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## Priority to BCs in Nalgonda corporation: Komatireddy

Nalgonda: Minister for Roads & Buildings and Cinematography, Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, stated that while finalising candidates for the Nalgonda Municipal Corporation, the Congress party strictly followed the principle of social justice by ensuring representation to all social groups and by giving major priority to Backward Classes (BCs). On Sunday, Venkat Reddy held a Zoom meeting with Congress corporator candidates of the Nalgonda Municipal Corporation and provided direction on election preparedness. Addressing the candidates, the Minister said, "If you win, it is my victory. Your victory is my victory, and it is the victory of the poor." He assured that if all 48 corporators are elected, he would bring any amount of funds required for the development of Nalgonda.

## Budget 2026-27 revamps customs, reduces import duties

**The Union Budget 2026-27 has simplified customs procedures by rationalising exemptions, waiving duty on 17 cancer drugs, easing baggage rules, and cutting duty on personal imports to 10 per cent. It also introduced a trust-based system using AI and faster dispute settlement**

New Delhi Feb 1

The Budget 2026-27 has simplified the customs regime by rationalising exemptions, waiving customs duty on 17 cancer drugs, easing baggage rules, and reducing duty to 10 per cent on goods imported for personal use.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday

toms processes.

She further announced that advance rulings will be binding on customs authorities for five years, up from three years currently.

She also said the Customs warehousing framework will be transformed into a warehouse operator-centric system with self-declarations, electronic tracking, and risk-based audits.

In her Budget speech, Sitharaman said that the Customs proposals "aim to further simplify the tariff structure, support domestic manufacturing, promote export competitiveness, and correct duty inversion".

"The reforms will move away from the current system of officer-dependent approvals and reduce transaction delays and compliance costs," she said.

The Budget proposed revising provisions governing baggage clearance during international travel to address genuine concerns of passengers. The revised rules will enhance duty-free allowances in line with present-day travel realities and provide clarity on the temporary carriage of goods brought in or taken out.

Under the Baggage Rules, 2016, Indian residents and foreigners residing in India arriving from countries other than Nepal, Bhutan, or Myanmar can bring Rs 50,000 worth of duty-free goods.

With regard to the import of goods for personal use, the Budget proposes reducing the tariff rate on all such dutiable goods from 20 per cent to 10 per cent.

Personal-use goods will exclude motor vehicles, alcohol, and tobacco.

## Are you the 'big leader' who ordered phone-tapping?

DCP KS Rao, ACP Venkatagiri, Greyhounds SP Ravinder Reddy, and ACP Sridhar.

Before the investigation started, the BRS chief got emotional as he recalled that from this very house, he had planned strategies for a separate state and today he was being questioned in the same room. Talking to the party leaders, he said, "I have never thought I would be sitting in front of the officials facing inquiry in the same room where the agitation for separate state was planned. I have spent many sleepless nights in this same room. Discussed in this same room with many people and in the same room I have planned strategies for achieving Telangana statehood. It is unfortunate that I had to attend for inquiry in this same room."

The SIT officers grilled KCR for about five hours questioning based on the allegations/ statements by some officials and political leaders that one 'big leader' had asked them to tap the phones. "The SIT officers questioned

## Budget proposes major overhaul of buyback tax rules

New Delhi: In a move to protect minority shareholders and curb tax arbitrage by promoters, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday proposed a major overhaul of the taxation framework governing share buybacks. Presenting the Union Budget 2026-27, Sitharaman said that buybacks will be taxed as capital gains for all categories of shareholders. To discourage misuse of tax arbitrage, promoters will be subject to an additional buyback tax, raising the effective tax rate to 22 per cent for corporate promoters and 30 per cent for non-corporate promoters, she stated.

## Telangana again treated unfairly in Union Budget: Deputy CM

Hyderabad, Feb 1

The Centre has once again treated Telangana unfairly in the Union Budget, said Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka.

Reacting to Union Budget 2026-27 presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in Parliament on Sunday, he said they expected allocations for various projects for Telangana, but the State received nothing in the Rs 53.47 lakh crore Budget.

He told the media that despite Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, Cabinet Ministers, and Members of Parliament repeatedly meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Finance Minister and submitting representations for the State's interests and development, the absence of allocations in the Budget has caused deep disappointment.

He said the state had expected Central funding in the Budget for projects such as the Musi River rejuvenation, the Regional Ring Road, Hyderabad city development, Metro Rail expansion, and other infrastructure.

Vikramarka said that when bio-pharma is discussed, the first name come to mind is Telangana, but the lack of allocations for the State is extremely disappointing.

He also mentioned that Hyderabad is globally recognised as a pharma hub. During the COVID period, Bharat Biotech supplied vaccines not only to the country but also to the world, but Telangana did not figure in the pharma hub initiatives.

The Central budget allocated Rs 40,000 crore for electronics, but not even a single rupee has been given to Telangana, he said and pointed out that Hyderabad has a well-developed electronics ecosystem.

The Telangana government has been focusing on sports. As part of the Global Summit and the Vision 2047 document, sports events were organised with world-re-



nowned athletes. Despite special emphasis on sports, Telangana was ignored by the Centre, the Deputy CM said.

"In the Orange Economy, Hyderabad-centric activities were shifted to Mumbai. What wrong has Telangana done? Hyderabad is the biggest centre for audio-video, gaming, and comics. Ignoring Hyderabad in the Orange Economy and choosing Mumbai instead is unjustified," he said.

He mentioned that Hyderabad is emerging as a medical hub with people from across the country and from other nations coming to avail medical facilities. He wanted to know why Telangana was not included in the Regional Medical Value Hub initiative.

"Excluding Telangana, even in the tourism sector, is unfair. Telangana has UNESCO-recognised heritage sites like the Ramappa Temple, Mannanur Tiger Reserve, Kawal Reserve Forest, waterfalls, temples along the Krishna and Godavari riverbanks, and rich forest areas."

He stated that the Centre has not focused on Telangana even in rare earth minerals. Singareni Collieries is already running rare earth mineral processing to extract scandium and lithium in Sathupalli and Ramagundam.

Despite Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and Industries Minister Sridhar Babu personally meeting the Prime Minister and requesting approval for a semiconductor unit for Telangana, the Budget granted such projects to other states while showing a step-motherly attitude towards Telangana.

This Budget has not focused on the welfare of SCs, STs, and minorities. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme is being undermined, which will severely harm the rural poor, Vikramarka said.

He appealed to all Telangana Members of Parliament to rise above political differences during this Budget session and submit representations to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman seeking fund allocations.

The Deputy CM said the State had requested the Centre to allow a fiscal deficit of 4 per cent, but the Centre itself has set a fiscal deficit of 4.3 per cent, while denying permission to Telangana. "Is Telangana not an integral part of the country?" he asked.

## Increase in Finance Commission Grant is Welcome ex vp Cantonment Board, Ramakrishna

\*\*\*Secunderabad Cantonment. February.1 (Indian Chronicle): "Former Vice Chairman of the Cantonment Board, Mr. Janyavula Ramakrishna, said that the increase in the Finance Commission grant for the development of local bodies, municipalities, and corporations in 2026-27, as introduced by the Central Government, is a welcome development and will be crucial for the development of the Cantonment area. Speaking in the press meet on the Union Budget, he praised it, stating that its uniqueness lies in the massive allocation of funds for infrastructure development with the aim of further strengthening the country's economy. He said that the increase in capital expenditure in key sectors such as roads, railways, ports, high-speed rail corridors, and urban development will further accelerate the pace of development across the country. Responding specifically to issues related to Hyderabad city, he said that the measures taken in this budget will be very beneficial for Hyderabad, which is growing as a hub for IT, pharmaceuticals, startups, and industries. He stated that through infrastructure development, metro rail expansion, road connectivity, and improvement of urban infrastructure, Hyderabad city will transform into a more competitive metropolis at the international level. He added that the allocations made in the Union Budget to promote industrial development in and around Hyderabad, support for MSMEs, and the startup ecosystem will create extensive employment opportunities for the youth. He said that increased investments in modern sectors such as IT, semiconductors, and biopharma will further strengthen Hyderabad's position as a key center for the country's economic growth. He stated that the priority given to the agricultural sector will provide long-term security to farmers, and that the central government is moving forward with a clear plan to strengthen the rural economy. He



added that the encouragement given to MSMEs and small and medium-sized industries will increase employment opportunities and open up new job avenues for the youth. He said that the simplification of the tax system through the new income tax law is a relief for the middle class, and that this budget has been designed to improve the ease of living for the people. He clarified that focusing on the defense sector and modern technology will further strengthen national security and economic stability. Overall, Mr. Janyavula Ramakrishna stated that this budget, designed with the country's development, the progress of Hyderabad city, the welfare of the people, and the needs of future generations in mind, will serve as a strong foundation for the goal of a developed India.

## Efforts for the Development of the Munnuru Kapu Community

\*\*\*Secunderabad Cantonment. February.1 (Indian Chronicle): "The president of the Bowenpally Munnuru Kapu community, Narender, said that leaders, young men, and women should come together for the development of the Munnuru Kapu community. A meeting of the Bowenpally Munnuru Kapu community was held on Sunday at Venu Guesthouse in the Cantonment's 6th ward, presided over by Narender. Munnuru Kapu community members residing in Bowenpally, Hasmatpet, and Old Bowenpally areas participated in this program. On this occasion, journalists, doctors, advocates, government and private employees, and teachers who are serving in various professions were felicitated. Speaking on this occasion, the community president Narender said that while working towards strengthening the Munnuru Kapu community, they will also provide support to those who are economically backward. He stated that although the Munnuru Kapus are economically and socially backward, they are at the forefront of social service. He said that they will soon go door-to-door to every Munnuru Kapu household in the Boyinapally area to further strengthen the community, and that they will organize marriage introduction forums in the coming days. He also stated that they will work towards the construction of a community building. He said that they will organize a massive meeting under the name "Munnuru Kapu's Roar," transcending political parties, to showcase the unity of the community. He stated that this meeting was organized with the goal of bringing all the Munnuru Kapus across



Bowenpally onto a single platform. The association announced that it will be conducting a membership drive, meeting with every brother and sister, granting them membership in the association, and making them active participants. They stated that they will hold more meetings to help the association move forward and called upon every member of the Munnuru Kapu community to come forward. Those present at the event included Secretary Venugopal, Treasurer Tella Srikar, Vice Presidents Tella Surender and Nagaraju, Joint Secretary Chittananda, and members Narender Raju Patel, T. Sunil, T. Srinivas, Surender, and Ravikumar, along with a large number of Munnuru Kapu youth who are participated in this program.



# Indian Chronicle

English Daily

## On the rapid expansion of State Development Loans

While the Union Budget is keenly tracked by States to assess their share in overall Central tax devolution, it is becoming increasingly clear that this revenue stream no longer plays the stabilising role it once did in State finances. The evidence lies in the rapid expansion of State Development Loans (SDLs), which have emerged as a key financing instrument for States' day-to-day spending needs. In 2024-25 (Revised Estimates), SDLs amounted to about 35% of Tamil Nadu's total revenue receipts and nearly 26% of Maharashtra's — levels that would have been considered fiscally exceptional a decade ago. This shift gathered pace after 2020-21, when the COVID-19 pandemic delivered a severe economic shock and Central devolution proved inadequate.

This dependence on borrowing has not reversed since. Instead, States are increasingly relying on SDLs; borrowings by profit-making State PSUs and Special Purpose Vehicles are done to finance even routine revenue expenditure. This has happened despite the 15th Finance Commission fixing States' share at 41% of the divisible pool, as the effective flow of resources has been eroded by the growing use of cesses and surcharges, which lie outside the divisible pool. The problem is acute for industrialised States with a large indirect tax base. Since the introduction of GST in 2017, a substantial share of these revenues is collected by the Centre and redistributed through a formula that often weakens the fiscal link between tax effort and reward. Consequently, welfare commitments — pensions for the elderly and retired employees and mass health insurance schemes for the poor — are increasingly being funded through domestic borrowing. This limits the availability of funds for public capital expenditure and private investment, which is essential to sustain growth.

A comparison of borrowing patterns over the past five years across Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and West Bengal underlines this trend. West Bengal, which is structurally dependent on Central devolution — averaging about 47.7% of its revenue receipts over the last five years — continued to borrow heavily from the domestic market. SDLs constituted roughly 35% of the State's revenues on average during this period, even as nominal tax devolution rose. This points to a steady erosion of States' fiscal autonomy, with potentially serious macroeconomic consequences as debt-to-GSDP ratios rise while assured revenue streams weaken. If debt, rather than devolution, becomes the primary shock absorber in India's federal system, fiscal sustainability itself comes under strain. India needs higher effective devolution, and a reworking of horizontal devolution criteria to give greater weight to tax effort and efficiency. Cesses and surcharges must be brought into the divisible pool.

## Praja Vani Suspended Due to Municipal Election Preparations: Collector

“Taj Khan, Kaghaznagar, January 31 (Indian Chronicle)“Public Grievance Programme Cancelled in View of Municipal Elections District Collector K. Haritha has announced the cancellation of the Praja Vani (Public Grievance Redressal) programme that is usually held ev-



ery Monday at the Integrated District Collectorate Complex in the district headquarters. “The decision has been taken in view of the Second General Municipal Elections–2026, as officials are currently engaged in election-related duties. The District Collector stated that details regarding the resumption of the Praja Vani programme after the completion of the elections will be communicated through a press release.” She appealed to the public and applicants to take note of the temporary cancellation and extend their cooperation.

## Garve Shareef Celebrations Held with Grandeur at Beerappagadda under the Leadership of Irshad Khan



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 1 (Indian Chronicle):“Garve Shareef celebrations were held with great devotion and enthusiasm in the Beerappagadda area. The event was efficiently organized under the leadership of Irshad Khan, popularly known as “Uppal Khan,” who served as the in-charge of the celebrations. “Uppal Congress Party In-charge Mandhamula Parameshwar

Reddy attended the program as the chief guest and extended his greetings to the devotees on the occasion. A large number of minority youth, women, and children from the Beerappagadda area participated in the celebrations and took part with great fervor. Several local leaders and party members, including Bazar Jagan, Agam Reddy, Santosh, Anwar, Afzal, Asif, Mohsin, Faheem, and other Congress leaders, were present at the event. The program



was successfully coordinated by the organizers Junaid, Azeem, Aiju, Yaseen, Noor, Altaf, Rafiq, Moji, Mustaq, Mujamil, Baba, and others, who ensured the smooth conduct of the celebrations. Speaking on the occasion, Irshad Khan stated that such spiritual and religious programs play a vital role in strengthening unity and communal harmony in society. Local residents appreciated and congratulated the organizers for conducting the Garve Shareef celebrations in a grand and peaceful manner.

## Uppal Constituency Congress In-charge Parameshwar Reddy Inaugurates MAER Box Cricket



“Kishore Vaddepalli, Uppal, February 1 (Indian Chronicle):“The “Big Bash” rooftop box cricket facility was inaugurated at Srirama Puram Colony, Ramanthapur, by Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Parameshwar Reddy. “Speaking on the occasion, Parameshwar Reddy said that sports help keep youth away from bad habits and play a vital role in maintaining physical fitness. He emphasized that facilities like box cricket are essential and encouraged everyone to make use of them. He also specially congratulated the box cricket organizers, Allam Anthony Reddy. “The event was attended by Rev. Father Anand Bhaskar, Allam Lourdu Reddy, Colony President Ratna Reddy, Somanarayana, Chukkala Satyanarayana, Srikanth Yadav, Aleem,



Upender Reddy, Babu Rao, Srinivas, Sandeep Bhaskar, Raghavendra, John Wilson, P. Lucas, Vinay, Laxma Reddy, Balaswamy, Vinay Reddy, Karre Praveen Kumar, Pratap Reddy, Sudhakar, Naveen, Manohar, Kishore, Sudheer Reddy, Dileep Reddy, Vinod Reddy, Narendra, Vamsi, Rayanna, Santosh, and several others.

## Grand Celebrations of Pastor Gona Philip's 73rd Birthday



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 1 (Indian Chronicle):“The 73rd birthday celebrations of Pastor Gona Philip were held in a grand manner at Horeb Church, Swaroop Nagar, Uppal. Several Christian leaders, pastors, and bishops conveyed their heartfelt greetings to Gona Philip on the occasion. “Speaking as the chief guest, Rev. Prabhucharan appreciated Pastor Gona Philip's dedicated service, stating that his contributions to social service, spiritual gospel ministry, his role as the founder of the Pastor Fellowship, and his efforts in coordinat-

ing with political parties and government officials for the welfare of the Christian community are truly commendable. Many pastors offered prayers, wishing that God's blessings remain with the Philip family, Horeb Church, and the Uppal Churches Pastors Welfare Association. John Paul from Aradhana TV delivered a Bible sermon during the program. “The event was attended by UCPWA members and pastors including David Sun, Rev. Dr. Ramesh, Gona Anil, Rev. Kumar, Jerusalem Mattaiah, Tejomaya, Agrippa Raj, as well as BRS Christian leaders Ravulapati Moses, David, and others.

## Grand Giripradakshina Held at Hemadri Venkateswara Swamy Temple

“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, February 01, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):“Giripradakshina performed on Magha Pournami at the Sri Hemadri Venkateswara Swamy Temple, located on Venkuloni Hill at Rampally Dayara in Keesara Mandal, was held in a grand and devotional



manner. According to the guidance of Vedic scholars Aditya Sharma, Anjaneya Sharma, and Srinivas Sharma, Magha Pournami was considered an auspicious and spiritually significant day for performing Giripradakshina to seek the blessings of the deity. The ritual was conducted at the scheduled auspicious time under the leadership of temple chairman Kandadi Hanumanth Reddy and the Temple Trust Board members, with great devotion and discipline. Local Keesara Police Station Circle Inspector Anjaneyulu participated in the Giripradakshina as part of the service to Sri Hemadri Venkateswara Swamy. During the event, the Utsava idols of the deity were carried in a palanquin amid chants of the Lord's name, devotional songs, bhajans, and spiritual music. Devotees danced and sang throughout the procession. Donors supporting the temple's renovation, villagers of Rampally Dayara, and devotees from surrounding villages participated in large numbers, making the event vibrant and spiritually uplifting. Speaking on the occasion, temple chairman Kandadi Hanumanth Reddy announced that Giripradakshina would be conducted regularly on every Pournami day at 5:00 a.m. He appealed to devotees to participate in large numbers and seek the blessings of Sri Hemadri Venkateswara Swamy. Vice Chairmen Kamasani Bal Reddy and Garugula Mallesh, Joint Secretary Gadi Ramu, Organizing Secretary Purushottam Reddy, and Trust Board members Dyagala Sudhakar, Varaganti Nagesh, Bitla Ganga Samudram, Chokkapuram Sriramulu, Gurugala Balanarasimha, Goka Balaswamy, and others were present.



## Setback for Congress as Former Councillor Joins BRS



“Taj Khan, Kaghaznagar, January 31 (Indian Chronicle)“In a significant setback to the Congress party, former Congress councillor Murali Goud and his spouse, along with their supporters, formally joined the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) on Sunday.“The induction took place under the leadership of young leader Srikanth Chinnna of Sir Silk Ward No. 4, in the presence of former Sirpur MLA Koneru Konappa. Murali Goud and his wife were warmly welcomed into the party as Koneru Konappa draped them with the traditional pink scarves, symbolising their entry into the BRS.“Addressing the gathering, Koneru Konappa stated that the BRS government has been working with public welfare as its core objective

and has earned a distinct identity through the effective implementation of development and welfare schemes. He said the entry of experienced leaders like Murali Goud would further strengthen the party.“Speaking on the occasion, Murali Goud said there was no effective platform within the Congress party to address public issues. He stated that he joined the BRS with firm confidence that under the leadership of Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao, the party is delivering genuine justice to the people. He added that he, along with his supporters, would work collectively to take BRS development initiatives to the grassroots.

## Illa who had a fight with her husband..

### Disappearance including 19-month-old baby

“K.Sadanadam“Malkajigiri, February 1, a wife who came out of the house after quarreling with her husband disappeared along with her daughter. “The details are as per Nared Met Police. “Pavalur Aarti (21) of Neredmet Sainathapuram is Prakash's husband and wife. “Theirs is a love marriage. “They have a 19-month-old daughter named Chaitrika.““She is currently four months pregnant. “last month““On the 31st at around 14.30 hours, Aarti, Thana ““She took her daughter and reached the house. “As her parents were not at home at that time, relatives went home and called her father and told her that she had a fight with her husband. “The daughter said that she will go to her husband's house again. “After that, the daughter and granddaughter did not return to the husband's house. “The search for the daughter



was unsuccessful.““With this Aarti's parents

“Pavaluru Renuka and Raju lodged a complaint with the Nered Met Police.

Based on their complaint, the Nered Met Police registered a missing case and are investigating.

## Mallanna Kalyanam, Bonala fair under the auspices of Sri Krishna Yadav Sangam

### Temples are abodes of spirituality: Corporator Kanam Rajyalakshmi



““K.Sadanand ““Malkajigiri, February 1, : Mallanna Kalyanam and Bonala Jatara were organized on Sunday under the auspices of Sri Krishna Yadav Sangam at Mallanna Temple in Malikarjuna Nagar under Gautamnagar Division. “This ““On the occasion, Vinayaknagar corporator Kanam Rajyalakshmi visited Mallanna temple in Malikarjuna Nagar and took Mallanna blessings. “Later she said that temples are the abode of spirituality. “He said that mental peace is obtained by visiting temples. “Along with the corporator, Sunil Yadav, Chari, Ganesh, Manjula and Yadav's sisters participated in this program.

## Offering food on the pournami day brings wealth and prosperity

““Secunderabad Cantonment. February.1 (Indian Chronicle):“Former Cantonment Board member Pandu Yadav said that according to the Puranas, offering food and clothes on the pournami day removes poverty and increases wealth and prosperity. He added that worshipping Lord Satyanarayana and Lord Shiva and Vishnu, and performing Annadanam (food donation) on the full moon day is considered highly meritorious. On Sunday, special prayers and an Annadanam program were organized at the Shiva Panchayatan Hanuman Temple in the Cantonment's 6th ward, Sitapuram Colony, Bowenpally on the occasion of the pournami. Former Board Vice Chairman Jampana Pratap and former Board member Pandu Yadav attended the program. They appreciated the commendable effort of conducting Annadanam every month on the full moon day with the cooperation of donors. They urged donors to come forward and contribute to the development of the temple. They also praised the service rendered by donor Rajasekhhar for the Annadanam program. Temple committee members Saibaba Yadav, Vijay Babu, Govardhan Raju, Srikanth Reddy, Prakash, and others participated in the program.



