

# INDIAN CHRONICLE

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## Chief Minister Sri A.Revanth Reddy departs from Mumbai to Delhi

The Hon'ble Chief Minister Sri A. Revanth Reddy has departed from Mumbai to New Delhi and is scheduled to arrive in the national capital at 5:00 PM today.

The Chief Minister will attend a dinner hosted by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi at 7:30 PM tonight. The dinner is being organised at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi on the occasion of the AI Impact Summit-2026.

Tomorrow morning, the Chief Minister, along with Hon'ble Minister for IT, Industries Sri Sridhar Babu, will participate in the inaugural session of the AI Impact Summit-2026.

## Hyderabad Net Zero Plan: CM Revanth Reddy Announces 5-Year Move to Shift Industries Out of Urban Areas

The Hyderabad Net Zero emissions plan by Chief Minister Revanth Reddy outlines a major sustainability roadmap for the city.

Under the plan, Hyderabad aims to achieve Net Zero emissions by 2034, supported by a comprehensive carbon footprint audit to be conducted across the city.

5-Year Plan to Shift Industries Out of Urban Hyderabad

A key highlight of the Hyderabad Net Zero plan is a five-year strategy to relocate industries and factories from the urban core to peri-urban zones.

The move is expected to:

Reduce pollution levels

Improve urban living conditions

Promote planned industrial growth

Support sustainable city development

Officials indicated that urban Hyderabad could eventually see minimal industrial presence within the next five years.

Major Sustainability Initiatives Announced

The government's environmental roadmap includes several large-scale projects:

Revitalisation of the Musi River

Restoration of lakes across the city

Strengthening water and energy infrastructure

Establishment of HYDRAA, a dedicated environmental policing unit

These initiatives aim to transform Hyderabad into a cleaner and more resilient city.

Push for Green Mobility and Infrastructure

The Hyderabad Net Zero emissions plan also focuses heavily on green transport:

Taxes on electric vehicles removed, boosting adoption



Over 200,000 autorickshaws being retrofitted with greener alternatives

Replacement of 3,500+ RTC buses with electric models

Expansion of Hyderabad Metro from 71 km to over 200 km

These measures are expected to significantly cut transport-related emissions.

Energy Demand and Economic Vision

According to the government, energy remains central to economic growth:

Current average consumption: 16,610 MW per day

Peak demand expected to exceed 19,000 MW this year

Projected demand by 2034: over 34,000 MW

Around 25% of energy sourced from green power

Telangana aims to grow into a \$1 trillion economy by 2034 and \$3 trillion by 2047, with sustainability at the core of its strategy.

## India, France don't want dependence on US, China AI models: Macron

French President Emmanuel Macron on Wednesday said India and France share the "same obsession" when it comes to artificial intelligence (AI) innovation and do not want to be "totally dependent" on US and Chinese models. "I really believe that India and France have the same obsession — that we do not want to be totally dependent on US and Chinese models. We believe that we want to be part of the solution. We want our players to be part of the solution as well," he said.



## Biennial polls to 37 Rajya Sabha seats, including 2 in Haryana and one in Himachal, on March 16

NEW DELHI, FEB 18

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has announced the biennial election to the Rajya Sabha, with polling scheduled for March 16, to fill 37 seats from 10 states. The election includes two seats from Haryana and one from Himachal Pradesh, where BJP's Kiran Choudhary and Ram Chander Jangra, and Indu Bala Goswami, respectively, are set to retire on April 9.

The last date for filing nomination is March 6, while the last date for the withdrawal of nomination is March 9.

The election process will begin with the issue of

notifications on February 26.

The election is being held as the term of 37 members is set to expire in April 2026. Some notable members retiring include Union Ministers Ramdas Athawale and Rameswar Teli, Congress' Abhishek Manu Singhvi, TMC's Saket Gokhale, DMK's Tiruchi Siva, and Shiv Sena UBT's Priyanka Chaturvedi.

Seven seats from Maharashtra, six seats from Tamil Nadu, five each from West Bengal and Bihar, four from Odisha, three from Assam, two each from Chhattisgarh, Haryana and Telangana, and one from Himachal Pradesh are falling vacant owing to retirement of sitting members.



## Bangla, Iran present as Navy exhibits self-reliance at 74-nation fleet review

Visakhapatnam, Feb 18

The Indian Navy today hosted an international fleet review (IFR) off the coast of Visakhapatnam and used the event to showcase self-reliance in making warships and systems. It was also a signal to allies about New Delhi's multilateral alignments spanning across acrimonious global divides.

President Droupadi Murmu, the supreme commander of the armed forces, reviewed the fleet while travelling on board INS Sumedha. Representatives of 74 countries, including Bangladesh and Iran, witnessed the fleet review, the third edition since Mumbai (2001) and Visakhapatnam (2016). A total of 85 ships, including 19 foreign warships, participated in the review, reflecting the scale and diversity of maritime participation.

The Indian fleet at the parade included 60 Navy ships, which showcased self-reliance that has grown since the 2016 IFR. The indigenous aircraft carrier INS Vikrant (commissioned in 2023) was the lead example of self-reliance.

The diving support vessel, 10,000-tonne INS Nistar that is also a submarine rescue vessel along with the Visakhapatnam class of warships were the other projects of self-reliance showcased at the IFR. Besides foreign navies and their representatives and defence attaches of friendly countries, some 30 journalists invited from across the world were put on a separate ship as they watched the event unfold in the Bay of Bengal.

Officials said some friendly countries would be shown a demonstration on board INS Nistar as crews dive under sea for specialised tasks.

Four maritime reconnaissance planes of the Indian Coast Guard extended the outreach as several smaller island nations need New Delhi's help in monitoring the seas for drugs and illegal arms. A ship of the National Institute of Ocean Technology--that conducts hydrographic data--was also on display. The event was also about multilateralism. US warships could not make it due to impending issues with Iran, while Germany and France had their assets at the event. Japan and Australia--both partners in the Quad with India and the US--also sent their warships. Also present were South Korea, Russia and Iran. Ships from Malaysia, Philippines and Vietnam--all three ASEAN members locked in a maritime dispute with China--also made it to the event. Ships from Thailand, Myanmar and Indonesia added to the ASEAN presence. And despite the acrimony of the past, a ship from Bangladesh Navy was also present. The review also featured three Indian Navy submarines, a French Atlantique maritime patrol aircraft and participation by over 60 aircraft, underscoring the multi-domain operational capability and the coordinated maritime presence on display.

Murmu described the event as one that takes forward India's vision of 'Mahasagar'.

### CHANGE OF NAMES

We, MUDDASANI SATHYANARANA, and MUDDASANI LAKSHMI father & mother of Service No: 15622560W NK M. Rajashekhar presently residing vill: Shantinagar, Post: Adilabad, Dist: Adilabad State: Telangana Pin: 504001 changed our names M. SATYANARAYANA TO MUDDASANI SATHYANARANA AND M. LAKSHMI vide affidavit dt: 17 February 2026 before B. Premsingh advocate and Notary public, Adilabad.

## Former BRS MLA Balka Suman Arrested Amid Clashes

Hyderabad, Feb 18

Balka Suman, the former BRS MLA, has been detained by police in connection with the attack on Minister Vivek Venkataswamy's convoy. Police officers, who arrived in large numbers at Suman's residence, requested his cooperation in the arrest. When he agreed, officers forcibly took him away in a police van. However, BRS activists attempted to prevent the arrest, leading to a tense confrontation. Suman was eventually taken to hospital for medical tests amidst protests in Kyatanapalli.

The incident follows clashes during the recent election of the Kyatanapalli Municipal Chairman and Vice Chairman, where allegations surfaced that BRS activists pelted stones at the minister's convoy. The police registered a case against Suman and several BRS leaders. As officers moved to arrest him, hundreds of activists gathered, attempting to block the police. This resulted in



scuffles and heightened tensions, with police eventually dispersing the crowd and arresting Suman.

# Indian Chronicle

English Daily

## On India's external trade landscape

India's record goods trade deficit in October (\$41.68 billion) follows a sequential build-up from September (\$32.15 billion), reflecting a disturbing turn in its external trade landscape. The shock from the U.S.'s tariffs has been largely responsible — a full 50% levy that came into effect in August — at a time when the U.S. had become India's largest single export market (since about 2018-19). But the main cause of the 11.8% year-on-year (YoY) drop in goods exports to \$34.38 billion (\$38.98 billion in October 2024) and the precipitous rise in imports lies in a record surge in precious metal inflows. Gold imports nearly tripled from last October (\$4.92 billion) and inbound silver rose more than fivefold. This suggests that the bullion surge is not merely seasonal but also a hedge against growing economic uncertainty. The rupee's weakening from about 85.6 to a dollar in April to around 88.4 to a dollar in October, and the net foreign portfolio outflow in September (leading into a recovery in October) further corroborate the hedging. What is troubling about October's merchandise data is the steep fall in exports of labour-intensive sectors such as textiles and apparel — cotton yarn and handlooms 13.31%; man-made yarn 11.75%; readymade garments 12.88%, and engineering goods 16.71%. The U.S. has been the largest market for these sectors for some years now. Overall exports to the U.S. declined by 9% YoY in October. The import surge in goods value is partly explained by the depreciating rupee but also strongly suggests the increased use of cheaper imported intermediate ility.

## Orders to the authorities to provide all facilities to the Muslims on the occasion of the holy month of Ramzan:-

Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Additional Collector Bhaskar Rao "(Mandava Srisailam..Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... February 18): As the holy month of Ramzan is about to begin, Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Additional Collector Bhaskar Rao has ordered the concerned authorities to provide all basic facilities to the mosques and mosques in the district. On Wednesday, a Shanti Sangha meeting was held in the mini meeting hall under the chairmanship of the District Additional Collector to celebrate the month of Ramzan. "Speaking on the occasion, the Additional Col-



lector suggested that the duties assigned to the concerned departments regarding the arrangements for the holy month of Ramzan should be carried out in a coordinated manner. He wanted to ensure that electricity is available during the namaz time. He instructed the concerned authorities to provide facilities like electricity and drinking water during the month of Ramzan. He ordered that thorough sanitation work be carried out at mosques, that fresh water facilities be provided, that street lights be installed, that there be no power interruption, especially during prayer times. He wanted to see that fresh water arrives in the municipality wards on time. He instructed the concerned officials to ensure that there are no problems in good water supply. He said that all facilities will be provided for the month of Ramadan, which is celebrated in a peaceful atmosphere with brotherhood. He wanted to make the district a symbol of religious harmony. Additional SP Lakshmi Narayana said that during the holy month of Ramadan, all arrangements will be made at mosques, that there will be complete security during the month of Ramadan, and that with the cooperation of everyone, the month of Ramadan will be celebrated in a harmonious atmosphere. District Revenue Officer Jayamma, Bhuvanagiri Revenue Divisional Officer Krishna Reddy, police officers, religious leaders and concerned officials participated in this meeting.

## Holding municipal elections by reducing reservation for BCs to 42 percent is a fraud:- Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District President Kotha Narasimhaswamy



## Sanctus PhenoLumia 2026 Illuminates a New Chapter with Launch of Sanctus Group of Schools

Hyderabad Sanctus World School, Shamshabad, hosted Sanctus PhenoLumia 2026 along with the formal launch of the Sanctus Group of Schools. The event brought together students, parents, educators, leadership, dignitaries, and well-wishers in a celebration that reflected unity, disciplined growth, and a shared educational vision.

The evening was graced by Rajendra Nagar MLA T. Prakash Goud, whose presence added significance to the occasion. Addressing the gathering, he emphasized the responsibility educational institutions hold in shaping socially conscious and capable citizens. He appreciated the leadership's initiative in expanding quality education through the Sanctus Group of Schools and lauded the institution's balanced focus on academic excellence and strong value systems.

Bollywood choreographer Atul Mehtani also attended the event and commended Sanctus for its progressive academic direction. He highlighted the importance of experiential learning and global exposure in preparing students for a rapidly evolving world, aligning with the school's philosophy of meaningful and applied learning.

At the core of this journey stands the leadership of Chairman D. Rajeshwar Reddy and Director D. Haritha Reddy, whose vision has steadily shaped Sanctus into a trusted educational institution known for innovation, discipline, and community strength.



Speaking on the occasion, Founder and Chairman Mr. D. Rajeshwar Reddy said, "Sanctus was built on the belief that education must shape both intellect and character. The launch of the Sanctus Group of Schools is not merely an expansion—it is a commitment to extend value-based, globally aligned, and emotionally balanced education to more learners. Our vision is to nurture confident, compassionate, and future-ready individuals who contribute meaningfully to society."

Sanctus PhenoLumia 2026 showcased vibrant student-led innovation through scientific models, sustainability initiatives, entrepreneurial stalls, and research-based interdisciplinary projects. The integration of the Finnish curriculum framework within the CBSE structure was evident in the inquiry-based, experiential, and collaborative presentations displayed across the campus.

## Qualcomm Commits Up To \$150 Million for Strategic AI Venture Fund in India

Hyderabad

Qualcomm Incorporated today announced its intention to invest up to \$150 million to support India's rapidly expanding technology and AI startup ecosystem. The investments will be deployed through Qualcomm Ventures and will invest in startups across all stages, with a particular focus on AI for automotive, IoT, robotics, and mobile. This initiative underscores Qualcomm's long-standing commitment to India's technology landscape and aligns with the company's leadership in advancing edge AI at global scale. The announcement coincides with Qualcomm CEO Cristiano Amon's participation in the India AI Impact Summit in New Delhi.

"Through our new Strategic AI Venture Fund, Qualcomm is investing in companies that are advancing the next chapter of AI in India," said Cristiano Amon, president and CEO, Qualcomm Incorporated. "AI is entering a new phase where intelligence is built directly into devices and systems people depend on every day, from smartphones and PCs to cars, industrial machines, robots, and more, delivering richer and more meaningful experiences. This shift will reshape entire industries, and India's startup ecosystem has a critical role to play as edge AI drives innovation across sectors."

With the massive growth of India's startup landscape and the rapid advancement of AI, Qualcomm sees a unique opportunity to help emerging companies build transformative, market-leading solutions. As an AI leader driving the global shift toward efficient, secure, and powerful edge AI, Qualcomm is supporting the startups that are poised to shape the next wave of innovation through technologies with real-world impact across industries.

"India has become one of the world's vibrant centers of innovation, and we're proud to deepen our long-

## Hyderabad comes alive as Karthik mesmerises fans with a power-packed House of McDowell's Soda Yaari Jam show

Hyderabad: Hyderabad witnessed an unforgettable musical evening as celebrated singer and composer Karthik set the stage ablaze with his electrifying performance as a part of the Karthik Live Tour, produced and promoted by TribeVibe Entertainment and presented by House of McDowell's Soda Yaari Jam. The city came alive with energy, music and emotion as thousands of fans gathered to experience his timeless melodies and high-energy renditions, transforming the atmosphere into a vibrant celebration of music.

As the tour made its much-awaited stop in Hyderabad, Karthik enthralled the audience with a powerful mix of chart-toppers, soulful melodies and high-energy crowd favourites. From romantic classics to high-tempo favourites, Karthik delivered a power-packed setlist such as 'Mahaganpathim', 'Kannula Basalu', 'Muthyalu

## Qualcomm ventures

standing commitment to its startup ecosystem," said Quinn Li, Senior Vice President, Qualcomm Technologies, Inc., and global head of Qualcomm Ventures. "This additional investment expands our support for founders building the next generation of transformative technologies. We look forward to helping these companies scale and contributing to India's continued progress."

Qualcomm has been investing in India's startup community since 2007, backing more than 40 companies. By investing in startups in areas closely aligned with Qualcomm's core technology strengths—especially AI, intelligent computing, and wireless leadership—Qualcomm helps founders accelerate innovation through access to its deep technology expertise and global industry network, supported by the Qualcomm Ventures India team's strong regional presence and insights. Current and previous portfolio companies include Jio, India's largest telecom network provider, MapMyIndia, a provider of digital maps and navigation solutions; ideaForge, a pioneer in drone technologies; Shadowfax, an e-delivery service platform; Cavli Wireless, an enabler of connected intelligence across industries; SpotDraft, an AI-powered contract lifecycle management platform; and Tonetag, a company modernizing AI-enabled digital payments.

Dharini', 'Naa Hrudayamlo' and 'Arare Arare' creating a sea of swaying lights and heartfelt Yaari moments.

Speaking about the tour, Karthik shared, "As an artist, there is nothing more fulfilling than seeing thousands of people connect with your music with complete fervour. The energy and love I've been showered with is extremely gratifying. Sharing our favourite songs brought everyone together in a beautiful moment of unity and joy."

Varun Koorichh, Vice President and Portfolio Head, Marketing, Diageo India, shared his excitement, saying, "Music and friendship have always been at the heart of House of McDowell's Soda, and these passions come alive through Yaari Jam — India's largest branded music IP. Last year, we brought together over 50,000 consumers across five cities. This year, we're taking Yaari Jam to 15 cities with an incredible lineup of artists who embody the sound and spirit of today's generation, and we expect to connect with over 1,00,000 consumers as we continue to celebrate the essence of real friendships."

Shoven Shah, Founder & CEO, TribeVibe Entertainment, said, "We are proud to bring an artist of Karthik's calibre back to the stage and even prouder to see how deeply audiences resonate with his music. Karthik's tour marks a special milestone for live music in the region, setting a high benchmark for the shows to come. Witnessing fans from all generations come together was a testament to the enduring appeal of Karthik's music and the spirit of togetherness that TribeVibe always aspires to foster."

## BRAND AVATAR ANNOUNCES ROCKSTAR ANIRUDH XV - 15 YEARS WITH YOU LIVE IN HYDERABAD

Hyderabad:

Brand Avatar proudly announces Rockstar Anirudh XV: 15 Years With You, a massive live concert celebrating 15 years of music by Rockstar Anirudh Ravichander. This landmark tour will officially open in Hyderabad, marking Rockstar Anirudh's first ever concert in the city.

Rockstar Anirudh XV - 15 Years With You - A concert by Brand Avatar, co-produced by TribeVibe Entertainment, a BookMyShow Enterprise and presented by Ocean Vibes in Hyderabad. The concert is set to mesmerise audiences on March 21, 2026, at Gachibowli Outdoor Stadium, promising a high-energy outdoor experience for fans.

Pre-Registrations are now live! Register here: <https://in.bookmyshow.com/events/rockstar-anirudh-xv-15-years-with-you/ET00486479>.

Pre-Sale begins at 12 PM on Thursday, February 19, 2026, followed by the General On-Sale at 12 PM on Friday, February 20, 2026, exclusively on BookMyShow.



Rockstar Anirudh's previous Hukum Tour was a huge success, receiving an overwhelming fan response everywhere he performed. His concerts are known to draw massive crowds not just across India but globally. The Hukum Tour concerts in Chennai and Bengaluru, produced by Brand Avatar, became record-breaking shows and among the biggest concerts in the live music circuit. This time, he returns with a brand-new tour, and with his first-ever concert in Hyderabad, the excitement around this show is expected to be massive.

Hemachandran, Founder & CEO, Brand Avatar, said, "Rockstar Anirudh's journey over the last 15 years has been extraordinary. Launching this special tour in Hyderabad and bringing his first-ever concert to the city makes this show truly special. This concert is designed to be a powerful, high-energy experience for fans who have grown up with his music."

Shoven Shah, Founder & CEO, TribeVibe Entertainment, said, "We are thrilled to partner with Brand Avatar to bring alive Anirudh's milestone moment of 15 years of his musical journey to Hyderabad in a show that will touch thousands of hearts."

Tickets for Rockstar Anirudh XV - 15 Years With You will be available exclusively on BookMyShow, India's leading entertainment destination and the official ticketing partner. High demand is expected and fans are encouraged to book early.

## Telangana Fitness Festival 2026 Set to Inspire Strength, Health, and Athletic Excellence

Hyderabad:

The Telangana Fitness Festival 2026, organized by Ex-Indian Army coach Shafi Sami, is set to energize the fitness community with a spectacular celebration of strength, wellness, and bodybuilding excellence.

The festival has taken place at the Gachibowli Indoor Stadium on February 12, 2026, bringing together athletes, fitness professionals, and enthusiasts from across the region.

This prestigious event will feature competitive bodybuilding showcases, fitness demonstrations, and opportunities for emerging athletes to gain recognition. The festival aims to promote healthy lifestyles, discipline, and sportsmanship while strengthening Telangana's growing fitness culture.

Mr. A Waheed Khan Overall Champion of champion Classic physique



The event will be graced by

Mr. Tareq Ansari Sahab

Chairman, Telangana Minorities Commission

\*Guests of Honour

Shri Mittu Sai Garu CHAIMEN FISHERIES FEDERATION GOVT OF TELANGANA

Mr. Janab Osman Alhajri Sahab (Contested MLA & Karwan Incharge)

Janab Habeeb Rashed Sahab & Other Esteemed Guests

Event Highlights

Bodybuilding & physique competitions

Fitness demonstrations & expert sessions

Platform for upcoming athletes

Promotion of health and wellness awareness

Networking opportunities for fitness professionals

Sponsors & Partners

The Telangana Fitness Festival 2026 is proudly supported by leading fitness, wellness, and corporate partners committed to promoting a healthier society.



Photo write up only:- "(Mandava Srisailam...Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... February 18):- Bhuvanagiri MLAs Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy and Kumbham Keerthy Reddy met Bhuvanagiri Municipal Chairman Tangellapalli Srivani Ravi Kumar and others as a courtesy call.

