms, including the International Solar Alliance (ISA), an organisation headquartered in India and jointly led by India and France.

What is the ISA?

The ISA was set up in 2015 to make solar power cheaper and easier to adopt, especially in developing countries. While it doesn’t build solar plants itself, it helps countries access finance, reduce risk for investors, and speed up solar adoption. Today, the Alliance has over 120 member countries and works across Africa, Asia, and island nations. The U.S. joined fairly late, in 2021. Over three years, it has contributed around \$2.1 million.

How will U.S. exit affect the ISA?

The U.S. exit will not really harm the alliance financially. U.S. contribution made up only about 1% of the Alliance’s total funds. Indian officials have already said that the ISA’s day-to-day work will continue, and that ongoing programmes will not be shut down. Moreover, training and capacity-building efforts are still in place.But economics is not only about budgets, it’s also about confidence. And that’s where the ripple effects begin.

What about India’s solar industry?

As India does not depend on the U.S. for solar panels or key equipment, solar power will not become more expensive. In fact, India now makes a large share of solar components on its own. As of late 2025, India’s solar module manufacturing capacity was close to 144 gigawatts. Solar cell manufacturing was around 25 gigawatts and is growing fast, with Indian companies investing across the entire supply chain.Moreover, China is by far the largest producer of high-efficiency mass market solar modules and cells, with 70% of the global cell producing capacity. In fact, India imported about \$1.7 billion worth of Photovoltaic (PV) modules from China in FY25, as per a Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) report in Parliament.This makes it clear that the recent U.S. decision does not push up project costs in India. It does not affect electricity tariffs either. For consumers, nothing changes.

Will investments slow down?

Again, unlikely. Most solar projects in India are driven by domestic demand. They are backed by long-term contracts with state utilities and central agencies. Investors look at India’s power demand, policy stability, and growth potential.The U.S. is not the main source of funding for Indian solar projects. Indian banks, global funds, and development institutions continue to invest based on India’s market fundamentals. So the pipeline of projects inside India remains intact. Even with respect to jobs, India is relatively well-protected. Solar jobs in India come mainly from manufacturing, installation, and operations within the country. Since India is rapidly building a strong local manufacturing capacity, these jobs are not affected by U.S. climate policy. There is even a possible upside. As the U.S. becomes more inward-looking and slows renewable approvals at home, it may still need clean energy equipment. With the U.S. having supply tensions with China and Mexico, Indian manufacturers could find openings, either through exports or by setting up units that meet U.S. standards. A lot however, hinges on the ongoing talks for a bilateral trade agreement

between New Delhi and Washington.

Where is the real economic risk?

Mostly outside India. The ISA works extensively in Africa and poorer developing countries. These regions depend heavily on cheap loans and international cooperation to build solar projects. When a large economy like the U.S. steps back from climate engagement, lenders can turn cautious; projects can slow down; and decisions can take longer. If solar growth slows in these regions, Indian companies looking to expand abroad may feel the impact.The ISA is also one of India’s key tools for climate leadership and diplomacy in the Global South. It helps India build influence, open markets, and support Indian companies overseas. While the U.S. exit removes one influential partner and some technical expertise, it does not change who leads the alliance. India still does. That leadership now comes with more responsibility.

What next?

Solar power in India does not become costlier, domestic projects are not threatened, and jobs inside India remain secure. The real challenge then is a more divided global climate landscape, where cooperation is harder and emerging markets need to work harder to attract finance. For India’s solar industry, this is not a shock. It is a stress test. And compared with where it stood a few years ago, India appears to be better prepared to handle it.

Rot in the ranks

Speaking at the annual conference of IPS officers recently, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah made the startling revelation that the State’s police personnel were themselves found to be involved in 88 criminal cases last year, and booked. He termed the state of affairs “shameful”. His reprimand came after a series of high-profile cases made headlines, including an ATM cash van heist in Bengaluru in which a head constable turned out to be the kingpin, and several violations and alleged corruption in Bengaluru’s Central Prison. Over the past year, the Maharashtra Police have busted narcotics manufacturing units in Mysuru and Bengaluru, seizing material worth several crores. This shows the failure of the Karnataka Police to arrest a single synthetic drug producer throughout the year.

The establishment has dealt with these embarrassing events by suspending police personnel. Nearly 150 of them were suspended in Bengaluru alone in 2025 — including the City Police Commissioner in connection with the RCB stampede case — for corruption, criminal offences, or dereliction of duty.However, the elephant in the room is the allegedly pervasive ‘cash for postings’ problem, where police postings are bought with money. Police sources say that the cost of securing postings has become “astronomical,” worsening corruption. Given this alleged state of affairs, the leadership is either helpless or has lost the moral authority to pull up wrongdoers, they say. Suspensions have become an eyewash, as most officers are back in action after a short hiatus. None of them has faced severe consequences.

Opposition leaders, particularly Union Minister and JD(S) leader H.D. Kumaraswamy, have repeatedly alleged that there is a ‘transfer dhandhe’, or transfer business, being run by the State government. They allege that the Congress’s five guarantee schemes eat into a major chunk of the State’s funds. As a result, other developmental works that earlier kept the “corruption economy” going have taken a hit, with cash-for-postings now occupying their place.On December 17, 2025, there was a three-hour debate on Home Department issues during the winter session of the Legislative Assembly. Several leaders, including the Leader of the Opposition, R. Ashok, hinted that cash-for-postings were driving police corruption. Basanagouda Patil Yatnal, an MLA suspended from the BJP, said that the police department could be reformed only if all the MLAs stop taking money from the police.

How is China framing its Antarctic ambitions? | Explained



The story so far: On December 23, 2025, media houses reported that China was proposing a draft legislation titled the ‘Antarctic Activities and Environmental Protection Law’. The draft has been submitted for first reading to the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress. The proposed legislation seeks to regulate China’s activities in Antarctica.

What does the draft legislation say?

The draft legislation consists of seven chapters and 57 articles. It seeks to establish a comprehensive domestic legal framework governing all Chinese-related activities in Antarctica. It applies not only to Chinese citizens and organisations but also to foreign entities that organise Antarctic activities from within China or depart from Chinese ports. It also drafts rules aimed at regulating expeditions, scientific research, fisheries, tourism, and shipping. A central feature of the draft is its emphasis on peaceful use and environmental protection in line with the Antarctic Treaty System (a collection of international agreements which govern the southern continent). The draft prohibits military activities, and only allows its limited use if it is to support peaceful objectives. It does not permit combat operations, weapons testing, troop deployment, or strategic military activities. Mineral resource exploitation is banned except for scientific research. The draft also introduces environmental impact assessments, supervision mechanisms, and post-incident accountability. Governance challenges on Antarctic tourism, waste management, and marine pollution are also addressed.

Health impacts due to plastics worldwide may double by 2040: Lancet study

Adverse effects on health due to emissions from the world’s plastics system, including greenhouse gases, air-polluting particles and toxic chemicals released from production, could more than double by 2040, compared to levels in 2016, if current trends continue, according to a study.The study, published inThe Lancet Planetary Health journal, also highlighted that the global production of plastics may not peak until beyond 2100, worsening environmental and health burdens in an already overwhelmed system.

Plastic pollution and emissions released across its lifecycle are increasingly recognised for their potential impacts on human health, yet the overall scale of the impact is only beginning to be fully quantified, researchers from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and institutes in France, said.Quantifying health impacts throughout plastics’ lifecycles can inform global action against pollution, promoting sustainability across the environment, economy and health, they said.The team added that a non-disclosure of the chemical composition of plastics is “severely limiting” lifecycle assessments in informing effective policy.

The plastics lifecycle assessment study is the first global-scale one to estimate health impacts in terms of ‘disability-adjusted life-years’ related to greenhouse gases, air pollutants and chemicals released, the researchers said.Lifecycles of plastic products analysed include raw material extraction to polymer production to post-consumption waste collection, recycling technologies, dumpsites and open burning and environmental pollution.The model put forth in the study contributes a flexible framework that can be expanded to include new data and methods and improve precision in health impact estimates associated with plastics, their alternatives and substitutes -- the information can

World not ready for rise in extreme heat, scientists say

Nearly 3.8 billion people could face extreme heat by 2050 and while tropical countries will bear the brunt cooler regions will also need to adapt, scientists said Monday.Demand for cooling will “drastically” increase in giant countries like Brazil, Indonesia and Nigeria, where hundreds of millions of people lack air conditioning or other means of beating the heat.But even a moderate increase in hotter days could have a “severe impact” in nations not used to such conditions like Canada, Russia and Finland, said scientists from the University of Oxford.

