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Residents oppose Gandhi Sarovar Project over 'forcible' land acquisition

Hyderabad: Even as arrangements are being made for Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy to lay a foundation stone for the Gandhi Sarovar Project (GSP) at the Musi-Esa river confluence near Langar Houz later this month, local residents are opposing the move amid a row over land acquisition.

Land acquisition for the project has triggered a dispute with residents urging authorities to stop what they described as a forcible land acquisition drive.

Five Osmania varsity players in South Zone squad for Vizzy Trophy

Hyderabad: Five players from Osmania University have been selected to represent South Zone in the Vizzy Trophy cricket championship to be held in Goa from March 1 to 7.

The players are Paras Raj, Anvith Reddy, Dharmapuri Sathwik, S Vamshi Kumar and VM Danush. It may be mentioned here that Osmania University won the recent South Zone inter-university cricket championship.

PM calls for ethical, transparent AI, unveils India's MANAV vision

NEW DELHI, FEB 19

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday sought global standards for artificial intelligence and advocated strong ethical commitments as the cornerstone of the world's AI development and governance architecture.

Inaugurating the India AI Impact Summit at Bharat Mandapam, where he later addressed the Leaders' Plenary, PM Modi batted for democratisation of AI and unveiled India's MANAV vision for the segment.

In the presence of world leaders, including UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, French President Emmanuel Macron, Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, Swiss President Guy Parmelin and who's who of the AI world, Modi elaborated the human-centric acronym. "I present the MANAV vision for AI where M stands for moral and ethical systems, A for accountable governance, N for national sovereignty, A for accessible and inclusive; and V for valid and legitimate," said the PM, noting that India's MANAV vision for AI would become a vital link to the welfare of mankind.

PM Modi's speech on Thursday included real-time translation in the sign language using AI, reflecting India's commitment to inclusion. "We will always work to ensure that technology and public discourse are accessible to persons with disabilities," PM said. The speech was also dubbed live in 11 Indian languages: Assamese, Bangla, English, Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Odia, Punjabi, Tamil and Telugu.

Sri Lanka President Anura Kumara Disanayaka, Bhutan Prime



Minister Tshering Tobgay, Mauritius Prime Minister Navin Chandra Ramgoolam, Croatia Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic, Serbia President Aleksandar Vucic, Estonia President Alar Karis, Finland Prime Minister Petteri Orpo and Seychelles Vice-President Sebastian Pillay were among the leaders at the event. Among CEOs there were Google's Sundar Pichai, OpenAI's Sam Altman, Anthropic's Dario Amodei, Google DeepMind's Demis Hassabis, Adobe's Shantanu Narayen and Meta's chief scientist Alexandr Wang.

Without naming any country, Modi made a compelling case for transparency in AI. "Just as sunlight is the best disinfectant, transparency is the best security. Some nations and companies believe AI is a strategic asset, so it should be confidentially developed. But our thought is different. We believe AI will be beneficial to the world when it is shared, when codes are opened.... AI

should be developed as a global common good," the PM said, adding that India saw destiny, not fear, in AI revolution.

Modi also cautioned against deepfakes, saying fabricated AI content was destabilising open societies and called for watermarking of AI-generated content. He further urged AI companies to look beyond profits.

"AI companies carry a major responsibility to focus not only on profit, but also on purpose," the PM said, underscoring the need for strong ethical commitments. He said since the scope of unethical behaviour in AI was unlimited, "ethical norms for AI must also be unlimited".

As top minds debated the future of AI, PM Modi said authenticity labels should accompany digital content to enable people to know "what's fabricated and what's real".

"Watermarking and clear source standards in the AI world are imperatives. It is necessary that

trust is inbuilt in technology. We also have to be more alive for children's safety. Just as school syllabus is curated, AI space should also be child-safe and family-guided," the PM said.

His three suggestions for ethical AI were--AI training must respect data sovereignty; AI platforms must keep their safety rules clear and transparent; and AI must be guided by clear human values.

While stressing the importance of India, home to one-sixth of the humanity, hosting the largest AI Summit, Modi urged prioritisation of Global South when the future of AI was discussed.

Recalling how humanity had always turned disruptions into opportunities, the PM invoked Lord Buddha's "Right action comes from right understanding" teaching to stress the importance of creating a roadmap that ensured AI's positive impact through timely, well-intentioned, correct and human-centric decisions.

AICC reviews T'gana govt performance, discusses roadmap to strengthen party

New Delhi, Feb 19

The All India Congress Committee (AICC) leadership on Thursday held discussions with Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy and senior state leaders on an action plan to further strengthen the party organisation in Telangana and review governance initiatives.

The meeting, held in Delhi under the leadership of AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge, also reviewed the performance of the Congress government in Telangana over the past two years and assessed progress in implementing welfare and development programmes.

Senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, AICC General Secretary K.C. Venugopal, and AICC in-charge for Telangana Meenakshi Natrajan were present at the meeting, along with senior leaders from the state unit.

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy later stated on social media that there was an extensive discussion on the roadmap to strengthen the party in Telangana, the development initiatives undertaken by the state government over the past two years, the implementation of welfare schemes, and the outcomes of recent rural and urban local body elections.

According to the Chief Minister, Rahul Gandhi also enquired in detail about developments in the agriculture sector, including Telangana's leading position in paddy production at the national level, and reviewed the progress of the Young India Integrated Schools initiative. He also offered suggestions to further strengthen governance and organisational outreach.

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) President Mahesh Kumar Goud, Deputy Chief Minister

Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, and several state ministers attended the meeting held at the residence of Mallikarjun Kharge.

Deputy Chief Minister Vikramarka said that a roadmap was presented during the meeting to further strengthen the party organisation in Telangana following its performance in recent local body elections. He said Rahul Gandhi appreciated Telangana's leading position in paddy production and the progress made under the Young India Integrated Schools initiative.

He added that the government remains committed to its 'Praja Palana' (people's governance) vision and is focused on delivering development and welfare benefits to people across the state.

Minister Sridhar Babu said the meeting involved comprehensive discussions aimed at strengthening the party structure and aligning governance priorities with organisational objectives in Telangana. He said the deliberations focused on coordinated leadership, effective implementation of government programmes, and accelerating the state's development trajectory.

TPCC President Mahesh Kumar Goud said there were detailed discussions on governance, development initiatives, and measures to further strengthen the party organisation at various levels. He said key programmes were reviewed and strategies were formulated to ensure effective implementation at the grassroots level.

He added that the party remains committed to delivering good governance while strengthening its organisational structure with unity, coordination, and dedication.

Telangana High Court allows State, Centre three weeks to file counters on plea against GHMC split

The Telangana High Court heard a plea challenging the State government's decision to split GHMC into three municipal corporations, citing violations of census laws. The court granted time for counter affidavits and posted the matter for March 25

Hyderabad: A Division Bench of the Telangana High Court comprising Chief Justice Aparesh Kumar Singh and Justice GM Mohiuddin on Thursday heard a writ petition filed by Daram Guruva Reddy challenging the State government's decision to split the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) into three separate municipal corporations — GHMC, Malkajgiri Municipal Corporation and Cyberabad Municipal Corporation.

The petitioner questioned GO Ms No. 55 dated February 11, contending that the notification restructuring the municipal corporation was issued in violation of the provisions of the Census Act, 1948 and the Census Rules, 1990, particularly in view of the ongoing Census-2027 exercise. Counsel for the petitioner referred to notifications issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs fixing March 1, 2027 as the reference date for Census-2027 and prescribing house-listing operations between April 1, 2026 and September 30, 2026, and argued that jurisdictional changes could not be undertaken during the census process.

Additional Solicitor General appearing for the Union of India and Advocate General representing the State sought time to obtain instructions and file counter affidavits. Granting the request, the Bench allowed three weeks' time to the respondents to file counters and one week thereafter for the petitioner to file a reply affidavit. The matter has been posted for further hearing on March 25.



Priyanka attacks Assam Govt, releases 20-point chargesheet

Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Thursday unveiled a 20-point chargesheet against the BJP-led Assam Government, alleging corruption, failure to honour electoral promises and the creation of fear among minorities as the state heads towards Assembly elections.

The document was released at a public programme in Guwahati on the first day of her two-day visit to Assam. The Congress said that the chargesheet enumerates key assurances made by the ruling party over the past decade which, it claimed, remain unfulfilled.

Among the principal issues raised were the pending grant of Scheduled Tribe status to six indigenous communities and the promise to raise the daily wage of tea garden workers to Rs 351. The party said these commitments were repeatedly highlighted during previous election campaigns but were not implemented.

Vadra, who heads the Congress screening committee for the Assam polls, alleged that the government's tenure had been marked by widespread corruption. She claimed that Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, certain ministers and members of their families had accumulated wealth through improper means. The chargesheet also accuses the administration of misusing official machinery and neglecting minorities and marginalised communities.

Earlier in the day, Vadra, accompanied by Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D. K. Shivakumar and Assam Congress president Gaurav Gogoi, visited the Kamakhya Temple and offered prayers.

Speaking to reporters later, she downplayed the recent defection of former Assam Pradesh Congress Com-

mittee chief Bhupen Bora to the BJP. She said that party-switching before elections was not unusual and occurred in every political cycle. She maintained that the Congress organisation in Assam remained united and prepared to contest the elections collectively.



On candidate selection, Vadra said the screening committee had been travelling across districts to gather feedback from local leaders and party workers. Over the next two days, she said that she would consult as many stakeholders as possible before finalising nominations to ensure candidates were chosen after thorough consultation and preparation. Asked about possible alliances for the Assembly elections, she said developments would become clear in due course.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Big challenges for India's Quantum leap

For a nation like India, driven by an ambition to become a global technology leader, quantum computing is not just an opportunity but a necessity. With a history of missed opportunities in capitalising on early trends in technology, India cannot afford to repeat past mistakes. At a time when India has attracted global attention by hosting the AI Impact Summit in New Delhi, an honest assessment is needed to understand where the country stands on cutting-edge frontiers of technology. Lofty announcements and grand government schemes with fancy acronyms will not make any difference on the ground unless tangible measures are taken to build an appropriate ecosystem. Though belated, India had launched the Rs 6,000 crore National Quantum Mission (NQM) in 2023, with the development of home-grown quantum computers as one of its major objectives. Despite acknowledging the power of quantum computers in shaping the course of the 21st-century technology world, the government has not followed it up with adequate focus on R&D spending. Between 2015 and 2020, India filed 339 quantum patents, compared with 23,335 by China and 8,935 by the United States. R&D labs in India import around 90% of the critical subsystems required for quantum computing. This can be particularly challenging at a time when global export controls on quantum components are tightening. India must build its first large-scale quantum computer and increase investments in commercial and industrial applications.

The focus over the next couple of years must be on strengthening the ecosystem to transition from research to commercial applications, particularly in logistics and healthcare. While India's budget for the National Quantum Mission, spanning 43 institutions across 17 States, is around \$670 million over eight years, China's estimated investment is \$15 billion, while Japan has committed \$7.4 billion in 2025 alone. Germany, the UK, France and the Netherlands are also far ahead of India in terms of investments in the field. Another major challenge for India is the underutilisation of human capital. While the country churns out over 91,000 graduates annually in fields relevant to quantum technology, an overwhelming majority of them have no jobs, either in academia or industry. Quantum technologies are still in their formative stages globally, offering India a rare opportunity to shape the trajectory of a foundational technology. Quantum computing harnesses the principles of quantum mechanics to deliver a huge leap forward in computation to solve complex problems, with applications in wide-ranging areas like health, education, data security, defence and manufacturing. It also has the potential to enhance the pace of developments in AI and Machine Learning.

Dubai's tourism industry achieves third successive record-breaking year with 19.59 million international visitors in 2025, up 5% YoY

Hyderabad

Strategic partnerships, global marketing campaigns and major events contributed to Dubai welcoming 19.59 million international overnight visitors in 2025, marking a 5% increase compared to 18.72 million arrivals in 2024, according to data published by the Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism (DET), and the third successive year of record-setting figures. The city ended the year by welcoming more than 2 million visitors in a single calendar month for the first time in December, building strong momentum heading into 2026.

DET's diversified year-round market strategy, delivered in collaboration with domestic stakeholders and more than 3,000 international partners, showcased Dubai to new and returning visitors from both traditional and emerging markets. This led to an increase in arrivals from key regions, while also attracting new permanent residents, investors and businesses. In December, the city welcomed 2.04 million international overnight visitors, marking +6% year-on-year growth. The previous record month for the city was January 2025, with 1.94 million visitors.



His Excellency Am Kazim, CEO of the Dubai Corporation for Tourism and Commerce Marketing (Visit Dubai), part of DET, said: "Guided by visionary leadership, Dubai's record international visitation is a testament to global confidence

in the destination and the effectiveness of policies aligned with the Dubai Economic Agenda, D33, as well as the collective strength of partnerships across sectors and communities that defines our city. As we look forward, our priorities will be to continue enhancing Dubai's global competitiveness through digital innovation and providing exceptional guest experiences at every touchpoint, with powerful momentum after surpassing the 2 million figure for a single month in December for the first time. In partnership with stakeholders across the public and sectors, we remain dedicated to sustained investment in capacity, infrastructure development, and initiatives to make Dubai the world's best city to visit, live and work in."

According to DET's full year data, the GCC and MENA proximity markets had a combined 26% share of overall visitors to Dubai in 2025, with 2.99 million (15%) and 2.17 million (11%) arrivals respectively. Western Europe was again the largest source market to Dubai, with 4.10 million visitors (21%), up from 3.74 million in 2024, followed by CIS and Eastern Europe (2.89 million; 15%), South Asia (2.89 million; 15%), North East and South East Asia (1.85 million; 9%), the Americas (1.40 million; 7%), Africa (897,000; 5%) and Australasia (401,000; 2%).

Global EDM Powerhouse KSHMR Set to Ignite India with Sunburn Holi Weekend 2026

Hyderabad This March, the highly-anticipated Sunburn Holi Weekend brings globally celebrated DJ and producer KSHMR to India for a high-energy, multi-city tour. Known for his explosive drops, cinematic sound and fusion of Indian influences with global EDM, he shares a strong connection with fans across the country.

With immersive production, stunning visuals and a set packed with fan-favourite anthems, KSHMR promises a larger-than-life experience. Expect massive build-ups, powerful drops and an electrifying atmosphere that perfectly matches the spirit of Holi.

WHEN & WHERE TO CATCH KSHMR LIVE

Mumbai: Tuesday, March 3rd, 2026 (with DJ Chetas)

Chennai: Wednesday, March 4th, 2026

Bengaluru: Friday, March 6th, 2026

Bhubaneswar: Saturday, March 7th, 2026

Hyderabad: Sunday, March 8th, 2026

Volkswagen Tayron R-Line, the versatile luxury SUV from Volkswagen launched at an exciting introductory price of INR 46.99* Lakh

Hyderabad Volkswagen India has announced the introductory price of Tayron R-Line, a luxury SUV targeted at the discerning Indian consumer and all their lifestyle goals, launched at INR 46 99 000 Lakh (ex-showroom). Built for customers who seek a product that complements their aspirations, the Tayron R-Line blends progressive design, dynamic performance, intuitive technology and exceptional comfort, delivering much to their expectations and ambitions.

With its bold R-Line styling cues and refined interiors, the Tayron R-Line reflects the brand's core design DNA, while delivering everyday usability and premium comfort. The versatile SUV stands for precision engineering, exceptional performance and understated luxury, core pillars that have long defined the Volkswagen brand.

Commenting on the launch, Mr. Nitin Kohli, Brand Director, Volkswagen Passenger Cars India, said, "The Tayron R-Line embodies our vision of aspirational premium cars that add meaningful value to customer lives. It is designed for those who value performance as much as luxury, and who seek a vehicle that reflects their progressive mindset. With the Tayron R-Line, we are reinforcing our commitment to bringing globally admired, performance-led products that elevate the brand's presence in India."

Annexure I

Introductory, ex-showroom Price

Tayron R-Line INR 46 99 000

Annexure II

Born Niles Hollowell-Dhar, KSHMR is one of the most recognised names in global electronic music. A consistent presence in DJ Mag's Top 100 DJs list, he has performed at some of the world's biggest festivals including Tomorrowland, Ultra and EDC.

His signature sound blends orchestral storytelling with high-impact electronic production, creating tracks that are both emotionally powerful and festival-ready. Over the years, he has built a loyal global fanbase, with India holding a particularly special place in his musical journey.

KSHMR's ability to fuse cultural melodies with massive drops has made him a standout performer on international stages. Each of his live sets is crafted to take audiences on a journey, combining precision production with raw crowd energy.

Sunburn Holi Weekend 2026 is set to be more than just a concert tour, it's a celebration of music, colour and community. Gather your crew and get ready to experience KSHMR live in your city.



Dimensions

L x W x H 4792 mm x 1866 mm x 1665 mm

Wheelbase 2789 mm

With its compelling price positioning and unmistakable R-Line character, the Tayron R-Line strengthens the brand's journey towards building a sharper, more aspirational portfolio in India, one that balances performance, luxury and global design sensibilities for the modern Indian consumer. Available in seven distinctive colour options (Dolphin Grey Metallic, Oyster Silver Metallic, Ultraviolet Metallic, Cipressino-Green Metallic, Nightshade Blue Metallic, Grenadilla Black Metallic and Oryx White Mother-of-Pearl Effect) the Tayron R-Line offers customers a refined palette to match their individual style.

PNB MetLife Aims to Make Indians 'Always Ready for Life' with New Brand Positioning Raising life insurance awareness and encouraging financial readiness

Hyderabad:

PNB MetLife India Insurance Company Limited (PNB MetLife), one of India's leading life insurers, has launched its new brand positioning, 'Always Ready for Life'. The campaign, which features international cricket



superstar Smriti Mandhana, aims to drive conversations around the need for insurance and financial planning at every stage in life. India continues to face a 91% life protection gap, which means for every 100 required to financially secure families, only 9 is covered. At the same time, the elderly population (60 years and above), is projected to surge to around 230 million by 2036, making up about 15% of the total population. 'Always Ready for Life' shares PNB MetLife's holistic approach to life and financial security and encourages Indians to build clarity and confidence around their financial future. It focuses on key life stages - retirement planning, child education,

and long term savings for varied financial goals.

Sourabh Lohtia, Chief Marketing & Communications Officer, PNB MetLife said, "There is a unique sense of freedom that comes when careful financial preparation meets present-day opportunities. With this campaign, we want to show that being prepared helps people focus on what truly matters. Financial growth and security are achievable - and PNB MetLife wants to support Indians by helping to simplify financial planning, turning every future milestone into something to look forward to." PNB MetLife's partnership with Smriti Mandhana on this campaign helps spread the message to millennials and younger age groups. Speaking on the campaign, PNB MetLife's brand ambassador Smriti Mandhana said, "As a cricketer, we study the pitch, understand opposition, and assess the situation before every match. Life works similarly; staying prepared for every goal or situation is essential, and financial readiness plays a key role in that. Life insurance helps build that strong foundation at every life stage - whether we are achieving big dreams, starting a family, buying a home, or planning for a comfortable retirement."

'Always Ready for Life' will appear on television, YouTube, Meta platforms, Over-The-Top (OTT), Google Display, as well as high-visibility outdoor locations.

SMFG India Credit Champions "Sarvottam Seva" Through Pashu Vikas Day; Impacts Over 1.55 Lakh Rural Lives

Hyderabad: SMFG India Credit, one of India's leading NBFs, successfully concluded the 8th edition of Pashu Vikas Day (PVD), its flagship livestock welfare and rural livelihood initiative, on February 14, 2026. Anchored around the theme 'Sarvottam Seva: Pashu, Parivar aur Pragati', the initiative reinforced the organisation's commitment to holistic rural development by strengthening livestock health, family wellbeing, and sustainable progress.

Launched in 2014, Pashu Vikas Day addresses the critical healthcare needs of cattle owners by providing access to free veterinary services and expert guidance. Over the years, the initiative has evolved into one of the largest one-day cattle welfare programmes in the country.

SMFG India Credit positively impacted over 1.55 lakh lives, including the treatment of approximately 1.4 lakh cattle and healthcare support for over 14,000 people, benefitting more than 30,000 households. The initiative was conducted in 16 states, across 510 SMFG Gramshakti branches, underscoring the company's deep reach into rural India.

In Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, Pashu Vikas Day was held across 47 locations and provided essential health care services to over 8,350 cattle, benefitting more than 2,300 households. Each camp offered services like free cattle check-ups by local veterinary doctors, distribution of free medicine and vaccinations for cattle, and advice on increasing the yield for milch animals.

Commenting on the successful conclusion of the initiative, Mr. Ravi Narayanan, Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer, SMFG India Credit, said, "Sarvottam Seva' is about delivering service at its highest standard—where empathy meets impact and intention translates into lasting change. In rural India, the health of livestock,



the security of families, and economic progress are deeply interconnected. Pashu Vikas Day embodies our commitment to nurturing this ecosystem by caring for cattle, strengthening livelihoods, and supporting community well-being. Through this initiative, we aim to create sustainable outcomes that empower farming households and drive inclusive growth from the grassroots level."

Toshiba Announces Winners of GridDB Cloud IoT Hackathon

Hyderabad Toshiba Digital Solutions Corporation, in collaboration with Toshiba Software India Private Limited, successfully concluded the GridDB Cloud IoT Hackathon, an innovation initiative aimed at enabling students, developers, and startup companies to build real-time IoT applications using Toshiba's GridDB® Cloud Database Service for Big Data and IoT.

The hackathon received strong participation from October 29 to December 14 2025, with over 250 applications from across India, addressing use cases including Healthcare, Finance, IoT, and Knowledge Management, demonstrating the versatility of GridDB® database service.

After an intensive evaluation process, five finalist teams advanced to the in person final rounds held in Bengaluru from January 31 to February 1, 2026. During the onsite sessions, they received direct technical support and mentorship from the GridDB® technical team, helping them further refine their proof of concept (PoC) solutions. Following the final PoC presentations to a panel of judges, the results were announced as follows and all



the finalists shared a total cash prize of USD 5,000.

Commenting on the initiative, *Mr. Hiroshi Tsukino, Director and Vice President of Toshiba Digital Solutions Corporation* said, "Toshiba is committed to making a better world through the power of data by utilizing various kinds of data generated by businesses related to social infrastructure and turning them into platforms.

Addressing the participants and judges, *Mr. Ramdas Baliga, Managing Director, Toshiba Software India Private Limited* added, "Toshiba Software India's key strategic direction is to evolve into a digitally agile Centre of Excellence, embedding digital thinking and speed across everything we do, and translating advanced technologies into real-world IoT solutions.

PhonePe Rolls Out UPI Payments with Biometric Authentication

Hyderabad PhonePe today announced the launch of biometric authentication for UPI payments, enabling a faster and more seamless 'one-touch' payment experience for its users. This new feature allows users to authorize transactions using their smartphone's native security, such as fingerprint or facial recognition, eliminating the need to manually enter a UPI PIN for transactions. With this launch, PhonePe becomes one of the first major payments players to bring this capability to market at scale.