## Collector Jitesh V. Patil Calls for Comprehensive Plan to Ensure 100% SSC Pass Rate

"Bhukya RanjithNaik, Bhadravadi Kothagudem Bureau, February 18, Indian Chronicle: The District Collector, Jitesh V. Patil, has directed officials to implement a robust and result-oriented action plan to ensure that every Class 10 student in the district passes the upcoming examinations. He emphasized the need to improve the SSC pass percentage, increase admissions in Government Junior Colleges, and enhance basic infrastructure facilities in schools." The Collector conducted a review meeting through Zoom from the Collector's Camp Office at the IDOC on Wednesday. The meeting was attended by Additional Collector D. Venugopal, Additional Collector (Local Bodies) Vidya Chandana, ZP CEO Nagalakshmi, MEOs, APMs, and officials of concerned departments. "During the review, the Collector observed that an analysis of the previous academic year's results revealed that students had underperformed in Mathematics, Science, and Telugu. He instructed officials to prepare a comprehensive strategy to ensure that every student secures a pass. Based on pre-final examination results, headmasters were directed to identify academically weak students within two days and submit detailed reports. "He further advised that Women Self-Help Group members at the village level should also participate in supporting students' academic performance and, if necessary, conduct counselling sessions for parents. Evening study hours should be monitored by Village Organization Assistants (VOAs). Special question papers and study materials should be prepared using modern technology to support slow learners." Noting that the pass percentage among boys is lower compared to girls, the Collector instructed officials to take special measures to improve boys' attendance and academic performance. "He also directed that every Class 10 student in the district be linked with a nearby Government Junior College. Pamphlets containing details of available courses and facilities should be distributed. Officials



were asked to ensure that students from economically weaker sections enroll in Government Junior Colleges to avoid financial burdens associated with private institutions." The Collector stressed that all government schools in the district must have adequate drinking water facilities. He instructed officials to coordinate with Mission Bhagiratha authorities to complete necessary repairs immediately and ensure that drinking water facilities are available in all high schools before the commencement of SSC examinations. He further made it clear that no school should lack functional toilets for girl students and ordered immediate completion of all pending repairs related to sanitation facilities." Additionally, officials were directed to compile data on individuals below 30 years of age who have passed SSC, Intermediate, or ITI, along with details of their current employment or occupation. The Collector stated that unemployed youth would be identified and provided with skill development training to enhance employment opportunities." Mission Bhagiratha EE Tirumalesh, Education Department Coordinator Satish, and other concerned officials participated in the meeting.

## Successful Blood Donation Camp Organised by Lions Clubs in Bhadrachalam

"Bhukya RanjithNaik, Bhadravadi Kothagudem Bureau, February 18, Indian Chronicle: A blood donation camp jointly organised by Lions Club of Bhadrachalam Srirama and Lions Club of Bhadrachalam was conducted successfully on Wednesday at the local Area Hospital." A large number of voluntary donors participated in the camp and donated blood, reflecting their commitment to humanitarian service. The organisers stated that the donated blood would help save several precious lives and support patients in need of emergency medical care." The organisers expressed their gratitude to Area Hospital Superintendent Dr. Ramakrishna, the medical staff and volunteers for their cooperation in conducting the camp smoothly. "On the occasion, the club representatives appreciated the donors and reiterated that blood donation is one of the noblest forms of service to humanity. They affirmed that the Lions Clubs would continue to take up such service-oriented programmes in the future." Among those present were Challagulla Nageswara Rao, President, Lions Club of Bhadrachalam Srirama; Bhukya Ranjith Naik, Secretary; Guntamukkala



Bharat Kumar, Treasurer; Pinninti Kamala Rajashekhar, President, Lions Club of Bhadrachalam; Mortala Siddareddy, Secretary; Yadlapalli Ramarao, Treasurer; along with members including Lions Pawan and Jinda, and others

## Immediate Resolution To Borewell Issue At Gollaguda Government School Deputy Sarpanch Lobade Lahukumar Ensures Drinking Water Supply Restoration



"Indian Chronicle" kumram bheem Asifabad Dis district Reporte,Jade Srinivas,February,18,"A sudden borewell malfunction at the Government School in Gollaguda Khamana village,Wankidi Mandal.caused significant inconvenience to students and staff, disrupting the supply of drinking water on campus. With the borewell out of service, students were forced to struggle for access to safe drinking water during school hours.Upon being informed of the issue by the school authorities,Khamana Deputy Sarpanch Lobade Lahukumar responded immediately and visited the school to assess the situation personally. Recognizing the urgency of the matter, he instructed the concerned technical staff to begin repair works without delay."Under his supervision, the repair team inspected the borewell system, identified faults in the motor and pipeline, and carried out the necessary repairs promptly. Within a short span of time, the borewell was restored to working condition, and the drinking water supply at the school resumed smoothly."Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Sarpanch Lobade Lahukumar stated that the health and well-being of students remain a top priority. He emphasized that there would be no negligence when it comes to essential facilities in educational institutions."Teachers, students, and villagers expressed their appreciation for the swift action taken by the Deputy Sarpanch. They praised his commitment to addressing public issues promptly and ensuring that students do not face hardships due to infrastructure problems."He further assured that continuous monitoring of basic amenities such as drinking water, sanitation, and other facilities in schools would be maintained to support the overall development and welfare of students.

## Development Works Worth Rs 2.27 Crore in Church Colony: Parameshwar Reddy & Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy

Rs1.09 crore for water pipeline and underground drainage

"?1.18 crore for CC road construction" KISHORE VADDEPALLI , Uppal, February 18 (Indian Chronicle):"Development works are progressing rapidly in Church Colony under Uppal Division. To resolve the problem of contaminated drinking water in the colony, construction of a water pipeline and underground drainage system is being carried out at a cost of ?1.09 crore."Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy and former corporator Mandumula Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy inspected the ongoing works. They stated that once the pipeline works are completed, CC road construction will be taken up immediately at an estimated cost of ?1.18 crore."They informed that the water pipeline, underground drainage, and CC road works in Church Colony are being executed at a total cost of ?2.27 crore and will be completed at the earliest."Water Board Deputy General Manager Rajanikant Reddy, Church Colony representatives Johnny, Sudhakar, Lucas, Ratna Reddy, David, Praveen, Sunil Satish, Rosy Mary, Karthik, Pushpalamma, Francis, Balaswamy, Salla Prabhakar Reddy, Sandeep, Bhaskar, Raghavendra, Vallappu Srikanth Yadav, Saga Sridhar, and Sattireddy participated in the inspection.



## Irshad Khan (Uppal Khan) Extends Support to Disabled Family in Chilkanagar Division

"KISHORE VADDEPALLI , Uppal, February 18 (Indian Chronicle):"Local youth leader Irshad Khan (Uppal Khan) extended financial assistance to an extremely poor disabled family residing in Chilkanagar Division, demonstrating compassion and humanitarian concern."Both parents in the family are disabled and unable to work, forcing them to depend solely on the government disability pension for survival. Their daughter, K. Nandini, who is also physically challenged, is currently studying in Intermediate second year. Due to unpaid college fees, the management refused to issue her hall ticket. Upon learning about the situation, Irshad Khan visited the family's residence and personally assessed their condition, following the directions of Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy."After realizing the severity of their financial hardship, Irshad Khan paid Nandini's college fees in full and also provided essential groceries to support the family. He assured them that they could approach him for any future needs. Local residents appreciated Irshad Khan's humanitarian gesture and stated that such acts of service would inspire others to help those in need.

## Free Homeopathy Medical Camp Conducted at Rajendranagar under the Aegis of Guru Nanak Homeopathic Medical College & Hospital

"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 18 (Indian Chronicle):"A free homeopathy medical and health services camp was organized on Wednesday at Rajendranagar, Ramanthapur, under the supervision of Guru Nanak Homeopathic Medical College & Hospital. Senior Uppal Congress leader Gaddam Ravikumar attended as the chief guest and inaugurated the camp. Speaking on the occasion, he appreciated the initiative taken by the institution to conduct a free medical camp in the Rajendranagar area and encouraged the public to make good use of the services provided. During the camp, people were given free medical check-ups and medicines were distributed at no cost."Faculty members from Guru Nanak Institutions Technical Campus participated in the camp, including: "Dr. S. Shivakumar (Assistant Professor)"Dr. Uda Devi (Assistant Professor)"Dr. Shivananda Swami (Assistant Professor)Dr. V. Rekha (Associate Professor) Pharmacy and Homeopathy students also actively took part in the medical camp.



## Rega Army Volleyball Tournament Begins in Pinapaka

"Krantikumar Dasari | Pinapaka Con-stancy | February 18 | Indian Chronicle: The volleyball tournament organized by Rega Army in Potlapalli village of Pinapaka mandal began with enthusiasm on Wednesday. Former MLA Rega Kantha Rao graced the occasion as the chief guest and declared the tournament officially inaugurated. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Kantha Rao stressed the importance of promoting sports in rural areas. He stated that participation in sports improves the physical and mental strength of the youth. He encouraged the young players to compete with true sportsmanship and work hard to bring recognition to their village. Senior TRS leaders Satthibabu, Datla Vasubabu and other local leaders were present at the inauguration along with a large number of youth. The event received an enthusiastic response from the local community..



## Work towards social security for women\_ State Serp Gender Project Director Jamuna

"Jagital Correspondent Ennam Kishan Reddy, February 18, (Indian Chronicle):"State Serp Gender Project Director Jamuna stated that despite being in a modern era, women are still facing discrimination and lack proper recognition. She said that efforts are being made to provide support to women through the establishment of Gender Resource Centers at the district and village levels, under the leadership of women's federations."A training program was conducted for Mandal Samakhy office bearers, Social Action Committee members, and APMs on the management of Gender Resource Centers at the Jagital district collectorate. Jamuna emphasized the importance of addressing issues such as domestic violence, dowry harassment, eve teasing, and human trafficking, and ensuring justice for victims."District Rural Development Officer Raghuvardhan stated that the district administration is working to establish Gender Resource Centers in all 18 mandals to provide support to women. Serp EPD P. Sunitha said that the district has already taken steps to address women's issues through the Gender Committee."The program was attended by Serp Gender Project Officer Lingaya Goud, District Gender DPM Ramesh, District Samakhy President Sarojana, and other officials.



## New Jagtial Councillors Felicitated



"Jagtial Correspondent Ennam Kishan Reddy, February 18, (Indian Chronicle): "The newly elected councillors of Jagtial Municipality, Arav Laxmi Raju (Ward 22), Sirikonda Padma Singaravu (Ward 21), and Dayala Chandrakala Shankar (Ward 2), were felicitated by the Sita Ram Anjaneya Swamy Temple Committee on Wednesday. The temple priests honored them with shawls and congratulated them on their victory. The event was attended by Inganti Ashok Rao, Ailneni Venkat Rao, Gandra Praveen Rao, Muninder, Kondadi Narasing Rao, Driver Srinu, Paidipalli Raghav Rao, Tandra Venkateshwar Rao, Shivnarti Chiranjeevi, and Bittu Dayala Sharath, among others."

## Former Vice-Sarpanch Meets Bhadrachalam SP, Submits Representation on Local Issues

"Kranthikumar Dasari | Pinapaka Constancy | February 18 | Indian chronicle: Pothireddy Venkateswara Reddy, former Vice-Sarpanch of Lakshmiapuram and senior Congress leader of Burgampahad mandal, met Superintendent of Police Rohith Raj at the district police office and submitted a representation highlighting several local concerns. During the meeting, he urged the district police to focus on key technical and public safety issues in Burgampahad mandal. He pointed out that Sarapaka and Lakshmiapuram, located near the tri-state border and known for their industrial activity, have witnessed a steady rise in trade, transport movement and population, necessitating enhanced security measures. Reddy requested the installation of CCTV surveillance cameras in sensitive areas of Sarapaka, Gandhinagar and surrounding localities to prevent any untoward or anti-social incidents. He assured the SP that local residents would extend full cooperation as part of their social responsibility to strengthen public safety. Responding to the representation, SP Rohith Raj stated that he would personally visit the region shortly to assess the situation.

## Social Activist Chappidi Prakash Submits Memorandum to Palvai Harish Babu Seeking 108 Ambulance Facility

"Indian Chronicle" Kumram Bheem Asifabad District Report, Jade Srinivas, February 18. "In a significant move highlighting public health concerns, social activist Chappidi Prakash submitted a memorandum to Sirpur MLA Palvai Harish Babu requesting the immediate establishment of a 108 ambulance service at the Primary Health Centre (PHC) in Penchikalpet Mandala headquarters of Kumram Bheem Asifabad district. The activist stated that the absence of a 108 ambulance at the Penchikalpet PHC is causing severe difficulties for residents, especially during medical emergencies. The PHC serves as the primary healthcare facility for several surrounding villages, and in critical situations such as accidents, cardiac emergencies, and complications involving pregnant women, the lack of an emergency ambulance has been putting lives at risk. Chappidi Prakash explained that villagers are often forced to rely on private vehicles to transport patients to distant hospitals, leading to treatment delays and additional financial burdens on economically weaker families. He emphasized that timely medical transportation can make the difference between life and death, particularly in rural and remote areas. The memorandum also highlighted the growing population in the mandala and the urgent need for strengthening emergency medical infrastructure. Prakash urged the MLA to take immediate steps to ensure that a 108 ambulance is stationed permanently at the Penchikalpet Primary Health Centre. Responding positively, MLA Palvai Harish Babu assured that he would take up the matter with the concerned authorities and make efforts to arrange a 108 ambulance for the PHC at the earliest. He acknowledged the seriousness of the issue and expressed his commitment to improving healthcare services in the constituency. The residents of Penchikalpet Mandala have expressed hope that the ambulance service will soon be made available, ensuring timely medical assistance and safeguarding the lives of rural citizens."

## Thanks to everyone who contributed to the conduct of municipal elections

"Jagtial District Congress President Gajangi Nandayya, Jagtial Correspondent Ennam Kishan Reddy, February 18, (Indian Chronicle): "Jagtial District Congress President Gajangi Nandayya expressed gratitude to all Congress party leaders and workers who contributed to the smooth conduct of municipal elections and the election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman. In a statement, Nandayya thanked the District Collector, SP, and district administration for conducting the elections without any hindrance. He also thanked Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, PCC President Mahesh Kumar Goud, Minister Adluri Laxman Kumar, and former Minister Tatiparthi Jeevan Reddy for giving him the opportunity to participate in the municipal election process. Nandayya appreciated the role played by Jagtial MLA Dr. Sanjay Kumar in winning the Congress party's municipal elections and thanked him for his contribution. He congratulated the newly elected Chairmen, Vice-Chairmen, and councillors of Jagtial, Rayakal, Dharmapuri, Korutla, and Metpalli municipalities. Nandayya expressed hope that the municipalities would work towards development under the leadership of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy."

## OC Commission should be established at national level

### OC JAC State Vice President Kishan Reddy, Laxmi Reddy

"Jagtial District Correspondent Ennam Kishan Reddy, February 18, (Indian Chronicle): "OC Welfare Association state vice president Ennam Kishan Reddy and Jagtial district convenor Mahankali Rajanna, led by Vancha Laxmi Reddy, 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, Laxmi Reddy 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 Jagtial district leaders, including Sirsilla Venugopal, Baddam Narayana Reddy, Santa Gautam Reddy, Ayilineni Sivapras Rao, Vuturi Kalyani, Nagisetty Aparna, Chetla Janaki, Vani, Padhma Reddy, Edamala Kalpana (KGBV Special Officer) and Geetha (Government Headmistress) lost their lives in a road accident at Jajireddygudem in Suryapet district. Employees ques-

tion the ethical basis for the differential treatment meted out to regular government employees and contract personnel when both discharge comparable duties with equal commitment. In Andhra Pradesh, since 2018, contract and outsourcing employees who die in accidents are granted ₹5 lakh as ex-gratia, ₹2 lakh in cases of natural death, and ₹15,000 to ₹25,000 towards funeral expenses. CRPs in Telangana contend that, despite the state's formation through a prolonged struggle for justice and self-respect, similar humanitarian safeguards remain conspicuously absent. They further lament that successive political leaders have failed to honour their assurances. During the Telangana statehood movement, former Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao reportedly promised the abolition of contract employment and the regularisation of services. Likewise, prior to assuming office, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy visited the CRPs' hunger-strike camp in Hanamkonda and assured regularisation within a month. Yet, employees allege that these commitments have remained unfulfilled, reinforcing a pattern of political rhetoric unaccompanied by action. TCRPA State President Tirandasu Santosh Kumar remarked: "What kind of governance denies even funeral assistance to an employee who dedicated 14 years of service and died in the line of duty? At the very least, the government must now regularise CRP services and render long-overdue justice." TCRPA State General Secretary Kottakapu Srinivas Reddy stated: "True people's governance lies in honouring promises made before assuming power. Politics must be guided by integrity, not empty assurances. Since education falls under the Concurrent List, both the Central and State Governments share the responsibility to regularise CRP services." As their appeals grow more urgent, CRPs urge the government—and the conscience of Telangana society—to confront this inequity. Their demands are unequivocal: equal pay for equal work, regularisation of long-standing services, and equitable ex-gratia compensation to safeguard the families of those who have fallen in the line of duty."

## Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Collector Hanumantha Rao turns math teacher

"(Mandava Srisailam..Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... February 18):- Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Collector Hanumantha Rao said that class 10 students should study hard and achieve 100 percent pass results. On Wednesday, District Collector Hanumantha Rao conducted a surprise inspection of the Zilla Parishad High School in Pedda Kandukuru village of Yadagirigutta mandal. Speaking on the occasion, the District Collector asked about the number of students in the school and how many of them were studying in class 10. He inquired whether the entire syllabus was completed by subject. He asked whether special classes were being conducted every day and whether students were being given a wake-up call at 5 am every morning. Later, the Collector asked the students studying in 10th class straightforward questions in mathematics and taught the students on the board in a way that they could understand. Since the time of the 10th class exams is approaching, he said that they should study hard from now on and rise to a higher level, make a plan for the exams and study well and pass 100% and earn a good name. The Collector gave a good teaching to the students that the 10th class is the first step for the students to move to a higher level in life. He wanted the students to study twice on the backward subjects and write and research with dedication. The Collector advised that education is the only way to change generations from a poor family to a higher level. He said that good education is provided in government schools, and from now on, people in villages and parents of students should be made aware about the education provided in government schools. He said that the authorities should take steps to ensure that every student in the village studies in a government school. Teachers and school staff participated in this program.



## Malkajgiri MP Etela Rajender Felicitates Newly Elected Uppal Print & Electronic Media Committee



"Kishore Vaddepalli, Uppal, February 18 (Indian Chronicle):" Members of the newly formed Uppal Print & Electronic Media Committee met Etela Rajender, Member of Parliament from Malkajgiri, and conveyed their greetings. During the meeting, held under the lead-

ership of President Vaddepalli Kishore, the MP honored the committee members with ceremonial shawls. Speaking on the occasion, he stated that after 35 years, the establishment of a Press Club in Uppal under the leadership of senior journalist Vaddepalli Kishore is highly commendable. He expressed hope that the new committee would function effectively with unity and mutual cooperation. The MP assured that he would strive to secure necessary facilities from the government whenever required by the committee. He advised the media to work with impartiality and bring public issues to the attention of the government. He also emphasized that the media should take a leading role in creating awareness about development and welfare programs. He further clarified that he would always extend full support to the social service initiatives undertaken by the Uppal Press Club. The meeting was attended by Uppal BJP President Marineni Phaninder, General Secretary Theega Vittal Rao, Treasurer Duvvala Ramesh, and representatives of the Uppal Press Club.

## "Unequal Pay, No Protection: Telangana's CRPs Cry Out for Justice After Years of Neglect"

"P. ASHOKAN" KARIMNAGAR BUREAU. "The deep anguish of Cluster Resource Persons (CRPs) working under the Samagra Shiksha programme of the Telangana School Education Department is reverberating across the state. After more than a decade of unwavering service, these educators allege that governmental indifference has reduced them to perpetual contract employees—underpaid, unprotected, and denied even the most basic humanitarian assistance in the event of accidental death. Appointed in 2011 through the District Selection Committee under the Rule of Reservation and Roster-cum-Merit system—prior to the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh—CRPs have rendered 14 to 15 years of uninterrupted service. Despite possessing professional qualifications such as B.Ed and TET, they continue to draw a modest monthly remuneration of ₹19,500. In stark contrast, their counterparts in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh receive ₹28,500 per month for identical responsibilities, highlighting a glaring disparity in compensation. Currently, approximately 2,027 CRPs are serving across Telangana. Tragically, 135 CRPs have reportedly lost their lives due to accidents and health complications while performing official duties. Employees assert that the government's response to these tragedies has been marked by silence and inaction. The recent deaths of CRPs Ramesh Naik and Erram Srinivas on February 14, 2025, in a road accident while travelling on official duty in Chegunta mandal of Medak district, have intensified public outrage. Even after 14 years of dedicated service, no financial assistance was reportedly extended toward funeral expenses—an omission widely condemned as both insensitive and unjust. Similarly, on January 17, 2026, Mamidala Kalpana (KGBV Special Officer) and Geetha (Government Headmistress) lost their lives in a road accident at Jajireddygudem in Suryapet district. Employees ques-

tion the ethical basis for the differential treatment meted out to regular government employees and contract personnel when both discharge comparable duties with equal commitment. In Andhra Pradesh, since 2018, contract and outsourcing employees who die in accidents are granted ₹5 lakh as ex-gratia, ₹2 lakh in cases of natural death, and ₹15,000 to ₹25,000 towards funeral expenses. CRPs in Telangana contend that, despite the state's formation through a prolonged struggle for justice and self-respect, similar humanitarian safeguards remain conspicuously absent. They further lament that successive political leaders have failed to honour their assurances. During the Telangana statehood movement, former Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao reportedly promised the abolition of contract employment and the regularisation of services. Likewise, prior to assuming office, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy visited the CRPs' hunger-strike camp in Hanamkonda and assured regularisation within a month. Yet, employees allege that these commitments have remained unfulfilled, reinforcing a pattern of political rhetoric unaccompanied by action. TCRPA State President Tirandasu Santosh Kumar remarked: "What kind of governance denies even funeral assistance to an employee who dedicated 14 years of service and died in the line of duty? At the very least, the government must now regularise CRP services and render long-overdue justice." TCRPA State General Secretary Kottakapu Srinivas Reddy stated: "True people's governance lies in honouring promises made before assuming power. Politics must be guided by integrity, not empty assurances. Since education falls under the Concurrent List, both the Central and State Governments share the responsibility to regularise CRP services." As their appeals grow more urgent, CRPs urge the government—and the conscience of Telangana society—to confront this inequity. Their demands are unequivocal: equal pay for equal work, regularisation of long-standing services, and equitable ex-gratia compensation to safeguard the families of those who have fallen in the line of duty.

