

# INDIAN CHRONICLE

21 February, 2026 | Saturday | Volume No:10 | Issue No: 327

Pages: 12+8

www.indianchronicle.com

Published from : Ranga Reddy (Telangana State)

₹ 3

## Telangana HC quashes cases against Osmania University Arts College principal

Hyderabad: Justice Tukaram of the Telangana High Court on Friday quashed two criminal cases registered against Osmania University Arts College Principal Professor C Kasim, holding that the prosecution was initiated in violation of the mandatory procedure prescribed under Section 195 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

## Telangana to train 800 farmers as vegetable cultivation volunteers

Hyderabad: In order to resolve vegetable storage in the State, the government would train more than 800 farmers as best vegetable cultivation volunteers, under the auspices of primary agricultural credit societies, who would train others, said K Surendra Mohan, Secretary, Telangana Agriculture and Co-operation Department.

Participating in the annual group meeting of All India Crop Research Project on Vegetable Crops at Sri Konda Laxman Telangana Horticultural University here on Friday, Mohan said efforts were being made to strengthen the horticulture sector in the State with 12 focus areas as part of Viksit Bharat by 2047.

## Telangana CM Revanth Reddy Calls for Separate AI Ministry

Hyderabad, Feb 20

Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has proposed establishing a dedicated AI ministry at the central government level to keep India at the forefront of artificial intelligence (AI). He emphasised that a specialised system is necessary to manage AI-related issues such as usage, regulation, legal guidelines, and national security.

Revanth Reddy made his remarks at the AI Summit in Delhi today. He reflected on how innovations like fire, the wheel, agriculture, electricity, and the Internet have transformed the world. He described AI as a revolutionary technology, not just another tool, but the most powerful in human evolution. He highlighted that unlike previous machines, AI can learn, analyse, and make deci-



sions independently. He also explained that when combined with robotics, machines are gaining both mental intelligence and physical capabilities.

## SC flags 'trust deficit' in West Bengal SIR

New Delhi, Feb 20

Dismayed over ongoing tussle between the West Bengal government and the Election Commission, the Supreme Court on Friday issued an "extraordinary" direction to deploy serving and former district judges to assist the poll panel in the controversy-ridden special intensive revision of electoral rolls in the state.

Ruining the "unfortunate blame game" and the "trust deficit" between the EC and the "democratically elected" TMC government, a bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and justices

Joyimalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi passed a slew of fresh directions to ensure completion of the special intensive revision (SIR) process. The bench ordered deputation of judicial officers for adjudication of claims and objections of the persons, who are put under the logical discrepancy lists and facing removal of their names from the electoral rolls.



Logical discrepancies in progeny linking with the 2002 voter list include instances of a mismatch in the parent's name and the age difference between a voter and their parent being less than 15 years or more than 50 years.

## Senior Congress Leader T. Jeevan Reddy Hospitalised Amid Health Concerns



Hyderabad, Feb 20

Senior Congress Party figure and former MLC T.

Jeevan Reddy was taken seriously ill on Saturday. His condition suddenly worsened, prompting family members to urgently take him to NIMS Hospital in Hyderabad.

It is initially believed that food poisoning may be the cause of his illness. However, his family has indicated that he is also under significant mental stress due to ongoing political developments in the state. They suggest that concerns over recent political manoeuvrings and party changes have contributed to his condition.

Doctors at NIMS are providing emergency treatment and are closely monitoring his health. Medical sources have assured that there is no cause for alarm. Many Congress leaders and supporters, upon hearing of Jeevan Reddy's illness, have extended their wishes for his speedy recovery.

## Municipality withdraws permission for prayers in government building in Uttarkhand



Gopeshwar (Uttarakhand): Authorities in Jyotirmath in Uttarakhand held a meeting with community members, amid simmering tension after a video of namaz being offered in an under-construction government building surfaced on social media.

The municipality on Thursday withdrew the verbal permission given for offering namaz in the building and locked it.

Jyotirmath Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Chandrashekhar Vashisht told reporters that a meeting

was held on Thursday with members of both communities as a precautionary measure for peace.

He said police have been instructed to keep a vigil on elements that may disrupt the atmosphere.

Some Hindu outfits met the district magistrate and superintendent of police on the issue and demanded an investigation.

At the heart of the controversy is a video in which some people are seen offering namaz in an under-construction

table tennis court in the Meat Bazaar area of Jyotirmath municipality.

Municipal Council President Deveshwari Shah told reporters that Muslims had obtained verbal permission to offer namaz.

However, after a meeting of councillors chaired by Shah in the evening, the room in the building was locked.

In 2017, a gurdwara here had opened its gates for the members of the Muslim community to offer namaz on Eid al-Adha due to heavy rain.

## US Supreme Court strikes down Trump tariffs

New Delhi, Feb 20

In a major setback to the protectionist trade policy of President Donald Trump, the US Supreme Court on Friday struck down sweeping global tariffs, holding that the administration exceeded its statutory authority by invoking emergency economic powers.

The court held that the White House had improperly relied on the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) to impose across-the-board duties on multiple trading partners, observing that the law was intended to address "extraordinary external threats" and not to restructure global trade flows.

The tariffs, which were introduced to reduce trade deficits and incentivise domestic manufacturing, covered imports ranging from electronics and machinery to consumer and industrial goods. They had been challenged by industry groups, importers and US states, which argued the measures amounted to taxation without Congressional approval.

The ruling carries immediate relevance for India, which had recently concluded an interim trade arrangement with Washington aimed at stabilising market access and supply chains. The legal basis for the reciprocal tariffs of 18 per cent now stands invalidated, removing uncertainty surrounding duties that had affected Indian exports during negotiations.

Writing for the 6-3 majority, Chief Justice John Roberts held that IEEPA authorises the President to regulate transactions and foreign property but not to impose import duties, which constitutionally fall within Congress' taxing power.

Allowing tariffs under an emergency statute, the court said, would effectively transfer Congress' control over trade and taxation to the executive branch. The President, therefore, exceeded statutory authority, it held.

Justices Sonia Sotomayor, Elena Kagan and Ketanji Brown Jackson joined the majority, emphasising the case could be resolved purely on statutory interpretation and

cautioning against expanding emergency economic laws into permanent policymaking tools.



Justice Amy Coney Barrett agreed with the outcome, writing separately that tariffs were legally taxes on imports, distinct from the regulation of economic transactions. Reading the IEEPA to permit tariffs, she said, would allow any President to impose sweeping duties merely by declaring an emergency — an authority Congress never granted.

Justice Brett Kavanaugh, joined by Samuel Alito and Clarence Thomas, dissented, arguing the President acted within authority because regulating imports historically included adjusting duties and courts should defer to the executive in foreign economic crises.

Kavanaugh noted the tariffs had influenced negotiations with several countries, including India, and warned the ruling could complicate refunds of collected duties and create uncertainty for existing trade arrangements. He maintained the measures were lawful under the statute's text, history and precedent.

The decision significantly limits the use of emergency economic powers for broad trade action and reaffirms that tariff policy primarily rests with Congress rather than unilateral executive authority.

## Rahul appears before Sultanpur court in defamation case

New Delhi, Feb 20

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Friday appeared before a special MP-MLA court in Sultanpur and recorded his statement in a 2018 defamation case linked to his alleged remarks against Union Home Minister Amit Shah. The proceedings were conducted before Special Judge Shubham Verma, where Rahul denied all allegations and maintained that the complaint was driven by political motives.

Rahul, through his counsel Kashi Prasad Shukla, informed the court that the case had been filed with the intention of damaging his personal and political image. He submitted that the allegations were baseless and founded on a distorted interpretation of his remarks. He said he had not used derogatory language against any individual, nor had he made any statement with the intent to defame. The complaint, he argued, was false and motivated by malice.

The court has now fixed March 9 as the next date of hearing, directing the Raebareilly MP to present evidence in his defence.

The case traces back to 2018, when a defamation complaint was filed by Vijay Mishra, a local BJP leader and former chairman of the district cooperative bank. The complaint alleges that during the Karnataka Assembly elections that year, Rahul made objectionable remarks targeting Shah, who was then serving as the BJP president.

Counsel appearing for the complainant, Santosh Kumar Pandey, informed the court that the cross-examination of the plaintiff and two witnesses has already been



completed.

Rahul reached the court premises at around 10:40 am and remained inside for approximately half an hour to record his statement. As he exited, party workers gathered outside raised slogans in his support. He briefly acknowledged them before leaving the premises.

## Telangana HC hears plea over alleged extortion bid to withdraw PIL

Hyderabad, Feb 20

Justice J Sreenivas Rao of the Telangana High Court on Friday heard arguments in a criminal petition arising out of allegations that a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) was used to demand money for its withdrawal, with both sides making serious accusations against each other. The matter concerns a PIL filed by Gadila Raghuvuera Reddy, a resident of Kondapaka in Siddipet district, relating to the regularisation of plots in NBT Nagar, Banjara Hills.

The PIL seeks quashing of GO Ms No. 56 issued by the State Government concerning regularisation of certain plots allegedly linked to K Venkateswara Rao, son of

former MP and senior Congress leader Dr K Kesava Rao, and GHMC Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi.

During the hearing, counsel appearing for K Venkateswara Rao submitted that Raghuvuera Reddy had allegedly threatened to withdraw the PIL if an amount of Rs 3 crore was paid. It was contended that several WhatsApp messages were sent demanding money in exchange for withdrawing the case pending before the High Court. Based on a complaint lodged by Venkateswara Rao, the Banjara Hills police registered an FIR against Raghuvuera Reddy.

Raghuvuera Reddy subsequently approached the High Court seeking quashing of the criminal proceedings registered against him.

# Indian Chronicle

English Daily

## Breaking China's semiconductor chokehold

India's entry into the Pax Silica coalition — a United States-led alliance aimed at building a resilient supply chain for critical minerals and artificial intelligence — is a transformative moment that could significantly accelerate the country's semiconductor and AI ambitions. The agreement, signed on the sidelines of the AI Impact Summit hosted by India at New Delhi, makes India the 10th full member of a grouping that is essentially working in tandem to counter China's oversized influence on global supply chains. The move also assumes significance as it comes amid efforts by India and America to finalise a trade deal and move forward on several other initiatives to solidify bilateral ties after a spell of severe strain in relations due to a steep hike in US tariffs. The pact has the potential to reshape tech alliances. In the last few years, there has been a convergence among global economies on the need for joint efforts to "de-risk" critical technologies, linking artificial intelligence governance with resilient supply chains and long-term economic security partnerships. For this to happen, it is essential to break China's semiconductor chokehold and build a reliable supply chain for economic security. For instance, Beijing currently controls 90% of India's rare earth imports. Becoming a member of Pax Silica will open up avenues for India. Launched in December last year, the initiative includes Israel, Japan, Greece, Australia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Singapore, South Korea, and the United Kingdom.

India was excluded from the coalition when it was founded. The sharp reversal on the part of the US sends across a clear signal that Washington is now serious about including New Delhi within its technology orbit to counter China. The Pax Silica declaration lays out a shared vision of economic and technology cooperation across supply chains — from raw materials to semiconductors and AI infrastructure — and commitment to mutual prosperity and security. Resilient semiconductor supply chains are critical in a world that has witnessed supply chain weaponisation. According to estimates by the International Energy Agency, China accounts for about 61% of global rare earth production and 92% of processing. Rare earths are used across a wide range of modern industries, from semiconductor chips and electric vehicles to defence equipment and consumer electronics.

## Temple Burgled in Kagaznagar; Flee with Gold and Cash

Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), February 20, "Residents of Asifabad district are gripped by fear following a series of thefts reported in the region. In the latest incident, unidentified miscreants broke open the locks of the Ellamma-Pochamma Temple located in the RRO Colony area of Kagaznagar on Thursday night and decamped with gold ornaments and cash. The theft came to light



early Friday morning when members of the temple committee visited the premises and noticed the break-in. Upon receiving information, town police rushed to the spot and conducted a preliminary inspection. "According to the police, the accused also removed two hundis (donation boxes) from the temple premises and later abandoned them in agricultural fields near the temple. A case has been registered and an investigation is underway. Police are examining CCTV footage from nearby areas in an effort to identify and apprehend the culprits.

## Nagaraju Nadendla Appointed as Telangana Executive Member of Telangana Human Rights Justice Forum

Kishore Vaddepalli, Hyderabad, February 20 (Indian Chronicle): "Dr. Vyasa Bhatt Sreevani Chowdary, Chairperson of the Telangana Human Rights Justice Forum, announced that Nagaraju Nadendla has been appointed as the Telangana Executive Member of the organization, which is actively working across the state. Speaking to the media on the occasion of his appointment, Nagaraju Nadendla expressed his gratitude to Chairperson Dr. Vyasa Bhatt Sreevani Chowdary and General Secretary Jatla Padmavathi for placing their trust in him and facilitating his appointment. He stated that he would work to the best of his ability for the protection of human rights. He assured that he would stand by victims and strive continuously to ensure justice. He further emphasized that he would contribute to the organization's growth through effective administration and responsible leadership. Nadendla also said that whenever human rights are violated, he would respond firmly on behalf of the Telangana Human Rights Justice Forum and initiate necessary actions. He added that the appointment has increased his sense of social responsibility. On this occasion, trust members, local dignitaries, and social activists felicitated the newly appointed Telangana Executive Member Nagaraju Nadendla and extended their congratulations.



He further emphasized that he would contribute to the organization's growth through effective administration and responsible leadership. Nadendla also said that whenever human rights are violated, he would respond firmly on behalf of the Telangana Human Rights Justice Forum and initiate necessary actions. He added that the appointment has increased his sense of social responsibility. On this occasion, trust members, local dignitaries, and social activists felicitated the newly appointed Telangana Executive Member Nagaraju Nadendla and extended their congratulations.

## Sri Narayana Junior College Students Receive Hall Tickets from Chairman Madhukar

"NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, February 20, (INDIAN CHRONICLE): "Students of Sri Narayana Junior College who are appearing for the upcoming Intermediate examinations received their hall tickets from Founder and Chairman Madhukar. On this occasion, special prayers were offered at the Nimushambika Devi Temple seeking blessings for the students success. Following the prayers, the hall tickets were formally distributed. Addressing the students, Madhukar encouraged them to move forward with confidence and courage. He stated that hard work always brings results and described the Intermediate examinations as an important milestone in their academic journey. He advised students to remain focused, disciplined, and determined to achieve excellent results. With dedication, perseverance, and self-belief, success is assured, he said, urging students to fulfill their goals and make their parents and teachers proud. He extended his best wishes to all students appearing for the examinations and reiterated that consistent effort and confidence are the keys to success.



## Big Shock to BRS in Chilukanagar – Mala and Madiga Community Leaders Join Congress



"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 20 (Indian Chronicle): "The Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) suffered another major setback in the Uppal constituency as a large number of leaders and activists joined the Congress Party in Chilukanagar. Leaders from Mala and Madiga community associations formally joined the Congress in the presence of Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy. "Liberation from 10 Years of 'Exploitation'" Speaking on the occasion, Parameshwar Reddy alleged that the state witnessed exploitation during the ten-year BRS rule. He said that under the guise of development and welfare, BRS leaders themselves benefited while people suffered. "Allegations of 'Bannala Tax' Collections" He accused a former corporator of the Chilukanagar division of collecting hundreds of crores of rupees in the name of "Bannala tax." He further alleged that nearly ₹100 crore worth of government land near High Court Colony had been encroached upon and said several such irregularities existed. "Parameshwar Reddy stated that people's governance has been restored in the state and that the implementation of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's Six Guarantees has drawn public attention towards the Congress Party. "Leaders Who Joined Congress" Among those who joined the party were Ramana, Cherla Balaram, Kondra Ramulu, Marepaka Sailu, Polati Kishayya, Kurelli Yadagiri, Ram Narsaiah, CH Ailiah, Marepaka Nagaiah, B. Anjaiah, S. Narasimha, Podishetty Krishna, M. Srinivas, G. Ramulu, M. Srinivasa Rao, Ravi, Murali, Baburao, Kanakaraju, Ella Swamy, Rajender, Salender, Koti, Karthik, Bhaskar, Venkataswamy, Pochayya, Balakrishna, Ramakrishna, Mahesh, Ramulu and others. "Participants" Division President Mulakalappalli Rajesh Mudiraj, Agiti Agam Reddy, Bajar Jagannath Goud, Kompalli Balaraju, A-Block SC Cell President Lingampalli Ramakrishna, A-Block Women's President Amreshwari, Sushilamma, Manchala Raghu, Sriramulu, Mahender Mudiraj, Gandikota Ganesh, Dudugula Shankar, Amar, Moynuddin, Satyam, Bhaskar Reddy, Chandrayya, Radhakrishna, Shrivani, Jagan, Ravi, Shiva, David, Chand Pasha, Kiran and several Chilukanagar Congress leaders participated in the programme.

## MP Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy Unveils Invitation for Silver Jubilee Celebrations

"NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, February 20, (INDIAN CHRONICLE): "The invitation for the Silver Jubilee celebrations marking 25 years of the Telangana State Dwarfs Welfare Association was presented to Bhongir Member of Parliament Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy. Representatives of the association met the MP at his residence in Hyderabad and invited him to attend the Silver Jubilee event scheduled to be held on February 26 at Ravindra Bharathi. He responded positively and assured his presence at the programme. On the occasion, the MP extended financial assistance of Rs. 50,000 towards the conduct of the Silver Jubilee celebrations and to support the association's activities. He stated that standing by socially and physically disadvantaged sections of society is a responsibility and assured continued efforts toward addressing the issues faced by persons with dwarfism. The association representatives expressed gratitude for the support. State President Mallesham and district-level leaders of the Dwarfs Welfare Association were present.



## Additional Collector Inspects Disability Assessment Camp in Kothagudem

"Bhukya Ranjith Naik, Bhadradi Kothagudem Bureau, February 20, Indian Chronicle: "The Additional Collector



lector (Local Bodies), Vidya Chandana, inspected the disability assessment camp conducted at the Government Area Hospital in Kothagudem on Friday. "During her visit, she reviewed the medical examinations being carried out for persons with disabilities and observed the process of online application registration. She also interacted with beneficiaries to understand the challenges they face, assessed the availability of services at the hospital, and examined the functioning of equipment used for disability assessment. "Speaking on the occasion, the Additional Collector stated that the government accords the highest priority to the welfare of persons with disabilities and is committed to ensuring that every eligible individual receives proper identification and certification. She highlighted that the Unique Disability Identity (UDID) cards issued by the government are recognized across

Telangana and throughout India. These cards enable persons with disabilities to access benefits under various central and state government schemes related to healthcare, education, employment, and transportation. "She directed officials to ensure coordinated efforts among departments so that persons with disabilities receive equal rights and opportunities in society. "The Additional Collector instructed authorities to facilitate slot bookings under the SADAREM system for applicants who have newly applied for UDID cards and to provide prior intimation to ensure timely medical assessments. She also emphasized the need to ensure the availability of required medical specialists, diagnostic equipment, and technical staff during examinations. "Further, she directed that adequate basic facilities be provided at the camp venue, including a reception center, seating arrangements, shade, drinking water, toilets, ramps, and wheelchairs, so that beneficiaries do not face inconvenience. Creating a disability-friendly environment is a responsibility of the administration, she noted. "She instructed officials to ensure that, after medical examinations, details such as percentage of disability, personal information, and certification by medical experts are accurately uploaded to the UDID portal without errors. Maintaining digital records of beneficiaries, she said, would serve as a strong foundation for the effective implementation of future welfare schemes. "Medical experts, departmental officials, and staff members were present during the inspection

## Grand Idol Re-Consecration Ceremony of Sri Sri Sri Sitarama Anjaneya Swamy Held in Boduppall

"NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, February 20, (INDIAN CHRONICLE): "A grand idol re-consecration ceremony of Sri Sri Sri Sitarama Anjaneya Swamy was conducted



with religious fervor in the Boduppall Circle under the MMTCL limits. The programme was organized by the Sri Sitarama Anjaneya Swamy Temple Committee and witnessed large participation from devotees and local residents. State Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy attended the event as the chief guest. DCC President Thotakura Vajresh Yadav and former corporator Singireddy Padma Reddy were among the prominent leaders present. Other attendees included Boduppall Congress Party President Pogula Narasimha Reddy, former Mayor Thotakura Ajay Yadav, former Deputy Mayor Kotha Sravanti Kishore Goud, former corporators, temple committee members, local leaders, and a large number of devotees. The ceremony was performed with traditional rituals and special pujas. Devotees offered prayers and participated in the spiritual proceedings, making the event a vibrant and devotional gathering.