## The Venkateswara Swamy Kalyana Mahotsavam was celebrated with great splendor



““Secunderabad Cantonment. February.1 (Indian Chronicle):“The Kalyana Mahotsavam of Lord Venkateswara Swamy, along with Goddesses Sridevi and Bhudevi, was celebrated grandly on Sunday at the Venkateswara Swamy Temple in Bowenpally New City Colony. As part of the Pushkara Brahmotsavams of the Boyinapalli Sri Venkateswara Swamy Temple, the Lord's wedding was conducted with great pomp and ceremony. After special prayers were performed under the chanting of Vedic mantras by prominent Vedic scholars Sriman Mudumbai Ranganatha Acharyulu and Srikanth Acharyulu, the Lord's wedding was conducted in the presence of thousands of devotees. On this occasion, the processional idols of Lord Venkateswara Swamy along with Sridevi and Bhudevi were specially decorated with colorful flower garlands, leaving the devotees who witnessed the ceremony overjoyed. Until the completion of the wedding, the temple premises resonated with the chanting of "Jai Sriman Narayana Namo Venkatesha". The temple and its surrounding streets were decorated with colorful electric lights for the celebrations, creating a festive atmosphere in New City Colony. Former Cantonment Board Vice Chairman Jampana Pratap and BJP leader Banuka Mallikarjun attended the event and had darshan of the Lord. The temple priests offered them sacred water and blessings. Later, a grand feast Maha Annadanam was organized for the devotees. The temple committee members announced that the Hanuman Vahana Seva procession will be held in the temple premises on Monday evening as part of the Brahmotsavam festivities. The temple priests appealed to the devotees to participate in large numbers in the chariot procession to be held on Tuesday, making it a grand success. Narayan, Rammohan, Yadaiya, Sumanth Reddy, Jagantham, Narsing Rao, Shambashiva Rao, Pentareddy, Dharmaveer Pawan Swami, and others participated in the event.



## Preparatory meeting held for the formation of a JAC for the Cantonment Board merger struggle



““Secunderabad Cantonment. February.1 (Indian Chronicle):“Following the recent relay hunger strike by Cantonment MLA Sri Ganesh demanding the merger of the Cantonment Board into the state government's municipal corporation, colony association members, slum dwellers, intellectuals, poets, and artists from the constituency expressed their solidarity. At the hunger strike camp, it was decided to form a Joint Action Committee (JAC) to take this struggle forward and achieve the merger. In this regard, a preparatory meeting for the formation of the JAC was held on Sunday at Lee Palace in Balamrai.“In the meeting, which lasted for about 3 hours, it was decided to exert pressure on the central government in various ways. They stated that the official announcement of the JAC and its action plan would be made

after finalizing the procedures. Those who participated in the meeting opined that the Cantonment area, which is 30 years behind in development compared to the development in GHMC, will only develop if the board is merged into the state government's municipal corporation. They said that democracy is being ridiculed due to the lack of elections for the past 6 years. Those present at the meeting congratulated MLA Sri Ganesh for making everyone aware of the necessity of the merger through the relay hunger strike. They stated that they are inviting everyone who is willing to selflessly join the merger struggle. Presidents of 40 colonies in the Cantonment area, several intellectuals, poets, and artists participated in this meeting and expressed their views.

## 51 Child Labourers Rescued in District During Operation Smile

““Taj Khan, Kaghaznagar, January 31 (Indian Chronicle)“Operation Smile-XII Rescues 51 Child Labourers Across District SP Nitika Pant. As part of the district administration's sustained efforts to eradicate child labour, 51 child labourers were rescued across the district under Operation Smile-XII, District Superintendent of Police Nitika Pant said.“The special drive was conducted from January 1 to January 31 with dedicated teams deployed across the district. Of the total rescued children, 46 were boys and five were girls, the SP stated.“Subdivision-wise details reveal that Asifabad Sub-Division accounted for 23 child labourers (22 boys and one girl), while Kagaznagar Sub-Division reported 28 cases (24 boys and four girls).“The SP said cases have been registered against employers who engaged children in hazardous occupations. She reiterated that employing children below 14 years in any form of work is strictly prohibited, and engaging adolescents aged 15 to 18 years in hazardous activities is a punishable offence under the law.“Calling for public participation in eliminating child labour, the SP urged citizens to immediately report any instances of child labour by dialling 100, assuring strict action against violators.





# Demand for Construction of an Arts and Cultural Centre in the Constituency

## Nalla Radhakrishna, Founder President, Nacharam Artists JAC

““Nacharam, Indian Chronicle, January 1: ““Nalla Radhakrishna, Founder President of the Nacharam Artists Joint Action Committee (JAC), appealed to Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy to construct an Arts and Cultural Centre in the Uppal constituency for artists and cultural programmes.”On Sunday, the formation meeting of the Nacharam Artists JAC was held at the Bahujan Sahitya Academy office in Nacharam. The meeting was presided over by JAC leader Teki Rajashekhar, with Nalla Radhakrishna attending as the chief guest and addressing the gathering.”Floral tributes were paid to the portrait of renowned singer Gaddar. Speaking on the occasion, Radhakrishna said that the formation of the Nacharam Artists JAC on the occasion of Gaddar’s birth anniversary was commendable. He announced that committees would be formed in all



divisions of the constituency and a convention with around 1,000 participants would be organized in the near future.”Distinguished guests who addressed the gathering included writer and advocate Hemalatha, retired Joint Director

Gadda Sarojini, and former councillor Ram Koteswara Rao.”On this occasion, several artists—performers of Dappu, Dolu, Veena, Mridangam, poets, and other cultural practitioners—were felicitated.

Participants in the programme included dance guru Jhansi Ram, Prem Kumar Goud, Kunukuntla Vijay Kumar, Prabhakar Chary, Daiva Dinam, Dappu Suresh, Anjaiah Goud, Ganesh Goud, and others.

# Centre allocating funds for Harappan site of Rakhigarhi to transform it into global landmark: Haryana CM Nayab Singh Saini



The Central Government has allocated Rs 500 crore in the Union Budget for the development of Rakhigarhi, a site of the ancient Harappan civilisation, with an aim of elevating it “into a global landmark of historical and cultural importance”, Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini said on Thursday. He was addressing the gathering at the second state-level Rakhigarhi Mahotsav.

Government officers said that the initiative is expected to place Rakhigarhi prominently on the national and international tourism map while strengthening India’s archaeological presence worldwide. Saini said, “It stands as a living symbol of India’s ancient and glorious civilization. The site represents one of the largest and most advanced urban centres of the Harappan civilization, which flourished thousands of years ago. Both the Central and State governments are working in close coordination to transform Rakhigarhi into a prestigious global landmark of historical and cultural significance”. During the event, CM Saini mentioned that all 13 demands put forward by the Rakhigarhi panchayat and five demands raised by the Rakhi Shahpur panchayat would be forwarded to the departments concerned for prompt action. He also declared a grant of Rs 21 lakh each for the development of Rakhigarhi and Rakhi Shahpur villages. Saini also inaugurated the Harappan Knowledge Centre, aimed at deepening public understanding of the Indus-Saraswati civilisation. “Excavations have revealed evidence of advanced town planning, sophisticated sanitation systems, water management techniques, and thriving industrial and commercial activities. The presence

of such a prominent civilization center in Haryana is a matter of immense pride for the state and the nation,” he said. The Chief Minister said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India is moving forward with confidence while embracing its cultural roots. He cited major heritage-focused initiatives such as the Kashi Vishwanath Dham, Mahakal Lok, the Shri Ram Temple in Ayodhya, and archaeological sites like Rakhigarhi as symbols of India’s renewed emphasis on its civilizational legacy. “This is a new India that draws inspiration from its past to build a prosperous future,” he said. Saini reaffirmed the state government’s commitment to developing Rakhigarhi as an international tourism and research center. “Plans include a world-class archaeological museum, a dedicated research institute, improved tourist facilities, and enhanced infrastructure. These initiatives are expected not only to attract visitors from across the globe but also create employment opportunities for local youth and boost the regional economy,” he said. The chief minister also highlighted social insights gained from excavations, noting that archaeological findings suggest women in ancient Harappan society enjoyed respect and equal opportunities. Drawing a parallel with the present, he said, “the daughters of Haryana continue this legacy by excelling in sports, education, science, administration, and the armed forces”. He reiterated the government’s focus on women’s empowerment through various education, safety, and self-reliance schemes. The Chief Minister said, “Haryana is home to nearly 100 historically significant archaeological sites, including Farmana, Mitathal, Balu, and Banawali. Special conservation and development projects are underway for these locations, with efforts also being made to include Rakhigarhi in the Unesco World Heritage List. A modern museum has already been constructed at Rakhigarhi for Rs 22 crore, while several other monuments across the state have been declared protected”. Heritage and Tourism Minister Dr Arvind Sharma said the nearly 7,000-year-old Rakhigarhi civilization showcased principles of urban planning that continue to inspire the modern world. “Cultural programmes held during the Mahotsav reflected the site’s enduring legacy,” Sharma said. Several ministers, MLAs, senior officers, and dignitaries attended the event, underscoring the importance of Rakhigarhi as a cornerstone of India’s ancient heritage and its growing global recognition.

# Run for a Cause: Allen World Junior 10K Event



““Venkata Devarakonda“01 Feb 2026“Manikonda““The Allen World Junior 10K Run was launched in Gachibowli with great success under the professional guidance of Spot On Sports Advice, drawing enthusiastic participation from hundreds of young runners and creating a vibrant atmosphere of energy and determination across the city.”From the early hours of the morning, students assembled at the venue, eager to take part in the event that aimed to nurture healthy habits and a sporting mindset among the next generation. The run strongly highlighted the importance of physical fitness, discipline, and sportsmanship, with coaches and volunteers guiding participants through warm-up sessions, safety instructions, and pacing techniques before the race was flagged off.”Parents, teachers, and well-wishers lined the route, cheering the young athletes and adding to the festive spirit. Many participants completed the challenging distance with confidence and perseverance,

earning praise for their commitment and stamina. Organisers noted that the initiative was designed not only as a competitive sporting activity but also as a platform to inspire children to adopt active lifestyles and develop teamwork, resilience, and respect.”The smooth execution of the event was made possible through the cooperation of commuters and the tireless efforts of volunteers and support teams, who worked behind the scenes to manage logistics, hydration points, and medical assistance. Special appreciation was extended to the Cyberabad Traffic Police, whose active monitoring and on-ground coordination ensured efficient traffic flow and road safety along the race route, allowing the event to proceed without disruption.”Representatives from Allen World expressed gratitude to all stakeholders involved and reaffirmed their commitment to organising more such community-focused sporting initiatives in the future. The successful inaugural edition of the Junior 10K Run, they said, stands as a strong reminder that encouraging fitness and social responsibility from a young age can help shape healthier and more confident citizens.”The event concluded on an uplifting note, leaving participants, parents, and organisers alike inspired by the collective effort and youthful enthusiasm that marked the day.



# Shimla doctor’s dismissal sparks mass leave protest; IGMC services hit

GNS News Agency, Feb 1

Patients at the Indira Gandhi Medical College and Hospital (IGMC), Shimla, faced significant inconvenience on Friday as resident doctors proceeded on mass casual leave across the city and other parts of Himachal Pradesh, affecting routine healthcare services. The leave was in protest against the termination of Senior Resident Dr Raghav Narula, who was dismissed from service for allegedly assaulting a patient at IGMC earlier this week.

According to sources, nearly 2,800 doctors, including junior residents and senior residents, went on one-day casual leave across the state. Dr Narula was terminated from his senior residency following an alleged altercation with a 36-year-old patient, Arjun Singh, in the pulmonary ward of IGMC on December 22. The state government ordered a departmental inquiry, which was completed within 24 hours, following which his services were terminated on Wednesday. A faculty member at IGMC Shimla, speaking on condition of anonymity, said medical services were adversely impacted not only at IGMC but also at other government hospitals across the state. “Medical services were affected today as many doctors were already on leave due to winter vacations. Though senior faculty members, including professors and assistant professors, attended outpatient departments (OPDs), the functioning was limited to barely 20 to 30 per cent. Several scheduled surgeries had to be postponed,” the faculty member said, maintaining that the emergency services were functioning. At IGMC, around 450 doctors were on leave simultaneously, while nearly 50 per cent of doctors had already been on leave since December 22 due to winter vacations. As a result, many OPDs either had no doctors or were attended by only one or two



doctors, leading to long waiting hours and distress among patients. Several patients complained that they had travelled from distant areas a day earlier for treatment, only to find doctors unavailable. “Doctors’ problems should not be made our problems. We came here for treatment, but there is no one to attend to us,” said a patient. Others said they were unaware that doctors were on leave and questioned the hospital administration over the absence of prior notice. Meanwhile, a delegation of the Resident Doctors’ Association (RDA), IGMC Shimla, met Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Friday, pressing for the reinstatement of Dr Narula, strengthening of security arrangements in government hospitals, and legal action against individuals who allegedly entered the hospital premises and threatened doctors after the December 22 incident. Dr Vikas Thakur, General Secretary, Himachal Medical Officers’ Association (HMOA), said resident doctors had proceeded on leave in almost all government hospitals in the state. “A delegation met the chief minister today.

# Amritsar’s walled city meat vendors face uncertain future after Holy City tag

GNS News Agency, Feb 1

The December 15 notification of the Punjab government declaring the Amritsar walled city area as ‘holy city’ and banning the sale of non-vegetarian items there has cast a shadow on the future of around 100-150 meat and fish shops, and around 150 outlets selling non-veg items. The affected meat and fish shopkeepers gathered in the Golbagh area of Amritsar on Tuesday to voice fears over losing their livelihoods.

Talking to The Indian Express, Surinder Singh, a meat vendor near Hathi Gate, said, “Our ancestors came from Pakistan in 1948, and since then we have been running this meat shop near Hathigate. We do not know any other business, any other work.” “Most meat stalls in the walled city are run by middle-class and poor people. So far, no one has come to us to shut our shop, but... the administration has started objecting to the outlets in the walled city,” Singh added. He clarified that of roughly 100 meat shops, only 20 sell halal meat, while 80 offer jhatka meat as per the Sikh code of conduct. Fish vendors echoed similar pleas. Makhan Singh, owner of Makhan Fish near Hall Gate, said, “We have talked to the mayor about relocating the fish market to an appropriate place, and we are hopeful that the administration will help us. There are around 20 meat and fish shops near the Hall Gate.”

The ‘ban’ has also ignited Sikh doctrinal debates. Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) member Kiranjot Kaur objected sharply, terming the ban a “Brahmanical imposition”. “Jhatka meat is our right,” she asserted, citing Guru Nanak Dev cooking meat in Kurukshetra and the 1935 Jhatka Conference. “Tobacco and kutha (halal) remain prohibited in Sikhism, but jhatka aligns



with the Gurus’ hunting traditions. So there shouldn’t be any ban on meat shops,” she said in a Facebook post. Meat vendors have formed a committee to meet the deputy commissioner and mayor, seeking to limit bans so as not to affect their meat shops, which are largely near the outer edge of the walled city.

The fresh restriction echoes demands dating back to the 1980s, when Sikh bodies like the SGPC and All India Sikh Students Federation pushed for tobacco and liquor bans around the Darbar Sahib. In 1980, SGPC president Gurcharan Singh Tohra urged prime minister Indira Gandhi to prohibit the sale of these items. Demand to ban meat sales, however, emerged when the then Amritsar deputy commissioner S M S Chahal called a joint meeting of the city’s Hindu and Sikh leaders in 1981. Hindu bodies raised a demand for a ban on meat shops during the meeting, to which Sikh bodies didn’t object.

# Vardhman Group chairman digital arrest: Key accused arrested after ED conducts multi-state searches

GNS News Agency, Feb 1

According to official sources, Kalita’s arrest came after the ED conducted searches on December 22 at 11 locations across the states of Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Assam under PMLA provisions. According to official sources, Kalita’s arrest came after the ED conducted searches on December 22 at 11 locations across the states of Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Assam under PMLA provisions.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) arrested a key accused in the high-profile ‘digital arrest’ cyber fraud case involving eminent Ludhiana-based industrialist and Vardhman Group chairman S P Oswal earlier this week, after it carried out extensive search operations in connection with its money laundering investigation. Rumi Kalita was arrested under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002, on December 23. Her transit remand for four days was granted by the Chief Judicial Magistrate Court in Kamrup, Guwahati, following which she was produced before a special court in Jalandhar. The court granted the ED custody of the accused for 10 days, up to January 2.

According to official sources, Kalita’s arrest came after the ED conducted searches on December 22 at 11 locations across the states of Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Assam under PMLA provisions. During the search operations, various incriminating documents and digital devices were allegedly recovered and seized. The investigation was initiated on the basis of a First Information Report (FIR) registered by the Cyber Crime police station in Ludhiana under various provisions of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023. Subsequently, nine more FIRs registered by different police authorities across the country, pertaining to cybercrime and digital arrest cases involving the same group of criminals, were also taken up as part of the investigation. According to the ED, its probe revealed that during the ‘digital arrest’, fraudsters impersonating officers of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) used forged official and judicial documents to coerce him into



transferring ?7 crore into various bank accounts. Of this amount, ?5.24 crore was traced, recovered from the accounts, and transferred back. The remaining amount was transferred into multiple mule accounts held in the names of various entities and individuals, including labourers and delivery boys, the ED said. These funds were either further diverted through layered transactions or withdrawn in cash immediately. Kalita accused of using banking credentials of mule accounts. The investigation allegedly uncovered that amounts cheated from various victims were swiftly routed through mule accounts operated by a group of individuals. The banking credentials of these mule accounts were allegedly being used by Kalita, who, in return, was to receive a percentage of the money, as her share. Evidence gathered during the searches indicated that she was deeply involved in the diversion and layering of the proceeds of crime, the ED said. Officials also stated that earlier searches conducted on January 31 in the same case had resulted in the recovery and seizure of incriminating documents. Providing further details, the Ludhiana police stated that on August 29 and 30, 2023, the accused contacted Oswal on his personal phone number while posing as CBI officials. They claimed that a Malaysia-bound parcel, allegedly sent by his company, had been confiscated by Mumbai Customs and was found to contain 58 passports and 16 ATM cards. The accused further told him that arrest warrants



# EU appears poised to sanction Iran’s Revolutionary Guard over protest crackdown



GNS News Agency, Feb 1

Brussels: The European Union appeared poised Thursday to sanction Iran’s paramilitary Revolutionary Guard over Tehran’s deadly crackdown on nationwide protests, further squeezing the Islamic Republic as it worries over a threat by U.S. President Donald Trump to potentially launch a military strike against it. America has moved the USS Abraham Lincoln and several guided-missile destroyers into the Mideast, which can be used to launch attacks from the sea. Iran has kept up its own threats as well, saying it could launch a preemptive strike or broadly target the Mideast, including American military bases and Israel.

It remains unclear what Trump will decide about using force, though he has threatened to use it in response to the killing of peaceful demonstrators and over possible mass executions. At least 6,373 people have been killed in the protests, activists said. But the move by Europe, long considered, will put new pressure on Iran as its economy already struggles under the weight of international sanctions. Its rial currency fell to a record low of 1.6 million to \$1 on Thursday. Economic woes had sparked the protests that broadened into challenging the theocracy before the crackdown.

The EU’s top diplomat, Kaja Kallas, told journalists it was “likely” the sanctions would be put in place. “This will put them on the same footing with al-Qaida, Hamas, Daesh,”

Kallas said, using an Arabic acronym for the Islamic State group. “If you act as a terrorist, you should also be treated as a terrorist.” Iran had no immediate comment, but it has been criticizing Europe in recent days as it considered the move, which follows the U.S. earlier sanctioning the Guard. By EU law, sanctions require unanimity across the bloc’s 27 nations. That’s at times hindered Brussels’ ability to flex its economic clout to crack down on Russia over its invasion of Ukraine.

For Iran, France had objected to listing the Guard as a terrorist organization over fears it would endanger French citizens detained in Iran, as well as diplomatic missions, which provide some of the few communication channels between the Islamic Republic and Europe and its allies. However, the office of President Emmanuel Macron on Wednesday signaled Paris backed the decision. French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said Thursday before the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels that France supports more sanctions in Iran and the listing “because there can be no impunity for the crimes committed.” “In Iran, the unbearable repression that has engulfed the peaceful revolt of the Iranian people cannot go unanswered,” he said.

The Guard was born from Iran’s 1979 Islamic Revolution as a force meant to protect its Shiite cleric-overseen government and later enshrined in its constitution. It operated parallel to the country’s regular armed forces, growing in prominence and power during a long and ruinous war with Iraq in the 1980s. Though it faced possible disbandment after the war, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei granted it powers to expand into private enterprise, allowing it to thrive. The Guard’s all-volunteer Basij force likely was key in putting down the demonstrations, starting in earnest from Jan. 8, when authorities cut off the global internet for the nation of 85 million people. Videos that have emerged from Iran via Starlink satellite dishes and other means show men likely belonging to its forces shooting and beating protesters. Sanctioning the Guard, however, would be complicated. Iranian men once reaching the age of 18 are required to do as much as two years of military service and many find themselves conscripted into the Guard despite their own politics.

# Nicki Minaj declares herself as Donald J Trump’s number 1 fan

GNS News Agency, Feb 1

Los Angeles: Rapper Nicki Minaj has spoken up on her controversial support for President Donald J. Trump with a short speech at a special session. She told the assembled audience that Trump is being ‘bullied’ and ‘smeared’ and declaring herself “probably the president’s Number 1 fan,” reports ‘Variety.’ “Well, I don’t know what to say,” the rapper began, after clapping hands with the president at the Washington, DC event, “but I will say that I am probably the president’s Number 1 fan. And that’s not going to change.”

She added, “And the hate with what people have to say, it does not affect me, at all. It actually motivates me to support him more. And it’s gonna motivate all of us to support him more. We’re not going to let them get away with bullying him. The smear campaigns, it’s not going to work. He has a lot of force behind him, and God is protecting him. Amen.” As per Variety, with that, she whispered a question to someone off-stage of whether she should go, and made her exit. Trump told her, “We did pretty well with your community,” apparently speaking of his Black supporters.

He also joked about her wealth, saying about how \$16 billion in contributions to ‘Trump Accounts’ was a figure that would make even as rich a rapper as Minaj sit up and take notice. The rapper has announced that she will contribute between \$150,000 and \$300,000 to fund her fans Trump



Accounts, although how those contributions would be diverted specifically to fans has not been explained. Trump Accounts is the name given to Section 530A individual retirement accounts, as part of recently passed tax and spending legislation in which the federal government has pledged to deposit \$1,000 into investment accounts for all children born between 2025 and 2028, if parents sign their children up in the course of filing their income taxes. Trump said, “Decades from now I believe Trump Accounts will be remembered as one of the most transformative policy innovations.”