## Minorities Receive Financial Aid via State Minority Welfare Corporation



"Indian chronicle Babar, Tandur (Feb, 18) "State Minority Welfare Minister Mohammed Azharuddin, Legislative Council Government Chief Whip Dr. Patnam Mahender Reddy, State Government Advisor Shabbir Ali, Chairman of State Minority Finance Corporation Obaidullah Kotwal, Gurukul School Chairman Faheem, MLCS Imphendi and Mirza Rahmat Beg, State Minority Welfare Secretary Shafiqullah, and MGMP Persis Medchal DCC President Vajresh Yadav attended as chief guests." Keynote by Chief Whip Mahender Reddy: "Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is continuously working for the development and welfare of minorities across the state," said Dr. Patnam Mahender Reddy. "He added: "Minister Mohammed Azharuddin and Advisor Shabbir Ali are tirelessly striving for minority upliftment—we stand firmly behind them." Financial Assistance Distributed: "As part of today's statewide financial aid program, support is being extended to minorities in Unified Ranga Reddy & Medchal Districts. This is an ongoing process. Under the Indiramma Minority Women Scheme, we targeted 232 beneficiaries. So far, 225 have been selected—today, we distributed cheques worth ₹1 crore 12 lakh 50 thousand to 5 beneficiaries," he said. "Each eligible woman receives ₹50,000 as financial assistance under Revanth Reddy's 'Bharosa' Scheme." Additionally, bikes are being distributed to minorities under the same scheme. "In Medchal district alone, 25 bikes worth ₹1 lakh each are being handed over—today, 13 beneficiaries received their vehicles," Mahender Reddy announced.

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## 41% VNNSGU students reject NEP's 4th year: Why 'Honours' dream is clashing with reality in Gujarat



GNS News Agency, Feb 18

A survey conducted by the Veer Narmad South Gujarat University (VNNSGU) for undergraduate students in the four year honours programme revealed that over 41 per cent of the nearly 20,000 students who are in the third year said they did not want to continue the fourth year of the "Honours and Research" course introduced in 2023-24 by the university under the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020. In alignment with the NEP, the university intends to begin interest registration for the upcoming academic session, which is why the survey was conducted.

The Vice Chancellor of VNNSGU, Dr K N Chavda, sent a circular to the colleges of South Gujarat affiliated to the varsity, asking them to pass on the details of the circular to the students so that their intention would be known.

The VNNSGU covers seven districts of Gujarat, including Surat, Bharuch, Navsari, Tapi, Valsad, and Dang, as well as the Union Territory of Daman and Diu, and has 263 affiliated colleges. The survey started late in November last year and continued till the end of January. Vice Chancellor Chavda said, "Till date, we have received response of

19,675 students, in which 8,128 (41.31 per cent) students opted for "Exit" after successful completion of 3rd year, 5,878 (29.87 per cent) had shown interest for "Honours", while 706 (3.58 per cent) students had shown interest in "Honours with Research" and 4,963 (25.22 per cent) students had shown interest in Post-Graduation". The circular seen by the Indian Express says, "Interest Registration for 4th Year Honours, 4th Year Honours with Research, or Master's Degree Pathways. Students currently in their 3rd year in different colleges are requested to review the three avenues and register their preferences in the academia ERP system. This pathway involves continuing your undergraduate studies for a fourth year. It focuses on advanced theory and in-depth knowledge of your major subject, making you eligible for a 1-Year Master's degree later." The fourth year of the Honours with Research programme is designed for students who wish to undertake a rigorous research project under faculty supervision. This is highly recommended for students planning to pursue a PhD in the future, as mentioned in the circular.

Those students who wished to exit after three years and join a two-year master's degree were free to, after successfully completing the third year with the standard bachelor's degree and then enrol in a traditional two-year master's degree programme. The survey covered third-year students in the Science, Commerce and Arts faculties. Sources at VNNSGU said students preferred jobs first after completing the third year to help their families financially. "Besides, there are many such students who want to appear for competitive exams conducted by the State government and get a government job, where the minimum qualification is a graduation degree", sources said. Professors at VNNSGU said that students will gain more benefits by saving 2 years of a master's degree by directly entering research activities.

## Panchkula cyberfraud gang busted in Rs 12.2 lakh credit card scam

GNS News Agency, Feb 18

The fraudster allegedly obtained bank account information, debit card number, PIN, etc through phone calls and WhatsApp messages, and then stole around Rs 12.2 lakh (Representative image). The fraudster allegedly obtained bank account information, debit card number, PIN, etc through phone calls and WhatsApp messages, and then stole around Rs 12.2 lakh. The Panchkula Cyber Crime Police has busted an organised gang that allegedly duped an elderly resident of Rs 12.20 lakh on the pretext of issuing a credit card. Among the three individuals arrested, two are in judicial custody. According to police officials, the complainant, a resident of Sector 4, had lodged a complaint on the national cyber portal stating that a caller posing as an employee of Punjab National Bank lured him with an offer to issue a credit card. The fraudster allegedly obtained confidential details such as bank account information, debit card number, PIN and other sensitive data through phone calls and WhatsApp messages, and then siphoned off approximately Rs 12.20 lakh through multiple transactions. Acting on the complaint, police registered a case at the Cyber Crime police station and launched an investigation.

Using I4C inputs, bank transaction records and technical analysis, police identified suspicious bank accounts linked to the fraud. Raids were conducted in Delhi and



Rajasthan, leading to the arrest of two accused — Bhoma Ram and Uda Ram. Based on their interrogation, a third accused, Vivek Kumar Gautam, was later arrested from Delhi. Police said the accused used forged documents and altered addresses to open multiple bank accounts, which were then used to route and withdraw the defrauded money. The seized materials indicate the gang's involvement in organised cyber fraud operations, police added. Two accused have already been sent to judicial custody, while the third is being interrogated. Police said further investigation is underway to identify other members of the network and trace additional financial links.

## Mann returns to hospital after attending Moga rally

GNS News Agency, Sept 21

Mann was admitted to the hospital amid reports of Cabinet reshuffle and appointment of Deputy Chief Minister. Mann was admitted to the hospital amid reports of Cabinet reshuffle and appointment of Deputy Chief Minister. Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann was admitted to a private hospital in Mohali on Monday evening — after addressing the Moga rally — hours after he was discharged from the health facility.

Earlier in the day, Mann was discharged from the hospital and went to Moga to attend an anti-drug drive 'Yudh Nashian Virudh'. However, after addressing the gathering, he returned to the hospital.

Before he was discharged Monday morning, Mann posted on X, "A massive rally is being held today by the Aam Aadmi Party at Killi Chahlan village near Moga... See you there, friends." The event was also attended by AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal and state cabinet ministers. On Sunday, Mann was flown to Mohali by a government chopper and admitted to the hospital. Sources said the chief minister experienced a spike in blood pressure while in Dhuri, prompting immediate medical intervention. The hospital, in a statement released Sunday evening, had



said the CM underwent exhaustion but his condition was stable. Mann was admitted to the hospital amid reports of Cabinet reshuffle and appointment of Deputy Chief Minister.

While the AAP top leadership wanted to elevate Finance Minister Harpal Cheema, Mann was learnt to be backing Social Security, Women and Child Development Minister Baljeet Kaur. The party was considering elevating Industries, Local Bodies and Power Minister Sanjeev Arora also.

## 'Abuse of legal process': Karnataka High Court quashes BJP's 2023 defamation case against Rahul Gandhi over 'corruption rate card' ads

GNS News Agency, Feb 18

The Karnataka High Court Tuesday quashed the criminal defamation proceedings initiated against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi by the state Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) over an alleged defamatory advertisement and social media posts made in 2023, before the Assembly elections. "The petition is allowed, the continuance of further proceedings would amount to an abuse of legal process and the proceedings in CC no 7399/2024 in so far as the petitioner accused no 4, is concerned is set aside," Justice Yadav said in his order. A detailed order of the judgment is yet to be made available. Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar were also named in the case registered under sections 499 and 500 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

The Karnataka BJP filed a complaint with the magistrate's court after alleged "Corruption Rate Card" advertisements were published in a newspaper, claiming that various government posts and transfers under the then-BJP government carried fixed "rates" and "commissions". The BJP alleged that the advertisement was defamatory, false, and based on "fanciful imagination". The court took

cognisance of the matter, and issued a summons.

Senior Advocate Shashi Kiran Shetty, who appeared for Gandhi, argued that the complaint did not disclose any material linking the Congress leader to the publication in question. Shetty also contended that the advertisement was not against the BJP but against the then government in power. He also pointed out that the complaint against Gandhi and others was not filed by the Karnataka Government, but by the state BJP, thus a third-party complaint was not maintainable. Shetty also pointed out to the court that in 2023, Gandhi was neither a Member of Parliament nor held any party position. He further contended that the summons issued by the magistrate suffered from "non-application of mind". Shetty also said there was no evidence showing Gandhi's participation in authorising the advertisement, and no material establishing mens rea. Advocate Vinod Kumar M, representing the Karnataka BJP, opposed Gandhi's petition, submitting that the allegations in the advertisement clearly targeted the party, which was then in power. Further, he submitted that although the advertisement did not explicitly name the party, its content was clearly directed at it, thereby giving the BJP locus to file the complaint.

## Beyond litti-chokha: Bihar govt releases official list of 18 delicacies to showcase its cuisine



Long before famous Bhojpuri singer and BJP leader Manoj Tiwari sang his 'International Litti Chokha' song, Bihar's cuisine has often been identified with the dish made of wheat flour and roasted gram, eaten with mashed, roasted vegetables. The Bihar government has now come out with a list of 18 delicacies from the state, showcasing a cuisine that includes, but goes far beyond, litti-chokha.

Describing litti-chokha, the government's website says: "It consists of wheat and sattu with spices, kneaded into round spicy balls, dipped in ghee. The texture of litti, along with the crunchy crust, makes it a foodie's delight. Chokha is prepared by mashing boiled vegetables (most common being potatoes, brinjal, tomatoes), adding spices and chopped onion, garlic, etc., and served with litti as a complementary delicacy." Kadhi bari, made of besan, or gram flour, also makes the list. This is served with steamed rice. "Accompaniments should be some dry subzi or pakodas, even dry baris or fritters, which are not dipped in the gravy or kadhi, can accompany this dish."

Chana ghughni, a spicy-tangy evening snack, is another item on the list. "Boiled chickpeas, fried with onion and spices along with 'chuda ka bhaja' (flattened rice) make it a perfect answer to satisfy your hunger! Flattened and dried gram is also used to make other salty snacks," the description says. Pittha, a traditional delicacy, bears a resemblance to the popular momo, but boasts a unique flavour profile that sets it apart. This versatile dish can be prepared in both savoury and sweet variations. The semi-circular or ball-shaped pittha is crafted from soft rice flour dough, typically filled with a mixture of chana dal/lentil paste or poppy seeds, and then steamed in water or milk to achieve its distinctive texture.

The list also includes several sweets. Among these

## Kila Raipur sports festival begins today; farmers set for cart race, bulls to debut

GNS News Agency, Feb 18

Banned, debated and nearly forgotten after a decade-long legal freeze, bullock cart racing is set for a dramatic comeback in Ludhiana's Kila Raipur village on Wednesday. The return of the races at the Kila Raipur Rural Olympics also known as Kila Raipur sports festival after a 12-year hiatus. This festival, scheduled from February 17 to 19, has reopened an old chapter of Punjab's rural sporting culture — one that many farmers never stopped believing would resume.

Bullock cart races were banned in Punjab in 2014 following court orders citing concerns about animal cruelty. Since then, the tracks at Kila Raipur had fallen silent to this sport. This year, after prolonged legislative, administrative and political efforts the races are finally back. "I made my former bulls participate in these races from 2007 to 2014 and they had won prizes in all the tournaments — at Kila Raipur and in other villages as well," Arshdeep said. "Even after the race was banned, we never lost hope. I kept training my bulls year after year, hoping the games would restart someday."

This year, his two bulls — Bholu Kaka and Meena — both four years old, will make their competitive debut with Arshdeep on cart. Bought as calves from Haryana for Rs 30,000 each, they were raised "like my own sons", he said. The dairy farmer manages much of their diet from his 20 acres of farm but still spends Rs 1,000-1,500 daily on their feed. "One bull can compete for seven to eight years if taken care of properly," he said, adding that he never stopped caring for them even when races were banned. Another participant, Satnam Singh Billa (45) from Assi Kalan village, has been waiting just as long. A kabaddi coach by profession, Billa will race with his bulls named Rocket (3) and Bugla (4).

Billa said, "Bulls drink milk, eat soaked black gram, almonds, fruits and desi ghee. We train them for nearly an hour daily, whether or not there is a competition... I have made a stretch for them to run where they practice daily." When asked about the cost, Billa said: "Shauk da koi

mul nahi hunda (passion has no price)... I raised my bulls... otherwise a good bull can cost up to Rs 20 lakh." The sports department officials said each round will feature four animals, with the top two advancing to the next round. On February 19, the final day, the 'Super 8' will compete for the top honours. The first prize carries Rs 2.5 lakh (Rs 50,000 for the rider) and the second Rs 1.9 lakh (Rs 40,000 for the rider) and the third Rs 1.3 lakh (Rs 30,000 for the rider), the sports officials said. Participation, however, comes with strict conditions. "Without a medical fitness certificate, bulls cannot take part and the minimum age is 2.5 years," officials said. The officials of the animal husbandry department will carry out the medical examination. By Monday, 32 candidates had already registered. Most entries are expected on Tuesday once animals arrive at the venue, said Gurwinder Singh, a local organiser. The races were halted after the Supreme Court's 2014 ruling prohibiting the use of bulls in entertainment events under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act, 1960. Over the years, there were multiple attempts to bring them. In 2019, the Punjab Assembly passed the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Punjab Amendment) Act to allow bullock cart racing. Meanwhile, animal rights activists wrote to the Ludhiana Deputy Commissioner and the Punjab Governor seeking strict enforcement of welfare norms. Ludhiana DC Himanshu Jain said the administration has formed a high-powered committee to ensure compliance with the Animal Welfare Board of India guidelines, the PCA Act and Punjab government instructions.

Bhuja, which is puffed fried rice mixed with roasted gram; dahi-chooda, which is beaten rice; and khichdi, a soupy preparation with rice and daal; are also on the list. The Bihari thali, a complete lunch or dinner, also makes the list. "It is a composite food choice from Bihar, whose ingredients keep changing on the basis of specific seasons, but the commonest of its ingredients that remain constant throughout the year include rice, roti, achar, chatni, dals, and milk, besides a variety of sweets," the government site description says. Ravishankar Upadhyay, public relations officer with the state's tourism department and author of 'Bihar Ke Vyjan (Bihar's Cuisine)', told The Indian Express: "Our ethnic delicacies go back to the Mauryan period and the time of the Buddha. Pittha, kheer and pua go back to these periods. Ramcharitmanas has a description of dahi-chooda." He said, "We have region-wise delicacies, which need to be advertised."

The list also includes several sweets. Among these



mul nahi hunda (passion has no price)... I raised my bulls... otherwise a good bull can cost up to Rs 20 lakh." The sports department officials said each round will feature four animals, with the top two advancing to the next round. On February 19, the final day, the 'Super 8' will compete for the top honours. The first prize carries Rs 2.5 lakh (Rs 50,000 for the rider) and the second Rs 1.9 lakh (Rs 40,000 for the rider) and the third Rs 1.3 lakh (Rs 30,000 for the rider), the sports officials said. Participation, however, comes with strict conditions. "Without a medical fitness certificate, bulls cannot take part and the minimum age is 2.5 years," officials said. The officials of the animal husbandry department will carry out the medical examination. By Monday, 32 candidates had already registered. Most entries are expected on Tuesday once animals arrive at the venue, said Gurwinder Singh, a local organiser. The races were halted after the Supreme Court's 2014 ruling prohibiting the use of bulls in entertainment events under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act, 1960. Over the years, there were multiple attempts to bring them. In 2019, the Punjab Assembly passed the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Punjab Amendment) Act to allow bullock cart racing. Meanwhile, animal rights activists wrote to the Ludhiana Deputy Commissioner and the Punjab Governor seeking strict enforcement of welfare norms. Ludhiana DC Himanshu Jain said the administration has formed a high-powered committee to ensure compliance with the Animal Welfare Board of India guidelines, the PCA Act and Punjab government instructions.

## VES turns to music and courses to keep Sindhi alive among youth

GNS News Agency, Feb 18

Mumbai's Vivekanand Education Society will host a Sindhi Bhajan Jamming Concert on Saturday as part of its ongoing efforts to preserve and promote the Sindhi language among young people. The event comes amid growing concern over the decline of minority languages and is one of several initiatives undertaken by the Society's Vivek Sindhi Kendra to keep the language alive through structured courses and cultural programmes. The linguistic minority trust, which runs several educational institutions in the city, has been promoting Sindhi through its Vivek Sindhi Kendra, a centre set up nearly three decades ago to keep the language and culture alive among youth. The Kendra began functioning in 1999 to 2000 and offers certificate, diploma and advanced courses in Sindhi that are certified by the National Council for Promotion of Sindhi Language. More than 1,000 students enrol in its courses every year.

Apart from language classes, the centre organises musical events, film screenings and a programme titled Sindhi's Got Talent, where participants present performances inspired by Sindhi literature and culture. Its latest initiative is a Sindhi Bhajan Jamming Concert scheduled for Saturday, aimed at engaging young people through devotional music. Speaking about the concert, VES Secretary Rajesh Gehani said, "Change is inevitable with time but it is equally important that future generations are rooted with the cultural heritage of the community, although with their preferred format of cultural expression."

Gehani said the Kendra was set up after many Sindhi



medium schools in Mumbai began shutting down in the mid 1980s. "Over the years Sindhi language has reshaped to remain relevant from its original Arabic script to a very Indianised Devnagari script. And today we are turning to Romanised Sindhi to make the language more accessible to young generation and children, enabling them to read and engage with it more easily and in due process discover the cultural heritage and collective wisdom preserved in Sindhi literature." Sangeeta Shahani, a member of the VES management team, said the Kendra's location in Chembur, which has a large Sindhi population, has helped families connect their children with the language. "As a result it has become a vital link for Sindhi families from the area to help their children stay connected with Sindhi language and culture," he said, adding that the courses are open to all students, whether or not they belong to the Sindhi community or study in VES institutions.

## Instagram 'swag' to prison cell: How the Lawrence Bishnoi gang uses viral reels to lure youngsters into joining it



GNS News Agency, Feb 18

The gang's social media presence consists of "fan accounts" that upload reels featuring its members projecting a sense of "swag," at times even from court premises.

The majority of the seven accused arrested in connection with the Rohit Shetty firing case are in their early twenties and fit the profile of youngsters from North Indian states who, in recent years, have been enamoured by the Lawrence Bishnoi gang through their social media presence. According to officers, the seven accused arrested Monday said in their initial interrogation they were "motivated by several accounts linked to the Shubham Lonkar gang on Facebook and Instagram, glorifying their work".

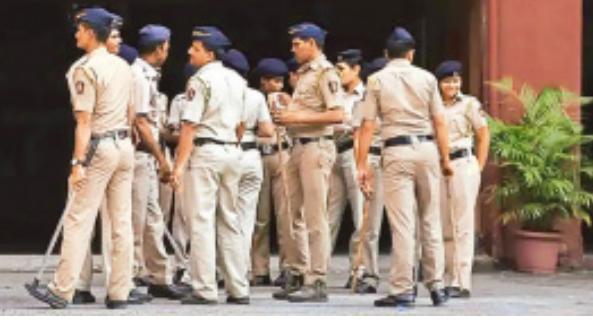
The Mumbai police nabbed the men in a joint operation with the Uttar Pradesh Special Task Force (STF) from Haryana and UP. The city police have named Shubham Lonkar as the mastermind of the firing at Shetty's Juhu bungalow, which was carried out earlier this month. The gang's social media presence consists of "fan accounts" that upload reels featuring its members projecting a sense of "swag," at times even from court premises. In October 2023, the Punjab Police informed the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, heads of state police forces and anti-terror agencies that they had blocked over 6,000 such social media accounts.