This feature is designed to elevate both the security and reliability of digital payments by addressing common friction points in the user's payment journey. By leveraging device-level biometric verification, this feature ensures that users can transact securely even in crowded public spaces, effectively eliminating the risk of 'shoulder-surfing' or PIN exposure. Beyond security, the integration significantly improves transaction success rates by reducing failures often caused by forgotten or incorrectly entered UPI PINs. To ensure a consistent experience, the feature includes a seamless fallback mechanism that allows users to instantly switch back to using their standard UPI PIN if biometric authentication is hindered by factors like poor lighting or sensor issues. In line with current regulatory guidelines, this 'one-touch' approach leverages device-level biometric verification as a secure two-factor authentication layer for UPI transactions up to ₹5,000. Transactions exceeding this limit will continue to require UPI PIN authentication to ensure maximum security. Consumers will be able to utilize biometric authentication across every day use cases such as peer to peer money transfers, scanning a QR to make payments in-store or online payments and even to check their bank balance. Speaking on the launch, Deep Agrawal, Head of Payments at PhonePe, said, "At PhonePe, our goal has always been to make digital payments as intuitive and accessible as possible for every Indian. By integrating biometric authentication, we are taking a significant step toward a truly frictionless payment experience. This feature not only saves time but adds a hardware-grade layer of security that protects users in their everyday environments. We believe that by eliminating common friction points, we are making digital payments more seamless and secure for everyone."

Adobe Introduces Photoshop, Acrobat and Firefly AI Student Offering for Free in India to Accelerate Vibrant Creator Economy

Hyderabad At the India AI Impact Summit, Adobe (Nasdaq: ADBE) — the global technology leader unleashing



ing creativity, productivity and personalized customer experiences—today announced a strategic investment to accelerate AI-driven creativity and productivity for India's next generation of talent. AI is changing how people create content, share ideas, build businesses and bring their passions to life. Adobe is enabling the next generation to be ready for AI-first careers by putting its industry-leading applications such as Firefly, Photoshop and Acrobat, into the hands of students for free, via accredited higher education institutions across India. The toolkit provides access to Adobe's creativity and productivity software along with curriculum, training and credentials that will enable students to stand out when they graduate.

Adobe's announcement reinforces the Indian Government's Create in India vision and complements the Union Budget 2026 which focused on creating two million jobs in the field of Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming and Comics (AVGC) by 2030. In partnership with the Government, Adobe will make its AI first offer, along with our industry endorsed curriculum, free for the 15,000 schools and 500 colleges that will have Content Creator

Labs.

"Adobe is expanding the opportunity for creativity for millions of students across India, empowering them with AI skills, further accelerating Prime Minister Modi's vision," said Shantanu Narayen, Chair and CEO, Adobe. "I look forward to seeing what the students of India create with Adobe's industry-leading tools, and in doing so accelerating Viksit Bharat."

As students learn AI skills, they will benefit from Adobe's unique approach to generative AI and cutting-edge innovation — including access to AI-generated content that is safe and ready for commercial use, as well as choice and flexibility to work with other generative AI models directly in the applications.

Adobe Firefly—the all-in-one creative AI studio that brings together the world's best creative AI models in one place—seamlessly integrates the top industry models from partners like Google, OpenAI, Runway and more, so students have choice and flexibility with models and tools to generate in their own unique style. With Acrobat Pro, students can boost their productivity and collaboration, easily editing text and images to get their best work done.

Investing in India's AI and Creativity Ecosystem

Today's announcements will enable higher education institutions across India to offer students the AI-powered tools, as well as skills needed for future careers. As an extension of Adobe Digital Academy—the company's global skilling and career pathway program—Adobe India has partnered with NASSCOM FutureSkills Prime, a digital skilling initiative in collaboration with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), to offer free, industry-relevant courses and certificates to learners across India.

Municipal Chairperson Vani Srinivas Felicitated

"Jagtlial Correspondent Ennam Kishan Reddy, February 19, (Indian Chronicle): "Samindia Vani Srinivas, who was elected as the Municipal Chairperson of Jagtlial, was felicitated by the BC Association on Thursday."Speaking on the occasion, Musipatla Laxminarayan, State Secretary of BC Welfare Association, urged the Chairperson to provide employment opportunities to artisans and ensure justice for BCs. The Chairperson, Vani, assured that she would support artisans and focus on self-employment programs."The event was attended by Dr. Puppala Srinivas, Raparthi Ravi, Janardhan Reddy, Bandi Satyam, Beti Satyanarayana, Dyavana Pelli Shankar, Kartik, and others.



Deputy Sarpanch Lobade Lahu Kumar Conducts Inspection at MPUPS School in Khamana

Directs Officials to Provide Quality Meals as Per Government Menu



"Indian Chronicle" kumram bheem Asifabad District Reporte,Jade Srinivas,February,18."Deputy Sarpanch Lobade Lahu Kumar paid a surprise visit to the MPUPS (Mandal Parishad Upper Primary School) in Khamana village of Wankidi Mandal.During the visit, he reviewed the overall functioning of the school, student attendance, and the implementation of the Mid-Day Meal Scheme.He interacted with students and teachers to understand the academic progress, teaching standards, and availability of textbooks and basic facilities. The Deputy Sarpanch emphasized the importance of maintaining high attendance and ensuring a disciplined learning environment within the school premises."Special attention was given to the Mid-Day Meal Scheme. Lobade Lahu Kumar instructed the school authorities to strictly follow the government-prescribed menu and ensure that students receive nutritious, hygienic, and quality food every

day.He stressed that children's health and academic performance largely depend on proper nutrition, and there should be no compromise in food quality or cleanliness."During the inspection,he examined the kitchen area,food storage facilities, drinking water arrangements, and cleanliness of utensils. He directed the cooking staff to maintain hygiene standards and avoid the use of expired or substandard food materials.The Deputy Sarpanch also reviewed sanitation facilities, drinking water availability, and overall cleanliness of the school campus. He urged the staff to take necessary steps to provide a safe and healthy environment for students."He further appealed to parents and villagers to actively support the development of the school and ensure that government welfare schemes are implemented effectively for the better future of children.School authorities assured full cooperation and committed to maintaining quality standards in both education and nutrition services.

New Leadership Takes Charge in Kagaznagar Municipality

"Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), February 19,"Shaheen Sultana formally assumed charge as the Municipal Chairperson of Kagaznagar on Thursday. The event was attended by MLC Dande Vittal, who extended his congratulations to the newly appointed Chairperson and the governing body."Speaking on the occasion, MLC Dande Vittal stated that politics ends with elections and emphasized that the newly elected leadership should now focus entirely on the development of the town. He urged the municipal authorities to prioritize and complete urgent works across all 30 wards under the Kagaznagar Municipal limits to ensure better civic amenities for the public."He further affirmed that the State Government remains committed to urban development.



VTGCET/2026 – Correction Notice Regarding Exam Centre Address

Centre Code: 260412 – Official Clarification



"Indian Chronicle" kumram bheem Asifabad District Reporte,Jade Srinivas,February,18."Asifabad An error has been identified in the address printed on the hall tickets for the VTGCET/2026 (Telangana Gurukula Entrance Test)."For Centre Code: 260412, the hall ticket incorrectly mentioned the centre as: MJPTBCWR School / Jr College, GANNARAM, Godavelly Road, Asifabad" The inclusion of the village name "GANNARAM" is incorrect.To avoid confusion among students and parents appearing for the entrance examination,district authorities have issued an official clarification.Corrected and Official Address:Centre Code: 260412" MJPTBCWREIS Junior College (Boys), Asifabad"Godavelly Road,"Opposite: Telangana Model School & Junior College, Asifabad" Asifabad" This clarification was issued by the District Co-ordination Officer of Telangana Social Welfare Residential Educational Institutions Society, Kumuram Bheem District, Mrs. A. Sharada.Parents and students are advised to carefully note the corrected address and ensure timely reporting to the examination centre for VTGCET/2026..."Kindly share this information to prevent any inconvenience to candidates.

Chhatrapati Shivaji Felicitated

"Jagtlial Correspondent Ennam Kishan Reddy, February 19, (Indian Chronicle): "On the occasion of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Jayanti, Shiv Sena Youth organized a program in Thimmapur, Jagtlial Mandal, where they paid floral tributes to the statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji."The program was attended by Bjp Konda Laxman, BJP leader of the constituency, Dr. Akuthota Srinivas Reddy, Dr. Ellala Srinivas Reddy, Hinduvahini Vemula Santosh, Sarpanch, ward members, and villagers.



Korutla Municipality will be developed in all aspects

Municipal Chairperson Thirumala Vasantha-Gangadhar Goud

"Jagtlial Correspondent Ennam Kishan Reddy, February 19, (Indian Chronicle): "Korutla Municipal Chairperson Thirumala Vasantha-Gangadhar Goud stated that the Korutla Municipality will be developed in all aspects."On Thursday, the Chairperson and Vice-Chairman were felicitated at a function organized by Balija Padma, former Councillor of 16th Ward, and Balija Raja Reddy, Congress Party Incharge of 16th Ward."Speaking on the occasion, Vasantha-Gangadhar Goud said that the Municipality will be developed with the support of Korutla Constituency Congress Party Incharge Juvvadi Narsing Rao and State Congress leader Juvvadi Krishnar Rao."The Chairperson assured that the problems in each ward will be addressed and funds will be allocated for development. She also stated that the government will ensure that every eligible person receives the benefits of the state's welfare schemes."The function was attended by Vice-Chairman Sahid, Councillor Morthad Laxminarayan, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Sangh State leader Uyyala Narasayya, former Councillor Chityala Laxman, Mais Anand, Yatham Arun, Dr. Abdullah, Guruvantula Sattayya, Uyyala Shekhar, Kandle Michael, Balija Shivaprasad, Nazimuddin, Ayoub, Raju Veer, Thirupathi, Ravi, Shekhar, Mais Rajesh, Balija Santhosh Kumar, Uyyala Madhesh, Mais Naveen, Narendar, Ward Officer Jagadishwar, RP Pavani, Anganwadi Teacher Prabha, Pasul Devaratna, Gudisel Tukamma, Pasul Shanti, Uyyala Bharathi, Kandle Rajamani, Chityala Gangu, Gudisel Madhavi, and ward residents.



Grand Celebration Of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Jayanti At Jetwan Buddha Vihar



"Indian Chronicle" kumram bheem Asifabad District Reporte,Jade Srinivas,February,19."The 396th birth anniversary of the great Maratha warrior and founder of Hindavi Swarajya, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, was celebrated with great enthusiasm and devotion on Thursday at Jetwan Buddha Vihar in Vankidi mandal headquarters."The program began with Buddhist prayers, followed by floral tributes to the portrait of Shivaji Maharaj.

and paid their respects."Speaking on the occasion, Wankidi Sarpanch Chunarkar Satish said that Shivaji Maharaj was not just a king but a courageous and visionary ruler who dedicated his life to the welfare of the people. Ashok Mahulkar, District President of Bharatiya Bauddha Mahasabha, emphasized the need for the younger generation to understand the true history of Shivaji Maharaj and carry forward his ideals. Samata Sainik Dal District President Durgam Sandeep highlighted that Shivaji Maharaj ensured justice and equal respect for all sections of society during his rule."Ambedkar Association President Durgam Durgaji, General Secretary Vijay, Are community leaders Tumde Maharaj and Patel Manohar, ward members Tursu Bai, Namdev, Jabure Ganesh, along with members of Ambedkar Association, Samata Sainik Dal, women, and youth actively took part in the celebrations."The event concluded with the distribution of sweets among the attendees. The celebration stood as a symbol of unity, social harmony, and collective respect for the legacy of Shivaji Maharaj.

Leaders of the Bharatiya Bauddha Mahasabha, Ambedkar Association members, Are community elders, women, and local residents participated in large numbers

Osmania University Hosts AIU Central Zone Vice Chancellors' Meet; Focuses on Building AI and Quantum-Enabled Higher Education



Indian Chronicle OU February 19: The iconic Tagore Auditorium at Osmania University became the epicenter of India's higher education transformation today as it hosted the Inaugural Session of the Central Zone Vice Chancellors' Meet 2025-26. Organized in collaboration with the Association of Indian Universities (AIU), the two-day conclave brings together over 100 Vice Chancellors from Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Telangana, and Uttar Pradesh to deliberate on the theme: "Creating AI- and Quantum-Enabled Higher

ers to evolve from knowledge transmitters to "intelligence architects," ensuring India creates—rather than just consumes—future technologies. "Alignment with SDGs? SDG 4 (Quality Education): Integrating AI/Quantum literacy across all disciplines to ensure future-ready, inclusive learning. "SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, & Infrastructure): Establishing universities as hubs for indigenous research and technological clusters. "SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals): Leveraging the AIU network to foster collective digital governance and cross-institutional collaboration. "Prof. V. Balakishtha Reddy, Chairman, TGCHE, highlighted the state's strategic vision: "The digital leap from traditional classrooms to AI and Quantum-enabled ecosystems is no longer optional. At TGCHE, our mission is to ensure that Telangana's higher education framework remains at the forefront of this technological revolution, bridging the gap between academic theory and global industrial requirements. "Prof. Vinay Kumar Pathak, President of AIU, spoke on the collective strength of Indian universities: "The AIU serves as a collective wisdom platform. By focusing on AI-driven research today, we are ensuring that the leaders of tomorrow's India are equipped with the computational intelligence required to lead on a global stage. "Dr. (Mrs.) Pankaj Mittal, Secretary General of AIU, noted the collaborative nature of the meet: "Integrating AI into pedagogy and governance is a monumental task. This conference is designed to create a roadmap for HEIs to navigate global regulatory frameworks while maintaining the highest standards of ethics in AI. "A Roadmap for Future-Ready Universities" The conference serves as a critical run-up to the National Conference of Vice Chancellors, focusing on four key pillars: "1. Curriculum & Pedagogy: Integrating AI and Quantum technologies into mainstream learning. "2. Governance: Leveraging AI for smarter, more transparent university administration. "3. Indigenous Research: Promoting "Made in India" AI products and research. "4. Ethics & Regulation: Establishing a global framework for responsible technology use. "The session also witnessed the release of a Special Issue of University News, a flagship AIU publication documenting contemporary trends in higher education. The inaugural program concluded with a Vote of Thanks by Prof. Gaddam Naresh Reddy, Registrar of Osmania University, who expressed gratitude to the Ministry officials, experts, and international delegates for their participation. Principals, Deans, Directors, Heads, Chairpersons BoS attended in large numbers.



Educational Institutions. "The event was graced by the Chief Guest, Shri Jishnu Dev Varma, Hon'ble Governor of Telangana, alongside distinguished leaders from the AIU and apex bodies including AICTE, NAAC, and ICAR. "The ceremony commenced with the traditional lighting of the lamp and Saraswati Vandana, followed by a series of powerful addresses highlighting the urgency of technological integration in Indian academia. "Shri Jishnu Dev Varma, Hon'ble Governor of Telangana, in his inaugural address, emphasized the state's commitment to innovation: "The intersection of AI and Quantum technology is not just a scientific milestone but a pedagogical necessity. Our universities must transition from being consumers of technology to becoming the architects of indigenous AI solutions that reflect Indian ethics and values. " The Welcome address by Sr. Prof. Kumar Molugaram at the AIU Central Zone Vice-Chancellors' Meet 2025-26 advocates for transforming higher education through AI and Quantum technologies while maintaining ethical and cultural integrity. He challenges lead-

Grand Felicitation to Uppal Media Club's New Committee — Bandaru Srivani Venkata Rao Extends Congratulations



KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 19 (Indian Chronicle): "Members of the newly formed executive committee of the Uppal Media Club (Print & Electronic Media) paid a courtesy visit to former Ramanthapur Division Corporator Bandaru Srivani Venkata Rao. On the occasion, she warmly felicitated and congratulated the new committee members. Speaking at the event, Bandaru Srivani Venkata Rao emphasized that the media plays a crucial role in delivering truthful information to the public. She stated that the media carries the responsibility of highlighting public issues impartially and acting as the voice of the people. "She expressed hope that the

new committee members of the Uppal Media Club would work with a strong sense of social responsibility and commitment to public welfare. She further noted that media support is essential in creating awareness about public welfare and development programs, and requested media representatives to extend constructive cooperation for the development of the Uppal area. "Bandaru Srivani Venkata Rao assured her full support to the good initiatives undertaken by the Uppal Print & Electronic Media Club. The program was organized under the leadership of Uppal Print & Electronic Media Club President and senior journalist Vaddepalli Kishore.

Cotton Rejections Spark Outrage Among Koutala Farmers



Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), February 19, "Farmers Protest Alleged Negligence by CCI in Koutala" Tension prevailed at Sri Venkateswara Ginning Mill in Koutala mandal on Thursday as distressed farmers staged a protest, alleging negligence and disrespectful behavior by officials of the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI). "Farmers who brought their hard-earned cotton produce for sale claimed that CCI staff were rejecting cotton loads without providing valid reasons. According to the protesting farmers, officials allegedly told them to sell their produce at ports or to private traders instead. "When questioned about the reasons for rejection, the farmers alleged that they received dismissive and humiliating responses such as, "Complain wherever you want and to whomever you want." They further accused the staff of speaking in an authoritative and disrespectful manner. "Why Are Farmers Angry?" Cotton cultivation requires nearly six to seven months of hard work and heavy investment in fertilizers,

labor, and transportation. At a time when input costs are rising sharply, farmers say arbitrary rejection of their produce and alleged rude treatment has added to their financial and emotional distress. "Farmers' Demands" The protesting farmers stated: "We are only seeking justice. The authorities must clearly explain why our cotton is being rejected. No one has the right to insult us." They urged the concerned authorities to intervene immediately and demanded: "Transparency in CCI procurement processes" Clear and public criteria for cotton rejection" Action against staff accused of misconduct" S m o t h and fair continuation of cotton procurement" Issue Gains Attention" The incident is drawing widespread attention on social media, with many expressing concern over the alleged treatment of farmers and the rejection of their produce without clear justification. "A Final Word" Farmers emphasized that agriculture sustains the nation and appealed to authorities to consider the hardship behind every cotton load before rejecting it.

RTI Activist Rescues Injured Rare Owl, Hands It Over to Forest Officials

Kranthikumar Dasari | Pinapaka Constancy | February 19 | Indian chronicle : In a commendable act of compassion, an RTI activist from Elchireddypalli village in Pinapaka mandal rescued an injured rare owl and handed it over to the Forest Department for treatment. Boda Lakshman Rao noticed the injured bird lying within the premises of his residence. Realizing the seriousness of its condition, he immediately provided first aid to stabilize the owl and informed the forest authorities. Following his alert, the bird was safely shifted to the Bayyaram Forest Office and handed over to officials for further medical care. Forest personnel stated that the owl would receive necessary treatment and, upon recovery, would be released back into its natural habitat. Local residents have appreciated Lakshman Rao's timely intervention, describing his action as a responsible and humane gesture toward wildlife conservation



The foundation stone was laid for the construction of the CC road at Ring Road Center with a cost of Rs. 90 lakh



at a cost of Rs 90 lakhs was laid. Speaking on the occasion, the MLA said that the main purpose of these works is to provide a permanent solution to the road problems frequently encountered in the Ring Road Center. He said that after the construction of the CC road is completed, motorists and traders will have convenient transportation facilities for the local people. He said that keeping in mind the needs of the people, we are undertaking development works with quality and are committed to further developing the mandal center. Mandal President Tumma Rambabu garu, Self-Committee Chairman Sunkavalli Veerabhadra Rao garu, Municipal Chairman Jupally Sasikala garu, Vice Chairman Jupally Ramesh garu, municipal councilors, local public representatives, officials, Congress leaders, etc. participated in this program.

Aswaraopet, Feb 19: Honorable MLA Jare Adinarayana laid the foundation stone at Ring Road Center at Aswaraopet Mandal Center at a cost of Rs. The foundation stone of the CC road works to be constructed

CM Revanth Reddy gives priority to minorities; welfare schemes extend support Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy

KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, Feb. 19 (Indian Chronicle): "Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy stated that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is giving high priority to Muslim minorities in the state. He said the government is supporting minority communities through development and welfare schemes while also creating employment opportunities. "He explained that welfare schemes implemented under the Minority Welfare Department were launched by Minister Mohammed Azharuddin and Government Advisor Mohammed Ali Shabbir. As part of these initiatives, five beneficiaries from the Uppal constituency belonging to Muslim Fakir/Dudekula and other weaker minority sections were provided mopeds (e-bikes). Under the "Indiramma Minority Women Yojana" scheme, 35 minority women received cheques worth ₹50,000 each as 100% subsidy assistance. Parameshwar Reddy further stated that the government has also introduced new welfare measures, including distribution of sewing machines for minority women under the "Indiramma Minority Mahila Shakti" scheme, issuance of work orders to launch skill development training for minority youth, and other support programs across the state. "Beneficiaries from Uppal Constituency" Moped (E-Bike) Beneficiaries: "Mohammed Abdul Khalid, Velupunoori Khadeer Basha, Midde Dudekula Hussain, Mohammed Yasin, Pasupula Mahboob Subhani. Indiramma Minority Women Yojana - ₹50,000 Financial Assistance



Beneficiaries: "Aysha Begum, Shaik Rasool Bee, Khadar Bee, Safeega, Reshma Begum, Md. Mumtaz Begum, Najmeen Begum, Nazeem Sultana, Naseem Begum, Shahee, Syed Noor Jahan, Telabati Chinna Kasim Bee, Zarina Begum, Shabana Begum, Kausar Fathima, Velupuri Kasim Bee, Pothuganti Peerambai, Mohammed Faheem Begum and others. Congress leaders Akiti Agan Reddy, Srikanth Goud, Mulpally Rajesh Mudiraj, Vittal Nayak, Srinivas Yadav, Sarfaraz, Vamsi, Afzal Bhai, Anwar, Faheem, Hussain Nagoor Basha, Alla Basha, Maulana, Nabisab, Mastan Anwar Basha, Mallikarjun, Siddamma and others participated in the programme.

Grand Celebrations of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Jayanti by Habsiguda Shivaji Youth Association "Former Malkajgiri District Youth Congress President Kandi Shraavan Kumar Reddy Participates"

KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 19 (Indian Chronicle): "On the occasion of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Jayanti, grand celebrations were organized under the auspices of the Habsiguda Shivaji Youth Association. The event was held near Swathi Tiffins Center, Street No. 8, Habsiguda. "Former Medchal-Malkajgiri District Youth Congress President Kandi Shraavan Kumar Reddy participated in the celebrations. He paid floral tributes to the portrait of Shivaji Maharaj and later distributed buttermilk packets to local residents. "Speaking on the occasion, Shraavan Kumar Reddy described Shivaji Maharaj as a symbol of courage, patriotism, valor, and devotion. He recalled that Shivaji displayed extraordinary bravery from a young age, winning forts through strategic warfare and resisting the Mughal Empire's oppression. He emphasized that Shivaji Maharaj founded the Maratha Empire and inspired generations with his leadership and commitment to protecting dharma. He urged people to draw inspiration from the great leader and remain committed to the protection of righteous values. "The event was attended by Habsiguda Division Congress Party President Gannaram Vijay Kumar, Division Youth Congress President Vasu, party leaders Babu, G. Raju, Sai Kiran, Ravi, Suman, and members of the Shivaji Youth Committee including Shiva, Vinod, Venu, Ranjith, Umesh, Siddu, Rakesh, Rahul, Rahul Smiley, Gopi, Nagender, Madhu, Mahesh, Srinu, and others.