# Pakistan says imprisoned ex-PM Imran Khan ’in good health’ after eye procedure

GNS News Agency, Feb 1

Pakistan’s jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan is in good health after undergoing a medical procedure for an eye ailment at a government hospital, Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said on Thursday. Mr. Khan was examined by a team of doctors at Rawalpindi’s Adiala prison, where he is serving multiple prison sentences, before being taken to a government hospital on Saturday, where he underwent a 20-minute medical procedure with his consent. “He is in good health,” Mr. Tarar told a private news channel.

Suffered for a while The comments came after Mr. Khan’s Opposition party spokesperson Zulfiqar Bukhari said earlier this week that the former premier was suffering from an eye condition and required “immediate medical attention”. Mr. Bukhari had called for Mr. Khan’s personal physician to be granted access, warning that any further delay could result in “irreversible harm”. Mr. Tarar’s remarks followed days of speculation on social media that Mr. Khan had been taken to a hospital under heavy security over the weekend and returned to jail the same night. Mr. Khan has not been seen in public since his arrest in 2023 in a corruption case. “Very worrying”

In a statement on Thursday, Mr. Bukhari said the Minister’s remarks were “very worrying” and described the handling of the health issue as “opaque and alarming”. Mr. Khan’s family nor his legal team were informed before or after he was taken from prison for medical treatment, Mr. Bukhari said, adding that authorities had provided no verifiable details about his condition, the treatment administered or the doctors involved. Mr. Bukhari said the government’s attempt to portray the eye condition as a routine medical matter raised “more questions than answers”. He expressed serious concerns about Mr. Khan’s health and demanded immediate access for his family and personal physicians, as well as full disclosure of the medical procedure and Mr. Khan’s current condition. He urged human rights organisations to monitor the situation, saying the treatment of a former elected Prime Minister in custody reflected broader concerns about the rule of law, prisoners’ rights and due process in Pakistan.

After Mr. Khan’s arrest in 2023, his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party, or PTI, initially launched a campaign demanding his release, but the effort later subsided. Authorities recently restricted meetings between Mr. Khan and his family after relatives publicly conveyed political messages urging supporters to stage rallies against the government of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Mr. Khan has also used social media posts to criticise the military and Mr. Sharif for his removal from office in a no-confidence vote in April 2022.



He has alleged that his ouster was the result of a U.S.-backed conspiracy carried out with the support of Mr. Sharif and Pakistan’s powerful military — claims denied by Washington, the military and his political opponents. Mr. Khan’s party remains in Opposition in Parliament and he continues to command significant popular support across the country.

# Domestic help arrested for stealing valuables worth 1 crore from couple in Bengaluru

The J.B. Nagar police have arrested a domestic help for allegedly stealing gold and diamond jewellery along with cash, totally amounting to ₹1 crore, from the house of his employer in Bengaluru.

According to police, the complaint was lodged on January 21, by the residents of a villa located at Kodihalli, Rustumbagh Main Road, under the limits of the J.B. Nagar police station. The complainants, originally from Texas, USA, are a husband and wife working in an MNC in Bengaluru. The complainants stated that they had left for work on the morning of January 21. On returning home in the evening, they noticed that gold and diamond jewellery kept inside a bedroom locker was missing. They suspected their domestic help, who had been working in the house for the past six months. Based on their complaint, a case was registered and police launched an investigation. Within a few hours, police traced and apprehended the domestic help near the villa of the complainants. During questioning, police said, he confessed to the theft and revealed that he had hidden the stolen jewellery in his residence at Sudhamanagar.

# Use of tranquilisers to catch tiger cannot be decided solely by public pressure: Forest officials



GNS News Agency, Feb 1

Fear travelled faster than facts in villages bordering the Reserve Forest after reports of a tiger’s movement surfaced, prompting forest officials to clarify that the animal poses no threat as long as it remains within its natural habitat. The wildlife experts caution that survival of the tiger after tranquilising it is 50:50. The tiger might behave aggressively or become depressed. There are instances where such tigers died in captivity. “Actions such as use of tranquilisers to catch the tiger cannot be taken simply because of public pressure or perception,” they say.

When contacted, Project Tiger Field Director B. Vijay Kumar said, “Tigers are natural inhabitants of forest ecosystems and their movement should not be treated as an

emergency situation.” The official explained that under Sections 11 and 12 of the Wildlife Protection Act, intervention such as tranquilisation, capture, or relocation can be undertaken only when there is a proven threat to human life or property. “If the animal strays into a village or populated area and poses a real danger to people, the law empowers us to act, but only after obtaining the necessary permissions from competent authorities,” he said.

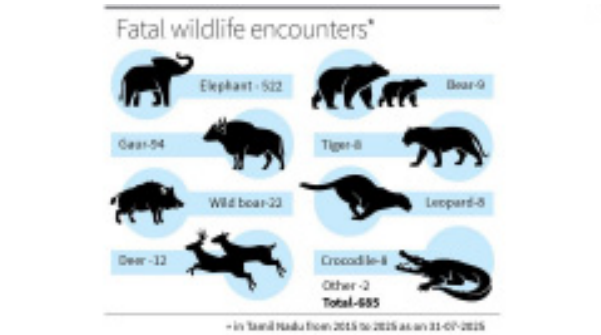
He explained that the chances of recovery will be almost negligible. “See, wild animals cannot be tranquillised. Tranquiliser is nothing but anesthesia, which will be given based on the body weight, and also based on the animal’s health condition. “Tigers weigh, we cannot assess. By trial and error, we make the dose. So, the recovery chances are fifty-fifty,” he said. Mr. Vijay Kumar further added that tranquilised animals should either be released in a reserve forest or shifted to a zoo. “We don’t know the territory of the caged tiger. If it is released in territory of another tiger, it leads to tiger-tiger conflict,” he explained.

The expert said burning of chillies along with husk in places where tiger movement is sighted drives the tiger to its natural habitat. Forest officials reiterated that conservation and human safety must go hand in hand, and that all actions would be taken strictly in accordance with the law and expert guidance. A sub adult male tiger crossed into Eluru district from Telangana on January 21, 2026.

# Wild animal attacks claim 685 human lives in Tamil Nadu in 10 years

A total of 685 people lost their lives in negative interactions with wild animals across Tamil Nadu from 2015 to 2025 (up to July 31) as per a data from the Forest Department. As many as 43 people died in animal attacks in 2025, registering a decline from 79 in 2024 and 84 in 2023. Among the 685 deaths in 10 years, 522 were due to attacks by wild elephants, followed by gaur (94), wild boar (22), deer (12) and bear (9). The highest human mortality due to elephant attacks during the period was in 2019 when 62 deaths were reported, as per the data presented by D. Venkatesh, Chief Conservator of Forests and Field Director of Anamalai Tiger Reserve, who elaborated the status of the human – animal conflict scenario in the State in a workshop for Forest Department officers and stakeholders held at the Central Academy for State Forest Service (Casfos) in Coimbatore on Wednesday (January 28, 2026).

The conflict situation is a cause of serious concern in Western Ghats districts such as Kanniyakumari, Tirunelveli, Virudhunagar, Madurai, Theni, Dindigul, Coimbatore and the Nilgiris and in three Eastern Ghats districts — Erode, Krishnagiri and Dharmapuri. Habitat degradation through biotic pressure, lack of fodder and water resources in the habitat, occurrence of exotic species in large extent suppressing native ecosystem, encroachments on forest lands, enlargement of human habitations adjacent to the forests and fragmented habitats were among the reasons for the human-animal conflict situation. Change in the cropping pattern in places along forest boundaries, which involves cultivation of crops that attracts animals, was another reason.



“Straying of elephants into villages for fodder and water is causing mortalities and injuries not just to humans; it is also impacting the quality of life of the elephants, as they get injured, develop infections and diseases. The conflict situation can only be mitigated through human approach and there is no use in finding fault with wild animals,” said Mr. Venkatesh. Tamil Nadu has registered an increase in the population of elephants, which stood at 3,170 in 2025. Tiger population in the State increased to 306 in the All India Tiger Estimation 2022 compared with previous cycles. Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Head of the Forest Force Srinivas R. Reddy, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Administration) H. Venuprasad, Casfos Principal V. Thirunavukarasu, District Forest Officers, Forest Range Officers, researchers and other stakeholders were present.

# Economic Survey 2025-26: Pharma industry shifting from volume to value driven approach

India’s pharmaceutical industry is sharpening focus on complex generics, biosimilars and innovation as it moves up the value chain, according to the Economic Survey 2025-26. Third-largest by volume globally and meeting around 20% of global generics demand - with exports to 191 countries in FY25 – the industry is shifting from a volume-driven to a value-driven approach. Over 50% of the exports are directed to highly regulated markets such as the U.S. and Europe.

Beyond generics, India is a global leader in low-cost vaccine supply, providing a majority of the world’s DPT, BCG and measles vaccines, the Survey document tabled in the Parliament on Thursday (January 29, 2026) noted. India’s medical devices sector is also rapidly becoming globally competitive, exporting to 187 countries in FY25. It now manufactures high-end equipment, including MRI and CT scanners, linear accelerators, cardiac stents and ventilators. This expansion into sophisticated imaging and life-support technologies marks a significant shift toward high-tech medical manufacturing.

While medical devices exports have grown from \$2.5 billion in FY21 to \$4.1 billion in FY25, the scope for further growth is substantial. For scaling up, the medical devices sector needs to reduce import dependence through adoption of advanced manufacturing technologies such as AI and 3D printing, along with streamlining global certification processes to strengthen international market access, the document of Finance Ministry’s Department of Economic Affairs recommended. On its part, the government has launched various policy measures from production linked incentive (PLI) schemes for pharma as well as medical devices; promotion of bulk drug parks with a ₹3,000 crore outlay in Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh; and a scheme for promotion of medical devices parks under which final approval for financial assistance of ₹100 crore



each has been given to Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh. Under the scheme, land has already been allotted to 184 manufacturers.

The PLI scheme for bulk drugs has mobilised ₹4,763 crore investments upto September 2025 and created manufacturing capacity of 55,000 tonnes per year for 26 critical products, including a strategic focus on fermentation-based synthesis for KSMs like Penicillin G Potassium, which is the precursor for several semisynthetic antibiotics, such as amoxicillin, ampicillin, cloxacillin and dicloxacillin. As of September, the PLI scheme for medical devices attracted ₹1,093.69 crore in investment. Manufacturing of 57 high-end medical devices has begun in the country, the Survey document showed. In November 2024, the Centre had launched the Strengthening of Medical Device Industry (SMDI) scheme with a ₹500 crore outlay focused on reducing import dependence, capacity building and supporting clinical studies. It has also launched a scheme with an outlay of ₹500 crore to support MSMEs and clusters.

# Five arrested for killing Bihar couple, toddler; bodies dumped across city

Chennai City Police are unravelling, part by part, the gruesome murder of a family of three, including a two-year-old boy from Bihar, who had come here for work, by their own friends, also from Bihar. On Monday (January 26, 2026), based on an alert by residents, the police found the body of Gaurav Kumar, a native of Bihar, dumped in a cloth sack near a two-wheeler showroom in Indira Nagar First Avenue of Adyar. The next evening (January 27), they recovered the body of his child Birmani Kumar from the Buckingham Canal near the Birma Nagar railway station.

Five arrested; search for woman’s body on On Wednesday (January 28), the police arrested five persons, all from Bihar, for the crime. The arrested reportedly confessed to having murdered the family of Gaurav Kumar. The four involved in the murder have been identified as B. Sikander, R. Narendrakumar, S. Ravindranath Tagore and U. Bikas. The fifth person is being interrogated. The police are trying to find out if there are more suspects involved in the murder. Based on their confession, the police are still search-

ing for the body of Munitha, the wife, in Buckingham Canal and Pallikaranai marshland. A senior police officer said that after they found the body of Gaurav Kumar in the gunny bag, a case was filed, and subsequent investigation of the CCTV footage found that two persons who came on a two-wheeler had dumped the sack there. Picking up on that lead, the police found that the vehicle belonged to a private security company and the murder was executed by five persons including the main accused B. Sikander, who were supposedly friends with Gaurav Kumar. After being arrested, the five persons told the police that initially Gaurav Kumar along with his wife Munitha and child had come from Bihar to be employed in a private security company. However, Sikander got him a job as a security man at a polytechnic college in Taramani and the family staying with Sikander, the officer said.

Murder motive Police said they suspected that on Monday (January 26) night, Sikander and his friends had murdered the entire family, when Sikander had tried to sexually assault Munitha, police said.



# Smithsonian to return three stolen South Indian temple bronzes to India



GNS News Agency, Feb 1

Washington: The Smithsonian’s National Museum of Asian Art has announced that it will return three historic South Indian bronze sculptures to India after provenance research established that the works had been illegally removed from temple settings decades ago. The museum on Wednesday (local time) stated that one of the sculptures, a Chola-period “Shiva Nataraja,” will remain in the United States on a long-term loan agreed upon with the Indian government, allowing the museum to continue displaying the work while publicly documenting its history, removal and return. The three sculptures — “Shiva Nataraja” (Chola period, ca. 990), “Somaskanda” (Chola period, 12th century), and “Saint Sundarar with Paravai” (Vijayanagar period, 16th century) — are regarded as important examples of South Indian bronze-casting traditions, a media release said. They were originally sacred objects carried in temple processions in Tamil Nadu. The museum said the “Shiva Nataraja,” which will be placed on long-term loan, will be displayed as part of the exhibition “The Art of Knowing in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Himalayas.” Such a decision by the museum follows a multi-year investigation conducted as part of a systematic review of the museum’s South Asian collections.

In 2023, researchers working with the Photo Archives of the French Institute of Pondicherry confirmed that the three bronzes had been photographed in temples in Tamil Nadu between 1956 and 1959. The Archaeological Survey of

India later reviewed the findings and determined that the sculptures had been removed in violation of Indian law, it said. “The National Museum of Asian Art is committed to stewarding cultural heritage responsibly and advancing transparency in our collection,” museum director Chase F. Robinson said.

“The return of these sculptures, the result of rigorous research, shows our commitment to ethical museum practice. We are profoundly appreciative to the Indian government for enabling us to continue exhibiting the long-admired Shiva Nataraja for the benefit of our visitors,” Robinson said. shiva naThe museum said it is working closely with the Embassy of India to finalise arrangements marking the agreement. The process was supported by the museum’s provenance team, curators of South and Southeast Asian art, and international research partners. According to the museum, the “Shiva Nataraja” originally belonged to the Sri Bhava Aushadesvara Temple in Tirutturaippundi Taluk in Tamil Nadu, where it was photographed in 1957. The sculpture was later acquired by the National Museum of Asian Art from the Doris Wiener Gallery in New York in 2002. Museum researchers found that the gallery had provided falsified documentation to facilitate the sale. The other two sculptures entered the museum’s collection as part of a 1987 gift of about 1,000 objects from Arthur M. Sackler. Research confirmed that the “Somaskanda” was photographed at the Visvanatha Temple in Alattur village in 1959, while the “Saint Sundarar with Paravai” was photographed at a Shiva temple in Veerasolapuram village in 1956. The museum described provenance research as a process that combines physical examination of objects with extensive documentary review, including export licenses, dealer records, historical photographs, correspondence and shipping records, to reconstruct an object’s ownership history. For decades, India has been seeking the return of cultural artefacts removed illegally from temples and archaeological sites. The Smithsonian Institution, the world’s largest museum and research complex, oversees multiple museums on the National Mall and attracts millions of visitors annually. The National Museum of Asian Art, which opened in 1923, houses one of the world’s most significant collections of Asian art and is free to the public.

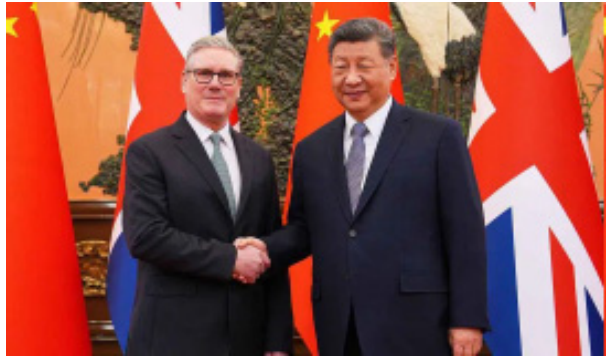
# Starmer and Xi call for deeper UK-China ties as Trump shakes up global relations

GNS News Agency, Feb 1

Beijing: The leaders of Britain and China called Thursday for a “comprehensive strategic partnership” to deepen ties between their nations at a time of growing global uncertainty. Neither publicly mentioned Donald Trump, but the American president’s challenges to the post-Cold War order was clearly on their minds.

“I think that working together on issues like climate change, global stability during challenging times for the world is precisely what we should be doing as we build this relationship in the way that I’ve described,” Starmer told Xi in his opening remarks. The two met in the Great Hall of the People in central Beijing as their nations try to improve relations after several years of acrimony. Relations have deteriorated over allegations of Chinese spying in Great Britain, China’s support for Russia in the Ukraine war, and the crack-down on freedoms in Hong Kong, the former British colony that was returned to China in 1997. Starmer is the first British prime minister to visit in eight years.

“China-U.K. relations experienced setbacks in previous years, which was not in the interests of either country,” Xi said. “In the current complex and ever-changing international situation, ... China and the U.K. need to strengthen dialogue and cooperation to maintain world peace and stability.” Xi also appeared to acknowledge the criticism that Starmer has faced for reaching out to China despite national security and human rights concerns. The UK recently approved controversial plans for a huge Chinese Embassy in London, removing a sticking point in relations but also overriding fears that the “mega-embassy” would make it easier for China to conduct espionage and intimidate dissidents. “Good things often come with difficulties,” Xi said. “As long as it is the right thing to do in accordance with the fundamental interests of the country and its people, leaders will not shy away from difficulties and will forge ahead bravely.” Starmer, who became prime minister in July 2024, has said he would protect national security while keeping up



diplomatic dialogue and economic cooperation with China. He told Xi that it has “been far too long” since a U.K. prime minister visited. “I made a promise 18 months ago when we were elected into government, that I would make Britain face outward again,” the leader of the center-left Labour Party said.

“Because as we all know, events abroad affect everything that happens back in our home countries, from prices on the supermarket shelves to how secure we feel.” His government has struggled to deliver the economic growth it promised and ease a cost-of-living crisis for millions of households. More than 50 top business executives have joined him on the trip, along with the leaders of some cultural organizations, as he seeks to expand opportunities for British companies in China. The disruption to global trade under Trump has made expanding trade and investment more imperative for many governments. Starmer is the fourth leader of a US ally to visit Beijing this month, following those of South Korea, Canada and Finland. The German chancellor is expected to visit next month. The UK leader earlier Thursday met Zhao Leji, the chairman of China’s legislature, the National People’s Congress. The two countries are expected to sign a number of agreements later in the day.

# will NSIL pick up the slack of a flat space budget?

From the historic high of landing on the moon to the recent sobering reality of failed launches and near-misses that have triggered internal reviews, the last five years have been a period of strategic volatility for the Department of Space (DoS). What began as a celebrated era of ‘unlocking’ the sector, marked by the Indian government’s 2020 reforms, the creation of IN-SPaCe, and the entry of private players like Skyroot and Agnikul, has transitioned into a complex phase of growing pains. The Economic Survey 2025-26, however, which was tabled in Parliament today, has read the events of the last decade not as a period of struggle but one of export consolidation. It noted that between 2015 and 2024, India launched 393 foreign satellites for 34 countries, earning over \$143 million and •272 million.

But it’s possible that this revenue stream is masking the Department’s internal structural fragility. The space industry has been clamouring for a historic budget hike to fund a projected \$44 billion space economy over the next decade, a figure that the Survey backs, including upstream launch and satellite manufacturing and downstream applications and services. So the Department needs to balance the promises of human spaceflight and a space station against the unglamorous need to fix the manufacturing issues threatening its primary launch capability.

Capacity to absorbThe Budget Estimates (BE) have grown minimally over the last four years. Between FY22 and FY26, the nominal allocation decreased and then recovered slightly, effectively shrinking when adjusted for inflation. The Department of Space has consistently failed to use up its initial allocations, leading to progressive downward revisions in the Revised Estimates (RE), weakening the case for a larger increase in the FY27 budget. (The Finance Ministry has historically preferred a greater capacity to absorb funds over fulfilling ambitions.)

In FY22, the capital expenses, on assets like new launch pads, spacecraft, etc., was 78,228 crore but by FY26 it had dropped to 76,103 crore. Conversely, revenue expen-

diture such as salaries and for operations rose from 75,720 crore in FY22 to 77,311 crore in FY26. Thus the budget is increasingly consumed by operational costs rather than new infrastructure or R&D assets. This is a worrying trend for a technology-intensive organisation whose competitiveness in the long term depends on sustained capital formation. The government appears to be betting that NewSpace India, Ltd. (NSIL) — ISRO’s commercial arm — can plug this capital gap. The Survey pointed out that the NSIL’s revenue surged from 7322 crore in FY20 to 72,940 crore in FY23, with the implicit strategy being to replace tax-funded infrastructure with growth funded by commerce, even as the core R&D budget stagnates.

‘Critical infrastructure’

Both the Satcom Industry Association-India (SIA-India) and the Indian Space Association (ISpA) have formally articulated their funding and policy demands for the FY27 budget. SIA-India in particular has been vocal about the financial scale required. In its pre-budget submission to the Finance Ministry, the body said the current allocation of about 0.04% of GDP is insufficient and that it needs to reach 0.12%. It recommended a roadmap in which the FY27 target is 718,000 crore, to be earmarked for a ‘National Satellite Connectivity Mission’, expanded launch infrastructure, and a hybrid production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme tailored to low-volume, high-reliability space components. To understand how ambitious the 718,000 crore request is, one need only look at the Survey’s data on private capital: India’s entire ‘NewSpace’ ecosystem raised just over 71,000 crore in FY23. In other words the industry effectively wants the government to inject 18x the amount of private capital raised in a single year, turning the state into the primary venture capitalist. ISpA, which represents major private players including Bharti Airtel, L&T, etc., asked that the space sector be classified as “critical infrastructure” in the FY27 budget. This is a financial mechanism to lower the cost of borrowing for private space firms.