The Mumbai police, which have had the gang in their crosshairs for the past two years, said they are also moni-

toring social media accounts linked to the group and getting them blocked. They found that, unlike Mumbai's underworld of yore, which operated under layers of secrecy, the Lawrence Bishnoi gang openly used social media platforms. "While we cracked down on the gang's social media accounts, it is not possible to keep it down all the time as new accounts can be created," an officer said. A UP STF officer said that during the initial interrogation, the arrested accused said they were lured by social media to work for the gang and had an opportunity when someone from their village linked to the gang approached them. The gang cultivates its image through "fan accounts" on platforms such as Instagram. These accounts share reels, photographs of young men posing with AK-47 rifles, and videos of Lawrence Bishnoi attending court hearings in Bhagat Singh T-shirts.

These accounts are usually the first to share posts claiming responsibility for attacks or killings carried out by gang members. These posts garner thousands of likes on social media, keeping the aura of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang alive. "Since they already have a platform, the gang does not find it difficult to create an impression among youngsters through reels uploaded online. A lot of times, youngsters send Direct Messages to these social media accounts 'requesting an opportunity' to work for them," said an officer. While underworld gangs in the past had to look for sharpshooters and pay them large sums, some youngsters who approach the Bishnoi gang are just excited to work for them and ready to carry out a task for a pittance, said the officer. The officer said that there are several Bishnoi fan accounts that have added 302 and 307, the now-scraped Indian Penal Code sections for murder and attempt to murder, to their Instagram handles to boast of their criminal nature, make a statement, and also catch the eye of those at the top layers of the gang. An officer said another lure that was at least initially promised by the Bishnoi gang to these youngsters who come from impoverished or broken families is the promise of a "new life" in Canada. "Youngsters look at these glamorous reels and think they could be the next big thing and are willing to do anything to achieve it. It is only when they land in prison for years that they realise the folly of their actions," an officer said. Anuj Thapar, one of the six accused in the firing case outside actor Salman Khan's residence, allegedly died by suicide in the Crime Branch lock-up after his arrest.

## After schools, airport, and IT companies, bomb threat emails disrupt courts in Karnataka



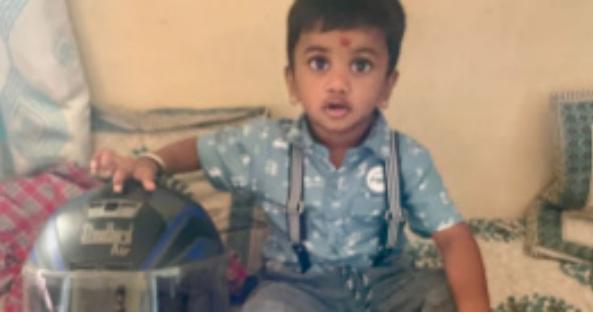
GNS News Agency, Feb 18

The police evacuated lawyers, staff, and court personnel from all affected buildings as a precautionary measure. The police evacuated lawyers, staff, and court personnel from all affected buildings as a precautionary measure. (File photo) Multiple courts across Karnataka received bomb threats on Monday, leading to mass evacuations and intensive security operations before authorities confirmed all alerts were hoaxes. The threatening emails targeted the Karnataka High Court's Dharwad Bench and district courts in Bengaluru South, Mandy, Kodagu, and Mangaluru, triggering immediate emergency protocols across the state. Court proceedings were suspended following the threat emails. The police evacuated lawyers, staff, and court personnel from all affected buildings as a precau-

tory measure. They cordoned off the premises while bomb disposal squads and canine units conducted comprehensive searches.

In Bengaluru South, authorities received an email at approximately 12.35 pm claiming that twelve RDX bombs had been planted on court premises. The threat was confirmed as fraudulent, and no suspicious objects were found after extensive searches by the police, bomb disposal teams, and sniffer dogs. Similar hoax emails were received at the Mangaluru district court and the Kodagu district court in Madiikeri, both of which underwent thorough inspections that yielded no evidence of explosives. At the Dharwad High Court, Gunjan Arya, Superintendent of Police, personally supervised the security operation. Speaking to reporters, she said the threatening message specified an explosion time of 1.15 pm and contained references to multiple states. "We are conducting a full inspection. Only our personnel are inside," Arya said, adding that further details couldn't be shared as the investigation was ongoing. In Mandy, court proceedings were temporarily suspended while judges, lawyers, and litigants were evacuated. The Bomb Disposal Squad worked alongside the local police to search the premises. Despite the disruptions proving baseless, the incidents caused significant interruptions to judicial proceedings across Karnataka. The police in respective districts have registered cases and launched investigations to trace the email sources and identify those responsible for sending the threats.

## 2-year-old killed in Bengaluru crash; residents protest bad roads, traffic mismanagement



GNS News Agency, Feb 18

Due to the impact, the child fell onto the road, and the car reportedly ran over him, causing grievous injuries. Due to the impact, the child fell onto the road, and the car reportedly ran over him, causing grievous injuries. A two-year-old boy was killed after a speeding car allegedly rammed into a scooter and ran over him in Bengaluru's KR Puram Sunday evening, triggering protests by residents who blamed poor road conditions and traffic mismanagement for the accident.

According to the complaint, the accident occurred around 6 pm while Vijayalakshmi was travelling on a scooter with her son, Badri, and her two-year-old, Trishan. They were heading from Kithaganur towards the Margondanahalli Shiva Temple. The police said the scooter had slowed amid traffic in front of Carry Food Super Market when a car, allegedly driven at high speed and rashly and negligently from the same direction, rammed the two-wheeler from behind.

Due to the impact, the child fell onto the road, and the car reportedly ran over him, causing grievous injuries. He was immediately shifted to Ovum Hospital in Bhattarhalli, where doctors declared him dead. "The car hit the scooter from behind while being driven in a rash and negligent manner. The child fell on the road and was run over. We have arrested the driver and registered a case under sections 281 (rash or negligent driving) and 106(1) (death by any rash or negligent act) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Samhita

(BNS)," a senior officer from the K R Puram traffic police said.

The driver has been identified as Krishna Mohan Memon, and was taken into custody. Soon after the accident, angry passersby and residents staged a protest at the scene. They alleged that the stretch of Kithaganur Main Road where the accident occurred is in a dilapidated condition and demanded immediate repairs. The protesters shouted slogans against the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) for failing to fix the damaged road and against the traffic police for alleged mismanagement and lack of proper regulation on the congested stretch. The police later pacified the protesters and assured them that their concerns would be conveyed to the authorities concerned. Further investigation is underway, they added.

## Tiger kills three cattle in Ellantakunta mandal of Karimnagar district

Hyderabad: Panic prevailed in the villages of Ellantakunta mandal in Karimnagar district after a tiger attacked three cattle at Thippapuram village outskirts on Monday night.

The wandering tiger that had stayed put at the reserve forest in Chinnakondur mandal of Siddipet for last four days travelled a distance of around roughly 35 km and attacked the cattle on Monday night. A farmer who owns the cattle went to the shed in the morning and found the cattle dead. On noticing the pugmarks of tiger around, the man alerted the villagers. On information the local police and forest officials reached the spot. The forest teams are trying to trace the route taken by the tiger and its location. The people in the mandal were asked to be on alert in view of the movement of tiger.

## Winning 3 tractors, 3 bikes, Rs 50k twice in just 2 months: 5-year-old Rafael is no ordinary cow



GNS News Agency, Feb 18

Winning three tractors, three motorcycles and two cash prizes of Rs 50,000 each, and dominating major dairy events across Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan in just two months — 'Rafael' is not an ordinary cow. The five-year-old Holstein Friesian (HF) bovine has to her credit an astounding record of producing 79.215 kilograms of milk in a single day, and taking centre stage by securing first position at north India's premier livestock competitions. Owned by 36-year-old progressive dairy farmer Pritpal Singh of Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar (Nawanshahr) district, Rafael's latest and most talked-about victory came at the 19th International Dairy and Agriculture Expo organised by the Progressive Dairy Farmers Association (PDFA) in Jagraon from February 7 to 9, where she outperformed elite high-yielding cows to reinforce Punjab's growing reputation as a hub of record-breaking dairy production.

Competing in the elite Holstein Friesian (HF) category, where all participating cows produce more than 50 litres per day, Rafael recorded an astounding 79.215 kilograms of milk in a single day, securing the first position among entries from multiple states. Interestingly, the second position in the same HF class competition was also secured by another cow from Singh's farm, which produced 76.125 kg of milk in a day. The third position went to an HF cow from Kulhar, Ludhiana, with a yield of 74.467 kg.

However, what makes Rafael's achievement remarkable is not just the number, but the context. According to Pritpal, the cow typically produces even more milk at home. "When cattle move to a new environment, they take time to adjust. Despite that, Rafael gave nearly 80 kg in a single day. At home, she produces even more milk," he said. After winning first place, Rafael brought home a tractor, adding to the family's growing collection of prize-winning farm vehicles. From December 1 to date, the cow has helped the family win three tractors and three motorcycles by excelling not only in the milking category but also in other segments like physical standards and overall breed quality. "She

is unstoppable, that's why we named her Rafael," Pritpal said with pride. "Rafael, a pure HF cow breed, was only two years old when she first participated in the 2022 Jagraon expo in the HF two teeth milking category and won the first prize. Then it participated in 2025 and won first prize again. This year, too, Rafael won the first prize in the milking breed category, and was awarded a tractor and a cash prize of Rs 50,000, in another category."

The family has retained all tractors she won for farm use. "For us, Rafael is more than a prize-winning cow. She represents years of disciplined breeding, careful feeding and professional farm management," Pritpal said, adding that in the recently held Kurukshetra, and Rajasthan Pehova competitions, the cow won two motorcycles and a cash prize. From 10 to 90 cows: A farmer's journey Pritpal's father, Chaman Singh, began dairy farming long ago but discontinued it after some time. In 2010, Chaman Singh, along with son Pritpal, again began dairy farming with just 10 cows. Today, their herd has expanded to around 90 animals, of which nearly half are in milk, while the rest are calves. Most of his animals are Holstein Friesians, while five to seven are Jersey cows. The family manages nearly 12 acres of joint-family land and 10 acres on lease, producing vegetables and fodder. Five-year-old Rafael has delivered three calves. The farm places strong emphasis on animal health, nutrition and hoof care. High-yielding cows are fed around 80 to 90 kilograms of green fodder and a balanced ration daily.

According to the family, feed and related costs for top-yielding animals can reach around Rs 2,000 a day. With milk prices ranging from Rs 40 to Rs 55 per kilogram, Rafael alone generates an estimated monthly benefit of around Rs 60,000 after meeting feed and maintenance expenses.

The Progressive Dairy Farmers Association (PDFA), which organises competitions, represents over 12,000 dairy farmers in Punjab, and has transformed dairy into a technology-driven enterprise built on three pillars — genetics, nutrition and scientific management. After studying best practices in countries such as the United States, the Netherlands, Germany and Brazil, PDFA adapted global models to local conditions. PDFA president Daljeet Singh said, "The three-day milking and breeding contests are among India's most transparent, with strict breed categories, standardised measurements and international judges. Farmers and officials from Europe now visit the expo to understand Punjab's rapid genetic progress." National coordinator Uday Tiwari said, "The expo attracts over 300,000 farmers annually, making it one of the largest dairy gatherings globally. Alongside competitions, it hosts seminars and exhibitions by leading dairy equipment and nutrition companies, emerging as a national knowledge hub."

## ED attaches 1.36 crore assets of former Punjab civil supplies official in disproportionate assets case



GNS News Agency, Feb 18

The ED's Bhopal Zonal Office filed a Prosecution Complaint (PC) on January 28, 2026, against Mark Pius Karari, the former Branch Manager of Punjab National Bank in Ashta, Sehore district, and four others. ED Jalandhar attaches five properties worth ₹1.36 crore linked to former deputy director Rakesh Kumar Singla. The Enforcement Directorate's (ED) Jalandhar zonal office has provisionally attached five immovable properties worth approximately ₹1.36 crore in connection with a disproportionate assets case involving Rakesh Kumar Singla, a former deputy di-

rector at Punjab's Food and Civil Supplies Department.

The action has been taken under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002. The attached properties are stated to be linked to Singla and his wife, Rachna Singla. The ED initiated its investigation on the basis of a First Information Report (FIR) registered by the Vigilance Bureau of the Punjab Police. The case pertains to allegations that Singla amassed assets disproportionate to his known sources of income. According to officials, the investigation revealed that Singla allegedly acquired substantial assets through illegal gratification during his tenure in public office. The proceeds of crime were reportedly deposited in bank accounts held by him and his family members. Investigators further allege that the funds were layered through various entities and invested in immovable properties to project them as legitimate income. Under the PMLA framework, provisional attachment is aimed at preventing the disposal or transfer of assets suspected to be derived from unlawful activities while the investigation continues. Officials stated that further investigation is underway to identify additional assets and examine the money trail. The agency is also scrutinising financial transactions and possible involvement of other individuals or entities connected to the case.

## 'Mumbai to become climate finance gateway for Global South: Devendra Fadnavis inaugurates MCW 2026 summit

GNS News Agency, Feb 18

Climate change is a governance challenge and should be addressed seriously, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said Tuesday on the opening day of Mumbai Climate Week (MCW) 2026. "Mumbai as a city has remained resilient over extreme climate change events. Over here, extreme rainfall events are not statistics, and heatwaves are not graphs. Here, we see trains halted, disrupting livelihoods. That's why tackling the climate crisis is the need of the hour," Fadnavis said after inaugurating the three-day MCW summit.

At the event, the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRA) signed a Memorandum of Cooperation on 'Urban Heat Mitigation, Passive Cooling and Nature-based Resilience systems, Climate adaptation frameworks' with United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), World Resources Institute (WRI), C40, and Urban Land Institute (ULI). The opening event also saw the launch of the theme report for MCW, 'Climate in the Global South: Advancing innovation and collective action'. Fadnavis also said that Mumbai, India's financial capital, can become a climate finance gateway for the Global South. "Scale of climate transition requires patient capital and confidence in execution. Mumbai has deep financial markets and growing green finance platforms. Therefore, we invite global institutions to partner with us for making scalable models to counter climate change, which other economies can replicate."

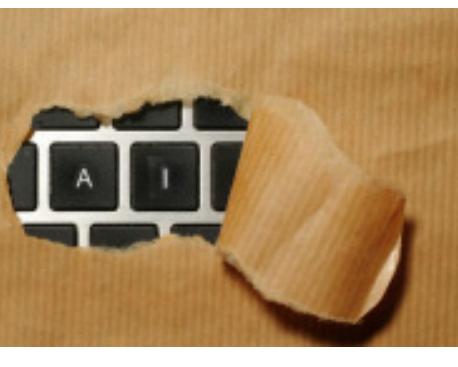
The MCW is India's first platform dedicated to accelerating transformative, citizen-driven climate action in the Global South. Global leaders and policymakers converge at the summit to advance climate sustainability and growth. According to Fadnavis, Maharashtra leads the way in renewable energy. "India added an additional 55 gigawatts to its 552 gigawatt installed capacity in just one year, the fastest ever and 75 per cent renewable sources have led this. I am proud to say most of this has come from Maharashtra." "In Maharashtra, we are roughly at 48 gigawatt installed capacity with 21 per cent renewable, but this



number will change significantly by 2030, when we approach 84 gigawatt installed capacity, we will have more than 50 per cent from green and clean sources. We are doing this by saving green hydrogen, electric mobility, biofuels and sustainable infrastructure," Fadnavis added.

Speaking during the launch, Prahlad Joshi, Union Minister of New and Renewable Energy, announced 1 lakh additional solar pumps for Maharashtra under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha Evam Utthan Mahabhiyan (PM Kusum) scheme. "Being the fourth largest economy in the world, India's emissions have come down in the last 10 years. We are decoupling growth and emissions. This is the first of its kind globally, and Maharashtra is leading on that front. Maharashtra is becoming a model of how economic growth and environmental protection can go hand in hand, a model many states are now following. Therefore, Mumbai should become the voice of Global action," said Joshi. He added, "When the PM Kusum yojana, which looks at the conversion of agricultural pumps into solar pumps, was announced, it was very slow. In Maharashtra, Devendra Fadnavis made it into a people's movement and brought in a revolution. In Maharashtra, under the PM Kusum programme, the cost of energy production is Rs 3, with Rs 5 in savings: electricity is generated by farmers, consumed on-site, and any excess is fed into the power grid."

## Who wins the science prize when AI makes the discovery?



need to be mindful that this line will always be arbitrary — a convention rather than some sort of natural joint in reality.

So finally the question becomes: how do we draw this line? People usually draw it in a way that favours those closer to the end of the chain, working in wealthy institutions, in countries with strong intellectual property regimes, and established scientific bureaucracies. The people whose labour is distant — in time, space, and/or the social hierarchy — get written out as the conditions of possibility. Crucially, when an AI makes a discovery, this arbitrariness becomes impossible to ignore because all the normally invisible labour is evident in the model's workflow. Hundreds of machine-learning researchers built the model, in the process practically inventing a way to explore mathematics that didn't exist before. If a new technique to prove something usually gets you credit — mathematicians have won Fields Medals for such work — why doesn't inventing a machine that invents techniques count? Then there are the training data and computing resources: the former is accumulated human knowledge from textbooks and research papers annotated by poorly paid data workers whose names appear nowhere, and the latter has been made possible only by a few organisations that can afford to train models at such large scale.

Stories about achievementThe Nobel committees might say all of that matters but it's not the discovery; that would be only the specific science result. And that the people who should get the prize are the ones who can explain it and take intellectual responsibility for it. But this just pushes the problem back. Taking "intellectual responsibility" is also a social role we've invented: in practice it means to be the person who gives talks, writes the papers, gets invited to conferences, has the PhD, and has the faculty position. It means occupying a place in the prestige economy that lets you speak for a result as being "yours". And this position is itself the product of truckloads of background labour that we've already agreed to not count. But here's the thing: the Nobel Prizes are already arbitrary. They always have been, less in the sense that they reward the wrong people (though sometimes they do) and more in the sense that the category of 'primary discoverer' is a fiction we've all agreed to believe in. Science is not done by individual geniuses who've had flashes of insight in isolation. It's done by big, diffuse networks, networks stretching across generations and continents. Every discovery is underwritten by thousands of people whose contributions are individually small but collectively indispensable. So when we give a prize to one person, or three people, we're just telling a story that makes reality easier to process and reward rather than describing reality itself.

This isn't necessarily bad. Stories about individual achievement can motivate others to do better. They give people something to aim for. And maybe that pretense is useful even if it's not exactly true. But it comes at a cost. The story of individual genius erases the infrastructure that makes genius possible. It treats labour as either 'creative' and thus deserving of prizes or as mechanical and thus just a cost of doing business. It takes the last person to touch the result and calls them the author, as if the result just popped out of their head with no other dependencies.

Too useful as a signalThe problem may be unfixable since it's baked into how we think about achievement. We want to be able to say "this person did this thing" but the world doesn't actually work that way. And maybe that's just how it has to be. Maybe there's no way to give out a 'scarce' prize without replicating the inequalities that produced the discovery in the first place. Or maybe the prize itself is the problem. Maybe the whole idea of singling out individuals is a mistake — a 19th century relic from back when we could still pretend science was done by lone polymaths working in labs rather than by sprawling global supply chains of human and machine cognition. But we can't get rid of the Nobel Prizes: they're too embedded, too useful as a signal, and — yes — too good at generating headlines. We're stuck with them and we have to make them work somehow, so the best we can probably do is use the prize as an occasion to talk about everything it doesn't capture. Every time someone wins a Nobel Prize, we can make it a moment to foreground all the people who didn't, and not in a "let's indulge our guilt" way but more in a "here's how knowledge actually gets made" way. It's not a solution but at least it's not a lie.

Noticing the arbitrarinessHowever, even this final step is an artefact of how we tell stories. At some point we have to draw a line and say, "these people count as discoverers and all those other people are in the background". And we

In 1974, Antony Hewish won the physics Nobel Prize for discovering pulsars. His graduate student, Jocelyn Bell Burnell, had actually spotted the first one in the data; she'd also built parts of the telescope herself, analysed the charts, noticed the anomaly, and helped confirm that it was real. But she didn't win the prize. At the time, the Nobel committee argued that Hewish had designed the telescope and directed the research programme. The fact that Bell Burnell's eyes and judgment were the ones that caught the signal didn't register as the decisive contribution. In fact, in the committee's apparent view, she was doing what graduate students do: executing a senior scientist's vision. Let's reimagine this scenario by replacing Bell Burnell with an AI, and the question stays the same: when a crucial insight or calculation emerges from something that isn't the senior scientist's own brain, how do we decide who 'made' the discovery?

Suppose an AI system solves a longstanding problem in mathematical physics — say, the existence and smoothness of the Navier-Stokes equations — and produces a proof. Human mathematicians confirm the proof is correct. Who should win the Nobel Prize?

On February 13, OpenAI announced that its AI model GPT-5.2 had helped a group of scientists "derive a new result in theoretical physics". The (human) scientists posed the original question. GPT-5.2 suggested a potential solution. Then OpenAI built an internal model that fleshed the solution out as well as — this is important — provided it. The scientists finally verified it (verifiability is also important), and voila. The first instinct might be to say it should be the humans who asked the question, set up the problem, and knew what would count as a solution. The AI model is just a powerful calculator. When Andrew Wiles proved Fermat's Last Theorem using computer verification, nobody suggested the computer should share credit; it was only checking cases Wiles had fully specified. But if an AI generates a proof humans can verify but not fully reconstruct, they're more like curators than coauthors and shouldn't win the prize. Discovery implies understanding.