World Heritage Desk established for research on ancient rock carvings in Konkan region



GNS News Agency, Feb 19

A World Heritage Desk has been established to undertake in-depth research, documentation, and conservation of more than 1,000 ancient rock carvings (geoglyphs) found along the Konkan coastline and plateau region, Maharashtra Cultural Affairs Minister Ashish Shelar said. The Government has approved a total expenditure of Rs 14.62 crores for this initiative, the minister said in a statement. These rock carvings in Konkan are considered extremely significant for understanding the lifestyle, culture, and the biological and social heritage of prehistoric human societies. Shelar said a proposal had been submitted to the

Central Government seeking Unesco recognition for Konkan's petroglyphs. The World Heritage Desk will function from 2026 to 2029 to undertake extensive research, identify new sites, and systematically document these findings. Two dedicated branches of this desk will be established, Shelar said. The Mumbai branch will focus on studying international research literature, creating a comprehensive database, developing criteria in accordance with Unesco standards, and undertaking academic research and documentation. The Ratnagiri branch will conduct extensive field surveys, GPS-based mapping, drone-assisted documentation of the petroglyphs, collection of local folklore, and public awareness initiatives.

The project will also include scientific research to determine the antiquity of these carvings and establish the period of their creation. It will entail expenditure on skilled manpower, scientific testing, specialised equipment, transportation, and other related requirements. The Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Mumbai, will implement the project. An internationally benchmarked documentary film will also be produced to ensure global recognition of these rock carvings, the minister said. This initiative will not only place Konkan's rock art on the global stage but also significantly boost tourism in the region in the coming years, he added.

Gang rape, murder of tourists at Hampi was 'controlled savagery': What court said in death penalty verdict for 3 youths



GNS News Agency, Feb 19

A district court in Karnataka has described the March 6, 2025, attack on four tourists and their guide at Hampi—where one tourist was murdered, and two women were gang-raped—as an act of "controlled savagery" that shocked the collective conscience of the world and reduced tourist footfall in the heritage site over the past year. The district court in the Koppal region made the observations in its February 16 order awarding a death sentence to three youths—Mallesh alias Handi Malla alias Mallayya, 22, Sai alias Chaitanya Sai alias Saikumar, 21, and Sharanappa alias Sharanabasavaraj, 27, after convicting them for murder, rape and robbery on February 6.

"The collective conscience of the world community is so shocked that society expects a death sentence," district court judge Sadananda Nagappa Naik observed after concluding that life imprisonment for the accused would be inadequate given the brutality of the crime and the apparent lack of remorse among the accused. The incident occurred when a five-member group—a citizen of Israel, a citizen of the US, a woman guide from the resort where the tourists were staying, a youth from Odisha, and a youth from Maharashtra—were relaxing near the Tungabhadra Canal on the northern side of the Hampi heritage site, which is popular with backpackers. The brutal attack had created a shockwave and resulted in a slide in foreign tourism in the region.

The pattern of the crime "reflects controlled savagery and conscious determination to kill, not a sudden loss of self-control," the court said. "The extraordinary brutality, helpless victims, absence of remorse and post-crime conduct establish that awarding life imprisonment would be grossly inadequate, would trivialise the offence, and would fail to serve the ends of justice," the court said, bracketing it as the "rarest of rare" crime. "The murder, two gang rape and two attempt to murder has already projected the Indian country in a bad light on the safety of travellers of the world in India. The foreign tourists to Hampi has drastically reduced due to this untoward incident. It has also affected the lawful business activities of the locals which deprived them of their fundamental right to carry on their business for livelihood," the district court judge observed. The court referred to news reports of only 3,818 foreign tourists visiting Hampi in 2025 against nearly 20,000 in 2024, after the crime. The court also referred to the description of Hampi (known as Kishkinda in old texts) as being a place rich in heritage and beauty, as well as historical narratives of the region and its rulers, and compared it to the statements of the horror and trauma undergone by the victims.

In its nearly 700-page conviction and sentencing order, the district court stated that the court had weighed the aggravating factors and mitigating factors as prescribed by the Supreme Court for deciding on capital punishment in crimes. "In this case, the aggravated factors overwhelmingly outweigh the mitigating factors. While the court has recognised and considered poverty, limited education, addiction to alcohol, smoking and tobacco, these do not possess the moral or legal weight necessary to neutralise the enormity, cruelty and calculated nature of the offence, nor do they establish a realistic prospect of reformation sufficient to substitute capital punishment," the court stated. The court had sought a social investigation report from a probation officer, a jail report and a psychiatric evaluation report before awarding a death sentence to the three accused youth in the murder, gang rape, and robbery case.

The court awarded the death penalty to three youths—they had not studied beyond Class 10 and were employed as construction labourers—for the murder of Bibhas Nayak, 26, a social worker from Odisha. Nayak was pushed into a canal along with two other men in the group and stoned by the attackers to prevent them from saving the women. The court said that it had conducted the evaluation of aggravating and mitigating circumstances for a death penalty for the accused "independently, cautiously and without pre-judgment, recognising that capital punishment can be imposed only after complete and meaningful sentencing evaluation".

Bibhas Kumar's father, who was present in court on the day of the sentencing, sought stringent punishment for the three accused. The court noted the victim's father as saying ".....my son has been killed when he tried to rescue gang rape victims. If the accused persons are left without imposing capital punishment, no one will in future go to rescue any women. There has to be a strong message to the society that anyone assaults the person who try to res-

cue gang rape victims, they will be awarded severe punishments," he said. "Bibhas Kumar was working in the health care sector; he always expected best treatment to be given to even the poor of this country; he was involved in social service; he has helped many poor and needy; they really miss him. He was fond of Indian history and nature. He was always telling me that if everyone in this country is well educated, they become good citizens of this country and the nation develops to the highest level," he said. All the surviving victims of the attack provided statements on their ordeal to the court. Social assessment of accused ahead of verdict. The mothers of two of the accused (A2 and A3) were present in court for the sentencing and pleaded for forgiveness on their behalf. Accused number one (A1), who is involved in multiple cases, including a Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act case and robbery cases, did not have any family members in court during the sentencing. Amicus curiae T Manjunath, who appeared for the accused, told the court that A1 has no parents and his family comprises his wife and a small child. The court, however, referred to a social investigation report against A1 and noted that there is no good opinion about him and the other accused in society.

"Report of the probation officer shows that based on the submissions of the locals, the accused persons are involved in many of the offences and the lady victims have not filed the complaint in apprehension of the accused persons. There is no safety for women by these accused persons," the court noted. While the accused persons wish for leniency, the materials show that there is no scope for reformation. The Social Investigation Report finds no indication of willingness to reform," the court said. In its order for the death sentence, the district court said that it "shall be executed by hanging by the neck till they are dead, in terms of Sec. 393(5) of BNS (Corresponding to Section 354(5) of Cr.P.C.), subject to confirmation by the Hon'ble High Court of Karnataka under Section 407 of BNS (Section 366 Cr.P.C.)." For the offence of gang rape, the accused "are sentenced to undergo rigorous imprisonment for life which shall mean imprisonment for the remainder of natural life", the court said. For rape, attempt to murder, dacoity, and robbery, the accused were sentenced to life.

The district court, in its order, appreciated the efforts of a 23-year-old US citizen in saving the life of a 27-year-old Indian citizen from Maharashtra, who did not know how to swim, after the three men were pushed into the canal by their attackers. The district court addressed the US citizen by the pseudonym of Hanuman and the Indian citizen as Laxman during the trial. "It is pertinent to note that like Lord Hanuman saved Laxman's life during the Ramayana war by flying to the Himalayas to fetch the magical Sanjeevani herb, similarly, CW-4 Hanuman (Name changed), American Citizen saved CW-3 Laxman (Name changed) Indian citizen who was drowning away in the water when Indian Citizens themselves attempted to murder CW-3 and 4. The effort of CW-4 is always appreciable," the district court noted in its final order. The court also appreciated the efforts of the Koppal police in cracking the case and bringing the accused to justice with evidence ranging from CCTV and video footage of their movements before, during and after the crimes, and tracking down the accused in different locations and recovering stolen goods and evidence from the crime scene. The district court has recommended a compensation of ₹ 10 lakh to the two women victims or "other appropriate compensation to be determined by DLSA, Koppal as per Schedule Applicable to Women Victim of Crimes in NALSA's Compensation Scheme for women Victims/Survivors of Sexual Assault/other Crimes -2018".

DoT directs Navi Mumbai airport to grant Right of Way to telecom operators

The Department of Telecommunications has directed the Navi Mumbai International Airport to grant Right of Way permissions to telecom service providers, clearing a key hurdle in a months long dispute over network access inside the airport premises.

In a letter dated February 16 to Arun Bansal, CEO of Adani Airports Holdings Limited, which operates the airport, the DoT said the airport must comply with the Telecommunications Act, 2023 and the Telecommunications Right of Way Rules, 2024 while processing applications from telecom operators seeking to establish infrastructure. "You are requested to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Telecommunications Act, 2023 and the Telecommunications (Right of Way) Rules, 2024 while processing applications for grant of RoW permissions within your premises, and to take necessary action to facilitate establishment of telecom infrastructure in accordance with the statutory framework," the letter said. The intervention follows complaints by the Cellular Operators Association of India in December 2025.

After years of delay, car shed projects gather pace as Mumbai prepares for suburban fleet expansion



GNS News Agency, Feb 19

Mumbai The Bhivpuri Road car shed is being developed to support future growth on the Central Railway network and to reduce dependence on existing sheds at Matunga, Kurla and Kalwa. (file) After years of slow progress and land related hurdles, two critical suburban car shed projects meant to support Mumbai's expanding local train fleet have finally gained traction. The Mumbai Railway Vikas Corporation is developing new EMU car sheds at Vangaon on the Western Railway and Bhivpuri Road on the Central Railway under the Mumbai Urban Transport Project MUDP 3A at a cost of Rs 2,353 crore.

For the Bhivpuri Road EMU car shed, land acquisition has been completed in full. A total of 45.24 hectares have been acquired, including 42.28 hectares of private land and

2.96 hectares of government land. MRVC said tenders for land development works including bridge extension, boundary wall, drainage and internal roads have been finalised. A Letter of Acceptance has been issued and site development work has commenced, marking the start of physical execution. At Vangaon, 43.68 hectares are required for the project, of which 40.04 hectares involve forest land. Land acquisition has substantially progressed and joint measurements have been completed. Statutory notifications under Sections 20A and 20E have been published. A key breakthrough came on February 6, 2026, when Stage I forest clearance was granted, allowing the project to move forward after years of regulatory delays. "These new carsheds at Bhivpuri and Vangaon are not standalone assets but are integrally linked to the procurement and lifecycle maintenance of 2,856 AC EMU Vande Metro suburban coaches. They will serve as the backbone infrastructure for maintaining the next generation fleet, ensuring higher reliability, quicker turnaround of rakes, and safer, more efficient suburban operations for Mumbai's commuters," said Sunil Udasi, Chief Public Relations Officer, MRVC. On the Western Railway, the Vangaon car shed is closely linked to the Virar Dahanu quadrupling project, which is expected to significantly enhance capacity at the northern end of the suburban corridor. The Bhivpuri Road car shed is being developed to support future growth on the Central Railway network and to reduce dependence on existing sheds at Matunga, Kurla and Kalwa.

Taapsee Pannu addresses RG Kar rape and murder in Kolkata: 'Which case am I supposed to comment on?'



GNS News Agency, Feb 19

Bollywood actor Taapsee Pannu has addressed the rape and murder of a doctor at Kolkata's RG Kar Medical College, capturing the collective grief and outrage felt across the nation. As the incident continues to spark protests and demands for systemic reform, Pannu said the fight for safety and justice is not a local issue—it's a recurring narrative that every city, and every citizen, is forced to reckon with. The premiere of her upcoming movie Assi (which takes its name from the statistic that 80 rape cases are reported every day in India on average) in Kolkata took an emotional turn on Tuesday evening, when Taapsee Pannu made a surprise appearance. As the credits rolled, the lead actor walked into the theatre to engage with the audience, sparking a raw conversation about justice in India.

The atmosphere grew tense when Pannu was asked to comment on the high-profile RG Kar Medical College incident. Known for her candidness, the actor chose to address the broader epidemic of violence. Pannu spoke about the staggering frequency of sexual violence, questioning why public outcry is often limited to cases that gain social media momentum.

"Whichever city we are going in, they are quoting an example of a rape and asking me to react on it," Pannu told The Indian Express. "In Patna, they spoke of the NEET student. This morning, I read about a one-and-a-half-year-old girl raped by her father's friend. So, which one am I supposed to comment on? Shall we talk about one case or the 79 others that happened the same day?" The actor also said "true justice" remains elusive, asking if a single judgment could ever truly end the cycle of violence. "For me, each of these cases is equally disturbing," she added, expressing her hope that every grieving family finds closure. The discussion also pivoted to the current landscape of Indian cinema, where films are frequently labelled as "propaganda". Asked whether Assi falls under this category, its director, Anubhav Sinha, offered a provocative defence of the term. Sinha argued that "propagating an idea" is the literal meaning of the word and that it is not inherently negative. "Every filmmaker has the right to propagate an opinion through their art. The problem only arises when a film is used to propagate lies rather than personal or social truths," he said.

'Thought they were pendrives': Two men arrested for 'stealing' AI wearable devices from AI Summit

GNS News Agency, Feb 19

Two contractual employees have been arrested for allegedly stealing AI wearable devices belonging to Bengaluru-based firm NeoSapien from the venue of the AI Impact Summit on Monday (February 16), police said. Police officers involved in the probe said the accused thought that the devices were pendrive, and thought they would be of use to them and stole them. DCP (New Delhi) Devesh Mahla said, "The accused have been identified as Manish Nagar and Ashish Mahariya. They are contractual employees, hired to lay electrical wires and carry out videography at the event. The stolen devices have been recovered." Dhananjay Yadav, co-founder and CEO of NeoSapien, said he was happy that the police had recovered the wearables. Yadav told The Indian Express, "I am very happy that the Delhi Police acted swiftly, the DCP also met me today... I am grateful to the Delhi Police for finding my devices. Delhi has always been one of my favorite cities and it's wonderful to be here again."

NeoSapien advertises its pendant-like product as "India's first AI-Native wearable that tracks conversations and analyses emotions". The listed price of the NeoSapien Neo 1 wearable on the company's web site is Rs 11,999. On Monday, the co-founder of the wearable AI-powered device that claims to be the wearer's "second brain", had alleged that several of the machines were "stolen". "It was the first time the [AI] summit was being hosted in India, and I was really excited, both to showcase innovation and to back the government's push to position India as a global AI hub. I believe India really deserved to host something like this," Yadav had told on Tuesday. Yadav had said that around noon on Monday, security personnel began sanitising and cordoning off the venue of the Summit in preparation for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit which he said was



scheduled at 2 pm.

He said that he tried to explain to officials that the company was building India's first patented AI wearable and requested permission to remain at the booth to display the product. According to him, "The security officials told me that one person could stay, and since I was all excited, I stayed back." "One of the security personnel also liked our device," he had said. However, Yadav had said that a second set of security personnel had subsequently shown up, and asked him to leave. "I don't know how they coordinated amongst themselves," he said. "So I left the premises (Hall number 3)." He alleged that before leaving, he had asked whether he should also take away the wearable devices, but was told that other exhibitors too were leaving their equipment, including laptops, behind, and that security personnel would "take care". According to Yadav, however, the gates remained shut till 6 pm, which was "much much longer than anticipated". "I had also made friends with a volunteer who said he would tell me when we could possibly come back. Around 6 pm, when he went to our stall, he informed us that the devices were not there," Yadav said.

Delhi courts Dhaka after BNP sweep, keeps close watch on ISI moves

New Delhi: Ties between India and Bangladesh are witnessing a reset following the massive win by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). Prime Minister Narendra Modi was one of the first to congratulate Tarique Rahman on his impressive victory. PM Modi even sent a letter to Rahman with Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, who attended the swearing-in ceremony. India has also reached out to the second-largest party, the Jamaat-e-Islami. India's foreign secretary Vikram Misri conveyed his greetings to Shafiqur Rahman, the supreme of the party. He also reaffirmed India's enduring support for Bangladesh. The Jamaat chief, on his part, highlighted the deep civilisation bonds shared by India and Bangladesh, while expressing hope for stronger bilateral relations. Officials say that there has been a lot of bad blood between the two countries since the ouster of Sheikh Hasina. Ties under the former caretaker of the interim government, Muhammad Yunus, had worsened. However, India understands the importance of maintaining good relations with its neighbours and hence wants to make

a fresh start. Bangladesh is important in terms of trade and security, and hence good ties become all the more important, the official also added. India finds the BNP to be more moderate and hence is hopeful of working closely with Dhaka. India's bilateral trade with Bangladesh is around \$10 billion annually, and hence it is important for relations to be fine. Bangladesh too recognises this and hence would go all out to improve ties with New Delhi. Another official said that the safety of Hindus in Bangladesh is of utmost priority. Under Yunus, not only were Hindus violently targeted, but many had been placed under arrest, too. India would seek the immediate release of these persons while also wanting an assurance on the safety of the Hindus in Bangladesh. India would also seek the restoration of the damaged Temples in Bangladesh. An Intelligence Bureau official said that security is also a key issue. The security officials of both countries would be working closely to ensure that Bangladesh does not become a launch pad for Pakistan-backed terrorists.

Mapping clubs, bars: How Delhi Police plans to tackle extortion rackets run by gangs abroad



GNS News Agency, Feb 19

To tackle the menace of extortion rackets being operated by gangsters from abroad, the Delhi Police is looking at devising a new strategy — mapping the city's major clubs and bars. Sources said this move comes after a sudden surge in extortion cases targeting businessmen — property dealers, jewellers, sweet shop owners, second-hand car dealers and factory owners — in the city. Sometimes, they turn deadly. Earlier this week, a businessman in the Bawana Industrial Area was shot dead allegedly by shooters of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang after reportedly intervening in an extortion call.

Sources said the exercise, currently in the planning stage, is set to be carried out at clubs and bars of South, West and East Delhi, which are frequented by businessmen. For this, a dedicated Special Cell team will coordinate with the local police. The police plan to screen workers and check if they are passing any information about them, The Indian Express has learnt. For the police, the biggest challenge so far was ascertaining who was passing on information about businessmen to gangsters. A senior police officer, who did not wish to be named, told The Indian Express, "Famous businessmen, punters, bookies, politicians or celebrities remain prime targets for criminals. However, in the past few months, it has been noticed that businessmen who are neither well known nor particularly wealthy have also been receiving extortion calls." "It is suspected that businessmen often hold meetings and parties in clubs and bars, from where information about them could be leaked. This might be one of the sources of information for criminals operating from abroad," the officer said. Police have prepared an elaborate plan to verify employees, workers, and regular visitors at these clubs and bars, said sources, adding that the exercise will be carried out at premises in South, West and East Delhi. According to another

police officer, these gangs used to make their money through illegal businesses such as the drug and firearm trade. In recent years, however, extortion has been their major source of "revenue". Then, Whatsapp calls are made via "dabba calling", a sophisticated extortion technique. In this, the henchman would allegedly place an extortion call to his intended victim using the Internet. Next, he would place a second call using another phone to his boss sitting in a different country, keep the two phones side-by-side, turn on their speakers, and allegedly let his boss do the talking. The gangs sometimes send voice notes threatening the businessman on WhatsApp. If their target does not respond to the demand, warning messages are sent via WhatsApp. And if the businessman still continues to ignore them, police said armed men are sent to fire shots at his house or office as a warning. The officer said that in many cases, businessmen become so terrified by such threats that they do not even report the matter to the police and often end up paying the money. According to Delhi Police data, officials managed to solve around 65% of extortion cases registered in the city in 2025. However, police said the situation on the ground remains challenging as they've only been able to apprehend ground-level operatives who carried out shootings. The masterminds who planned these attacks are rarely identified as the gangs operate primarily by invoking the names of its leaders, they said.

Lawrence Bishnoi gang: While the gangster himself is lodged in Gujarat's Sabarmati Jail, police said his gang is allegedly being operated by Randeep Malik, Anil Pandit, and Harry Boxer from US and Canada. In the past six months, around 10 businessmen have approached Delhi Police after receiving extortion threats from the gang. Earlier this month, the gang allegedly demanded Rs 5 crore from businessmen in the Paschim Vihar and West Vinod Nagar areas. Kapil Sangwan alias Nandu gang: Sangwan allegedly runs his gang from the UK. He became notorious for extorting Southwest Delhi businessmen. In May, last year, he had allegedly demanded Rs 2 crore from a businessman in Southwest Delhi. Himanshu Bhau gang: Bhau, from Hisar, runs his network from the US. In July last year, his aides had allegedly demanded Rs 10 crore from a Delhi Police official posted in the West district. Goldy Brar, Rohit Godara: They reportedly issued threats using VOIP technology, demanding crores, including Rs 2 crore from a Delhi businessman in April last year. Formerly part of the Bishnoi gang, they now operate separately. Neeraj Bawana gang: Delhi's most wanted criminal until his arrest in 2015, Bawana is now lodged in Tihar Jail. His associates run the gang through robbery and extortion from businessmen.

BWSSB to install 'mini water tanks' in Bengaluru neighbourhoods; mandatory field duty for engineers to prevent 2025-like crisis

GNS News Agency, Feb 19

Chairman V Ram Prasath Manohar said the board is prepared to tackle any water crisis this summer. Last year, several parts of Bengaluru were severely affected by water scarcity. Chairman V Ram Prasath Manohar said the board is prepared to tackle any water crisis this summer. Last year, several parts of Bengaluru were severely affected by water scarcity. With summer approaching, the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) has decided to install 'mini water tanks' in areas likely to face shortages.

On Thursday, BWSSB Chairman V Ram Prasath Manohar said the board is prepared to tackle any water crisis this summer. Last year, several parts of Bengaluru were severely affected by water scarcity. Manohar chaired a high-level review meeting with senior officials at the BWSSB head office to assess the summer preparedness. Speaking after the meeting, Manohar said the Board has already identified high-density areas and localities likely to face water shortages. He added that BWSSB has decided to install 'mini water tanks' (Sintex tanks) in these locations to mitigate scarcity and ensure free access to drinking water for residents. Manohar issued strict instructions on the logistics for filling these tanks, emphasising that priority must be given to BWSSB's own tankers and



the 'Sanchari Cauvery' mobile tankers. He clarified that private tankers should be hired only on a rental basis, as a last resort in unavoidable circumstances.

Warning against any negligence in summer management, the BWSSB chairman instructed all chief engineers, assistant executive engineers (AEEs), and water inspectors to leave their offices and be present in the field to actively oversee and manage the situation. "Officials must visit their respective jurisdictions daily, assess the ground reality, and ensure that water reaches the identified areas without fail," Manohar said.