# Can international patent law handle a permanent space presence?



Space stations, lunar bases, and Mars missions have moved from humans’ imagination to engineering reality. In these environments, innovation emerges through collaboration rather than isolation. Living on the moon or Mars will depend on continuous technological innovation, including on systems that extract water, generate energy and recycle waste and which can adapt to harsh and unpredictable conditions. Innovation in space is the condition for survival, and isn’t optional. Longer habitation means shared habitats, shared infrastructure, and multinational crews working together over extended periods. Scientists, engineers, and technicians from different jurisdictions have to collaborate closely, refining technologies in real time as operational needs evolve. And when such innovation takes place beyond Earth, a simple question arises: who owns it? Which patent system governs an invention created in a place where no state may claim sovereignty?

These questions expose a growing mismatch between the realities of sustainable human presence in space and intellectual property law, which remains built around territorial boundaries that space itself does not recognise. Patent law rests on the principle of territoriality. Exclusive rights are granted to patent holders within specific jurisdictions, and authorities assess infringement by locating where acts such as making, using or selling have occurred. On the earth, this framework works because innovation takes place within geographically bounded spaces subject to a singular legal authority. Outer space destabilises this logic. International space law prohibits national sovereignty over celestial bodies yet it allows states to retain jurisdiction and control over objects registered under their authority in space. Article VIII of the Outer Space Treaty and the Registration Convention together stipulate that legal jurisdiction attaches to the state of registry of a space object, not to the physical location where activities occur.

In practice, this means an invention developed aboard a registered space object — e.g. a national space station — is treated as having occurred within the legal territory of the registering state (i.e. that nation), even when the activity takes place on the moon or in orbit. This jurisdiction-by-registration approach has become the default mechanism through which spacefaring states have extended domestic patent law into outer space. The International Space Station (ISS) demonstrates how this model can function in a tightly controlled setting. It consists of multiple modules, each provided by a participating country. Article 21 of the ISS Intergovernmental Agreement allocates jurisdiction module by module, treating each segment as the territory of its partner state for purposes including intellectual property. Because the ISS is a static, carefully segmented facility, this arrangement has remained workable.

However, this presumes clear structural boundaries, stable installations, and nationally identifiable zones of activity. Permanently inhabited lunar or planetary bases may not operate in such conditions. Consider a lunar settlement extracting water ice near the moon’s south pole. One team operates autonomous drilling robots, another refines extraction algorithms using shared data, while life-support engineers adapt the process to local power and temperature

constraints. The components can be built on the earth, the software updated remotely, and robots operate across multiple platforms. When such a system is incrementally refined by multinational teams on shared infrastructure, it’s not clear where the legally relevant act of invention occurs or which jurisdiction should govern it.

In these settings, the territorial anchors that patent law depends on become weaker. Identical technological activity may fall within patent jurisdiction or outside it entirely, depending solely on registration choices rather than on substantive contribution, operational control or the location of innovation. In such contexts, registration no longer reflects how innovation actually occurs. Non-appropriation principleThese challenges intersect with the foundational principles of international space law. Article I of the Outer Space Treaty frames outer space as a domain to be explored and used for the benefit of all humankind. Article II reinforces this vision by prohibiting any form of national appropriation of celestial bodies, including the moon. While patents don’t amount to territorial claims, they do confer exclusive control over technologies that may be essential for survival or exploration in space. In permanently inhabited environments, where access to water and energy could depend on patented technologies, such exclusivity carries real structural consequences. This raises an unresolved question: at what point does patent-based exclusivity begin to operate as de facto exclusion in a domain that international law insists must remain accessible? The concern is that fragmented enforcement driven solely by registration could indirectly constrain the freedom to explore and use space. If access to a patented life-support process or resource-extraction technique depends on the registry of a particular platform, operators on other platforms may be legally barred from using or modifying technologies essential to survival or mission continuity, even in non-competitive settings. Article 5 of the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property is concerned with the doctrine of temporary presence. It limits patent enforcement in the public interest to ensure patented articles in transit are not treated as infringing. On the earth, this provision preserves freedom of transport across borders. Whether this doctrine applies to space objects, however, remains unclear. Does temporary presence cover patented equipment launched through foreign territory, docked at multinational space stations or operated onboard platforms registered to another state? No treaty or authoritative interpretation provides an answer.

Flags of convenienceRegistration-based jurisdiction also creates powerful incentives for strategic behaviour. Technologies can be developed in states with strong patent protection but deployed onboard space objects registered in jurisdictions with weaker enforcement, allowing innovation to slip beyond the reach of the legal system that enabled it. This is not unlike the use of flags of convenience in maritime operations — and it risks hollowing out patent protection through regulatory arbitrage rather than genuine innovation. Further, while more than 110 states are parties to the Outer Space Treaty, only a few shape how registration interacts with patent law, producing a system that is global in form but uneven in practice. Operational coordination mechanisms, such as those under the NASA Artemis Accords, could reduce interference. But coordination is also not jurisdiction, meaning they can’t resolve questions of ownership and enforcement in permanently inhabited space environments. The challenge of patent protection in outer space is not a marginal legal puzzle. It reflects a structural mismatch between legal regimes designed for territorially bounded activity and environments defined by shared infrastructure and jurisdictional fragmentation. International institutions have begun to acknowledge these tensions, and proposals for specialised space-related IP mechanisms are emerging. But coordination remains limited and uneven. Most states remain rule-takers rather than rule-makers in the evolving legal architecture of space innovation.

# Economic Survey 2025-26 shows India in bright light in an increasingly darker world

The Economic Survey 2025-26 has painted a relatively rosy picture of India’s domestic growth outlook, raising the country’s medium-term outlook to 7% from its earlier estimate of 6.5%. However, it has simultaneously outlined a relatively grim outlook for the global economy, estimating a 10-20% chance of a crisis worse than the global financial crisis of 2008 unfolding in 2026. Even its best-case scenario is a continuation of conditions as they were in 2025, but “increasingly less secure and more fragile”.

The Survey, authored by Chief Economic Advisor V. Anantha Nageswaran, tabled in Parliament by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, went on to say that each of its three probabilistic scenarios for the globe could pose risks to India. For India, it pointed to the growth of capital, improved labour participation, and greater efficiency in the deployment of these two factors of production as the key drivers of a higher medium-term growth outlook. For the current financial year 2025-26, the Survey highlighted the government’s estimate of 7.4% growth, adding that its ‘nowcast’ estimate for growth in Q3 (October-December 2025) stood at 7%. For 2026-27, the Survey estimates a growth rate range of 6.8-7.2%. It noted that, in its 2022-23 edition, it had estimated India’s medium-term growth to be 6.5%, which could rise to 7-8% only if sustained reforms were conducted.

“Over the past three years, reform momentum has strengthened across several areas relevant for medium-term growth,” the Survey said. “Manufacturing-oriented initiatives, such as the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes, FDI liberalisation, and logistics reforms, have supported capacity creation.” These measures, it added, were further bolstered by sustained public investment in physical and digital infrastructure, the simplification of tax laws, measures targeted at MSMEs that have sought to ease credit constraints. “These reforms have coincided with stronger corporate and financial sector balance sheets, rising formalisation of employment, and continued improvements in tax administration,” the Survey added. “Together, these developments make a persuasive case that India’s potential growth has risen to around 7% over the medium term.” The Survey outlined three scenarios for the world economy that could unfold in 2026. The worst of these, the macroeconomic consequences of which “could be worse than those of the 2008 global financial crisis”, was assigned a probability of 10-20%.

Under this scenario, systemic financial, technological, and geopolitical stresses would amplify each other rather than taking place independently. A key emerging risk, the Survey said, was the level of highly-leveraged investments in Artificial Investment (AI). It said these investments have exposed business models that are dependent on “optimistic” execution timelines, narrow customer concentration, and long-duration capital commitments. “A correction in this segment would not end technological adoption, but it could



Under this scenario, systemic financial, technological, and geopolitical stresses would amplify each other rather than taking place independently.

tighten financial conditions, trigger risk aversion and spill over into broader capital markets,” the Survey said. Without naming any particular countries, the Survey further said that if these developments also coincided with “geopolitical escalation or trade disruption”, the result could be a sharper contraction in global liquidity, a jarring weakening of capital flows, and a “shift toward defensive economic responses across regions”. “While this remains a lower-probability scenario, its consequences would be significantly asymmetric,” the Survey said. The macroeconomic consequences could be worse than those of the 2008 global financial crisis. “The Survey gave its best-case scenario a 40-45% chance of occurring. Under this scenario, conditions from 2025 would persist in 2026, albeit in a more fragile state. In its third scenario, also assigned a probability of 40-45%, the Survey said the probability of a “disorderly multipolar breakdown” rises significantly. “Under this outcome, strategic rivalry intensifies, the Russia-Ukraine conflict remains unresolved in a destabilising form, and collective security arrangements unravel,” the Survey predicted.

The Survey said that, in all three scenarios, India is relatively better off than most other countries but added that it still faces risks. “The three scenarios pose a common risk for India: disruption of capital flows and the consequent impact on the rupee,” the Survey said. “Only the degree and the duration will vary. It added that this impact may not be confined to a year, and could be more enduring.” In response, India needs to generate sufficient investor interest and export earnings in foreign currency to cover its rising import bill, as, regardless of the success of indigenisation efforts, rising imports will invariably accompany rising incomes,” the Survey said.



## Maharashtra govt allots Sion plot to VHP for 30 years for medical, educational activities



GNS News Agency, Feb 1

In addition, the organisation must pay a one-time premium of Rs 9.72 crore, calculated at 25 per cent of the usual rate applicable to such long-term occupancy. The civic body will set the payment schedule for both the annual rent and the premium. In addition, the organisation must pay a one-time premium of Rs 9.72 crore, calculated at 25 per cent of the usual rate applicable to such long-term occupancy. The civic body will set the payment schedule for both the annual rent and the premium. The Maharashtra government Thursday approved the allotment of a 7,658.33-square-metre plot in Sion to the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) for 30 years, converting the land from a leasehold plot into makta (occupancy) tenure. The decision follows a proposal from the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's (BMC) Improvements Department

ad has been cleared under provisions of the Mumbai Municipal Corporation Act. In October, the BMC submitted a proposal to the Urban Development Department (UDD), led by Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, seeking approval to allot the plot to the VHP for medical or educational purposes. On December 4, the UDD approved the proposal and clarified that occupancy will officially begin on June 25, 2025, the date the civic body granted its approval for a 30-year period. The government has fixed an annual ground rent of Rs 10,186, payable by the VHP for the entire 30-year period beginning June 25, 2025. In addition, the organisation must pay a one-time premium of Rs 9.72 crore, calculated at 25 per cent of the usual rate applicable to such long-term occupancy. The civic body will set the payment schedule for both the annual rent and the premium. As per the Development Control and Promotion Regulations (DCPR), 2034, the plot is subject to various reservations. Only medical or educational activities are allowed on this land. The responsibility of ensuring that the land is used strictly as permitted and that all reservations are followed lies with the BMC commissioner. This condition means that any construction or activity on the plot must fall within these two categories, and the civic body must verify that the rules are not violated. The plot, located in F/ North ward, was earlier on leasehold. The BMC's Improvements Department forwarded a proposal to the state government recommending that it be converted into makta land and granted to the VHP for institutional work. After examining the proposal, the state approved it and issued its sanction through an official government resolution.

## How parents can spot early signs of stress in kids — and what to do about it

GNS News Agency, Feb 1

Counsellors in schools across Delhi are reporting heightened levels of stress and earlier onset of anxiety among students. An eminent senior clinical and child psychologist, Dr Bhavna Barmi, also the founder of Happiness Studio, analysed the patterns of behaviour that are visible across age groups, and listed the steps families can take to build emotional safety at home. What emotional and behavioural issues are most commonly seen among primary and senior school children these days? In primary school children aged 6-11, increased anxiety (separation, school performance), somatic complaints (stomach/headaches), temper/ defiant outbursts, sleep problems, toileting/ regression (in younger children), and attention/ peer problems are the most common.

Among secondary students aged 12-18, the concerns often include social anxiety, depressive symptoms, self-critical/ perfectionistic behaviour, academic stress, risky online behaviours, impulsive conduct and occasional self-harm ideation or attempts. All these issues have evolved — and we now see faster escalation and earlier onset of anxiety/ depression, more school-related performance and humiliation stress, and digital-fuelled peer comparison. The problems are often amplified by continuous social media exposure and reduced unstructured peer play. Why do children appear more sensitive or fragile today compared to a few years ago? Several forces shape this. Intense academic pressure and high-stakes testing, ubiquitous social media, constant comparisons, curated lives, and cyberbullying. Also, reduced free and unstructured play, and less face-to-face coping practice. Parenting styles matter: both overprotection and performance-focus can limit resilience development among children.

There is the issue of stigma and low mental-health literacy in some schools and communities, so problems go unnoticed until they have worsened significantly. As clinicians, we emphasise early, low-stigma conversations and routine emotional check-ins — small, steady parental curiosity and validation protect children more than grand interventions done too late. In what specific ways can parents monitor children's digital lives without becoming controlling? Parents should co-create digital rules: negotiate screen times, public vs private content, and 'no-phone' zones (meals/ bedtime). The focus should be on behaviour



and well being, not spying. They should ask about online experiences and friends; show interest in what the children enjoy. Use collaborative monitoring — agree on apps/ devices that allow parental oversight transparently. Teach children privacy, critical thinking, and online safety skills rather than only forbidding platforms.

Intervene when online interactions cause distress. Remove or restrict access temporarily while discussing alternatives. What harm can overprotective or 'helicopter' parenting cause to children, and how can parents find a balance? Such parenting reduces children's problem-solving practice, fosters dependence, increases anxiety when facing failure, and can diminish self-efficacy. The balance comes when parents support and scaffold rather than solve. Give graded responsibilities, allow safe failures, and celebrate effort over outcomes. Step in more for safety risks, step back for manageable everyday problems. After a distressing school incident, what should parents do at home to create safety and openness? Parents must pause media exposure of the incident, and protect children from graphic details. Provide the child reassurance with words like 'You might be worried... What's on your mind?', and validate their emotions and normalise seeking help from a school counsellor or a therapist. What are the early-warning signs that parents should never ignore? Red flags could include talk of hopelessness, 'I wish I weren't here', etc. A sudden, sustained withdrawal from family or friends, or loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities, are signs. Watch out for significant changes in sleep, appetite, academic performance, or marked mood swings. Also, increased substance use, aggressive outbursts, or giving away prized possessions.

## Opposition 'directionless', LoP decision rests with presiding officers: Fadnavis



GNS News Agency, Feb 1

Terming the Maharashtra opposition "directionless", Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Sunday said the decision to appoint the Leader of Opposition in the Assembly and the Council falls under the jurisdiction of the respective presiding officers and the government has nothing to do with it. "The state government has no say in it. Whatever decision is taken by the presiding officers of both Houses is acceptable to his government," the CM said, addressing a press conference on the eve of the winter session of the state legislature. The opposition had earlier slammed the government for not appointing the LoP and had boycotted the customary government tea party over the issue. "The opposition's press conference appeared full of frustration and theatrics. It is not the government's role to announce the Leader of Opposition. Only the Speaker and the Council Chairman have the authority to do so," Fadnavis said. The CM also claimed the opposition had submitted a representation regarding their boycott but it was without signatures from the NCP (SP) leader. Fadnavis said the session will last for a week as the model code of conduct is in place for the local body polls. "Despite the short duration, we plan to do maximum business and take decisions in the interest of Vidarbha and Marathwada," he said. On farmer issues, Fadnavis said 92 per cent of rain-affected farmers have received financial aid, while the remaining will get it after their Know Your Customer (KYC) details are updated. "The Opposition is making accusations without studying the issue. My government is ready to debate on any issue raised in the legislature," he said. He also informed reporters that

Deputy CM Ajit Pawar, who was in Bahrain for his son's wedding, has landed in Pune and will arrive in Nagpur by tonight. Deputy CM Eknath Shinde said the delay in counting of votes for the local body polls held on December 2 had saved the opposition from loss of face in the session. "The Mahayuti contested together in some places. In some other places we had friendly fights. We will win more than 70 per cent seats," Shinde said. Responding to Congress Legislature Party leader Vijay Wadetiwar's remarks that he should focus on the development of Vidarbha, Fadnavis said the government had already prioritised regional issues. "Wadetiwar has made comments without any study. He seems eager to project Maharashtra as a financially mismanaged state, but that is far from reality," he said. Fadnavis said Maharashtra was among the top states adhering to Union government fiscal norms despite financial stress. Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde also criticised the opposition for "lacking seriousness" about Vidarbha's concerns. "The opposition seems more interested in creating spectacles outside Vidhan Bhavan than raising real issues inside it," he said.

## Three Hyderabad-bound flights receive bomb threats; all found to be hoax

Hyderabad: Yet again, tension prevailed at the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport after authorities received bomb threat emails targeting three incoming flights on Sunday. The flights that received the threat include IndiGo flight 6E-7178 from Kannur, Kerala to Hyderabad, Lufthansa flight LH-752 from Frankfurt to Hyderabad and the British Airways flight from London to Hyderabad. As per information available, all three aircraft were allowed to make safe landings at Shamshabad airport.

Following standard protocol, airport officials immediately evacuated the passengers and shifted them to isolation areas for safety checks.

## Telangana government to name Hyderabad roads after Ratan Tata, Donald Trump



GNS News Agency, Feb 1

Telangana is set to name several roads in Hyderabad after prominent personalities and global corporations. Telangana is set to name several roads in Hyderabad after prominent personalities and global corporations. The Telangana government on Sunday announced that it will name several roads in Hyderabad after prominent personalities and global corporations. The upcoming greenfield radial road at the proposed RRR will be named after the late industrialist Ratan Tata, whereas a high-profile road along the United States Consulate General in Hyderabad will be named 'Donald Trump Avenue', the government said in its release. The state government will inform the Union Ministry of External Affairs and the US Embassy about these plans.

## "Doing everything except teaching": Schools go empty as hundreds of Punjab teachers put on zila parishad poll duty; women sent to far flung stations

GNS News Agency, Feb 1

Punjab's government schools are set to be adversely impacted this week as hundreds of teachers have been pulled out for zila parishad and panchayat samiti election duty, prompting protests from staff. The Democratic Teachers Front (DTF), in a statement issued late on Sunday, said they will meet deputy commissioners in several districts to protest what they called "unjustified" deputing of women teachers to far flung polling stations. Some teachers also said they might "boycott" duties if the orders were not corrected by Monday.

Rehearsals begin Monday and polling is on December 14. Lists from several districts show 30 to 40 teachers from a single school have been assigned duty, including those teaching math, science and commerce. Women teachers have been posted 70 to 100 km from their stations, with no clarity on where they will stay overnight or how they will return after polling concludes. This comes barely two months after education minister and senior AAP leader Harjot Singh Bains wrote to the chief secretary asking to "stop deployment of teachers for non-academic works," saying their presence in classrooms was "non-negotiable." Pulling them out as an "easily available tail-end workforce," he said, compromised children's Right to Education. Dapinder Singh Virk, Officer on Special Duty (OSD) to Bains told The Indian Express: "Several times we have raised this matter with the district administrations and other departments that teachers should not be put on non-academic duties as they are already overburdened. The minister has also written to the chief secretary previously to raise it. We are not in favor of such duties for our teachers." Many of those now on poll duty are already on SIR duty. "Why should we do double election duty including on Sundays," asked a teacher from Ludhiana.

Several women teachers said the issue was not the duty but the distances they must travel. Even widows with no one to accompany them have been posted far from home. Teachers in Jagraon have been sent to Khanna; those in Khanna to Raikot. Teachers must report for rehearsals on December 8 and 11, then again on December 13 for dispatch and on December 14 for polling. Many will have to stay overnight. "Earlier women teachers were at least given duties within their own block but now we have been asked

Earlier this year, while addressing the annual US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) conclave in Delhi, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy had proposed to name key roads in Hyderabad after leading global corporations. A prominent stretch in the city will be named 'Google Street' to recognise the tech giant's global impact. The road alongside Google's upcoming campus in Hyderabad's Financial District, which is set to be the company's largest outside the United States, will receive the recognition, said the government release. Microsoft and Wipro are also expected to receive recognition in the city's topography. Wipro Junction, to honour the tech mogul's contribution to the city and Microsoft Road, which is a part of the state's initiative to position itself as a hub for innovation-driven development. Union Minister and BJP leader Bandi Sanjay Kumar hit out at Reddy, stating that Hyderabad should be "renamed back to Bhagyanagar". Rename Hyderabad back to Bhagyanagar. If the Congress government is so eager to change names, they might as well start with something that actually has history and meaning. "If the Congress government is so eager to change names, they might as well start with something that actually has history and meaning," he said in a post on X. He slammed Reddy for renaming places after "whoever trends". "What a sad state of affairs we're living in — one side has #Twittertillu busy making AI statues of KCR who's very much alive, and on the other is Revanth Reddy renaming places after whoever trends.



to report 80 km away," said a teacher from Khanna deputed to Jagraon. A political science lecturer from Ropar, posted nearly 100 km away in Raikot, said: "Has the government made any arrangement for my safety? Will any vehicle drop me home in Morinda on the night of December 14 when work ends after 9 pm? My husband is also on poll duty and cannot pick or drop me. The local administration is not ready to listen to us." A widow from Khanna posted in Jagraon said: "My children are abroad. Who will pick or drop me at night? Where will I stay on December 13?"

Thirty-one teachers from Government Senior Secondary School, Basti Jodhewal alone, and 34 from PM-SHRI Government Senior Secondary School, Dehlon, have been deputed. An English lecturer from Raikot said: "My duty is in Khanna. We are doing everything except teaching. Padhaan taan ditta hi nahi jaanda (We are just not allowed to teach)." Another teacher posted 80 km away in Machhiwara said she is arranging a taxi from her own pocket. "This is punishment in the name of poll duty." "School khaali ho gaya hai (Our school has gone empty)," said a teacher from Ludhiana's Haibowal, posted 60 km away in Malaud. "All teachers including history, Punjabi, commerce, political science and science are on duty." Dharamjit Singh, finance secretary, Lecture Cadre Union, said "women staff were being mentally harassed" and that such distant postings were unprecedented. Punjab, secretary, education Anindita Mitra said: "I have already contacted various district administrations where certain issues have been flagged." Asked why teachers are still being put on non-academic duties despite the minister's instructions, she said: "I will not be the right person to comment on it."

## BMC aims for a climate-resilient Mumbai by setting up bioswales

GNS News Agency, Feb 1

To mitigate Mumbai's flooding woes, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) is set to construct a series of bioswales in Mumbai, as part of its Rs 12,705-crore proposal submitted to the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) to re-engineer city's aging drainage infrastructure and enhance its climate resilience. A bioswale is a vegetated shallow areas or ditch designed to naturally filter and treat accumulated rainwater or stormwater by removing pollutants such as silt, oil or construction debris. These bioswales comprise a sunken base with slopes through which the accumulated rainwater gets collected in the base and seeps underneath, recharging the ground water levels. Beside bioswales, the amount will be utilised for construction of a sponge park for Rs 200 crore, setting up of sluice gates at Rs 2,000 crore, construction of permeable pavements at Rs 120 crore, as well as construction of pumping stations at Rs 700 crore.