In a new study, they looked at different global warming scenarios to project how often people in future might experience temperatures considered uncomfortably hot or cold.They found “that the population experiencing extreme heat conditions is projected to nearly double” by 2050 if global average temperatures rise 2C above preindustrial times.But most of the impact would be felt this decade as the world fast approaches the 1.5C mark, the study’s lead author Jesus Lizana told AFP."The key take away from this is that the need for adaptation to extreme heat is more urgent than previously known," said Lizana, an environmental scientist."New infrastructure, such as sustainable air conditioning or passive cooling, needs to be built out within the next few years to ensure people can cope with dangerous heat."Prolonged exposure to extreme heat can overwhelm the body’s natural cooling systems, causing symptoms ranging from dizziness and headaches to organ failure and death.

It is often called a silent killer because most heat deaths occur gradually as high temperatures and other environmental factors work together to undermine the body’s internal thermostat.Climate change is making heatwaves longer and stronger and access to cooling -- especially air conditioning -- will be vital in future.The study, published in the journal Nature Sustainability, projected that 3.79 billion people worldwide could be exposed to extreme heat by mid century.This would “drastically” increase energy demand for cooling in developing nations where the gravest health consequences would be felt. India, the Philippines and Bangladesh would be among biggest populations impacted.The most significant change in “cooling degree

What about China’s presence in the Antarctic?

In 1984, China conducted its first scientific expedition to Antarctica. Later it became a consultative party to the Antarctic Treaty in 1985. It has since then expanded its scientific and logistical footprint in the continent over 40 years. Currently, China operates five research stations in the Antarctic, namely the Great Wall Station, the Ongshan Station, the Taishan Station, the Kunlun Station, and the Qinqing Station. This well-established network of research stations in different parts of the Antarctic allows China to conduct year-long scientific research. It can conduct research across key climatic, glaciological, atmospheric, and astronomical zones. China also operates advanced polar icebreakers such as the Xuelong and Xuelong 2, strengthening its logistical capacity.

What are China’s Antarctic goals?

China’s official statements emphasise scientific research, climate studies, environmental protection, and international cooperation. Antarctic research supports China’s understanding of the global climate challenge, seal-level rise and polar-atmospheric interactions. This has implications for domestic environmental planning as well. Its ambitions are framed around science, governance, participation, and long-term strategic presence rather than territorial claims. At the governance level, China seeks to move from being a participant to a rule-shaping actor within the Antarctic Treaty System. Moreover, sustained polar operations contribute to advancement in ice-breaking, satellite navigation and extreme-environment engineering.

What does it mean for the Antarctic treaty?

China’s draft Antarctic law signals its move towards formalising and strengthening its Antarctic presence. It places Antarctic activities within a clear domestic legal and regulatory framework rather than relying only on policy guidelines. It also reflects a broader pattern among major consultative parties using national legislation to ensure better compliance with Antarctic Treaty obligations. China’s legislative initiative reinforces the need to monitor how major powers organise and regulate their Antarctic engagement, as domestic laws increasingly shape behaviour within a treaty-based governance system.



contribute towards a rapidly changing policy landscape, the authors said.The framework currently recommends a deep reduction in primary plastic (virgin plastic) production in leading a transition away from substances, along with assessments that account for plastics’ functions across sectors.A globally coordinated policy that addresses upstream effects through a full lifecycle approach is crucial to protecting human health, the researchers said.

"We found that emissions throughout plastics lifecycles contributed to human health burdens of global warming, air pollution, toxicity-related cancers, and non-communicable diseases, with greatest harms from primary plastics production and open burning," the authors wrote."Adverse health effects associated with the global plastics system more than doubled under P2O (plastics-to-ocean) BAU (business-as-usual) projections for 2016-40," they said.The authors say to effectively reduce plastic emissions and their impact on health, policymakers must better regulate and significantly reduce the production of new plastics for non-essential uses to effectively reduce plastic emissions and health impacts.



days” -- temperatures hot enough to require cooling, such as air conditioning or fans -- were projected in tropical or equatorial countries, particularly in Africa.Central African Republic, Nigeria, South Sudan, Laos and Brazil saw the biggest rise in dangerously hot temperatures."Put simply, the most disadvantaged people are the ones who will bare the brunt of this trend our study shows for ever hotter days," urban climate scientist and research co-author Radhika Khosla told AFP. But wealthier countries in traditionally cooler climates also “face a major a problem -- even if many do not realise it yet”, she added.Countries like Canada, Russia and Finland may experience steep drops in "heating degree days" -- temperatures low enough to require indoor heating -- under a 2C scenario.But even a moderate rise in hotter temperatures would be felt more acutely in countries not designed to withstand heat, the authors said.In these countries, homes and buildings are usually constructed to maximise sunshine and reduce ventilation, and public transport runs without air conditioning.

Some cold-climate nations may see a drop in heating bills, Lizana said, but over time these savings would likely be replaced by cooling costs, including in Europe where air conditioning is still rare."Wealthier countries cannot sit back and assume they will be OK -- in many cases they are dangerously underprepared for the heat that is coming over the next few years," he said.

Red flags in Govt: Can GenAI models track prompts of officials, leverage citizens’ data?



What happens when a government officer uploads an internal note to an AI chatbot for a quick summary? When a police department asks an AI assistant to optimise CCTVs across a city? Or when a policymaker uses a conversational model to draft an inter-ministerial brief? Can the AI system analyse such prompts at scale, identify the user, infer their role, draw patterns across queries and predict strategic intent?These questions are being debated in sections of the Union government, The Indian Express has learnt, amid growing concern about the rapid proliferation of generative AI (GenAI) platforms in India, especially those run by foreign firms, often bundled as free services with telecom subscriptions.

Senior officials say the core issue is not only data privacy but inference risk: whether these systems can derive sensitive insights indirectly from users’ behaviour, relationships, and search patterns.Two broad areas are under discussion. First, whether queries made by top functionaries — senior bureaucrats, policy advisers, scientists, corporate leaders and influential academics — could be mapped to identify priorities, timelines, or weaknesses.Second, whether anonymised mass usage data from millions of Indian users could help global firms.One issue being discussed, sources said, is whether to “protect” official systems from foreign AI services.“We don’t know what the level of tracking is on these services, and whether they are able to identify the significance of a user’s prompts to make inferences from it. For now, the foreign LLMs are most popular, and there can be more safety in running them directly on a computer rather than on a server. But, of course, the most secure way would be to use locally made LLMs which are currently being developed. Until we have that, we are keeping a close eye on these issues,” a senior government official said.

Another top official indicated that a debate is on within the government over this issue.The IT Ministry did not respond to a formal request for comment.Some of these anxieties have led to specific directions from at least one major government department to not use AI services on official workstations. In February, the Finance Ministry directed its employees to “strictly” avoid use of such tools “like ChatGPT and DeepSeek” in office computers and devices over concerns pertaining to confidentiality of official documents and data.“It has been determined that AI tools and AI apps (such

as ChatGPT, DeepSeek etc.) in the office computers and devices pose risks for confidentiality of Govt data and documents,” the memo by the ministry said.Some departments have already moved to limit exposure. In February, the Finance Ministry issued a directive prohibiting the use of GenAI platforms such as ChatGPT and DeepSeek on official workstations and devices, citing risks to “confidentiality of Government data and documents.”

Generative AI platforms can draw deeper inferences about users from their prompts because every input reveals intent, tone, preferences, and context in real time. Besides, some AI companies have signed distribution deals with telecom operators and their free subscription is usually linked to phone numbers.The concerns come at a time when India is funding the development of indigenous large language models (LLMs) under its Rs 10,370-crore India AI Mission. At least 12 LLMs and smaller domain-specific models are being developed with government support. One of these, led by Bengaluru-based start-up Sarvam, is expected to roll out by year-end, targeting governance and public sector use cases.