Appointment of actor, political activist to West Bengal Public Service Commission raises questions, they defend



GNS News Agency, Feb 19

A controversy has erupted over the recent appointment of the Chairman and members of the West Bengal Public Service Commission (PSC), with questions raised about the selection of an actor and a political activist to the prestigious recruitment body. Alongside him, four members were named — actor Diganta Bagchi, social worker Sabir Siddhartha Gaffar, retired WBCS officer Debashish Bandyopadhyay, and political activist Barnali Mukherjee. While Gaffar was already a member for over a year, the inclusion of Bagchi and Mukherjee has sparked debate. Some critics have also pointed to Bagchi's close ties to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

According to a senior official of state administration, traditionally, PSC members have been selected from administrative services, judiciary, or academia. WBCS officers or retired administrative officials. "However, the tradition broke during the TMC regime. Previously also, a cabinet minister's friend and owner of a liquor shop, younger brother of a minister were appointed in PSC. But, selection of an actor is new in the PSC history," the official added. Bagchi, who has been trolled on social media, de-

fended his appointment, saying, "Any common man can get this post. It is an honorary post. Before me, some ordinary people or people associated with different professions were appointed in this position.

There is no problem with that. The name comes from the government or from the Governor's office, that is how I got the post. I have not seen any posts on social media as I am not very familiar with that." "People will talk about people. No one can stop them. I can't argue with anyone. Respect and love for those who say. And the most important thing is that this is not a lifetime post. So the few days I stay, I will try to work well," he added.

Newly appointed member Barnali Mukherjee said, "We were appointed by the governor. So, I think the governor selected us within the boundary of the Constitution. I think in our democracy, the representatives of people have the highest regard. So, if I was selected as the people's representative, it is I think it would be good for democracy, because those who will be selected as government employees through PSC will have to handle people and their representatives."

"I don't think it is bad to select an actor for the post... On the other hand, those who are political activists or actors, were selected by the governor. I don't think the governor selected him or her without getting detailed information. I don't see anything wrong in it," Gaffar said. Responding to the issue, Trinamool Congress spokesperson Arup Chakraborty said, "Mamata Banerjee always likes to bring people from different professions into the political and administrative circle. As such, actors enriched the political stage. Why will politics only be focused on a few politicians? People from all walks of life enrich politics and administration. It is a positive message. He (Bagchi) was not made chairman, but has been made an ordinary member. Those who look for negativity in it are actually playing cheap politics."

Bangalore Turf Club to move to Tumakuru; Karnataka Govt to impose penalty for rent dues



GNS News Agency, Feb 19

The Karnataka Cabinet Thursday approved leasing 110 acres and 20 guntas of land at Kunigal Stud Farm near Tumakuru to the Bangalore Turf Club (BTC) for 29 years to conduct horse racing, signalling a resolution to the long-standing dispute between the state government and the club.

Under the agreement, BTC will pay an annual lease amount equivalent to 2.5 per cent of the land's guidance value. In addition to clearing pending rent dues, the Club

must deposit two per cent of its annual income with the Public Works Department (PWD) from 2010 onwards until it vacates its existing premises in the city centre. Addressing a press conference after the Cabinet meeting, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H K Patil said the government would provide "minimum time" for the Club to relocate. "A government order will be issued spelling out the specifics," he said. Patil said the penalty has been imposed because rents have not been revised since 2010 due to a legal dispute, resulting in losses to the state exchequer.

Of the 83 acres and 14 guntas of land currently occupied by the Club in Central Bengaluru, the BTC will retain its heritage office building and four acres of surrounding land. "The remainder of the area will be used to develop a lung space in the city," Patil said. The Karnataka Government maintained that the prime land in Central Bengaluru should be used either as lung space or for new government facilities. The decision comes after tensions escalated in 2024, when the state government refused to renew the Club's racing licence, an order that was later stayed by the High Court. In October last year, the government sought the immediate shifting of the racecourse, warning that licences would not be issued if the Club failed to comply.

Karnataka Lokayukta raids 4 officers across 29 locations; PWD engineer found with Rs 12.8 crore in assets



GNS News Agency, Feb 19

The Karnataka Lokayukta Police Thursday carried out coordinated searches at more than 29 locations across Bengaluru, Bengaluru Rural, Davanagere and Dharwad in connection with disproportionate assets (DA) cases registered against four government officers. Lokayukta officials said the searches were part of ongoing investigations under the Prevention of Corruption framework related to possession of assets disproportionate to known sources of income. They added that the simultaneous searches covered the accused's houses and offices, as well as properties linked to their relatives. The officers under investigation are Purushotham Das Hegade, Executive Engineer with the Public Works Department (PWD) in Bengaluru City; H M Janardhana, Superintendent Engineer with KRIES in Bengaluru Rural; Arjun R H, Assistant Executive Engineer (Civil) with BESCO in Davanagere; and Somalingappa

Fakkirappa Siddanagoudar, Survey Supervisor at the ADLR Office in Dharwad. According to the Lokayukta police, the searches unearthed both immovable and movable assets allegedly disproportionate to the officers' known sources of income. In Bengaluru, searches at 14 locations linked to Hegade led to the detection of assets, including one site, two houses, two educational institutions, and 11 acres 30 guntas of agricultural land, collectively valued at ₹1.52 crore. Movable assets — including cash, gold and silver ornaments, and fixed deposits — were valued at ₹1.32 crore, taking the total assets to ₹12.84 crore.

In Bengaluru Rural, six locations connected to Janardhana were searched. Investigators reported the recovery of one site, three houses, and 34 acres of agricultural land, valued at ₹3.20 crore. Movable assets, including cash, jewellery, vehicles and other items, were estimated at ₹2.57 crore, with total assets pegged at ₹5.77 crore. In Davanagere, five locations linked to Arjun R H were searched. The identified assets include two sites, three houses, and 2.2 acres of agricultural land, valued at ₹2.17 crore, along with movable assets worth ₹31.69 lakh. The total value of assets was estimated at ₹2.49 crore. In Dharwad, searches at four locations associated with Siddanagoudar revealed three sites, one house and three acres of agricultural land valued at ₹2.08 crore. Movable assets worth ₹56.13 lakh were also found, bringing the total to ₹2.64 crore. Officials said further scrutiny of documents and property valuations is underway, and subsequent legal action will be initiated based on the findings.

SP MLAs demand 'full-time' Home Minister: 'Police are going out of control of govt'

GNS News Agency, Feb 19

The UP Assembly on Thursday witnessed a heated discussion on the law and order situation in the state, with the Opposition Samajwadi Party MLAs demanding a full-time Home Minister. Raising the law and order issue in the Assembly, SP MLA Ragini Sonkar claimed that fake encounters were increasing in the state as the police have become "uncontrolled". "Jis tarike se police sarkar ki belagam hoti ja rahi hai, UP fake encounters mein number one hai. Court ne fatkar lagayi hai, NCRB ke ankare batate hain police custodial deaths mein UP number one hai... In sabse rok lagane ke liye is pradesh ko kya home minister degi? (The way the police is going out of control of this government, that UP has become number one in the country in fake encounters. NCRM data shows that UP is number one in custodial deaths. To stop this, will the government give a full-time Home Minister to the state?)," the SP MLA from Machhlishahr constituency in Jaunpur district said.

"While UP is number one in loot and robbery, it leads even in crime against women. Officers do not have respect either for MLAs or for the legal system. Officers are undertaking fake encounters as they hope to get rewarded with medals, tickets or be made chairman of some public unit somewhere," said Sonkar, adding that no action has been taken against "the goons who barged into KGMU". She cited instances of death of four children in Prayagraj Division belonging to Khatik community and alleged that the Yogi Adityanath-led government was shying away from responding to the deaths of Dalit children. Later, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Suresh Khanna refuted Sonkar's charge and said that Dalit children died of drowning, and the government has taken steps to assist the family. Meanwhile, BJP and SP legislators came face-to-face as both refused to accept each other's data on crimes in the state. While SP MLAs claimed that crimes against Dalits, women were increasing in the state, Parliamentary Affairs Minister cited data indicating the crime rates had decreased in the state, which was objected by the SP legislators. Speaker Satish Mahana, later, rejected the SP MLAs' demand for a debate on the law and order issue in the state. Later, demanding a discussion on law and order, SP MLA Atul Pradhan raised the issue of alleged misbehaviour towards Shankracharya



in Prayagraj and also the demolition of a shop of one Moin Ahmed in Ayodhya. The government had alleged that Moin Ahmed belonged to the Samajwadi Party because he was a Muslim. He was put in jail for 19 months. His bakery was demolished in Ayodhya, and later the case against him did not stand in court. Will the government now apologise to him?" asked Atul Pradhan.

He said that the Samajwadi Party does not want to stop the government from taking action against criminals, but said that the action should not merely be based on caste and religion. State Agriculture Minister Surya Pratap Shahi on Thursday accused the Opposition Samajwadi Party (SP) of working against farmers and instead working for the interest of industrialists when the party was in power in the state. Replying to a question by SP MLA Anil Pradhan on "chakbandi" or agricultural land consolidation, Shahi said that his government was acquiring land from farmers "only after providing them proper compensation on market rate". Shahi alleged that the SP, when it was in power in the state four times, did not take such initiatives. He alleged that during its tenure, firing at the farmers was ordered in Noida and Ghaziabad "for Anil Ambani". "The farmers of Uttar Pradesh can never forget how your government ordered firing for the sake of Anil Ambani," he said. He also referred to an alleged firing incident linked to a Durg Cement project, saying it occurred during the SP regime. "Such incidents have never happened under the Yogi Adityanath-led government," Shahi asserted.

Eye on panchayat polls, Yogi govt hikes Panchayati Raj funding by 67%

GNS News Agency, Feb 19

With panchayat elections in Uttar Pradesh due this year, the Yogi Adityanath government has proposed a sharp increase in funding for rural local bodies in this year's state Budget. The government has earmarked about Rs 32,090 crore for Panchayati Raj schemes — a 67 per cent rise over the previous year's allocations for the Panchayati Raj Department. While grants to gram panchayats have more than doubled — from Rs 5,457.90 crore in 2025-26 to Rs 13,490.19 crore — fund allocations for block panchayats and district panchayats have also been significantly increased — from Rs 1,169.55 crore each to Rs 2,890.76 crore each. Further, provision of Rs 350 crore has been made in the budget for making arrangements for the panchayat

elections. While the budgetary outlay for the capital and administrative expenditure has seen only a marginal increase — Rs 30 crore and Rs 50 crore, respectively — a major portion of the hike is directed towards direct financial assistance to the three tiers of Panchayati Raj institutions in the state. "The enhanced allocation is aimed at strengthening grassroots governance and improving basic infrastructure like sanitation and service delivery in villages. It signals a major push towards rural development and local capacity building before the upcoming panchayat polls, which are due anytime this year," said a senior official of the Panchayati Raj Department. Spending under Central schemes such as Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) and the National Gram Swaraj Abhiyan has also been stepped up."

Experts Explain | India AI applications stack: What the country can bring to the table



The ultimate success of artificial intelligence (AI) in India will not depend on the size of its GPU clusters, but on how our AI applications can help improve the quality of life of our citizens. Among other things, AI can help ASHA professionals detect the number of high-risk pregnancies, small farmers save significantly on pesticide consumption, or significantly improve the reading and math scores of a child in a remote government school. The Economic Survey 2026 is pragmatic about how India can leverage AI. A primary objective of the proposed AI Economic Council for India is Human Primacy and Economic Purpose. Clearly, a national AI adoption policy must be explicitly subordinate to human welfare and economic inclusion. AI needs to be sensitive to domestic economic realities, and the benefits of AI adoption should accrue to all sectors of the economy and all citizens.

Fortunately for us, Indian innovators are deploying AI applications to solve social and economic problems that are immediate and contextual to India. Applications in health, agriculture, education, urban management, and disaster preparedness have shown promise. With the right support, many of these can scale to a pan-India market and, at some future point, can be bundled into an India AI Applications Stack and even be taken to global markets.

Niramai has developed a non-invasive, privacy-conscious breast cancer screening tool that uses AI-driven thermal imaging instead of traditional mammography. This tool enables early detection of abnormalities in women of all ages, including those with dense breast tissue where mammography often fails. It is portable and low-cost, making mass screening viable in rural and semi-urban areas. Qure.ai is an AI tool that analyses X-rays and CT scans in seconds, detecting more than 35 conditions like TB, lung cancer, and heart failure. This solution is very effective in resource-constrained settings where radiologists are unavailable, facilitating rapid triage and treatment in remote districts. AISteth, an AI-powered stethoscope, converts heart and lung sounds into visual waveforms for accurate, remote diagnosis. This low-cost device has a 93% accuracy and empowers frontline health workers in rural India to detect cardiac and respiratory issues early. It bridges critical gaps in specialist care and has the potential to strengthen India's public health system. Neoperk is a portable device using near-infrared spectroscopy and machine learning to analyse soil health instantly without conventional lab chemi-

cals. This provides lab-accurate results for 12 key soil parameters in under five minutes. This empowers farmers to make data-backed decisions on fertiliser use, improving soil health and reducing input expenses.

CottonAce from Wadhvani Institute for Artificial Intelligence is an AI-based mobile app that allows farmers to upload photos of pests caught in traps to receive instant, localised advice on pesticide application. This app helps thousands of smallholder cotton farmers to protect their crops from pests like pink bollworm, leading to higher quality harvests and increased profit margins. Niqo Robotics uses AI-powered robots equipped with computer vision (day-and-night cameras) to identify pests and weeds in real-time. This enables selective spraying, which ensures chemicals are applied only where needed. This has led to a significant reduction in pesticide use (up to 60-90% in some cases), lowering costs for farmers and reducing environmental toxicity. Cropin is an AI-enabled digital ecosystem that spans farm monitoring, credit risk analytics, and last-mile farmer engagement. It drives sustainable productivity and climate-smart decisions, turning fragmented practices into predictive farming systems ready for global scale. PadhaiWithAI uses an AI-powered personalised learning platform designed to tackle poor mathematics learning outcomes in government schools. Within just six weeks, the initiative significantly improved pass rates and the performance of high-achievers. It serves as a scalable model for bridging learning gaps in rural Indian education. Rocket Learning has an AI-powered learning companion, Appu (a generative AI elephant), that interacts with parents and children via WhatsApp. It delivers bite-sized, play-based activities to help children under six achieve foundational literacy and numeracy. Belagavi Smart City is integrating deep learning-enabled eBooks into its public library ecosystem. Designed to analyse user behaviour and adapt storylines, vocabulary, and difficulty levels in real time, these books have improved engagement and comprehension. There is a 12% improvement in reading speed in just two weeks. The government can become a powerful ecosystem orchestrator for these grassroots AI innovations, helping them scale to pan-India high-impact applications. A key focus area of the government could be to assist in market making for these AI applications. For example, the government can facilitate procurement for empanelled domestic AI applications to provide solutions for government (including state government) departments, hospitals, schools, etc. Further, by setting benchmarks for AI in health, agriculture, education, etc., the government can create a trusted environment for customers and citizens to adopt them. Once these AI applications have proven themselves, the government could facilitate integrating the most impactful applications into an India AI Applications Stack — i.e., solutions built for India's scale and diversity that are ready for global deployment. We can leverage platforms like the Global Partnership on AI strong national governance framework for the Indian AI Application Stack that dovetails with international frameworks like the European GDPR can make the stack a plug-and-play in many countries.

At Yerawada prison, inmates take on role of chess coaches for 200 fellow prisoners



AS THE day began inside the high-security Yerawada Central Prison in Pune, a life-term inmate walked to the prison library. On the tables lay chessboards, pieces already arranged, and some desktop computers with chess applications open. A dozen inmates were ready for the lesson for the day: the King and Pawn versus King endgame, one of the most fundamental endgames in chess.

The life-term inmate, in his late 40s, is among a group of around 20 prisoners at Yerawada Central Prison who are training nearly 200 fellow inmates interested in chess. The group includes members of the winning team of the FIDE Intercontinental Championship for Prisoners, along with others receiving expert coaching as they prepare for future editions of the tournament. In October last year, a six-member team of inmates from Yerawada prison clinched gold by beating the El Salvador team in a decisive Armageddon game in a tense final match. All six members are serving life sentences, so are most of the 20 inmates who are being trained for future editions.

The chess team at Yerawada Central Prison began taking shape in mid-2021 under Indian Oil Corporation (IOC)'s social stewardship programme, Parivartan: Prison to Pride, launched across prisons in India. The initiative gained international attention in 2024 when Yerawada hosted the International Chess for Freedom Conference, organised by the International Chess Federation (FIDE) in partnership with IOC, focusing on chess as a key correctional activity. Prior to gold in the intercontinental championship in October 2025, the Yerawada prison team clinched silver in Asian championship in 2025, fourth position in intercontinental championship in 2024, gold in intercontinental championship in 2023 and bronze in intercontinental championship in 2022. The intercontinental championship is the biggest-ever chess event among correctional facilities, organised by FIDE and the Chicago Cook County Sheriff's Office, a part of the 'Chess for Freedom' programme. Yerawada prison Superintendent Sunil Dhamal said, "Inside the prison walls, chess has become more than a game. It offers inmates a

structured space to think, plan and focus, replacing idle hours with discipline and purpose. The dedication shown by the players reflects a deeper desire to rebuild themselves and move beyond the most difficult chapters of their lives. We have a group of around 20 inmates, most serving life sentences, who have been selected for specialised training. They undergo intensive training from outside coaches for two to three months prior to each international competition. But for the rest of the year, these 20 inmates become coaches for around 200 inmates who are interested in chess."

A prison department officer said, "Every inmate carries a past marked by difficult and often dark chapters. Chess, with its emphasis on strategy, patience and discipline, offers a rare opportunity to look ahead with purpose. While all the participants are serving sentences for serious offences including murder, the programme aims to open a constructive path — one that encourages reflection, responsibility and the possibility of a more positive future." Indian Chess Grandmaster Abhijit Kunte, who mentors the programme, roped in chess player and trainer Ketan Khaire as the team coach around the same time when the team was formed in 2021. Along with Kunte and Khaire, the trainers for the Yerawada chess team comprises International Master Eesha Karavade, Assistant Coach Sagar Mohite, Competition Referee Pavan Katkade, Computer Systems Assistant Ganesh Malkari and Team Coordinator Yogesh Pardeshi. The programme receives guidance from Additional Director General Suhas Warke and Special Inspector General Yogesh Desai.

Speaking to The Indian Express, Khaire said, "While the focus of the programme is training of the 20 selected inmates, what makes us even prouder is the fact that these 20 become coaches themselves for around 200 more inmates. That is a very unexpected yet reassuring spin-off of our programme. When we started the specialised training, chess skill sets were unrefined. The programme began by grounding participants in the basics — understanding the language of chess, learning how to record games, and gaining clarity about the level of competition ahead. As training progressed to deeper tactical and strategic concepts, the sessions evolved into more than lessons on the board. In that space, many inmates began sharing their personal challenges, speaking candidly about emotional burdens and their desire for change. We now have a set of 20 inmates who can compete in international competitions and a pool of 200 more to select from." Training includes chess rules and terminology, algebraic notation and tournament protocols, followed by opening principles, core tactical motifs such as forks, pins and skewers, and fundamental endgames including king-and-pawn positions. Sessions also emphasise game analysis, error identification and time management.

As world adjusts to US power politics, India's task is to secure market access, investment

GNS News Agency, Feb 19 Global economic engagement is and was riddled with contradictions. We aspired for growth yet feared competition. This diffidence shaped our early approach to trade. PM Narendra Modi has acted with panache. The present engagement on FTAs with the EU and US represents a discontinuity with the past. The US deal is not an isolated initiative but integral to a long, uneven journey from protectionist to purposeful participation in global trade. After Independence, barter trade was inescapable. In the gray corridors of the Soviet bloc, we swapped tea for machinery and rice for oil. It was a world where freedom of choice was traded for the comfort of certainty. State entities like the State Trading Corporation and the Mines and Minerals Trading Corporation canalised foreign trade in a debilitating trade regime. I witnessed this caution firsthand in 1973 while negotiating concessional oil with the Shah of Iran as the global economy buckled under the first oil crisis. Today, however, our deepening engagement with the United States represents the shedding of that protectionist skin.

My engagement with these issues began in 1969 when I joined as undersecretary in the Ministry of Commerce. I participated in GATT and UNCTAD negotiations and later during the transition to the WTO. At the time, we took pride in negotiating stratospheric bound tariff rates while keeping applied rates at more acceptable levels. As Anne Krueger argued, such protectionist regimes encourage rent-seeking, stifle competitiveness, and misallocate resources. The Tokyo Round attempted to discipline non-tariff barriers, but the Uruguay Round altered the landscape by creating the WTO. It expanded non-trade sovereign obligations. For developing nations, this sharpened anxieties. It introduced non-trade issues of investment and procurement policy into a forum designed primarily for trade issues. These divides were further exposed in Cancun and later in Seattle. On December 1, 1999, during the Seattle WTO Ministerial Conference, President Bill Clinton's attempt to introduce labour and investment standards met with massive protests. PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee tasked me to assist the delegation's leader, Murasoli Maran, then Minister of Commerce and Industry. The US presidency's whims derailed these negotiations. Whims mattered then as they do now.

Today, that rules-based order is strained by complex supply chains, industrial subsidies, and the rise of state capitalism. With its dispute settlement mechanism in shambles, the WTO has lost its functional credibility. We are witnessing the "trilemma" articulated by Dani Rodrik: Deep globalisation, democratic politics, and national sovereignty cannot be simultaneously maximised. In this vacuum, FTAs have displaced multilateral ambition. Jagdish Bhagwati's critique of the "spaghetti bowl" of overlapping rules remains valid, and Paul Krugman correctly cautions against viewing trade deals as universal remedies. Yet, these arrangements deliver the predictability that markets crave. India's evolution mirrors this realism. Following the 1991 crisis, trade liberalisation became the first ingredient of India's response. Initiated by a Congress government, these reforms dismantled extreme insulation. Fears of deindustrialisation proved baseless; Indian industry adapted and emerged globally competitive. Having come of age, India can no longer prosper behind walls of excessive protection.

Our current choices reflect a sophisticated understanding of strategic autonomy. It is not a purist doctrine but a practical instrument shaped by cost-benefit calculations. Access to American technology, capital, and markets have long-term value. Cooperation with the US and the EU strengthens domestic economic and defence capabilities. Diversifying external partnerships enhances India's strategic leverage, becoming a more consequential partner, better insulated against future uncertainties. Crucially, the new India-US interim arrangement does not leave us harshly exposed. Agriculture remains a vital political and social anchor; providing livelihoods for 45 per cent of our population despite contributing only 18 per cent to GDP. Diversification into value-added agro-activities reduces overload and



Without this interim arrangement, India would face elevated tariffs, a widening competitiveness gap, and hemorrhaging of foreign investment. Such outward capital flight puts continuing pressure on exchange rates and currency management, making reserves increasingly vulnerable. Further, avoiding the 25 per cent tariff linked to Russia-related measures carries immense signalling value

enhances incomes in the farming sector. Interestingly, Bangladesh's "free access" to the US came at the cost of exposing sensitive domestic agricultural sectors to American scale and subsidies. The India-US interim arrangement, alongside our successful negotiations with the EU, must be viewed through this lens of calibrated market access. The US agreement signals an ambition for trade and procurement flows approaching \$500 billion over five years. In 2024-25, India exported \$86.5 billion in merchandise to the US; 20 per cent of our total exports. Until recently, nearly \$41 billion of those exports faced reciprocal tariffs as high as 50 per cent. We are not reducing tariffs to zero. We are pursuing a balanced outcome that protects our industrial base while securing zero-duty access for high-margin sectors where India dominates, such as generic pharmaceuticals, gems and diamonds, and aircraft parts. While our reciprocal rate stands at a balanced 18 per cent, other exporters face significantly higher barriers: China at 35 per cent, Vietnam at 20 per cent and ASEAN nations at 19 per cent. This is neither a total victory nor a debilitating loss. In complex trade negotiations, unlike the ABBA song "The winner takes it all, the loser must fall", there are no absolute winners or losers.