The move comes as Mumbai continues to grapple with increasingly incidents of intense rainfall. According to BMC data, the city has seen a sharp rise in downpours with the average very heavy rainfall within a 24-hour period climbing from 132 mm to 182 mm over the past six years. This surge in precipitation has led to frequent flash floods, disrupting life and transport across the city. Between March and August this year alone, Mumbai was repeatedly brought to a halt due to relentless rain. Being an island city, Mumbai has an array of chronic flooding spots. Speaking to The Indian Express, Abhijit Bangar, additional municipal commissioner (projects), said the idea behind the project is that if surface water during heavy rainfall reduced, it will reduce waterlogging in low-lying areas.

"Slow rainfall creates maximum percolation, but high rainfall doesn't allow smooth percolation of water because the surface of Mumbai has become so impervious with time. The rainwater that doesn't percolate get accumulated and create waterlogging. Therefore, our target is to increase Mumbai's percolation capacity," Bangar said. "Creation of bioswales is a cost-effective measure. Once they become operational, the percolation capacity of Mumbai's surface

will increase. Even if we are able to increase the percolation by 10 per cent, then it will reduce the overall waterlogging in Mumbai by a significant margin," he added. In total, the BMC intends to set up 800 bioswales in Mumbai's sparks and open spaces, however, initially they will be set up in chronic flooding areas like Dadar, Matunga, Santacruz, Andheri and Vakola where more waterlogging is reported. "Our initial plan is to set up the bioswales in traditional flooding spots or low lying areas. We are setting them up in gardens, because in Mumbai there is a scarcity of open land. The idea is to earmark a portion of land in a civic garden and then to modify it to a bioswale so that it increases percolation of water, in a way that the intensity of waterlogging in a given area is reduced or brought under control," said Bangar. He added that the overall project will be funded by the Union Home ministry — the parent department of the NDMA. Bangar said that earlier this week, BMC officials had a meeting with the department officials and early next year, a team is likely to visit Mumbai to verify the plan. Following the visit, a detailed project report for executing the plan would be made. Speaking to The Indian Express, civic officials said that initially Rs 100 crore has been earmarked for this project with the construction of each bioswale costing Rs 12-15 lakh.

"Patches of bioswales will also be created along the roads and traffic medians. This will slow down the rainfall stormwater and direct it into the drains after filtration," an official said, adding each pit will comprise native vegetation and layered filtration comprising sand, gravel and geotextile. Civic officials said the bioswales would reduce micro-flooding or waterlogging in a given natural area, increase ground water retention capacity, improve biodiversity pockets, act as natural dust suppression mechanism as well as lead to cleaner footpaths and pedestrian zones."

Once an interconnected network of bioswales is activated, the city will start seeing bigger results. Firstly, due to improved percolation of ground water, the intensity of waterlogging will reduce, secondly due to improved ground water level the surface temperature may become cooler," a civic official said.



# Diversity on the small screen: when Doordarshan stitched together a nation



Reading Sheila Chaman’s Doordarshan Diaries: The Golden Era of Television (Om Books International) is like rediscovering the magic of the public broadcaster. From the silent generation to the boomers who witnessed the birth and growth of Indian television, from Gen X and the millennials often described as the Doordarshan generation to Gen Z and Alpha who perhaps do not connect with its content, this book is a reminder of the uncomplicated times long before algorithms dictated our remote-controlled lives.

It is almost impossible today to gather around the television like we did for broadcasts on a single channel at a fixed time. Those intense emotions and feelings TV viewing evoked have diminished. From shared cultural ritual in front of the television, for limited news to entertainment, sports or education, everything is now available on an industrial scale with 918 private satellite channels.

Conversation starterThat is why Sheila Chaman’s book compels you to pause and understand how the daily four hours of broadcast, unified the country, inspiring conversations and shaping opinions.The veteran broadcaster, who grew with the medium over a span of three decades, does not state the obvious decline, but through her vivid recollection writes about several untold behind-the-scenes anecdotes that bring alive the pioneering spirit of the people behind popular and iconic programmes who transformed Doordarshan into a national memory.

It is important to realise that Doordarshan was not just a channel disseminating tailored information but also upheld constitutional values promoting national integration and social development.Chaman’s is an insider’s perspective on the early days of the organisation, its transition and transformation. She captures the nostalgia of unfettered journalism. Reading her is like reconnecting with the older and quieter version of a tolerant India. She highlights the challenges of producing content in those days and reflects on discipline and creativity that helped programmes resonate with diverse audiences.Challenging a monopoly

It may be prudent not to indict current television programmes, but the advent of cable TV did challenge Doordarshan’s monopoly. The saturated media landscape today says something forlorn about DD, a foundational pillar of national media history that began as a modest experiment in public service telecasting.Once Upon a Prime Time by Ananth Mahadevan (Embassy Books) is partially autobiographical giving an interesting insight into the first-hand experience of those who performed for television audiences and were not part of any consumer-driven shows. It is a

throwback for those connected with the medium and its services, past and present.Public Service Broadcasting in India: A Study of Doordarshan by Rommani Sen Shitak (Bluerose Publishers) reflects on the journey of television in India from its humble beginnings in 1959 to a flourishing sector; how Doordarshan started off with socio-educational experiments, and became a multi-channel network catering to diverse linguistic and ethnic groups. Shitak takes stock of changes that took place in terms of policies, financing and programming over the years. There is a detailed analysis of the strategies implemented by Doordarshan when it was faced with competition from private networks.

The Ramayana effectIAS officer Bhaskar Ghose who was appointed director-general of Doordarshan by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, has authored Doordarshan Days (Penguin India), talking about his seminal role in the organisation’s development. This included the airing of popular serials such as Ramayana and Mahabharata; the first live broadcast of the cricket World Cup; the advent of satellite transmission; the first live election coverage; building Doordarshan’s international presence; and the onslaught of private networks.Ghose’s attempts at reforming Doordarshan put him in conflict with the murky underside of public broadcasting and he candidly recounts with his characteristic humour the struggle to bring about change.

In another memoir by the same name (Doordarshan Days), Manna Bahadur, remembers the days when TV news did not sound like a screamathon and its programmes were a treat for the entire family. He talks about the iconic presenters who became fashion trendsetters for the nation. The memoir treads on DD’s anxious birth, teething pains, its golden period to its expansion.Many books on Doordarshan cover television history and its connection to All India Radio (AIR), as both were part of the same public broadcasting system.For instance, how many know that Rabindranath Tagore dedicated a poem to AIR called Akashvani, which was adopted as the broadcaster’s Hindi name; that an AIR producer was the first civilian allowed inside the Golden Temple after Operation Blue Star; or that noted Pakistani ghazal singer Ghulam Ali made his disciples listen to AIR’s Urdu service to correct Urdu pronunciation.These and many other tales make up Akashvani: A Century of Stories from All India Radio by Neelesh Kulkarni and Vikrant Pande (HarperCollins Publishers India). With anecdotes from producers, broadcasters, radio jockeys and listeners, the book reveals the pivotal role of the mass media in an average Indian’s life.

Vinod Kapoor in Radio Cavalcade: Indian Broadcasting ...A Look Back (Notion Press) writes about the day when India gained independence, the scene at AIR during Gandhi’s assassination, the way soap operas gained prominence, and how Hindi cinema provided a stream of artists it nurtured. The author critically discusses the clipped freedom of professionals under the Prasar Bharati Act and how it led to the downfall of public broadcasting.Viewers of a certain vintage will understand better that Doordarshan mirrors India’s growth from a young republic to a global player, and fundamentally shaped every Indian’s consumption of news, education and entertainment.It should continue to fulfil its public service mandate, reflecting diversity and inclusivity.

# Study links weaker internal body clock with higher dementia risk

A study suggests that a person’s internal body clock may influence dementia risk, with weaker circadian rhythms -- characterised by greater disruption and irregularity -- being associated with a higher likelihood of developing the condition.Circadian rhythms peaking later in the day, such as post-afternoon, instead of earlier, were linked to a 45 per cent higher risk of dementia."Disruptions in circadian rhythms may alter body processes like inflammation, and may interfere with sleep, possibly increasing amyloid plaques linked to dementia, or reducing amyloid clearance from the brain," study author Wendy Wang, from the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, said.An amyloid plaque is a clump of proteins in the brain, commonly seen in patients of Alzheimer’s disease and contribute to dementia by causing cell death.

The researchers analysed data of over 2,100 older adults with an average age of 79 who did not have dementia at the study’s start. The participants wore chest monitors to measure rest and activity for an average of 12 days. The study, published in the journal Neurology, followed the participants for three years, during which time, 176 of them were diagnosed with dementia.

A strong circadian rhythm, in which the body clock aligns well with the 24-hour day, sends clear signals for body functions -- people tend to follow regular times for sleeping and activity, despite changes in schedule or season, the researchers said.People with a weak circadian rhythm -- more likely to be disrupted by light and schedule changes -- are at a higher chance of shifting sleep and activity times with season or schedule changes.

The participants with a low, weaker circadian rhythm



had nearly 2.5 times the risk of dementia, compared to those with a high, strong rhythm, the study found."Changes in circadian rhythms happen with ageing, and evidence suggests that circadian rhythm disturbances may be a risk factor for neurodegenerative diseases like dementia," Wang said."Our study measured these rest-activity rhythms and found people with weaker and more fragmented rhythms, and people with activity levels that peaked later in the day, had an elevated risk of dementia," Wang said.The researchers also found that people who experienced a peak of body clock activity later in the afternoon -- 2:15 pm or later -- compared to earlier in the afternoon, 1:11 pm-2:14 pm, had a 45 per cent increased risk of dementia.Seven per cent of those whose circadian rhythms peaked early in the day developed dementia, compared to 10 per cent of those with a high, strong circadian rhythm.Having a later peak of activity means there could be a difference between the body clock and environmental cues such as later hours and darkness, the team said.

# Prayagraj Magh Mela: Devotees throng Sangam ghats in large numbers for holy dip

Prayagraj: On the third day of the ongoing Magh Mela in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, devotees have been arriving at the Sangam ghats since early morning to take a holy dip at the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati rivers.

The 44-day-long Magh Mela began on January 3 at the Sangam in Prayagraj with the auspicious bath on Paush Purnima. IANS spoke to several devotees who expressed their spiritual enthusiasm and appreciation for the arrangements made by the administration.A devotee from Hyderabad said, “We have come here from Hyderabad. Earlier, we had visited the Mahakumbh, and now we have come to take a holy dip during the Magh Mela. After the sacred bath, with the blessings of the Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati, we will visit the Kashi Vishwanath temple to-night. Tomorrow, we plan to go to Ayodhya for darshan at the Ram Mandir and then return to Hyderabad.Another devotee highlighted the unique spiritual atmosphere of the event, saying, “The Magh Mela has a distinct charm of its own, and we truly enjoy coming here. The administration had made good arrangements last time as well, and they have done the same this year, too.”Praising the crowd management and logistical planning, a third devotee said, “The government has managed the crowd very efficiently. The traffic and vehicle arrangements are truly commendable. I would

like to assure and encourage people to visit. There is no inconvenience here, and all arrangements are excellent."Elaborate security arrangements have been put in place across the Mela area to ensure the safety and convenience of pilgrims. The administration has made extensive preparations, with the Mela area spread across nearly 800 hectares and divided into seven sectors.Parking facilities have been arranged at 42 designated locations to manage the large influx of vehicles. The entire Mela area is secured with 17 police stations, 42 police outposts, and a dedicated police control room.Additionally, around 400 CCTV cameras have been installed to monitor activities. Prayagraj District Magistrate Manish Verma said that officials are maintaining constant vigilance to ensure smooth conduct of the event.To facilitate transportation, around 3,800 buses of the Uttar Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation have been deployed. There will be six major bathing occasions during the Magh Mela, which will conclude with the holy bath on Mahashivratri.Uttar Pradesh’s Minister for Culture and Tourism, Jaiveer Singh, said that the Magh Mela is not just a religious gathering but a living expression of Indian culture and ethos.The important bathing dates this year include Makar Sankranti on January 14, Mauni Amavasya on January 18, Basant Panchami on January 23, Maghi Purnima on February 1, and Mahashivratri on February 15.

# Russia says any troops sent to Ukraine by ‘coalition of the willing’ would be targets



Russia said on Thursday (January 8, 2026) that any troops sent to Ukraine by Western governments would be “legitimate combat targets”, after Britain and France announced plans to deploy a multinational force there in the event of a ceasefire.A Russian Foreign Ministry statement said “militaristic declarations” by a coalition of pro-Ukraine Western governments were becoming increasingly dangerous.

Russia was responding for the first time to a meeting of the “coalition of the willing” in Paris on Tuesday (January 6, 2026) at which Britain and France signed a declaration of intent on the future deployment.French President Emmanuel Macron said it could involve sending thousands of French troops. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said it paved the way for a “legal framework whereby “British, French and partner forces could operate on Ukrainian soil, secur-

# Not just forests: why grasslands also belong in national climate plans

In 2022, a group of scientists from institutions in Tanzania, Zambia, the U.K., the U.S., Germany and Canada wrote an open letter urging the parties of the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC) to broaden their goals to be inclusive of all biomes on earth, but especially grasslands and savannahs. Their letter, published in Science, asserted that even though savannahs are potentially better carbon sinks, forests have hogged the limelight in global climate negotiations. Unfortunately, three years since the letter was written, the UNFCCC climate summits have continued to fall short of addressing this key issue.

The UNFCCC COP30 climate talks took place over the course of 10 days in the city of Belém in North Brazil, and it had a major focus on forests. Hosting the bulk of the Amazon river, Brazil had an opportunity to place forests at the centre of its agenda. Early on at the conference, the announcement of the Tropical Forest Forever Facility (TFFF) was exciting to most attendees. With commitments of multi-million-dollar funds from different countries, the TFFF was established to fund countries to keep tropical forests intact. COP30, which ended with a lack of any concrete roadmap to protect the climate, also signalled a glaring disparity in a global climate action agenda that has continued to favour forests alone. Much like forests, other major biomes the world over are also facing the consequences of climate change and biodiversity loss — and protecting them can also aid climate action.

“Everyone is facing the effects of climate change, but the desert people are facing some of the harshest effects,” said Samantha Murray, an Ilka/Wongutha/Nyoongar indigenous person and the CEO of Indigenous Desert Alliance (IDA). “It is getting hotter and it is getting harder to live here”The IDA is a network of indigenous community rangers that works to protect and manage the vast desert grasslands that make up more than a third of Australia’s land-mass.

Grasslands are one of the most threatened ecosystems in the world. The biome has suffered rapid habitat loss due to agriculture, conversion to forests and plantations, spread of invasive species, and due to the extraction of fossil fuels. In addition, many governments have suppressed indigenous and local land management techniques such as controlled fires and grazing, leaving forest land to burn during wildfires with greater intensity and to release more carbon into the atmosphere as forests degrade.Today, the desert grasslands of Australia are reeling under the effects of dry spells and flash floods induced by climate change. These consequences are playing out in tandem with those of the buffel grass (Cenchrus ciliaris), an invasive species of grass that hasn’t only replaced native grass but which also burns with higher intensity.Organisations like the IDA have been at the forefront of bringing more attention to the desert grasslands of Australia. Stewarded by indigenous communities, the IDA has been working on the ground to protect their grasslands through culturally appropriate burning regimes, round-the-clock monitoring by indigenous rangers, and invasive species management. “I still think that in my lifetime, there won’t be a chance for me to walk up to someone in Melbourne and ask them about climate change, for them to say, ‘yes, it is affecting the deserts of our country,’” Samatha said, further highlighting that the grasslands are often seen as nothing more than empty spaces and is thus also insufficiently funded by the government.No cerrado, no Amazon

The same situation in Australia is echoed around the world. Brazil is home to one of the world’s most biodiverse savannahs, called the Cerrado. Home to eight of the 12 water systems of Brazil, including major river systems like the Sao Francisco and the Tocantins, the cerrado is stressed; in fact the cerrado grasslands face twice as much range loss due to human activities as well as climate change compared to the Amazon rainforests in the country.Of late, small-scale efforts have been bringing forth the importance of grasslands at the COP summits. Scientists, members of indigenous and local communities, and policymakers have been coming together to advocate for this imperilled biome. At the COP30 itself, big billboards at the central hall of the venue; public demonstrations by indigenous communities living in the cerrado; and special youth groups formed by the Brazilian ministry with representatives from each of the six biomes in the country all brought issues related to grasslands to the participants’ attention, even if these efforts were scattered.Several side events also highlighted grasslands. In one event called ‘Cerrado e Amazonia; Conectados Pelas Aguas’, Dandara Tonantzin, a federal congresswoman from the state of Minas Gerais in Brazil and coordinator of the Cerrado Defense Group of the Environmental Parliamentary Front highlighted the crucial role of the cerrado grasslands. In her words: “The Cerrado and the Amazon are two biomes, and brothers, that are connected ecologically. It is important to understand that without the cerrado, there is no Amazon.”A social justice issue

The cerrado today faces multiple pressures from growing agricultural expansion, mining, fire suppression, dis-

ing Ukraine’s skies and seas and regenerating Ukraine’s armed forces for the future”.Russia “warns that the deployment of Western military units, military facilities, depots and other infrastructure on Ukrainian territory will be classified as foreign intervention, posing a direct threat to the security of not only Russia but also other European countries,” the statement from Moscow said.It added: “The fresh militaristic declarations of the so-called coalition of the willing and the Kyiv regime constitute a veritable ‘axis of war’.”The plans of these participants are becoming increasingly dangerous and destructive for the future of the European continent and its inhabitants, who are also being forced by Western politicians to finance these aspirations out of their own pockets.”

Russia, which staged a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, says it was forced to intervene in order to prevent Ukraine from being absorbed into NATO and used as a launchpad to threaten Russia. It has consistently said it will never accept the stationing of Western forces there.Ukraine and its allies accuse Moscow of waging an imperial-style war aimed at seizing the territory of its neighbour, of which it now holds nearly 20%. They say Ukraine needs firm security guarantees as part of any peace settlement in order to prevent another Russian invasion in future.The United States has ruled out sending its own troops to Ukraine, but its special envoy Steve Witkoff said at Tuesday’s meeting in Paris that President Donald Trump “strongly stands behind” security protocols aimed at deterring future attacks on Ukraine.



enfranchisement of communities’ rights to their land, and public policies that protect agribusiness over ecosystems. In addition, 70% of Brazil’s agricultural toxic wastes are dumped in this biome, endangering the ecology as well as the people that live there.“We can still choose another path. First, by officially recognising territorial rights and secure demarcations for Indigenous peoples and Quilombolas (Afro-descendent communities in Brazil), Dandara said, highlighting that protecting the cerrado is also a social justice issue. “We need to ensure the implementation of inclusive public policies that integrate the participation of traditional communities in the management of natural resources.”Bridging these narratives from the side events to the negotiating rooms of the COP is a long road. By design, the UNFCCC COP focuses almost exclusively on conversations around managing carbon, while biodiversity and land degradation largely remain the talking points for the U.N. Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the U.N. Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD). To their credit, however, the CBD and the CCD have made better efforts to recognise grasslands in their programmes.For example, at the UNCCD COP16 conference in Saudi Arabia, there were efforts to highlight the importance of grasslands and rangelands in achieving land degradation neutrality. Through resolution L15, the UNCCD COP officially recognised that rangelands are complex socio-ecological systems and called on its parties to “prioritise policies and investments” and to “improve tenure security in rangelands”.

Building bridgesProtecting a biome like grasslands can’t happen in isolation but must come about through goals shared by the various U.N. bodies. Unfortunately, there are still debates ongoing about whether biodiversity and climate goals align and how institutions can build synergies. In 1992, the formation of the three Rio Conventions marked a historic first step in bridging the gap between the UNCBD, the UNFCCC, and the UNCCD — and from there a mechanism to cooperate on goals to address climate change, biodiversity loss, and land degradation together.COP30 also saw the active participation of organisations such as the World Wide Fund for Nature and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature on the matter of these overlooked biomes. In a report jointly released during the conference, titled ‘Protecting the overlooked carbon sink’, authors from these organisations highlighted a growing need to integrate grasslands in climate negotiations. In its policy recommendation, the report stated that grasslands should be considered in “an integrated manner across all three Rio Conventions to break silos and maximise effectiveness”. The report also stated that grasslands must be recognised in the country-specific nationally determined contributions (NDCs), which are national climate action plans that outline a country’s commitment to reducing emissions under the Paris Agreement.Small step for IndiaLaying bridges between the U.N. bodies is in fact the best way to protect the world’s grasslands, and a similar exercise between various branches of the Indian government could benefit the country’s grasslands as well. According to a white paper released by the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE), Bengaluru, at the UNFCCC COP16 in Saudi Arabia, grasslands in India come under the purview of 18 Ministries, each with competing interests and policy goals. While the Union Environment Ministry considers grasslands for afforestation purposes, say, the Ministry of Rural Development publishes the “wasteland atlas of India” that often includes grasslands the atlas deems available for conversion to other uses.If the governing bodies are unified from the national to the multilateral levels, however, the benefits could trickle down through mechanisms such as the country-specific NDCs. In fact, one of India’s eight NDCs is “to create an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO2 equivalent through additional forest and tree cover by 2030.” By recognising grasslands as a crucial carbon sink, the Indian government can easily encompass this biome, move away from forest-focused carbon sequestration schemes, and give its own climate mitigation efforts a boost.In similar vein, a policy brief shared by a group of researchers from Brazil urged the UNFCCC to “adopt the Ecosystem-Based Approach as an immediate pathway” to conserve and sustainably manage “open ecosystems as adaptation actions, enabling their inclusion in Brazil’s NDCs”.Recognising the importance of grasslands as unique ecosystems worthy of attention, valuing their potential for carbon sequestration.



# Hardik — the three-in-one cricketer who delivers more often than not



It's a little before 8 p.m. on a nippy Tuesday night, a deafening sound of silence enveloped Cuttack's Barabati Stadium. Having done the hard yards, Tilak Varma has just been dismissed to an excellent catch at fine-leg by Marco Jansen. It's the strapping left-arm quick's third catch of the evening, Lungi Ngidi's third wicket of the contest.At 78 for four midway through the 12th over, India's innings is going nowhere. The run rate is in the 6s, courtesy South Africa's discipline and a tacky surface where stroke-making is fraught with danger. India's top-four has all fallen attempting big shots, its efforts negated by both bounce and the ball sitting in the pitch. There is a sense of apprehension, if not anxiety, among the 45,000 predominantly pro-India audience in the first of five Twenty20 Internationals.