The government has consistently urged the use of swadeshi digital tools instead of foreign platforms, a message that’s grown sharper amid strained trade ties with the United States over tariffs and H-1B visa caps. Globally dominant US-based platforms — ChatGPT, Gemini, WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, Gmail, X — shape much of India’s digital communication and information environment.Last month, in a meeting with top Secretaries, the Prime Minister is understood to have flagged the need for domestic digital platforms in communication and knowledge ecosystems, not just in payments and identity. IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw publicly shifted to Zoho’s Indian office suite, and Home Minister Amit Shah announced that his official email would move to Zoho Mail.

Over the last six months, at least three GenAI companies have rolled out free access to user groups in India. OpenAI’s basic ChatGPT Go plan will be made available free to consumers in India for a year while Alphabet’s Gemini Pro will be offered to each of Reliance Jio’s over 500 million subscribers for 18 months. Perplexity AI will offer its Pro version to Bharti Airtel’s 350 million users.There is some history to this. At the height of its sour relationship with X (then Twitter) in 2021, several government officials tried propping up Koo as an alternative. The app failed and shut down operations last year. After border clashes with China in 2020, India had banned several popular apps such as TikTok, citing national security concerns.Incidentally, a subcommittee formed by the IT ministry under the IndiaAI Mission submitted its report Wednesday on governance guidelines for AI companies, which among other things, recommended the creation of an India-specific risk assessment framework that reflects real-world evidence of harm. It also advised a “whole of government approach” where ministries, sectoral regulators, and other public bodies work together to develop and implement AI governance frameworks.

Asia shares mostly lower after sharp Wall Street losses on AI-related worries

Hong Kong: Asia shares were trading mostly lower Friday, tracking sharp Wall Street losses on a sell-off of technology-related stocks that investors fear could lose out from artificial intelligence disruptions. U.S. futures were mostly unchanged.Tokyo’s Nikkei 225 fell 0.8 per cent to 57,165.13 on Friday, after it passed the 58,000 mark for the first time early Thursday. SoftBank Group, which has a focus on AI, fell 6.8 per cent even as the company reported a quarterly profit Thursday building on its investments in OpenAI, among other gains.

South Korea’s Kospi rose 0.4 per cent to 5,545.49, after crossing 5,500 on Thursday, driven by gains in technology-related stocks. Samsung Electronics, the Kospi’s largest listed company, was up 1.2 per cent.Hong Kong’s Hang Seng fell 1.8 per cent to 26,547.97. The Shanghai Composite index was down 0.7 per cent to 4,105.04.In Australia, the S&P/ASX 200 traded 1.4 per cent lower at 8,919.30.

On Thursday, Wall Street saw sharp losses as AI worries dampened sentiment. The S&P 500 fell for its second-worst day since Thanksgiving, dropping 1.6 per cent, or 108.71, to 6,832.76, but it’s still near an all-time high that was set last month. The Dow Jones Industrial Average was down 1.3 per cent, or 669.42, to 49,451.98. The Nasdaq composite lost 2 per cent, or 469.32, to 22,597.15.American technology giant Cisco Systems sank 12.3 per cent even though it reported better-than-expected quarterly results, as investors were concerned about its ongoing profitability.

Shares of technology company AppLovin plunged 19.7 per cent despite better-than-expected quarterly profits as worries over AI undercutting its business weighed on its stock price.Fears of AI disruptions across industries in recent days have hit investor confidence in companies, especially in software stocks. Some analysts say uncertainties surrounding the AI disruption risk are likely to go on for a while. Many remained concerned about whether mas-



sive AI investments by companies will eventually pay off.

But other analysts are more optimistic. Economists at Capital Economics, for example, argue that they still believe in the AI rally, and that this year will be a “good year” for the S&P 500, building on the technology-led gains.“Our sense remains that a sustained reversal of tech outperformance would require a big slide in tech itself,” Thomas Mathews, head of markets for Asia Pacific at Capital Economics wrote in a recent note. “We think tech will fare very well.” For other US stocks, McDonald’s was up 2.7 per cent following stronger-than-expected profits. Walmart gained 3.8 per cent.Investors and economists are also paying close attention to the US inflation data set to be released Friday, which could impact on the Federal Reserve’s interest rate moves. Some economists expect the likelihood of another rate cut is low for the next few months.In other dealings early Friday, US benchmark crude oil lost 0.1 per cent to USD 62.77 a barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, fell less than 0.1 per cent to US\$ 67.49 per barrel.Gold and silver prices gained on Friday. The price of gold — which earlier fell back below US\$ 5,000 per ounce — was up nearly 1 per cent to US\$ 4,995.80. The price of silver rose 1.4 per cent to US\$ 76.72 per ounce.

Preliminary report on Learjet 45 accident likely ‘very soon’, says Civil Aviation Minister Naidu

“Very soon we will have the preliminary report of the investigation,” Naidu said. On January 30, the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) had said that the investigation into the fatal crash in Baramati was “progressing expeditiously” and that the ill-fated aircraft’s black box—cockpit voice recorder and flight data recorder—had been recovered. The aircraft involved in the accident was a 15-year-old Learjet 45 bearing registration VT-SSK, operated by charter operator VSR Ventures. It took off from Mumbai’s Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport at around 8:10 am and disappeared from the radar at about 8:45 am, as per the flight tracking data. According to preliminary information provided by the government, the plane had crashed at around 8:44 am. The flight path shows the aircraft making a loop to line up with the runway as it prepared to land at the Baramati airport, before crashing close to the runway. Along with Pawar, there were four others on board the aircraft—Pawar’s personal security officer, one flight attendant, and two pilots.

Earlier this week, Ajit Pawar’s nephew Nationalist Congress Party (SP) MLA Rohit Pawar alleged the possibility of a conspiracy and sabotage in the January 28 plane crash, and demanded that that an independent international

agency such as the US National Transportation Safety Board, France’s Bureau of Enquiry and Analysis for Civil Aviation Safety, or the UK’s Air Accidents Investigation Branch be asked to investigate the crash. As per India’s aircraft investigation rules, aircraft accidents and serious incidents are probed by the AAIB.

Rohit Pawar also levelled allegations of negligence, regulatory failures, and operational and crew irregularities against Delhi-based VSR Ventures. A special audit of VSR Ventures is already under way by a six-member team appointed by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). The DGCA is also undertaking audits of all non-scheduled aircraft operators in the country in two phases in the wake of the January 28 crash.According to guidelines from the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), investigators should release a preliminary report within 30 days of an air accident, although Indian aviation experts say that the country’s aircraft accident investigation rules have no such mandate and India is not bound to stick to the 30-day timeline for the preliminary report. Nevertheless, the initial report is expected soon, given the significance of the accident, sources indicated.It is, however, not clear how detailed the report itself would be at this stage.

‘She didn’t have depression. She had a deficiency we never talk about’: Homeopathic doctor shares case of a 27-year-old, expert explains



Body: Homeopathic physician Sujit Telagamsetty recently shared a surprising case on Instagram that highlights how nutritional deficiencies can mimic mental health issues. He described a 27-year-old corporate professional who appeared “sharp, ambitious, and always smiling.” As his post says, outwardly, the patient seemed fine — no tremors, limp, or visible fatigue — but internally, she was struggling.“She said, ‘I think I’m depressed, doctor. I cry for no reason. I forget things. I feel like I’m disappearing,’” Telagamsetty wrote. Despite consulting psychiatrists, taking medications, and meditating, she continued to feel drained, as if “dragging a dead weight out of bed” each morning.

Observing that something didn’t add up, Telagamsetty conducted tests often skipped in routine examinations. The results revealed critically low Vitamin B12 (134 pg/mL), extremely low Vitamin D3 (7 ng/mL), and nearly absent magnesium. “Her brain wasn’t broken. Her biochemistry was,” he noted.