Without this interim arrangement, India would face elevated tariffs, a widening competitiveness gap, and hemorrhaging of foreign investment. Such outward capital flight puts continuing pressure on exchange rates and currency management, making reserves increasingly vulnerable. Further, avoiding the 25 per cent tariff linked to Russia-related measures carries immense signalling value. The certainty and openness of India's future support greater investor confidence and greater US investment flows. Judicial reforms, Bilateral investment protection treaties, and considering credible arbitration frameworks such as the Abu Dhabi Global Market could further fortify both investment flows and investor comfort. Trade negotiations are rarely one-sided and must be judged within a long-term geopolitical frame. The world is adjusting to US power politics, but India's task is precise: Securing market access and investment amid strategic churn. A successful negotiation is often said to leave all sides equally dissatisfied. If this agreement raises exports and deepens technical-industrial capability during a disorderly global transition, it is a substantial achievement. It is ironic that a momentous mindset shift is met with prevarication. India is mature enough to seek purposeful engagement with a credible place in the global value added chain. What could have been a moment missed has become a moment seized.

'Opponents, not enemies': Parliament needs to remember Sushma Swaraj's words once more



For years, the decline of parliamentary standards in the country has been lamented. The passage of Bills without adequate or no discussion, the din during discussions, MPs rushing to the Well, the throwing of papers at each other, proceedings stalled for days on end, and allegations of partisanship against the presiding officers. All this has become commonplace. And yet, by any standard, the present crisis gripping Parliament is unprecedented. There is a notice, signed by 118 Opposition MPs, to move a no-confidence motion against the Lok Sabha Speaker. The Opposition may not be able to get the motion passed, given the numbers weigh heavily in favour of the ruling party, but it does raise questions about the credibility of the Speaker, something the Opposition had avoided over the years.

It was also unprecedented for Birla to admit that he had advised Prime Minister Narendra Modi not to come to the Lok Sabha to reply to the debate on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address. Birla said he had "concrete" information that "many members of the Congress party could carry out an unexpected act by reaching the spot where the prime minister sits". In other words, the Speaker was apprehensive that the PM could be attacked and that it was not safe for him to attend the proceedings. This admission was startling.

The second implication was that the government was not in a position to protect the PM in the Lok Sabha. Since mid-2024, the Central Industrial Security Force, and not the Watch and Ward staff, has been looking after Parliament security. If the PM is really not safe in the Lok Sabha, that is serious business. The Opposition blamed the government for "managing the headlines", as Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi had cited former Army chief General M M Naravane's unpublished book, "Four Stars of Destiny", when attempting to question the Centre over the face-off with the Chinese military in eastern Ladakh in 2020. With Penguin Random House clarifying that the book had not been published and General Naravane endorsing the publisher's position, the situation has become more explosive. It has been complicated by an FIR registered that has turned the discussion on the contents of the book to how Gandhi came to possess it. On Thursday, a day after Gandhi addressed the House on the Union Budget, BJP MP Nishikant Dubey submitted a notice to move a substantive motion against the LoP for engaging in "anti-India activities". Dubey has called for the cancellation of Gandhi's Lok Sabha membership and demanded that he be barred from contesting elections for life.

These developments have had a bearing on the dignity of two prime institutions of Parliament — the LoP and the Speaker — and underscore once again the breakdown of trust between the ruling side and the Opposition that has rendered Parliament dysfunctional. The bitterness that has come to vitiate the relationship between the two sides makes dialogue that much more difficult. While the government has to ensure Parliament runs smoothly, it is not possible without the cooperation of the Opposition, or without civility in public discourse, which is becoming a casualty.

It is not as if disruptions are new to Parliament. A sight indelibly etched in my mind is of Home Minister Indrajit Gupta, sometime in 1996, sitting near the entrance to Parliament's Central Hall, holding his head in his hands and

exuding helplessness after the shenanigans in the House. The coalition era (1989-2014) also saw contention convulse Parliament time and again. Regional parties had become national players; their MPs would often stall Parliament to send a message to their party chiefs that they were agitating for the state in Delhi. I remember how RJD MPs opposed the Lokpal Bill in the Rajya Sabha in December 2011, with one of them tearing the Bill and throwing it in the House. RJD chief Lalu Prasad sat in the visitors' gallery that day, hawk-like, to see how his MPs were faring. In 2016, a riled President Pranab Mukherjee had upbraided MPs to get on with business. "For God's sake, do your job," he told the protesting members. In the past, when the House became uproarious, the presiding officers used to adjourn proceedings and call leaders from the ruling side and the Opposition parties to their chamber to persuade them to exercise restraint and "find a way out". These attempts often succeeded because the presiding officers still exercised a kind of moral authority. Besides, there were leaders on both sides of the aisle who believed in the sanctity of Parliament and wanted it to function.

Where is parliamentary democracy headed?

Where then is our parliamentary democracy headed? The answers have to come from within Parliament. While Parliament has been a witness to many a stirring speech over the years, the essence of what the relationship between the ruling side and the Opposition should be was captured in the words of BJP leader Sushma Swaraj, then the LoP, in 2014. Swaraj made the speech during the last sitting of the 15th Lok Sabha, just before the House dissolved for elections that turned out to be historic. "Bhai Kamal Nath," Swaraj said in her inimitable style, "apni shararat se is sadan ko uljha dete the, aur adarniya Shinde ji (Sushil Kumar Shinde) apni sharafat se use suljha dete the." (My brother Kamal Nath used to leave this House in tangles with his mischief, and the respected Shinde ji used to untangle it with his decency.) Swaraj then went on to compliment Sonia Gandhi, whose possible elevation as PM she had once opposed by threatening to touse her head. Swaraj thanked Sonia for her "mediatory role" during times of crisis, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh for his "gentleness", Speaker Meira Kumar for her "tolerance" (of different views), and L K Advani's "nyayapriyata (sense of fair play)", all of which had contributed to the functioning of the House despite problems. But the core sentiment at the heart of Indian democracy, Swaraj said, was that "while we are opponents, we are not enemies". That made it possible for relationships to be maintained despite ideological and programmatic differences.

Elon Musk targets self-growing Moon city within 10 years

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New Delhi: Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk on Monday said he is aiming to build a self-growing city on Moon in less than 10 years, followed by human presence on Mars in about 20 years.

According to the world's richest man, SpaceX has already shifted focus to building a self-growing city on the Moon, "as we can potentially achieve that in less than 10 years, whereas Mars would take 20+ years".

In a post on his X social media platform, Musk said the mission of SpaceX remains the same — extend consciousness and life as we know it to the stars.

'Right to dignified life': Haryana human rights panel orders Gurgaon authorities to remove encroachments at Sector 57



GNS News Agency, Feb 19

The complaint, filed last year by Roshan Lal Yadav, president of the Residents Welfare Association (RWA) of Sector 57, alleged ongoing illegal activities at the site despite previous interventions. The complaint, filed last year by Roshan Lal Yadav, president of the Residents Welfare Association (RWA) of Sector 57, alleged ongoing illegal activities at the site despite previous interventions. The Haryana Human Rights Commission (HHRC) recently directed the Gurgaon authorities to take immediate and permanent measures to remove encroachments and prevent the unlawful dumping and storage of building materials at a nursery school site at Sector 57. The sector is just 3 km away from the Golf Course Road. In its order issued by Chairperson Justice Lalit Batra on January 14 and made public Saturday, the Commission emphasised the need for sustained enforcement to avoid recurrence.

The complaint, filed last year by Roshan Lal Yadav, president of the Residents Welfare Association (RWA) of Sector 57, alleged ongoing illegal activities at the site despite previous interventions. During the hearing, Yadav informed the Commission that unauthorised dumping and storage of building materials continued, and he supported his claim with recent photographs sent via WhatsApp that showed persistent alleged encroachment and misuse of the land. The Commission reviewed multiple reports submitted in compliance with a previous order dated October 31, 2025. A report dated January 12 from the Municipal Corporation

of Gurgaon (MCG) stated that enforcement in Sector 57 had not been handed over to the MCG and that Haryana Shehri Vikas Pradhikaran (HSVP) itself handled all such activities in its sectors. A December police report stated that the people involved were instructed to shift operations to non-residential areas. Some complied, while others were in the process of doing so. The report listed five FIRs registered at the Sector 56 police station last year for offences under the Motor Vehicles Act, the Disaster Management Act, and for negligent acts that led to the spread of infections. Yadav, during the hearing, explained that while HSVP removed encroachments periodically, the same individuals re-encroached due to a lack of continuous monitoring, deterrent measures, and strict enforcement by the district administration.

During the hearing, DCP East Gaurav Rajpurohit was directed via teleconference to personally oversee the matter, ensure effective and time-bound steps for permanent removal of the encroachment, and prevent future illegal activities. He was also instructed to submit a detailed status report on the FIRs, including whether trials had commenced, and if not, the investigation status in each case. HSVP Administrator Vaishali Sharma, also contacted via teleconference, informed the Commission that a tender had been floated for barricading the area. In view of repeated encroachments, she was directed to implement robust protective measures, including the construction of RCC/CC boundary walls not less than 8 to 10 feet high, the erection of permanent iron grills or fencing where feasible, installation of prominent warning signboards stating "Trespassers Will Be Prosecuted", and reflective signage visible at night. Additional directives included exploring CCTV installation at vulnerable points, providing adequate lighting, demarcating the land with boundary pillars, and coordinating with local police for periodic patrolling and surprise inspections. Assistant Registrar Dr Puneet Arora stated that the Commission views encroachment on public land as a violation of citizens' right to a safe, clean, and dignified life, and not merely a law-and-order issue. Speaking with Yadav said HSVP officials had since visited the site again, and told him that work on the directions would commence soon.

Fishing in Tapi River, man & 9-year-old daughter killed as angle iron falls on boat



GNS News Agency, Feb 19

A MAN and his nine-year-old daughter were killed in Surat on Saturday as their boat overturned after a heavy angle iron fell on it even as work was underway on the under-construction bullet train bridge on the Tapi River. The Utran police identified the deceased as Mohsin Ikbai Shaikh (35) and his daughter Huma, 9. Police said the incident took place in the afternoon, when Mohsin, a resident of Badat street in Kathor village of Kamrej taluka in Surat, was engaged in fishing activities in the Tapi River along with his

mother Mumtaz Shaikh (55) and daughter. Construction work on a bridge – that will connect Kamrej with Kathor villages – as part of the bullet train project was also underway at the spot at the time, police said. The boat overturned after the angle iron fell on it, throwing all three persons overboard. Mumtaz raised an alarm. A press release issued by the NHRL (National High Speed Rail Corporation Limited) later on Saturday said, "... a workman heard a distress call. Upon reaching the spot, he noticed a woman in the water. He took prompt action, jumped into the water and rescued the woman. During the rescue, it was reported that two more persons, who were in the same boat, had fallen into the water. In the meantime, some local fishermen reached the location, traced the other two persons and took out of the water. Later, it was learnt both could not survive."

A police team also reached the spot and sent the bodies for post-mortem examination. Mumtaz's condition is stable, doctors said on Saturday evening. The release added that the NHRL and its contractor are extending full cooperation to the police in the ongoing investigation. Inspector D U Barad said, "The girl died due to drowning and Mohsin suffered a head injury. We have registered an accidental death case and started a probe."

Amit Shah meets senior BJP leaders amid buzz over cabinet, organisational rejig

GNS News Agency, Feb 19

Amid buzz over a reshuffle in the Uttar Pradesh Cabinet and organisational changes in the state BJP unit, Union Home Minister Amit Shah held a closed-door meeting with senior leaders at the party headquarters in Lucknow on Saturday. On his way to the airport after inaugurating the UP Diwas ceremony at Rashtra Prerna Sthal, Shah held the meeting. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, his deputy Brajesh Pathak, party state president Pankaj Chaudhary, state general secretary (organisation) Dharampal Singh, and other state general secretaries were present in the meeting that lasted for about 30 minutes. "By holding the meeting with top functionaries of the government and party organisation, Shah has sent out a clear message that both the government and the party will have to work together over the next one year to ensure BJP victory for the third consecutive time in the state next year," said a BJP leader.

With the state elections scheduled next year, the reshuffle of the state cabinet is expected to accommodate new ministers to set the caste and regional equations right. Currently, both the chief minister and party state president are from Gorakhpur in Eastern UP. Also, Pankaj Chaudhary, who was elected state president in December, has to constitute the new state committee, regional committee, and district committees as soon as possible to set the organisation ahead of the assembly elections. Notably, those aspiring for a position in the state organisation as well as the state cabinet are making rounds of the state headquar-



ters in Lucknow and the central headquarters in Delhi. Meanwhile, the party has currently deployed the entire state organisation in the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise of electoral rolls. After the end of the first phase, data showed that the state's predominantly urban districts are facing a higher number of voter deletions than their relatively rural counterparts, triggering concern among the party. The BJP central leadership has held several rounds of meetings with the state leaders regarding the electoral exercise. Lalmani is an Assistant Editor with The Indian Express, and is based in New Delhi. He covers politics of the Hindi Heartland, tracking BJP, Samajwadi Party, BSP, RLD and other parties based in UP, Bihar and Uttarakhand. Covered the Lok Sabha elections of 2014, 2019 and 2024; Assembly polls of 2012, 2017 and 2022 in

1 arrested, 4 minors held days after man found near railway underpass in East Delhi

A 22-year-old youth has been arrested and three juveniles apprehended in connection with the murder of a 25-year-old man whose body was found near a railway underpass in East Delhi's Preet Vihar last week, police said on Saturday. Police identified the arrested man as Aman, a resident of Mandawali, who has been booked previously in three criminal cases. The juveniles are in the 14 to 16 age group. Police said the deceased, Deva – originally from Rama Bai in Kanpur – who lived under a railway bridge in Mandawali, was allegedly involved in theft and snatching incidents along with the accused. A quarrel reportedly broke out over sharing of money between them. "In a fit of rage, the accused beat up Deva and also hit him with stones and knives, causing fatal injuries," said an officer.

The matter came to light on January 22, when a head

constable on patrol spotted the body near the railway underpass close to Hotel Mona International on PPG Road. The deceased, who was initially unidentified, was sent to Hedgewar Hospital for medico-legal examination and the body was kept at Lal Bahadur Shastri Hospital mortuary. A murder case was registered at Preet Vihar police station under BNS. "Considering the gravity and blind nature of the case... multiple teams from the Anti-Narcotics Squad, Special Staff of the East district and the local police station were formed to trace the killers. The teams conducted extensive CCTV camera analysis and technical surveillance, tracing the movements of the deceased prior to the incident," said DCP (East) Abhishek Dhania. After the police identified the four suspects, Aman, during questioning, allegedly admitted that he was involved in the murder.

HC orders UP DGP to deal sternly with cops not disclosing ground of arrest in 'memo'



GNS News Agency, Feb 19

The Allahabad High Court has directed the Uttar Pradesh Director General of Police (DGP) that police officials not disclosing the grounds of arrest to the accused in the prescribed document while making the arrest should be dealt strictly and shall face a departmental inquiry after suspension to stop them indulging in such "illegality".

The division bench of Justices Jai Krishna Upadhyay and Siddharth said in the order that the DGP had issued a circular on July 25 last year in the matter along with a "memo" that has to be filled during arrest. The bench observed... "his own Subordinate Officer of Police is not complying the same and therefore the purpose of new arrest memo having been made and circulated to all the police officers of the State has been frustrated". The directive was issued while hearing a habeas corpus writ petition for issuing a writ order or direction to the Gautam Buddha Nagar police to produce and release the petitioner, Umang Rastogi, from "illegal custody", while declaring his "arrest, detention and remand as illegal, null and void".

The petitioner also prayed for issuing a writ order quashing the remand order passed by Civil Judge (SD) FTC/ACJM, Gautam Buddha Nagar. According to the petitioner, his father, a permanent resident of Haldwani, Utrakhand, was "abducted" by the Bistrakh police station (Gautam Buddha Nagar) station house officer (SHO) from their business premises at Laxmi Nagar in Delhi and was kept in illegal custody for 5 days. During his illegal detention, evidence was fabricated and an FIR was registered against his father under Section 317(2) of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita on December 3, 2025, it was alleged. After the petitioner's father filed a writ petition in the Delhi High Court, the police on December 26, 2025, arrested Umang Rastogi from Haldwani without disclosing to him the ground of his arrest, it was further claimed.

Umang Rastogi was produced in the Gautam Buddha Nagar district court the next day seeking his remand but was not given a copy of the arrest memo, he said. His counsel moved an application in the local court seeking his release, but it was rejected. Then they approached the High Court challenging the remand order dated December

27. Justifying Umang Rastogi's arrest, the additional advocate general argued that the petitioner had a "criminal history" with six cases and he did not deserve any leniency from the court.

The division bench, however, said, "After considering the pleadings of the parties and the rival submissions, we find that the crux of the dispute between the parties is that the petitioner was arrested without disclosure of grounds of arrest in the arrest memo brought on record and it was also not supplied to him though his signature was taken thereon." "The grounds of arrest must be informed to every person arrested. The ground of arrest should be furnished to the arrestee in writing. Breach of any such requirements will render the arrest of arrestee illegal," the court added. "Earlier there was no definite pro forma of memorandum of arrest in the state of Uttar Pradesh and the investigating officer used to make his own memo of arrest and arrest of accused was made on its basis. Finding total anarchy in this regard, this court passed number of orders and thereafter the DGP office UP, got a proforma of arrest memo prepared and the same was directed to be circulated to all the Police Commissioners, SSPs/SPs, AIGs, zonal AIGs, DIGs were informed about the new arrest memo by the circular of the DGP issues on July 25, 2025," the bench stated. It further said, "The direction of the Director General of Police clearly amounts to dereliction of duty on the part of the police personnel investigating this case. The empty compliance of law and justification of the same before the court, as in this case by the respondents, deserves to be discouraged." It said, "In the instant matter, admittedly, no such effort had been made by the learned Magistrate to ensure adequate legal aid to the accused petitioner and appropriate opportunity of hearing at the time of judicial remand. Even the arrest memo does not contain any column regarding grounds of arrest of the petitioner." It further observed, "No details of the material collected by the investigating officer, till the time of arrest of petitioner, which necessitated his arrest was disclosed. Details of other material collected, documentary or electronic, relating to person arrested was also not disclosed. Even the details of sections of B.N.S.S and other laws, their supporting material and evidence collected against the arrested accused were not disclosed in the arrest memo. Therefore, it is clear that the arrest of the petitioner was absolutely illegal. The purpose of preparing the arrest memo was frustrated by the Sub-Inspector of Police." The court ordered, "In such view of the matter, the impugned order dated 26.12.2024 is hereby set aside. The arrest of the petitioner is also quashed. The petitioner shall be set at liberty, unless required in connection with any other case." The bench directed that the "order be communicated to Director General of Police, Uttar Pradesh through Registrar General of this Court and accordingly, a circular be issued to all the Commissioners of Police / SSPs/SPs for necessary compliance in the light of the observations made".

EC publishes 1.5 crore voter names on list of 'logical discrepancies'

GNS News Agency, Feb 19

The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Saturday published a list of 1.50 crore names for hearing in connection with the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. Out of them, 30 lakh names have been categorised as "unmapped voters" meaning they have no link with the last SIR conducted in 2002, and 1.20 crore names with logical discrepancies. According to the EC sources, the list has been published for Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) and District Election Officers (DEOs), who will take print-outs of the list and display it at various locations as per the Supreme Court guidelines. A senior ECI official stated that the commission had aimed to publish the list by Saturday night. "However, it was not mandatory to publish a list within January 24. The Supreme Court did not govern any such deadline," a senior official of the EC said. The Supreme Court had on January 19 issued a set of directions to the Election Commission to ensure that the verification of the persons put in the 'logical discrepancies' category is conducted in a transparent manner, without causing stress and inconvenience to the persons. It had also directed the EC to display the names of those on the "logical discrepancies" list at gram panchayat bhavans, block offices of talukas and ward offices in West Bengal. The court noted that about 1.25 crore notices have been sent to various persons, citing discrepancies such as mismatch in parents' names, low age-gap with parents, number of progeny exceeding six. The Supreme Court also clarified that persons, who have received notices from the EC, will be entitled to submit their documents/objections through their authorised agents, who can be the Booth Level Agents (BLAs). The agents have to be



appointed through a letter marked with a signature or thumb impression.

Taking into consideration the concerns expressed by the petitioners, that persons will have to travel hundreds of kilometres to respond to the notices, the Supreme Court directed that the office for submitting the documents/objections shall be set up within the Panchayat Bhavan/Block offices. If the documents are found to be unsatisfactory, the election officers should give the persons an opportunity of hearing, which can be attended by the authorised agent. According to sources, some districts had already published a hearing list after the Supreme Court verdict. "Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) ordered DEOs that no one can publish the list because it will be published by ECI centrally. Those who have already published lists locally, CEO asked DEOs to withdraw such lists because that can create confusions."

Shiv Sena (UBT) corporators from Kalyan East untraceable, party leaders claim they have filed missing complaint

GNS News Agency, Feb 19

The formal group registration of corporators was held at the Konkani divisional commissioner's office, where corporators from the Shinde-led Shiv Sena and the MNS were present together. The formal group registration of corporators was held at the Konkani divisional commissioner's office, where corporators from the Shinde-led Shiv Sena and the MNS were present together. Four newly elected corporators of the Shiv Sena (UBT) from Kalyan East have been untraceable for the past few days, prompting the party's district leadership to approach the police, claimed a Sena UBT leader.

The missing persons complaint was lodged at Kolsewadi police station in Kalyan by Shiv Sena (UBT) district chief Sharad Patil, who sought a technical probe into the matter, including examination of CCTV footage and call detail records, the party leaders claimed.

Patil said that two of the four corporators fall within his jurisdiction, and that concern for their safety led him to formally approach the police. "After instructions from the party leadership, we decided to lodge a complaint. If the corporators are safe, they should come forward and clarify their position before the media," he said. The development comes amid heightened political activity in the Kalyan-Dombivli Municipal Corporation (KDMC) following post-election realignments. Earlier this week, five corporators of the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS), led by Raj



Thackeray, extended support to the Shiv Sena headed by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, strengthening the ruling alliance's numbers in the civic body. The formal group registration of corporators was held at the Konkani divisional commissioner's office, where corporators from the Shinde-led Shiv Sena and the MNS were present together.

The move altered the post-poll arithmetic and added momentum to negotiations over the mayor's post. In the recently held KDMC elections, the Shinde-led Shiv Sena emerged as the largest party with 53 seats, followed by the BJP with 50. The Shiv Sena (UBT) secured 11 seats, while the MNS won five, Congress two and the Sharad Pawar-led NCP one, in the 122-member House.