The silence lasts only till a lithe, athletic figure strides out, all intent and purpose. Hardik Pandya is playing his first international game in two and a half months but from the time he takes guard, one feels he has never been away.Such is the strength India can summon in white-ball cricket that Hardik wasn't missed in the time he was away from the game, recovering from a quadriцеп injury that kept him out of the T20 Asia Cup final against Pakistan and beyond. Make that 'wasn't almost missed.' How can one not miss an all-rounder of his calibre, a rare commodity in Indian cricket who bowls in the 140s and who can bat in different gears, depending on the situation? How can one not miss one of the great influencers of the modern limited-overs game, a powerhouse with the bat but also capable of making inroads with the ball, banking on the immense belief that he can use his short ball as a veritable weapon?

How can one not miss a T20I batter who fuses an average in the late 20s with a strike-rate in the early 140s, who smacks a six every 12 deliveries or so? How can one not miss a bowler who can take the new ball, bowl in the middle overs or deliver at the death, who boasts nearly 100 wickets and is agile, athletic and committed in the field? How can one not miss Hardik Pandya?Back to the Barabati. As Hardik emerged from the dugout, the crowd found its voice. It will be a stretch to say that it saw the Hardik blitzkrieg coming, but they had faith in the 32-year-old, a faith that eventually proved well justified.More than them, though, Hardik had faith in himself. Immense self-belief. It's been his calling card, his greatest ally and sometimes his worst enemy. Hardik is at that stage of his career where he is driven by inner expectations, by his own standards, not so much by what others want of him. Various responsibilities, including the captaincy of the T20I side, have passed him by, but instead of moping and cursing his luck and bemoaning the litany of injuries that have stymied his development as a Test all-rounder, he has chosen to sport a sunny outlook marked by positivity and the desire to deliver for the team.

A nonchalant single first ball from Lungi Ngidi got the juices flowing. His second ball, from left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj, disappeared over wide long-on as he opened his broad shoulders and deposited the ball over the fence. It was a beautifully executed stroke, all timing and grace with power not even an afterthought. Hardik can do that, you know. He has done it a million times previously, across formats. By the end of the first T20I, he boasted 188 sixes in 226 outings for the country, 100 of them in the 20-over version alone.The next ball disappeared for another six, longer and more dramatic than the previous one. At the time of the bat making contact with the ball, Hardik's eyes were on Maharaj, not the ball. He had sized up the little white orb in the air, got into perfect position to launch it straighter; the eyes on the bowler sent out a chilling message: 'I am here, and I mean business.'For the next 40 minutes or so, Hardik bossed the exchanges. He made batting look ridiculously easy on a demanding pitch. It was as if while the rest were confronted with a minefield, he was taking guard on the most placid of decks, where he could hit through the line with impunity and where the fielders were mere serfs positioned to fetch the ball from the boundary and relay it to the hapless bowler

By the time the curtain came down on the Indian innings, Hardik had breezed to 59 off 28, six fours and four gigantic sixes. Touch and power competed for effect and efficiency. Tottering and stumbling along until he arrived in a

blaze of boundaries, India raced away to 175 for six when they ran out of time.The electric right-hander contributed 60.82% of the runs accrued when he was at the crease while facing 56% of the deliveries left in the innings. South Africa, all of South Africa, together bested Hardik by 15 runs, but they fell short of India's total by 101. Just for good measure, Hardik picked up the scalp of the dangerous David Miller with his first ball back. Is there anything this man from Choryasi in Gujarat can't do?India tided over Hardik's latest injury-fuelled absence with minimal damage, though they did surrender the ODI series in Australia 1-2. He would have been handy in Perth and Adelaide, where the first two games were held, because of his propensity to bowl a deceptively heavy ball and because he is an expert at horizontal-bat strokes. But that's how the cookie crumbles and over the years, India have learnt not to stress too much over Hardik's unavailability because he has given them adequate practice at playing without him.A promising Test career was nipped in the bud because his athletic-looking but fragile body couldn't shoulder the burden of responsibility that comes with the tag of a genuine all-rounder. After token attempts at reviving his five-day fortunes, Hardik heeded the obvious and decided to stay away from the red-ball game. To some, it might appear as if he took the easy way out, opting not to put in the hard labour required to stay relevant in the longest iteration. Hardik will counter that he chose prudence and logic, that no amount of core strengthening could have prevented the ugly shadow of injuries from eclipsing his path.While there is no denying the value a fully fit Hardik would have given the Test side, there's no point trying to get on board a ship that has long sailed. He will no longer don the white flannels, a reality he has come to terms with, but he remains crucial to India's white-ball ecosystem, a landscape where his three-dimensional presence lends the cutting edge that can be the game-changer.Hardik's challenge over the next three months will be to steer clear of the spectre of injuries that has been relentlessly chasing him. He needs to be managed carefully, which means perhaps keeping him away from the three ODIs against New Zealand in January and getting him to play only the remaining T20Is of this five-match series against South Africa and five further outings against the Kiwis next month before the T20 World Cup begins in early February.

It was his dismissal of Heinrich Klaasen, with South Africa needing 26 off 24 deliveries, six wickets standing, that turned the final of the last World Cup upside down in Bridgetown last year. A second heartbreak loomed in seven months for Rohit Sharma's men when Hardik threw them a lifeline through a slower delivery that the marauding Klaasen could only nick through to Rishabh Pant. India were suddenly all over the Proteas like a bad rash, Jasprit Bumrah and Arshdeep Singh expertly closing out all escape routes and Hardik delivering the coup de grace in the final over with the scalps of Miller (to a sensational catch by Suryakumar Yadav running around at long-off) and Kagiso Rabada.Hardik was Rohit's deputy at the World Cup and would have realistically expected to don the captain's imaginary armband when the inspirational skipper retired after hoisting the trophy. But ostensibly because of his numerous dalliances with injuries, Hardik lost out, the crown instead placed on Suryakumar's head. It must have been a bitter pill to swallow for the man who loves to live life king-size, but he gritted his teeth, kept his mouth firmly shut and decided to let his cricket do the talking.

Nowhere was that more evident than at the 50-over Champions Trophy in Dubai in February-March, when unbeaten India scythed through the draw to add a second ICC title to their cabinet in seven and a half months.Either side of the haunting meltdown in the final of the 50-over World Cup in November 2023, India won 23 matches in three ICC tournaments, though it is the one that got away that will always rattle. On somewhat dodgy tracks at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium where India lost all five tosses and were forced to chase four times, Hardik came to the party thrice on the bounce.With a run-a-ball 45 against New Zealand in the league stage, Hardik gave himself and his bowling colleagues enough to defend and took the first wicket in the Kiwi chase to set up a 44-run victory. In the semifinal against Australia, with the match in the balance, he smacked three giant sixes, including two off successive deliveries from leggie Adam Zampa, to settle the issue, and conjured 18 off 18 in the final against the Kiwis. His strike-rate ranged between 100 and 117, not special but just what was needed under the circumstances. It was Hardik at his calculating best, choosing the bowlers to target, the areas to clear.Hardik's presence allows the think-tank the luxury of playing an additional specialist resource, depending on what the perceived need is. He is three cricketers rolled in one, and a leader in his own right even if he is not the captain or the vice-captain. His colleagues recognise his value but more importantly, Hardik knows what he must do. For him, that's what matters the most.



For Telugu cinema, 2025 was a year of split screens with glittering highs at the box office on one side, and a shadowy underworld of leaks, hacks and digital theft on the other. While some films soared and others sank, the real plot twist unfolded far away from theatre halls.Behind the scenes, a coordinated, sustained effort by the Telangana police, the Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre (I4C) and the Anti Video Piracy Cell (AVPC) of the Telugu Film Chamber of Commerce quietly closed in on the industry's most elusive pirates.

By the time the net tightened, several key operators had been tracked and cornered, including Cyril Raja Amaladoss, who funnelled fresh releases to multiple syndicates, and then there was a more notorious name in circulation: Ravi Emandi of iBomma.On October 17, after months of following his movements, Telangana police finally intercepted Ravi when he visited Hyderabad. According to the police, he helmed a piracy network built around iBomma, Bappam TV and more than 65 mirror websites hosting newly released Telugu films in crisp high definition (HD) prints. The scale was staggering: hard drives with 21,000 films in different languages were seized, and police estimate Ravi earned around ₹20 crore from the operation, money allegedly channelled into flats and plots. His bank accounts, holding ₹3.5 crore, have now been frozen.But the piracy itself was only the opening act. As police dug deeper, they found a darker layer: users streaming pirated films on iBomma and its mirror pages were being quietly diverted to betting platforms, a pipeline that enabled identity theft, data mining and financial fraud.Two of Ravi's associates — web developer Duddela Shivajee and Susarla Prashanth — had been arrested in September. Ravi also figures among four other FIRs involving piracy, online cheating and data theft.

His arrest added to a string of earlier breakthroughs. In September, the cybercrime wing had nabbed five persons: Ashwani Kumar from Bihar, the kingpin who allegedly hacked servers of digital media companies to steal HD prints of new films; Cyril Infant Raj of Tamil Nadu believed to have managed piracy websites such as 1TamilBlasters and uploaded more than 500 films since 2020 via international servers, earning nearly ₹2 crore in cryptocurrency; Hyderabad's Jana Kiran Kumar, accused of recording over 100 films inside cinemas with concealed mobile devices; Sudhakaran from Erode who confessed to recording 35 south Indian titles; and Arsalan Ahmed who allegedly uploaded films on file-sharing platforms and circulated them through Telegram channels.A definite moveThe wave of arrests and continued crackdown on piracy come on the heels of fresh triggers. The AVPC had filed complaints after Telugu films #Single and HIT: The Third Case appeared online on the very day of their release, followed soon after by a similar leak of Kuberaa. Each incident renewed pressure on enforcement, signalling that the pirates were growing bolder and more sophisticated.

According to investigators, the syndicates thrived behind layers of digital camouflage: encrypted Telegram groups, overseas domain-hosting servers and cryptocurrency payment trails that blurred their footprints across jurisdictions.The recent arrests have injected a sliver of hope into the industry, but the battle is far from over. For every iBomma or 1TamilBlasters that is pulled down, several more hydra-like networks are at work, waiting to fill the vacuum.The AVPC has pegged the loss of revenue to the industry in 2024 due to piracy at ₹3,700 crore. An estimation of losses for 2025 will be carried out by the end of the year, although chairperson Rajkumar Akella is hopeful that the numbers may just dip this time.“Tackling piracy is a long-drawn, sustained battle,” he says. “Several rogue websites such as 1Tamilmv, Movierulz, Tamilrockers and CineVood continue to thrive. The recent arrests have shown that if all of our efforts continue, there will be results.”While pirated links of new releases, including Andhra King Taluka and Tere Ishk Mein, continue to surface online, there is a faint silver lining, notes Rajkumar. Most of those prints are not razor-sharp HD versions anymore. Earlier incidents of films, such as HIT 3, Single and Kuberaa, appearing online on or before release day had rattled the industry, but now the uploads are making their way online nearly two days after a film hits theatres. “Yet, it is disconcerting,” he admits.The tightening of the noose is visible. With Telangana police working in coordination with the I4C, Rajkumar says the industry has begun to see measurable impact: “Police alerted us to certain leak points and we upgraded the standard operating procedures for digital cinema suppliers to

# Open AI, Microsoft face lawsuit over ChatGPT’s alleged role in Connecticut murder-suicide

San Francisco: The heirs of an 83-year-old Connecticut woman are suing ChatGPT maker OpenAI and its business partner Microsoft for wrongful death, alleging that the artificial intelligence chatbot intensified her son's "paranoid delusions" and helped direct them at his mother before he killed her.Police said Stein-Erik Soelberg, 56, a former tech industry worker, fatally beat and strangled his mother, Suzanne Adams, and killed himself in early August at the home where they both lived in Greenwich, Connecticut.The lawsuit filed by Adams' estate on Thursday in California Superior Court in San Francisco alleges OpenAI "designed and distributed a defective product that validated a user's paranoid delusions about his own mother." It is one of a growing number of wrongful death legal actions against AI chatbot makers across the country. "Throughout these conversations, ChatGPT reinforced a single, dangerous message: Stein-Erik could trust no one in his life — except ChatGPT itself," the lawsuit says. "It fostered his emotional dependence while systematically painting the people around him as enemies. It told him his mother was surveilling him. It told him delivery drivers, retail employees, police officers, and even friends were agents working against him. It told him that names on soda cans were threats from his adversary circle."" OpenAI did not address the merits of the allegations in a statement issued by a spokesperson. "This is an incredibly heartbreaking situation, and we will review the filings to understand the details," the statement said. "We continue improving ChatGPT's training to recognize and

plug these loopholes. This has helped. Further, apart from one incident in Dharmavaram in Anantapur district, there have not been any reported cases of new films being pirated with camcorders inside theatres in the two Telugu States over the past two months."But the trail doesn't end within regional borders. Newer piracy links from camcorder prints have been traced to Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and other States, often in remote locations where security measures tend to be lax.Unlike the pre-digital era when curbing piracy meant tracking down lone operators, the recent spate of arrests has helped expose the modus operandi of large scale networks.

The vast network of digital piracy first came into focus during the release of Baahubali 2 in 2017. Rajkumar recalls how the case of Priyank Paradeshi, an IT employee based in San Francisco, exposed the scale of a distributed, cross-border operation. Paradeshi reportedly worked with associates who recorded films on camcorders in Kolkata, while another member of the network threatened Hindi film production houses, demanding hefty payments to prevent leaks of their upcoming releases."This was the time when we could still track IP addresses, before pirates started masking them," Rajkumar says. "We followed the trail to Jabalpur and Pune. Transactions were being carried out using cryptocurrency even in 2017. That showed us the complexity of the issue. At the time, jurisdictional challenges made it difficult to apprehend culprits across geographical locations."The Ministry of Home Affairs-backed I4C, he says, has helped bridge those gaps.To put things in perspective, he points to the case of iBomma Ravi, who was eventually arrested when he briefly visited Hyderabad. "If he is living in France and outsourcing his work to the Caribbean Islands, how do we nab him without the help of local authorities?"Investigations revealed the vastness of Ravi's operation: the iBomma and Bappam domains were handled by employees in the Caribbean and the UK. According to the police, Ravi admitted to purchasing movies via the Telegram app to upload them to the domains. He also recorded films from OTT platforms and converted them into HD quality through a multi-layered, auto-generated mirror transmission system. The servers supporting the network were operated from the Netherlands and Switzerland.Investigators found that Ravi had initially registered the iBomma domain with his own e-mail ID, debit card and personal details through a company named Njalla. The site was later hosted on IPVolume, which provided backend infrastructure. Its underlying script redirected users who clicked on movie links to online gaming and illegal betting platforms before granting access to the pirated film.Transnational poly crimeLong dismissed as a "victim-less crime", piracy was rarely considered serious enough to warrant the involvement of law enforcement agencies across borders. But as Rajkumar describes it, piracy has now evolved into a "transnational poly crime", a sprawling nexus that intersects with betting syndicates, identity theft and malware attacks, compelling global agencies to take note.In July, the Digital Piracy Conference at the Indian School of Business, Hyderabad, attended by officials of the Central Bureau of Investigation and Interpol, focussed on this growing nexus between piracy and cybercrime. The arrest of iBomma Ravi, and the subsequent revelation of how the site exposed users' financial and identity data to betting networks and fraud portals, is a case in point. "Anyone arguing that watching movies on piracy websites does no harm needs to understand that movie piracy is just a front; identity theft and malware affects every user," says a producer working closely with the AVPC.Producer Sureshbabu concurs. "It is good that the government is helping us combat piracy. The larger issue is to make people realise the gravity of the issue. Apart from the makers incurring loss, their privacy is compromised."These concerns were reiterated internationally. At the Interpol Global Meeting on Digital Piracy held in Seoul, Korea, on November 17 and 18, the need for global enforcement agencies to stay connected and exchange knowledge for actionable intelligence was a key theme, Rajkumar says. "If cinema is going global, so is piracy."Piracy and malwareIn 2021, cryptomining malware was discovered embedded in pirated downloads of Spider-Man: No Way Home, compromising both individual devices and corporate networks.If just one piracy syndicate (iBomma) was making nearly 25 lakh per month, it shows the magnitude of the problem. Betting apps linked to the network have been benefitting from the traffic to the piracy site," Rajkumar reiterates.On November 27, the Telugu film industry, with the help of the Telangana government, signed a memorandum of understanding with the Japanese film and anime organisation CODA (Contents Overseas Distribution Association) to strengthen protection for intellectual property and take up counter measures against online copyright violations. The MoU assumes significance given the rising popularity of Japanese anime in India.For Rajkumar, the larger battle now is to hold intermediaries, such as web-hosting companies, accountable. "When piracy links surface, complaints are raised with the hosting domains, and it takes 24 to 36 hours to bring down the links. By then, the damage is done since hundreds of mirror websites will already have those links. We are developing tools to escalate the issue in real time to the hosting domains."

# Thalassemia groups urge swift passage of National Blood Transfusion Bill

New Delhi: Thalassaemia patients on Friday hailed the introduction of the National Blood Transfusion Bill in Parliament and urged members to pass the life-saving bill at the earliest.Earlier this month, during the Winter session of the Parliament, the National Blood Transfusion Bill, 2025, was proposed by MP Parshotambhai Rupala in Lok Sabha and by Dr Ajeet Madhavrao Gopchade in Rajya Sabha.

The Bill aims to regulate the collection, testing, processing, storage, distribution, issuance, and transfusion of human blood and blood components, to ensure health protection and prevention of transfusion-transmissible diseases. It also calls for establishing national standards for safe blood collection, transfusion, and management and imposing penalties for non-compliance and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

The main objective is to establish a National Blood Transfusion Authority with statutory powers to prescribe national standards for blood collection, processing, storage, and transfusion."For India's thalassaemia community, which depends on safe, uninterrupted, and quality-assured blood transfusions for survival, this legislation marks a historic and long-awaited step forward," said the Thalassaemia Patients Advocacy Group (TPAG).

"It reflects a coherent and serious parliamentary commitment to reforming one of India's most under-regulated yet critical public health areas," TPAG said, while urging the MPs to immediately pass the Bill.For lakhs of patients who rely on blood as their lifeline, this reform offers hope for a safer, more accountable, and more efficient blood ecosystem. A unified national framework will play a pivotal role



in strengthening safety, quality assurance, accountability, and public trust."Strengthening the governance of blood transfusion services is essential for ensuring safety and public trust. I hope the proposed bill provides a much-needed, science-based framework to streamline standards and improve patient outcomes," said Prof N K Ganguly, former Director General, ICMR.Anubha Taneja Mukherjee, Member Secretary of TPAG, noted that the advocacy group will submit detailed comments on the Bill, and strongly urged for the inclusion of patient representation in any body constituted under this framework.The Federation of Indian Blood Donors Organizations (FIBDO) also commended the efforts made by the MPs to propose the critical Bill in the Parliament."We call upon all parliamentarians to unite in passing this bill, which holds the promise of saving countless lives and fortifying the very foundation of India's healthcare system," the FIBDO said in a statement.



# Finance Ministry announces PPP project pipeline of Centre, states for 3 years



the highest number — 108 projects — are to be undertaken by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways with the total project cost of Rs 8.77 lakh crore.The highest number — 108 projects — are to be undertaken by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways with the total project cost of Rs 8.77 lakh crore.In line with the announcement made in Union Budget 2025-26, the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), Ministry of Finance on Tuesday said it has created a three-year Public Private Partnership (PPP) project pipeline covering 852 projects across Centre and states with a total project cost of over Rs 17 lakh crore.

Of the total 852 projects, 232 PPP projects with project cost of Rs 13.15 lakh crore would be undertaken by eight central departments and infrastructure ministries, while 620 projects worth Rs 3.84 lakh crore will be executed by 20 states and Union Territories.Of the projects listed under central infrastructure ministries, the highest number — 108 projects — are to be undertaken by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways with the total project cost of Rs 8.77 lakh crore, followed by Ministry of Power with 46 projects and Rs 3.4 lakh crore project cost and 29 projects under Department of Water Resources, River Development

and Ganga Rejuvenation with cost of Rs 12,254 crore. The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways will carry out 22 projects with a cost of Rs 37,644 crore, while the Ministry of Railways will undertake 13 projects and a project cost of Rs 30,904 crore.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation will undertake 11 projects with a project cost of Rs 2,262 crore, while the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade has 2 projects with a cost of Rs 6,646 crore. The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas will undertake one project with an estimated expenditure of Rs 8,743 crore.Among states, the highest number — 270 projects — will be undertaken by Andhra Pradesh at an estimated total project cost of Rs 1.16 lakh crore, followed by Uttar Pradesh with 89 projects at a cost of Rs 11,519 crore and Tamil Nadu with 70 projects and Rs 87,640 crore cost. Jammu & Kashmir will undertake 57 projects at a cost of Rs 21,374 crore, while Madhya Pradesh will have 21 projects with Rs 65,497 crore cost.The pipeline provides early visibility of potential PPP projects to enable investors, developers and other stakeholders to undertake more informed planning and investment decisions, the Finance Ministry said in a statement.In her Budget speech on February 1, 2025, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said each infrastructure-related ministry will come up with a 3-year pipeline of projects that can be implemented in PPP mode. States will also be encouraged to do so and can seek support from the IIPDF (India Infrastructure Project Development Fund) scheme to prepare PPP proposals, she had said.Then Expenditure Secretary Manoj Govil had in February 2024 said that the idea behind this project pipeline was that each department should have a shelf of projects, which they can think about and start implementing over the next three years. "They should not bring the projects in one go or sporadically, but think about their sector and prepare a pipeline of projects which can be funded over the next few years," he had said.

# Goldilocks phase of low inflation, stable growth set to continue in FY27: India Ratings

India's macroeconomic situation is set to remain in the 'goldilocks' phase even in 2026-27, with India Ratings & Research forecasting on Tuesday a GDP growth of 6.9 per cent and headline retail inflation of 3.8 per cent. The latter will likely be lower than the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) medium-term target of 4 per cent for the second year in a row.For 2025-26, the ratings agency expects GDP to clock a growth rate of 7.4 per cent. So far in the first half of the year, growth has averaged 8 per cent in real terms. The statistics ministry will release its first advance estimate of GDP for 2025-26 on Wednesday.