## "ITDA Project Officer Assures Support for Tribal Youth Preparing for Competitive Examinations"

"Bhukya Ranjith Naik, Bhadradi Kothagudem Bureau, February 20, Indian Chronicle: "B. Rahul, Project Officer of the Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA), has assured comprehensive support to unemployed and aspiring youth preparing for competitive examinations, including DSC (Teacher Recruitment), Group I, Group II, and other state-level competitive tests. "He made these remarks during his visit to the District Central Library in Kothagudem on Friday, following an invitation from Library Chairman Pasupuleti Veerababu. During the visit, the Project Officer inspected various sections of the library and interacted with students preparing for competitive examinations, offering guidance and encouragement. "Addressing the aspirants, Rahul emphasized the importance of dedication, discipline, and perseverance. He advised candidates to remain focused



on their goals and not to rest until they achieve success. He also encouraged them to seek guidance from experienced mentors whenever necessary. The ITDA, he stated, would extend support by providing study materials, books, and assistance for organizing online coaching classes to help candidates prepare effectively. "Highlighting the challenges faced by tribal youth in remote areas, the Library Chairman brought to the Project Officer's attention the lack of library facilities in Chandrugonda, Tekulapalli, and Dammapeta mandals. Many students in these regions, he noted, struggle to access adequate resources for competitive exam preparation. "Responding positively, Rahul stated that if suitable government land is available in these mandals, proposals may be submitted after obtaining approval from the District Collector of Bhadradi Kothagudem. He assured that ITDA would take necessary steps to facilitate the establishment of libraries in these areas and ensure that adequate infrastructure and basic amenities are provided for students and readers. "The event was attended by Executive Engineer (Tribal Welfare) Madhukar, Deputy Engineers, Assistant Engineers, revenue officials, and other staff members.



## Extend Cotton Procurement Deadline Till March 15, Demands Koneru Konappa



ately respond and extend the procurement deadline until March 15 to enable farmers to sell their produce at the Minimum Support Price (MSP). He appealed to both the State and Central governments to take prompt action in the interest of farmers. "Meanwhile, local farmers have expressed hope for an extension of the procurement period and are awaiting a favourable decision from the government.

## 23 Cattle Seized at Jainoor Check Post

“Three Persons Detained for Cruel and Illegal Transportation



against those violating animal welfare laws. They also advised livestock traders and transporters to strictly adhere to government guidelines and legal procedures while transporting animals.

## Former Corporator Gandham Jyothsna Nageswara Rao Moves Forward with Public Welfare as Her Mission

Former corporator hands over mosquito fogging machines to DC under Gandham Foundation



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 20 (Indian Chronicle): “Responding promptly to the difficulties faced by residents due to the increasing mosquito menace in the Ramanthapur division, former corporator Gandham Jyothsna Nageswara Rao took immediate action. Under the aegis of the Gandham Foundation, two new mosquito fogging machines were voluntarily purchased and handed over to Deputy Commissioner Raju at the Uppal Circle Office to strengthen mosquito control measures in the area. “Local residents expressed their gratitude to former corporator Jyothsna Nageswara Rao, who continues to move forward with public welfare as her primary mission. “GHMC Entomology SE Madhava Reddy, DE Sai Tarun, AE Bharati, along with BRS leaders Ramasahayam Srinivas Reddy, Suram Shankar, Chand Pasha, Thoot Narasimha, Manish, Madduri Srinu, Mandapati Srinivas Reddy, Laddu, Gautham, Pawan, Praveen, Prashanth, and others participated in the programme.

## Mass Rally Demands Government Approval for Statuary Installation at Ramanthapur Tank Bund

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, Feb 20 (Indian Chronicle): “A large rally was organized on Friday demanding government permission to install statues of eminent personalities, historians, and freedom fighters on the Ramanthapur Pedda Cheruvu Tank Bund. The rally was led by BJP State Vice President and former MLA N.V.S.S. Prabhakar. The procession began at Baddi Pochamma Temple in Nehru Nagar, Ramanthapur, and passed through Indiranagar and Satyanarayana Temple before concluding near the Public School on the Ramanthapur main road. BJP cadres and leaders of various community organizations participated in large numbers, carrying placards displaying photographs of great leaders, historians, and freedom fighters. “Speaking on the occasion, former

MLA N.V.S.S. Prabhakar stated that the rally was organized to demand permission for installing statues to promote patriotism and preserve national integrity. He said that such installations would inspire service-mindedness, national pride, and social awareness among future generations. “He criticized the government for delaying approval and urged authorities to grant permission immediately. If permission is not granted, he warned that residents of Ramanthapur and Habsiguda would be united to call for a bandh and intensify protest programs. “Prabhakar asserted that the movement would continue until statues of eminent personalities, historians, and freedom fighters are installed at the Ramanthapur Mini Tank Bund. Leaders from various community organizations participated in the rally in large numbers.

## Shivaji Maharaj Jayanti Procession Held in Beerappagadda Division



; Irshad Khan (Uppal Khan) Participates “KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 20 (Indian Chronicle): “A grand procession was organized in Beerappagadda Division to mark the 396th birth anniversary of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj under the leadership of the Beerappagadda Youth Association. “Congress Minority leader Irshad Khan (Uppal Khan) attended the event and actively participated in the celebrations. “Speaking on the occasion, Irshad Khan said that the life of Shivaji Maharaj is an inspiration to youth. He noted that Shivaji’s courage, leadership qualities, and commitment to justice remain exemplary for society. He emphasized the importance of maintaining communal harmony and unity while moving forward on the path of development. The rally was conducted peacefully and with great enthusiasm. Hindus and Muslims participated together, showcasing communal harmony. Women, youth, and local residents actively took part, making the procession a grand success. Sunil, Kittu, Anil, Sai, Pandu, Raju, Pawan, Dattu, Sampath, Americ, Junaid, Hyderabad, Noor, Mohammed, and several others, along with a large number of women and youth from the division, participated in the program.

## Rs 789 Crore Embankment Proposed to Protect Four Villages in Bhadradi from Godavari Floods

“Kranthikumar Dasari | Pinapaka Constancy | February 20 | Indian chronicle : In a major step towards providing permanent flood protection to four vulnerable villages in Bhadradi Kothagudem district, the State Government is considering a comprehensive embankment project along the Godavari River at an estimated cost of ₹789 crore. The Irrigation Department has submitted detailed proposals to the government for the construction of a flood protection bund near Burgampadu mandal. The project aims to safeguard Burgampadu, Nagineni Prolu, Sanjeevareddypalem, and Reddypalem villages, which face recurrent flooding whenever the Godavari reaches the third danger level of 53 feet at Bhadrachalam. The affected stretch lies at a critical bend of the Godavari near Bhadrachalam, where floodwaters frequently inundate low-lying habitations during the monsoon season. With rising flood levels, additional nearby villages are also impacted. Moreover, submergence of the main road disrupts connectivity between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, severely affecting inter-state transport. Following the devastating floods of 2022, the government constituted a special committee under the leadership of the Engineer-in-Chief (ENC) to examine long-term solutions. The committee recommended the construction of an embankment along the right bank of the river as a permanent mitigation measure. According to the proposal, the embankment will be constructed over a stretch of 11.64 kilometres, with a design height of approximately 51 metres. The estimated project cost stands at ₹789 crore. The plan also involves acquisition of about 281 acres of land, for which ₹33.72



crore has been earmarked. In addition, the report recommends the establishment of two pumping stations to divert floodwaters flowing from the Burgampadu side into the Godavari River, thereby preventing waterlogging in interior areas. The State-Level Standing Committee approved the proposal last month and forwarded it to the government for final clearance. If the State Cabinet grants approval, tenders are expected to be floated soon, paving the way for commencement of construction works, according to Irrigation Department sources.

## Communist Party of India (Marxist) Submits Memorandum to Extend Cotton Procurement Deadline

“Indian Chronicle" kumram bheem Asifabad Dis trict Reporte, Jade Srinivas, February, 20. “Asifabad “With the CCI cotton procurement deadline ending today, anxiety has gripped cotton farmers across the district. In this regard, leaders of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPM) submitted a memorandum to District Collector Haritha, urging the authorities to extend the procurement period. Speaking on the occasion, CPM District Secretariat Member Durgam Dinakar stated that nearly 50% of the cotton produce in the district is still lying in farmers’ houses. Due to recent rains, shortage of labour, and transportation issues, many farmers have been unable to transport their cotton to procurement centres, he explained. Cotton cultivated over thousands of acres remains unsold, causing serious financial distress to farmers. “He expressed concern that if the procurement centres are closed, middlemen will dominate the market and exploit farmers by offering prices lower than the Minimum Support Price (MSP). He alleged that some private traders are already purchasing cotton below the MSP. Considering the heavy investments made by farmers in cotton cultivation, failure to secure fair prices may push them into debt, he warned. The party demanded that the cotton procurement deadline be extended



at least until March 30 and that all procurement centres function fully to ensure justice for farmers. They urged the district administration to respond immediately and safeguard farmers’ interests. “CPM district committee members Godisela Karthik, Rajender, and Nikhil were also present during the submission of the memorandum.

## Jeevan Reddy's health takes a turn, shifted to KIMS

Fans worried, Minister Laxman Kumar visits

“Jagtlal Correspondent Ennam Kishan Reddy, February 20, (Indian Chronicle): “Former Minister and Congress senior leader Tatiparthi Jeevan Reddy's health took a turn, and he was shifted to KIMS hospital in Hyderabad on Thursday night. “Jeevan Reddy, who had recently been involved in a controversy over the allocation of councilor tickets and the election of the Chairperson, had been feeling unwell. He was taken to a private hospital in Jagtlal, and after treatment, was shifted to KIMS hospital for further treatment. “Minister Adluri Laxman Kumar visited Jeevan Reddy at the hospital and inquired about his health. TPCC President Mahesh Kumar Goud expressed concern over Jeevan Reddy's health and wished him a speedy recovery. “Jeevan Reddy's fans and Congress leaders are worried about his health, but family members assured that he is undergoing routine medical check-ups and is stable.



## Uppal Youth Congress President Aakarapu Arun Patel Participates in 396th Birth Anniversary Celebrations of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 20 (Indian Chronicle): “Uppal Constituency Youth Congress President Aakarapu Arun Patel participated as the chief guest in the procession organized to mark the 396th birth anniversary of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. The celebrations were held in Venkat Reddy Nagar Division, covering Venkat Reddy Nagar, Vasavi Nagar, Satya Nagar, and Ramanthapur Main Road colonies. “Speaking on the occasion, Arun Patel said that Shivaji Maharaj took up the sword at the young age of 14, fought bravely, and resisted the Mughal forces to establish Hindu Swarajya. He emphasized that the survival of Sanatana Dharma owes much to Shivaji Maharaj's legacy. “He urged people, irrespective of political affiliation, not to forget Sanatana Dharma and stressed that it is everyone's responsibility to protect and uphold it. He also encouraged families to nurture children with the courage and values of Shivaji Maharaj and Sambhaji Maharaj. “Several Congress leaders, party workers, and a large number of local residents participated in the procession and celebrations.



## Government Schools Get a Major Boost: Rs 2 Crores Sanctioned for Building Construction at Uppal School“---Parameshwar Reddy inspects site along with officials



also stated that similar efforts will be undertaken to improve facilities in other government schools across the constituency. Mandal Education Officer Rama Rao, School Headmistress Sireesha, senior teacher Ashok, Division President Bakaram Laxman, Eega Anjaiah, Lingampalli Ramakrishna, Hanumanth Reddy, Bazaar Jagannath Goud, Amarnath, Sonnaila Balaraju, Giyagudem Abraham, Narsing, Alugula Anil Kumar, Alwala Bhaskar, Thokata Raju, Janagama Ramakrishna, Bakaram Arun, Vijay Kumar, Silver Prem Kumar, Nomula Suresh, Sai Reddy, Bharat, Devaraj, Manoj, Basha, Sudhakar, Prakash, Bhaskar, Ajay, Prabhakar, Pratyush, Kranthi, Sonnaila Ashwini, Ambika, Malleswari, Narsamma, Satamma, Hemalatha, Geetha, Lakshmi, Kishtamma, Maheshwari, Kamalamma, Bhagyamma, Sarita, Lakshamma, Sandhya, Lalitha and several others participated in the programme.

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 20 (Indian Chronicle):“Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy stated that Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy is giving top priority to strengthening infrastructure and ensuring quality education in government schools across the state. As part of this initiative, Parameshwar Reddy inspected the proposed construction site for a new school building to be built with an estimated cost of ₹2 crore at the Zilla Parishad High School Uppal. He was accompanied by former Uppal Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy and Mandal Education Officer Rama Rao. Speaking on the occasion, Parameshwar Reddy said that the Chief Minister is sanctioning adequate funds for the development of school infrastructure and construction of modern buildings. He

## The Dream of a Home for the Underprivileged Soon to Be a Reality...

### MLA Manohar Reddy Inspects Double Bed Room Houses with Collector Prateek Jain Orders Speedy Repairs

### Visits Maternity Hospital, Inquires About Healthcare

“Indian Chronicle, Babar, Tandur (Feb 20)“Chief Minister Revanth Reddy’s government is set to make a bold move for the underprivileged. The administration is taking steps to turn the dream of homeownership into reality for those without a roof. With Congress Party’s election promises in focus, MLAs are prioritizing implementation. “Tandur MLA Buyyani Manohar Reddy, accompanied by Vikarabad District Collector Prateek Jain, inspected the Double Bed Room (DBR) houses near Hyderabad Road in Tandur town today. Construction had stalled, but now it’s gearing up. “MLA Manohar Reddy’s Statement: “With CM Revanth Reddy’s support, development works in Tandur are progressing fast. As per our election promise, 3,500 Indiramma houses have already been sanctioned in the constituency, some are under construction, and a few have even had house-warming ceremonies. “These DBR houses will go to deserving poor families who lack space for Indiramma homes. We’ll complete the construction, prepare a beneficiary list with officials, and ensure every needy person gets a home. Congress government is committed!”“Visit to Maternity Hospital:“The MLA and Collector also visited the Maternity and Child Hospital, inquiring about the healthcare services. They spoke to medical staff, addressing issues and challenges faced. “Attendees:“MLA Buyyani Manohar Reddy, Collector Prateek Jain, Additional Collector Sudhir, Municipal Chairperson Neeraja Bal Reddy, Vice-Chairman Abdul Razak, DCHS Anand, Hospital Superintendent Vinay Kumar, Public representatives, concerned officials.



“Tandur MLA Buyyani Manohar Reddy, accompanied by Vikarabad District Collector Prateek Jain, inspected the Double Bed Room (DBR) houses near Hyderabad Road in Tandur town today. Construction had stalled, but now it’s gearing up. “MLA Manohar Reddy’s Statement: “With CM Revanth Reddy’s support, development works in Tandur are progressing fast. As per our election promise, 3,500 Indiramma houses have already been sanctioned in the constituency, some are under construction, and a few have even had house-warming ceremonies. “These DBR houses will go to deserving poor families who lack space for Indiramma homes. We’ll complete the construction, prepare a beneficiary list with officials, and ensure every needy person gets a home. Congress government is committed!”“Visit to Maternity Hospital:“The MLA and Collector also visited the Maternity and Child Hospital, inquiring about the healthcare services. They spoke to medical staff, addressing issues and challenges faced. “Attendees:“MLA Buyyani Manohar Reddy, Collector Prateek Jain, Additional Collector Sudhir, Municipal Chairperson Neeraja Bal Reddy, Vice-Chairman Abdul Razak, DCHS Anand, Hospital Superintendent Vinay Kumar, Public representatives, concerned officials.

## Symbol of Indian Valor: Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj



— BRS State Leader Bannala Praveen Mudiraj“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 20 (Indian Chronicle):“BRS Party State Leader Bannala Praveen Mudiraj stated that Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj was a great warrior who founded the Maratha Empire in India, bravely resisted the Mughal Empire, respected women, and dedicated his life to the protection of Hindu dharma. “On the occasion of Shivaji Maharaj Jayanti, he participated in a grand procession held at Chilukanagar, Beerappa Gadda. Speaking on the occasion, he paid rich tributes while remembering Shivaji Maharaj’s bravery, courage, and just governance. He described him as the unparalleled founder of the Maratha kingdom, an ideal ruler who upheld religious harmony, and an unmatched warrior. Members of Navodaya Welfare Association, Ambedkar Nagar Gopi, Chinna, youth leaders, and senior BRS leaders including Eddula Kondal Reddy, Kokonda Jagan, Jalli Mohan, Dasari Krishna, Muddam Srinivas, Pale Ramesh, Rohit, Balender, Bala Mallesha, Mas Shekhar, Shyam, Balu, and others participated in the program.

## IAS Officer Saurabh Sharma Launches Admission Poster for Tribal Welfare Degree College in Manuguru.



“Kranthikumar Dasari | Pinapaka Constancy | February 20 | Indian chronicle : Trainee IAS officer Saurabh Sharma on Friday unveiled the admission poster for the academic year 2026-27 of the Telangana Tribal Welfare Residential Degree College for Boys, located at Manuguru (Mittagudem) in Bhadradi Kothagudem district. The poster was released at the Ashwapuram Tahsildar’s office. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Sharma said that Tribal Welfare Gurukul institutions are playing a crucial role in providing quality higher education to tribal students. He urged eligible students to make effective use of the opportunity and pursue higher studies through these institutions. The college is affiliated to Kakatiya University and has been accredited with a NAAC ‘B’ Grade. It offers undergraduate courses including B.Sc in MPCSS, MP Electronics, BZC and MBZC, B.Com in Computer Applications and Finance, and B.A in HEP and EP Journalism. Principal Ravi Bandarupalli explained that the government provides comprehensive facilities to students admitted to the college, including completely free quality education, boarding and lodging. The institution is equipped with digital classrooms, a well-stocked library and science laboratories. NCC and NSS units are available, and teaching is imparted by qualified faculty holding PhD, NET and SET credentials. Students are provided free textbooks, notebooks, uniforms and trolley bags, along with a monthly pocket money of ₹200 credited directly to their bank accounts. Students who have passed Intermediate or an equivalent examination are eligible to apply. For further details, candidates may contact 7901097698 or visit the website [https://ttwrdds.ac.in/manuguru](https://ttwrdds.ac.in/manuguru). Local revenue officials and college facu

## Book on Medaram Jatara released

“Minister for Rural Development Dr D Anasuya released a publication on Medaram Jatara brought out by Kakatiya Heritage Trust titled “Goddess of Folk” today. Eminent filmmaker B Narsing Rao who compiled the book with rare photographs and members of the Trust retd IAS officers BP Acharya, BV Papa Rao, Retd NIT Professor Panduranga Rao, K Sridhar and retd DGP M Ratan were among those who attended the event held at J Phool Praja Bhavan. Minister lauded the efforts of the Trust and requested to prepare necessary proposal for recognition of Samakka Saralamma Jatara as an intangible World Heritage by UNESCO.