EU leaders ready countermeasures to pressure from Russia, China and Trump



European Union leaders broadly agreed on a plan to restructure the 27-nation bloc's economy to make it more competitive as they face antagonism from U.S. President Donald Trump, strong-arm tactics from China and hybrid threats blamed on Russia. Meeting in a Belgian castle, the EU leaders agreed an "action plan" with a strict timeline for the economic restructuring, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said. "The pressure and the sense of urgency is enormous, and that can move mountains," she said. The plan, to be presented formally in March, would include measures to coordinate upgrading energy grids, deepen financial integration and loosen merger regulations to allow European firms to grow to better compete globally, she said.

"We need European champions," Ms. von der Leyen said. European Council President António Costa described the meeting as a "real game changer" as leaders threw their weight behind plans to further integrate and simplify the bloc's financial systems. The meeting had started with an image of unity between the two traditional power centers of the EU after each had publicly staked out different strategic positions. French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz arrived together, crossing a drawbridge side by side into the 16th-century Alden Biesen castle. "We share this sense of urgency that Europe must take action," Mr. Macron said while standing on a blue welcome carpet next to his German counterpart. "We want to make this European Union faster, we want to make it better, and above all we want to ensure that we have competitive industry in Europe," Mr. Merz said. Mr. Merz and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni lead a wing of the bloc calling for deregulation, rebooting Europe's relationship with Washington and forging trade deals like the recent one struck

with the Mercosur nations of South America. The EU "cannot continue to hyperregulate," said Ms. Meloni. "There's no time to lose." France instead is leading a push for "strategic autonomy" — meaning a bloc less dependent on Washington. Mr. Macron argues that EU countries should buy exclusively from European producers as the continent pursues greater military spending as a response to Russian aggression in Ukraine. Mr. Merz and Ms. Meloni say purchases should be from both foreign and European firms. In comments to reporters as he arrived, Macron said he was urging his partners to protect "sectors that are particularly under threat" like cleantech, chemicals, steel, the car industry and defense. "There is also an increased pressure on us, with competition — sometimes unfair competition — that is very intense, with very strong pressure from China, tariffs imposed on us by the Americans with threats of coercive practices," Mr. Macron said. EU leaders will also debate new financial instruments to protect the bloc in a global trading system rocked by Mr. Trump's blitzkrieg of tariffs and China's restricting of critical mineral exports. Mr. Macron is renewing his call for the EU to be able to borrow money, which he described as "Eurobonds for the future" that would provide an opportunity "to challenge the hegemony of the dollar." Most leaders are calling for action along the lines of the economic stimulus strategy called for by Mario Draghi, former head of the European Central Bank. The 2024 plan includes cutting regulations, making infrastructure investments and establishing trade ties with more countries.

Both Mr. Draghi and Enrico Letta, a former Italian Prime Minister, beseeched leaders assembled in the castle to drastically restructure and integrate the bloc's economy. "We have way too many barriers that prevent money and capital from moving from one country to another, way too many obstacles to simplification," said Roberta Metsola, president of the European Parliament. "No more words, but more action," said Mr. Metsola, who like Mr. Merz and Ms. von der Leyen is a leading figure in the European People's Party, which is the largest bloc in the European Parliament and claims 13 heads of EU states as members. Citizens across the bloc are hungry for a stronger EU and a more unified, stronger and ambitious leadership amid military threats, economic pressures and climate instability, according to an official EU poll, Eurobarometer. "There has never been a better time for European leaders, national political leaders, to actually leverage on these European citizens' demand for greater European action," said Alberto Alemanno, a professor of EU law at the HEC Paris business school.

Govt. unveils new CPI series covering more items and services, with revised weights; January retail inflation at 2.75%



Retail inflation as per the new series of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) stood at 2.75% in January 2026. As this is the first data release from the new series, a historical comparison is not yet possible. The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) on Thursday 9 February 12, 2026) released CPI data for January 2026 based on the new series of the index in the presence of MoSPI Secretary Saurabh Garg, Chief Economic Advisor V. Anantha Nageswaran, and other officials of MoSPI.

This new series incorporates an updated base year of 2024 from the earlier 2012, wider coverage of goods and services, and new weights given to these goods and services based on consumption patterns revealed in the latest Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) 2023-24. "The economy has undergone a significant transformation in the last decade," Mr. Nageswaran said in his speech. "Consumption behaviour, market structures, and the compositions of household expenditure have evolved and the new CPI structure unsurprisingly reflects these changes." Improvements in measurement The total number of items covered under the new series has increased to 358 from the 299 items in the older series. Of these, the number of goods covered has increased to 308 from 259, and the number of services included has gone up to 50 from the earlier 40.

The new series also collects data from more sources across the country. Data is collected from 1,465 rural mar-

kets, up from 1,181. The number of urban markets covered has gone up to 1,395 from 1,114. Notably, the new series also collects data from 12 online marketplaces, a new category that has been included now. The new series of the CPI, with a base year of 2024, provides more granular data by dividing the underlying goods and services into 12 broad groups compared to the six groups under the older series. As a result of this, and also based on the consumption patterns of the HCES 2023-24, the weights assigned to these goods and services have also been revised to better reflect current consumption. The weightage assigned to the food and beverages category has been revised downward in the new series to 36.75% from the earlier 45.86%. "The lower weightage on the relatively volatile food category may make the headline inflation number less volatile, all other things remaining equal," Mr. Nageswaran said.

The housing category, with an earlier weight of 10.07%, has been expanded to also include water, electricity, gas and other fuels, and this combined category now has a weight of 17.67% in the new series. The additional groups in the new series include furnishings, household equipment and routine household maintenance (with a weight of 4.47%), health (6.1%), transport (8.8%), information and communication (3.61%), recreation, sports and culture (1.52%), education services (3.33%), restaurants and accommodation services (3.35%), and personal care, social protection and miscellaneous goods and services (5.04%). The paan, tobacco and intoxicants category saw its weight increase to 2.99% from 2.38% in the older series. The clothing and footwear category's weight fell to 2.38% from 6.53%. "Since the basket is aligned with recent expenditure data, the inflation signals from this will be more closely matched to the prevailing economic conditions," Mr. Nageswaran said. "This includes the information basis for calibrating monetary and fiscal policy." Inflation for earlier months While releasing the data for January 2026, MoSPI provided the index values based on the new methodology going back to January 2025. However, since earlier index values are not readily available, the year-on-year inflation rate can only be measured for January 2026. "We are following international practice to give a linking factor, so you can calculate the index as far back as 2013," Mr. Garg explained.

Otome and 'Love Games': The Challenges of understanding the Ghaziabad Tragedy

Hyderabad: How do we find balance for a 'generation that never logs out' and plays every day? Gen Z and Alpha are among the loneliest young people in the history of human civilisation. Growing up in places with limited spaces for play and leisure, and in environments that have felt increasingly bleak, Indian youth are becoming more dependent on digital platforms for entertainment, learning, relationships, and meaning. In such conditions, loneliness and anxiety are almost inevitable as young people search for communities they can belong to and resonate with.

At the heart of the Ghaziabad tragedy that rocked the nation is the fact that the three young people who performed acts of 'life taking' were not prepared to imagine their lives without their smartphones and, by extension, the collage of games and content-driven applications they engaged with daily. As expected, most discourse around the tragedy is examining overexposure to Korean culture among the nation's youth, as well as a return of predictable 'digital panics' that speak of younger generations losing connections with the offline world. The closest understanding of the 'Korean love game' that has been described as "one played every day and requires players to complete tasks to unlock new scenarios and deepen relationships with in-game characters" is the 'Otome' game. Otome games have been criticised for portraying idealised traits in their characters

and for setting relationship expectations that are practically unachievable. Experts in Korea and China have also expressed concern about their social impact, with some research suggesting that certain young players move away from offline relationships to pursue in-game relationships with characters of their choice. 'Otome' games are a huge industry, and some of the most popular titles, such as Love and Deepspace, Amnesia Memories, and Crimson Spires, have garnered millions of loyal players worldwide.

The difficulty, however, is not in the 'Otome' aspect of the game. These games have several characteristics that make gaming communities more democratic and open to women gamers.

The issue lies in the way they are played, day after day, as part of one's everyday schedule. The modern live-service game often takes over players' daily routines to become their primary leisure activity. When leisure combines with romance and expectation, the combination can become dangerous. When the same game is played repeatedly, day after day, it is no longer just play but transforms into a practice, a habit. When young players find attention, value, and meaning in an online character that offline friends and family cannot offer, the boundaries between relationships begin to blur. What appears to have happened in the Ghaziabad tragedy stems from this.

VB-G RAM G: when a policy shift meets rural realities



Bandarugudem village in Bapulapadu mandal of Krishna district sits at a distance from the restless churn of urban Andhra Pradesh. Its narrow mud roads are worn dark by years of use, flanked by shallow drains carrying sewage and spewing out a stench that hangs heavily in the humid air. Elderly and middle-aged women in crumpled cotton saris walk along the lanes separating small, low-roofed houses in uneven rows, their talk punctuating the hum of rural living. Except for the occasional growl of two-wheelers, there is little to signal that the world beyond the village is changing rapidly.

It is in these quiet lanes that the debate over the future of rural employment has begun to echo. Sixty-year-old Barre Jayamma stands at the end of a street speaking animatedly with a group of women. "What good is the new scheme when we are unable to utilise the full benefits of the existing one?" she asks, referring to the Union government's decision to replace the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) with the Viksit Bharat—Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) or VB-G RAM G.

Jayamma and most women around her are unfamiliar with the finer points of the new Act. Their understanding comes from what local officials have told them, that the guaranteed number of workdays has been increased from 100 to 125 and that payment delays are being addressed. For them, the question is not about legislative nuance but about work. MGNREGA's mandate was simple and legally enforceable - at least 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members were willing to do unskilled manual work. But in practice, the experience varied widely. "My cousins in villages like Chavatipalli in Nellore district, Advinekkalam in Eluru district and even in neighbouring Ampapuram get 100 days of paid employment every year. I have to fight with local officials to find work even for two weeks." Medabalimi Dhanalakshmi Job card holder at Bandarugudem village Fifty-year-old Medabalimi Dhanalakshmi voices her frustration. "My cousins in villages like Chavatipalli in Nellore district, Advinekkalam in Eluru district and even in neighbouring Ampapuram get 100 days of paid employment every year. I have to fight with local officials to find work even for two weeks," she says. Her neighbour, Chintalapudi Aluvelamma (58), got 28 days of work last financial year. "I am healthy and willing to work, but there is no work around this village," she laments.

Bandarugudem's problem is structural. It is one of the smaller gram panchayats in the mandal and lacks the kind of community assets that can generate sustained employment under the scheme. The village tank, once a steady source of work through desilting and bund strengthening, has been leased out for fish rearing. That decision has effectively closed off a crucial avenue of wage labour, particularly during lean agricultural seasons. Merugu Rajaratnam (53) sums up the prevailing mood: "The tank which provided us some work is gone now. Most of us need work, but there is not much around." Peeeka Adamma (40) says they had raised the issue in gram sabhas, but to no avail. Field assistant Chelli Prasanna says that distributing limited works among 20 groups of 50 members each is a challenge. In the previous fiscal year, villagers here could only access 30 days of work. The contrast with neighbouring Ampapuram is stark. The roads there are wider and paved, and houses are mostly pucca and arranged in neat rows. The village presents an air of relative prosperity. Ganduboyina Venkateswara Rao (65) tends to four buffaloes in a shed constructed under MGNREGA. Inside, hay stacks lean against mud-plastered walls, some neatly tied, others scattered across the damp floor. The structure represents an asset, a tangible outcome of the programme's emphasis on individual beneficiary works. "The scheme allows for individual asset creation, including livestock sheds," explains field assistant Lalitha. Such works must be included in the labour budget and annual action plan approved by the gram sabha. For Rao, the shed has been transformative. "It is more useful than I imagined," he says, rearranging bundles of hay. Similarly, Chilakanti Jyothi (34) opted for oil palm cultivation under the scheme and receives monthly maintenance support during the critical growth years. The programme covers pit digging, planting and irrigation structures and also provides for maintenance to ensure sapling survival. Ampapuram has 280 job cards divided into seven groups, each with 40-50 members. Beneficiaries have reportedly completed 70-80% of their allotted workdays in the current financial year. Across the 27 villages of Bapulapadu mandal, 9,818 households received work under MGNREGA this year, with ₹10.44 crore spent on wages, says Additional Programme Officer for Bapulapadu mandal S. Ashok

Kumar. He says there are no pending payments.

At the district level, N.V. Shiva Prasad Yadav, Project Director of the Krishna District Water Management Agency (DWMA), outlines the scale of implementation. In 2024-25, 139,739 households were provided employment, generating 7,580.66 lakh person-days; in 2025-26 (till date), 5,490.37 lakh person-days have been generated. Women accounted for 2,956.87 lakh person-days. Wage expenditure stood at ₹15,406.78 lakh and materials at ₹8,622.18 lakh, with an average wage of ₹280.54. Over 3,900 families completed 100 days of work this year, he says, adding that plantation activities have covered hundreds of acres and kilometres of avenue and canal stretches. It is evident that in parts of Krishna district, MGNREGA has functioned as intended, generating employment and creating assets. Yet disparities between villages such as Bandarugudem and Ampapuram illustrate the unevenness of implementation. Smaller panchayats with limited common land face inherent constraints. Officials attempt to bridge the gap by encouraging individual works such as private ponds for water storage. "But many small farmers are reluctant to part with scarce land," says Ashok Kumar. It is against this backdrop that the Union government's move to replace MGNREGA with VB-G RAM G has sparked controversy. Opposition parties and civil society groups argue that the change represents not merely a redesign but a structural shift. They contend that MGNREGA's defining feature was its statutory guarantee, the legal right to demand work. Critics fear that VB-G RAM G could transform rural employment from a demand-driven entitlement into an administratively managed scheme shaped by budget allocations, notifications and technological controls. The Congress has sharply criticised the change. Sonia Gandhi, Chairperson of the Congress Parliamentary Party, described it as an assault on farmers and rural workers. Congress Andhra Pradesh president Y.S. Sharmila has undertaken a protest yatra from Bandlapalli in Anantapur district, where MGNREGA scheme was first launched in 2006, underscoring its historical significance. Bandlapalli itself offers evidence of MGNREGA's transformative potential. Water harvesting ponds, percolation tanks and trenches have improved groundwater levels. Cement concrete roads built under the programme have enhanced connectivity. Cheemala Peddamma, who received the first job card two decades ago, continues to work. "The money helps me take care of my needs," she says. For her, the scheme's name is less important than its ability to sustain farm labourers. "It would be painful to see any dilution of the employment generation programme that has helped so many families to improve their financial condition," she says. LibTech India, a research and advocacy organisation focused on transparency and social protection, has examined the implications of the new Act. Its report on the impact of VB-G RAM G on Andhra Pradesh argues that even under MGNREGA, employment averaged 51.6 days per household in the State in 2024-25, with only 11% completing 100 days, suggesting fiscal and administrative rationing despite statutory guarantees.

VB-G RAM G, it warns, removes the explicit right to demand work and allows selective implementation in notified areas, potentially excluding vulnerable communities like Adivasis. The report also highlights fiscal concerns. Given existing liabilities, the State may struggle to maintain employment levels without rationing, it says. The fears are not unfounded. Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, in his recent meeting with the Union Home Minister Amit Shah, discussed the financial provisions of VB-G RAM G scheme. Stating that the revised 60:40 Centre-State funding ratio had put additional financial burden on the State and could adversely impact the implementation, he requested alternative financial support. "The State government should urgently review the impact of the VB-G RAM G Act on employment security and hold broad consultations, including a dedicated Assembly debate. Based on these discussions, the State should formally urge the Union government to reconsider the framework and retain MGNREGA's statutory employment guarantee," says Chakradhar Buddha, senior researcher with LibTech India. "The government should review the impact of the VB-G RAM G Act on employment security and hold broad consultations, including an Assembly debate. Based on these discussions, it should urge the Centre to retain MGNREGA's statutory employment guarantee." Chakradhar Buddha senior researcher with LibTech India For villagers like Jayamma, these policy debates are distant abstractions. Their reality is measured in days of work secured or denied. The divergence between villages shows that implementation capacity, asset availability and administrative priorities shape outcomes as much as legislation does. MGNREGA has built ponds, sheds and roads, it has raised groundwater levels and provided income support. But it has also revealed gaps in planning and resource allocation. The transition to VB-G RAM G raises fundamental questions: Will the new framework strengthen delivery or weaken entitlements? Can it address disparities between villages like Bandarugudem and Ampapuram? And will it preserve the core principle that rural households should have assured access to wage employment in times of need? As Andhra Pradesh navigates this shift, the answer may lie less in rhetoric and more in ensuring that the scheme, whatever its name, remains responsive to the realities of rural workers. For the women standing at the edge of Bandarugudem's dusty lanes, employment is a matter of survival, dignity and the promise that the State will stand by its poorest citizens.

Stop blaming the heart, clogged vessels are the problem: How walking rewires your heart health

Hyderabad: A daily dose of walking has the potential to act like a powerful catalyst for cardiovascular health, reducing strain on blood vessels and lowering blood pressure, a combination that could translate into tangible risk reduction over time. There is a growing cohort of wellness advocates and medical professionals who suggest a shift in perspective. Instead of viewing the heart as the primary source of failure, the focus should shift to resistant blood vessels, which force the heart to pump against mounting pressure. Experts argue that the most effective way to alleviate this strain and smooth out blood flow is through a simple, consistent act of walking.

Physiologically, regular walking ensures a steady flow of blood that stimulates the walls of the blood vessels to relax. This process centers on the endothelium, which is the inner lining of the blood vessels. When blood flows past it consistently, the endothelium releases signals that prompt the vessels to widen. "No force is required; just regular use to prevent stagnation," notes Metabolic Uncle, a prominent health communicator on X (formerly Twitter), who frequently advocates the advantages of regular walking. So how much walking is good? Noted neurologist from Hyderabad Dr Sudhir Kumar, who himself is an accomplished long dis-

tance runner, points out that individuals should not get trapped in 10,000 steps per day advisory. "Benefits of walking begin as early as 2,700 steps per day. Those who are able to walk 2,700 steps have 8 percent lower risk of death. Of course, as the number of steps increases, the health benefits also increase. However, the optimum benefits are reached by 8,000 to 9,000 per day," says Dr Sudhir Kumar in one of his posts on X. There are a large number of studies that indicate that cardiovascular benefits from walking start at around 2,500 to 2,700 steps per day. For individuals who have largely led a sedentary life, that small number of steps produces large health gains. Large-scale studies support this, indicating that cardiovascular benefits start at roughly 2,500 to 2,700 steps. For individuals transitioning from a sedentary lifestyle, even this small increase produces disproportionately large health gains. Evidence suggests the curve of cardiovascular resilience begins to flatten past 7,000 steps, where the system has received the majority of the signals it needs for flexibility. While walking is a foundational tool, global health specialists urge the public to diversify physical activity to build total-body resilience. Deputy Head (UN Task Force) on Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs), Dr Alexey Kulikov on X recently highlighted the importance of multi-modal approach on X.

AI-linked quality inspection to emission monitoring: Use cases offer scale-up potential for MSMEs



Artificial intelligence-enabled quality inspection to detect weaving or dyeing defects in real time in textiles, or predictive maintenance tools reducing machine downtime, or identifying the source of a specific solvent in a contaminated cough syrup, or real-time measurement using AI to track emissions, energy intensity rather than retrospectively — these were some of the case scenarios policymakers cited at the India AI Impact Summit on Tuesday. These AI-linked interventions may not just help scale up manufacturing but also improve quality and competitiveness of the country's industrial sector going ahead. In this transition towards AI, the officials said the key role will need to be played by micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) — over 76 million in number, of which about one-fifth are in manufacturing.

"While large enterprises typically have ways to finance this transition and are able to make the necessary investments, smaller enterprises and enterprises in traditional sectors like textiles, may or may not necessarily be in the position to make the kind of investments which are needed to support this (transition)," said S Krishnan, Secretary, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).

The officials launched a study on AI adoption and impact on manufacturing MSMEs by Athena Infonomics in partnership with National Institute for Smart Government and line ministries of MSMEs, textiles, and pharmaceuticals. MSME Secretary SCL Das said the AI-powered transformation has to be essentially led by industry, especially MSMEs that contribute hugely to employment and the economy. But it does require several support systems involving public support and public investment, he said. "It's a partnership where primarily the solutions will come from the industry. At the same time, the government would have to do its bit in terms of tweaking the policy design in terms of providing resources where private sector resources would not automatically come," he said.

Emphasising that India's battle for AI will be won or lost on the factory shop floor, Rohit Kansal, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Textiles said the country's long-term economic shift cannot solely be determined by digital native businesses and will eventually be decided by the use of AI to modernise legacy industries like textiles, food processing, leather. "Productivity improvement in these sectors and MSMEs will matter far more for national income than incremental gains in already digitised sectors," he said. He said

global buyers increasingly value consistent quality, delivery reliability, and transparent supply chains, and competitiveness no longer depends on labour or wage arbitrage. "They demand granular visibility across production networks, and AI-driven measurement networks can allow Indian firms to meet all these standards at lower compliance and verification costs," he said. If AI is not adopted as of now, then it is possible that India's manufacturing sector may lag behind and that's why to remain competitive and remain market ready, it's essential to bring solutions, Bhuvnesh Kumar, Chief Executive Officer, NISG said. "This is an opportunity not only for the MSMEs, but for a large number of startups and AI-solution providers," he added. A shelf of AI-based solutions could be offered to MSMEs, which can then be customised by them as per their requirements, Kumar said, adding that some kind of government support may also be offered to MSMEs for AI adoption in the future.

"We really want the MSMEs to remain competitive and offer the best of the solutions to the market at an affordable price for the consumers. That's the most important part," he said. MSMEs have to adopt some of the basic traceability, data interoperability mechanisms, Kansal said. Also, for MSMEs, any returns from AI have to be visible and timebound, he said, adding that cluster-level deployment, shared digital infrastructure, and common data standards are important. "Collective service platforms can help us adopt lower adoption costs and create scale efficiencies. Vendor lock-in has to be discouraged as much as possible," he said. More importantly, AI has to be seen as productivity-enhancing, not labour displacing, he said, adding that AI adoption in MSMEs will improve, only when quality is improved without impacting jobs.

India gets its first private sector helicopter assembly line with inauguration of Tata-Airbus facility in Karnataka

Two years after it was announced, India's first private sector helicopter final assembly line (FAL)—to manufacture Airbus's best-selling H125 helicopters—was inaugurated on Tuesday at Vemagal in Karnataka's Kolar district. The facility, built by Tata Advanced Systems (TASL) in partnership with European aerospace major Airbus, was inaugurated virtually by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and visiting French President Emmanuel Macron. The project, seen as a big boost to aircraft manufacturing in India, was first announced on Republic Day in 2024 in conjunction with Macron's visit to India at the time.

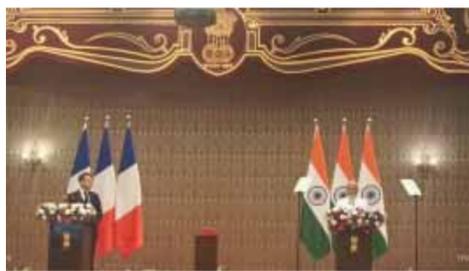
While Modi and Macron inaugurated the facility virtually from Mumbai, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Civil Aviation Minister K Ram Mohan Naidu, and France's Minister of the Armed Forces and Veterans Affairs Catherine Vautrin, were present at the FAL site for the inauguration. The delivery of the first made-in-India H125 helicopter is expected in early 2027, and the FAL will serve the Indian market as well as other markets in the region.