India's real growth rate has surprised on the upside in the first two quarters of 2025-26, coming in well above expectations of economists as well as the RBI. At the same time, inflation based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) has been rather subdued, with the central bank having to cut its forecast six times in 2025 to 2 per cent for the fiscal year ending March. As a result, Governor Sanjay Malhotra said in early December that benign inflation and a per cent growth in the first half of the year presented "a rare goldilocks period".Risks, though, remain, with the main challenges being a weak currency – India Ratings sees the rupee averaging 92.3 per US dollar in 2026-27 – a high base effect, slower growth in indirect tax collections due to the cuts made to the Goods and Services Tax (GST) rates, a possible El Nino in mid-2026, and weaker-than-expected demand revival. "Emerging tech like AI (artificial intelligence) also presents new hurdles," Devendra Kumar Pant, India Ratings' Chief Economist and Head of Public Finance, said on Tuesday.

On the flip side, growth could also exceed current projections, especially if India manages to quickly finalise a trade deal with the US. "Upcoming changes to the base year for GDP and CPI to 2022-23 and 2024, respectively, will prompt a revision of the current economic outlook once new data is available," the agency said in a statement.The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) is in the midst of updating key macroeconomic data, with the first advance estimate of GDP that will be released on Wednesday being the last growth number as per the current methodology and the 2011-12 base year. At the end of February, MoSPI will release GDP data for October-December 2025 as per the new base year and after having incorporated certain changes in how the data is compiled. CPI inflation data for January, which will be released on February 12, will also be as per the new consumption basket based on the 2023-24 Household Consumption Expenditure Survey and with



2024 as the base year for prices.According to Pant and Paras Jasrai, Associate Director and Economist at India Ratings, both private consumption and investment will benefit next year from the government's reform momentum, with positive rural real wage growth supporting consumption demand.

"With five consecutive quarters of agricultural GVA (gross value added) growth surpassing 3.5 per cent and declining inflation in 2025-26, consumption demand is set for a sustained boost," India Ratings said, projecting a 7.6 per cent increase in private consumption in 2026-27 on the back of strong service sector growth, low inflation turning real wages positive, the personal income tax cuts announced in the Union Budget for 2025-26, and the GST rate cuts.In the first half of 2025-26, private consumption rose 7.5 per cent year-on-year in real terms.On the investment side, gross fixed capital formation is expected to grow by 7.8 per cent next fiscal, led by the government's capital expenditure. "Though some sectors like telecom and chemicals may see slower capex, others like power, logistics, and real estate continue robust growth. Global tech giants are turning India into an investment hotspot, especially in electronics and mobile manufacturing, though further policy enhancements are needed to solidify India's role in the global supply chain," the economists noted.Gross fixed capital formation, a proxy for investments, rose 7.6 per cent in April-September 2025. And while the Central government's capital expenditure was up 28 per cent in the first eight months of 2025-26 as per latest data, the jury is still out on private capex, with India Ratings noting on Tuesday that low interest rates were a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for investment demand. However, with loan growth to the industry picking up pace in the second half of 2025, there is optimism on the private capex front, Jasrai said.

# Banks report robust Q3 credit growth backed by RBI policy and GST rate cuts

Fuelled by higher demand following a 125-basis point (bps) cut in the repo rate, reductions in the goods and services tax (GST) rates and the festive season spending, several banks reported robust credit growth in the quarter ended December, show provisional quarterly business figures filed by lenders for the October-December 2025 quarter.Banks continue to post double-digit loan growth, according to the data. During Q3FY26, most of the lenders posted a higher deposit growth, though credit expansion continued to outpace it as shown by lenders' credit-deposit (CD) ratio that touched a record high of 81.6 per cent as of December 15, 2025, according to latest RBI data.

Overall, loan growth among public and private sector lenders who have reported their provisional numbers was between 7.42 per cent and 20 per cent.Among public sector lenders, banks that saw strong growth in advances in Q3FY26, are the Bank of Maharashtra (19.61 per cent), Central Bank of India (19.57 per cent) and Bank of India (15.07 per cent), show provisional numbers filed by these lenders.Bank of Baroda's advances were up 13.54 per cent, while Punjab National Bank reported a loan growth of 10.15 per cent. Union Bank of India's loan book expanded by 7.42 per cent.HDFC Bank's advances jumped 11.9 per cent to Rs 28.44 lakh crore in the third quarter of the current fiscal, compared to Rs 25.42 lakh crore in the year-ago period. Kotak Mahindra Bank's net advances increased by 16 per cent.

"There has been a good pick up in loan growth. Note that this is the quarter where we have seen the full impact of GST cuts playing out. Our guess is growth could have been driven by auto loans, unsecured loans and overall pick up in retail credit," said Suresh Ganapathy, MD, Head of Financial Services Research, Macquarie Capital.Between Feb-

ruary-December, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has reduced the repo rate from 6.5 per cent to 5.25 per cent.The government implemented the next-generation goods and services tax (GST) reforms effective September 22, with a simplified two-slab structure of 5 per cent and 18 per cent. The move has helped in spurring domestic demand in the festive season. The GST cuts triggered a significant demand for auto loans during September and October — a period that coincided with the festive season.

"We expect liquidity revival to stimulate a concurrent downstream growth in credit and CASA (current account savings account), and we keep our above-consensus FY26E credit growth of 13 per cent unchanged. This view is reinforced by GST rationalisation benefits and a high balance sheet dry powder for most leading banks," said Santanu Chakrabarti, analyst – Banking and Finance, BNP Paribas India.Deposit growth during the quarter among banks who reported their provisional numbers stood at 3.35-15.3 per cent.During Q3 FY26, Bank of Maharashtra deposits grew by 15.3 per cent, while Central Bank of India posted a growth of 13.2 per cent in deposits. Punjab National Bank and Union Bank of India reported a slower growth in deposits at 8.32 per cent and 3.35 per cent, respectively. Axis saw strong deposit growth (15 per cent) that outpaced its loan growth (14.1 per cent)."The more critical variable to watch is deposit growth, which continues to trail credit expansion. This reflects lower savings rates, tighter overseas inflows, and greater diversification of household savings," said Prakash Agarwal, Partner, Gefion Capital Advisors, a capital and strategy advisory firm.During the October-December quarter, banks' CD or loan-to-deposit ratio — indicating what share of a bank's total deposits has been extended as loans — remained high. HDFC Bank's CD ratio stood at 99.45 per cent,

# Why pregnancy acts as a ‘physiologic stress test’ for a women’s heart



Pregnancy comes with many physiological and hormonal changes, as well as certain complications. One of the lesser-discussed aspects is how a woman's heart is affected during those nine months, especially if she has a pre-existing cardiovascular condition. According to Dr Sameer Bhate, Senior Consultant & HOD, Adult Cardiac Surgery at Amrita Hospital, Faridabad, pregnancy acts as a powerful stressor on the cardiovascular system, even in otherwise healthy women."Pregnancy acts as a 'physiologic stress test', as it increases cardiac workload by 30–50% to support the foetus," Dr Bhate tells indianexpress.com. During this period, he further explains, a woman's blood volume rises sharply—by nearly 40–50%—forcing the heart to pump significantly more blood every minute, and the heart rate increases by 10–20 beats per minute.

Moreover, the hormonal changes relax the vascular walls, while the expanding uterus restricts blood flow. "This can lead to increased pressure and, in some cases, varicose veins or clotting risks."

Why pre-existing conditions raise the riskFor women with underlying medical conditions, this physiological load can become dangerous. "Women with heart valve disease already have compromised pumping mechanics or blood flow patterns. Pregnancy adds volume and output demand on top of that." The extra blood volume can worsen valve leakage or obstruction, pushing the heart beyond its reserve."If a woman has a mechanical valve, she is at higher risk of blood clots during pregnancy. Besides, mechanical valves require anticoagulation, which may harm the fetus," he further adds.

# Rubina Dilaik acknowledges her in-laws, husband’s support during postpartum journey: ‘Those who say divorce rates go up after a kid...’

Emphasising the value of traditional Indian family structures, Rubina Dilaik said that the support of in-laws and husbands in raising children is essential, especially when joint family systems are dwindling. "My mother-in-law was a working woman. She used to leave Abhinav with their nani (grandmother). She says, I know the value of a mother. In today's times, if a woman gets an understanding family, in-laws, and a husband, so I am telling you...those people who say that divorce rates go up after a kid, I am telling you all of this will come to so much of understanding," Dilaik, 37, said.

"It will come to a healthy family relationship. I can vouch for the fact that the parents' relationship affects the kids the most. This is the beauty of Indian family systems," she told Nayandeep Rakshit on YouTube.Taking a cue from her acknowledgment, let's learn the importance of understanding the family and being on the same page when raising children in today's times.Dr Shorouq Motwani, a psychiatrist at Lilavati Hospital in Mumbai, said that being on the same page about embracing parenthood is important for not only the couple's emotional well-being but also the healthy development of the children and the maintenance of peace and love in the family.

Parenthood brings significant lifestyle changes, responsibilities, and emotional shifts for the couple and the family. "If both partners are on the same page, they can support each other better, manage stress properly, and create a

There is also an increased risk of hypertensive disorders, including pre-eclampsia and heart failure. "Chronic kidney disease similarly heightens risk, increasing the chances of pre-eclampsia, preterm birth, low birthweight and NICU admission."pregnant During pregnancy, heart rate increases by 10-20 beats per minute (image: pexels)The importance of early monitoring and follow-upProtecting heart health during pregnancy, Dr Bhate stresses, must begin even before conception, with "honest risk assessment and counselling." Once pregnant, careful and frequent monitoring becomes essential.

"Regular cardiology follow-up with clinical exams, ECG, and echocardiography to monitor ventricular and valve function, and management by a multidisciplinary pregnancy heart team can help detect worsening function, arrhythmias, or heart failure early." High-risk women may also require tailored delivery plans and specialist medication management.Dr Bhate recalls a case of a 44-year-old Ethiopian woman, in whom pregnancy worsened a pre-existing heart condition. The cardiologist cites that the woman had undergone a bioprosthetic mitral valve replacement and, over the course of two decades, carried four full-term pregnancies."Each added sustained hemodynamic stress. Pregnancy accelerated the degeneration of her tissue valve, a known risk in younger women." Over the years, she developed severe breathlessness and pulmonary hypertension."Evaluation showed the valve had worn out prematurely, necessitating a high-risk redo mitral valve replacement, complicated further by a single kidney." Although bioprosthetic mitral valve degeneration is inevitable over time, in this case, "repeated pregnancies likely accelerated a process that is biologically expected."Dr Bhate says that timely surgery restored her cardiac function and stability, and that this example underlines the cruciality of frequent cardiovascular surveillance in pregnancy, especially in women with pre-existing heart conditions."Annual echocardiography after valve replacement, closer follow-up during and after each pregnancy, and early screening for rising pulmonary pressures would have helped detect valve degeneration sooner," Dr Bhate asserts, cautioning that frequent cardiovascular surveillance in pregnancy, especially in women with pre-existing heart conditions, is non-negotiable.



thriving environment for the child. When a couple is a team, it is far easier for the in-laws to be supportive and nurture their grandchildren," said Dr Motwani.However, if families are not on the same page regarding caregiving or even matters like where the children will be raised, it may lead to a communication gap or emotional distance, which can damage the relationship and the child's upbringing."Open and honest communication becomes the key if a couple and their family are not aligned. So, each other's fears, expectations, and reasons should be taken into consideration before the decision," said Dr Motwani.

# Foods and diets that dominated our health conversations in 2025

In 2025, food was no longer discussed only in terms of weight loss or indulgence; it became a daily health strategy. Conversations around what we ate were increasingly tied to how our joints felt in the morning, how steady our energy stayed through the day, how well we slept, and how our digestion behaved under stress. Meals turned into quiet interventions, with people looking to their plates not for perfection, but for relief, resilience, and long-term wellbeing.

From joint-friendly diets that promised reduced inflammation to heart-healthy foods aimed at managing cholesterol and blood pressure, nutrition talk grew more condition-specific and practical. Instead of chasing superfoods in isolation, people focused on combinations such as fibre with protein, fats with antioxidants, fermented foods alongside home-cooked staples and questioned how cooking methods, timing, and consistency mattered just as much as ingredients.

Gut health, in particular, dominated the conversation. Probiotics, prebiotics, fermented foods, and fibre-rich grains moved from niche wellness circles into everyday kitchens. At the same time, there was a noticeable shift away from extreme food rules. This year, health conversations around food were less about restriction and more choosing foods that helped the body cope better with modern life, chronic stress, and ageing, one meal at a time.Gut health took over the menu

Gut health wasn't just a buzzword; it was a cultural movement. Experts emphasised the role of various seeds and fibres in nourishing the gut microbiome, which in turn supports digestion and even heart health. Nutritionists highlighted seeds like chia, flax, and pomegranate seeds for their fibre, omega-3s, and antioxidants, all key for maintaining gut balance and reducing inflammation.

Meanwhile, experts also reminded readers that certain pigment-rich foods like berries and colourful fruits also help foster gut wellbeing and lower inflammatory stress in the body. According to Deepalakshmi, a registered dietitian at Shree Balaji Medical Centre, Chennai, red pigments in foods are very helpful for keeping your gut healthy.Traditional fermented staples from curd to batter for idli and dosa also saw a renaissance in 2025, not just as comfort foods but as functional ingredients for probiotic and digestive support. Dr



Raj Kumar, senior consultant, Non-invasive Cardiology at PSRI Hospital, also stressed that eating a diet rich in fibre, such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, feeds the healthy bacteria in the gut. Heart-smart choices and anti-inflammatory staplesNutrition conversations also placed heart health at the centre of daily food choices. Cardiologists and dietitians pushed back against simplistic "low-carb" or "low-fat" labels, urging people instead to focus on whole, minimally processed foods.Dr CM Nagesh, general secretary at the Indian College of Cardiology, noted, "Consume a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats (such as those from nuts, seeds, and olive oil) to support cardiovascular health."Anti-inflammatory eating became another practical theme in 2025, reinforcing the importance of colourful fruits, leafy greens, seeds and fibre — foods known to lower systemic inflammation and support both gut and heart health.

Condition-specific foodsDiscussions moved beyond generic 'eat clean' advice to condition-specific eating. Foods traditionally recommended for digestive comfort were spotlighted by gastroenterologists, blending ancient practices with contemporary science. Joint health-focused diets drew attention to anti-inflammatory nutrition (like omega-3-rich fatty fish and fibre-dense legumes) as tools to cope with joint pain



# ‘Don’t boycott tournament but don’t play India match’ Rashid Latif reverses stance on Pakistan T20 World Cup boycott

GNS News Agency, Feb 1

Former Pakistan captain Rashid Latif has shifted his position on boycotting the upcoming T20 World Cup, saying the window for such action has closed. However, the former wicketkeeper-batsman suggested an alternative protest: Pakistan could participate in the tournament but refuse to play matches against India specifically, though he acknowledged such a decision rests with the Pakistani government, not the cricket board.

“If the government says we won’t play against India, the ICC will have to accept it,” Latif said. “If they don’t, that’s where the real confrontation begins.” When the host asked what would happen if India and Pakistan reach final, then Latif said, “nahi khelenge’ (we won’t play (in that protest plan)). Latif, who previously advocated for a boycott to challenge what he called India’s dominance over global cricket governance, acknowledged Wednesday the opportunity passed when Pakistan Cricket Board failed to act immediately after Bangladesh’s exclusion from the tournament. “The time for a strike has passed,” Latif said on the YouTube channel CaughtBehind. “Every decision has a timing. When the iron is hot, that’s when you strike. That time was last week during the ICC meeting.” The comments mark a reversal from Latif’s earlier calls for Pakistan to withdraw from the World Cup to expose flaws in international cricket administration. Bangladesh was replaced by Scotland after receiving 14 votes against their participation, with the ICC



citing logistical and contractual concerns. Pakistan voted in support of Bangladesh but ultimately accepted the decision.

Latif said Pakistan demonstrated solidarity by voting for Bangladesh but maintained that boycotting now would be ineffective. “We showed our support. We voted for them. That chapter is over,” he said. “If we boycott now, it won’t have the same impact.” Pakistan chairman Mohsin Naqvi had indicated three days ago that the board might take a principled stance similar to Bangladesh’s position, but no formal boycott announcement has materialised. The T20 World Cup proceeds with Pakistan participating under a hybrid model that allows matches involving India to be played at neutral venues through 2027.

# Novak Djokovic vs Jannik Sinner Australian Open 2026 semifinal: One number that could give the Serb an edge

GNS News Agency, Feb 1

Novak Djokovic takes on Jannik Sinner in the Australian Open semifinal on Friday, and starts as the distinct underdog. He was massively fortunate to reach the final four thanks to a fourth-round walkover and Lorenzo Musetti’s retirement from their quarterfinal with injury despite leading by two sets. Additionally, this is a matchup that really does not favour the Serb; he has lost each of the last five meetings against Sinner and failed to win a set in the last three. But there is one area where Djokovic’s prowess is still elite. And Sinner has shown a slight weakness. Across four completed matches that Djokovic has played at the Australian Open so far, he has won 58.5% of all the points that he has played while returning second serves. Meanwhile, through the five matches that he has played at this tournament, Sinner has won 55.4% of the points behind his won second serve.

Second serve factor The minuscule edge is simple reading: Djokovic wins a shade more than half the second serves he returns. Sinner wins a shade more than half the second serves he plays in. But the slight edge could have an outsized impact on their semifinal on Friday if the Italian doesn’t get his serves right on Friday.

Sinner’s serve is not a weakness; its reliability has often been a strength. But he has shown slight tentativeness in making first serves over the past few months; his



first-serve success rate stands at 65.4% in the tournament. That is average but nothing to write home about. And when he does continually miss it and has to throw in second serves, they are often safe and predictable enough for opponents to latch onto them and make him pay. It’s not a mere coincidence that in the only match in which he visibly struggled in Melbourne this week, due to heat and cramping and a spirited opponent in American Eliot Spizziri in a four-setter in the third round, he won just 43% of the points behind his second serve. In last year’s US Open final, which he lost in four sets to Carlos Alcaraz, he won only 48% of the points behind his second serve.

Age and a weakened physicality may have led to a slight drop off in other parts of his game, but Djokovic still remains a razor-sharp returner. He will be ready to take advantage of any lapses in that area of Sinner’s usually consistent and high-level game.

# Norway Chess: Divya Deshmukh to be youngest player to compete in women’s tournament

GNS News Agency, Feb 1

One of the brightest talents in women’s chess today, Divya Deshmukh arrives in Oslo following a breakthrough season in 2025 that has firmly established her among the world’s elite. (Photo: Norway Chess) One of the brightest talents in women’s chess today, Divya Deshmukh arrives in Oslo following a breakthrough season in 2025 that has firmly established her among the world’s elite. Thanks to a high-flying 2025, Divya Deshmukh has been invited to play at the super-elite Norway Chess women’s event in Oslo in May-June this year, thus becoming the youngest player to compete in the women’s tournament since its launch in 2024. So far the organisers of Norway Chess have announced that Bibisara Assaubayeva and last year’s winner Anna Muzychuk will be part of the six-player field. The remaining three players will be announced soon.

In 2025, Deshmukh won the FIDE Women’s World Cup, earned the Grandmaster title and qualified for the 2026 Women’s Candidates Tournament. At just 19 years old, she became the fourth Indian woman in history to achieve the GM title. In the open section, Magnus Carlsen, Praggnanandhaa R and Vincent Keymer are the three players announced by the organisers to be competing. Over the last decade, Norway Chess has emerged as one of the world’s premier chess tournaments, particularly since it’s a rare classical event that Magnus Carlsen plays each year. Over the past couple of years, many of India’s top players have featured in Norway Chess, with Praggnanandhaa competing in the 2024 edition and defeating Magnus Carlsen for the first time in classical chess, while world champion Gukesh D and Arjun Erigaisi were invited for the 2025 edition, where Gukesh defeated Carlsen for the first time in classical chess. Vaishali Rameshbabu was part of the 2024 and 2025 editions while Koneru Humpy played last year.

The event has a distinctive six-player double round-robin format. Norway Chess 2026 will take place from May 25 to 5 June at Deichman Bjervika in Oslo. “I’m incredibly



excited to be competing in Norway Chess. It’s my first time in the country, and I’m really looking forward to seeing what Norway is like. I can’t wait to experience this unique format and compete in such a prestigious tournament. To all the fans rooting for me, thank you for the love and encouragement, see you all there!” Deshmukh was quoted as saying by a statement released by Norway Chess. “India continues to produce outstanding young chess talent, and Divya is a great example of that momentum,” says Benedicte Westre Skog, COO of Norway Chess. “We’re delighted to welcome her to Norway Chess Women and look forward to engaging a growing Indian chess audience as she makes her debut in Oslo.” What is Norway Chess Women?

Launched in 2024, Norway Chess Women is the world’s first fully equal super tournament for women in chess, staged in parallel with the main Norway Chess event. The tournament features the same format, number of players, playing conditions and prize fund as the open event, setting a new benchmark for gender equality in professional chess. Now entering its third edition, Norway Chess Women has quickly established itself as one of the most prestigious platforms for elite women’s chess, bringing together the world’s strongest female players in a highly competitive and internationally visible setting.

tain Suryakumar Yadav). They have given me the bowling opportunity. So, when you bowl, you become a little smart. So, I am working on that as well and yes, I am trying to develop some more skills.” Dube said in a post-match briefing. “There is one thing when you work really hard behind in the nets, but there is something which you have to apply in the match. Yes, I have worked really hard, but there is something I have got an opportunity to bowl and bat, do everything in the match,” Dube said. “I feel that my experience is going in the right direction. For me also, upgrading is important as I can’t be the same player as I was earlier,” he said. “I always try to hit not just the spinners but the fast bowlers as well.

# From cleaning toilets at mental hospital to football coach: The unbreakable Giuseppe Sannino

GNS News Agency, Feb 1

Giuseppe Sannino wakes at dawn in Bellinzona, Switzerland, ready for what he calls “yet another miracle” in the country’s second division. But the 68-year-old coach has already lived several lifetimes worth of them. “I used to clean toilets in a mental hospital,” Sannino told Gazzetta dello Sport. “Now I’ve worked my way up to Serie A.” The journey between those two points is filled with sawdust floors and cockroaches, six promotions and nine resignations, a Neapolitan childhood in flip-flops and a father who once burned his soccer shoes as punishment.