So then let's award the prize to someone that can actually do that. The humans who didn't just prompt the AI but who supplied the constraints, the sanity checks, the conceptual ideas that made the solution legible as mathematics, etc. That sounds reasonable... right? The problem is if that sounds reasonable to you, you've also admitted there's a clear line between the intellectual work undergirding the solution and the infrastructure that makes it possible. Why did Hewish alone receive the Nobel Prize instead of the technicians who built the radio receiver? Or the engineers who figured out how to filter atmospheric noise? Because, the story goes, they were all part of the necessary conditions, not of the discovery itself. The discovery was in noticing that the signal was anomalous, something new. That was an intellectual act whereas building the telescope was engineering.

Fine.\* But then what about the theoretical physicists in the 1930s who first calculated that neutron stars should exist? Without their work, Hewish and Bell Burnell may not have known what they were looking at. Should they have been co-laureates as well? "Of course not," you say. Their work was foundational but it was already part of the scientific background. And the Nobel Prizes reward only the final step, not the whole ladder.

Noticing the arbitrarinessHowever, even this final step is an artefact of how we tell stories. At some point we have to draw a line and say, "these people count as discoverers and all those other people are in the background". And we

## What are bio-based chemicals and enzymes? | Explained

The story so far: Bio-based chemicals are industrial chemicals produced using biological feedstocks like sugarcane, corn, starch, or biomass residues, often through fermentation or enzymatic processes. Examples include organic acids (such as lactic acid), bio-alcohols, solvents, surfactants, and intermediates used in plastics, cosmetics, and pharmaceuticals. Enzymes are biological catalysts widely used in detergents, food processing, pharmaceuticals, textiles, pulp and paper, and increasingly in biomanufacturing. Enzymes often work at lower temperatures and pressures, reducing energy use and emissions.

Why does India need such chemicals?

India has strong fundamentals for scaling bio-based chemicals and enzymes: a large agricultural base, deep expertise in fermentation from pharmaceuticals and vaccines, and a growing manufacturing sector. Expanding this space could reduce import dependence on petrochemicals, create new markets for agricultural produce, and position India as a competitive supplier of sustainable industrial inputs. For example, India imported roughly \$479.8 million worth of acetic acid in 2023.

Where does India stand today?

India has prioritised bio-based chemicals and enzymes as a priority area under the Department of Biotechnology's BioE3 policy. In the bio-based chemicals segment, companies such as Praj Industries and Godrej Industries are leading. Other firms such as Godavari Biorefineries are pioneering ethanol-based, bio-derived chemicals in India, while Jubilant Ingrevia produces "acetyls" intermediates (for example, acetic anhydride/ethyl acetate). Emerging companies such as StringBio are using novel microbial strategies to develop such chemicals. The India enzymes market is consolidated in nature with top players accounting for more than 75% of the market share. Companies such as Novozymes India, DuPont, DSM, Advance Enzyme Technologies, BASF SE, and Ultreze Enzymes Private Limited are key players in the Indian market.

What are other countries doing?

The EU Bioeconomy Strategy and Action Plan provides coordinated support for bio-based chemicals as part



of circular bioeconomy goals. It links industrial transformation to climate goals, waste reduction, and sustainable growth. In the U.S., the USDA BioPreferred Program mandates federal procurement preference for certified bio-based products, including chemicals and enzymes, creating early markets for producers. China's bioeconomy development plans explicitly prioritise high-value bio-based chemicals and enzyme technologies as strategic sectors. In Japan, priority projects funded through METI/NARO integrate bio-based chemical research with manufacturing readiness.

What are the risks?

A key risk in developing the bio-based chemicals sector is the comparative cost of bio-based products relative to petrochemical alternatives. While this cost disadvantage may be temporary and limited to early stages of scale-up, it nonetheless creates a significant entry barrier for private investment. A second risk relates to the availability of reliable feedstocks and supporting infrastructure required to produce different categories of bio-based chemicals at scale. A third challenge lies in market adoption — specifically, whether bio-based chemicals can seamlessly substitute existing inputs in manufacturing pipelines and whether downstream manufacturers are willing to switch, even when costs are comparable. Scaling shared biomanufacturing infrastructure — such as biofoundries, pilot plants, and demonstration facilities under BioE3 — can reduce capital risk for firms. Clear standards, certification, and procurement policies can help create build investor confidence.

## How district cooling can ease India's climate and urban planning troubles



With rising temperatures, longer heatwaves, and a rapidly growing urban economy, cooling in India is rapidly shifting from a lifestyle choice to a basic need, driving up air-conditioner use in homes and workplaces. This surge is now a major part of cities' power demand, in turn raising concerns about blackouts and higher emissions and about keeping urban areas livable. In this context, planners and experts are looking at district cooling as a way to keep people comfortable while using less electricity and emitting less carbon.

A central coolerDistrict cooling is a centralised system that supplies air-conditioning to a cluster of buildings, like a shared air-conditioner for an entire neighbourhood or campus. Instead of every building running its own chillers or rooftop units, one large plant makes chilled water and sends it through insulated underground pipes to many buildings, much like a public utility such as piped natural gas or electricity.

Inside each building, this water passes through heat exchangers, cools the indoor air by absorbing heat, then returns slightly warmer to the central plant, where it's cooled again and sent back into the network. Buildings therefore don't need to install or operate large cooling systems. They simply draw 'cooling as a service' from the network. ?Like other utilities, district cooling usually follows a multi-part tariff: a one-time connection charge to join the network, a fixed demand charge based on the maximum cooling capacity, and a consumption charge based on actual cooling energy used.?

Efficiency gainsDistrict cooling plants use large, high-efficiency chillers and cooling towers to deliver more cooling from each unit of electricity than individual building systems. They typically supply chilled water at about 6-7°C and receive it back at around 12-14°C, after it has absorbed heat. Many systems use thermal storage so that 20-40% of the cooling can be produced at night, when demand and tariffs are lower.

Together, these choices allow well-run systems to operate roughly twice as efficiently as many stand-alone building chillers, cutting electricity use for cooling by 30-50% and reducing peak demand on the grid by 20-30%.? These efficiency gains translate into important environmental benefits. Lower electricity use means greenhouse gas emissions can fall by roughly 15-40% while concentrating equipment in a one unified plant can cut refrigerant volumes in buildings by up to 80%, reducing leak risks. At the street level, fewer small outdoor units spewing hot air outside can also mitigate the urban heat-island effect. Some districts abroad have already reported local temperature drops of 1-2°C where such systems operate. ?Water use is often raised as a concern, especially in water-stressed cities. In district cooling systems, the chilled water circulating between the plant and buildings runs in a closed loop and consumes very little water. A district cooling plant of about 10,000 tonnes of capacity typically requires a little over one kilolitre of make-up water during cooling tower operation. Because these systems are built at scale and centrally managed, they can also be designed to use treated sewage or waste-water.

Making senseAll of this connects directly to India's

National Cooling Action Plan. Using less power for cooling and shifting part of the load to the night eases pressure on the grid, improving energy security and reducing the risk of outages during heatwaves, when people most need cooling. Lower emissions and easier use of low/zero global warming potential refrigerants in central plants support India's climate goals and its Kigali commitments to phase down hydrofluorocarbons while reliable, high-quality cooling underpins the growth of services, IT, hospitals and data centres in dense urban areas. By freeing up rooftops and indoor space otherwise taken up by cooling equipment, district cooling can also help cities use urban land better, making it a tool of comfort as much as climate action and smarter urbanisation.?

District cooling works best where cooling demand is high, dense, and predictable. This makes it suitable for commercial districts, transit-oriented corridors, airports and aerotropolis, hospitals, universities, and IT parks. In India, Navi Mumbai, Hyderabad's financial districts, Ahmedabad's GIFT City, and parts of Bengaluru are often cited as strong candidates because they combine new development, dense commercial loads, and planned infrastructure. ?Business caseFor operators, district cooling is a utility-style business with revenue typically coming from a one-time connection charge, a fixed demand charge, and a variable consumption charge. The model can be financially attractive if there are enough long-term customers and city planning offers certainty about future demand. ?For customers, cooling can account for 30-50% of electricity use in many commercial buildings, and by using energy more efficiently and sharing infrastructure, district cooling can cut operating costs by about 20-40% over the life of a project.

Not having to install separate chillers and cooling towers in each building can also save developers 5-10% of project cost and unlock 1-2% extra usable or saleable space. Utility-grade reliability (often above 99.9%) is also a major plus for hospitals and data centres. ?The main concern is the fixed demand charge: customers pay for reserved capacity even if the building is partly empty.

If they over-estimate their needs or have inefficient internal systems that waste chilled water, bills can feel high, making good building design and right-sizing of contracts crucial. ?For electricity utilities, the primary benefit is lower peak load from air-conditioning during hot afternoons. District systems use large, efficient chillers, benefit from diversity where different buildings peak at different times, and often include thermal storage to shift 20-40% of cooling production to the night, helping flatten daytime peaks. This allows utilities to avoid or defer new peak load plants and reduce purchases of expensive peak power. Economy of scaleTo move to a real network of district cooling systems, many players need to work together. Urban authorities should demarcate district cooling zones in master plans, set aside land for plants and pipe corridors, and coordinate underground utilities. Municipal bodies need to be empowered and strengthened to introduce clear concession rules, service standards, and long-term frameworks so private players know how they will recover investments. Likewise, state electricity regulators and DISCOMs can consider shifting loads from day to night as a formal demand-side resource, link it to tariff design, and recognise the value of avoided peak capacity. Central agencies can also issue standard technical guidelines and model PPP contracts while developers design new buildings with ready connection points and compatible internal piping. ?GIFT City in Gujarat has already demonstrated district cooling. Studies here have suggested full deployment could reduce power demand by around 6,100 MW, save about 7,850 GWh annually, and avoid roughly 6.6 million tonnes of CO2 emissions each year. With effective coordination and clear governance frameworks, Indian cities can replicate and expand such examples, transforming cooling from a climate vulnerability into a cornerstone of sustainable, resilient urban infrastructure.

## The UAE-India corridor is sparking a growth story

Something remarkable has happened in the economic relationship between India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). When the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) was signed in 2022, both sides had set a target of \$100 billion in bilateral trade by 2030. That milestone was reached five years ahead of schedule. In January this year, leaders set a new target of \$200 billion by 2032. Few economic corridors in the world today are moving with the speed and ambition of this one.

The scale and direction

The numbers tell part of the story. Non-oil trade between the two countries grew nearly 20% last year to reach \$65 billion, demonstrating that this partnership has moved well beyond its energy origins. UAE entities have invested over \$22 billion into India since 2000, while Indian companies have invested more than \$16 billion into the UAE. Nearly five million Indian nationals live and work in the Emirates, forming its largest diaspora community and the human backbone of a corridor that now supports over 1,200 flights a week between the two countries — one of the busiest air routes on earth.

But what excites the most is not just the scale. It is the direction. This corridor is being reshaped by advanced manufacturing, financial services, technology, and logistics. Reliance Industries has partnered with TA'ZIZ on a \$2 billion-plus investment in low-carbon chemicals manufacturing in Abu Dhabi. Ashok Leyland has relocated its electric bus production from the United Kingdom to the UAE. Larsen & Toubro has been selected as preferred contractor for one of the world's most ambitious solar-plus-storage projects in Abu Dhabi. Indian banks, technology firms, and healthcare companies are building real operational presence across the Emirates. These are not tentative first steps. They are confident long-term industrial commitments.

Investment is flowing with equal conviction in the other direction. DP World has committed an additional \$5 billion to Indian infrastructure, expanding its already extensive network of ports and logistics parks across the country. Emirates NBD's acquisition of a majority stake in RBL Bank represents the largest single foreign direct investment in Indian banking history. ADNOC has signed long-term LNG supply agreements with Indian Oil Corporation Ltd and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited worth billions of dollars. Mubadala has deployed over \$4 billion across Indian health care, renewables, and technology platforms. Abu Dhabi Investment Authority became the first sovereign wealth fund to establish a base in India's GIFT City.

It is for the long termWhat underpins all of this is trust

built over decades, reinforced by human connections, and supported by a policy architecture — the CEPA, which eliminated tariffs on roughly 90% of tariff lines, the 2024 Bilateral Investment Treaty, and now a strategic defence partnership — that gives businesses the certainty to make long-term bets. The ambition is now extending into third markets. Bharat Mart, currently under construction in the UAE, will serve as a wholesale hub for Indian goods targeting Africa, West Asia and Eurasia, aiming to help double India's exports to these regions. India and the UAE are also exploring joint digital infrastructure and capacity-building initiatives across Africa. The corridor is becoming a platform not just for bilateral exchange but also for global reach.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is emerging as the next major frontier for this corridor. India this week hosts the AI Impact Summit in New Delhi (February 16-20, 2026) — the first global AI summit held in the Global South. It is a powerful statement of India's growing role in shaping how this technology develops and is governed. The UAE, which appointed the world's first Minister of State for AI back in 2017 and has invested heavily in AI infrastructure and research ever since, is a natural partner in this space. The UAE and India are already exploring cooperation on advanced computing capacity, data centres, and AI-driven innovation. In a technology that will reshape every sector of every economy, the countries that lead will not be those that build fastest alone, but those that build the smartest partnerships.

The next chapterIndia's global moment is here. As the world's fourth-largest economy, with GDP at around \$4 trillion, it is powered by entrepreneurial energy, manufacturing ambition, and digital infrastructure that are genuinely world-class. In conversations with Indian business leaders, there is one theme that is coming through consistently: the appetite to scale internationally has never been stronger. The question is no longer whether Indian enterprise will go global, but how effectively the right corridors can accelerate that journey. This is also part of a wider realignment. The recent Delhi Declaration between India and Arab Foreign Ministers outlined an ambitious programme of cooperation across politics, economy, energy, technology, and security through 2028. The India-UAE corridor is at the vanguard of that broader convergence. The UAE and India are demonstrating what becomes possible when two countries align policy, capital, and execution around a shared vision. The first \$100 billion came faster than anyone expected. The next chapter will be defined not by the numbers alone, but by how deeply their economies integrate — and how far that integration reaches.



## Trump slams energy deal between California and Britain: report



GNS News Agency, Feb 18

U.S. President Donald Trump denounced a clean energy agreement between the United Kingdom and California Governor Gavin Newsom hours after it was signed Politico reported. In an interview with the outlet, Mr. Trump said it was "inappropriate" for Britain to be dealing with the Democratic governor. Mr. Trump, a Republican, also branded Mr. Newsom "a loser," saying "his State has gone to hell, and his environmental work is a disaster." Mr. Newsom is an outspoken Trump critic and has publicly mulled seeking the Democratic presidential nomination in

2028. The energy agreement Mr. Newsom inked with British Energy Secretary Ed Miliband on Monday pledged cooperation on clean energy technologies such as offshore wind, and aims to expand access for British firms to California's market.

"Donald Trump is on his knees for coal and Big Oil, selling out America's future to China," a Newsom spokesperson said in an email. "Governor Newsom will continue to lead in his absence. Foreign leaders are rejecting Trump and choosing California's vision for the future." A spokesperson for Britain's Department for Energy Security and Net Zero said that it continued to work closely with the U.S. government and that Monday's agreement with California was "just one in a series signed at the State level, including Florida and Texas, that will deliver jobs and growth in the U.K."

Mr. Trump recently invited the oil and gas industry to nominate areas in Southern and Central California for a potential sale of offshore oil and gas leases as soon as next year, a move Newsom and environmental groups condemned as a threat to the state's ecosystems. In January, Mr. Newsom was blocked from speaking inside the official U.S. venue at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, a move he blamed on the White House.

## Sheikh Hasina's presence in India will not be a 'deterrent' to broader India-Bangladesh relation: BNP's Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir

GNS News Agency, Feb 18

Bangladesh's relation with India will not be "captive" of one issue and the presence of deposed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in India will not "deter" Bangladesh from pursuing its broader relation with India, said the senior most leader of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) that will form the next government of Bangladesh on Tuesday (February 17, 2026). Speaking exclusively to The Hindu in Dhaka at the party headquarters in Gulshan neighbourhood, Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, General Secretary of the BNP said that Bangladesh will expedite the projects that are in its interest and will intensify development partnership with India. "We believe that Hasina has really committed serious human rights violations. There is a popular demand to punish her and we believe that India should hand her over to us. But not handing over Sheikh Hasina to Bangladesh will not be a deterrent to build broader relation including trade and commercial ties. We want to build even better ties," said Mr. Alamgir emphasising that the broader India-Bangladesh relation should not be "captive" to one issue.

Bangladesh under the interim government has repeatedly urged India to hand over Sheikh Hasina and some of the other senior members of the Awami League who fled after the 2024 uprising but India has not responded to these requests during the past seventeen months. Mr. Alamgir said there is a legal process for Ms. Hasina and her ministers and bureaucrats who were accused of carrying out murders and criminal acts during the uprising. "That process will continue," he said. Mr. Alamgir who led the standing committee of the BNP when the late PM Khaleda Zia was arrested during the Hasina era with Tarique Rahman staying in exile in the United Kingdom said India-Bangladesh relation has difficult issues to resolve but that should not overwhelm areas that are open for cooperation. "America and China have many difficulties in bilateral ties yet they are working with each other. We should not stick to just one issue in India-Bangladesh relation," said Mr. Alamgir. He highlighted the historic role of BNP in Bangladesh's politics and reminded that following the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in August 1975, when Sheikh Hasina and other members of her family were based in India, President Ziaur Rahman, founder of BNP had travelled to India and had hosted Prime Minister Morarji Desai in Dhaka. He reminded that President Rahman had visited Delhi and met



Indira Gandhi in January 1980 when Hasina was planning to return to Bangladesh for her political debut saying "That's the statesmanlike approach."

"Before next year, the issue of Farakka's water will come up under the renewal of Ganga Waters Treaty, then there is the issue of border killings and we must talk on these issues," said Mr. Alamgir adding, "We can't fight a war with India. We need to talk. Those who talk about fighting India are speaking like insane." Along with Chairman of BNP Tarique Rahman, Mr. Alamgir is in favour of reconciliation with political rivals and visited the leaders of the opposition Jamaat-e-Islami and National Citizen Party (NCP) on Sunday (February 15, 2026). He said that revenge and violence are detrimental to building healthy democratic environment in Bangladesh and said the interim government could not bring in reconciliation after the violent uprising of August 2024 as "the leaders of the uprising chose Prof. Yunus" adding, "Prof. Yunus could not go outside of the brief that the leaders of the uprising gave him." He presented the 31-point agenda of the BNP as a political will that will give India and Bangladesh a chance to work in areas like trade, commerce, capacity building and in digital infrastructure. "India has resources in technical education and we have a large number of unemployed youngsters. We need to help them with capacity building so that they can get jobs in the Gulf," said Mr. Alamgir. He also pointed out that the BNP government will have to deal with the burden of loan that the Awami League government has left behind and it will re-evaluate various projects to see which of the mega projects are wasteful. "Out of these projects we will retain the ones that serve Bangladesh's interest," he said.

## Hindus among four from minority communities elected to Bangladesh parliament



GNS News Agency, Feb 18

Four candidates from minority communities, including two Hindus, won in the recent general elections in Bangladesh, with all being nominees of the BNP, which is set to form the government. Goyeshwar Chandra Roy and Nitai Roy Chowdhury are the two Hindu candidates who won on a Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) ticket. They won from a Dhaka seat and the western Magura constituency, defeating their rivals fielded by the Jamaat-e-Islami.

Mr. Roy is a member of the BNP's highest policy-making standing committee, while Mr. Chowdhury is one of the prominent vice presidents of the party as well as a senior advisor and strategist for its top leadership. The third minority MP-elect is Sachin Pru, a senior BNP leader and follower of the Buddhist faith, representing the Marma ethnic community in southeastern hill district of Bandarban, from where he was elected. The fourth minority candidate, Dipen Dewan, belongs to the Buddhist majority Chakma ethnic minority group, who won from a constituency in southeastern Rangamati hill district. Mr. Dewan defeated an independent Chakma candidate as his nearest rival, while Mr. Pru defeated a nominee of the student-led National Citizen Party, which was formed last year by the Students Against Discrimination, which led the mass protests against ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina in August 2024.

According to the Election Commission, 79 candidates, including 10 women from religious minority communities, mostly Hindus, contested the election on Thursday (February 12, 2026). While 67 were nominated by 22 political parties, 12 ran as independent candidates. The Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) fielded the highest number with 17 minority candidates. It was followed by left-leaning

Bangladesh Samyabadi Dal (BSD) with eight minority candidates, little-known Bangladesh Minority Janata Party (BMJP) with eight candidates and left-leaning Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal (BASOD) with seven candidates. The BNP fielded six candidates and Jatiya Party nominated four candidates. The Jamaat-e-Islami nominated a minority Hindu candidate for the first time in its history.