## District Women’s Federation Meeting Focuses on Financial Discipline and Expanded Livelihood Opportunities



“Bhukya Ranjith Naik, Bhadradi Kothagudem Bureau, February 20, Indian Chronicle :“A district-level meeting of the Women’s Federation was held on Friday at the Chunchupalli Mandal Federation Office in Bhadradi Kothagudem district. “District Rural Development Officer M. Vidya Chandana attended the meeting as the chief guest and provided guidance to federation members on the various initiatives being implemented under the Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty. “She directed members to ensure 100 percent repayment of Community Investment Fund, Stree Nidhi, and bank linkage loans extended to self-help groups under the project. She also instructed officials to complete the grounding of all works undertaken under the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana within the stipulated timeframe. “Highlighting emerging opportunities, she stated that women’s self-help groups would continue supplying school uniforms and that the government has now decided to entrust them with stitching uniforms for RTC drivers, as well as personnel in the medical and health and fire departments. She emphasized that uniforms must be stitched accurately according to prescribed measurements and quality standards. “The officer further directed that paddy

procurement centers operated by women’s groups be managed efficiently and encouraged them to come forward to establish additional centers in the upcoming agricultural season. She also called for the expedited completion of sanctioned Gram Sangha buildings across the district. “With regard to education, she instructed Village Organization Assistants and village-level federation governing body members to take responsibility for ensuring that all Class 10 students in the district pass their examinations with strong performance. “Additionally, she directed that details of youth under the age of 30 who have completed Class 10, Intermediate, or Industrial Training Institute courses be compiled at the village level and submitted to the District Rural Development Agency for further planning and employment support initiatives. “The meeting was attended by Additional DRDO Neelesh, District Federation President Smt. Soyam Sujatha, presidents of all mandal federations, District Project Manager NF, Regional Manager Stree Nidhi, Assistant Project Managers, and accountants from various mandals.



## Govt moves to remove 3 slums on Race Course Road in Delhi, asks residents to leave by March 6



GNS News Agency, Feb 20

In a step towards removing three slum clusters on Race Course Road near the Prime Minister's residence in New Delhi, the Centre Thursday began issuing rehabilitation notices to residents, asking them to vacate by March 6 and take possession of the flats allotted to them at the DUSIB Colony at Savda Ghevra, The Indian Express has learnt. The residents of Bhai Ram Camp, Masjid Camp, and DID Camp on Race Course Road have been asked to vacate or face legal action, according to a notice issued Thursday by the Land and Development Office (L&DO) of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) to a resident.

The notice, seen by The Indian Express, says the three jhuggi jhopri (JJ) clusters are located on government land under the L&DO. Sources say that the 717 households have been allotted flats at Savda Ghevra.

The Prime Minister's Residence, 7, Lok Kalyan Marg, is located just a few kilometres from the slums. While the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) changed the name of Race Course Road to Lok Kalyan Marg in 2016, the L&DO records still list the slums' address as Race Course Road. The notice adds that, as per the rehabilitation policy of the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB), a joint survey was conducted by the L&DO and the Delhi Development Authority in January 2024 to assess whether the residents were eligible for alternate housing. After that, it was decided that the residents of the three clusters would be rehabilitated at the DUSIB Colony in Savda Ghevra, about 45 km away. A notice for rehabilitation was issued to all residents on October 29, 2025, which was then challenged in the Delhi High Court in November. In its order on November 13, 2025, the court asked the government for a reply, and said: "In the meantime, the petitioners shall not be evicted without adhering to the procedural safeguards..." On the next hearing on January 13, the government sought another four weeks to reply. The court ordered the matter to be listed on May 13 and directed that its November 13 interim order will remain in force till then.

## 'Rs 2,400 cr scam, land grab, membership fee misuse': Navjot Kaur Sidhu launches fresh tirade against Raja Warring

GNS News Agency, Feb 20

Launching a fresh tirade against Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee (PPCC) president Amarinder Singh Raja Warring, Dr Navjot Kaur Sidhu, wife of former Punjab Congress leader Navjot Singh Sidhu, alleged that he bought 100 acres of land in Zirakpur, of which 60 acres was "snatched illegally" with the help of fake signatures and thumb impressions. Posting on her X account, Navjot Kaur Sidhu also alleged a Rs 2,400 crore scam perpetrated by Warring in collusion with a former Punjab Congress in-charge from Rajasthan. She also accused Warring of mishandling the Rs 75 membership fee for joining Congress.

"You are the first one who has not even spared the youth of Punjab linked to Congress by putting up a one member joining fee at 75 rupees. And just imagine how many youngsters have been looted by you. Could you please tell me how many youths have you helped by getting them jobs or good placements? Is the youth only to be used to gather people, organise rallies and shout slogans for you? Can you explain how you are going to spend around 7.5 crores which you will be collecting from the youth of Punjab, many of whom are living hand to mouth," she wrote in her post on X.

Speaking to the media, Warring dismissed her allegations and said that it did not look nice to comment on statements made by someone struggling with mental health issues. He further questioned how one could forcibly take over even a small piece of land, pointing out that people killed each other over even minor boundary adjustments.



"If she says I have bought 1,000 acres of land, she can keep 990 acres out of it and just give me 10-12 acres," he said. Navjot Kaur Sidhu was earlier suspended from Congress in December 2025 following a tirade against senior party leaders. Earlier this month, she was expelled from the party after she targeted Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and senior party leader Rahul Gandhi. She has maintained a steady attack on Warring, calling him the "most horrific, incapable, corrupt president ever" and accusing him of colluding with Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann to undermine and "destroy" the Congress from within. She also alleged in the past that he had entered into a secret understanding or partnership with the Aam Aadmi Party for personal and petty political gains, allegedly to save himself from jail. Navjot Kaur Sidhu had also accused Gurdaspur MP Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa of various acts of omission and commission, following which he served her a legal notice for defamation.

## 'Affordable' dreams: Panchkula Extension-2 plots start at less than half the price in city



GNS News Agency, Feb 20

With property prices in Chandigarh and Panchkula climbing steeply, the 24 upcoming sectors under Panchkula Extension-2 along National Highway-7 are attracting attention for offering plots at less than half the prevailing rates in Panchkula. Private developers have already begun work in at least four of these sectors, where plots are being sold between ₹50,000 and ₹1 lakh per square yard. In comparison, Panchkula's property prices have crossed ₹2 lakh per square yard in some areas, making the extension comparatively a more "affordable" option. A senior officer from the Town and Country Planning Department explained that the plan for developing 24 sectors under Panchkula Extension-2 (Kot-Behla Urban Complex) was originally drawn up in 2008, but residential development only began about five years ago with Eldeco's township, followed by projects such as Eco City, Sigma Residency, Sunlit Urbana, Hill View, Rangoli, Orange Flower City, Palm Valley, and Sigma Jaswant Garden. Haryana Urban Local Bodies Minister Vipul Goel described the extension as having "great possibilities for development in the coming years," adding that the government is committed to supporting growth in the area and expects "a good future here".

In the initial phase, residential areas are being developed in sectors 12A, 14, 15, and 16, largely by private players. Under the Deen Dayal Jan Awas Yojana housing scheme here, plot sizes range from 100 to 180 square yards, while outside the scheme, plots between 250 and 1,000 square yards are being offered. Most of these townships are located within 10 kilometres of the Panchkula Deputy Commissioner's office. Blissed Homes Realty managing director Gaurav Sharma noted that "residential properties in Chandigarh are available at rates of ₹3.5 lakh per square yard or above, while plots in Panchkula or Panchkula Extension-1 are nearly ₹2 lakh per square yard. In contrast, plots in Panchkula Extension-2 are available in the range of ₹60,000 to ₹1 lakh per square yard". Work is underway to develop a new residential township on NH-7 (Panchkula-Barwala). (Photo: special arrangement) Work is underway to develop a new residential township on NH-7 (Panchkula-Barwala). (Photo: special arrangement)

Shri Shyam Properties co-founder Vijay Goyal emphasised the locational advantage of the extension, saying, "Due to its location on National Highway-7 and proximity to the Panchkula mini-secretariat, even major real es-

tate players plan to develop townships here, offering plots from 300 square yards to two-kanal sizes. These projects will include luxury facilities like clubs, large parks, sports infrastructure, high-rise buildings, and commercial areas." He added that "proposed 32-metre-wide roads for sector-to-sector connectivity and 24-metre-wide inter-sector roads will ensure smooth movement, while a planned new road linking NH-7 to the Delhi highway and Mohali will further enhance accessibility".

There are also growing calls for government intervention. Ambala Congress MP Varun Chaudhary remarked that "the HSVP is now auctioning every plot, which goes against its own mandate of providing affordable and quality housing. Time will reveal how private players actually perform, as past experiences have shown instances of incomplete residential projects that forced residents to seek legal remedies in an effort to safeguard their interests." Shivalik Vikas Manch president Vijay Bansal argued that HSVP should develop new sectors near Panchkula to provide affordable housing options for poorer and lower-middle-class citizens through plot allotment draws. He cautioned that "the government needs to remain vigilant as several private developers enter the area, ensuring that all legal provisions are followed and that civic amenities are provided in the new townships." Responding to a question in the Vidhan Sabha in March 2025, the state government had clarified that there was "no proposal under consideration to allot residential plots through a draw system in HSVP sectors". However, Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini had confirmed that "HSVP plans to develop a total of 41 sectors in various urban estates across the state." He explained that land procurement through e-bhoomi was underway, and "in the first phase, Sectors 14, 16, and 22 of the Kot-Behla Urban Complex (Panchkula) Development Plan and Sector 31 of the Pinjore-Kalka Urban Complex Development Plan are to be developed as pilot projects".

## Three injured in stabbing incident in Godavarikhani

A violent family dispute in Godavarikhani's Markandeya Colony, Peddapalli district, resulted in three people being injured after Gadsella Ramdoot attacked his relatives with a coconut-cutting knife.

GNS News Agency, Feb 20

Peddapalli: A family dispute led to a stabbing incident in Godavarikhani, in which three persons were injured. The incident occurred in Markandeya Colony on Friday.

According to local people, Gadsella Ramdoot attacked his uncle's wife Sumitra, her son Pranav and another woman, Komuramma, with a knife used to cut coconuts.

Local residents shifted the injured to the Godavarikhani Area Hospital. Pranav, who sustained severe injuries, was later shifted to a hospital in Karimnagar for better treatment. His condition is stated to be serious.

## Mahayuti's Muslim quota decision signals BJP's bid for closure, highlights NCP's vote-bank dilemma



GNS News Agency, Feb 20

The GR was revoked by the Social Justice Ministry headed by Shiv Sena minister Sanjay Shirsat. Both the BJP and the Shiv Sena, which share a Hindutva ideology, have long opposed reservation for minorities. However, the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) under the late Ajit Pawar had disallowed scrapping the GR, arguing that it would hurt minorities, who form a sizable vote base for the party. Incidentally, whether by coincidence or design, the decision taken on Tuesday, February 20, came less than 24 hours after Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar held a meeting at Sahyadri Guest House in Mumbai to review issues pending before the minorities development department.

"The department should work according to the policy direction laid down by the late Ajit Pawar," Sunetra said, reiterating the government's commitment to the social, economic, educational and cultural upliftment of the minority community. She also issued strict directions to ensure that funds earmarked for minority communities were distributed equitably and transparently. "There is no prejudice against Muslims," senior BJP minister Chandrashekar Bawankule emphasised. "Reservation cannot be given on the basis of religion—this is the court's decision. The government is taking further steps in accordance with the court's order. This is not the government's independent decision but action taken as per the court's verdict," he added, referring to past Bombay High Court and Supreme Court orders on the issue.

Defending the government decision, another senior

BJP functionary said, "We are not apologetic about the decision. Muslim reservation was introduced through an ordinance by the Congress-NCP government months before the 2014 Assembly elections. It was appeasement of Muslims... vote bank politics." When the BJP came to power under Devendra Fadnavis (2014-2019), the ordinance was not converted into a permanent law within the constitutional time frame and was allowed to lapse on December 23, 2014.

Since then, whenever the Opposition Congress or NCP raised the issue, the BJP stuck to its stated position that religion-based reservation was unacceptable. The party also argued that certain Muslim communities were already availing reservation under the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category, questioning the need for a separate quota. Meanwhile, even as the Opposition has intensified its attack on the Fadnavis government for pushing its anti-Muslim agenda, the NCP has remained silent. A state NCP leader, requesting anonymity, said, "We will pursue secular politics. Our ideology, as defined under Ajit Pawar's leadership, believes in the Shahu-Ambedkar-Phule ideology. Sunetra Pawar will take Ajit Pawar's political legacy forward."

The leader pointed out that the Muslim quota GR was never implemented by successive governments, including the Maha Vikas Aghadi led by Uddhav Thackeray in 2019-2022. "So, we can't blame the BJP alone," he said.

How the contentious issue has played out in 2014, the Congress-NCP government issued an ordinance granting 16 per cent reservation to Marathas and 5 per cent reservation to Muslims in government jobs and government-run educational institutions. The Muslim quota allowed around 50 identified Muslim communities to obtain caste verification and validity certificates under the Special Backward Category-A (SBC-A). After the decision was challenged, the Bombay High Court struck down the Maratha reservation but allowed 5 per cent reservation for Muslims in education. The ordinance, however, was allowed to lapse after the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance came to power in 2014. Later, the government introduced Maratha reservation under Socially and Educationally Backward Class (SEBC) in 2018. But, it made it clear that Muslim reservation was not on its agenda. In 2021, Maratha reservation was scrapped by the apex court. In 2024, then chief minister Eknath Shinde brought a legislation okaying 10 per cent quota to the Maratha community in education and jobs. However, no initiative was taken for Muslim quota.

## Stamp duty evasion scam worth crores: 329 booked in Ludhiana for 'cheating' govt, 296 sale deeds found discrepant

GNS News Agency, Feb 20

The FIR against 329 people (buyers and sellers of the properties under scanner) was registered Tuesday (February 17) at Moti Nagar police station on the complaint of revenue sub-registrar (Ludhiana East division). The FIR has been registered on the directions of the Punjab and Haryana High Court. According to the FIR, these "registries were done with an intention to cheat the government and evade stamp duty." The "undervalued" land registries caused heavy loss to the state exchequer, further states the FIR.

The High Court directions for the FIR registration came on the writ petition filed by Subhash Kundra alias Katty, a resident of sector 32, Chandigarh Road, Ludhiana, who has been pursuing the matter since 2016, alleging massive losses to state exchequer due to stamp duty evasions. According to the sub-registrar's complaint to the police, 296 vasike (sale deeds) are under scanner for stamp duty deficiency. Of 296, the FIR for 159 has been registered at Moti Nagar police station on February 17. The sale deeds under scanner were registered in Ludhiana East division between 2016 and 2019. The FIR has been registered under sections 420 (cheating), 177 (knowingly furnishing false information to a public servant, 120 B (criminal conspiracy) of IPC and section 82 of Registrations Act at Moti Nagar police station. The FIR has been registered under the IPC sections as the registries took place before the Bhatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) came into force. As per the excerpts from the High Court order dated February 9 that have been quoted in the FIR, the District revenue officer (DRO), Ludhiana, Gurjinder Singh, who was present in the court, assured the High Court that a proper probe will be carried out for all 296 sale deeds under scanner. The ADCP from Ludhiana Police has also assured the court that FIRs shall be registered in all 296 cases of deficient stamp duty. According to the FIR, sub-registrar in his complaint wrote that 159 sale deeds are confirmed to be found with "deficient stamp duty" under the section 47-A of Stamp Act.

Whistleblower Katty, a former lottery tickets trader, said that he had blown the lid off in the case in 2016, and has been pursuing it since then. He said that the Ludhiana administration has admitted in the court that at least 296 sale deeds have been found with "deficient stamp duty." "It was a long legal battle that I undertook against the administration, police and the state government as none of them took the matter seriously. In 2016, I had myself bought a property and got to know of this scam then. The crorepatris in

Ludhiana are buying properties worth crores but paying minuscule stamp duties. For instance, sale deeds which should be executed after paying at least Rs 1.50 crore as stamp duty are being for Rs 17-18 lakh only. They are paying peanuts in name of stamp duty and revenue officials are also hands in glove. This is a massive scam and cheating with state exchequer, and also a way to stash black money. This is not just stamp duty evasion, but also a way to evade income tax by crorepatris involved in this scam," said Katty.

Katty said that initially in 2016 he had given details of 11 such discrepant sale deeds to Ludhiana Police, and the then SP Dhruv Dahiya had got the FIR number 113 registered at division number 5 police station. "However, the Ludhiana Police tried its best to get the case quashed and thrice they filed the cancellation report in the court. But I moved the High Court and argued my case on my own after my lawyer also left the case in midway. After pursuing the case for 10 years, my effort has paid off as the court has ordered registration of fresh FIR in all such sale deeds," said Katty. Katty is also known for the 2020 "sting operation" on cops. In 2020, eleven cops from Ludhiana Police were also booked on his complaint after he had handed over the video recordings of at least 28 policemen, in which they were purportedly seen taking bribes from lottery traders to let them run shops illegally.

"But even now, the police has neither made me the complainant, nor the witness in the fresh FIR so that they can protect revenue and other officials who will be found involved further during the probe. For ten years, I met and pleaded to all the MLAs including those from SAD, Congress and even AAP demanding a thorough probe and action in this multi-crore scam but no one listened. It's not just any one party but the entire system is corrupt. But I will take this fight to a decisive conclusion in the High Court," said Katty, adding that the next hearing in the HC is scheduled for April 22. "I have not been made complainant or witness in the fresh FIR, so that the officials can later connive and get each other acquitted. They just want to save and shield each other," he alleged. "But I won't let that happen." Assistant commissioner of police (ACP, Industrial Area-A), Ludhiana, Inderjit Singh, said that a probe has been started after the registration of the FIR on the High Court orders. "If the role of any revenue official will also surface during the probe, we will nominate more accused in the case," said the ACP.

## 'Numbers are in our favour': BJP-led Mahayuti will win 6 Rajya seats in Maharashtra, says Devendra Fadnavis

Amid intense competition among Maha Vikas Aghadi constituents, the Shiv Sena (UBT), Congress, and NCP (SP), for a single Rajya Sabha seat, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis Friday expressed confidence in the ruling Mahayuti's prospects. While speaking to reporters in New Delhi, Fadnavis said, "Of the seven Rajya Sabha seats, the Mahayuti alliance will win six. The numbers are in our favour, which makes it certain that we will secure six seats." "Whereas, the Opposition will be able to win just one seat. It is for them to take a decision on whether the candidate for the lone Rajya Sabha seat will be from Congress, Shiv Sena (UBT) or NCP (SP)," he added. The elections for seven Rajya Sabha seats in Maharashtra will take place on March 16. The seven candidates in Maharashtra whose tenure in the Upper House will come to end necessitating elections are Sharad Pawar (NCP-SP), Bhagwat Karad (BJP), Fauzia Khan (NCP-SP), Priyanka Chaturvedi (Shiv Sena UBT), Dhairyasheel Patil (BJP), Rajani Patil (Congress), and Ramdas Athavale (RPI). All these candidates' tenure will end on April 2. Members of the state Legislative Assembly elect Rajya Sabha representatives, as MLAs cast



their votes for candidates nominated by their respective parties or alliances. Based on the individual parties' strength in the Maharashtra Assembly, the BJP will claim four, the Shiv Sena and the Nationalist Congress Party one each, and the Mahayuti will have six seats. Given the current strength, where the Mahayuti with 230 seats is in the majority in the 288-member Maharashtra Assembly, the Bharatiya Janata Party and its alliance partners have an upper hand over the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi with 46 MLAs.

## US Indo-Pacific commander caps 5-day India tour with visit to ADA, NFTC in Bengaluru



GNS News Agency, Feb 20

Admiral (Adm) Samuel J Paparo, the commander of the US Indo-Pacific Command (US INDOPACOM), completed a five-day visit to India. Adm Paparo capped the five-day visit to the country, which began on February 14, with a tour of the Aeronautical Development Agency — which is developing India's fifth-generation AMCA fighter plane — and the National Flight Test Center in Bengaluru. The visit of the commander of the US Indo-Pacific Command was intended

"to collaborate on US-India shared security interests and to strengthen the nations' close military ties," said a report on the US Defense Visual Information Distribution Service (DVIDS).

The US INDOPACOM commander's visit to India also included stops in New Delhi and Chandimandir in Haryana. "While in New Delhi, Paparo met with senior Indian defense officials, including Gen Anil Chauhan, Chief of Defence Staff of India, and Adm Dinesh Kumar Tripathi, Chief of the Naval Staff of India. These discussions centered on areas of mutual interest, including India's contributions to safeguarding a free and open Indo-Pacific region," the DVIDS report said. "In Chandimandir, Paparo visited India's Western Command alongside US Ambassador to India Sergio Goro to discuss operational security dynamics along India's western and northern fronts," the report added. "As a key Quad partner, India works alongside the United States, Japan, and Australia to strengthen maritime, economic, and technology security in response to growing regional challenges. Recently, the Quad participated in a field training exercise that advanced the Indo-Pacific Logistics Network (IPLN), enhancing regional cooperation and operational readiness," the report further said.