He recommended combining dietary changes, supplements, early-morning sun exposure, and strength training twice a week. Three months later, the patient reported, “Doctor... it’s like the fog is finally lifting,” showing dramatic improvement in mood, energy, and mental clarity.But can such deficiencies really mimic mental health symptoms? Or is it an exaggeration? If yes, then how? We reached out to Dr Aakash Shah, vice president, Technical at Neuberg Diagnostics, seeking answers.How can vitamin deficiencies mimic psychological symptomsDr Shah explains that Vitamin B12 and folate deficiencies interfere with the production of serotonin and dopamine, which can cause irritability,

forgetfulness, and emotional emptiness. “When these essential nutrients are low, the brain literally cannot synthesise the chemicals required to regulate mood and cognitive function. Patients often feel sad, anxious, or emotionally numb, even though nothing in their external environment has changed.”

Vitamin D deficiency, which is very common in people who spend most of their time indoors, can also lead to a similar drop in mood and may even mimic seasonal depression. “Many individuals are misdiagnosed because these biochemical issues aren’t routinely checked,” he tells indianexpress.com.deficiency “It is important to have your nutrient levels checked first before concluding that it is burn-out or anxiety if you have been feeling strange lately,” says the expert Not just Vitamin B12 and Vitamin D, but iron deficiency can also have similar effects. “A lack of iron doesn’t just cause weakness; it can also impair cognitive function. People feel lethargic, foggy, and disconnected, no matter how much sleep they get. These symptoms are often mistaken for burnout, depression, or stress-related fatigue.”Dr Shah emphasises that mislabeling these conditions as purely psychological can delay proper treatment. “Checking nutrient levels is crucial before concluding a mental health issue. Sometimes the solution isn’t therapy or medication — it’s replenishing what the body has been missing all along.”

What to do next“This is where a wellness genomic test comes in handy. It helps pinpoint whether your body has difficulty absorbing certain vitamins and minerals. Once you know that, you can optimise your diet and supplement intake to regain energy, mental clarity, and emotional balance.”According to Dr Shah, combining clinical insight with lifestyle adjustments can create profound improvements. “Simple steps such as correcting B12 and folate levels, getting adequate sun exposure for vitamin D, and addressing magnesium or iron deficiencies can transform someone who feels chronically drained into a person who feels alert, motivated, and emotionally stable,” he says. Telagamsetty’s case, he notes, is not unique. “Many women, in particular, are mischaracterised as anxious, emotional, or even lazy, when their struggles are actually rooted in nutrient deficiencies. Recognising these biological factors is essential to preventing misdiagnosis and unnecessary emotional distress.”Lastly, Dr Shah stresses the importance of a holistic approach. “Before attributing fatigue, brain fog, or mood changes solely to mental health conditions, it’s vital to consider biochemical and nutritional status. Sometimes, the fog isn’t in the mind — it’s in the body.”

‘Main 80 kg, tu ek dum patla’: How Harssh Limbachiya’s reassurance helped Bharti Singh feel secure in love



In a dating culture often characterised by ambiguity, unconditional love seems nearly impossible. However, comedian Bharti Singh’s reflection on her relationship cuts through the noise. On Raj Shamani’s podcast, she shared, “Usne mujhse pyaar kiya... mai jaise thi koi nahi pyaar karta. Mumbai mein ladke date karte hain, chhor dete hain phir, theater mein puppiyan karte hain... phir chhor dete hain, toh aisa kuch nahi tha. Usne seedha mujhe kaha mai aapko bahut pasand karta hun, mujhse aapse shaadi karni hai. Mujhe aisa laga ki tera mera koi match nahi, tu ek dum patla, aur mai ek dum 80 kg ki. Kehta ye (shakal) aaj hai, kal nahi, par pyaar humesha rahega. Uske alwa mujhe kisi se pyaar nahi ho sakti, mai shayad uske bina jee nahi sakti, apne aapko soch bhi nahi karti.” (“He loved me... the way I was—something I felt no one else would ever do. In Mumbai, men date, then leave; they kiss in theatres and then leave—this was nothing like that. He told me directly, ‘I really like you, and I want to marry you.’ I felt like we didn’t match at all—you were so thin, and I was 80 kilos. He would say, ‘This face is for today, not forever, but love will always remain.’ Other than him, I don’t think I could ever love anyone else. I feel like I wouldn’t be able to live without him; I can’t even imagine myself without him.”)“At its core, Singh’s experience speaks to something many people crave but rarely articulate: emotional safety rooted in acceptance—especially around body image, vulnerability, and long-term intent,” explains Arpita Kohli, Psychologist & Counsellor at PSRI Hospital.

Why reassurance is important in relationshipsKohli adds that reassurance and acceptance form the emotional bedrock of secure romantic relationships. “When a partner feels accepted without conditions—without pressure to look, behave, or perform a certain way—it significantly reduces anxiety and self-doubt. This reassurance creates emotional safety, which allows people to be open rather than guarded.”Body image, she notes, often silently influences how lovable or worthy a person feels. In Singh’s words—‘mai jaise thi koi nahi pyaar karta’—that vulnerability is clear. Consistent acceptance from a partner can help dismantle these deeply internalised fears.“Over time,” Kohli adds, “this safety strengthens intimacy, communication, and mutual

respect, making the relationship more resilient.”

Singh describes feeling loved in a way she hadn’t experienced before—chosen fully, not conditionally. Kohli argues that such acceptance plays a crucial role in long-term commitment.“Unconditional acceptance reassures individuals that love is not fragile or transactional,” she says. “It tells them that mistakes, changes, or vulnerabilities won’t threaten the bond.”This emotional certainty builds trust. When affection doesn’t feel dependent on appearance, success, or perfection, partners feel emotionally anchored rather than anxious. “Commitment then becomes a choice rooted in security, not fear of abandonment,” Kohli explains.Singh’s admission—‘mai shayad uske bina jee nahi sakti’—is raw and honest, but it raises an important psychological question: when does deep love tip into emotional dependence?“The distinction lies in whether the relationship enhances one’s sense of self or replaces it,” Kohli clarifies. “Healthy bonding allows closeness while preserving individuality, personal goals, and emotional autonomy.”Feeling unable to imagine life without a partner isn’t inherently unhealthy, she adds—if it comes from love and choice, not fear or loss of identity. “A relationship should be a source of strength, not the sole source of meaning.”Kohli concludes that secure relationships are built when reassurance, acceptance, and honesty coexist. “When people feel emotionally safe, they don’t just fall in love; they stay grounded in it.”

Disha Madan shares her well-kept postpartum diet secrets: ‘A lot of ghee, nice salty food, menthe dosa...’

The postpartum period is an exciting yet daunting experience for new mothers. Choosing the right diet can help promote healing and maintain energy during this time. For South Indian actor Disha Madan, postpartum was an exciting phase of life, one she genuinely looked forward to, thanks to the delicious food she got to eat. In a recent conversation, she spilt the beans on everything she ate after giving birth.“My mom was really strict on my diet. I was like, ‘I want to have the babies really quick, but I wanted to come back to shape. So you do everything that you do, I will follow you like a very good student.’ I had a great balanced diet for postpartum, a lot of pepper rasam, and sabaki soppu. These are the things that I used to eat,” she told Curly Tales, adding, “A lot of ghee, nice salty food, menthe dosa. It’s very yummy. On a general day-to-day basis, you would not eat so much because it is very heating for the body, but I enjoyed my postpartum diet.”Decoding her dietAccording to Dr Anjana Singh, director & HOD, obstetrics and gynaecology, Fortis Hospital, Noida, a well-balanced post-natal diet with extra 500 calories, i.e. 1800 to 2200 kcal per day — rich in proteins, vitamins, calcium and fluids, low-fat

dairy products, veggies, fruits and high-fibre carbohydrates, and galactagogues (agents improving breast milk) is ideal.”