The largest Islamist party fielded veteran businessman Krishna Nandi from a southwestern Khulna constituency who lost but his participation as a Jamaat nominee was widely discussed. He finished as the runner-up in the Khulna-1 constituency conceding defeat to a BNP candidate. The number of Hindu MPs in the 2024 election was 17 and the same number of Hindus won in the 2018 election with most of them belonging to Hasina's Awami League. Led by Tarique Rahman, the BNP swept to power with a two-thirds majority with 49.97% votes and 212 seats in Thursday's (February 12, 2026) polls, results for which were declared on Friday. The Jamaat-e-Islami, which was opposed to the country's 1971 independence from Pakistan, registered its best-ever performance with 31.76% votes and 68 seats. The National Citizen Party (NCP) secured the third-highest number of seats, six, and 3.05% votes.

Senior Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin stood the best chance of consolidating the anti-Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) parties in the INDIA bloc to "help Rahul Gandhi assume the Prime Minister's Office". Speaking to reporters in Thiruvananthapuram, he said Mr. Stalin had refrained from hurling epithets and coining pseudo-slogans such as "Vote Chori and Chowkidar Chor Hai". Instead, he remained singularly focused on "every single point that is relevant to federalism in India", Mr. Aiyar said. He compared the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister to the iconic Congress leader late K. Kamaraj. Mr. Aiyar described Mr. Stalin as a "person of great

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virtue," adding that he would not stand in the way of Mr. Gandhi becoming Prime Minister. During the interaction, the former Union Minister termed himself as an outlier in the Congress like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subash Chandra Bose. Both leaders rebelled against Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi made Nehru the Prime Minister. The Mahatma would have surely tapped Bose as President if the latter had not lost his life in the tragic air crash. In stark contrast, the current leadership seeks to isolate Gandhian truth tellers like me," he added. Mr. Aiyar quoted Dr. Ambedkar to explain his estrangement from the Congress. "I am not a part of the whole; I am a part apart," he said and added that Mr. Gandhi had forgotten he was a member of the party.

## 'Imran Khan deserves to be treated with dignity' say former cricket captains on ex-Pakistan PM's jail treatment



GNS News Agency, Feb 18

The international cricketing fraternity has rallied around Imran Khan, the former Pakistan Prime Minister and cricket captain. Through a joint-statement issued by legends ranging from Sunil Gavaskar to Greg Chappell, World Cup winning captains like Kapil Dev, Clive Lloyd and Steve Waugh, and champion players like Michael Atherton and Belinda Clark, immediate and adequate medical assistance was sought for the ailing Pakistan legend, who is suffering in prison now. We, the undersigned former captains of our national cricket teams, write with deep concern regarding the reported treatment and incarceration conditions of Imran Khan, the distinguished former captain of Pakistan and a legendary figure in world cricket.

Imran Khan's contributions to the game are universally admired. As captain, he led Pakistan to their historic 1992 Cricket World Cup victory - a triumph built on skill, resilience, leadership, and sportsmanship that inspired generations across borders. Many of us competed against him, shared the field with him, or grew up idolising his all-round brilliance, charisma, and competitive spirit. He remains one of the finest all-rounders and captains the sport has ever

seen, earning respect from players, fans, and administrators alike. Beyond cricket, Imran Khan served as Prime Minister of Pakistan, leading his nation during a challenging period. Regardless of political perspectives, he holds the honour of having been democratically elected to the highest office in his country. Recent reports concerning his health - particularly the alarming deterioration of his vision while in custody - and the conditions of his imprisonment over the past two and a half years have caused us profound concern.

As fellow cricketers who understand the values of fair play, honour, and respect that transcend the boundary rope, we believe that a person of Imran Khan's stature deserves to be treated with the dignity and basic human consideration befitting a former national leader and a global sporting icon. We respectfully urge the Government of Pakistan to ensure that Imran Khan receives: Immediate, adequate and ongoing medical attention from qualified specialists of his choosing to address his reported health issues. Humane and dignified conditions of detention in line with international standards, including regular visits by close family members. Fair and transparent access to legal processes without undue delay or hindrance. Cricket has long been a bridge between nations. Our shared history on the field reminds us that rivalry ends when the stumps are drawn—and respect endures. Imran Khan embodied that spirit throughout his career. We call on authorities to honour it now by upholding the principles of decency and justice. This appeal is made in the spirit of sportsmanship and common humanity, without prejudice to any legal proceedings. Signed: Michael Atherton, Allan Border, Michael Brearley, Greg Chappell, Ian Chappell, Belinda Clark, Sunil Gavaskar, David Gower, Kim Hughes, Nasser Hussain, Clive Lloyd, Kapil Dev, Steve Waugh and John Wright.

## 67% of work completed on CMRL's phase II stretch from Koyambedu to Chennai Trade Centre

GNS News Agency, Feb 18

Nearly 67% of the work has been completed in Chennai Metro Rail's phase II stretch between Koyambedu and Chennai Trade Centre, which is scheduled for opening in June this year. When train services begin in this stretch, Metro Rail connectivity will expand further, as a second transit point between phase I and phase II networks will be available at Koyambedu.

In the 118.9-km phase II project, three corridors are shaping up — Madhavaram to SIPCOT (corridor 3), Poonamallee to Light House (corridor 4), and Madhavaram to Sholinganallur (corridor 5). Initially, a section of corridor 4 from Poonamallee to Vadapalani will open within two weeks, providing the first point of interchange between phase I and phase II networks at Vadapalani. This will be followed by a section of corridor 5 from Koyambedu to Chennai Trade Centre. Along with this stretch, stations in corridor 4 between Alapakkam and Saligramam (a part of Poonamallee-Vadapalani stretch) will be opened in June as their construction will be completed only after four months. According to officials of Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL), the viaduct work between Koyambedu and Chennai Trade Centre will be completed before the end of March.

"We started the track work simultaneously in locations where the viaduct was finished. So far, out of 12 km of track to be laid between Koyambedu and Chennai Trade Centre, we have completed nearly 2 km, in locations including Mugalivakkam, Ramapuram, Chennai Trade Centre, and parts of the double-decker corridor," an official said. Double-decker corridorThe double-decker corridor between Alapakkam and Alwarthirunagar, when fully ready in four

months, will allow commuters to interchange trains at four stations — Alapakkam, Karambakkam, Valasaravakkam, and Alwarthirunagar — between corridor 4 and corridor 5. A few months ago, CMRL officials said they wanted to provide connectivity a little beyond Chennai Trade Centre till Alandur in June this year. This will offer one more train interchange point between the phase I and phase II networks at Alandur. But there is a major hitch in establishing this connectivity, sources said. "Beyond Chennai Trade Centre, two stations — Butt Road and Alandur — have to be built. While construction of the Alandur station is under way, there are a lot of challenges in completing the Butt Road station before the June deadline. All these months, we couldn't get traffic permission in a full-fledged way to carry out construction along Paul Wells Road. As a result, even pile work hasn't begun at a few points in Paul Wells Road. It will be very difficult to finish the viaduct and the station at Paul Wells Road," a source said.

## French President Emmanuel Macron arrives in India for AI Impact summit, bilateral talks



GNS News Agency, Feb 18

French President Emmanuel Macron and First Lady Brigitte Macron arrived in Mumbai on Monday night (February 16, 2026) for a four-day visit to India till February On Tuesday (February 17), the French President will meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Mumbai, and the two leaders will exchange Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) before giving a press statement at the Lok Bhawan in Mumbai. The meeting will focus on cementing the strategic partnership between the two countries and diversifying it into new and emerging areas. Mr. Modi and Mr. Macron will also exchange views on issues of regional and global importance and will review the progress made in the bilateral strategic partnership.

Elaborate security arrangements have been made in the country's financial capital to host the French President, the First Lady, and several other international dignitaries who will arrive to attend key international economic and climate events. Mr. Macron will be in Delhi on February 18 and 19. President Emmanuel Macron will be on an official visit to India from 17-19 February 2026 at the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to participate in the AI Impact Summit hosted by India, as well as hold a bilateral summit with the Prime Minister in Mumbai. This will be President Macron's fourth visit to India and his first visit to Mumbai," according to a press statement issued by the government on Monday (February 16) At around 3:15 p.m. on Tuesday (February 17), Mr. Modi and Mr. Macron will hold bilateral engagements at the Lok Bhawan. Before that, Mr. Macron will engage in several private engagements and meetings in Mumbai. This will likely include a meeting with the film industry. They will thereafter exchange MoUs and give a press statement. At 5.20 p.m., the two will address the India-France Innovation Forum. In the evening, a cultural commemoration programme has been organised at the Gateway of India for India-France Year of Innovation. In the evening, Mr. Modi and Mr. Macron will launch the 'India-France Year of Innovation 2026' and will address a gathering of business leaders, start-ups, researchers, and other innovators from both countries. They will visit the Gateway of India thereafter.

## Only Stalin can consolidate INDIA bloc to help Rahul become PM: Mani Shankar Aiyar

GNS News Agency, Feb 18

Senior Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin stood the best chance of consolidating the anti-Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) parties in the INDIA bloc to "help Rahul Gandhi assume the Prime Minister's Office". Speaking to reporters in Thiruvananthapuram, he said Mr. Stalin had refrained from hurling epithets and coining pseudo-slogans such as "Vote Chori and Chowkidar Chor Hai". Instead, he remained singularly focused on "every single point that is relevant to federalism in India", Mr. Aiyar said. He compared the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister to the iconic Congress leader late K. Kamaraj. Mr. Aiyar described Mr. Stalin as a "person of great



## Rabies: The cruel and expensive disease of India's most impoverished

Divya Gandhi, Afshan Yasmeen



vate hospital because the government one refused to hospitalise him citing "unsatisfactory care by the staff") he soon developed a headache, high fever, began drooling saliva and experienced difficulty in drinking or swallowing one month later. He then became violent, and eventually died. "In the order of significance of the actions that led to rabies death, the lack of seriousness on the part of the hospital staff to attend to dog bite injury, prompting the patient to approach a local private nursing home, ranks foremost," states the One Health paper. Inadequate dog-bite wound management practices, is part of the many reasons behind rabies in humans.

While the patient in this case faced unacceptable delays in treatment, the treatment itself — PEP and RIG — continues to remain out of reach for many dog bite victims. A January 2025 study in *The Lancet Infectious Diseases*, which surveyed 3,37,808 individuals in 60 districts in 15 Indian States, found that among those who had been bitten by a dog, 20.5% did not receive ARV and nearly half (49%) of those who received one dose "did not complete their full course of vaccination", says M. K. Sudarshan, member of the National Technical Advisory Committee on Rabies, one of the authors of the paper. A scientist advises that dog lovers, who feed free ranging dogs on the streets, should fully support 20 dogs in their area, have them neutered and and regularly vaccinated.

Doctors note that when it comes to a small bleed or

severe dog / animal bite, the rabies vaccine alone is not enough. An RIG that is injected into the dog bite wounds is needed: RIG is life saving. But the country suffers from a

severe shortage of RIG, and it is only used for bites that

bleed, not for a lick on a scratch, which could cause rabies

too, says Aniruddha Belsare, assistant professor of disease

ecology at Auburn University, U.S. "Most public health

hospitals do not even have doctors, leave alone RIG for bite

victims," he says, forcing families to run from pillar to post

to try and obtain it. RIG is also prohibitively expensive: costing

anywhere between ₹5,000 to ₹20,000. As a result, dog

bite victims, mainly children under 15 (forming 40% of cases

in India), are taken to local quacks who use substances such

as chilli powder and chalk to 'cure' the disease, Dr. Belsare

says. RIG apart, even ARV is in short supply. "We need 60

million doses of ARV vaccinations. But India produces only

50 million, out of which 15 million are exported," he

adds. Hearteningly, recently, two novel rabies monoclonal

antibodies have been produced in India. RmAbs are cheaper

than human rabies immunoglobulin, but being new drugs,

are currently under pharmacovigilance and are yet to be in-

cluded in the national guidelines, says Dr. Sudarshan, who

is also the founder president and mentor of the Association

for Prevention and Control of Rabies in India. Tackling the

sourceEven though India has one of the highest populations

globally of free-ranging dogs (FRD) and the highest incidence

of dog-mediated human rabies, it "only deploys Catch-Neu-

ter-Vaccinate—Release for FRD control as a humane alter-

native to lethal methods, without evidence of it working suc-

cessfully," the One Health paper states. A 2020 paper in

*Nature* co-authored by Dr. Belsare said that long ago, lethal

methods including poisoning or electric chambers, now out-

lawed, were used "haphazardly for decades," but dog popu-

lations only rebounded. So what is the solution? Animal birth

control and mass vaccination have limitations because the

turnover of dogs is enormous (there is a 40% replacement

by unsterilised dogs every year). Community action is one

option. My advice would be that dog lovers, who feed strays

on the roads, should fully support 20 dogs in their area, have

them neutered and regularly vaccinated," says Dr. Belsare.

Every city, municipality, gram panchayat has to ensure a

dog bite is attended to with PEP and also that families

are compensated for the expenses they bear, he

emphasises. Dr. Tiwari adds that we need "good quality

shelters, with closed and enclosed spaces for homeless

dogs."Meanwhile, increasing awareness about washing

wounds from animals and seeking immediate medical help,

ensuring the vaccine and immunoglobulin are available

across the length and breadth of the country and speeding up

processes to make cheaper, indigenous drugs available, are

all crucial. In the end, it comes down to protecting both hu-

man health and animal welfare, and certainly, no human being

should be allowed to die of a completely preventable dis-

ease.

Recently, a 50-year-old construction worker from Delhi was brought in after a rabid dog bit him months ago. "He will be dead by tonight," says Suresh N.V., Bengaluru district surgeon, who is also the medical superintendent of the hospital. This was patient number 17 this year, just in this one hospital. "Some patients can be sedated to stop them from hallucinating and for hyperactivity, but others can get very aggressive," he says. One patient, the doctor recalls, lay crumpled with fear that the army was out to get him. And yet another suffered for 10 days before he finally died. Death by rabies is frightening, painful, and inexorably cruel. Of the 59,000 rabies-mediated human deaths in the world every year, India represents a third, around 20,000, and more than any other country, according to a paper published in One Health in December 2024. Rabies is endemic to India, with the main reservoir of the virus being dogs, and the poorest, the majority of the patients.

Days, weeks or months after a rabid dog bite, if the victim is not vaccinated, death is inevitable. The symptoms begin with paralysis from the feet upwards, typically followed by cardio-respiratory failure that finally strikes the victims down. Rabies is a neurotropic virus, and unlike other pathogens, travels via the peripheral nerves (not blood) to the spinal chord, and then to the brain. Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) involves immediately washing the wound under running water with soap for 15 minutes, followed by the anti-rabies vaccination (ARV), rabies immunoglobulin (RIG) and a tetanus shot. Who is at risk? "Human populations inhabiting areas that sustain free-roaming dogs are at the high risk of being bitten," says Harish Kumar Tiwari, of the Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati, and co-author of the One Health paper, describing rabies as being a disease of the poor and vulnerable. These are usually daily wage workers, often living on the margins of the society: brick kiln workers, waste collectors, rural and remote populations, farming communities. "Besides a lack of awareness of the disease, there is poor accessibility, affordability, and availability of PEP," he points out. In November 2025, the Supreme Court directed all States to remove stray dogs from hospital premises, educational institutions, railway stations and other spaces of public use and place them in shelters after they are sterilised and vaccinated. Animal rights activists have, ever since the court order, claimed that this prospective programme is "impractical" and "cruel". According to data available, there are 80 million free roaming dogs in India and 20 million dog bites per year, making rabies a large public health problem. Access to good quality, affordable healthcare continues to remain unavailable to large parts of the country, out-of-pocket expenditure on health is high, and families, to date, are pushed into poverty due to medical costs. But with rabies, finances play a role even before health is compromised.

Take the case of a 59-year-old man in a village in Assam (as recounted by the One Health paper researchers), who succumbed to rabies after being bitten by a neighbour's pup. The pup was not immunised by the family because of financial constraints. In May 2023, the pup "attacked the victim unprovoked, causing deep bite wounds." Even though he was administered PEP and RIG (at a pri-

ate reflection of the host, with soft lighting, and wooden elements.

Anirudh Singhal, founder of New Delhi-based, SpeedX, will vouch for this shift, as he pivoted his business post 2020, to cater to the home entertainment segment. "Our home bar, ModelX was a COVID baby, and in 2023, we launched a brand-new identity for our home bars — Haus Of Bars. From selling two to three units a day pre-2020, we now consistently sell at least 10 units per day". The Model M mini bar (₹30,199) has a laser cut drip tray, space for eight bottles, an ice bucket, a cabinet for glasses or books and all weather protective coating while Model C (₹45,599 upwards) is an AM-PM coffee and cocktail bar. Their bestseller is the fast-moving Model X and Double Model X varying between ₹72,799 and ₹1,18,899, "this hits the sweet spot, not really entry level but not too expensive either for all the features we incorporate," adds Anirudh. Hosts using a bar cart, hosts can comfortably fit up to a dozen bottles, three or more mixer cartons and a tray for garnishes in these models. The larger ones could accommodate double that capacity with a built-in sink, and space for an ice bucket. "Our bars have refrigerators, which solve a pain point for customers who don't want to run back and forth for ice or chilled drinks," says Anirudh, adding that Hyderabad has emerged as the single-largest market for this category, followed closely by Mumbai, Goa and Delhi. "In terms of tones, the South prefers matte black or marble finishes, while customers in the North want the matte red and gold combination." Haus Of Bars designs its units of food safe steel, tempered glass and a protective coating in different finishes, but what has really caught their customers' eye is customisation. "We have a laser cut drip tray on top of the counter for the inevitable spills, but we have offered customisation for either a name or hashtag in that space, and that has been a big hit. This appeals to people who gift these units for weddings, or want their signature statement visible while they entertain," adds Anirudh. Not all cities can accommodate expansive home bars, so eye-catching, stand-alone cabinets in eclectic styles sell too. Chennai-based design space Cape Kamoryn, co-founded by Alamelu Kesavan, sources bar units in leather, reclaimed wood, metal, inlay work and with quirky automotive elements, from across India and Southeast Asia. She highlights, "We have a lot of customers for moto-themed units, made from reclaimed bike parts or designed from race car bodies. These typically are conversation pieces, and you have to have the space and personality to pull it off."

While home bars, in the 1990s and early 2000s, were part of a larger dining display unit with a wooden door that pulled out on a hinge, that look has now become outdated. With interior stylists playing with metal, wood and glass to display contents. The bar has come to be a centrepiece of the entertainment area, and has to speak the same design language as the rest of the home. In terms of design, Mumbai-based architect Sahiba Madan, founder, Insite and Kalakaarihaath, says, form and function play an important role. "There is definitely a demand for a home bar, whether it's concealed in plain sight in multi-generational or joint family settings, compact in a smaller flat, or is an extension of the living space," she says. Sahiba's design incorporates wood, brass, and marble in a more neutral palette, keeping up with the aesthetic of the project. "Whether simple trolleys, integrated bars that have refrigerators, or independent bars with serving counters, there's a place for all of them, depending on what the family is looking for." Traditionally, wood was the material of choice, with a mirror or simple glass doors to display contents.

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## Tightening the opium belt in Madhya Pradesh



On the morning of August 28, a bus heading to Pratapgarh in Rajasthan was stopped soon after it began its journey from Madhya Pradesh's Mandsaur district. A group of policemen in mufti entered the vehicle and deboarded an 18-year-old boy. Sohanlal Mirasi, a resident of Sarnon Ki Dhanvi village in Rajasthan's Balotra district, was detained and later booked for illegally possessing 2.71 kilograms of opium. He was charged under Sections of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985. The event was recorded on the CCTV camera fitted on the bus. Sohanlal's family approached the Madhya Pradesh High Court in Indore for his bail, armed with the 23-second footage, claiming that Sohanlal was empty-handed.

On December 5, the High Court granted Sohanlal bail after his lawyer presented the footage. Justice Subodh Abhyankar remarked that the case filed at Mandsaur's Malhargarh police station is "rather suspicious". He summoned Mandsaur Superintendent of Police (SP) Vinod Kumar Meena to appear in the next hearing. On December 6, Meena suspended six police personnel, including the Malhargarh Station House Officer (SHO) Rajendra Panwar, two Sub-Inspectors and three constables, due to "procedural lapses", while detaining and arresting Sohanlal. The case prompted the High Court to remark that the State police had "conveniently forgotten" the provisions of Sections 105 and 185 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, which lay out the procedures for search and seizure and audio-video recording of the process. It has now summoned the Principal Secretary of the State's Home Department on January 12 "to apprise this Court about the steps taken to implement the aforesaid provisions".

While the M.P. police has faced backlash after the High Court's stance, the case has brought into focus the opium cultivating regions of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, and the challenges the people engaged in the generations-old livelihood are now facing. One challenge is the illegal trade of opium and crushed poppy straw, locally known as doda chura. Farmers and other locals say that they live under the constant fear of getting booked on charges of illegal possession or being named as part of a smuggling chain. They allege that people are also caught on fake charges and money extorted from them even if they are innocent. Sohanlal's older brother, Khartaram Jaat, also alleges that his brother was "held in illegal custody, beaten and tortured" for about five hours after he was detained, and ₹12 lakh was demanded from him. He says Sohanlal had finished school a few months before and wanted to start preparations for the civil services. "He had gone to Mandsaur to visit the Pashupati Nath Temple," he says, adding that his brother has been "depressed" since the bail and barely talks to anyone. Madhya Pradesh's Malwa region — Mandsaur, Neemuch, and Ratlam — is under scrutiny of four enforcement agencies: the opium regulatory body the Central Bureau of Narcotics (CBN), the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), the M.P. police, and the Narcotics Wing. The CBN had lodged 114 cases under the NDPS Act in 2023. This increased to 145 in 2025 (until December 18). The other agencies have registered separate cases under the same Act. Opium-growing landsThe Malwa region in M.P., and Pratapgarh, Chittorgarh, and parts of Kota and Jhalawar districts in Rajasthan's Mewar region, are known as the opium belt of India. The region produces nearly 85% of India's legally-grown opium with licences issued by the CBN that functions under the Department of Revenue (DoR) of the Union Ministry of Finance. Some parts of Uttar Pradesh also grow opium.