## Amid ACB trap, Minister Narhari Zirwal relieves private secretary

GNS News Agency, Feb 20

Days after the Maharashtra Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) arrested a clerk from the office of Maharashtra's Food and Drug Administration (FDA) minister Narhari Zirwal for allegedly accepting a 35,000 bribe to restore a suspended medical licence, the minister on Friday relieved his Private Secretary, Dr. Ramdas Gade, from the post.

Dr. Gade, who serves as Assistant Commissioner (Animal Husbandry) in the Department of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Dairy Development and Fisheries (ADF) at Mantralaya, Mumbai, had been posted as Private Secretary on deputation. With effect from the afternoon of February 16, 2026, he has been repatriated to his parent department.

The Private Secretary functions as the administrative head of the minister's office and oversees its day-to-day operations. Minister Zirwal has written to the General Administration Department (GAD) at Mantralaya, directing it to issue the necessary orders to formalise the change.

The development follows last week's ACB trap in which Rajendra Dherange, a clerk in the FDA department, was caught red-handed while allegedly accepting ₹35,000 as part



of a demanded bribe. The action came after complaints were received by the anti-corruption agency. Zirwal was reportedly in Delhi at the time of the operation. Sources said Gade's name was mentioned in a video linked to the sting operation, though no official confirmation has been issued regarding his role. Meanwhile, the opposition Indian National Congress has demanded Zirwal's resignation in the wake of the allegations and the sting operation, intensifying political pressure on the minister.

## One year of BJP rule in Delhi: Status report

GNS News Agency, Feb 20

### ROADS

Around 155 km of roads under PWD repaired, 600 km targeted to be fixed by end of the year. Also, more than 20 lakh metric tonnes of silt removed from roads.

### WATER

While upgradation of sewage treatment plants (STP) and common effluent treatment plants are under various stages, fixing flow of waste into water bodies to sustain aquatic life and clean Yamuna river has seen no clear progress so far, as per DPCC reports. Meanwhile, projects approved to tap major drains and set up decentralised STPs. Capacity enhancement of water treatment plants also being implemented.

### CLEAN AIR

'Delhi Clean Air Mission' yet to be launched. No substantial PM2.5 and PM10 reduction seen — target is to see a 50% dip by 2030. Meanwhile, six new air quality monitoring stations launched. Delhi Southern Ridge officially notified as critical green cover.

### SCHOOLS

Delhi School Education Transparency in Fixation and Regulation of Fees implemented, yet concerns persist, as current fees in private schools are yet to be audited. Meanwhile, 75 CM Shri Schools launched with smart classrooms. Dr APJ Abdul Kalam labs also being established.

### NUTRITION

Atal Canteens and Ayushman Arogya Mandirs launched. Free sugar distributed to all beneficiaries under Antyodaya Anna Yojana.

### SANITATION

Govt has promised to increase treatment capacity to eliminate the garbage mountains at Ghazipur, Okhla and Bhalswa, and redevelop them on the lines of Baansera Park. However, 100% door-to-door waste segregation and collection yet to be achieved. Meanwhile, use of biomining and waste-to-energy technologies likely to see reduction in waste at landfills by 2027.

### VEHICLES

## Congress failed to fulfil promises even after 800 days in power, says Harish Rao

GNS News Agency, Feb 20

Siddipet: Accusing the Congress government of coming to power with false promises, former Minister T Harish Rao alleged that it had failed to fulfil its assurances even after 800 days in office, despite vowing to implement all promises within 100 days. Addressing a gathering after inaugurating the BRS party office in the 37th ward of Siddipet municipality on Friday, Harish Rao said the Congress had promised to allot exclusive funds under the BC Sub-Plan even in the presence of Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, besides implementing the SC declaration included in its manifesto. However, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy had failed to take even a single step forward in this direction so far, he said. Andhra Council adjourned after row over 'display of Venkateswara Swamy pics' by YSRCP members. The former Minister criticised the Congress government for failing to implement the Rythu Declaration announced at the Warangal public meeting. As the State government was preparing to present the 2026-27 annual Budget in the Assembly shortly, Rao demanded that these schemes be included in the Budget with adequate fund allocations, besides implementing Rs 2,500 under the Maha



Lakshmi scheme to every woman and Rs 4,000 pension to the elderly and others. Stating that the government had invited applications under Rajiv Yuva Vikasa, Rao said no efforts were made to implement the scheme, leaving the youth disappointed. He said the government had also failed to implement Rajiv Athimiya Bharosa for labourers in villages. Rao said the BRS would continue to fight on behalf of the people and force the ruling party to implement all the promises it had made.

## Large private hospitals, premium care still out of reach: Ayushman Bharat scheme gains ground, but gaps in coverage remain



GNS News Agency, Feb 20

In the very first year of assuming office, the BJP government has signalled its governance priorities with a push towards expanding healthcare access for the poor. Among its most consequential decisions was the rollout of the flagship Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY), the world's largest publicly funded health insurance programme. The scheme provides an annual health cover of Rs 5 lakh per eligible household. Launched nationwide in September 2018, the scheme has been positioned by the BJP as a welfare reform aimed at reducing out-of-pocket healthcare spending. However, in Delhi, beneficiaries were unable to access its benefits for years due to the refusal of the previous Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government to implement it. The political friction over PMJAY became a visible flashpoint between the Centre and the then Delhi government under AAP, with the BJP accusing the state administration of putting "political interests" above public welfare.

While launching the PMJAY extension for senior citizens, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had publicly apologised to elderly residents of Delhi, stating that he was unable to extend the scheme's benefits to them because their state government had chosen not to adopt it. The remarks un-

derlined how healthcare delivery under PMJAY has also been interwoven with the BJP's political messaging and campaign narrative in the Capital. Since the scheme was finally rolled out in Delhi last April, at least 188 hospitals — 137 private and 51 government — have been empanelled. A total of 19,287 patients received treatment under the scheme till December 2025. However, concerns persist regarding the scope and depth of the rollout. Major private hospital chains in Delhi have yet to join the scheme, limiting access to highly specialised treatment for economically weaker sections. Their absence has effectively meant that certain advanced procedures available at premium tertiary care centres remain out of reach for PMJAY beneficiaries.

Industry representatives argue that package rates under the scheme are significantly lower than prevailing market rates, discouraging participation by large corporate hospital networks. At the same time, officials indicate that negotiations are ongoing, suggesting room for resolution. Dr Vipender Sabherwal, convener for Ayushman Bharat and representative of the Association of Healthcare Providers India (AHP), said the association has held several rounds of discussions with the National Health Authority (NHA) until last month. They remain hopeful that package rates under PMJAY could be aligned with those under the Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS), whose rates were significantly revised by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare last October. The limited participation of large hospital chains is reflected in the treatment profile currently being accessed by beneficiaries. Most empanelled facilities under the Ayushman scheme are focused on eye care, general medicine and general surgery, followed by orthopaedics, obstetrics and gynaecology, paediatrics, ENT and urology. The top five procedures available include chronic haemodialysis, cataract surgery, treatment for animal bites, caesarean deliveries, and bile duct stone removal surgeries — indicating that while essential services are being delivered, access to more complex tertiary care remains constrained.

## 'Partial success': Karnataka transport unions end protest after 1,271-crore relief; set March 2 deadline to fulfill remaining demands

GNS News Agency, Feb 20

The unions of Karnataka transport employees decided to call off the strike after the State Government issued an order to release arrears of Rs 1,271.92 crore to the employees of four transport corporations (File photo). The unions of Karnataka transport employees decided to call off the strike after the State Government issued an order to release arrears of Rs 1,271.92 crore to the employees of four transport corporations. The Joint Action Committee of the trade unions of Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) on Thursday called off its 'Bengaluru Chalo' protest, seeking implementation of pay hike and payment of pending wage arrears, temporarily.

The decision came after the State Government issued an order to release arrears amounting to Rs 1,271.92 crore to employees of four transport corporations in the state. During the protest meeting at Freedom Park, Vijaybhaskar D A, general secretary of the committee, said the protest has achieved "partial success".

The committee leaders announced that the protest would continue on March 2 if the government failed to meet other demands. The leaders would be holding a meeting with Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy to discuss their demands. They said that the funds released by the government will clear wage arrears for 26 months, from January 1, 2021, to February 28, 2023, while the committee has sought clearance of arrears for 38 months, from January 2020 to February 2023, in addition to implementing a pay hike.



"We have requested the KSRTC managing director to fix a meeting with the transport minister to discuss our remaining demands. We have not compromised with our demands. At the same time, we are not holding the public to ransom," Vijaybhaskar told reporters. However, the decision to withdraw the protest had met with resistance from a section of rate workers who disagreed with the committee's decision. Earlier, KSRTC Managing Director Akram Pasha announced the government order issued a day earlier at the venue, and added that the government has also agreed to clear wage dues of KSRTC employees that had been deducted for 12 months during the Covid pandemic. The protest was held as several meetings held over the issue failed to deliver the outcomes sought by the committee. In November last year, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah held a meeting and offered a pay hike from April 1 this year, apart from clearing Rs 718 crore of the pending arrears.

## After promises on Yamuna, roads, water and air, work in progress on most fronts

GNS News Agency, Feb 20

As the BJP-led Delhi government completes one year in office, its environment and civic governance agenda has been dominated by three flagship priorities — cleaning the Yamuna, clearing Delhi's landfills, and tackling air pollution, alongside commitments on drainage, solid waste management and public transport electrification. While the party boasts of project approvals, tenders and initial implementation in the past year, for most major promises, timelines are stretching into 2026 and beyond.

Soon after assuming charge, Water Minister Parvash Sahib Singh had set a three-year timeline to restore the Yamuna's health, backed by a multi-agency 43-point rejuvenation plan. Union Home Minister Amit Shah had also said a plan was prepared to clean the river up to Prayagraj within seven months through joint projects. A first-of-its-kind effort in coordination with the Haryana government was also seen during Chhath Puja, when Haryana released additional water into the river from the Hathnikund barrage for a few days to improve the water flow. Defoaming chemical agents were also sprayed that got muddled in controversy as environment activists raised safety and ecological concerns. One year on, the clean-up push is visible as Delhi currently operates 38 STPs with a capacity of about 712 MGD against an estimated sewage generation of 792 MGD, with the capacity projected to rise to over 814 MGD by December 2026 through upgrades and new plants at Sonia Vihar, Delhi Gate and Okhla. Floodplain redevelopment under the Yamuna Riverfront project led by the Delhi Development Authority targets completion of a 22-km stretch between Wazirabad and Okhla by June 30 this year.

Delhi Government Key Initiatives — Sector-Wise Update Around 155 km of roads under PWD repaired; 600 km targeted by year-end. Over 20 lakh MT of silt removed from roads. More than 1,100 DEVI buses on roads. Last-mile Metro connectivity target: 100% by year-end. 36,000 EV charging points being set up. Fee Regulation Act implemented; private school fee audits pending. 75 CM Shri Schools launched with smart classrooms. Dr APJ Abdul Kalam labs being set up. Pink Saheli Smart Card for free bus rides for women & transgender commuters from March 2. Delhi Mitra app launched. 502 anganwadi-cum-creche 'Palna' centres set up. Atal Canteens & Ayushman Arogya Mandirs launched. Free sugar distributed to all beneficia-



ries under Antyodaya Anna Yojana. Delhi Clean Air Mission' yet to be launched. No substantial PM2.5 and PM10 reduction seen — target is to see a 50% dip by 2030. Meanwhile, six new air quality monitoring stations launched. Delhi Southern Ridge officially notified as critical green cover.

Govt promises to increase treatment capacity to eliminate garbage mountains at Ghazipur, Okhla & Bhalswa. 100% door-to-door waste segregation & collection yet to be achieved. Biomining & waste-to-energy tech to reduce landfill waste by 2027.

Reforming the Capital's water utility was another major promise. The government highlighted high non-revenue water — 50-52% — along with infrastructure losses and weak billing systems. Progress so far includes the appointment of KPMG as a project management unit to monitor DJB works, and plans for smart metering, upgraded billing software and a new collection system. A late payment surcharge waiver scheme was kicked off to address pending domestic dues estimated at Rs 12,000-13,000 crore, while penalties for regularising illegal connections were reduced significantly. On supply augmentation, work to source 26 MGD from tubewells had deadlines cited in 2025, while the 50-MGD Wazirabad water treatment plant expansion is under construction, with the raw-water source yet to be finalised. Move to tap additional water from neighbouring states though remains in the planning stage. Overall, however, availability continues to fall short of estimated demand. Govt plans to add 50,000 more CCTV cameras on the roads. While no major announcements made, e-forensic system has been implemented. Also, approval granted for high-security prison complex in Narela. Projects also underway to improve infrastructure of courts.

## 2018 defamation case against Rahul Gandhi: Congress leader appears in UP court, denies charges



GNS News Agency, Feb 20

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi Thursday appeared before the MP-MLA court in Uttar Pradesh's Sultanpur district in connection with a 2018 defamation case related to his alleged remarks against Union Home Minister Amit Shah during the Karnataka Assembly elections.

The case was filed by local BJP leader Vijay Mishra, who accused Gandhi of allegedly making derogatory statements against Shah, who was then the BJP national president. Local BJP leader Vijay Mishra had filed a defamation

complaint against Gandhi, alleging that during the Karnataka elections in 2018, the Congress leader made derogatory remarks against the then BJP president and current Union Home Minister Shah. "Rahul Mishra, advocate and National Coordinator of the Indian Youth Congress Legal Cell, told T. According to his legal team, the Lok Sabha MP from Rae Bareilly appeared in person before the court. The next date of hearing has been fixed for March 9, though sources informed that Gandhi's personal appearance would not be required then.

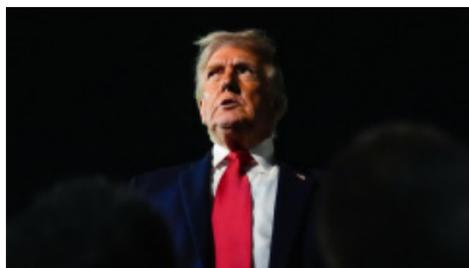
Gandhi's counsel, Kashi Prasad Shukla, said the Congress leader denied the allegations and termed the complaint politically motivated. "Rahul ji denied the charges against him and said the complaint has been filed with political malice. It is baseless and liable to be dismissed," he said. Gandhi arrived in Lucknow earlier in the day and travelled to Sultanpur by road for the court appearance. After the hearing, he returned to Delhi. On the way back to Lucknow, Gandhi also met the family of a cobbler whom he had interacted with earlier and had extended assistance to in the past. Sources informed that since the cobbler succumbed to illness, Rahul met his family and assured of further assistance and support.

## US President Donald Trump to get Florida airport renamed after him

GNS News Agency, Feb 20

An airport in Florida will soon be renamed after U.S. President Donald Trump, after a bill proposing the change was approved by the state's legislature on Thursday (February 19, 2026). Mr. Trump, a real estate mogul who has plastered his name on buildings around the world, has sought to leave his mark on the country in an unprecedented image and building campaign. Florida's Republican-led legislature approved a bill to rename the Palm Beach International Airport as the "President Donald J. Trump International Airport," state records show. Governor Ron DeSantis, once a Mr. Trump opponent, is expected to sign the measure into law. The airport in Palm Beach, a town known for its sandy beaches and luxurious estates, is just minutes away from Trump's Mar-a-Lago residence. The airport renaming will also require the approval of the Federal Aviation Administration. It would then become the latest institution to be renamed after Mr. Trump. The President's hand-picked board of the Kennedy Center, an arts complex and memorial to late president John F. Kennedy in Washington, voted in December to rename itself the "Trump-Kennedy Center." The same month, the State Department added Trump's name to the US Institute of Peace.

Mr. Trump has also sought to rename New York's Penn



Station and Washington's Dulles International Airport after himself, according to U.S. media reports, although those efforts were rebuffed. The Treasury Department has confirmed reports that drafts have been drawn up for a commemorative \$1 coin featuring Trump's image, even though there are laws against displaying the image of a sitting or living president on money. On Thursday (February 19), a large blue banner featuring Mr. Trump's face was draped across the headquarters of the Justice Department, an agency traditionally seen as outside the reach of political influence.

## Former Prince Andrew 'released under investigation' in case related to Epstein links

GNS News Agency, Feb 20

British police said late that Britain's former Duke of York, Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor (formerly, 'Prince Andrew') had "been released under investigation" after being arrested and held for hours on suspicion of misconduct while he was a trade envoy. He was arrested and taken into custody early on Thursday morning, in a case related to Jeffrey Epstein, the deceased American child sex offender and financier. The extraordinary arrest of a member of the Royal family, which has not occurred in centuries, underlines the gravity and reach of the unfolding Epstein scandal, which has shaken both the family and the Keir Starmer government. "We can also confirm that our searches in Norfolk have now concluded," Thames Valley Police said in a short statement, in apparent reference to searches of his residence on King Charles III's Sandringham estate in eastern England.

It is understood that reported searches of Mr. Mountbatten-Windsor's former home on the Windsor estate, west of London, remained ongoing. Mr. Mountbatten-Windsor, the younger brother of Britain's King Charles, who turned 66 on Thursday, was arrested on suspicion of misconduct in public office — in connection with passing on confidential official documents to Epstein, when he served as an unpaid trade envoy for the U.K. between 2001 and 2011. The revelations have emerged from the release of files running into millions of pages related to Epstein by the U.S. Department of Justice.

The alleged sharing of documents is just one of several ways in which Mr. Mountbatten-Windsor's name has surfaced in connection with Epstein. In 2021, an American woman, Virginia Giuffre, said that Epstein and his former girlfriend Ghislaine Maxwell had allegedly trafficked her to Mr. Mountbatten-Windsor for sex when she was 17. Giuffre died by suicide in April 2025. In 2022, the former prince, who has repeatedly denied any wrongdoing, reached an out-of-court settlement with her.

A photograph of a man who appeared to be Mr. Mountbatten-Windsor, kneeling on all fours over a fully clothed woman lying on the carpet, was among the images released on January 30, 2026, by the U.S. authorities. The tranche of documents also suggested a possible payment from Epstein to Peter Mandelson, former U.K. envoy to Washington, who resigned in November over his friendship with Epstein. The revelations also led to Mr. Mandelson's resignation from the Labour Party earlier this month and



calls for Mr. Starmer to step down. For the royals, as fresh revelations around his links with Epstein emerged, Mr. Mountbatten-Windsor was stripped of his titles in October 2025 and asked to leave the Royal Lodge, his official residence in Windsor. He recently moved into Wood Farm, on the Sandringham Estate in Norfolk, which is privately owned by King Charles. The British press reported that police cars arrived at the estate around 6 a.m. on Thursday, with the police releasing a statement around 10 a.m. "We have today arrested a man in his sixties from Norfolk on suspicion of misconduct in public office and are carrying out searches at addresses in Berkshire and Norfolk," the Thames Valley Police said in a statement, adding that they were not naming the individual as per national guidance, when people are normally only named when charged. Searches were also going on at Royal Lodge, where the former prince lived until earlier this month. It was unclear where the suspect was being questioned.

The King called for a "full, fair and proper process" and offered his "whole hearted support and co-operation", as per a statement released by Buckingham Palace. "Let me state clearly: the law must take its course," he said, adding it would not be appropriate to comment further at this point in time. The family of Giuffre also reacted to the news via a statement. "At last today our broken hearts have been lifted at the news that no one is above the law, not even royalty," they said, thanking the Thames Valley Police and adding, "He was never a prince. For survivors everywhere, Virginia did this for you." Meanwhile, U.S. President Donald Trump on Thursday called the arrest of the former prince "very sad." "I think it's a shame. I think it's very sad. I think it's so bad for the royal family. It's very, very sad," Mr. Trump told reporters on Air Force One.