Rasam is rich in thiamin, folic acid, vitamin A, vitamin C, and niacin, along with minerals such as potassium, iron, calcium, zinc, selenium, copper, and magnesium. So it’s not just a treat to your taste buds but should also be included in your diet for balanced nutrients, she said, adding that fenugreek seeds are an excellent herbal galactagogue or agent that helps improve milk supply in lactating women.The main focus after delivery, whether it is normal or caesarean, is for the mother to recover properly and subsequently pay attention to their breastfeeding needs, added Dr Singh.Disha Madan shares her postpartum secrets Exercise and healthy lifestyle choices help get the most out of your diet. (Source: Instagram,/@disha.madan)Bhakti Kapoor, a nutritionist, wellness consultant, and founder of Healthy High in Mumbai, added that ghee promotes metabolism, reduces cravings, and supports good digestion. Ghee, rich in omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids, boosts metabolism, facilitating fat breakdown and aiding fat reduction. Ghee’s unique composition allows efficient conversion to energy, supporting weight-loss efforts

When Shoaib Malik made MS Dhoni wait for a photoshoot; and why Sehwa and Uthappa were chosen for a tie-breaking bowl-out



GNS News Agency, Feb 17

Relations between India and Pakistan were not as strained as it is today, social media warfare didn't exist, fans from either side were largely cordial (though they remain incident-free in the stands even now). In those mellow times, players shook hands and exchanged pleasantries. Imagine the outrage today if a Pakistan captain made his Indian counterpart wait. MS Dhoni, new to his job as India captain, strode to the Nelson Mandela Square in Sandton, Johannesburg, his silky locks still the rage. He was making his way for the official photoshoot the day before the 2007 World Twenty20 final against Shoaib Malik-captained Pakistan. Photographers were ready, the gleaming trophy for the inaugural World Twenty20 – the name of the tournament before it was rechristened in 2018 – was placed in position by officials and one captain had reached the square on time.

Murmurs began: Was Malik doing a Ganguly on Dhoni? Minutes ticked by, but it seemed like an hour. Dhoni made small talk. Malik not keeping his appointment didn't seem to get under his skin. This was before the Captain Cool moniker stuck. Malik wasn't playing mind games. He had received a phone call he had to take. General Pervez Musharraf, the Pakistan president, wanted to wish his captain a day before the final. Once the president was done with the call, Malik was at the square in a jiffy. Dhoni and Malik beamed as they held the trophy between them with the towering statue of Madiba behind them.

In a little over 24 hours, Joginder Sharma, a surprise pick by Dhoni to bowl the last over, had only 13 runs to

defend. But Jogi wasn't entirely a left field choice. In the semifinal against Australia in Durban, Dhoni had thrown him into the deep-end. With a cushion of 22 runs, the military medium pacer scalped two Aussie batsmen to bowl India to a win. Two days later, when Misbah scooped to fine leg, those sitting high up in the second row of the press box, had to stand up and lean forward; first to see if there was a fielder in place and then to watch Sreesanth emerge from what seemed like nowhere to complete the famous catch. The Group game between the two arch-rivals earlier in the tournament at Kingsmead in Durban was a thriller too with India winning via a bowl-out which involved bowlers aiming at exposed stumps minus the batsman in a pre-Super Over era. Virender Sehwa, Harbhajan Singh and Robin Uthappa hit the stumps for India, while Yasir Arafat, Umar Gul and Shahid Afridi missed for Pakistan.

Malik was surprisingly candid during his post-match comments when he said the team realized a bowl-out would decide the winner only when the match was tied. Safe to say, not all teams were well-versed with the rules. The Indian team support staff, despite flying to South Africa after a long tour of England, quickly brushed up on the rules. Bowling coach Venkatesh Prasad made the batsmen try their hand at the bowl out. Why were Sehwa and Uthappa picked for the first-ever bowl out? Because they hit the stumps often during practice

Dhoni had a funny take, however. "Winning a cricket match 3-0, it doesn't happen every time. I can tell my friends," he said with a glint in the eye. Though he finished on the winning side, Dhoni wasn't a fan of the bowl-out. Even before he earned his stripes as T20 captain, Dhoni was named ODI skipper in the midst of the World T20 when Rahul Dravid stepped down all of a sudden. The media scrum on tour cornered him after the day's practice session. Dhoni relented with a couple of quotes along the lines of 'I didn't have time to think about it'. But there was hope of filing a bigger copy on the new captain if Dhoni came for the scheduled media briefing. Gautam Gambhir made an appearance. The questions and answers were quick because the newsmaker of the day was elsewhere. If only one could look into the future: Gambhir top-scoring with 75 from just 54 balls in the final against Pakistan.

Suryakumar confirms Abhishek Sharma's availability, on shaking hands with Pakistan, says 'wait for 24 hours'

GNS News Agency, Feb 17

India captain Suryakumar Yadav all but confirmed that opener Abhishek Sharma, who missed the previous fixture against Namibia in New Delhi, will take the field against Pakistan at Colombo on Sunday. And soon after the captain gave the confirmation, the opener padded up and had a long net session on the practice strips. As far as shaking hands with Pakistan players, Suryakumar refused to break the suspense, saying: "You will see in 24 hours."

Although India have won both their matches so far, their batting has been scratchy with Abhishek's absence clearly showing against Namibia. While he was out without opening the scoring against the USA, Abhishek's firepower at the top will be much-needed for India going into the match against Pakistan. Earlier, Pakistan captain Salman Agha had also wished the Indian opener played on Sunday. "If they (Pakistan want) we will play him," Suryakumar said, keeping his retort short. With regards to the handshakes, too he kept it simple: "Wait for 24 hours. Eat well, sleep well, we will see tomorrow," he said. Earlier, Agha had also spoke on the same lines when asked if his team would respond if India chose to shake hands. "We will see it tomorrow."

Speaking on the highly-anticipated fixture, Suryakumar said there will be pressure, which the team can't run away from. "Whatever game you play, there is pressure. When you play Pakistan, it is about the occasion. Whatever you say, we don't play them often, so when we do, it becomes an occasion. We will try to keep it simple and put our best



foot forward," Suryakumar said. As expected, there were multiple questions regarding how the Indian batsmen will face Usman Tariq, the spinner with a unique action. "During exams, there will be some questions that will be out of the syllabus. But that doesn't mean we skip that. Usman is unique and we will not surrender to him. We have been preparing for him," Suryakumar said. Although India beat Pakistan in all three matches of the Asia Cup in September, since then, their opponents for Sunday have grown from strength to strength. Given the spin-friendly conditions expected in Colombo, they start on an equal-footing to India. "They have been playing some good cricket. I watched their last two matches, but not much before that. I've been hearing that they have been playing well. At the same time, we have been playing well also, we will stick to our preparations," Suryakumar said.

'Someone who lost to the world No. 500': After Davis Cup loss to India, bitter feud erupts in Dutch tennis



GNS News Agency, Feb 17

The 3-2 win over the Netherlands in the Davis Cup Qualifiers may have been one of the greatest moments for India in their tennis history but for the Dutch, it seems to have exposed some fissures between the players themselves. The Netherlands had travelled to India without their top two players Tallon Griekspoor and Botic Van de Zandschulp. Griekspoor had been vocally critical about the Royal Dutch Lawn Tennis Association (KNLTB) and had refused to join the Netherlands team for the tie.

Jesper De Jong, who led the team in the absence of Griekspoor and Van de Zandschulp and lost the decisive singles tie to Dhakshineswar Suresh, said on the sidelines of the ongoing Rotterdam 500 event that Griekspoor had "embarrassed" the country. "You read that we played with a weakened team. I felt it was disrespectful. You shouldn't embarrass your country," he said. "I don't speak to Tallon anyway. If someone treats his teammates like that, I don't need to give them a hug."

De Jong said that while things need to improve, it wasn't so bad that Griekspoor needed to refuse to play in the tie. "Does he stand for Dutch tennis? I think I was there, and I was in the Netherlands with the others who were there for Dutch tennis. I'm certainly not pro-KNLTB; I also see things that are going wrong and need to be improved. But

we were in the Davis Cup final just over a year ago, so are things that bad then? You shouldn't overstate it," he said. Griekspoor didn't mince his words while responding to De Jong. "He says I'm disrespecting the country, which is a bit rich coming from someone who lost to the world No. 500," he is quoted as saying by Dutch website Nos. Suresh had been ranked 465 in the world at the time that he beat De Jong. "I'm not going to waste time and energy on people who are of no use to me, and that includes him."