Sannino doesn’t do things halfway. At Watford, he walked away from £550,000 after winning four of his first five matches because he couldn’t be anyone but himself. “I speak to your face,” he explained. “I resigned for dignity, leaving behind money.” Born in Naples and raised in Turin, young Sannino earned the nickname “cobbler” for wandering the streets in shorts and sandals. School was optional. Soccer was everything. His playing career peaked in Serie C before ending at 31, when he transitioned to coaching Vogherese’s youth team while secretly studying Arrigo Sacchi’s AC Milan. And working. Always working. “Wake up at 5 a.m., shift at dawn, seven hours there and then back on the field,” he recalled. For a decade he mopped psychiatric hospital floors with sawdust, battled cockroaches, and helped patients. “I experienced real suffering there. I remember a brilliant painter who sat there painting, and you wondered why she was in that place.” The Breakthrough

The turning point arrived with Südtirol’s Serie D championship in 1999-2000. He quit the hospital specifically to take that job. In 2008, an agent suggested he watch a Serie C2 match where both coaches were at risk. Como won 3-2. Sannino went to Varese. “The story of my heart,” he said of three years without a home defeat and attendance swelling



from 500 to 10,000. He invited players to curse each other out freely. It became the rallying cry for two promotions. In 2011, they barely missed Serie A. He left in tears.

Serie A and walking away Siena brought him to the top flight. At the Olimpico against Roma, watching Francesco Totti emerge from beneath the Curva Sud, Sannino whispered to his assistant: “How many will they score today?” It finished 1-1. “One of the most beautiful matches I ever coached,” he told the newspaper. At Palermo, he fought with Maurizio Zamparini before a 1-1 draw with Cagliari. “Who does he think he is?” Zamparini said, Sannino recounted. “The next day we drew and he fired me. But he was a generous man.” The Watford resignation remains his only regret. “I have to be myself. If I’d continued, I would have clashed with everyone,” he said. The team reached the Premier League that season. The real championship Italy holds too many clichés now, Sannino says. He won’t return. “At my age, I don’t want to get into that centrifuge,” he told Gazzetta. “I’m someone who started from nothing and made it on my own.”

# ‘Job not done yet’: Aryna Sabalenka reacts to reaching her 4th Australian Open final after beating Elina Svitolina in the semis

GNS News Agency, Feb 1

World No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka was cautious about not getting carried away after entering the 2026 Australian Open final with a 6-2 6-3 straight sets win over Elina Svitolina on Thursday. The 27-year-old Belarusian, who lost to Madison Keys in the 2025 final, admitted that she found it hard to believe that she had become the first player since Martina Hingis in 2002 to reach four consecutive Australian Open finals.

“I cannot believe that, it is an incredible achievement. But the job is not done yet. I am super happy with the win, she (Svitolina) is a great opponent and was playing incredible tennis throughout the week. I am super happy to get through this tough match.” “I have been watching her game and I felt like I had to step in and put as much pressure as I could today. I’m glad that the level was there today. I am happy to get this win in straight sets,” Sabalenka said after the win on Thursday. Ahead of the final, though, Sabalenka will look to unwind by watching the second season of Homeland on Netflix. “I am on season two of Homeland, the plan is for me and my boyfriend to finish the season! It has been forever since we started watching it and we are only on season two. First of all a little bit of a hit, [after that] it’s Netflix, maybe dinner with the team and I’m ready to go,” she



said. Sabalenka won the Australian Open in 2023 and 2024 but could not complete the three-peat in 2025, losing in three sets. She had thrown her racket, draped a white towel over her head, and briefly stepped off the court before returning for the post-match ceremony. “I just needed ... that time for myself to kind of switch off and forget and ... be respectful. There definitely was a bit of frustration because I was so close to achieve something crazy. When you’re out there, you’re fighting, but it seems like everything going not the way you really want to go,” she had said after the defeat last year.

# Mourinho admits tactical confusion before Trubin’s dramatic winner

GNS News Agency, Feb 1

José Mourinho revealed he was unaware Benfica needed a fourth goal against Real Madrid until the final moments, leading to an accidental tactical shift that produced one of the Champions League’s most dramatic finishes. The Benfica manager initially substituted two forwards for defensive reinforcements while protecting a 3-2 lead Tuesday night, only to learn his team required another goal to advance to the playoff round.

“When I substituted António Silva and Ivanovic, I had no idea if 3-2 was enough. I just wanted to close the door,” Mourinho said after the match. “When I was told we needed one more goal, honestly I was upset. I was thinking, ‘Why was I not told a few seconds before?’” Realizing the situation with Madrid down to nine men after two late red cards, Mourinho pushed center-back Nicolas Otamendi forward before sending goalkeeper Anatoliy Trubin into the attacking area for a stoppage-time free kick. Trubin headed home to complete a 4-2 victory and secure Benfica’s Champions League survival, sparking celebrations at Estádio da Luz.

Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola, whose team’s automatic qualification could have been threatened by a Madrid comeback, acknowledged his rival’s gamble succeeded. “We didn’t know Benfica needed a goal to qualify,” Guardiola said Wednesday. “When we saw the goalkeeper coming up we asked, ‘Why are you coming up?’ But it was



a good strategy from José, wasn’t it?” Mourinho defended his approach, saying he had challenged players to win regardless of qualification implications. That was the pride behind the attitude,” he said. “I would be happy the same, winning the way we did against Real Madrid and being out.” The keeper’s first career goal came after Raul Asensio and Rodrigo received red cards in stoppage time. Kylian Mbappé had twice given Madrid the lead before Andreas Schjelderup’s brace and Vangelis Pavlidis’ penalty put Benfica ahead. Both clubs advance to the playoff round after missing automatic qualification for the round of 16.

# WTA defends players amid privacy row over cameras at Australian Open: ‘Human and fair demand’

The WTA has moved swiftly to address growing concerns over player privacy at the Australian Open, issuing a strong response after several top players criticised the presence of cameras in off-court, player-only areas.

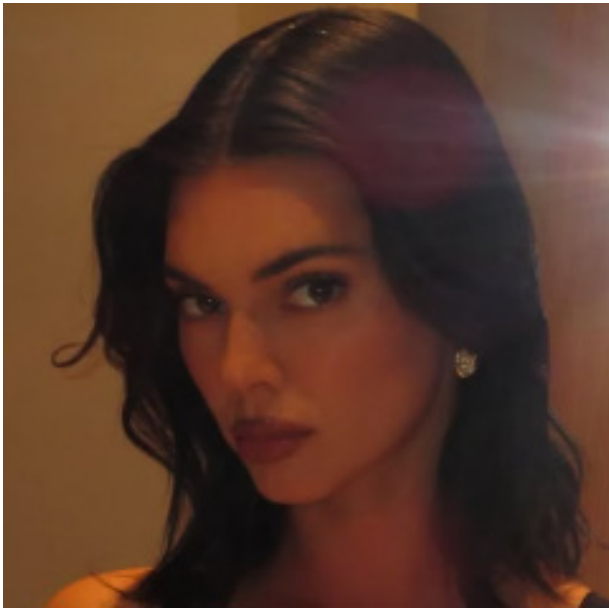
“The WTA supports its players and takes their concerns about privacy and cameras at the Australian Open very seriously,” the organisation said in a statement. “Players deserve spaces away from competition where they can rest in complete privacy.” The governing body emphasised that it has already taken steps at WTA events to reduce camera presence in non-competition areas and called on tournament organisers and broadcast partners to establish “clear and respectful boundaries.” The WTA added that it would engage in dialogue with players and tournaments to find an appropriate solution. The statement follows a wave of criticism sparked by Coco Gauff’s quarter-final loss to Elina Svitolina in Melbourne. Frustrated after her elimination, Gauff was filmed smashing a racket in the tunnels of Melbourne Park, footage that quickly circulated online. The incident echoed a similar moment involving Aryna Sabalenka during the 2023 US Open final and reignited debate about

how much access cameras should have beyond the court.

Iga Swiatek of Poland plays a forehand return to Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan during their quarterfinal match at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia, Wednesday, Jan. 28, 2026. (AP Photo) Iga Swiatek of Poland plays a forehand return to Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan during their quarterfinal match at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia, Wednesday, Jan. 28, 2026. (AP Photo) Several players spoke candidly about the issue in press conferences. Gauff expressed discomfort with the lack of privacy in locker room and tunnel areas, while Jessica Pegula described the situation as a “violation of privacy.” World No. 2 Iga Swiatek offered a stark comparison, saying players sometimes feel like “animals in the zoo”, constantly observed even in moments of vulnerability. WTA President Valerie Camillo reinforced the organisation’s stance, calling the players’ concerns “completely legitimate.” “This is a very human and fair demand,” Camillo said. “Athletes need spaces where they can rest without feeling constantly watched. Providing them this space is part of our responsibilities as a sport.”



## Kendall Jenner uses the ‘Kardashian Curse’ to make an ad film; says athletes who date her hit a rough patch: ‘I bet on it’



The Kardashian and Jenner family never fails to leave the spotlight due to their individual careers and their show Keeping Up with the Kardashians. The women of the family have long been associated with the ‘Kardashian Curse’, which basically means that any athlete who dates them will then go through a rough patch in their career. Kendall Jenner

has also been a part of this curse, but now she has decided to flip the script and use this narrative to her advantage. The supermodel paired up with Fanatics Sportsbook for their Super Bowl 60 campaign and released an ad film. The ad film opens with Kendall saying, “Haven’t you heard? The internet says I’m cursed. Any basketball player who dates me kind of hits a rough patch. While the world’s been talking about it, I have been betting on it. How else do you think I can afford all this? Modelling?”

In the ad, the whole house is filled with pictures of Kendall with her former partners, and their faces have been scratched off. She goes on to say that she got her pool, expensive car, and her private jet because of “boyfriend 1, 2, and 3,” respectively. She even joked about her first boyfriend missing the NBA playoffs and said, “I guess no one was getting a ring in this house,” making a play on the championship ring and an engagement ring. She ended the ad film by saying, “Kardashian curse? That’s not even my last name.” Kendall Jenner talked about her ad campaign on the Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon, where she revealed that she will be placing a bet on the Super Bowl. She said, “Essentially the internet has created this narrative, which is the idea that if an athlete dates me or one of my sisters, they are then cursed. Which is... please. But I got a commercial out of it. If I win, the winnings go to a charity of my choice, and if Fanatics win, the money goes to a charity of their choice.” While no one has been named in the ad-film, Kendall has dated 4 basketball players in the past including Jordan Clarkson, Blake Griffin, Ben Simmons, and Devin Booker.

## Imtiaz Ali announces film with AR Rahman after supporting singer during communal comment row, set to release on June 12

Imtiaz Ali announces film with AR Rahman after supporting singer during communal comment controversy. Imtiaz Ali announces film with AR Rahman after supporting singer during communal comment controversy. AR Rahman’s recent remark about getting less work in the Hindi film industry, because of ‘communal’ bias, led to a huge controversy. Despite issuing a clarification about his statement on social media, several celebs spoke against him. Amid the row, Imtiaz Ali came out in the music composer’s support, calling his comment ‘misconstructed’. And now, the filmmaker has announced his next film, featuring Rahman’s music. The movie, starring actor-singer Diljit Singh, is set to release in June, this year.

Described as a “charming story of love and longing,” the untitled film, which also features Naseeruddin Shah, Vedang Raina, and Sharvari, was supposed to hit the theatres in April earlier, but has been postponed now. Imtiaz Ali will be marking his second collaboration with Dosanjh, as the duo has worked together in the 2024 Netflix film Amar Singh Chamkila, also starring Parineeti Chopra. It received a lot of praise from the critics and audience. AR Rahman worked on the music of his highly acclaimed film.

In an Instagram post, the filmmaker announced the film in a collaboration post with the producer Applause Entertainment. “Imtiaz Ali’s next, a charming story of love and longing to release in cinemas on 12th June, 2026. Applause Entertainment Presents, A Window Seat Films Production. Starring: Diljit Dosanjh, Vedang Raina, Sharvari, Naseeruddin Shah,” the caption read. It further added, “Directed by Imtiaz Ali. Music by A.R. Rahman. Lyrics by Irshad Kamil. Produced by: Applause Entertainment, Window Seat Films, Mohit Choudhary.” “This film has a big heart. It has a large canvas yet is very personal. It is a story of a boy and a girl, but also a country,” Imtiaz said in a statement. Imtiaz Ali supports AR Rahman amid row. While talking to India Today in an interview earlier, Imtiaz said that he himself has not faced any communal bias in the film industry. “No, I don’t think there is a communal bias in the film industry. I’ve been here for a long time, and I’ve never seen it, and AR Rahman is one of the brightest figures that I’ve met in the film industry,” he said. The filmmaker added, “I do not actually believe



that he made all the comments that are being attributed to him, or maybe it’s been misconstrued. In fact, I know that he did not say exactly what is being perceived. Also, I don’t remember of a single incident where there was any communal bias or animosity.” AR Rahman has composed music for many Imtiaz Ali’s films, including Rockstar, Highway, Tamasha, and Amar Singh Chamkila.

What did AR Rahman say?

During an interview with BBC Asian Network, AR Rahman spoke about prejudice in Bollywood and said, “Maybe I never get to know of this, maybe it was concealed but I didn’t feel any of this. Maybe in the past eight years because a power shift has happened and people who are not creative have the power now. It might be a communal thing also... but it is not in my face.” He continued, “It comes to me as Chinese whispers that they booked you but the music company went ahead and hired their 5 composers. I say good, I have more time to chill with my family. I am not in search for work. I don’t want to go in search for work. I want work to come to me; my sincerity to earn work. Whatever I deserve, I get.” Along with Imtiaz Ali, several other celebs like Paresch Rawal, Varun Grover, Chinmayi Sripaada, and Rahul Dholakia supported Rahman during the controversy.

## Drunk Rajesh Khanna yelled at God after seven flops as Dimple Kapadia watched in fear: ‘Success hit me so hard....’



Rajesh Khanna was a superstar when he married a 16-year-old Dimple Kapadia in 1973. The star was 31, and Dimple was still in her teens and getting a grip on the world around her. She married one of the leading stars of the country even before her debut film released but since he forbade her from working in the movies, Dimple’s career was over even before it started. Nine years after their marriage, Dimple walked out of Rajesh’s house with her two daughters and restarted her career. By all accounts, their marriage was a mess. Rajesh’s volatile behaviour, diminishing stardom,

drinking and his many alliances outside of their marriage caused many problems and in a later interview, Dimple described this as a “traumatic” period in their life.

In a 1994 interview with Pritish Nandy, Dimple said that their personalities were quite different and she was too young to understand what was going on. “I think we were two very different kinds of people. And I was probably very young to understand what was happening to this man who was a superstar. I mean I have never been able to understand stars and their behaviour patterns at all because I am not one myself. It’s very difficult for me to... I couldn’t understand it. I just couldn’t understand it,” she said. When asked if this period was “traumatic”, Dimple simply said, “Yes it was.” Rajesh, in a 1990 chat with Movie magazine, shared that he once ended up at the terrace of his house at 3 am in a drunken state. “One after another, seven films had just flopped in a row. It was raining, pitch-dark and up there alone on my terrace, I lost control. I yelled out. ‘Parvardigar, hum garibon ka itna sakt intihan na le ki hum tere vajood ko inkar kar de (God, don’t test my patience to such an extent that I question your very existence).’ Of course, Dimple and my staff came running, thinking that I had gone insane. It was because success hit me so much that I couldn’t take the failure,” he said.

After Dimple and Rajesh separated, she started working in the movies again, and he, for a short while, had a relationship with his co-actor Tina Munim. Rajesh and Dimple had been separated for a while but did not get divorced. In 1994, when Dimple was asked if she planned on getting married again, she sounded hopeful. “Yes, I would. I don’t know how I’d be able to adjust because I am so used to being my own person, but sure, I would love to get married again,” she said.

## John Abraham ditches beard, surprises fans with clean-shaven look: ‘His face looks gaunt’



Actor-producer John Abraham has left fans doing a double-take with a surprising new look. Known for his rugged, beard-clad persona, the actor was recently spotted in a clean-shaven look that has gone viral across social media. John Abraham’s different look. Photos of John posted online show a noticeably leaner actor, sporting salt-and-pepper hair and a bright, confident smile as he poses with his team. Dressed casually in a black T-shirt, his freshly shaved face immediately grabbed attention. The internet wasted no

time reacting to John Abraham’s new look. While some saw it as a “complete transformation,” others speculated it could be tied to a movie shoot. “Ye kya ho gaya John ko? (What happened to him?),” one fan wrote. Another wrote, “Maybe I’m in Delulu but... IPS Rakesh Maria biopic ka shoot wrapped ?? Clean-shaven John spotted ?? Force 3 ke liye beard grow loading... calm before the Force ??????” “It seems like he’s lost weight, and with that weight loss, his face looks gaunt and his wrinkles more visible,” observed another. “Face-wise, he’s looking how he’s supposed to look at his age,” another fan commented. John Abraham’s striking transformation isn’t a coincidence. A well-known fitness enthusiast, the actor is famously disciplined with his diet and lifestyle. Celebrity fitness trainer, Vinod Channa, recently revealed that John hasn’t consumed sugar for years and follows a strict regimen without compromise. “John is an egalitarian. If I tell him to eat only four types of food, he will stick to that and won’t touch anything else,” Vinod told Hindi Rush. He shared an example highlighting John’s discipline: “Once, when Princess of Taiwan was visiting during a shoot, all the food on the table was finished. She told me John must have eaten everything. But I was 100% confident he hadn’t touched a single thing.” Vinod added, “John doesn’t even consume sugar. His body has adapted to this routine. Even if he eats something like brinjal or okra, which he hasn’t eaten in years, his stomach can’t digest it. That’s the level of strictness he follows.”

What’s next for John Abraham?

John Abraham was last seen in the high-octane thriller Tehran, directed by Arun Gopalan and also starring Manushi Chhillar. Recently, John also unveiled the teaser for the documentary Oslo: A Tale of Promise at the 56th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) in Goa, which he is producing. There are reports that he may star in Force 3 and a biopic on former Mumbai Police Commissioner Rakesh Maria, though no official announcements have been made yet.

## ‘Salman Khan was fuming’: Producer revisits night Vivek Oberoi accused star of 41 threat calls, what ‘ended’ his career

Film producer Shailendra Singh, known for backing critically acclaimed films such as Page 3, Traffic Signal, Phir Milenge and Firaq, recently spoke candidly about his long-standing friendship with Salman Khan, the Vivek Oberoi press conference controversy, and Salman’s relationship with Aishwarya Rai.

In a conversation with Siddharth Kannan, Shailendra revealed that his friendship with Salman Khan began long before fame entered the picture. “Salman and I go back to Cuffe Parade, where I used to live. He used to come there to meet his first girlfriend, Shaaheen Jaffery,” he said. “Salman’s problem is that he is all heart. He’s an awesome guy, but the company he keeps is strange,” Shailendra remarked. Reflecting on how success reshaped Salman over the years, Shailendra said, “Salman is a tiger, but now he’s tamed. He was born a tiger in the jungle, now he’s a tiger in a zoo. Success makes you cautious, even fearful. Then people surround you, constantly telling you that you’re the boss and everyone else is wrong.” At the height of Salman’s career, the two shared a close camaraderie. “For three years, Salman and I had a tradition. Every Monday night, we would party together in Bandra,” Shailendra recalled.

How Salman Khan came on board Phir Milenge. Shailendra also spoke about the casting struggles behind Phir Milenge, revealing that the film nearly fell apart before Salman stepped in. According to him, director Revathy had approached almost every major name in the industry. The role was that of an AIDS patient who dies at the end of the film. “Revathy went to around 30 actors in the industry. The last actor to say no was Uday Chopra,” he said. With no options left, Revathy reportedly told Shailendra she was ready to return the money and abandon the project until Salman Khan agreed to take it on, turning the film’s fate around. Salman Khan was “fuming” after Vivek Oberoi press conference

Shailendra also revisited the controversial Vivek Oberoi press conference, revealing how he advised Salman to handle the situation. He shared that he went to Salman’s house shortly after the incident and found him extremely angry. “He was fuming. Earlier, he would openly show his emotions. Now, he has a lot more control,” Shailendra said. Recalling his advice, he added, “My only reaction after Vivek’s press conference was to tell Salman that in life, we should act, not react. Whatever needs to be done can be done later. For now, let’s sit, have a drink, and let him do whatever he’s doing.” “I asked him to not act on impulse, wait and fight the battle silently. I think he did that. He made sure that Vivek doesn’t work in Bollywood anymore. I don’t know for sure, but that’s how it looks.” In 2003, Vivek Oberoi held a press conference claiming that Salman Khan had threatened him. At the time, he was in a relationship with Aishwarya Rai following her split from Salman. The allega-



tions shook the industry and soon, after which Vivek gradually found himself pushed to the margins. When asked about Salman’s relationship with Aishwarya Rai, Shailendra described the actor as someone who often found himself in difficult circumstances. “Salman is a great guy, but always at the wrong place at the wrong time. He has a strange way of finding disaster,” he said.

The fallout that ended his friendship with Salman. Shailendra finally opened up about the incident that led to the end of his friendship with Salman Khan. He had approached the actor for a film titled Captain, hoping to collaborate on a full-fledged commercial project. “Our friendship was very strong, so I went to him and said I want to make this film with you—a full commercial project,” he recalled.

The meeting, however, didn’t unfold the way he had expected. “When I went to meet him, he had called several people into the meeting. That was my last meeting with Salman. I felt deeply insulted,” Shailendra said. He explained that Salman wanted the discussion to happen openly, despite Shailendra requesting privacy. “He told me to say it in front of everyone. I wanted to talk privately, but he refused. I didn’t like that. He treated our relationship casually, and that was the last time I met him.”

## Ananya Panday shares spiritual moments from temple visit

Mumbai: Actress Ananya Panday was recently seen performing ‘Gau Seva’ and offering prayers during a recent temple visit. The actress shared a carousel set of pictures on social media that featured moments of devotion and compassion. In the first picture, Ananya is seen seated inside a temple, dressed in a yellow traditional outfit, holding a coconut in her hands as she is seen offering prayers.

In another picture, the actress is seen engaging in Gau Seva, where she is feeding grass and fodder to cows at a cowshed. In one of the close-up pictures, Ananya is seen with a tilak on her forehead. The carousel also includes images of a Shiva statue. In another picture, a dog can be seen resting calmly on a bench.

Sharing the pictures, Ananya Panday captioned the post, “Om Namaha Parvate Pataye Har Har Mahadev”, with an emoticon of a trishul. Earlier, too, Ananya had shared beautiful pictures from her spiritual trip. The actress was seen offering prayers to the divine.

On the work front, Ananya was last seen in the movie, Tu Meri Main Tera, Main Tera Tu Meri, opposite Kartik Aaryan. The film, which was released on December 25, 2025, opened to a very lukewarm response at the box



office. Talking more about Ananya, the actress made her Bollywood debut with Student of the Year 2 and later went on to star in movies like Kaali Peeli, Gehraiyaan and others, she received where her acting received great reviews. Her performance in her OTT movie CTRL was lauded by both fans and critics alike.