## India attends Trump's Board of Peace meeting as observer nation

GNS News Agency, Feb 20

India on Thursday attended the inaugural meeting of U.S. President Donald Trump's Board of Peace on Gaza as an "observer" country. According to a list of attendees at the meeting held at the Donald J. Trump Institute of Peace, India was represented by Chargé d'affaires at the Indian Embassy in Washington DC Namgya Khampa.

India has not joined the Board of Peace, which has been set up by Mr. Trump for the redevelopment of the Gaza Strip. Mr. Trump announced that the U.S. will commit \$10 billion to the Board, whose members include 27 nations such as Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Hungary, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Prime Minister Narendra Modi was among the numerous global leaders that the U.S. Presi-



dent had invited to join the board that was announced under the second phase of a ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

## U.S. pays about \$160 million of nearly \$4 billion it owes to U.N.



The United States has paid about \$160 million of the nearly \$4 billion it owes the United Nations, the U.N. said Thursday (February 19, 2026), and President Donald Trump promised more money to the financially strapped world organization. The Trump administration's payment last week is earmarked for the U.N.'s regular operating budget, U.N. spokesman Stéphane Dujarric told The Associated Press.

The U.N. has said the United States owes \$2.19 billion to its regular budget, including \$767 million for this year, as well as \$1.8 billion to a separate budget for the far-flung U.N. peacekeeping operations. U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned late last month that the world body faces "imminent financial collapse" unless its financial rules are overhauled or all 193 member nations pay their dues, a message clearly directed at the United States. He said in a letter to all member nations that cash for the regular budget could run out by July, which could dramatically affect U.N. operations. U.N. officials have said 95% of the overdue payments to the U.N.'s regular budget is from the United States.

## Kim Jong Un opens rare party congress in North Korea

GNS News Agency, Feb 20

North Korea's ruling party has opened a landmark congress, state media said, launching a political spectacle expected to unveil the next phase in the nation's nuclear weapons programme. Leader Kim Jong Un took centre stage with a speech to start the Workers' Party congress, a gathering that directs state efforts on everything from house building to war planning. Party elites packed the cavernous House of Culture in Pyongyang for the once-in-five-years event, which is typically capped with an immense parade flaunting the military's latest weapons. The congress offers a rare look into the workings of a nation where even mundane details are shrouded in secrecy — and will be closely watched for insights into Mr. Kim's long-term thinking. Mr. Kim said North Korea had overcome its "worst difficulties" since the last congress in 2021, and was now entering a new stage of "optimism and confidence in the future." "Today, our Party is faced with heavy and urgent historic tasks of boosting economic construction and the people's standard of living and transforming all realms of state and social life as early as possible," he said Thursday (February 20), according to state media.

He also singled out "deep-rooted defeatism" and "immaturity in leadership ability" that still hindered the party's work, a sign of possible reprisals against officials seen to have fallen short. Mr. Kim has already declared this year's congress will lay out plans to bolster North Korea's nuclear arsenal. It has been more than eight years since North Korea's last nuclear test triggered a man-made earthquake underneath the northern Hamyong mountains. Pyongyang's atomic scientists have worked since then to harness this power in portable warheads that can be attached to long-range missiles.

North Korea's economy has for years languished under heavy Western sanctions that aim to choke off funding for its nuclear weapons programme. Mr. Kim is likely to boast of progress on the country's nuclear programme and "strengthened alignment with China and Russia", Yang Moon-jin, former president of the University of North Korean Studies, told AFP. Ruling dynasty It is just the ninth time the Workers' Party congress has convened under North Korea's

The disclosure of the U.S. payment came as Mr. Trump convened the first meeting of the Board of Peace, a new initiative initially meant to oversee the Gaza ceasefire but whose wider ambitions under Mr. Trump many see as an attempt to rival the U.N. Security Council's role in preventing and ending conflict around the world. Mr. Trump has said the United Nations has not lived up to its potential and has withdrawn the U.S. from U.N. organizations, including the World Health Organization and the cultural agency UNESCO, while pulling funding from dozens of others. At the Board of Peace meeting Thursday (February 19) in Washington, Mr. Trump was much more positive than he has been in the past about the future of the United Nations, which was established on the ashes of World War II.

He said his administration was going to be working "very closely" with the U.N., adding, "Someday, I won't be here — the United Nations will be." Mr. Trump said the Board of Peace "is going to almost be looking over the United Nations," strengthening it and making sure its facilities are good and it runs properly. "They need help, and they need help moneywise," the President said, never mentioning that the U.S. failure to pay its dues is a key reason for the U.N.'s financial crisis. "We're going to help them moneywise, and we're going to make sure the United Nations is viable," Mr. Trump said. "And I think it's going to eventually live up to its potential. That will be a big day." He did not say when any future payments would be made. Mr. Dujarric, the U.N. spokesman, said last week that Mr. Guterres has been in touch with U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Mike Waltz "for quite some time" and that the U.N.'s controller also has been in touch with U.S. officials about the arrears. The U.N. said 55 countries paid their annual dues for 2026 by the February 8 due date.



decades-spanning Mr. Kim rule. The meeting was shelved for decades under Mr. Kim's father, Mr. Kim Jong Il, but was revived in 2016. Mr. Kim Jong Un has spent years stoking his cult of personality in reclusive North Korea, and the congress offers another chance to demonstrate his absolute grip on power. Photos released by state media showed Mr. Kim delivering his opening address as senior party officials appeared to take notes in the background. Analysts will scour photographs to see which officials are seated closest to Mr. Kim, and who is banished to the back row. Particular attention will be placed on the whereabouts of Mr. Kim's teenage daughter Ju Ae, who has emerged as North Korea's heir apparent according to Seoul's national intelligence service. "Biggest enemy"

The ruling parties of China and Russia — North Korea's longtime allies — sent friendly messages to mark the start of the congress, according to the Korean Central News Agency. Mr. Kim appeared alongside China's Xi Jinping and Russia's Vladimir Putin at a military parade in Beijing last year — a striking display of his powerful friends and elevated status in global politics. At the previous congress five years ago, Mr. Kim declared that the United States was his nation's "biggest enemy". There is keen interest in whether Mr. Kim might use the congress to soften this stance, or double down. U.S. President Donald Trump stepped up his courtship of Mr. Kim during a tour of Asia last year, saying he was "100%" open to a meeting. Mr. Kim has so far largely shunned efforts to resume top-level diplomatic dialogue.

## Peru's new president under fire for child sex comments



GNS News Agency, Feb 20

Rights groups expressed concern on Thursday (February 19, 2026) at the choice of 83-year-old Jose Maria Balcasar as Peru's stand-in President given past utterances on girls and under-aged sex. Mr. Balcasar was on Wednesday (February 18, 2026) named Peru's interim leader, for a period of just over five months until the next election, after predecessor Jose Jeri was impeached on graft allegations. He became the South American country's eighth President in a decade.

But Mr. Balcasar's nomination has angered rights and women's groups. In 2023, he told a congressional debate about ending child marriage that "early sexual relations aid a woman's psychological future." Peru that year passed a legal reform to ban marriage for anyone under 18. Previously, teenagers could get married with their parents' consent. The CNDDHH rights coalition expressed concern Thursday (February 19, 2026) at the appointment "of an authority figure with a controversial public record and statements that justify sexual violence against girls." The Flora Tristan Peruvian Women's Centre, for its part, said the choice was emblematic of a "profound ethical and democratic crisis" in Peru, where more than half of women reported being a victim of psychological, physical or sexual abuse by a partner, according to government statistics.

"Anyone who minimizes violence against women and girls is not voicing an isolated opinion, but revealing a complacent attitude toward abuse," the center said in a statement. Mr. Balcasar has claimed his words have been

distorted and taken out of context. He is also under investigation for alleged misappropriation of public funds and corruption.

## Russian-run areas of Ukraine face water, heat and housing woes

Tallinn: Nearly four years into its full-scale invasion, Russia controls about 20 per cent of Ukrainian territory. Many of the estimated 3 million to 5 million people who remain in regions under Moscow's control face housing, water, power, heat and health care woes. Even President Vladimir Putin has acknowledged "many truly pressing, urgent problems" in the regions of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia, which were illegally annexed by Moscow months after the all-out war began on February 24, 2022. Russian citizenship, language and culture is forced upon residents, including in school lesson plans and textbooks. Some residents live in fear of being accused of sympathising with Kyiv, according to Ukrainians who have left. Many have been imprisoned, beaten and killed, according to human rights activists. Russia established a "vast network of secret and official detention centres where tens of thousands of Ukrainian civilians" are held indefinitely without charge, said Oleksandra Matviichuk, head of the Nobel Peace Prize-winning Centre for Civil Liberties. Russian officials have refused to comment on past allegations by UN human rights officials that it tortures civilians and prisoners of war. Inna Vnukova spent the first days of the Russian occupation in the Luhansk region hiding in a damp basement with her family. Outside in her village of Kudriashivka, soldiers bullied residents, set up checkpoints and looted homes. There was constant shelling. "Everyone was very scared and afraid to go outside," Vnukova told The Associated Press in Estonia, where she now lives. The troops sought out officials and civil servants like her and her husband, Oleksii Vnukov. In mid-March 2022, she and her 16-year-old son, Zhenya, fled the village with her brother's family, even though it meant leaving her husband behind temporarily.

## Inside the rise of robotics firm Unitree, glimpse into China's tech ambitions



It's been an eventful week for the Chinese robotics firm Unitree, which has managed to find itself at the centre of national conversations both in China and in India. First, in the country where it is based, Unitree's latest humanoid robots made a stunning splash on February 16, performing complicated martial arts on China's most watched television spectacle, the annual Chinese New Year gala that is watched by more than half a billion people.

Then, days later, one of Unitree's older robotic models, a quadruped "robo dog", unwittingly found itself in the headlines because of a display by the private Galgotias University at the ongoing AI Impact Summit in New Delhi. The university was forced to close its stall after it emerged that, what some of its representatives claimed was a home-grown design, turned out to be a Unitree Go2 quadruped. A model of the Go2 can be purchased online for \$1,600. Unitree, a private company started by tech entrepreneur Wang Xinxing (36) who designed his first robot at university, said this week it plans to sell as many as 20,000 humanoid robots this year, an almost four-fold rise from 2025. The company's name derives from "universe" and "tree", according to a South China Morning Post report, taken from a popular Chinese phrase "lighting up the technology tree".

The February 16 display of its latest fully autonomous G1 robot stirred wide attention in China, representing a significant improvement from a display only one year ago where robots performed largely stiff hand-waving motions. This year, they displayed martial arts and punched and kicked with flexibility. Mr. Wang's latest kung fu-performing humanoid robots, he told state media this week, "lay the groundwork for future robot deployment" in a range of

scenarios. Unitree, in fact, is only one among many robotics firms reshaping the country's tech landscape. As the Post reported, the country's share of the global robotics market last year was 40%, and the domestic market is expected to grow from \$47 billion in 2024 to \$108 billion in 2028. Unitree and AgiBot lead the pack of a stunning 7,40,000 reported firms in the robotics field in a highly competitive marketplace. The competition is so fierce that Chinese media reported that Unitree and AgiBot had entered a bidding war to showcase their products in the New Year programme offering more than \$10 million to do so (reports the companies have denied). As with China's congested Electric Vehicles market, Chinese analysts are concerned that the rapid and unbridled expansion may see many of these firms struggle to compete or even survive. Robotics is among industries prioritised in the country's fifteenth five-year plan (2026-2030), set to be approved next month. In October, the Communist Party Central Committee approved recommendations for the plan, calling for "faster progress in securing breakthroughs in core technologies in key fields" and to "redouble efforts to develop emerging pillar industries".

"We should launch industrial innovation projects and make integrated moves to construct innovation facilities, advance technological research and development (R&D), and promote product upgrading," the document said, also calling to "accelerate the development of industrial clusters in strategic emerging fields". It also called for exploring "market regulation rules and work to foster new drivers of economic growth such as quantum technology, biomanufacturing, hydrogen and nuclear fusion power, brain-computer interfaces, embodied artificial intelligence (AI), and 6G" and also for state support to "nurture unicorn companies." Unitree's rise reflects how quickly China's tech space is evolving. Its founder, Mr. Wang, developed his first prototype only ten years ago when he was in university, and spent, according to Chinese media reports, only 20,000 Yuan (then around ₹2 lakh) on developing his first model, a quadruped robot. That model won him a grant of 80,000 Yuan from a competition in Zhejiang province, where he was enrolled at the Zhejiang Sci-Tech University. Another model he developed when pursuing his master's in Shanghai brought him national attention at a time when China had begun an intense "Made in China 2025" plan to upgrade industries and boost innovation, releasing a flood of funding to universities and provincial governments. This drive has both spurred innovation and fuelled the rise of companies like Unitree.

## India joins 100 countries in signing statement criticising Israel's West Bank plans

GNS News Agency, Feb 20

A day after it skipped a joint appearance with other countries at the United Nations to condemn Israel for its plans for West Bank settlements, India signed a joint statement late on Wednesday. The statement, which was read out by the Palestinian Ambassador to the UN, Riyad Mansour, on Tuesday (February 17) in New York, criticised the Israeli government for a number of moves to expand its control over the West Bank areas under the Palestinian Authority.

Among those who accompanied Mr. Mansour during the joint press call were diplomats from Arab nations, BRICS members, Quad partners Japan and Australia, European Union member states such as Germany, and all permanent members of the UN Security Council, except for the U.S. India's initial decision not to sign the statement, which was endorsed by 85 countries, was seen as linked to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's travel to Israel on February 25-26 and his upcoming meetings with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The decision was surprising given India's traditional support for a Palestinian state and its past criticism of Israel's settlement policy.

However, more than 24 hours later, the government appeared to shift its position and signed the document. "More than 100 states and international organizations have joined the statement condemning Israel's unilateral measures and rejecting annexation," the Palestinian government announced late on Wednesday (February 18), including India's name in the statement. "We reiterate our rejection of all measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem," said the statement issued in New York. "Such measures violate international law, undermine the ongoing efforts for peace and stability in the region, run counter to the Comprehensive Plan, and jeopardize the prospect of reaching a peace agreement ending the conflict," it added. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who travelled to Delhi to attend the AI Impact



Summit on Wednesday (February 18), had also issued a statement "condemning" the Israeli government's plans to require documentation from existing landholders and ease restrictions on outsiders acquiring property in the West Bank.

"The decision could lead to the dispossession of Palestinians of their property and risks expanding Israeli control over land in the area. Such measures, including Israel's continued presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, are not only destabilizing but, as recalled by the International Court of Justice, unlawful," the statement issued by the Secretary-General's office said. The External Affairs Ministry refused requests for a comment on the government's decisions, first to stay away from the joint appearance and then to sign the statement.

The government's decision to stay out of the statement was criticised by the Opposition and former diplomats, some of whom praised the decision to join the statement later. Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said Mr. Modi must "call out" Mr. Netanyahu during his visit to Israel next week and "publicly express India's grave concern at what Israel is executing in the occupied West Bank". India has added its name to the list of countries criticising Israel for its unilateral measures on the West Bank.

## No reason to believe change in India's stance on Russian oil: Russian Foreign Ministry



The remarks came in the backdrop of Washington's claim that New Delhi has agreed to stop importing Russian crude oil

GNS News Agency, Feb 20

Russia's Foreign Ministry on Wednesday (February 18, 2026) said it has "no reason" to believe that India has changed its position on buying Russian oil, which it said is beneficial for both countries and maintains stability in the global hydrocarbons market. The remarks came in the backdrop of Washington's claim that New Delhi has agreed to

stop importing Russian crude oil.

"We have no reason to believe that India has changed its position on buying Russian hydrocarbons. India's purchase of Russian hydrocarbons benefits both countries and helps maintain stability in the international energy market," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova said in her weekly briefing. "There is nothing new in the claims of U.S. President Donald Trump, as well as U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who have grabbed the right to dictate to independent nations," Ms. Zakharova said. Following a recent phone conversation between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and United States President Donald Trump, both sides announced a reduction of the U.S. tariffs on Indian goods to 18% from 50%.

The reduction included the removal of a 25% tariff that Mr. Trump had slapped on India in August last year for New Delhi's purchase of Russian oil. Last week, Mr. Rubio said that India has committed to stop buying Russian oil, days after New Delhi reiterated that "national interests" will be the "guiding factor" for India's energy procurement.

While announcing the trade deal with New Delhi early in February, Trump had also claimed India had agreed to not procure crude oil from Russia. India has not yet confirmed or denied Washington's claim that it has committed to stopping the procurement of Russian crude oil. Earlier too, Russia had accused the U.S. of attempting to prevent India and other countries from buying Russian oil, saying Washington was using a wide range of "coercive" measures, including tariffs, sanctions and direct prohibitions. In her strongly worded statement, Ms. Zakharova also criticised the European allies of the Ukrainian regime, saying that they do not want a peace solution.

## How global free trade agreements are reshaping higher education choices



Global trade architecture is increasingly influencing higher education decisions rather than just academic standing. India's Comprehensive Economic Partnership talks with the Gulf Cooperation Council and its upcoming India-European Union Free Trade Agreement negotiations will lead to economic integration which will benefit the education sector. Decision logic, not aspiration, is what is evolving. Students are matching their educational choices to employment continuity, regulatory convergence, and labour mobility linked to trade.

Trade volumes are reshaping student mobility patterns. The empirical trade data shows the importance of this trade modification. India's annual trade with the EU reached more than USD 180 billion from 2018 until 2023 while its trade with the GCC countries exceeded USD 240 billion. A significant portion of India's professional services exchange, including those in engineering, healthcare, finance, logistics and digital services, now takes place through these corridors. Demand for education is reacting to this alignment. With destinations integrated into India's trade network experiencing greater growth in Indian enrollments than traditional legacy markets, student mobility patterns increasingly reflect the intensity of trade. Mutual recognition of qualifications is reducing credential risk.

Mutual recognition of qualifications is a crucial link between trade agreements and educational choices. The EU internal system has demonstrated measurable results through the implementation of standardised recognition practices. The European education data shows that EU cross-border tertiary enrollment increased by more than 30% between 2013 and 2021 while professional sectors achieved higher regulatory alignment. The India-EU negotiations specifically address professional mobility and regulatory cooperation which indicates that India will develop more recognition systems for its qualifications in the future. The system enables students to work in other countries while reducing the possibility of losing their educational qualifications. Labor market stability is strengthening long-term education planning.

The labour market data supports this transition to new technologies. According to multilateral workforce mobility datasets, over 60% of globally mobile students now value credential portability and post-study work alignment more than institutional ranking. The EU and GCC economies together supply about 38% of India's skilled migration flows which has maintained its structural stability during the past decade. The education destinations within these blocs of

fer better long-term career planning options because their stable environments create predictable requirements for Indian-trained professionals who work in trade-related economies. GCC education investment is closely tied to economic diversification.

The case for the GCC region is different but equally supported by data. The governments of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have invested more than \$100 billion since 2010 in institutions of higher learning, including universities, applied research centers, and sector-specific institutes. These expenditures are closely related to economic diversification plans that emphasize financial services, tourism, renewable energy, healthcare, and logistics. Indian student enrollment in GCC-based institutions has increased at an annual rate of roughly 12-15% over the last five years, according to enrollment data from public education registries. This growth rate greatly exceeds the global outbound student growth rate, which is still less than 7%.

Data at the program level shows an equally significant change. Data analytics, supply chain management, sustainability engineering, health administration and fintech are among the applied and professionally aligned fields where enrollment growth is concentrated. Enrollment in these programs at EU and GCC institutions has increased significantly faster than that of generalist or non-applied degrees, according to public higher education datasets. Demand from trade-related industries that function internationally under common regulatory standards is reflected in this.

Cost and risk optimisation is influencing destination choice. The cost and risk are an important factor in deciding whether to pursue an education abroad. A review of the cost of education in many countries compares median tuition costs for applied master's programs across Europe (30-45% lowers than master programs available in North America). Together with access to post-study work and wage convergence for regulated professions, the total educational return becomes more predictable by comparing different countries' returns. Cost/risk for GCC locations are further improved upon by using shorter programs and strong regional job absorption in the areas of infrastructure and services.