England to bowl first against Scotland in Group C T20 World Cup 2026 clash

GNS News Agency, Feb 17

Kolkata: England won the toss and elected to bowl against Scotland in the Group C game of the T20 World Cup 2026 here at the Eden Gardens on Saturday. Both the teams have named an unchanged playing eleven for the match.

England captain Harry Brook said, "We are going to have a bowl. We fancy chasing over here, as it's a quick outfield and it's also a pretty good wicket. I am not a curator, but it looks like a decent wicket. So, hopefully we can restrict them to as few as possible and then chase it down. On announcing the playing XI early, Brook said, "We just want to give the team a bit more clarity. I want them to come prepared for the game, knowing the team a day before. I think we were a little bit too careful with the bat. We should have been a bit more aggressive. Hopefully we do that today."

Praising the Scottish side, he said, "They are a really good side. They have played here before and we will certainly not take them lightly." Scotland captain Richie

Markram leads South Africa past New Zealand in T20 World Cup



GNS News Agency, Feb 17

Ahmedabad: Aiden Markram smashed a blazing half-century as South Africa steamrolled New Zealand by seven wickets to all but qualify for the Super 8s of the men's T20 World Cup, here Saturday. Leading from the front in a highly anticipated Group D clash, Markram's commanding 86-run knock deflated the Kiwi attack and ensured South Africa completed the chase without fuss. New Zealand rode on a counter-attacking 74-run stand between Mark Chapman (48) and Daryl Mitchell (32) to post 175 for seven after being asked to bat.

The Proteas were in a real hurry as they chased down the 176-run target in 17.1 overs for their third consecutive victory that has taken them to the top of Group D. The contest lived up to its billing as one of the most interesting games at group stage as close to 55,000 fans filled the stadium to witness the action despite it being a non-India fixture. With six points from three games, South Africa will be favourites to move to the next stage. They play UAE next while New Zealand take on Canada in Chennai on Tuesday. Barring an upset, the Black Caps will be through too. Mathematically, UAE (2 points) stay in the hunt for Super 8s but it will be a near impossible task to make that happen. The Proteas were playing their third match at the venue and knew the conditions better and nothing worked for the Black Caps.

Markram set the tone early as he peppered the bound-

ary with eight fours and four sixes at a strike rate touching 200. Quinton de Kock (20 off 14) fell to Lockie Ferguson after helping the Proteas to a brisk start, and Ryan Rickelton (21 off 11), whose cameo kept the momentum intact, also lost his wicket after a start. The defining passage came during a 40-run burst between Markram and Rickelton that pushed South Africa past the 100-run mark inside eight overs. Even after Rickelton and Dewald Brevis (21) departed in quick succession, there was no panic in the chase. Markram seamlessly shifted gears, picking gaps at will and punishing anything short or overpitched. He brought up his half-century in just 28 balls and ensured the required rate never became a factor. David Miller (24 not out) provided the finishing touches as the duo calmly steered the side home with 17 balls to spare. Miller ended the game with a gigantic six over mid wicket off Ferguson. New Zealand began briskly

Earlier, Tim Seifert (13 off 9) welcomed Marco Jansen with a six, while Finn Allen took the aggressive route against Lungi Ngidi, launching him for a massive straight six and a four in the same over. The Black Caps surged to 33 before Jansen used steep bounce to have Seifert caught behind by Quinton de Kock. Jansen then tilted the balance by dismissing Rachin Ravindra (13), caught by David Miller, and soon accounted for the dangerous Allen (31 off 17), who miscued to skipper Aiden Markram. Left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj tightened the screws further by cleaning up the in-form Glenn Phillips (1), reducing New Zealand to 64 for four inside seven overs.

Though Ngidi (1/34) and Kagiso Rabada (0/27) extracted good purchase off the surface, they did not fully capitalise. Ngidi, in particular, strayed in line at times, allowing the batters to free their arms. With the innings threatening to unravel, Chapman and Mitchell rebuilt with composure and controlled aggression. Chapman struck six fours and two sixes in his 48 off 26 balls, keeping the scoreboard moving with calculated risks. Mitchell (32 off 24) provided stability and momentum, smashing a huge six off Markram when the South African captain introduced himself to break the stand.

India eye stability as Pakistan bank on spin in Colombo

GNS News Agency, Feb 17

Colombo: Amid the still-smouldering embers of an impasse that mixed cricket with politics like never before, India will need middle-order stability and a fit-again Abhishek Sharma firing to maintain domination over Pakistan when the two bitter rivals clash in the T20 World Cup's marquee fixture, here on Sunday. A temporary 'peace season' has dawned after Pakistan made a U-turn from its boycott stand and agreed to take the field against India at the Premadasa stadium here. It came after weeks of intense parleys that involved the International Cricket Council, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Practically, the whole of South Asia was turning the wheel to make this match happen, should the weather gods allow, because of its power to attract millions — fans and bank balance alike.

So, a train of events set off by the BCCI-instructed release of Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman from the roster of Kolkata Knight Riders, that so transformed into a cross-border crisis has come to halt, for now. On their part, cricketers from both the teams have also tried to temper down the accompanying swirl of hype, terming this match as just another game in the calendar. It's hard to fathom the precise nature of their thoughts in that regard, but certainly both sides do not want the result to go against them because of the frenzy of negativism it can kick up. For that, they will have to push the thoughts of a fan backlash behind and focus on the more controllable factors. Abhishek bats at nets for India, the worries start with Abhishek as he was forced to skip the match against Namibia with a stomach bug that needed hospitalisation. But on the bright side, the left-hander batted for a considerable time at nets on Saturday evening, signalling his recovery from the illness. "If you guys want, we will play Abhishek," skipper Suryakumar Yadav was in a mood to joke with the media contingent when the obvious query came in.

So, it's almost certain that the Punjab man will walk in for Sanju Samson to open with an on-song Ishan Kishan. The nature of the track here also might prompt the management to bring in left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav.

But the inclusion of Kuldeep will have to come at the expense of a batter and the unfortunate one missing out could be Rinku Singh. Bringing in Kuldeep is also a massively tantalising option because of his hold over Babar Azam and he also had fine figures of 4 for 30 in the Asia Cup final at Dubai — his last outing against the cross-border rivals. Middle-order stutter in the run-up to the World Cup, the India batting line-up resembled a bulldozer rolling down a slope, crushing everything in its route. But the two matches in the marquee event so far have revealed a mild concern — a propensity to lose wickets in a cluster. India slid to 77 for six against the USA at Mumbai, while the home side lost five for four against Namibia in the death overs, but its impact was masked by a 200-plus total and a large 93-run



victory at New Delhi. On both those occasions, India were propped up by skipper Suryakumar Yadav, Ishan Kishan and Hardik Pandya. But a collective effort is needed to win a long tournament like this, rather than repeatedly relying on individual brilliance. With four points in the kitty, the management would not be overly concerned about it, but they certainly would not want another show of profligacy because Pakistan have the capacity to exploit it. Keeping up with the hybrid model chalked out last year, Pakistan have been stationed in Colombo, and it has given them a better understanding of the pitch and conditions here. The pitch at the RPICS has been a speed-sucker and the 2009 champions have five capable spinners in their ranks — Usman Tariq, Saim Ayub, Abrar Ahmed, Shadab Khan and Mohammad Nawaz.

Tariq's side-arm stop and pause action has already become the talk of the town and battle with the versatile Indian batters would be an intriguing sub-plot of the showdown. "When you get an out of syllabus question, you try to solve it," the Indian skipper replied to a question from a Pakistani journalist. Pakistan's batters led by the irrepressible Sahibzada Farhan, who seemed to have gotten a grip over Jasprit Bumrah during last year's Asia Cup, Ayub, and all-rounder Faheem Ashraf can pack a punch on their day.

Without any disrespect to the Netherlands and the USA, they are yet to be tested by a quality bowling unit and India possesses one. From Bumrah to Varun Chakravarthy, India have proven match-winners in their den and even pace all-rounder Shivam Dube has improved leaps and bounds as a bowler in recent times. It gives the defending champions immense flexibility while deciding combinations. But all calculations aside, this match is all about finding that mental equilibrium and rise above multi-pointed pressures — external and internal.