Although the H125 is primarily a civil helicopter and the initial proposal was to build the helicopters in India for civilian applications and use, plans now also include a military version—H125M—to be offered out of the Indian factory with high levels of indigenised components and technologies. Airbus sees the H125M as an "ideal successor" to Cheetah and Chetak helicopters used by the Indian armed forces. These helicopters were a result of an industrial collaboration agreement dating back over 60 years between Airbus and government undertaking Hindustan Aeronautics.

Moreover, civil helicopter use in India lags many other countries where choppers are routinely used for a number of purposes. India's massive population and notable economic growth make it an attractive potential market for increased civil helicopter use. Vemagal was announced as the location of the H125 FAL in October. Airbus and TASL had originally shortlisted eight potential sites for the FAL, top Airbus Helicopters officials had said in July 2024. TASL and Airbus have a broader partnership with the Tata group company already having an FAL for the Airbus C295 military aircraft in Gujarat's Vadodra. The India FAL for the H125 will be the fourth production unit for the single-engine helicopter with an initial annual production capacity of 10 helicopters, with the scope to ramp up production based on demand growth in India and the broader South Asia region, Airbus had earlier. Currently, Airbus manufactures H125 helicopters in France, the US, and Brazil.

Although smaller, the H125 FAL in India will have the same processes and standards as the flagship facility in Marignane (France) and helicopters produced in India will come with the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) certification. The made-in-India H125s are also expected to be similar in pricing to those manufactured elsewhere despite the import of key components. "The inauguration of the H125 FAL is a defining step towards India's civil and defence sovereignty when it comes to vertical lift capabilities. By establishing this facility with the Tata Group, Airbus is offering the Indian market a versatile and competitive platform with unrivalled performance that is 'Made in India' and tailored for missions across the country's unique topography," said Bruno Even, CEO of Airbus Helicopters. "The FAL will also be able to produce the military version H125M with a level of local manufacturing that ensures the Indian forces remain mission-ready at all times. It will also be a game-changer for the development of the civil helicopter market," Even added.

TASL and Airbus said that the H125M is optimised to serve as a "high-altitude force multiplier across a spectrum of critical missions", adding that it is designed to excel in tactical reconnaissance and surveillance. Additionally, the H125M provides a decisive edge in high-altitude logistics, ensuring the delivery of vital supplies to remote frontline outposts, and serves as a rapid-response asset for search and rescue or medical evacuation operations, they said. Tata Sons Chairman N Chandrasekaran said, "We are proud to establish the H125 Helicopter Final Assembly Line, a first



in the private sector in India—a landmark step in the nation's journey towards self-reliance in aerospace and defence. This facility reflects the growing depth of India's industrial capabilities and the strength of our long-standing partnership with Airbus. Together, we are contributing to the creation of a globally competitive aerospace ecosystem in India."

In India, civil helicopters are mainly used for commercial charter operations, tourism and pilgrimages, offshore operations by the oil and gas sector, and by corporations and high net-worth individuals. Their use for para-public services, including emergency medical services, law enforcement, firefighting, and natural disaster management, in India is significantly lower than many other parts of the world, including a number of developing countries. The H125 is seen as highly suited for such operations. One of the most popular helicopters globally, there are over 4,300 H125s flying around the world. Airbus believes that the H125 FAL in India will not just make it competitive in terms of lead and delivery times to Indian and South Asian customers, but also address the region's growing demand for helicopters. As per Airbus, the projected demand for H125 class of helicopters in India and neighbouring countries—Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives—is pegged at 500 helicopters over the next couple of decades, with India likely to account for a large majority of the incremental demand. Currently, the region has around 350 civil and para-public helicopters, of which around 250 are in India. Airbus Helicopters has a market share of 40% in the region in civil and para-public helicopters.

Nissan launches Gravite 7-seater MPV at introductory price of Rs. 5.65 lakh in India

Hyderabad: Nissan Motor India on Tuesday launched the all-new Gravite, a 7-seater MPV, at an introductory price of Rs. 5.65 lakh (ex-showroom). Unveiled in Udaipur, the Gravite marks the beginning of the company's renewed product push in India. Inspired by India and made in India at its alliance partner's facility in Chennai, the Gravite is positioned as a spacious, versatile and practical family mover with a strong road presence.

Thierry Sabbagh, Divisional Vice President and President, Middle East, KSA, CIS and India, Nissan and Infiniti, said India is central to Nissan's global plans and the Gravite signals the start of a steady growth phase backed by local manufacturing and a future-ready product roadmap. Saurabh Vatsa, Managing Director, Nissan Motor India, said the Gravite reflects the diversity and aspirations of Indian families. He added that the company will continue to design, manufacture and invest in vehicles aligned with India's mobility needs. The MPV features elevated proportions, muscular lines, pronounced wheel arches and high ground clearance.

Grokipedia an unrealistic idea that won't work: Wikipedia Co-founder at AI Summit

New Delhi: Dismissing comparisons between Wikipedia and emerging AI-driven knowledge platforms, Wikipedia co-founder Jimmy Wales on Wednesday said the idea of a so-called 'Grokipedia' is unrealistic and there is 'no competition' between Wikipedia and such experiments. Speaking during a session at the India AI Impact Summit here, Wales made it clear that attempts to replicate Wikipedia through artificial intelligence tools misunderstand how the platform works. He stressed that Wikipedia is built on human collaboration, transparency and verifiable sources, which cannot simply be replaced by automated systems.

Wales also raised concerns about artificial intelligence platforms failing to give proper credit to original sources. He said that providing attribution is not just a technical issue but an ethical responsibility in the digital age. "AI systems so far have not performed well when it comes to acknowledging where information comes from," Wales stated. At the same time, he acknowledged that the way people access and consume information is rapidly changing. Wales revealed that Wikipedia has seen an 8 per cent decline in human traffic. He described the drop as "a disaster," but added that it reflects a broader transformation in online behaviour, where users increasingly rely on AI tools and instant summaries instead of directly visiting websites. Despite these challenges, Wales said India is especially well positioned to benefit from the rise of artificial



intelligence. He pointed to the country's strong IT ecosystem and large pool of skilled technology professionals as key advantages in the AI era. On the issue of jobs and automation, Wales said artificial intelligence will make certain skills more valuable because people will be able to complete tasks faster and more efficiently. However, he cautioned that the world is currently going through a period of "great flux and great change." While some professions may decline, he said it is difficult to predict exactly which ones will be most affected. Wales, an American internet entrepreneur and former financial trader, is best known for co-founding Wikipedia, the world's largest free online encyclopedia, as well as Fandom, a for-profit wiki hosting service.

'I'm a gastroenterologist and here is how I turn my afternoon black tea into an anti-inflammatory, gut-healthy drink in 5 simple steps'

Instead of a sugar-laden beverage, gastroenterologist Dr Saurabh Sethi swears by black tea every afternoon. "I'm a gastroenterologist and here is how I turn my afternoon black tea into an anti-inflammatory gut-healthy drink in 5 simple steps," he said on YouTube Shorts. "Start by boiling water and black tea leaves. Black tea is rich in polyphenols and antioxidants* While it is brewing, add a small slice of fresh ginger. It increases gut motility and aids digestion

Crush a few cardamom pods and drop them in. They help reduce bloating and add a naturally sweet aroma without sugar Add a small piece of clove. It contains eugenol, a compound that supports liver function. *Once it's done brewing, strain the tea and let it cool slightly. Then you can add a drizzle of honey for optional sweetness. "Try it," said Dr Sethi. Afternoon tea, often thought of as a comfort ritual, a pause between meals or a social habit, can be converted into an antioxidant-rich drink that supports digestion, immunity and metabolism with just a few smart tweaks. Tea, when brewed and paired correctly, can serve as a functional beverage rather than just a source of caffeine. The first step is to start with a quality tea base. Black tea contains theaflavins, both known to protect cells and balance inflammation, said consultant dietician Garima Goyal. "Opting for loose tea leaves instead of tea bags ensures a higher concentration of these beneficial compounds," added Goyal. Next, spice it right. Adding fresh ginger, cinnamon, cardamom, clove, or even a small pinch of turmeric can amplify the tea's antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties, Goyal shared. "These spices stimulate digestion, improve gut motility and add a natural warmth that aids nutrient absorption. For instance, ginger helps soothe the digestive tract while cinnamon can balance blood sugar and enhance insulin sensitivity," said Goyal.



Watch the brewing temperature and time. According to Goyal, overheating tea or steeping it too long can destroy delicate antioxidants and increase bitterness. "Ideally, green tea should be brewed below 80°C, and black tea around 90–95°C for 2–3 minutes. A balanced brew retains flavour, aroma and maximum phytonutrient potential," said Goyal. Ginger Add ginger to your afternoon tea (Photo: Pixabay) Skip refined sugar and replace it with natural options like raw honey, jaggery or simply enjoy the tea unsweetened to keep it truly restorative. "Adding sugar not only negates its health benefits but also contributes to insulin spikes and mid-afternoon energy crashes," said Goyal. Goyal emphasised that it is essential to treat tea as a mindful break, not a caffeine crutch. "Taking a few moments to sit down, breathe and sip slowly helps reduce cortisol levels and improve digestion by activating the parasympathetic nervous system or the body's rest and digest mode," said Goyal. When prepared thoughtfully, afternoon tea becomes more than a beverage; it's a mini wellness ritual. The combination of antioxidants, anti-inflammatory spices and mindful sipping can make this daily habit a gentle boost for both body and mind.

Neeti Mohan on her music journey, gaining weight during pregnancy, and her yearly ice cream treat: 'Even if I fall sick...'

GNS News Agency, Feb 19

Over the last 15 years, popular playback singer Neeti Mohan, who rose to fame after winning a reality show, has experimented with various genres, giving each song her distinct touch. Best known for songs such as Tune Maari Entriyaan, Bang Bang, Nainowale Ne, and her breakout song from Student of the Year, she is enjoying every moment of it. "I have no complaints," she tells indianexpress.com in an exclusive interview. During the conversation, Neeti also discusses the discipline required to maintain her voice, why she has ice cream only once a year, how life changed after becoming a mother, gaining weight during pregnancy, and how she prioritises mental health.

Q: From Ishq Wala Love to Mirza, you've come a long way. How would you describe the journey?

Neeti Mohan: It feels like a dream come true. Every song I sing and every time people sing along, it just becomes more and more beautiful.

Q: Along the way, there have been hits, super hits, and misses. How do you deal with the ups and downs?

Neeti Mohan: Life is full of ups and downs—everyone goes through that. It's absolutely fine. You just have to stay positive and focus on the good.

Q: Being a singer requires giving up certain things and adopting specific habits. What has that been like for you?

Neeti Mohan: Your profession demands a certain lifestyle. Being a singer requires discipline, extensive practice, and continuous work on your craft. The more I do it, the more I enjoy it. I have no complaints—I love it.

Q: In a similar vein, do you avoid things like ice cream or chilled water?

Neeti Mohan: I don't have these things because they don't suit me. But once a year, I do have an ice cream when I really feel like it and when I know I don't have to sing the next day. Even if I fall sick, it's fine then.

Q: The industry is extremely unpredictable. Have challenging times ever affected your mental health?

Neeti Mohan: When I started, everything felt very big—every high and every low. Over time, I learned not to be overwhelmed by them. You shouldn't let highs and lows affect you too much. You just need to stay focused and keep working on your craft.

Q: What is the first thing you do when you wake up every day?

Neeti Mohan: I kiss my son. He sleeps next to me.

Neeti Mohan, Neeti Mohan interview Sangeeta Haldipur, Neeti Mohan, Jimmy Felix, and Vasudha Sharma emerged



as Popstars 2 winners.

Q: How do you manage work after becoming a mother—balancing feeds, naps, and quality time?

Neeti Mohan: Life completely changes after becoming a mother. You become a different version of yourself. Earlier, I was a different person—I don't even remember how it was before. Now, if my son isn't around me, it feels like a part of my body is missing. It's amazing, fulfilling, and also very challenging—nurturing a child and preparing him for the future.

Q: Do you think it's important for singers to have a career outside the industry?

Neeti Mohan: It depends. If you can handle both, there's no harm in diversifying.

Q: Motherhood changes every woman. How was that experience for you, especially with weight changes?

Neeti Mohan: I did put on some weight, but it was fine. I really enjoyed my pregnancy and delivery—everything was very smooth. It was during Covid as well, but overall, I feel women are designed to be mothers. It's a special gift, and I really enjoyed the experience.

Q: Fitness and diet play a huge role in staying healthy. What is your daily routine like?

Neeti Mohan: I wake up, and the first thing I do is work out—it's non-negotiable for me, no matter how late I've slept. After that, I do my riyaz.

Q: How does 2026 look for you?

Neeti Mohan: It looks exciting so far. There's a lot of travelling coming up. I'm looking forward to performing at Royal Stag BoomBox in Mohali, and my new single is coming soon, so I'm gearing up for that release.

Q: Tell us about the latest season of Royal Stag BoomBox. What can we expect from it?

Neeti Mohan: BoomBox consistently creates new sounds and makes history with the music festivals and new music it brings, along with the lineup of artists who come together to perform.

'It's been a really poor campaign, it has to be...': Ricky Ponting on Australia's disastrous T20 World Cup campaign



GNS News Agency, Feb 19

Australia out of T20 World Cup Ponting Australia's captain Mitchell Marsh, right, gestures to ask for a review for the wicket of Sri Lanka's Kusal Mendis as Australia's Nathan Ellis, left, looks on during the T20 World Cup cricket match between Sri Lanka and Australia in Pallekele, Sri Lanka, Monday. With 2021 World Champions Australia being knocked out from the ongoing ICC T20 World Cup, it has meant that the Travis Head led side will be returning home post the group stages of the tournament. With pacer Pat Cummins ruled out of the Australian team prior to the tournament and Josh Hazlewood too ruled out of the team, the Australian team lead began with a win over Ireland but then lost to Zimbabwe and co-hosts Sri Lanka in the group stage. Former Australian captain Ricky Ponting has termed Australia's campaign in the T20 World Cup as a 'poor' campaign and shared how teams like Australia cannot afford losses against teams like Zimbabwe in the World Cups.

"It's been a really poor campaign, it has to be said. They had some injury concerns at the start with (Josh) Hazlewood and (Pat) Cummins being ruled out and then Tim David not available right at the start as well. But I think just losing to Zimbabwe like they did, that's going to be the game that they're going to think back and think like that's our World Cup gone, there and then. I think looking at the pool before the start of the tournament, I felt Sri Lanka would be difficult to beat at home and that's certainly the way it turned out. They played really well against Australia. That was an amazing run chase when you look at it. That sort of score is never an easy one to chase down. But to think that Zimbabwe outplayed Australia in an ICC event, it's those opportunities that you can't afford to give up in a tournament like this." Ponting said on The ICC Review.

In the last nine editions of the T20 World Cup, Australia have only won the title once with their maiden title coming in the 2021 T20 World Cup in UAE and Oman. The team reached the final in the 2010 T20 World Cup and also has two semi-final appearances in the T20 World Cup in the years 2007 and 2008. In the last two T20 World Cups, Australia reached the Super 12 and Super 8 stages before be-

ing knocked out of the events. Ponting believes the current Australian T20 team does not have the sort of aura around it as compared to the other Australian teams going into the World Cups. The former captain also shared how the team has not got enough runs from their top order with Cameron Green batting at number three and Tim David at number four after missing the opening game.

"I think I said to you the other day that you look at that Australian team on paper, it just doesn't look to have that sort of aura around it that a lot of other Australian teams have going into ICC events and World Cups. You need to have your best players and your most experienced players standing up and winning big moments for you in these tournaments if you want to go ahead and win and Australia haven't had that. They probably haven't got enough out of their top order batting with Cameron Green at No.3, and then Tim David coming in at No.4 for the last couple of games. Those two haven't fired and Australia have lost early wickets certainly in the game against Zimbabwe. They went off to a great start the other night (against Sri Lanka) and then to lose six for 20, I think it was in the last four or five overs, taking no momentum at all into the second part of the game," added Ponting. Australia will co-host the next T20 World Cup with New Zealand in 2028 and the country also can have a possible appearance at the 2028 LA Olympics based on the rankings. When asked about the players in Australia's plans for the years ahead, Ponting pointed out that he does not see Glen Maxwell in the next T20 World Cup and the team will need some changes too.

"I think Mitchell Marsh will probably hang on long enough for that and I think Travis Head will definitely be around and (Josh) Inglis will be around. Steve Smith has been very vocal about him wanting to be a part of an Olympic team as well. Whether or not that happens is a different story. Cameron Green will be around if in fact his form is good enough to stay in the side. That's another bit of a worry I think for Australia, certainly across Test match cricket and probably T20 cricket, what we saw in this World Cup. You would think Nathan Ellis would be around, Xavier Bartlett will be there. Cooper Connolly would be there and thereabouts. Glenn Maxwell, I don't think will be there. I think it looks to me like his career is coming towards an end. Marcus Stoinis would also probably be a question mark, but he's predominantly playing only T20 cricket tournaments around the world these days. Doesn't play a lot of state cricket and obviously plays the BBL, so with his all round ability, he might be there. So there will be some change. Matthew Kuhnmann he's young enough to still be around as well if they decide to have two spinners in their lineups. So there could be some changes, but I guess, I mean, we're still, what are we, 18 months away from that, two years away from that happening. So let's wait and see," concluded Ponting.

'Had to wash dishes before match': Pakistan's hockey captain slams country's federation

GNS News Agency, Feb 19

PHF has been under severe criticism after Pakistani hockey players faced troubles and had to wait for 13-14 hours at Sydney airport before their onward flight to Canberra. (Photo: Ammad Shakeel Butt Instagram) PHF has been under severe criticism after Pakistani hockey players faced troubles and had to wait for 13-14 hours at Sydney airport before their onward flight to Canberra. The chaos surrounding the Pakistan men's hockey team and its tumultuous tour of Australia during FIH Pro League has reached a crescendo with skipper Ammad Shakeel Butt lashing out on the country's hockey federation on Wednesday. On his return to Lahore, he claimed that his side didn't just have to roam the streets for lack of accommodation but also "wash dishes before going to play a match".

"We can't work with this current management of the federation. When players have to clean the kitchen and wash dishes before going to play a match what result do you expect from us?" a livid Butt asked angrily while talking to the reporters at the Lahore Airport. Butt told the media at the Lahore Airport early this morning that the Pakistan Hockey Federation had been telling them lies and "enough was enough".

PHF has been under severe criticism after Pakistani hockey players faced troubles and had to wait for 13-14 hours at Sydney airport before their onward flight to Canberra. More disturbing reports came in when the team checked into its hotel ahead of the FIH Pro League matches. The players were told that they had no bookings since no advance payment was made to the hotel management. The



players had to wait for hours and roamed the streets before an accommodation was arranged for them. When the state-run Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) was asked about the horrible circumstances, the board confirmed it had given them more than 10 million rupees to arrange hotel accommodation of the national team in Australia. "What was pathetic was that even the Airbnb accommodation was arranged for 10 days when we had to stay for 13 days. We had to move into a cheaper residence after 10-days," Butt said. The PSB Director-General Noor us Sabah told the media that they were preparing a detailed report for Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif after he ordered an inquiry into the whole fiasco. Butt disclosed that the PHF had warned the players of disciplinary action if they spoke to the media "I am speaking up because of what we have been through in Australia," he said. "We need a foreign coach if we have to move forward. We have a good combination of players but we need a foreign coach and good management," he added.

Sourav Ganguly, Mohammad Azharuddin add to calls from ex-India captains for better treatment of Imran Khan

GNS News Agency, Feb 19

Sourav Ganguly and Mohammad Azharuddin have joined fellow former India captains Kapil Dev and Sunil Gavaskar in voicing their concern for the health of former Pakistan prime minister and cricket great Imran Khan. Imran has been held in detention since August 2023 on a slew of charges that his supporters maintain are politically motivated, and is currently serving two separate sentences of 17 years and 14 years.

On Tuesday, 14 former international captains, which included Kapil and Gavaskar, signed a joint appeal demanding that Pakistan's government treat Imran with basic dignity, provide urgent medical care and guarantee fair access to courts. "They have done the right thing (on former captains appealing for fair treatment of Imran)," Ganguly told reporters. "I hope his health recovers and I hope he gets the right treatment because he has taken Pakistan to the world map being captain of the Pakistan cricket team and then Prime Minister of Pakistan, so he should be looked after and I expect him to." Azharuddin, meanwhile, expressed his anguish on X. "Deeply saddened to hear about Imran bhai. Cricket has given us many shared moments, and as a fellow sportsman who has shared the platform and learned from him, I sincerely appeal that he be treated with dignity. Praying for his good health and strength for his family. @ImranKhanPTI #ImranKhanHealthEmergency," he said.



Deeply saddened to hear about Imran bhai. Cricket has given us many shared moments, and as a fellow sportsman who has shared the platform and learned from him, I sincerely appeal that he be treated with dignity. Praying for his good health and strength for his family. ... Widely regarded as one of the greatest all-rounders of all time, Imran, 73, led Pakistan to their only World Cup victory, in 1992 in Australia, a triumph that cemented his status as a national icon. He later entered politics, founding the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party, and served as prime minister from 2018 to 2022, when he was removed from office in a no-confidence vote. He is currently being held at Adiala prison in Rawalpindi where.

J&K reach their first ever Ranji Trophy final; Abdul Samad, Vanshaj Sharma seal semis with sixes for 6-wicket win over Bengal



GNS News Agency, Feb 19

The spectre of what Mohammed Shami could do, had loomed overnight despite Jammu & Kashmir needing just 60 odd to win their Ranji Trophy semifinal. Playing at the tree-lined Kalyani ground in distinctly quaint environs with white and blue corrugated sheets demarcating the field and spectators standing non-plussed, Shami did pack off Shubham Pundir scattering his stumps, before captain Paras Dogra too was dismissed for 9, to leave things edgy at 71-4. It's when J&K's only established star, Abdul Samad had walked in, whistling.

Samad, who's played the IPL for a fair few years, has taken on the mantle of strutting forward, and convincing his teammates that they totally belong in the big league, amongst the big boys of domestic cricket. It's how J&K beat Mumbai at Mumbai last year, and have followed up with travelling wins against MP and Delhi, always prepared to beat the hosts on their turf. Still, despite their visible surge, J&K had fallen short by 1 run ceding the first innings lead to Kerala in the quarterfinals at Pune. The common refrain in J&K about Samad was that he could drag their hopes very high, and then lose his wicket at the most inopportune moments, and bring dreams crashing down. Joining southpaw Vanshaj Sharma, who was batting sedately, Samad brought his T20 adventurous flair to what could've been a nervy chase. Empty stadia are not new for even those best of Ranji teams. But J&K assign duties to dismissed batsmen to yell their hearts out, and usually hope stadium acoustics echo their war-cries. The Kalyani ground, satellite of Kolkata, was open-air with no stands to bounce their voices off, but on the cusp of the final, they created enough of a din to mimic a large throbbing cheering contingent.