Institutions are responding to these dynamics by re-designing international engagement models. Universities within trade-integrated regions are aligning curriculum outcomes with cross-border employability metrics, industry co-design, and work-integrated learning. Empirical graduate outcome data consistently shows that institutions embedded within trade-linked industry ecosystems report higher employment rates and faster labor market entry for international graduates. Education choices are shifting from prestige to trade-aligned careers. The impact of higher education for students is more structural than it is temporary. In making their decisions, higher education institutions have begun moving from prestige signaling towards signaling aligned to careers in the area of their trade. The increasing influence of global trade agreements and their effect on the movement of talent means that viewing education through the lens of trade is now a necessity; moving forward, it will simply be the requirement or baseline for making rational, outcome-driven higher education decisions.

## India should focus on 'global-ready graduates' to curb academic migration

India is witnessing an alarming rise in academic migration, commonly referred to as brain drain, with lakhs of students leaving the country every year in pursuit of global degrees and better career prospects. Experts warn that unless India urgently reforms its post-secondary higher education ecosystem, the trend could severely weaken the nation's academic and innovation landscape. Recent official data reveal that Indian student migration has steadily increased over the past three years, with around 13.2 lakh students studying abroad in 2023, 13.3 lakh in 2024, and 13.8 lakh in 2025. Kerala alone accounts for nearly 11% of total Indian student migration, reflecting the magnitude of the issue in the State.

The U.S. and Canada together attract nearly 40% of Indian students, followed by the U.K., Australia, and Germany. In recent years, Germany has emerged as a preferred destination due to relatively affordable education, especially in professional courses such as engineering and nursing. Though several German public universities have begun charging semester fees post-COVID, costs remain significantly lower than in many English-speaking countries. Uncertain outcomes. A majority of Indian students migrating abroad belong to middle-class families, often financing their education through heavy bank loans ranging from ₹30 lakh to ₹750 lakh, mainly by mortgaging land and property. While some students secure quality education and meaningful employment, many others end up in lower-tier institutions, face unskilling, underemployment, work in part-time or unskilled jobs, and eventually return to India burdened with debt and limited career prospects.

Seats in universities and colleges in India go vacant and enrolment of talented students falls, leading to the gradual erosion of academic quality, particularly in science, technology, and research-oriented disciplines, ultimately affecting sustainable and holistic development of the country. A sustainable solution

The internationalisation of higher education is an imperative option for India, driven by social, cultural, political, academic, and economic necessities. This will enhance the quality of post-secondary education and research, and make a meaningful contribution to society. The desired outcomes are multifaceted: producing "global-ready" graduates, fostering groundbreaking research and innovation in cutting-edge areas of various disciplines, accelerating knowledge creation, and building institutional capacity. A holistic definition for internationalisation is given by the American Council on Education (ACE), which defines comprehensive internationalisation as a strategic, coordinated framework that integrates policies, programmes, initiatives, and individuals to make colleges and universities more globally oriented and internationally connected. In order to foster sustainable and just global engagement, the ACE model embraces an organisational growth mindset. It frames internationalisation as an ongoing process rather than a static one. It recognises that all elements at a college or university — students, faculty, and staff — are learners and central to the institution's equitable, intercultural transformation. Effective internationalisation cannot happen in a few siloed offices, confined to certain disciplines, or reserved for a limited number of students. All components should be transformed.

To adopt effective internationalisation in colleges and universities, the ACE model emphasises three broad lenses and six focus areas. The first lens is diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), which highlights the responsibility of insti-



tutions and individuals in promoting racial, economic, and social justice. The second lens focuses on agility and transformation, reflecting an institution's willingness and capacity to adapt its structures and practices in response to disruptive global, technological, and societal changes. The third lens, data-informed decision-making, ensures that internationalisation goals, progress, and outcomes are grounded in systematic institutional self-study, supported by measurable indicators, and strengthened through continuous assessment.

In addition, the ACE model identifies six key focus areas essential for effective internationalisation: Institutional strategic planning: the integration of internationalisation goals into the institution's overall strategic framework.

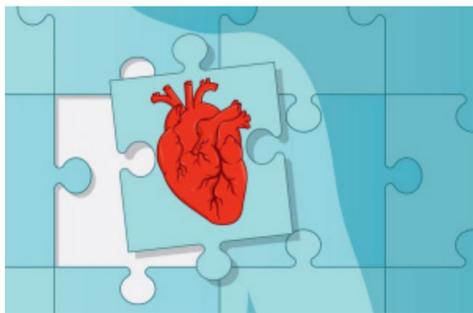
Leadership and governance: active involvement of senior leadership, supported by appropriate administrative and reporting structures for internationalisation. Curriculum and co-curriculum: The curriculum serves as the primary pathway to learning for all students, irrespective of background, aspirations, abilities, or institutional type.

Permanent faculty and staff support: ensuring sustained human resources and institutional capacity for international initiatives. Faculty and student mobility: promotion of exchange programmes and international exposure for both faculty members and students. Partnerships and networks: internal and external collaborations, whether local or international, that may be transactional in nature or evolve into platforms for innovation, knowledge creation, and collective action on global challenges.

Global-ready graduates. The ultimate outcome of internationalisation is the creation of global-ready graduates — students equipped with international perspectives, intercultural skills, digital competence, and the ability to work across borders. Such reforms can significantly reduce the compulsion for academic migration. Additional benefits include enhanced institutional reputation, increased research output, innovation, knowledge creation, funding opportunities, profit generation and long-term capacity building.

The larger goal is to establish an equitable and inclusive education system, where every student feels a sense of belonging and receives the support needed to achieve equal academic and professional outcomes. Translating this vision into practice requires structured global engagement mechanisms. Implementation strategies. Different types of university partner agreements are present globally: memorandum of understanding (MoU), student exchange agreements, university-wide agreements and strategic partnerships, transnational education — articulation, blended intensive programmes (BIPs), and GDPR — data sharing agreements, offshore campuses, consortiums/networks are the prominent ones.

## Stress: the silent killer of the heart



regular heartbeats, known as arrhythmias. These can range from harmless palpitations to life-threatening conditions such as atrial fibrillation.

**Myocardial Infarction (heart attack):** Stress is a known trigger for heart attacks. The surge of adrenaline during stressful events can cause coronary artery spasms or rupture vulnerable plaques, leading to blockages and heart muscle damage. Takotsubo Cardiomyopathy (broken heart syndrome): This condition mimics a heart attack but is caused by extreme emotional stress. The heart's left ventricle temporarily weakens, leading to chest pain and shortness of breath. Impaired recovery: Patients recovering from cardiac surgery or heart attacks often experience stress-related complications. Anxiety and depression can slow healing, reduce adherence to treatment, and increase the risk of recurrence. Coping with stress Managing stress is not just about feeling better—it's about living longer. Cardiothoracic surgeons emphasise the importance of proactive stress management to prevent heart disease and improve overall health. Stress management techniques include: Lifestyle changes: The first component to this is regular exercise. Physical activity reduces stress hormones and improves cardiovascular health. Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise most days. The next component is eating a heart-healthy diet: focus on fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats. Avoid excessive sugar, salt, and processed foods. Sleeping well is another crucial component: poor sleep increases stress and harms heart health. Establish a regular sleep routine and aim for 7–8 hours per night. Finally, limit alcohol and caffeine: both can exacerbate stress and increase heart rate and blood pressure.

**Mindfulness and relaxation techniques:** Regular meditation calms the mind and lowers blood pressure. Controlled breathing activates the parasympathetic nervous system, reducing stress. Yoga and Tai Chi combine physical movement with mindfulness, promoting relaxation and heart health. Psychological support: Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and other forms of counselling can help individuals manage stress and develop healthier coping mechanisms. Connecting with others who face similar challenges through support groups can provide emotional relief and practical advice. Writing down thoughts and feelings, a practice known as stress journaling, can help identify stress triggers and patterns. Medical interventions: In some cases, doctors may prescribe medications to manage anxiety, depression, or high blood pressure. Monitoring heart health through routine exams and regular health check-ups can catch problems early and guide treatment. Work-life balance: Set boundaries, by learning to say no and prioritising tasks to avoid burnout. Short breaks during the day can refresh the mind and reduce stress. Engaging in hobbies also helps: activities that bring joy and relaxation can counteract stress. As cardiothoracic surgeons, we often meet patients at the end of a long journey of silent suffering. By the time they reach the operating table, the damage caused by stress is already done — arteries are blocked, heart muscles are weakened, and lives are hanging in the balance. Stress is manageable. With awareness, lifestyle changes, and support, individuals can protect their hearts and lead healthier, more fulfilling lives. The key is to recognise stress: not as a badge of honour or a necessary evil, but as a warning sign—a signal that something needs to change. In the battle against heart disease, managing stress is one of the most powerful tools we have. It's time to listen to our hearts before they cry out in crisis.

In today's fast-paced world, stress has become an almost inevitable part of life. From workplace pressures to personal responsibilities, the constant demands placed on individuals can lead to chronic stress—a condition that quietly undermines physical health, particularly that of the heart. Often overlooked or dismissed as a psychological inconvenience, stress is now recognised by medical professionals, especially cardiothoracic surgeons, as a major contributor to cardiovascular disease. It is, quite literally, a silent killer. Understanding stress

Stress is the body's natural response to any demand or threat. When faced with a challenge, the brain signals the release of stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol. These hormones prepare the body for a "fight or flight" response—raising heart rate, increasing blood pressure, and boosting energy supplies. While this response is beneficial in short bursts, chronic activation of the stress system can lead to serious health consequences. The body remains in a heightened state of alert, which, over time, begins to wear down vital systems, especially the cardiovascular system. Stress manifests in various forms, each with its own impact on the body and mind: Acute stress: This is short-term stress that arises from immediate challenges or threats. It can be beneficial in small doses, helping individuals stay alert and focused. However, frequent episodes of acute stress can accumulate and lead to long-term damage. Chronic stress: Chronic stress results from ongoing pressures such as financial difficulties, job insecurity, or strained relationships. This type of stress is particularly harmful because it keeps the body in a constant state of tension. Emotional stress: Triggered by grief, trauma, or mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression, emotional stress can deeply affect both psychological and physical well-being. Physical stress: Illness, injury, or lack of sleep can place physical stress on the body, which in turn affects the heart. Environmental stress: Noise pollution, overcrowding, and unsafe living conditions contribute to environmental stress, which can exacerbate other forms of stress.

What stress does to the heart Doctors frequently witness the devastating effects of stress on the heart. Unlike visible injuries, stress-induced damage often goes unnoticed until it manifests as a serious cardiac event. Some of the effects of stress on the body are: Hypertension (high blood pressure): Stress causes blood vessels to constrict and the heart to beat faster, leading to elevated blood pressure. Over time, this damages the arteries and increases the risk of heart attacks and strokes. Atherosclerosis: Chronic stress promotes inflammation and increases levels of bad cholesterol (LDL), contributing to the buildup of plaque in the arteries. This narrows the vessels and restricts blood flow to the heart. Arrhythmias: Stress can trigger ir-

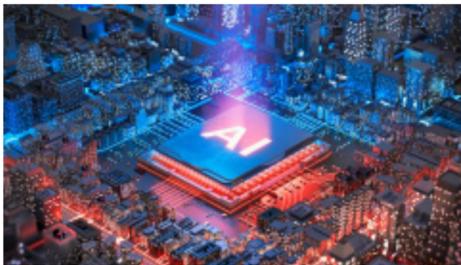
## Why AI infrastructure matters more

India's artificial intelligence debate is often dominated by applications — automation, productivity tools, chatbots, and efficiency gains. But the Government of India's recent white paper, "Democratising Access to AI Infrastructure", makes a crucial intervention: the future of AI in India will not be decided by algorithms alone, but by who has access to the infrastructure that powers them. At its core, the paper argues that compute power, datasets, and AI model ecosystems are becoming foundational economic assets. In a world where AI capabilities are increasingly concentrated among a handful of global corporations, access to infrastructure determines who innovates, who governs, and who merely consumes. For India, this is not a technical issue. It is a question of competitiveness, inclusion, and sovereignty. A public good

The paper makes a compelling case for treating AI infrastructure as a form of digital public utility. Just as roads enable commerce and electricity enables industry, AI infrastructure enables modern innovation, governance, and research. This infrastructure has two interlinked layers. The first is physical: data centres, GPUs, high-performance computing clusters, and energy systems. The second is digital: datasets, model repositories, governance frameworks, and access protocols. India today faces a stark imbalance. While it generates nearly 20% of global data, it hosts only around 3% of global data centre capacity. This asymmetry means Indian researchers, start-ups, and public institutions often rely on foreign compute and platforms. India's policy intent is strong. Initiatives such as the IndiaAI Mission, National Supercomputing Mission, AIRAWAT, and emerging national GPU clusters reflect a clear recognition that AI infrastructure must be strategically developed. Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) plays a central role in this vision. Platforms such as AI Kosh, Bhashini, and TGDeX demonstrate how shared, standards-based systems can democratise access to data and models while ensuring interoperability and accountability.

The risk of concentration Globally, AI infrastructure is becoming increasingly centralised. A small number of firms control advanced chips, large-scale compute, and frontier models. This concentration creates high entry barriers and amplifies market power. For India, the risk is not only economic but strategic. Dependence on external AI infrastructure can constrain domestic innovation, weaken bargaining power, and expose sensitive sectors to external vulnerabilities. The white paper's insistence on sovereign AI infrastructure does not imply isolationism. Rather, it advocates for shared access pathways that allow Indian innovators to compete globally while retaining control over critical systems. One of the paper's most important contributions is its emphasis on sustainability. As India expands AI capacity, energy efficiency and renewable integration are no longer optional — they are essential. Without careful planning, AI infrastructure could exacerbate environmental stress, particularly in water and power-constrained regions. The paper rightly calls for energy-efficient architectures, advanced cooling systems, and alignment with India's renewable energy goals.

The scale of AI infrastructure required cannot be delivered by the State alone. The white paper highlights public-private partnerships (PPPs) as a critical lever for expanding regional data centres, GPU clouds, and sovereign AI capacity. Well-designed PPPs can combine public oversight with private efficiency — provided governance frameworks are clear, transparent, and aligned with public



interest. AI adoption in India remains uneven. Mature sectors such as finance, e-commerce, and IT have moved faster, while agriculture, healthcare, education, and public services lag behind. Democratised AI infrastructure can help correct this imbalance. Affordable access to compute and datasets can enable precision agriculture, diagnostic tools, language technologies, and citizen-facing public services — especially in regional and vernacular contexts. This is where India's DPI approach offers a global template: shared infrastructure that enables innovation without privileging only the largest players. Finally, the white paper underscores that access must be trust-centric. A phased, modular policy approach — grounded in clear governance standards — allows innovation to scale without eroding citizen trust. Access is destiny. The central insight of the white paper is simple but profound: AI access is destiny. Nations that control and democratise AI infrastructure will shape innovation; those that do not will remain dependent. India has the opportunity to chart a third path — neither laissez-faire concentration nor State monopolisation, but public-good infrastructure enabled by DPI, partnerships, and trust-based governance. The question is no longer whether India will adopt AI. The real question is whether AI in India will remain the privilege of a few — or become a shared capability that powers inclusive growth, resilient governance, and digital sovereignty.

## Cold conditions grip Kashmir; snowfall likely

"Cold conditions prevailed across Kashmir on Thursday (January 22, 2026) with minimum temperatures dropping at most places and a western disturbance expected to affect the region later in the day and likely bring fresh snowfall," officials said. "There was a decrease in night temperatures at most places in Kashmir and the mercury settled below the freezing point across the valley," they said. "The minimum temperature in Srinagar dropped by a degree from the previous night to settle at a low of minus 3.4 degrees Celsius on Wednesday night," officials said. Tourist resort of Sonamarg in central Kashmir's Ganderbal district was the coldest recorded places in the valley at minus 6.1 degrees Celsius — down from minus 5.5 degrees Celsius the previous night. "The popular ski resort of Gulmarg, in north Kashmir's Baramulla district, recorded a low of minus four degrees Celsius," officials said. "The Pahalgam tourist resort in south Kashmir, which also serves as one of the base camps for the annual Amarnath Yatra, recorded a low of minus 4.4 degrees Celsius, down from the previous night's minus 3.8 degrees Celsius," they said.

## As Trump floats buying Greenland, Arctic island still holds toxic US waste



Since the end of World War II, the U.S. has established a global military network consisting of around 750 bases in roughly 80 countries. While the U.S. government has characterised this presence as a stabilising force, the local populations have often paid for the military's presence with displacement and long-term exposure to hazardous industrial waste. Perhaps the most extreme form of this cost is the forced removal of indigenous populations to clear land for military infrastructure. Between 1968 and 1973, for instance, the U.S. and the U.K. governments forcibly expelled the entire Chagosian population, of 2,000 people, to secure the island of Diego Garcia in the Chagos Archipelago in the Indian Ocean. To pressure the residents to leave, authorities restricted food imports and eventually gassed the islanders' pet dogs. The population was loaded on cargo ships and deposited in Mauritius and Seychelles, where many faced poverty, while the island became a sterile and restricted military zone.

In locations where the local population has stayed back, they have suffered significant environmental damage. Military bases are essentially industrial bases operating with little oversight. When the U.S. military withdrew from the Clark Air Base and Subic Bay in the Philippines in 1992, it left behind significant quantities of uncontained hazardous waste, including asbestos in deteriorating barracks and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), a known carcinogen, in electrical transformers. When scientists analysed the soil samples, they found high concentrations of lead and mercury and that solvents used to degrease aircraft engines had leached into the groundwater. Healthcare workers reported elevated rates of leukaemia and kidney disorders in the surrounding areas, including Angeles City, later linked to the ingestion of these heavy metals and hydrocarbons. Active installations also use aqueous film-forming foam, a specialised fire suppressant used in training drills. The foam contains per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, a.k.a. PFAS, a.k.a. "forever chemicals" — a name they've earned because they don't break down in ecologically relevant timeframes. Instead, they seep through the local environment and accumulate. At the Kadena Air Base in Okinawa in Japan and the Spangdahlem Air Base in Germany, government officials have documented PFAS in local water bodies for instance. Two specific compounds, PFOS and PFOA, also bioaccumulate in the human body and may be linked to higher risk of testicular and kidney cancers and thyroid disease.

On the flip side, these environmental liabilities are often protected by bilateral treaties between the U.S. and the host countries, called Status of Forces Agreements (SOFAs). Each SOFA determines the legal status of U.S. personnel and property abroad; the one with Japan in particular has been criticised for exempting the U.S. military from complying with the country's environmental laws. In fact the agreements often contain clauses that absolve the U.S. of the financial obligation to return land to its original condition or pay to remediate pollution, leaving host governments and eventually the local communities to manage the resulting public health crises and to fund the cleanup of toxic sites. Daily life near these installations also means living with noise pollution from jet aircraft and the physical risk imposed by training accidents. As a result, a U.S. military base operating under a typically lenient SOFA progressively erodes the local community's ability to control its own environment and safety.

Nuclear wasteln 2019, when U.S. President Donald Trump first floated the idea of purchasing Greenland, experts and scholars worldwide as well as communities in Denmark, Greenland, and across Europe critiqued the proposition on diplomatic and postcolonial grounds. The proposal included a critical material reality and thus merits scientific pushback as well: the U.S. already holds a significant negative-equity position in Greenland. Specifically, deep within the island's ice sheet, the U.S. maintains a shadow inventory of Cold War infrastructure that also poses significant environmental hazards. If the U.S. were to acquire the territory, it wouldn't just gain mineral rights, it would also formally inherit a large and scientifically complex cleanup exercise that climate change is about to make due. Perhaps the most acute liability is Camp Century, buried around 240 km inland from the coast. In 1959, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers used large rotary milling machines made by Switzerland to cut out a system of trenches in the ice; the central trench, colloquially called Main Street, was 1,100 feet long, 26 feet wide, and 28 feet high.