Chance of rain? The Sri Lanka Department of Meteorology has cautioned of a developing low-pressure point over Bay of Bengal, which potentially can mean up to 70 per cent chance of rain in the Khetarama area on Sunday evening.



Anil Kapoor turned down offer to join a political party after Nayak's release: 'I didn't want to treat it as a photo op'



One of the most defining films of Anil Kapoor's storied career would be S Shankar's 2001 seminal political action film *Nayak: The Real Hero*, in which he played Shivaji Rao, a cameraperson with a news channel who takes on the gargantuan task of becoming the chief minister of Maharashtra for a limited time. At the recently held 12th edition of *Expresso*, Anil revealed that he underwent extensive workshops for the film and was approached by political parties following its release.

During a conversation with Saurabh Dwivedi, Editor, *Indian Express Hindi*, Anil Kapoor said, "I've always been a student. I want to grow as an actor. So, I feel there's always someone who knows more about acting than me." He then revealed approaching his friend and veteran theatre director Feroz Abbas Khan for the same. "I thought of doing work-

shops for that film (*Nayak*) with him. So, I used to go to his office in Mahim and did many workshops and rehearsals. We haven't done a play together yet. That's on my bucket list. We'll definitely do it one day, which will be bigger than *Nayak* hopefully," added Anil.

His performance in *Nayak* was so striking that it was only a natural outcome that political parties would approach him after watching the film. "There were a few discussions, but I nipped it in the bud," said Anil Kapoor without naming the party. "They're also very sensible. So those who offer it to you won't do it directly. That offer comes through somebody else. You somewhere get the idea that he's not inclined to do this job," he reasoned. "If I do it, I have to do it very sincerely and genuinely. But I don't have it within me to give it my full commitment. I want to give my 100% to everything I do. So many times, the UN has asked me to become a brand ambassador when I was in America after *Slumdog Millionaire* released. Sometimes, when you're the flavour of the season, every organization of the world wants to approach you," added Anil. The actor broke out globally after his role of a manipulative yet self-made quiz show host in Danny Boyle's 2008 Oscar-winning Hollywood movie *Slumdog Millionaire*, which was set in India. Anil claimed that he didn't want to leverage his newfound international popularity by accepting a tokenistic position at the United Nations. "I didn't want to use it as a photo op. That I get those four photos and then you do nothing. If you do it, you give it your all. But right now, I have so many priorities that I don't feel like I can do it. So, I only do what I can without pretending. There are much better people than me who deserve to be in the Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha," argued Anil Kapoor.

Lokesh Kanagaraj's DC teaser reimagines a classic romance with a brutal twist

Tamil director Lokesh Kanagaraj is stepping in front of the camera for the first time with *DC*, a romantic action-drama helmed by Arun Matheswaran. The film's team unveiled a striking teaser on Saturday, coinciding with Valentine's Day.

Set for a summer theatrical release, the dialogue-free glimpse hints at a contemporary reimagining of the classic Devdas narrative, infused with brutal violence and gritty action sequences. The video showcases an unexpected side of Lokesh as Devadas, a fierce, rage-filled protagonist, a dramatic departure from his behind-the-camera persona. Sanjana Krishnamurthy appears as Parvathi, a traditional saree-wearing singer with dramatic Kohl-lined eyes. Wamiqa Gabbi plays Chandra who actively participates in the mayhem surrounding the Devadas character, handling explosives and firearms. The preview ends with visceral, blood-soaked visuals that justify its "bloody valentine" theme. Writer-director Arun Matheswaran, known for his previous works *Rocky*, *Saani Kaayidham*, and *Captain Miller*, brings his signature intense storytelling style to *DC*. Adding another layer of excellence is composer Anirudh Ravichander, whose evocative background score amplifies the teaser's emotional intensity and atmospheric tension. The technical crew assembled for *DC* features industry veterans across departments. Mukesh G serves as director of photography, capturing the film's raw visual aesthetic. GK Prasanna handles editing duties, while S Kannan brings his expertise as art director. The action sequences are choreographed by PC Stunts.



Canada distributor confirms Vijay-starrer Jana Nayagan won't hit screens before May



Canadian distributor and cinema chain York Cinemas has shared an important update regarding the highly anticipated release of *Jana Nayagan*, informing patrons that the film will not hit screens before April 30. In an official notice released to ticket holders, the cinema chain acknowledged the postponement and outlined measures to address customer concerns. "Please note that the movie *Jana Nayagan* will not be releasing before April 30th," the statement read, urging customers with advance bookings to reach out to their local theatres for refund processing if they haven't re-

ceived it already.

"Kindly contact our theatres to have it arranged at the earliest," the management stated, emphasizing their commitment to resolving pending refunds promptly. In a gesture of goodwill aimed at maintaining customer loyalty during this disruption, York Cinemas has announced that all loyalty membership holders will receive priority booking access once the new release date is confirmed. This preferential treatment appears designed to reward regular patrons while managing what could be substantial demand when the film eventually premieres. The announcement concluded with York Cinemas thanking customers "for your patience, understanding, and continued support" during the scheduling change. Notably absent from the announcement was any specific information about the reasons behind the delay or when exactly the new release date will be revealed. Directed by H Vinoth and produced by KVN Productions on a massive budget, *Jana Nayagan* stars Vijay in what is intended to be his final screen appearance before his transition into full-time politics. The supporting cast includes prominent names like Pooja Hegde, Bobby Deol, Mamitha Baiju, Gautham Vasudev Menon, Prakash Raj, Narain, and Priyamani. The postponement stems from ongoing certification issues with the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC). Originally scheduled for October 2025, the release was first pushed to January 9. However, despite the filmmakers agreeing to modifications, the CBFC referred the film to a revising committee following complaints.

Bigg Boss 13 fame Himanshi Khurana gets Rs 10 crore extortion threat

Himanshi Khurana Police said Himanshi Khurana lodged a complaint regarding the extortion email received on her email ID. Punjabi actor and *Bigg Boss 13* contestant Himanshi Khurana lodged a complaint with the Mohali police, claiming that she received an extortion threat of Rs 10 crore from a foreign based gangster, officials said. The Mohali police said it has lodged an FIR on the basis of the complaint received from the actress. Police said Himanshi Khurana lodged a complaint regarding the extortion email received on her email ID. Acting promptly on the complaint, an FIR under sections 308(4) (extortion) and 351(3) (criminal intimidation) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) was registered on Saturday at Sohana police station,



Kohrra Season 2 is a horror story that unfolds as a police procedural



As I watched *Kohrra Season 2*, I couldn't help but be reminded of *Talaash*. A police officer haunted by the loss of a child, men trying to escape the consequences of a crime they committed, an angry spirit seeking justice and a mystery that only seems to deepen before the truth finally emerges. Though it is presented as a police procedural where Dhanwant Kaur (Mona Singh) and Amarpal Garundi (Barun Sobti) try to solve the murder of a young woman, Preet Bajwa (Pooja Bhamrah), *Kohrra Season 2* is a horror story where characters are haunted by guilt, indiscretions, grief, loss and the political history of Punjab. Ghosts of the past and memories that linger like spirits with unfinished business shape decisions in the present or take human form to exorcise a society of the evil it has tried to bury.

Quite like its predecessor, *Kohrra Season 2* is set in a small town in Punjab, only this time it's a young woman who is found dead under mysterious circumstances. Dhanwant and Garundi begin their investigation by digging into Preet's life to find out who might have wanted to kill her, but what they unearth in the process are a family's dark secrets and how systemic injustice exists in plain sight. As they work long hours and track down suspects within the state and outside of it, the two battle demons of their own. Work often feels like an escape from the difficulties at home, and their uniforms conceal emotional scars that are seeking healing or redemption.