Opium, locally called afeem, is tied to family tradition and prestige. There's a local saying: "Afeem ka patta ladke se badhkar hai," (an opium licence is bigger than a son). Farmers, some of who have inherited the growing and trade from over 200 years ago, say the licence betters marriage prospects. Across villages in the area, land parcels are protected with fencing and sarees, and nets cover the plots from the top, so parrots do not get at the poppy seed. Cultivation begins after Deepavali and ends in March, close to Holi. The CBN issues licences and procures opium, and is also engaged in enforcement of illicit production. Licences are of two types: opium gum (latex) and the concentrate of poppy straw (CPS). With the gum licence, farmers extract the opium latex by lancing poppy seed capsules, and sell it to the government. This is the traditional practice in India. In a CPS licence, the CBN procures the capsule on the poppy straw of about eight inches, including the stem and leaves. This was introduced by the Union Government in 2020-21. As per the data obtained from the CBN, 1,15,416 licences were issued to farmers in the three States in 2025. Of this, 75,333 were for gum and 40,083 were CPS ones. In Madhya Pradesh alone, 56,349 licences — 38,801 gum and 17,548 CPS — were issued this year. After procurement, the products are sent to the Government Opium and Alkaloid Works, Neemuch, a plant for processing opium and manufacture of alkaloids. Illicit networks and extortion in Bajhkhedi village of Mandsaur's Sitamau, Krishna Pal Singh Rathore, a 36-year-old farmer, allegedly killed himself in February 5, 2024, months after he was booked by the CBN in September, 2023, for alleged illegal possession of 11kg of poppy straw. His family says that in addition, about 2.4 quintal doda chura was found at his elder brother, Narendra Singh Rathore's house. Neither had the required licences. Narendra was suffering from cancer at the time. The officers threatened Krishna Pal that the entire quantity would be shown in the FIR lodged against him. This scared him. They demanded money and a deal was struck for ₹22 lakh. After he paid the money, he was assured that the case would be over in a few months," a family member says on the condition of anonymity. "But the officer he had paid got transferred soon and the new person then demanded more money," he says. After locals and members of the Rajput collective Karni Sena staged protests, about ₹15 lakh was returned after his death, he adds. In Ayodhya Basti of Mandsaur's Piplia Mandi, Bhavna Kunwar, 48, runs a small kirana (daily needs) shop next to her tin-roof house. Her husband, Govardhan Singh Songara, 51, was arrested on November 19, 2025, by the CBN for allegedly being part of a smuggling chain of doda chura. Bhavna Kunwar's husband, Govardhan Singh Songara, was arrested in an NDPS case this year. She runs a kirana shop in Piplia Mandi in Madhya Pradesh's Mandsaur

district. Photo Credit: A.M. FaruqiSongara, who works as a driver for a local construction company, was booked under the NDPS Act, and was accused of driving a car as a pilot vehicle to a truck that was caught carrying 1,177 kg of doda chura in May. "My husband had no connection with opium. The red car he was driving crossed a nearby toll plaza twice on May 5, within half an hour of that truck's crossing. There was no recovery from his vehicle or any other link," Kunwar says. Jokchand, a former Congress leader, says that such cases put fear in people who feel they could be detained any time, and that threats are also made "just to settle scores". "The local police contact everyone whose name pops up during an investigation. If a farmer's name comes up, he mostly chooses to pay a hefty sum rather than having his name in a case and risk losing his opium licence. Others pay the money because they know they can be in jail for a long time and the conviction rate is high in these cases," Jokchand explains, saying that the practice of 'settling' is locally called khada tod (instant deal). In Luhari village of Ratlam's Jaora, Ambaram Singh, a 68-year-old farmer, says that due to the risks

## For India, AI a 'stress test' of state capacity; must align tech adoption with mass employability: CEA Nageswaran



term, create new types of employment, thousands of job cuts have been announced in recent times as more and more companies globally integrate AI and its applications in their processes. In an interview to British daily Financial Times last week, Mustafa Suleyman, tech giant Microsoft's AI Chief Executive Officer, said most, if not all, tasks in white-collar jobs will be automated by AI in the next 18 months or so. Microsoft itself has announced thousands of layoffs over the last year or so, including around 9,000 in July 2025. Closer home, software major Tata Consultancy Services last year announced that it would let go of more than 12,000 employees as part of a restructuring exercise.

In India, shares of tech and software companies have been pummelled in recent days amid fears that AI tools and bots could hit business orders and profits. Shares of Fractal Analytics – which only debuted on the National Stock Exchange on Monday after its Initial Public Offering (IPO) last week raised more than Rs 2,800 crore – closed 4.4% lower at Rs 837.7. The IPO price of the enterprise AI company's shares was Rs 900. On the whole, the sectoral Nifty IT index ended 0.2% higher on Monday. However, over the last week-and-a-half, the index has tanked nearly 6,000 points, or more than 15%, after AI firm Anthropic launched a legal plugin for its chatbot, Claude, which can automate work such as review of contracts.

Monday, Nageswaran referred to the Economic Survey for 2023-24, which said India needs to create at least 8 million jobs every year. Terming this as the scale of "our employment challenge year after year", the Chief Economic Advisor expressed concern that only a small proportion of India's workforce has received formal skill training. This, he said, is a "structural vulnerability". "If AI displaces faster than we can skill humans and if productivity rises without employment elasticity, if institutional reform lacks technological adoption, we risk squandering our demographic window. We risk widening inequality at precisely the moment of greatest technological change," he warned. As such, he called on policymakers, the private sector, and academia to "act now" as it was a question of the future of growth, social stability, and cohesion. According to Nageswaran, the first step is to reform India's education and pedagogy by imparting foundational skills. "And that is where the path to co-creating prosperity with AI and employability in the age of AI and that is where the path begins".

While experts say that the use of AI can, in the long-

run, generate millions of productive

dignified jobs or livelihoods; every year of delay compounds pressure, every year of drift narrows our options. If we do not move decisively, such as strengthening foundational education, scaling high-quality skills, expanding labour intensive service sectors, removing the regulatory bottlenecks that hinder the expansion of labour-intensive services, and if we do not ensure calibrated AI deployment, we will not merely miss an opportunity, we will create unavoidable social and economic instability," Nageswaran said in a panel discussion on the theme 'Future of Employability in the Age of AI'.

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## 'AI could be game changer for distributed RE'



expands, demand response management and asset maintenance across geographies will become increasingly important.

"Can we build predictability into this? There are a lot of generators who require weather forecasting, predictive analytics. Can we get this onto the AI tool? Lastly, as a consumer, as a prosumer, whether I know it is my rooftop system, is my solar pump generating enough when compared to my peers? Can I be able to sell my electricity to the other peers, which the B2B is trying to enable? So, these are enabling decisions," he said. "So, if you ask me what the AI is going to do in the future, it will not just make us react, but it will make us act. So, that is the story that we are looking forward as far as DRE and AI convergence is concerned," he added. AI as Development Infrastructure Hemang Jani said AI must be treated not merely as a technological tool but as development infrastructure itself. "The way we look at the grid, the way we look at discoms, and the way we look at meters, we have to look at AI. That is also one of the infrastructure layer that we need to create. And that is where I think the game will change," he said.

He also emphasised that countries cannot afford to treat AI as a pilot exercise but must deploy it at scale, citing the India Energy Stack as an example of thinking big. He said India should aim to become "the Google of AI for energy, for the world," positioning itself as a global leader in AI-driven energy systems. Henri Verdier underlined that the accelerating energy transition – marked by rising renewable penetration, decentralisation and growing consumer expectations – is making power systems far more complex, and artificial intelligence may be essential to managing that shift. However, he cautioned that innovation does not automatically mean progress, pointing to past digital missteps such as poorly regulated social networks that enabled Big Tech dominance.

Open standards like TCP/IP spark wide innovation and teamwork in diverse ecosystems, while strong rules and open-source AI prevent a few giants from ruling via subsea cables or models – favoring local solutions for energy, farms, and more. "We cannot afford a world with a few AI giants controlling the effects of the economy," he said. On what would constitute success in the near term for AI in energy, Jani said it is a fast-moving and evolving technology, and policymakers should not look for short-term wins but long-term transformation. Meanwhile, Subramanyam said in the next two to three years time, he sees the success in AI and RE convergence would mean "where overall cost of power to the consumer goes down and our industrial competitiveness goes up and consumer empowerment becomes prosumer empowerment and our grids become ready for energy transition."

Pointing to structural constraints in the distribution network, Subramanyam noted that transformers were originally designed for unidirectional power flow, but now must accommodate millions of 'prosumers' – consumers who also generate electricity. As distributed renewable energy

capacity is currently sourced from non-fossil fuel sources. That is around 272 gigawatts. Out of this, at least 140 gigawatts of India's installed capacity is solar. Within this, 38 gigawatts comprises DRE. Over the last 15 months, India has added almost 18 gigawatts to the distributed renewable energy space both under the Pradhan Mantri Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana, the rooftop solarisation programme, and the Pradhan Mantri Kusum Yojana, he said. "We spent close to 9 billion USD on rooftop solarisation and about 4 billion dollars on PM Kusum Yojana," he said. He said this scale-up in the past year was enabled by technology solutions that have been incorporated and which benefit consumers, field workers, vendors, banks and DISCOMS alike. Looking ahead, Subramanyam said AI will play a transformative role in managing the next stage of distributed renewable energy growth.

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## Can Australia qualify for Super 8 if Zimbabwe vs Ireland T20 World Cup clash is washed out?



GNS News Agency, Feb 18

Australia's Josh Inglis reacts after missing a catch opportunity during the T20 World Cup cricket match between Sri Lanka and Australia in Pallekele, Sri Lanka, Monday, Feb. 16, 2026. (AP Photo) Australia's Josh Inglis reacts after missing a catch opportunity during the T20 World Cup cricket match between Sri Lanka and Australia in Pallekele, Sri Lanka, Monday. The toss for the crucial Zimbabwe vs Ireland T20 World Cup clash at the Pallekele International Stadium in Kandy was delayed due to rain on Tuesday, adding further tension to a match that could decide the fate of multiple teams. The game holds major significance for both Zimbabwe and Australia. A win for Zimbabwe would secure their place in the Super 8 stage of the tournament and eliminate the 2021 champions, Australia, from the qualification race.

What happens if there is no result?

If persistent rain prevents a result, both teams will be awarded one point each. In that scenario, Zimbabwe's tally would rise to five points. Even if Australia defeat Oman in

## Sunil Gavaskar, Kapil Dev among 14 former captains urging Pakistan government to provide Imran Khan with 'immediate medical attention'

GNS News Agency, Feb 18

Sunil Gavaskar and Kapil Dev are among 14 international captains who have urged the Pakistan government to provide Imran Khan with immediate medical assistance. (Express archive photo by Mohan Bane 9/3/1996) Sunil Gavaskar and Kapil Dev are among 14 international captains who have urged the Pakistan government to provide Imran Khan with immediate medical assistance.

Kapil Dev and Sunil Gavaskar are among 14 former international captains from five Test teams who have appealed to the Pakistan government for better treatment of the country's former Prime Minister and cricket great Imran Khan, who has been imprisoned for about two and a half years. The development comes in the wake of reports the 73-year-old losing most of his vision in his right eye amid alleged poor conditions in the prison where he is held. According to The Age, the petition was drafted by former Australia captain Greg Chappell and was delivered to Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday afternoon. Apart from Gavaskar, Kapil and Chappell, former Australia captains Allan Border, Belinda Clark, Ian Chappell, Steve Waugh, Kim Hughes, former England captains Mike Atherton, Mike Brearley, David Gower, Nasser Hussain, former West Indies captain Clive Lloyd and former New Zealand captain John Wright.

The former captains listed the following as their demands from the government of Pakistan: Immediate, adequate and ongoing medical attention from qualified specialists of his choosing to address his reported health issues. Humane and dignified conditions of detention in line with international standards, including regular visits by close family members. Fair and transparent access to legal processes without undue delay or hindrance. "Many of us competed against him, shared the field with him, or grew up idolizing his all-round brilliance, charisma, and competitive spirit. He remains one of the finest all-rounders and captains the sport has ever seen, earning respect from players, fans, and administrators alike," the letter reads.

The letter was reportedly drafted by former Australia

their final league-stage match on Friday, they can reach a maximum of four points.

Therefore, a washout would be enough for Zimbabwe to seal a Super 8 berth alongside Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka's Kusal Mendis, left, shatters the stumps to get Australia's Adam Zampa run out during the T20 World Cup cricket match between Sri Lanka and Australia in Pallekele, Sri Lanka. (AP Photo) Sri Lanka's Kusal Mendis, left, shatters the stumps to get Australia's Adam Zampa run out during the T20 World Cup cricket match between Sri Lanka and Australia in Pallekele, Sri Lanka. Australia's qualification hopes were already dented on Monday after an eight-wicket defeat to Sri Lanka in Kandy. Dushan Hemantha led the charge with the ball, picking up 3/37 in four overs to restrict Australia to 181 all out.

In reply, Pathum Nissanka produced a magnificent unbeaten 100 off just 52 balls, guiding the co-hosts to a commanding victory and confirming their place in the Super 8 stage. Reflecting on the loss, Australia captain Mitchell Marsh admitted his side fell short in execution. "I think it was probably just execution tonight. That full-strength batting lineup has some of the best players of spin in Australia. It was more about execution. Sri Lanka pulled it back beautifully. We were probably a few short after the start. We had great belief going into the second innings, but we were outplayed," Marsh said at the post-match press conference. "I guess we'll never know what would have happened if we made 220. We had a good platform but weren't able to execute towards the back end. It's disappointing. We're certainly not here to blame anyone, but we're a disappointed group. We knew we were going to face spin towards the back end, the pitch slowed up a little bit, but again, it was about execution," he added.



captain Greg Chappell and was delivered to Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday afternoon. The letter was reportedly drafted by former Australia captain Greg Chappell and was delivered to Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday afternoon. "Recent reports concerning his health—particularly the alarming deterioration of his vision while in custody—and the conditions of his imprisonment over the past two and a half years have caused us profound concern. As fellow cricketers who understand the values of fair play, honour, and respect that transcend the boundary rope, we believe that a person of Imran Khan's stature deserves to be treated with the dignity and basic human consideration befitting a former national leader and a global sporting icon." "Cricket has long been a bridge between nations. Our shared history on the field reminds us that rivalry ends when the stumps are drawn—and respect endures. Imran Khan embodied that spirit throughout his career," the letter further reads. Earlier, Pakistan fast bowling great Wasim Akram, among the many players who spent their formative years under Imran's captaincy, urged authorities to ensure the former prime minister receives the best possible medical care. Taking to X on Saturday, Akram wrote: "It is heartbreaking to hear our skipper Imran Khan going through health issues. I sincerely hope the authorities take this seriously and ensure he receives the best possible medical care. Wishing him strength, a speedy recovery, and a full return to good health."

## Meet Canada's Yuvraj Singh Samra, who is named after Yuvraj Singh and became the youngest-ever to score a T20 World Cup century



GNS News Agency, Feb 18

As Canada's Yuvraj Singh Samra jogged back for a double off the 58th ball, he pumped his fists and pointed the bat at the dressing room and stood tall with his arms raised. At 19, the opener had become the youngest ever to score a century in the Men's T20 World Cup. The crowd at the Chepauk stadium, some 15,000 strong, gave him a standing ovation. It was the moment that Samra, named after the Yuvraj Singh, has been playing on his mind ever since Canada booked their spot in the T20 World Cup.

"Honestly, I manifested this moment ever since we qualified for the World Cup. Every single day, I dreamed about scoring a hundred on this stage. To do it here, in my first appearance, and as the youngest player in this World Cup—it's truly a dream come true," he told broadcasters.

Samra was around 11 or 12 years old when he realised he was named after Yuvraj by his father Baljit Samra. "I'm not sure exactly what age. I think it was around 11-12 years when I got to know about. My dad was a really big Yuvraj Singh fan. He followed his cricketing journey throughout and he told my mom 'if it is a boy he wants to name Yuvraj no matter what. And he named me that,'" Samra told Cricket Canada.

Like Yuvraj, Samra is tall and bats left-handed. Though he doesn't move his feet much, he has a good bat swing, not as high as the OG, but one that helps him to clear the distance. "He is my idol. Loves the way he bats and he has inspired me a lot. I like to see the ball travel the distance off my bat. I really love the sound off the bat when it connects well," Samra said. "It feels incredible. There are so many emotions right now, I can't really put them into words. Yuvraj Singh is someone I've looked up to since I was a kid, so to even be mentioned in the same breath is special. I just wish my dad was here today watching me from back home—this one's for him. On Tuesday at Chepauk, it was Samra who stole the show even as his opening partner Dilpreet Bajwa struggled to induce any sort of momentum. With New Zealand missing captain Mitchell Santner due to food poisoning and Lockie Ferguson not available due to paternity break, Samra set the tone from the word go on another placid surface.

## Pratika Rawal joins India's squad for India-Australia ODI series

Hyderabad: The Women's Selection Committee has added Pratika Rawal to India's squad for the three-match ODI series against Australia women, which is part of the ongoing multi-format tour of Australia. Pratika Rawal has completed her rehabilitation at the BCCI Centre of Excellence (COE) and has fully recovered from her ankle injury sustained in October during the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2025. India's updated squad for ODI series against Australia: Harmanpreet Kaur (C), Smriti Mandhana (VC), Shafali Verma, Renuka Thakur, Sree Charan, Vaishnavi Sharma, Kranti Gaud, Sneha Rana, Deepthi Sharma, Richa Ghosh (WK), Uma Chetry (WK), Kashvee Gautam, Amanjot Kaur, Jemimah Rodrigues, Harleen Deol, Pratika Rawal.

## In Freestyle Chess World Championship, Magnus Carlsen has found a stage that excites him



GNS News Agency, Feb 18

Magnus Carlsen did not look happy. As he sat on an elevated stage for a press conference right before the start of the FIDE Freestyle Chess World Championship on Friday, flanked on one side by German grandmaster Vincent Keymer and FIDE technical delegate Pavel Tregubov on another side, the world no 1 snuck a conspicuous glance at his watch, a universal signal that his time was being frittered away by this press conference.

There are many things in the sport that test the patience of the Norwegian, but, in theory, this should not have been one of them. After all, it was an opportunity for Carlsen to speak about the FIDE Freestyle Chess World Championship, an event he had a massive role in shaping from its early days. He's spoken—repeatedly—about the freestyle chess variant being the future of the sport. More than once, his inputs have even led to the format of the event changing. But on Friday, Carlsen did not want to be the face, the voice or the flagbearer for the newest world championship in the sport. He just wanted to be a player.

When Carlsen was asked how important the Freestyle Chess variant was for him personally, he pounced on his chance to make a statement. "I'm grateful for the opportunity to come here and participate in a world championship. But you know there's a time to prepare for the games and we're sitting here and wasting our time when we could be preparing. So I think that is not something you should do in an official world championship. But that's just my two cents," Carlsen said, with another look at his wrist watch, this glance more exaggerated. The emcee for the evening tried once again to engage with Carlsen, asking him about the format which dictated that of the eight players in contention on Friday, four would go through into the semis on Saturday after a single round robin. "I like the fact that it's cut-throat and it's not going to be easy to come through for anybody, further strengthening the point that we should not be sitting right here," said Carlsen, his lips curling into a smile that he usually wears when he's said something cheeky.

Carlsen's desperation to get back to his training just before the start of a game in freestyle chess was a strange one. With 959 possibilities of what the opening position of the board could look like, players only find out about 10 minutes before the start of a game what position they are play-

ing. (The 960th option is the regular chess opening position. So it's not used in freestyle.) And there was a 57-minute gap between Carlsen exiting the stage from the press conference and the first draw to find out the opening position of the first game of the day. So what precisely was he training for? We may have to wait for the answer on that one, but Carlsen's pointed reminders that he needed to get back to preparing for his games was an indicator of just how seriously he takes the variant and the newest world championship on the calendar. These were unconquered lands that the unquestionable monarch of the sport wanted to bring under him. Since his abdication of the world champion's throne in 2022, Carlsen has eased away from playing classical chess to focus his energies on playing online events or the faster time controls of rapid and blitz. But freestyle is truly a variant that commands his attention.

Just to understand the mindset of a man who is in contention to be the greatest proponent of chess in history, listen to what his longtime coach Peter Heine Nielsen had to say in 2024, when he was contrasting the hunger Carlsen felt at the FIDE World Cup in 2023 to his lack of appetite for the classical world championships. The World Cup was also a classical tournament, but it was an event that Carlsen had never won in repeated attempts. And then, just a year after Carlsen walked away from defending his classical world championship crown, he won the FIDE World Cup. "It will sound strange, but winning the world championship when you're the overwhelming favourite against just one opponent... he's done it many times. But he had never won the World Cup where you play 128 players. You have to win a lot of knockout matches. This also explains why the World Championship is something he quit playing. But the joy I felt from him after he won the World Cup or from winning the FIDE World Rapid and Blitz Championship in 2022 was extraordinary and something I didn't expect. Winning World Championship matches with Vishy (Anand in 2013 and 2014) felt great, because we never took it for granted. With Magnus, at some point, we took it for granted," Heine Nielsen had told The Indian Express in 2024.