Camp Century was a pilot for Project Iceworm, a classified plan for the U.S. to bore 4,000 km of tunnels to house 600 Icbeman nuclear missiles. The military expected to be able to use the opaque ice sheet to hide the launchers from Soviet reconnaissance. The project ultimately flopped because the engineers had misunderstood the material properties of the ice. They treated it as a stationary solid whereas in reality, under the immense pressure of its own mass, glacial ice behaves like a visco-elastic fluid. In other words, the trench walls flowed slowly rather than standing still, eventually twisting out of shape and becoming much narrower, threatening to crush the launchers. The changes were so severe that the US military evacuated the base in 1966 and abandoned it in 1967. But before it scooted, the U.S. Army had installed a portable pressurised light-water nuclear reactor called Alco PM-2A, which used highly enriched uranium-235 as fuel. When Camp Century was decommissioned, the Army removed the reactor but not the associated nuclear waste. One 2016 study led by glaciologist William Colgan catalogued the inventory left behind, assuming the snow would entomb it forever: there were 2 lakh litres of diesel, 2.4 lakh litres of wastewater and sewage, and large quantities of PCBs and radioactive coolant.

An ancient thermometer Climate models have indicated that by the end of the century, this area of the Greenland ice sheet could shift from being a zone of net accumulation, i.e. a place where snowing adds mass, to a zone of net ablation, where melting subtracts mass. Whenever this area crosses this threshold, the toxic slurry will start to move and leach into the subglacial aquifers, and eventually flow towards the ocean. There is a bitter irony in the Camp Century failure: the military project that ignored the dynamics of the ice also inadvertently funded the discovery of climate dynamics. Specifically, while the U.S. Army focused on the defaming tunnels, the Danish palaeoclimatologist Willi Dansgaard was able to secure access to the ice cores that

researchers had drilled at the site. In fact the Camp Century core was able to reach the bedrock and extract a cylinder of ice 1.4 km long. An ice core is a cylinder of ice drilled vertically from a glacier or ice sheet, and which contains physical imprints of the earth's past climate. The longer the core, the older the imprints it carries. For instance the Camp Century ice core recorded more than a lakh years of climate changes. Dansgaard analysed the ratio of the quantities of the oxygen-18 to oxygen-16 isotopes in the ice layers. He found that the heavier isotope, O-18, was more prevalent in snow and rain formed in warmer conditions. He also mapped these ratios against depth and thus reconstructed a 100,000-year thermometer. The data revealed the existence of Dansgaard-Oeschger events — rapid and violent fluctuations in the climate during the last glacial period when the region's temperature jumped by 8–10° C in just a few decades. The discovery was one of the earliest pieces of hard evidence that the world's climate is susceptible to drastic tipping points rather than evolving strictly based on how much carbon is pumped into the air. If Camp Century is a ghost today, the U.S. faces an active engineering challenge at the Pituffik Space Base, formerly Thule Air Base — a site that hosts the AN/FPS-132 early warning radar, a critical node in the U.S. Missile Defence network. The AN/FPS-132 is a solid-state phased-array radar with no moving mechanical parts. Each of its two faces radiates 870 kW of power, an energy output that includes a large quantity of heat that in turn poses a structural threat. The radar sits on permafrost. If the heat from the electronics thaws the ground beneath it, the foundation will settle and throw the radar out of alignment and blind its sensors. The U.S. Army is aware of this and has installed thermosyphons in the ice. Thermosyphons are passive heat exchange tubes that use a working fluid, usually carbon dioxide or ammonia, to draw from the ground and radiate it into the Arctic air, counteracting the heat from the radar. The thermosyphons don't have motors or pumps and depend entirely on the temperature difference between the ground and the air, which means they become less effective as the air warms. Research has already shown that Arctic winters are becoming warmer and shorter, which implies a not too distant point in the future where the ground will start to accumulate heat. Engineering reviews have also noted a phenomenon called cold-topping. In extremely cold conditions, the gas inside the thermosyphon condenses efficiently. But as the average temperature rises, the internal pressure of the system could change in a way that leads to non-condensable gases accumulating at the top of the radiator, effectively blocking heat transfer.

While the radar is the priority, the airfield is also at risk. One U.S. Army Corps of Engineers study in 2013 found that the permafrost under the runway was thawing despite efforts to mitigate that. In response the Corps attempted to paint the runway white to reflect sunlight and cool the ground but that then reduced the friction for landing aircraft and increased the maintenance cost. A 2023 report from the U.S. Department of Defence to the U.S. Congress thus classified the airfield pavements at Pituffik as being at "moderate to considerable risk" of failure.

Working on thin ice The sensitivity regarding U.S. operations here is heightened by Project Crested Ice. In 1968, a B-52 bomber carrying four hydrogen bombs crashed onto the sea ice near the base. The conventional explosives in the weapons detonated and dispersed plutonium, uranium, and americium across the ice. The clean-up, which was the project and which included removing large quantities of contaminated snow to a site in South Carolina in the U.S., was a joint U.S.-Denmark effort that also created a political dispute. The operation was led by the U.S. Air Force, specifically the Strategic Air Command, and the Danish Atomic Energy Commission. The U.S. provided the heavy equipment, the aircraft, and of course the ultimate disposal site. But while the U.S. military directed the project, it couldn't land heavy machinery at the site because it cracked the ice. As a result more than 60% of those who performed the dangerous manual labour were Danish and Greenlandic civilians. The issue? The US Air Force monitored its own personnel for radiation exposure while the civilians received less protective gear and weren't subject to the same long-term health monitoring. As a result, in the decades following the clean-up, many of the civilian workers developed cancers and other illnesses they attributed to radiation exposure. While the U.S. compensated the Danish government in the 1990s, which then distributed payments to workers, the U.S. has generally maintained that the radiation levels were too low to cause illness, a stance that continues to cause diplomatic friction. For decades, the U.S. treated Greenland as a disposable utility; now, rather than remediate the hazardous waste at Camp Century or address the instability at Pituffik, the U.S. is demanding title to the very land it poisoned. From Greenland's and Denmark's points of view, this is as much a question of sovereignty now as of dignity: the U.S. has proven itself a reckless tenant that trashed the property, and now it threatens to bankrupt the landlord and seize the deed.

## Cambodia will send 73 online scam suspects to South Korea

Dozens of South Koreans detained in Cambodia for alleged involvement in online scam compounds will be sent home this week to face investigations, officials said on Thursday (January 22, 2026), in what would be the largest group repatriation of Korean criminal suspects from abroad.

The 73 South Korean suspects allegedly scammed fellow Koreans out of 48.6 billion won (\$33 million), according to the statement. The suspects, 65 men and eight women, were among about 260 South Koreans detained in a crackdown in Cambodia in recent months. Public outrage over scam centers in Southeast Asia flared in South Korea when a Korean student was found dead last summer after reportedly being forced to work at a scam compound in Cambodia. Authorities said at the time he died after being tortured and beaten, and South Korea sent a government delegation to Cambodia in October for talks on a joint response.

South Korea will send a chartered plane to Cambodia, which is expected to return on Friday (January 23, 2026) with the suspects, who will be immediately handed over to investigative authorities upon arrival, according to a South Korean government statement. Cybercrime has flourished in Southeast Asia, particularly in Cambodia and Myanmar, as trafficked foreign nationals were employed to run romance and cryptocurrency scams, often recruited with false job offers and then forced to work in conditions of near-slavery. According to estimates from the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime, scam victims worldwide lost between \$18 billion and \$37 billion in 2023. In January, Cambodia said it had arrested and extradited to China a tycoon accused of running a huge online scam operation.

## Stay at home, have a global career



have become less linear," said Sashi Kumar, managing director, Indeed India.

"What we are seeing is a shift from 'move first, build later' to 'prepare first, move later or not at all'. Skills, experience, and global exposure are increasingly being built before geography changes." The study shows that working on international projects from India is now the preferred route to gaining global exposure, ranking higher than short-term overseas assignments or education abroad. Close to 40% of professionals say they are actively preparing for global opportunities through upskilling, certifications and international networking, often without a clear expectation of immediate relocation. The report shows that almost one in two employers (47%) say a significant portion of their United States teams depend on visa-linked talent. Entry-level hiring has taken the hardest hit, with 55% of employers saying early-career roles are the first to be affected.

Nearly a third of employers say skilled Indian professionals are now choosing alternative destinations such as Canada, the United Kingdom and parts of Europe, while others are opting to stay closer to home. Germany stands out as the most consistent alternative, with 47% of professionals across career stages listing it as their preferred non-US option, ahead of Canada, the Middle East and Singapore. Visa rigidity is also adding pressure inside organisations.

Four in ten employees (41%) say they would consider switching employers if it improved their chances of an overseas transfer. For many professionals, uncertainty around visas is shaping not just long-term plans but loyalty at work. 41% say they would switch employers for clearer mobility pathways, signalling that global exposure is becoming a meaningful part of how talent evaluates opportunities. Employers are responding, but the approaches vary widely. More than half say they are investing in preparing Indian teams for international exposure, and 46% report improved retention and workforce growth as a result. Others are still testing different strategies, such as local hiring, hybrid models, selective relocation and vendor partnerships, with no single model yet emerging as the clear answer.



seas warehousing and fulfilment infrastructure, including E-Commerce Export Hubs integrated with global distribution networks, it said.

Under this, an assistance of up to 30% of the approved project cost will be provided for a maximum of three years, subject to prescribed ceilings and MSME participation norms. For exporters from northeastern and hilly regions, Logistics Interventions for Freight and Transport (LIFT) was announced. LIFT mitigates geographical disadvantages faced by exporters in remote, hilly, northeastern and landlocked districts. Under this, there will be partial reimbursement of up to 30% of the eligible freight expenditure, subject to a ceiling of ₹20 lakh per IEC per financial year. Financial assistance will also be extended for an integrated Support for Trade Intelligence and Facilitation (INSIGHT). It is generally limited to 50% of project cost, with up to 100% support for proposals from central and State Government institutions and Indian Missions abroad, subject to notified ceilings. Through these coordinated financial and ecosystem interventions, the government aims to reduce the cost of capital, diversify trade finance instruments, enhance compliance readiness, address logistics constraints and strengthen overseas market integration for MSMEs.

## Govt. announces seven measures to help boost exports

The government on Friday (February 20, 2026) announced seven measures, including credit assistance for e-commerce exporters and support for alternative trade instruments, with an aim to promote the country's outbound shipments. These measures are part of the ₹25,060-crore export promotion mission. Out of 10 components of the mission, three have already been rolled out in January. To support exporters using digital channels, the commerce ministry announced credit facilities with interest subvention and partial credit guarantees.

The will provide support up to ₹50 lakh with 90% guarantee coverage. The Overseas Inventory Credit Facility will extend support up to ₹5 crore with 75% guarantee coverage, and an interest subvention of 2.75% will be available, subject to an annual ceiling of ₹15 lakh per applicant, the commerce ministry said. To promote export factoring as an affordable working capital solution for MSMEs, an interest subvention of 2.75% will be provided on the factoring cost for eligible transactions undertaken through RBI/IFSCA-recognised entities.

Assistance is capped at ₹50 lakh per MSME annually and will be processed through a digital claim mechanism to ensure transparency and timely disbursement. To support emerging export opportunities, the ministry said this intervention enables exporters to access new or high-risk markets through shared-risk and credit enhancement instruments such as Letters of Credit confirmation and negotiation. For Trade Regulations, Accreditation and Compliance Enablement (TRACE), support will be extended to exporters in meeting international testing, inspections, certifications and other conformity requirements. Under this, partial reimbursement of 60% under the Positive List and 75% under the Priority Positive List will be provided for eligible testing, inspection and certification expenses, subject to an annual ceiling of ₹25 lakh per IEC (import export code). Facilitating Logistics, Overseas Warehousing and Fulfilment (FLOW) will enable exporters to access over-

## Government clears export of 25 lakh tonnes of wheat



The government on Friday (February 13, 2026) allowed export of 25 lakh tonnes of wheat, along with an additional 5 lakh tonnes of wheat products and sugar each, to stabilise domestic markets and ensure remunerative returns to farmers amid a comfortable stock position. The decision was taken after a comprehensive assessment of the current availability and price scenario, reaffirming the government's commitment to protecting farmers' interests, the Food Ministry said in a statement.

Wheat stock availability with private entities during 2025-26 stands at approximately 75 lakh tonnes, which is nearly 32 lakh tonnes higher compared to the corresponding period last year, indicating a comfortable supply position in the country, it added. As of April 1, 2026, the total wheat availability in the central pool with Food Corporation of India (FCI) is projected at around 182 lakh tonne, ensuring that export permissions will not impact domestic food security requirements, the ministry said. Wheat acreage in Rabi 2026 has also increased to about 334.17 lakh hectares compared to 328.04 lakh hectares last year, reflecting strong farmer confidence in wheat cultivation supported by assured MSP and procurement mechanisms, and signalling the likelihood of another robust harvest. In view of higher stock availability, softening prices, expected higher production, and the need to prevent distress sales during peak arrivals, the government's decision will help stabilise domestic prices, improve market liquidity, ensure efficient stock rotation, and strengthen farmers' income while safeguarding national food security, the ministry said.

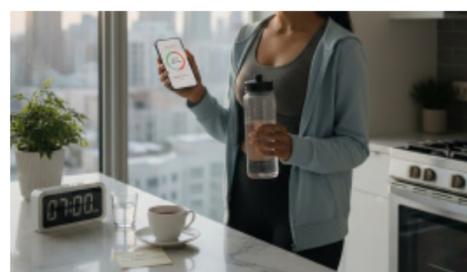
To facilitate sugar exports, the government has decided to allow export of an additional 5 lakh tonnes of sugar by willing sugar mills during the current sugar season 2025-26. Earlier, the government had permitted the export of 15 lakh tonne of sugar during the current sugar season vide order dated November 14, 2025.

According to information furnished by sugar mills, only about 1.97 lakh tonnes of sugar have been exported up to January 31, 2026. In addition, approximately 2.72 lakh tonnes of sugar have been contracted for export by sugar mills as of date. The additional export quantity of 5 lakh tonne will be made available to willing sugar mills, subject to the condition that at least 70 per cent of their allocated quantity is exported by June 30, 2026. The export quota will be allocated on a pro-rata basis among willing sugar mills, and mills will submit their willingness within 15 days from the date of issuance of the order. The export quota so allocated will not be swapped or exchanged with any other sugar mill, the ministry said, adding this decision is expected to facilitate higher sugar exports and help in managing surplus sugar availability in the country.

## Stock markets bounce back after falling in early trade

Mumbai: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty recovered their early losses and were trading higher on Friday, lifted by buying in banking and capital goods shares. The 30-share BSE Sensex declined 291.93 points, or 0.35 per cent, to 82,206.21 in early trade. The 50-share NSE Nifty dropped 74.6 points, or 0.29 per cent, to 25,379.75. However, both benchmark indices soon rebounded from their early losses and were trading in positive territory. The BSE benchmark quoted 161.43 points higher at 82,659.57, and the Nifty traded 65.55 points up at 25,519.90. Among the Sensex constituents, Bharat Electronics Ltd, NTPC, Larsen & Toubro, Hindustan Unilever, Titan, Axis Bank, Tata Steel, PowerGrid, Sun Pharmaceuticals, UltraTech Cement, ICICI Bank, and Kotak Mahindra Bank were the gainers.

## 'By eating late, you are forcing your body to...': Hyderabad neurologist on why your 9 pm intermittent fasting meal is 'fighting your biology'



Intermittent fasting has become a popular way for many people to manage weight, blood sugar, and overall health. Recently, Hyderabad-based neurologist Dr Sudhir Kumar, also known as 'Hyderabad Doctor,' highlighted a concern in a post on X, drawing attention to how meal timing interacts with the body's internal clock. He wrote, "Intermittent Fasting: Are you skipping the wrong meal? Most people think Intermittent Fasting (IF) is just about how long you fast. New data from BMJ Medicine and other landmark trials suggest that when you eat is just as important. If you are skipping breakfast and eating late, you might be fighting your own biology."

He explained that the body's circadian rhythm plays a central role in how nutrients are processed, adding, "Our bodies are hard-wired to process nutrients during daylight. Our insulin sensitivity is at its peak in the morning and lowest at night. By eating late, you are forcing your body to handle fuel when it's trying to go into 'repair mode.'"

He also pointed to research on early time-restricted eating patterns. "Studies on Early Time-Restricted Eating (eTRE) show that a window starting earlier in the day (e.g., 8 AM or 10 AM) is significantly more effective than a late window. The Result: Better blood sugar control, improved insulin sensitivity, and lower blood pressure compared to late-day eating."

According to him, hormones released at night can further complicate late meals: "As night falls, your brain releases melatonin. Melatonin tells your pancreas to slow down insulin production. If you eat a heavy meal at 9 PM, your blood sugar stays elevated longer because your 'insulin factory' has already clocked out for the night."

He also shared a strong view on which meal might be more beneficial to skip, stating, "Skipping dinner is better than skipping breakfast. By ending your eating window by 4 PM or 6 PM, you allow your body to enter a deep state of

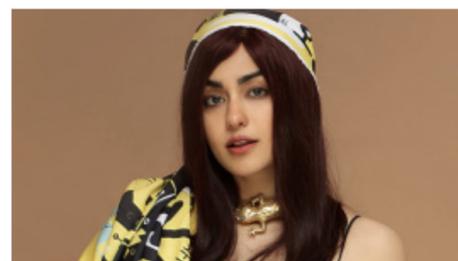
autophagy (cellular cleanup) and fat-burning while you sleep." Summing up his advice, he wrote, "Follow the sun. Eat like a King in the morning, a Prince at noon, and a Pauper (or nothing at all) in the evening. Stop chasing the clock. Start aligning with your biology." Impact of eating earlier in the day on people practising intermittent fasting Kanikka Malhotra, consultant dietitian and diabetes educator, tells indianexpress.com, "Yes, evidence does suggest that early eating in intermittent fasting, like 8 am to 4 pm, is better than just fasting longer. Solid trials on individuals at risk for diabetes show it ramps up insulin response by a third, eases blood pressure, and cuts cell stress, all by matching your meals to your body's natural day-night rhythm. Reviews of dozens of trials back this for better sugar control and fat burning."

Intermittent Fasting: Are you skipping the wrong meal?

Most people think Intermittent Fasting (IF) is just about how long you fast. New data from BMJ Medicine and other landmark trials suggest when you eat is just as important. But here's the Indian reality: late family dinners are our heartbeat. "Bonding over thalis, skipping them can spark guilt or fights and tank your stick-to-it power. The smart fix is to nudge the family table to 7 pm with lighter dal or sabzi," mentions Malhotra.

Best fasting schedule Malhotra states, "The best schedules vary: older adults or shift workers may tolerate breakfast skipping better to match routines and avoid low energy. For individuals with diabetes or sedentary lifestyles, early windows support circadian alignment; active morning workers may prefer later windows. In India, when assessing late family dinners, consider age, medications, work shifts, and chronotype first. One should personalise via glucose monitoring for sustainability." Steps that can help those following late eating windows align meal timing more closely with circadian rhythms For late eaters, Malhotra suggests gradually shifting 15-30 minutes earlier weekly to align with circadian rhythms without disruption. Start by advancing dinner: replace heavy evening meals with light, protein-rich options three hours before bedtime, and add a 20-minute walk to promote faster fasting. "Compress the window slowly—e.g., from 12 to 10, then 8 hours. Use black coffee, herbal tea, or warm water to curb hunger. Morning light exposure (10-15 minutes of sunlight after waking) and consistent sleep-wake cycles boost metabolism. Prioritise nutrient-dense Indian foods, such as millets or idlis, early. These habits yield metabolic gains long-term," recommends the expert.

## 'Jo hai, woh hai': How Adah Sharma uses authenticity to scare away trolls



Trust Adah Sharma to always surprise her fans and followers with her unique take on things. Whether it is her view on her current goals this year or the fitness routine that she is "enjoying" at the moment, the Commando actor is owning it with her unabashed perspectives. "Normal feels like a polite lie. I'd rather be strange than rehearsed. So no, it isn't consciously done. I don't wake up and curate a personality," she told indianexpress.com. The 33-year-old, who is currently working with the forest department of Madhya Pradesh for Anubhuti, a state-wide programme initiated by the MP Eco Tourism Development Board in association with the MP Forest Department, gave us an insight into her thinking and some food for thought in one of her most candid interviews to date.

Q: What's up these days?