Dhanwant is mourning the loss of her young son Nihal (Kabir Nanda), who, like Preet, died young and unexpectedly. In his absence, Nihal is omnipresent, haunting his parents night and day, driving his father to alcoholism and his mother to stare at kids getting into a school bus. Their home looks like the rundown buildings in horror stories where grief, guilt and grievances hang thick in the air, creating a suffocating atmosphere. Dhanwant never enters her son's room, quite like how people avoid 'haunted' spaces. Dhanwant and her husband are ghosts of their former selves, breathing because they have no other option. Like restless spirits, the two wander around the streets at night: he to get drunk and drown his guilt, and she to find her husband because the thought of losing him is too hard to bear. In a telling scene, Dhanwant uses a chain to lock Nihal's bike so no one can take it away, but it's his memories she cannot let go of. A few episodes later, when she begins to make peace with her loss, she removes the chain and lets the bike go, almost as if she has finally released Nihal's spirit and allowed it to move into the afterlife.

While Dhanwant is possessed by grief and helplessness, Garundi is trying to escape the shame he feels about

his past, which includes an affair with his sister-in-law. At one point in the show, his wife, Silky (Muskan Arora), asks him if there is anything he wants to forget, and he says he wants to forget his village. When Silky brings his pregnant sister-in-law, Rajji (Ekta Sodhi), to live with them, Garundi's home is suddenly haunted by the life he has tried to leave behind. Rajji is a living reminder of his indiscretion, and he tries his best to avoid her and stay away from home, immersing himself in work. In a superbly written and executed scene, Silky walks in on Garundi holding Rajji and helping her. He freezes for a few seconds, his guilt convincing him that his secret is out. All three characters pause for one extra beat that instantly adds tension before Silky comes forward to help Rajji, and Garundi realises that he has nothing to worry about. Garundi's brother, Jung (Pardeep Singh Cheema), is also tormented by guilt over the fact that he turned a blind eye to what was happening in his home to protect the family land. He abandons his pregnant wife and travels to pilgrimage sites seeking peace, but his mind remains torn and turbulent. After he reveals a shocking truth in front of Silky, Garundi berates him and says that he can keep visiting places of worship, but his deeds will never let him live in peace.

A popular feature of horror stories is suffering caused by an age-old curse or angry/vengeful spirits who torment the living. In the show, instead of angry spirits, we have people who have been forced to live like ghosts, their very humanity stolen from them by those with power and privilege. Preet's brother, Baljinder (Anuraag Arora), has inherited bonded labour along with land from his father, who 'purchased' men from other states to work on their farms. Unlike Dhanwant, who locks her son's bike with a chain because she can't let go of her grief, the labourers are literally chained like animals because Baljinder won't let them go, or let go of cruel traditions which have no place in a civil society. The injustice and suffering he and his family have caused manifests like a curse on his family, killing his sister, ruining his business and destroying his own marriage. There is a parallel story of a young man, Arun (Prayrak Mehta), who is looking for his father, Rakesh Kumar (Satyakam Anand). Rakesh left home when Arun was an infant and never returned, and his mother died soon after. All he has is an old photograph taken at his parents' wedding, and for the longest time, it feels like he is chasing a ghost. His father has seemingly vanished from the surface of the earth, but Arun is determined to find answers. It's almost as if Rakesh's soul calls out to his son, or his suffering forces the universe to take pity on him, resurrecting him from a lifetime of invisibility.

Kohrra, which was released almost three years ago, focused on how love, whether romantic or between parent and child, can drive us act out of anger and desperation. Season 2 shifts its focus to family and society, telling us a story that begins with a murder but eventually spreads like the fog it refers to, enveloping us in the horror of existing in a country where injustice and inequality are as pervasive as the air around us. The show seamlessly blends setting and characterisation, showing us that the world around us can profoundly impact the world within us. Only when we take accountability for the dense fog of grief, ignorance, cruelty, anger, entitlement or regret within us and around us, will we be set free from the spirits of our actions that follow us wherever we go.

The 'Vaseegara' girl who vanished: Why the early 2000s South Indian star walked away from fame

In the early 2000s, if you walked into any South Indian theater, chances are you'd see Reema Sen's infectious smile lighting up the screen. The Kolkata-born actress, with her natural charm and expressive eyes, became the quintessential girl-next-door who won hearts across multiple film industries. Yet today, she remains largely absent from the public eye, having made a conscious choice to step away from the arc lights.

Reema Sen's entry into cinema was almost serendipitous. Born on October 29, 1981, in Kolkata, she began her career as a model while still in her teens. Her appearances in popular music videos, particularly Falguni Pathak's "Mein Chali" and "Chudi Jo Khanki Haathon Mein," made her a familiar face across Indian households in the late 1990s. The camera loved her, and it wasn't long before filmmakers came calling. Her film debut came with the Telugu romantic drama *Chitram* in 2000, opposite Uday Kiran. The film was a massive success, and Reema's performance as the simple, lovable heroine struck a chord with audiences. But it was her Tamil debut in February 2001 that would truly cement her place in South Indian cinema.

Gautham Vasudev Menon's directorial debut *Minnale*, starring R Madhavan and Abbas alongside Reema Sen, became a Valentine's season blockbuster. The film's music by debutant Harris Jayaraj is still celebrated today, and Reema's portrayal of Reena Joseph remains etched in the memories of Tamil cinema fans. Her chemistry with Madhavan, combined with her natural acting style, made her an overnight sensation. If there's one song that became synonymous with Reema Sen's appeal, it's "Vaseegara" from *Minnale*. The romantic melody, composed by Harris Jayaraj and sung by Bombay Jayashri, became an instant classic. The visuals featuring Reema and Madhavan against the backdrop of college romance captured the innocence and charm of young love in a way that resonated across generations. Even today, 25 years later, "Vaseegara" remains a go-to song for romantic playlists. The simple yet elegant way Reema portrayed the character in that song, her expressions, her smile, her effortless presence—became iconic. It wasn't just a song; it was a cultural moment that defined early 2000s Tamil cinema romance. For many, Reema Sen will forever be the face of "Vaseegara," the song that launched both Harris Jayaraj and Gautham Menon into the big league while establishing her as a star. What followed was a career that saw Reema working with some of the biggest names in Tamil and Telugu cinema. She starred opposite Silambarasan in *Vallavan*, showcased her versatility in *Thimiru*, and surprised audiences with a powerful negative role in Selvaraghavan's period epic *Aayirathil Oruvan*.

In Telugu cinema, films like *Manasantha Nuvve* and *Bhageeratha* solidified her position as a bankable leading lady. She moved effortlessly between commercial entertainers and more serious cinema, never limiting herself to one genre or image. Her range extended beyond South Indian cinema. Reema appeared in Hindi films, including a memorable supporting role in Anurag Kashyap's critically acclaimed *Gangs of Wasseyapur* in 2012, which would turn



out to be her final film appearance. At the height of her career, Reema Sen made a different choice. In 2012, she married businessman Shiv Karan Singh in a private ceremony. The following year, she welcomed her son, Rudraveer Singh, born in February 2013. Unlike many of her contemporaries who attempted to balance motherhood with their careers, Reema chose to step away from films almost entirely. There were no official announcements, no farewell films, no grand exits. She simply prioritized her family and let her film career fade into the background. Today, Reema Sen lives a quiet life away from the media glare. Her social media presence is minimal, and she rarely makes public appearances. Those close to the industry suggest she's content with her decision, fully immersed in motherhood and family life. Occasionally, her name resurfaces when her old films are re-released or when fans reminisce about the golden era of early 2000s cinema. While Reema Sen may have left cinema behind, her contribution to Tamil and Telugu films remains significant. She represented a particular brand of heroines in the early 2000s, relatable, natural, and charming without being overly glamorous. In an era increasingly dominated by larger-than-life characters and elaborate star images, she was refreshingly real.

Male singers performing in high octaves, says Babul Supriyo

Mumbai: Singer Babul Supriyo opened up about the ongoing disparity between male and female singers in the music industry. During an exclusive conversation with IANS, he shared that the male singers these days sing in such a high octave that the female singers are forced to lower their voices. When asked about the changing dynamics in the music industry, Babul Supriyo went on to share, "The male singers are singing in such a high octave that sometimes the female singers, who are extremely talented, are left with no choice but to sing in a low octave. In this, sometimes the actual voice quality ends up suffering. Today, there has come a major change in playback singing. For a lot of songs, there is no lip-syncing; it is all playing in the background."