Now, just contrast his desperation to train for an unknown opening position at the Freestyle World Championship with him playing at Norway Chess last year. The event is the only classical chess tournament on his calendar these days. Carlsen's prep for the long grind of Norway Chess games would be long stints on the golf course with Heine Nielsen. At least once, the golf went on for so long that he would rush back to the hotel to return his golf clubs, change and then had to hurry to the playing hall for his game that day. But at the FIDE Freestyle World Championship, Carlsen was locked in. After the opening position is revealed to the players, players playing with the same colour get to discuss tactics with others on a physical chess board. In each discussion, Carlsen would come alive, spending plenty of time giving his inputs as he maneuvered the pieces in frantic blur. No surprise then, that Carlsen, right after winning the previous Grand Slam Tour of Freestyle Chess, also claimed the Freestyle Chess World Championship.

## 'Most baffling non-selection I can remember': Mark Waugh slams selectors over Steve Smith's T20 World Cup snub

GNS News Agency, Sept 21

Former Australian batter Mark Waugh has slammed the selectors for not selecting batting talisman Steve Smith in the initial squad, adding that the whole T20 World Cup campaign seemed 'doomed' based on the players picked for the tournament. Australia's qualification will depend on the results of other teams, following their eight-wicket loss to Sri Lanka in Kandy on Monday. They will have their eyes on the Zimbabwe versus Ireland clash on Tuesday, and if the former beats the latter, then Australia will be knocked out of contention to qualify for the Super 8.

"I know you can't please everybody, and sometimes there are tough calls that can go either way, but to me, the non-selection of Steve Smith in the squad originally is the most baffling non-selection I can remember for ages. I mean, here you've got a guy who has looked a class above everybody in the BBL." "I think that the whole campaign was doomed from the get-go with selection issues and injuries," Waugh told SENQ Breakfast.

"He's an outstanding fieldsman. He's a great player of spin. He should have been first picked, and he wasn't picked in the squad... then he wasn't even picked as a replacement, and then they've got him over there, and they still haven't played him," Waugh added. The 60-year-old questioned the selection of the likes of Glenn Maxwell and Coo-



per Connolly, whom he felt were not in form and yet found a place in the touring party. "Look at the selections. Look at Maxwell, Connolly, Green and Inglis, these guys are all out of form. Maxwell and Connolly have not made a run for three months between them." "The selectors have their plans in place, but you've got to be smart enough to see which players are in form and which players are out of form, and you've got to play the percentages a lot better than what our selectors have played at the moment. It's just been baffling some of the selections, and injuries haven't helped obviously," Waugh said. Australia will play the last league phase match of the tournament against Oman on Friday.

## Boycott 'circus' affected Pakistan, says Michael Clarke; predicts stars nearing end of T20I careers

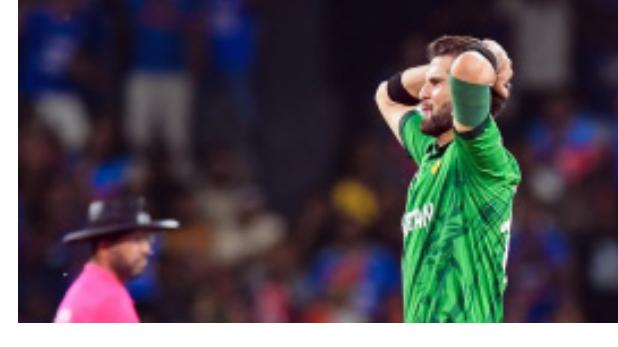
GNS News Agency, Feb 18

India extended their dominance over Pakistan on Sunday with a 61-run win in the T20 World Cup group stage between the two sides. Former Australia captain Michael Clarke has said that there is now a significant gap between the two teams and that some of Pakistan's stars may be in the last stages of their T20 international career.

"I think now, there is a distinct gap between the two teams," said Clarke on the 'Beyond23 Cricket Podcast'. "India have been ahead for a long time now and there is a significant gap. I don't know what Pakistan do. If you look through their list, there might be a few of their more senior players who have been good, but in regards to T20 cricket, this might be their final hurrah. They might look at the PSL and some young talent coming through there."

Clarke also felt that all the talk of Pakistan boycotting this match in the days leading up to it also affected their players. "I expected India to win. It has been a bit of a circus in regards to Pakistan playing the tournament but not playing the India game. So from a player's perspective, it doesn't help, but they were outperformed. India is a much better team than Pakistan in this format and have been for a while now," he said.

The Pakistan government had initially said that while the team will play the T20 World Cup, it will not take the field for the match against India. However, this was followed by a series of back channel discussions took place where representatives of Sri Lanka Cricket, Bangladesh Cricket Board, Pakistan Cricket Board and ICC. The conflict had risen from the ICC refusing Bangladesh's request for their matches to be shifted away from India to Sri Lanka and



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ultimately replacing them with Scotland. Pakistan were comprehensively outplayed by India at the R Premadasa Stadium on Sunday. Ishan Kishan's masterful 77 off 40 balls took India to a score of 175/7. Pakistan were then bowled out for 114 runs, with Jasprit Bumrah, Hardik Pandya, Axar Patel and Varun Chakaravarthy all taking two wickets each. The defeat has been followed by a number of former Pakistani players calling for senior players like Babar Azam and Shaheen Afridi to be dropped from the T20 side.

## Priyanka Chopra recalls being fired from Bollywood film by male co-star on Salaam-E-Ishq set: 'Director gave this to you by mistake'



Priyanka Chopra started her career in Indian films in the early 2000s and while in those days, the word 'nepotism' wasn't used as often, it was practiced quite liberally. This resulted in Priyanka getting fired from some films because the makers or actors favoured some other female actor over her, and theirs was the final word. Priyanka recently recalled one such incident where she was fired from a Hindi film after she had signed the contract. She recalled that her male co-actor told her that the director had made a "mistake" hiring her as the film was meant to star some other female actor. Priyanka found herself in a strange position as she was heartbroken, but despite having a legal contract, she could do nothing about this situation. Priyanka Chopra was fired from Bollywood film after signing a contract.

In a recent chat at Harvard Business School, Priyanka recalled that her male co-star from her supposed next film visited her on the set of the 2007 film *Salaam-E-Ishq*. Priyanka thought he was there to support her as they were supposed to start filming for their movie next month, but

that wasn't the case. "He goes, 'The director gave you this movie by mistake. It was his mistake. This was always supposed to go to this other girl but we will do another one together, don't worry about it. I just wanted to tell you myself.' And he ate some food and left," she recalled.

Priyanka said that she was 22 at the time and this was a "really important movie" for her that was just taken away in an instant. "My heart just crushed and I was like, 'I signed a contract. Like, what do you mean?' But that's how it was," she shared and added that this happened many times over. At this point, Priyanka had appeared in many successful films and was still building her career but since she was young enough to go back to college, she shared that she thought of that as a possibility. She shared that she was "rethinking" her career at that point but decided to "focus on my craft" which eventually paid off. "That took me through my career and got me more work," she shared.

Priyanka made her debut in 2003 with *Andaaz*, also starring Akshay Kumar and Lara Dutta, but in that period, there were many newcomers who came from film families, including Hrithik Roshan, Abhishek Bachchan, Kareena Kapoor, Zayed Khan among many others. When asked about nepotism, she shared, "I didn't know what nepotism meant at the time. I just knew that every parent wants to make sure that they give their children the best future that they can, which is normal. My parents did the best that they could to make sure that I have a choice in my future so I didn't understand what that meant or the limitations that came with it." Priyanka recalled that early on in her career, a few movies were "taken away" from her. "I was cast as a lead and suddenly, I was cast as a second lead because somebody else... You know, the politics of it just struck me and I realised that no one is making a movie for me. This person is not my uncle or I haven't been to their home since I was 4 years old and that started becoming really apparent when you met friends and colleagues," she said. But amid all of this, PC realised that she was starting to get good reviews for her work and she decided to stick with it. "I started looking for a variety of roles," she shared. Priyanka Chopra has not been working in Indian films since 2019's *The Sky is Pink*. She will next be seen in SS Rajamouli's upcoming film *Varanasi*, slated to release in 2027.

## Virat Kohli, Anushka Sharma visit Premanand Ji Maharaj's ashram days after son Akaay's birthday.



Anushka Sharma and Virat Kohli, known for their deep spiritual inclination, were once again spotted at Premanand Ji Maharaj's ashram in Vrindavan. The actor-cricketer couple was seen at Mumbai airport on Monday, and reportedly reached the ashram at around 5:30 a.m. on Tuesday to seek the guru's blessings. Anushka Sharma and Virat Kohli at Premanand Ji Maharaj's ashram. Photos from their latest visit to Keli Kunj Ashram have surfaced online, showing the couple attending the spiritual interaction. The visit came just days after their son Akaay's birthday on February 15.

Virat Kohli wore a white kurta-pajama for the visit while Anushka Sharma was seen in a blue-and-white suit. Both wore tulsi malas and tilaks as they sought blessings from the spiritual guru. Anushka Sharma and Virat Kohli are known to frequently visit Premanand Ji Maharaj's ashram. They last met the spiritual guru in December. During the interaction at that time, Premanand Ji encouraged the couple to remain humble and joyful while treating their professional lives as a form of service to God. He urged them to continue chanting God's name and to keep striving for spiritual growth.

He also advised them to make it their life's goal to one day see God. "Make it your goal that even if in this life or the next one, you decide, but I want to meet you. You have shown all the happiness in life, I don't want those now, I want you. And if I get to see you, all the happiness will come along with you in your feet. Stay joyful and

happy." Responding to his words, Anushka had said, "Hum apake hain Maharaj ji, aap humare (we are yours, you are ours)." To this, Premanand Ji Maharaj replied warmly, "Hum sab Shree ji ke hain (We all belong to God)."

Anushka Sharma and Virat Kohli recently made headlines for a major real estate investment. Virat and Anushka purchased a land parcel measuring over five acres in Alibaug for Rs 37.86 crore. The transaction, completed on January 13 in Zirad village near Awas Beach in Raigad district, involved a stamp duty payment of Rs 2.27 crore along with a registration fee of Rs 30,000. This is the couple's second investment in Alibaug. Nearly four years ago, they had acquired an eight-acre land parcel in the area for around Rs 19 crore. Anushka Sharma and Virat Kohli got married in December 2017. The couple are parents to daughter Vamika, born in January 2021, and son Akaay, born in February 2024.

## Abhishek Bachchan on how dad Amitabh Bachchan's investment mantra is 'zameen', wife Aishwarya Rai suggested silver: 'I invested in gold'



Abhishek Bachchan recently spoke about how his approach to both investments and brand endorsements is rooted in personal belief and everyday use. Influenced in part by his father Amitabh Bachchan's faith in real estate, the actor said he prefers to invest in and endorse things he genuinely connects with. Abhishek has invested in real estate and gold. "My father is a believer in real estate, I think there is that old thought zameen hai to sab theek hai, you know, so that partially is there. I used to invest a bit in gold, thank god and then my wife's like what about silver," he said at the Global Business Summit 2026. Abhishek explained that his investment journey typically begins with familiarity. "A lot of my investing, the products that interest me are predominantly of the fact that I use them or not and that's generally been that starting point for me."

Abhishek Bachchan's criteria of endorsing a product "I understand that as a film actor, it is part and parcel of the job, you are an actor, you endorse a brand, you leverage your celebrity status to whatever degree, but for me I find it uncomfortable and unnatural and almost deceitful if I actually don't use the product." He added that authenticity has always been his guiding rule. "For me my first criteria if a proposal came to me to be a brand ambassador would be – will I use the product if I don't already." Abhishek said,

"20 years later I still wear Omega watch, when I used to work with Ford, I used to drive a Ford car. Still have an Idea mobile number, I use Motorola phone, Amex as my credit card. These are all brands I had wonderful collaboration with. So for me it has to be that I feel it will be dishonest of me to sell a product if I don't use it myself."

Abhishek Bachchan also shared that he is a strategic partner in Naagin, an Indian hot sauce founded in 2019. "It came across my table by chance. I tasted it and loved it. I used it a lot and eventually contacted the people behind it, asking, 'Can I get involved?' They were looking at their first round of funding, and I came on board as a strategic partner. It's a matter of great pride for me because it's doing exceedingly well." He also shared that his investments in quick-commerce platforms like Swiggy and Zepto also started from regular use. "One day, I ran out of Naagin sauce. I needed it. It was available somewhere. So I used a quick commerce app to have it delivered for dinner, and that's how it came about," he shared. Speaking about Swiggy in particular, Abhishek revealed that his association began with a daily craving of misal pav from Thane's Mamledar Misal which he orders every morning through the app. "So I called up Swiggy one day and asked, 'Guys, you deliver this to me every morning. Can I invest in you?' I spend so much money on those companies for their services that I feel they should give back a bit. Then I try investing in them and make some money off them." Abhishek's portfolio also includes sports ventures. He owns the Pro Kabaddi League team Jaipur Pink Panthers and is a co-owner of the Indian Super League football club Chennaiyin FC. He has also backed Vahdam Tea alongside former cricketer Sachin Tendulkar. In addition, Abhishek remains an active real estate investor, with combined property investments across Mumbai estimated at around Rs 219 crore, according to Square Yards data.

## Will BMC blacklisting Aditya Dhar's studio delay Dhurandhar 2's March 19 release? Jio Studios responds, legal loophole emerges



GNS News Agency, Feb 18

The Deputy Municipal Commissioner (DMC) Zone I on Monday blacklisted Dhurandhar director Aditya Dhar and his brother Lokesh Dhar's production house B62 Studios from seeking permission to shoot in Mumbai for the blockbuster film's sequel, *Dhurandhar 2: The Revenge* as reported by the Indian Express. The development came after the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) flagged "repeated violations" of safety terms and conditions on sets of the Ranveer Singh-starrer that is supposed to release on March 19.

### Is *Dhurandhar 2* delayed?

However, an official spokesperson of Jio Studios confirmed to SCREEN that this setback has caused no delays in the filming of *Dhurandhar 2: The Revenge* in Mumbai. The shooting is still in progress, and the sequel is well on its way to meet the target of its scheduled release date of March 19, on the occasion of Eid, Gudi Padwa, and Ugadi, and clashing with Geethu Mohandas' Kannada action thriller *Toxic: A Fairytale for Grownups*, starring KGF superstar Yash. The spokesperson further stated that the violations and BMC's objection are merely "ground issues". While they had "no clue" about the blacklisting of its producing partner B62 Studios, the spokesperson for the latter remained unavailable for comment. Meanwhile, documents provided by the BMC confirmed it has received a sanction on the blacklisting of B62 Studios.

BMC blacklists Aditya Dhar's Studio, but there's a catch "Having received the clearances, the three applicants

– Komal Pokhriyal, Nasir Khan and B62 production house – can no longer apply for shoot permissions with the Maharashtra Film, Stage and Cultural Development CL website. On Tuesday, we will also be issuing notices to these three applicants informing of the action, and a copy of the notice will also be shared with the Maharashtra film cell and BMC's Business Cell head," a BMC official told

But the catch is that even after the blacklisting, it's only the three applicants named above which can't apply for shoot permissions in the given domain. "While the three blacklisted applicants can no longer apply after BMC clearance, the application can still be filed for their shoots on behalf of a fourth applicant and as such, permissions can still be granted to them for filming," a source privy to developments told The Indian Express, on the condition of anonymity. Thus, any fourth applicant, including Jio Studios, can still apply for shooting permissions with the Maharashtra Film, Stage and Cultural Development CL website. So, the makers seem confident that despite the BMC hurdle, they'd be able to circumvent the same and still wrap shooting in time for *Dhurandhar 2: The Revenge* to make it to the scheduled release date within a month.

Why was there a crackdown on *Dhurandhar 2* sets?

Authorities took action against *Dhurandhar 2* shoot after repeated violations of safety norms. Specifically, the production used lit torches (mashals) and flammable materials in South Mumbai's heritage Fort area during a night shoot on February 14, despite giving a written undertaking that fire effects would be added in VFX.

"After receiving the complaint again after 15 minutes, the officials from Mumbai police arrived on the site and the five torches (Mashals) lit during the shoot were seized by the police. It was also ensured that no flammable object was used during the course of the shoot till 4 am," a BMC official told Indian Express. BMC has now sought forfeiture of the deposit amount of Rs 25,000, impose a fine of Rs 1 lakh for filming on the terrace of the building and for using two generator vans without permission during filming. Co-produced by Jio Studios and B62 Studios, *Dhurandhar* released last year and became the highest grossing Indian film ever at the domestic box office while earning over Rs 1300 crore worldwide. Helmed by Aditya, it boasts of an ensemble cast including Ranveer Singh, Akshaye Khanna, Sanjay Dutt, Arjun Rampal, R Madhavan, Sara Arjun, and Rakhee Bedi among others.

## Ilaiyaraaja restrained from using songs from 134 films as Saregama gets Delhi HC relief

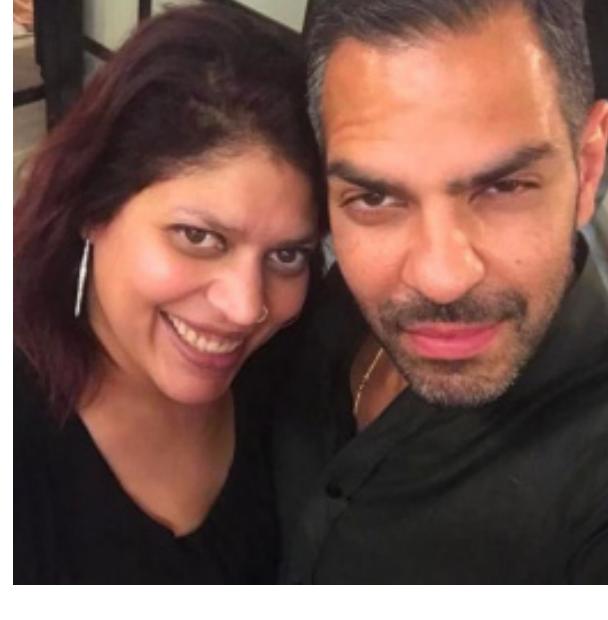
In a significant setback for music maestro Ilaiyaraaja, the Delhi High Court has restrained him from "exploiting or licensing" certain copyrighted musical works that belong to Saregama India Limited. The court passed the order recently while hearing a commercial suit filed by the music label, concerning compositions from as many as 134 films.

The HC granted an ex parte ad interim injunction in favour of Saregama after considering the music label's arguments that it owned copyrights to several musical compositions across various Indian languages, pursuant to agreements entered into with film producers between 1976 and 2001, news agency ANI reported. Saregama further alleged that Ilaiyaraaja has been granting licenses to third parties and uploading songs on platforms such as Amazon Music, iTunes, and JioSaavn since February 2026, while also claiming ownership over the works.

Pointing out that film producers are considered the first owners of musical compositions under the Copyright Act, in the absence of a contract stating otherwise, the music label alleged that Ilaiyaraaja's actions constituted infringement and created confusion about Saregama's legal title to the recordings. After considering the matter in depth, the High Court noted that Saregama made out a prima facie case and added that continued exploitation could cause "irreparable loss that may not be compensable monetarily." The court then issued the order and directed the defendant

to file a written statement within 30 days. The court will hear the matter further on April 2, 2026. One of the most celebrated film music composers in the world, Ilaiyaraaja has worked in several Indian languages, including Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, and Hindi. In a career spanning almost five decades, he has composed over 8,600 songs for approximately 1,523 feature films. Ilaiyaraaja's legal battles over copyright violations are also well known, and he has taken many to task for using his songs and music in films and live performances without prior permission.

## 'Conduct yourself with dignity': Delhi HC restrains Priya Kapur and Mandhira Smith from public mudslinging



According to a report by Bar & Bench, Justice Mini Pushkarna emphasized the importance of decorum, stating, "We expect you not to make any public statements against each other... Conduct yourself with dignity, this is what the court expects." The Court also issued a notice to Mandhira, instructing her to file her response to the interim relief application within five weeks.

In her application, Priya has sought directions to prevent Mandhira from making defamatory statements against her. The court order reads: "Issue notice. List after five weeks. In the meantime, both parties are directed to exercise restraint in making statements against each other, directly or indirectly." The matter is scheduled for further hearing on May 14. Senior Advocate Maninder Singh, representing Priya Kapur, highlighted several allegedly defamatory remarks made by Mandhira. "A grieving widow and a seven-year-old son are subjected to such derogatory statements like that there was no bloodline present. She (Mandhira) is saying they (Priya and her minor son) are thieves, robbers, and third wife, and that she (Priya) was just filling the gap," Singh stated. He further noted that Priya Kapur has not given any media interviews.

Speaking for Mandhira, Senior Advocate Amit Sibal contended that she, too, had been the target of media attention and public statements. "Considering the relationship between the parties and media trials that are happening... It's a tell-tale. Concurred media vilification campaign," Sibal remarked. To those unaware, Priya has sought an injunction against Mandhira to halt the allegedly defamatory statements and has claimed damages of Rs 20 crore for "loss of reputation, mental agony, emotional distress and social humiliation." She has also alleged that Mandhira made repeated insinuations on a podcast suggesting that Priya's marriage to Sunjay was troubled, manipulative, and lacked legitimacy.