As J&K saw the finish line within their grasp, Samad had done enough to embolden the tall Vanshaj, who picked Jaiswal for three finely struck boundaries, before he finished with a glorious straight six to earn them their first final. (Photo) As J&K saw the finish line within their grasp, Samad had done enough to embolden the tall Vanshaj, who picked Jaiswal for three finely struck boundaries, before he finished with a glorious straight six to earn them their first final. (Photo) Samad got the team score into the 80s at a quick clip, and then went after Bengal's biggest threat Akash Deep, pilfering 18 runs in his 15th and the team's 30th over, including a six over mid-on.

When Bengal brought on the lanky Shahbaz Ahmed, he tonked him for two more to drive him out of the attack. He was hitting both inside out and over his pet mid-on zone, and the first took him to 98, and by the time the over was

Real Madrid vs Benfica Champions League clash halted due to alleged racist slur against Vinicius Jr

GNS News Agency, Feb 19

The much anticipated UEFA Champions League match between Real Madrid and Benfica turned hostile after Madrid players decided to leave the pitch in the second half following an accusation of Benfica's Gianluca Prestianni directing a racist slur at Madrid winger Vinicius Jr. The alleged incident occurred moments after Vinicius had curled Real ahead five minutes into the second half at the Estadio da Luz, before referee Francois Letexier halted the match for 11 minutes under FIFA's anti-racism protocol by crossing his arms in front of his face.

Television pictures showed the Argentinian winger covering his mouth with his shirt before making a comment that Vinicius and nearby teammates interpreted as a racial slur against the 25-year-old, who has repeatedly suffered racism in Spain during matches.

Madrid players decided to leave the pitch in the second half following an accusation of Benfica's Gianluca Prestianni directing a racist slur at Madrid winger Vinicius Jr. Madrid players decided to leave the pitch in the second half following an accusation of Benfica's Gianluca Prestianni directing a racist slur at Madrid winger Vinicius Jr. It is unbelievable that, with dozens of cameras in the stadium that none could have caught (Prestianni's) racial slur, but if you cover your mouth to say something, that says a lot... Real captain Federico Valverde told Movistar Plus. "According to my teammates who were close, they heard something very ugly. Many people have been fighting against racism in football, Vinicius is one of them. I'm proud of him and his great game." As the Brazilian celebrated, television pictures showed a heated exchange between him and Prestianni. Real's players threatened to leave the pitch as tensions rose, but the referee eventually allowed the match to resume.

Hostile atmosphere Apart from Vinicius, striker Kylian

done, pressure had eased. They say "pressure-vevure" doesn't strike Samad, a deeply mature batter originally known as the 'Hot Spring of Kalakote', but having grown up in Jammu. He had helped captain Paras Dogra negotiate a tricky phase in the first innings after Shami had rocketed them to 13-3, with a 143-run partnership. His 82 off 85 had come in a similarly pressure-neutralising atmosphere. As J&K saw the finish line within their grasp, Samad had done enough to embolden the tall Vanshaj, who picked Jaiswal for three finely struck boundaries, before he finished with a glorious straight six to earn them their first final. "We deserved it," as player of the match Auqib Nabi put it. J&K's two breakout seasons have had milestones of beating big-name teams at home, and overturning Bengal at home, completes their marching stomp into the final, where they will most likely play Karnataka.

Captain Dogra, who came in a few years ago from Himachal owing to his heritage, has been a stabiliser influence on the team - not a hard-nosed dictating senior, but a leader with empathy, proud of the opportunity he was handed, and self-effacing to realise the team of very talented and driven men needed delicate handling, light shepherding. The scoldings were left to coaches Ajay Sharma, while bowling coach P Krishna Kumar, another hardworking pro from Rajasthan, and Dogra, gently chipped away at the rough edges of temperament and technique, and kept them positive. A bulk of the team's management have also previously been coaches bringing in hands on experience to admin.

"It was a small target in the morning, but we needed a good partnership to see it through. My partnership with Abdul in first innings had been enjoyable too because it's always good to bat with him, he's always positive," Dogra, who completed 10000 career first class runs, said. The team wasn't too frazzled by the first innings lead slipping away. "There were 2.5 days left, and it was only a small first innings lead. We were positive but we didn't expect they would fold up so quickly (99) in second innings," he added.

Pacer Auqib Nabi has stamped his class and confidence poise on the team, and he finished with 9 wickets. Crucially, he frustrated Shami & Co in the first innings with a handy 42 and triggered a collapse in Bengal's second. "We work hard on our batting, and last 4-5 players regularly add 150 runs to the score. We don't ignore batting," he said. On fortifying their confidence when facing Bengal, he said, "We had decided after last year that we will not go out of the competition again. We knew such opportunities don't come often. Now we will final too. We deserve it," he said, with a force of their collective will. The confidence to skittle the hosts for 99 despite losing the first innings lead, had come from their first innings bowling show. "Other teams had scored 600 on this pitch, sk when we restricted them for 300 odd, we felt positive about how we had bowled," he told the post match presenter. On his own bowling he said he kept it simple. "Channel mein ball daalo, without bothering about results. Just observe batsmen, but I don't think too much," said the skilled bowler, who's performed consistently against every team and in all three formats. The all rounder bound for Delhi Capitals took home a cheque of Rs 50,000 for his showing. It may not compare to the IPL riches, but it's brought them closer to the dream. "At the start of the season from Day 1 we had decided we have to win Ranji Trophy," Dogra said. Now, the home stretch to glory away from home, the toughest test at the end, lies ahead.



Mbappe was enraged and didn't want to come back to play. A TV footage showed an outraged Mbappe calling Prestianni "a bloody racist" to his face. The atmosphere grew hostile after play resumed, with Vinicius and Mbappe loudly boomed by the home crowd whenever they touched the ball. Towards the end part of the game, things were also thrown on the pitch including lighters and bottles. One such bottle hit Vinicius when he was standing on the sideline during a corner. A bottle hit Vinicius when he was standing on the sideline during a corner. (AP Photo) A bottle hit Vinicius when he was standing on the sideline during a corner. Mbappe said he had been prepared to leave the pitch but was persuaded by Vinicius to continue playing. "We cannot accept that there is a player in Europe's top football competition who behaves like this. This guy (Prestianni) doesn't deserve to play in the Champions League anymore," Mbappe told reporters. "I want to clarify that at no time did I direct racist insults to Vini Jr, who regrettably misunderstood what he thought he heard," Prestianni wrote on his Instagram account. "I was never racist with anyone and I regret the threats I received from Real Madrid players."

Eshwar Sai bags 'double' in Hyderabad Open Tennis Association tournament

Hyderabad: Eshwar Sai completed a 'double' in the 35 years & above category, winning the singles and doubles title (partnering Visakh) in the Hyderabad Open Tennis Association tournament at Jubilee Hills International Centre here. In the men's 55-plus doubles category, the pair of Nandyala Narasimha Reddy (Telangana) and Neelkantha Damre (Goa) emerged victorious. In the 55-plus singles category, IPS officer CV Anand defeated Neelkantha Damre 6-2, 6-3 to become the champion. In the final held at the Jubilee Hills International Centre, Narasimha Reddy and Neelkanth defeated Lagadapati Sridhar and Srinath 6-4, 6-7, 13-11 in a thrilling three-set battle to win the title. In the 35 category, Eshwar Sai achieved a double, defeating Bharani 6-2, 6-4 in singles. In doubles, he and Visakh scored a 6-4, 6-3 win against Sriram Alluri and Raghavendra Prasad.

In the singles categories, Suryapavan (30 plus), Madhu Rao (40 plus), Srikanth Nimmagadda (45 plus), Sridhar Reddy (50 plus), Paul Manohar (60 plus), P Ram Reddy (65 plus), Venkata Sanyasi Raju (70 plus), and Rama Mohan Rao (75 plus) emerged as the winners.

In the doubles category, the following pairs won the titles: Parvatheesham and Ram Prabhakar (75 plus), Venkata Sanyasi Raju and Gajapathi Naidu (70 plus), Anand Swaroop and Srinivas (65 plus), PVRLN Raju and Venkateswarlu (60 plus), Venkata Sivakumar Raju and Zakir Hussain (50 plus), Sandeep and Venkata Sivakumar Raju Mantena (45 plus), Nikhil Rao and Raghavendra Prasad (40 plus), Nikhil Rao and Rohit (30 plus). Hyderabad Open Tennis Association (HOTA) President Nandyala Narasimha Reddy, IPL Officer PV Padmaja, Urbanrise Executive Director Rajendra Desai, Jubilee Hills

Anurag Kashyap had two heart attacks, went to rehab thrice after Netflix's 'miscarriage' of Maximum City: 'They were silent for 1.5 years'



"It got India all wrong. Anything based in India, I won't do it in English. So, I've been walking the same path. When Suketu said do Maximum City in Hindi, I was very happy. It was greenlit by Netflix before I even wrote it. I asked them to read the book, but none of them did except one person. I said, 'Know what you're greenlighting,'" recalled Kashyap. By then, he'd already adapted Sacred Games for the platform, which turned out to be their maiden India Original, back in 2017. Kashyap then argued that since the problem was in the first 15 pages of his script, Netflix could've flagged it right there and then, but they didn't stop him from writing 900 pages. "Their silence for one-and-a-half years was even more triggering." Netflix India cancelled a number of shows and films, including Dibakar Banerjee's Tees, after 'policy changes' post the Tandav-Prime Video India controversy in 2021.

And then to compensate, they were sending me mediocre scripts. When I said it's mediocre and I need time, they said, 'No, but we have the actors' dates in four months.' I said no, I can't do it. If you want me to do it, I'll do it but I need time," said Kashyap. He revealed Netflix loved the pilot of a show he wrote, but wanted him to turn it into the Indian version of breakout Spanish thriller show Money Heist. Kashyap backed out, left Netflix India, and grieved for months. "It was like a miscarriage. Because of that grieving, I had heart attacks, was on blood thinners, and then the vaccine reacted. I got asthma, I was on steroids. With blood thinners and steroids, my mind was so abuzz as if it was on drugs," recalled the filmmaker. "I went into rehab three times, had a heart attack, my health went down, I didn't know how to deal with it. Then slowly, I crawled back. I'm myself now. But I still went on making films," Kashyap told SCREEN in 2022. "Unlike other people, I don't have the luxury to sit and wait. I don't do massive budget films which can sustain my people, my team," he added. Depression and asthma weren't the only health scares as Kashyap also began drinking a lot and ordering in a lot of unhealthy food, which led to him gaining 35 kg within just eight months. "My daughter was very worried. She sent me to rehab. I went to the rehab to fix myself, and I fixed myself. But I got a tear in my right leg in the rehab while playing cricket. And because of being on blood thinners, I couldn't go for surgery. I couldn't walk and was on a wheelchair. I was on bed rest for months," recalled Kashyap.

Anurag Kashyap's next release, Kennedy, starring Rahul Roy and Sunny Leone, is finally coming out this Friday on ZEE5. The film has been doing the rounds for two years now, and was written by Kashyap overnight back in 2023. That happened after two to three years of personal and professional setbacks, starting with the shelving of his ambitious adaptation of Suketu Mehta's 2004 book Maximum City by Netflix India. "I was only grieving over Maximum City. I was frustrated over Maximum City because the investment in that was so much. Because I'd been attached with Maximum City since 2009, when Danny Boyle was producing it. Slumdog Millionaire writer was writing it, and he wanted me to direct it at that time," revealed Kashyap in a new interview.

After the global crossover success of the Oscar-winning 2009 British film Slumdog Millionaire set in India, director Danny Boyle decided to adapt another Indian book, Maximum City, with screenwriter Simon Beaufoy, but it didn't work out. Kashyap told The Hollywood Reporter India he even turned down Showtime's offer to adapt Vikram Chandra's 2006 novel Sacred Games into a show produced by legendary filmmaker Ridley Scott and Warner Bros' offer to adapt Gregory David Roberts' 2003 book Shantaram with Forrest Gump-fame Eric Roth attached as the screenwriter.

Mammootty on recent health scare that forced him to take break from acting: 'I couldn't smell or taste anything'



George and his brother Ebrahimkutty, confirmed that he had been declared free of it. Now, Mammootty has finally opened up about what he went through during this challenging period, revealing the physical impact it had on him.

Speaking at the 16th-anniversary celebrations of the Care & Share International Foundation, a non-profit charitable organisation he founded, the actor shared that both his olfactory and gustatory abilities were compromised during this time. "Eyesight and hearing are very important aspects of human life. Even while breathing, some people are unable to smell anything. I was unable to smell or taste anything for a long time. We only understand the value of such abilities when we lose them," he reportedly said. Although he has recovered from the health issue since then, his sense of smell and taste are only gradually returning to normal.

When a man 'threw away' hearing aid Mammootty gifted him

During his address, Mammootty also took a trip down memory lane and recalled a time when someone discarded the hearing aid he had gifted them. The megastar noted that having a functional auditory sense was new for the person, and he felt extremely overwhelmed upon experiencing it for the first time. "During a shoot, I bought a hearing aid for someone I knew. He wore it for a short while and then removed it and threw it away. Sound was something he had never experienced before. It overwhelmed him, almost frightened him, and he never used the device again. Even today, he does not use it." One of the most influential and successful actors in the history of Malayalam cinema, Mammootty has appeared in over 400 films in a career spanning five decades. He was most recently seen in director Jithin K Jose's Kalamkaval, where he played the antagonist, and Adhvaith Nayar's Chatha Pacha, where he made a cameo appearance. Mammootty will next be seen in Mahesh Narayanan's Patriot, marking his on-screen reunion with Mohanlal after 18 years.

Early in 2025, a rumour started circulating on social media that sent chills down the spines of Malayalees worldwide. "Mammootty is unwell," people began saying, with some even claiming that he had been diagnosed with cancer and was stepping away from professional commitments for a while for treatment. Although his team quickly dismissed the rumours as fake, the following months saw Malayalees' fears come true as industry insiders indirectly confirmed that the megastar was dealing with a health scare. Mammootty's absence from the public eye further fueled the speculation, which reached a peak when fellow superstar Mohanlal performed a special offering for Mammootty at the Sabarimala temple in Pathanamthitta, Kerala.

Months later, in August, his co-stars and people close to him announced that he had recovered from the disease. While no one explicitly mentioned what health crisis he had been dealing with, they, including his long-time associate

Gangs of Waseypur made me, ruined me: Anurag Kashyap blames the film for his recent box office failures

Anurag Kashyap has directed 12 feature films, three short films, and one show since his 2012 two-part seminal gangster saga Gangs of Wasseypur. He's even turned an actor and starred in 10 feature films and one show since then. But he believes that franchise, starring Manoj Bajpayee, Nawazuddin Siddiqui, Richa Chadha, and Huma Qureshi among others is still an albatross around his neck.

"I don't think other than Farhan Akhtar or Karan Johar, there's no filmmaker who clicks more selfies than I do. And they all know me as either an actor or the director of Gangs of Wasseypur. And I have a filmography of 200 plus. They remember nothing else. And the only question they ask me, '3 kab bana rahe ho sir?' (When are you making part 3?)," said Kashyap in a recent interview.

He claims he's started telling them point blank that he won't make a Gangs of Wasseypur threequel because he wouldn't cave in to audience expectations. "I didn't make films to compete in this market of who's the most successful filmmaker. I came here to make films, and I will make films. I'm ready to bear the consequences. I'll go back to my indie days," Kashyap told The Hollywood Reporter India.

Kashyap also blames the "shadow of Gangs of Wasseypur" for the box office failure and underwhelming response to his latest two-part crime comedy, Nishaanchi, which released last year. He claimed that while the film was conceived with Prime Video India as a streaming-only re-



lease, the craze for Gangs of Wasseypur prompted them to split it into two parts and release the first one in cinemas. However, Kashyap points out that didn't work for the film as a lot of people were taken aback by the abrupt ending of the first part. He said whoever liked Nishaanchi, watched it in one go, either during the trials or on Prime Video once both parts were dropped at the same time. In fact, he insisted that both parts be released together on the platform since the first part failed to collect even Rs 2 crore at the domestic box office.

'Not as critical as reported': Dr Jalil Parkar clarifies Salim Khan's status after neurological procedure



Salim Khan was brought in around 8.30 am on Tuesday to Mumbai's Lilavati Hospital by his family physician, Dr. Sandeep Chopra, following a haemorrhage. Salim Khan was brought in around 8.30 am on Tuesday to Mumbai's Lilavati Hospital by his family physician, Dr. Sandeep Chopra, following a haemorrhage.

Veteran screenwriter Salim Khan, 90, was admitted to Lilavati Hospital in Bandra on Tuesday morning after his health condition deteriorated. Hospital officials confirmed that Khan was brought in around 8.30 am by his family physician, Dr. Sandeep Chopra, following a haemorrhage. On Wednesday, Dr. Jalil Parkar, pulmonologist at Lilavati Hospital, in a press briefing said Khan was initially treated in the casualty ward before being shifted to the ICU. "After seeing him in the casualty and giving him some medications, we realised he needed ICU hospitalisation and we took him to

ICU. He was having jerks and his blood pressure was high, for which we treated him. We had to put him on the ventilator as a safeguard while certain investigations were carried out. It was not that he was critical, as reported on various news channels," Dr. Parkar clarified.

On Wednesday, Khan underwent a medical procedure performed by neurosurgeon Dr. Nitin Dange. "The procedure, called DSA, has been accomplished successfully. He is fine, stable, and being shifted back to the ICU. By tomorrow, if all goes well, and God wishes, he will be off the ventilator. All in all, he is doing quite well, age is a factor and we understand, that is why the process of recovery takes a little time," Dr. Parkar said. Digital Subtraction Angiography (DSA) is a minimally invasive imaging technique used to visualize blood vessels in detail. It involves injecting a contrast dye into the bloodstream and using X-ray fluoroscopy to capture images. By digitally subtracting pre-contrast images from post-contrast ones, doctors can clearly see abnormalities such as blockages, aneurysms, or haemorrhages in the vascular system. DSA is often used in neurology and cardiology to diagnose and guide treatment for vascular conditions.

Family members, including actor Salman Khan, were seen at the hospital soon after news of his admission broke. Salman was spotted leaving the facility after visiting his father, while other relatives remained present. Salim Khan is widely regarded as one of the most influential screenwriters in Hindi cinema. As one half of the legendary Salim-Javed duo, he co-authored some of Bollywood's most iconic films of the 1970s and 1980s, including Sholay, Dewaar, Zanjeer, and Trishul. His work helped define mainstream Hindi cinema and continues to inspire generations of filmmakers.

'Trying to make the world better': Vin Diesel compares 'birthday twin' Priyanka Chopra to Nelson Mandela, Nick Jonas adjusts her dress

Prime Video and Russo Brothers' production house AGBO hosted a grand premiere of Frank E Flowers' upcoming action thriller The Bluff, which is headlined by Priyanka Chopra. The star-studded event in Los Angeles was attended by Priyanka, her husband and actor-singer Nick Jonas, Fast & Furious star Vin Diesel, and Karl Urban among others.

While addressing the media at the premiere, Vin Diesel was all praise for his birthday twin Priyanka, who was standing by her. "She is so amazing in this movie. And she's such an incredible talent. And she was so nice with my kids in New York, where they had a screening. And we share our birthday. And the only other person I can think of is the great Nelson Mandela. And we're all trying to make the world a better place," said the actor. The official Instagram handle of AGBO shared this video with the caption, "Joe Russo, isn't your birthday also July 18th? (dance emoji)."

Earlier in the evening, Priyanka arrived at the premiere of The Bluff with Nick Jonas. As they posed on the red carpet, Nick was seen gently adjusting the trail of her dress. They also shared a kiss on the red carpet. Priyanka also posed on the red carpet with the cast and crew of The Bluff, including The Boys star Karl Urban, with whom her character locks horns with in the film. Set against the historical and cultural backdrop of the Cayman Islands, The Bluff follows a former pirate whose peaceful life is upended by the return of her violent past. Priyanka plays Ercell Bloody Mary Bodden, a skilled ex-pirate who believes she has left behind a life of bloodshed to live quietly with her family.

"But when her notorious former captain, Connor (Urban), arrives seeking revenge, Ercell's world is torn apart. Forced to confront the demons she's tried to bury, Ercell is thrust back into a deadly game of secrets and survival. Armed with lethal swordsmanship, cunning traps, and a fierce will to protect those she loves, she wages a brutal war against Connor's merciless crew. Ercell's fight to save her family becomes a journey of redemption, as she re-



claims her power and embraces the warrior she once was," read the official logline. Priyanka's co-star from her upcoming Telugu time-travel epic Varanasi, Mahesh Babu, also hyped her up when the trailer of The Bluff came out. "Loved the trailer... @priyankachopra is uncompromising and formidable yet again. Wishing the entire team of #TheBluff the very best for Feb 25th," he wrote on X last month while sharing the trailer. Co-written by Joe Ballarini and Flowers, The Bluff marks Priyanka's reunion with Avengers directors Russo Brothers — Joe and Anthony Russo — after their 2023 Prime Video India espionage thriller show Citadel. Priyanka has already shot for season 2 as well, which will drop on the platform this year. The Bluff will release on Prime Video on February 25.

'A legacy of gentleness': Kiara Advani shares rare family portrait in heartbreaking tribute to late father-in-law

Sidharth Malhotra and his family are mourning the loss of his father and merchant navy captain Sunil Malhotra after he died of prolonged illness in Delhi earlier this week. Hours after the actor penned an emotional note remembering his father, his wife Kiara Advani also shared a family portrait on her Instagram handle on Wednesday morning and penned a heartfelt tribute to her late father-in-law.

"From the very beginning — you welcomed me with open arms, steady wisdom, and a kind of unconditional love that grounded us all," she wrote in the caption. "Your warmth was constant. Your generosity effortless. Your love for your family was at the center of everything you did. You showed up — every single time. You listened with intention. You remembered the little things. You gave so freely, never expecting anything in return," she added.

Along with a family portrait of her, Sidharth, and his parents, Kiara also shared a close-up still of her Sunil Malhotra. "Your stories, your laughter, your quiet strength, and your gentle heart will stay with me forever. You leave behind a legacy of gentleness, integrity, and deep, unwavering love. It lives on in your children, grandchildren and in all of us who were blessed to know you," she wrote.

"Rest peacefully. You will forever be missed, forever loved, and forever remembered," she concluded her note with a white heart emoji. Filmmaker Karan Johar, who directed Kiara in the 2018 Netflix India anthology Lust Stories, commented red heart emojis on her Instagram post. Other film industry members like actors Neha Dhupia and Shibani Dandekar, and choreographer Bosco Martis, also paid their condolences in the comment section.

On Tuesday evening, Sidharth had also shared several pictures with his late father on Instagram. He described his father as "a man of rare honesty, integrity and culture."



"From the very beginning — you welcomed me with open arms, steady wisdom, and a kind of unconditional love that grounded us all," she wrote in the caption. "Your warmth was constant. Your generosity effortless. Your love for your family was at the center of everything you did. You showed up — every single time. You listened with intention. You remembered the little things. You gave so freely, never expecting anything in return," she added.

Remembering him as a pillar of strength, he wrote that his father lived by "values that never bent". "From commanding the seas as a Merchant Navy Captain to facing illness with quiet courage, he never compromised, never lost his grace. Even when the stroke confined him to a wheelchair, his spirit stood tall," he wrote in the caption.