Adah: I'm currently in Kanha, Madhya Pradesh. I'm working with the forest department of Madhya Pradesh for Anubhuti. The aim of the programme is to sensitise the students towards nature and wildlife, to educate them on how the wilderness spaces and the denizens living within are crucial to our own survival.

Q: What are your goals or milestones that you are looking forward to in 2026?

Adah: My main goal is to understand why my charger works at only one angle, win all imaginary arguments with dignity and practice selective invisibility.

Q: You are known for your intense fitness preparations for your roles. What's your current fitness routine like... kindly detail it for us?

Adah: I'm currently doing a film where I'm playing a non-human entity. I'm required to fly for that. So I'm practising flying. I'm really enjoying it. It's not as easy as it looks. I have to have these long conversations negotiating with gravity. I drink lots of water. I've been told hydration helps wings. The crow outside my window is impressed with my progress.

Q: How do you reflect on your journey?

Adah: I had a rebellious thought one day, and I went along with it without thinking it through, and I've landed up here now. I've been fortunate to get 1920 as my debut... I think that's the role of a lifetime, and the action I got to do in Commando, comedy in Sunflower and The Kerala Story, which won so many hearts and became the highest female lead-grossing film of all time.

Q: What does a balanced meal look like to you?

Adah: Every state in India has balanced vegetarian meals. If you take the food from say North India, you will have rotis your carbs, there will be a dal or channa rajma, which is protein, and there will be vegetables. In South, your coconut is your protein, dosas have carbs, lentils, and vegetables. North East cuisine uses a lot of leafy greens, bamboo shoots, and local vegetables, providing vitamins, minerals, and fibre. Cooking uses mustard oil, sesame oil, and coconut oil, keeping fat intake moderate. For me, at home, gut-friendly food is what we eat.

Q: And cheat meals are?

Adah: I believe if you cheat in small aspects of life, you train your brain to cheat at big things. So I never cheat.

Q: Where do you find the most comfort?

Adah: In my imagination.

Adah Sharma Adah Sharma loves working out (Photo: PR Handout)

Q: You are known for your quirky social media presence... is it something more consciously done?

Adah: Normal feels like a polite lie. I'd rather be strange than rehearsed. So no, it isn't consciously done. I don't wake up and curate a personality. I just refuse to edit myself into something digestible. Authenticity scares people more than performance so it might make some uncomfortable. I like my social media to be - jo hai, woh hai (whatever it is, it is).

Q: What is a typical day in your life like?

Adah: No one day is typical since my birth this lifetime.

Q: How do you deal with low days?

Adah: I assume everything is my fault - the weather, global warming, everything. Eventually, I resurface, embarrassed but alive, like nothing happened, and then I eat sambar rice.

Q: What's your skincare routine like?

Adah: Not looking too much into the mirror. When I do, then I see imaginary pimples that I once had. I see scars that those pimples have left. I rethink being in a field that requires me to look presentable. So, as much as I can, I avoid mirrors.

Q: How do you deal with competition?

Adah: I'm looking hard for it. Got my eyes checked. They said my vision is 6/6.

Q: Trolls have been everywhere... what's your mantra to deal with them?

Adah: They are also people. I include them in my life as well. They are, after all just humans. Frustrated ones, but they are human. All the people who don't know who give me compliments we happily acknowledge them so I acknowledge the poor trolls also. They shouldn't feel left out.

Q: Do you feel the pressure of constant social connectedness?

Adah: The whole world is your family now and I think that's so delightful. We can be connected to people around the world. I learn yoga from a girl in France who shares videos online. I learn Carnatic music from my teacher in Chennai. I watch vegan cooking recipes from Spain. We learn about nature, the environment from all over the globe. Without having to meet anyone physically, we can be connected. I'm a very private person. I enjoy it.

Q: There was this bizarre piece of news that you have been creating an AI doppelganger... what was that?

Adah: I'm working on creating a look-alike of me. So I will be sending her out in public to test her. She speaks and behaves like me but is in the testing phase.

Q: What's your take on modern love and terms like situationships?

Adah: I believe only in 'saat janmon ka saath' (Together for seven lifetimes). So I need a partner who can also tolerate me for 7 lifetimes. I'm willing to compromise and do 6 if he really loves me. But I can't do lesser. I believe all of us are recycled. And we have multiple births. One should try out marriage for sure in at least one of the births.

Q: If you were to get yourself into the millennial vs Gen Z vs Gen Alpha debate, what would be your take?

Adah: I think we are all on the same side, we all have the exact same feelings. The same things make us happy, and the same things make us sad. We also all want the same things in life.

Q: Is there any message you want to give to newbies looking to make a mark?

## Was Pathum Nissanka's screamer to send back Maxwell the Catch of the World Cup? Roelof van der Merwe, 41, and Tony Munyonga enter the chat



GNS News Agency, Feb 20

The Flying Dutchman is a mythical ghost ship destined to sail forever past elusive shores. In sports lore, it has been twisted to denote any Dutchman (often a footballer) that succeeds. The Dutch forward of the 1950s, Servaas "Faas" Wilkes was the OG; his successors Marco van Basten and Arjen Robben wore the moniker for their explosive pace. Roelof van der Merwe is arguably the only "Flying Dutchman" ever in cricket. Fly he did when Tilak Varma's mistimed hack was to drop and kiss the Motera surface. Prowling the long-off fence, he took three gentle strides to his right (he is naturally left-handed), realised the ball was beyond his reach, and leapt towards his right to grab the ball with both hands. He is 41, the tucked-in shirt exaggerates the love handles, and the once flowing golden locks have thinned, but the agility and reflexes were intact.

He effortlessly glided into the leap, no jarring or rebelling parts, just a fluid extension of his limbs. He celebrated joyously. He loves to celebrate, the excesses almost wrecked his career, before he resurrected himself to turn up for South Africa, the country of his birth, made a profitable career out of franchise cricket, and revived his international career by switching to the Netherlands. For the Indian audience, he bridges generations. He was on the ground when Sachin Tendulkar scored the first double hundred in ODIs; he was Anil Kumble's teammate at RCB. Fifteen years later, in a different garb, he took a screamer of Tilak Varma. Tilak was five when Van der Merwe made his international debut.

In a World Cup where buttery fingers had been the theme—India have shelled nine, just behind Ireland on ten—and where dropped ones altered the destinies of teams, spectacular catches were born too. None more eye-twitching than Pathum Nissanka's air-borne pouch of Glenn Maxwell's reverse sweep. Like a spider leaping from one hard-spun web to the other, he took off stealthily, flipping his body back like a rainbow, the supple frame suspended in the air and suspending belief, arms elongating, the centre of gravity shifting through the torso, to snatch the ball,

speeding like a bullet, before it would whizz by him. The most astonishing part was that he was not stretching forward or fully back, a straightforward manoeuvre, but towards the side, in a semi-horizontal plane. Freeze-frame the exact moment he swoops the catch, he is like a vaulting catapult. A few European football scouts would be tempted to offer him a trial. Moments ago, he had spilled a sitter off Maxwell. A fiery, spunky character, he was ready to atone. "After the first catch went down, I was disappointed. I made up my mind in that moment that I needed to do something special for the team," he said. The best catches are the products of instinct: split-second improvisations through which inner genius can surface. The catch came from his defiance, his entire career owes to this virtue, his single-minded drive to not let opportunities fly by him, like his catch of redemption. His quiet captain Dasun Shanaka, though, nearly recreated the Jason Gillespie-Steve Waugh collision with Dunith Wellalage in the same country. Tashinga Musekiwa's miscued shot was floating toward wide long-off and Wellalage seemed to come under it. Shanaka sprinted from mid-on and flung himself to pocket the catch, careening past Wellalage like an expert cabbie. Thankfully, no disfigured nose or torn tibia.

It would perhaps require the cricketing equivalent of a Prodnova vault to beat Nissanka's catch, but some run close. Like the near-identical swoops of Zimbabwe's Brian Bennett (Oman) and Tony Munyonga (against Australia). Both were roving near the mid-wicket fence when they saw the ball speeding towards the boundary. Both teed off with explosive pace, lunged sideways at full-pelt and clasped the ball before it brushed the blades of grass. If Nissanka's catch was born out of imagination and instinct, these were marvels of athleticism. Bennett's was like a forward lunge in rugby, a sport he had played well into his teens. He embodies the cursed attitude of Southern Africa.

Munyonga's catch was arguably better because it was closer to the ropes, the shot was flatter and he caught it in just one hand, with a slithering dash. Munyonga is the quintessential boy on the hot tin roof, bubbly and restless, always wanting to make an impact. The all-rounder can give the ball a mighty biff, just as he could give it a fierce tweak. Often, the catch of the tournament reels feature a lot of "soaring Kiwis." This time, they have been uncharacteristically sloppy, even though the Mark Chapman-Daryll Mitchell relay catch to eject UAE's Alishan Sharafu was special, but not in the breathtaking bandwidth. Sharafu's flat slog-sweep almost crossed the ropes before Chapman sprang and pulled off a volleyball-style smash block. And Mitchell was perfectly positioned to devour the rebound. Chapman is a master of relay catches and by-the-rope screamers. The more serious phase of the tournament ushering in, more blinders are on the menu. But can someone beat the slinging Sri Lankan?

## 'International cricket will expose you...': Mohammad Amir's warning for Abhishek Sharma amid T20 World Cup struggles

GNS News Agency, Feb 20

Former Pakistan pacer Mohammad Amir has compared the situation that India opener Abhishek Sharma finds himself in to what Pakistan's Saim Ayub is experiencing. Abhishek is yet to open his account in this T20 World Cup, getting out for ducks in all three matches that he has played thus far, having missed India's group match against Namibia due to a severe stomach infection. Amir feels that Abhishek seems to be looking to slog every ball and feels anyone playing like that will always be exposed in international cricket at some point.

"Saim (Ayub) had the same issue when he came to play the PSL a few years back. He was new and was hitting no-look shots. Nobody knew his weakness because most of his shots were on the leg side. Now, if you bowl at the third or fourth stump line, he struggles to decide. Even in his last two matches, he was dismissed playing on the offside. Unless he improves his offside game, he cannot progress. Strong bowlers will always test your weakness and push you out of your comfort zone. Same for Abhishek. He wants every ball in the slot so he can hit. But at the bigger stages, or in ODIs, har ball lapete mein nahi le sakte (you cannot slog every ball in pressure cricket). Salman Agha and Aryna Dutta got him out in a similar fashion. International cricket will expose you," Amir said while speaking on the show Haarna Mana hai.

Abhishek has a very high-risk style of batting. In the 41 T20s he has played thus far, Abhishek has made 1297 runs and he still boasts a career strike rate of a whopping 192.43 despite the three failures in this T20 World Cup. Sharma had fallen for a golden duck against USA in India's



opening match at Wankhede Stadium. Sharma tried to play a lofted shot off pacer Ali Khan resulting in his dismissal. The 25-year-old then mistimed a pull shot off the bowling of Pakistan captain Salman Agha in the first over in the much anticipated clash against the arch rivals in Colombo. Sharma again fell on a duck during India's clash against Netherlands as he missed a pull against off-spinner Aryan Dutt. Post the match against Pakistan, Amir had termed Sharma as a slogger. "By whatever little I have seen, if you ask me honestly, I feel he is just a slogger. He has to go hard at every ball. The day he gets going, it's fine; otherwise, uske failure ke chances zyada hain (The chances of his failure are high). He scores once in 8 innings. Otherwise, his scores are 10, 15, 0, and 20. I don't think he is technically sound," Amir had said. Former Pakistan batsman Basit Ali had turned Amir's terming of Sharma as a slogger as a compliment. "If he is a slogger, then give us one like him — ek humey bhi de do! It is good that we get such players,"

## 'You perform and we will be quiet': Shahid Afridi's advice to Shadab Khan over beating India in World Cup comment

GNS News Agency, Feb 20

Shadab and other senior members of the current Pakistan squad like Babar Azam and Shaheen Afridi played an important role in their victory over India in a group stage match of the 2021 T20 World Cup. (File Photo) Shadab and other senior members of the current Pakistan squad like Babar Azam and Shaheen Afridi played an important role in their victory over India in a group stage match of the 2021 T20 World Cup. (File Photo)

Former Pakistan captain Shahid Afridi has told that all-rounder Shadab Khan should silence critics through his performances after the latter hit back at criticism by stating that it was only a team in which he played that managed to beat India in a World Cup match. Pakistan had come under fire from former players after their 61-run loss to India in the 2026 T20 World Cup. Shadab then made his comments after Pakistan beat Namibia by 102 runs in their next match and thus sealed qualification to the Super Eights.

Shadab and other senior members of the current Pakistan squad like Babar Azam and Shaheen Afridi played an important role in their victory over India in a group stage match of the 2021 T20 World Cup. It was the first, and thus far only, time that Pakistan had managed to beat India in any men's World Cup match, T20 or ODI. "Shadab was

absolutely right when he said that we didn't beat India in the World Cups, but his side did. They got respect after that, but they couldn't handle it. After they defeated India, they could not handle the issues between them. Shadab should also know that when he was not able to perform for the team, we stood up for him on national television, saying he is the backbone of the team," said Shahid Afridi on Samaa TV. "I know Shadab, he is a very nice guy, he has always spoken to us respectfully. When people talked about us during our playing days, we always backed up our words with our actions on the field. Not against the smaller teams, we used to perform against the bigger teams. So Shadab beta, aap bhi performance kariye. Beta performances karo. (Son, please perform). We stood by you in your difficult times; you didn't play domestic cricket, yet you still got into the national team. If you want to answer us, then do it by performing on the field. Perform and we will be quiet after that," Afridi said. According to Telecom Asia, Pakistan Cricket Board through team manager Naved Cheema conveyed to Khan about not using harsh words against former Pakistan cricketers. Khan, who had played a knock of 36 runs and took three wickets against Namibia, had earlier made scores of 8, 30 and 14 and had taken two wickets in the tournament. "

## Sunil Gavaskar points out an area for Shivam Dube to work on: 'Will become a really scary batter'



GNS News Agency, Feb 20

Shivam Dube ensured that India post a competitive total against the Netherlands, which the latter were ultimately unable to pose any serious challenge to, by blazing 66 runs in 31 balls in his side's last T20 World Cup 2026 group game. India were placed at 69/3 around the time that Dube started going big guns. The Suryakumar Yadav-led Indian team finished their group stage matches with a 17-run win over Netherlands and with Dube among runs, India will hope the all-rounder plays a major role in the Super 8s.

Former Indian captain Sunil Gavaskar was all praise for Dube and says that the all-rounder could become a 'really scary batter' if he works on developing the inside-out shot. "Shivam Dube is very difficult to bowl to because he has a wide range of shots," Gavaskar told Star Sports. "You can bowl outside off stump, but he still has the power to hit over long on. He is not just looking to hit over mid-wicket and square-leg. He can clear long off as well. If he works

hard on developing the inside-out shot over extra cover, he will become a really scary batter. Then he can hit the ball to any part of the ground. The way Shivam Dube is maturing with every innings is very good news for India."

This was the hosts' fourth win of the tournament and they thus finished top of Group A. Leg-spinner Varun Chakaravathy took three wickets for 14 runs in his quota of four overs against Netherlands and the 34-year-old now has a total of nine wickets in the tournament. "Varun Chakaravathy's figures of three for 14 in four overs are amazing. When you take wickets, you also take away runs from the opposition. Clearly, Varun is going to be your key bowler. India will depend a great deal on Varun's four overs. How the opposition tries to counter him in the Super 8 stage will be very interesting to see," added Gavaskar.

India will play their first Super 8 encounter against South Africa at Ahmedabad on Sunday. Gavaskar feels that Axar Patel will be back in the playing eleven for the game. "I feel Axar Patel will definitely come back to the playing XI for the Super 8 games. Now, whether he comes in place of Arshdeep Singh, we will have to wait and see. Whether Washington keeps his place is another aspect we don't know. My feeling is that Washington will probably keep his place. On a ground like the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad, on a pitch with hardly any turn, the team management might not go with Kuldeep Yadav. Kuldeep also did not play too many matches against South Africa in the five-match T20I series. My feeling is that Washington Sundar, being able to bat at number eight and hit the ball, gives him an advantage. So I feel only the return of Axar Patel in place of Arshdeep Singh will be the change," said Gavaskar.

## India will not reach T20 World Cup semifinals, says Mohammad Amir

GNS News Agency, Feb 20

India were dominant in the group stage of the T20 World Cup despite the fact that they suffered batting collapses in almost every game. India have been known for their high-risk batting approach since winning the 2024 T20 World Cup. While it came off more often than not in the matches preceding the 2026 T20 World Cup, it hasn't quite come together for them in this tournament and former Pakistan fast bowler Mohammad Amir sees this as the reason as to why India won't make it to the semi-final of the tournament.

"South Africa and the West Indies," said Amir on the Haarna Mana Hai Youtube show when asked who predicted will make it to the semi-finals Group 1 of the Super Eights. When asked why he thinks India won't make it, Amir said: "If you see their matches, the batting collapsed in all the games, barring the Pakistan contest. The pressure will rise in the Super 8 matches. The way in which South Africa and the West Indies have been playing, they can beat any team," Amir said.

India are in Group 1 of the Super Eights along with South Africa, West Indies and Zimbabwe. Group 2 consists of Pakistan, England, New Zealand and Sri Lanka. India



are looking to become the first team to successfully defend their T20 World Cup title and become the most successful team in the history of the tournament. They are currently tied with England and the West Indies on two title wins. India face South Africa in their first match of the Super Eights on Sunday at the Narendra Modi Stadium. They then face Zimbabwe at the Chepauk Stadium on February 26 and end the Super Eights with a match against the West Indies at the Eden Gardens on March 1. India beat the USA, Namibia, Pakistan and the Netherlands in the Group stage.

## There is a lot of mental pressure when you play in front of crowd, admits Canada's Saad Bin Zafar

GNS News Agency, Feb 20

Canada all-rounder Saad Bin Zafar has said playing in front of huge crowds at the T20 World Cup put them under a lot of pressure during the course of the tournament. Placed in Group D, Canada failed to get off the mark in the campaign, but they did have some close moments. Right through the tournament, they got the opportunity to play in front of a good turnout, in particular during their matches in Chennai against New Zealand and Afghanistan. "There's a lot of mental pressure when you play in front of the crowd, in front of the mass audience, not just the crowd at the ground, but also the very fact that the whole world is watching you, like it puts you under a lot of pressure. But as cricketers, we have to find ways to control our nerves and focus on the job on hand," Saad said.

While the experience of playing in front of fans might be a first of a kind, Saad said even in Associate tournaments there is considerable amount of pressure. "In associate cricket, even we play without crowds, but we have other kind of pressures. A lot of the tournaments we play, they're like our qualifications are on the line, whether we have to play a tournament to regain our ODI status or to qualify for a World Cup. So it's a different kind of pressure, but that's pressure itself. So as cricketers, we're just used to controlling the pressure and staying in present," Saad said.

As has been the case with many Associate teams,



Saad hoped going forward they would get more opportunities to play against full-members as against just facing them in the T20 World Cups. "I think if there's one thing that I would like to change, it would be associate countries getting more opportunities to compete against some of the best nations, because that's the learning route, that's where you learn. It's also hard for us because we don't fall under areas like Asia or some region, because in Asian teams, they get to play Asia Cup and few other tournaments. We don't have anything like that. So if we can start something like that where ICC can help us play some of these regular countries a couple of games throughout the year, it will give us more exposure and more experience," Saad said.

## 'Best time to crush them': Oman captain sounds warning to wounded Australia ahead of final T20 World Cup 2026 group match

GNS News Agency, Feb 20

His team may not have gotten most things right amidst a poor campaign in the T20 World Cup, but Oman captain Jatinder Singh and his boys are not short on confidence as they go up against a wounded Australian side in their final Group B match in Pallekele on Friday.

Despite being battered by Zimbabwe, Sri Lanka and Ireland by resounding margins in the previous rounds, Singh is exuding confidence from the similar struggles shared by Australia during their disastrous run in the island nation. With stunning defeats to Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka in succession, Australia missed out on qualification past the group stage for the first time in 17 years in the T20 World Cup. "One hundred percent this is an opportunity," said Jatinder on the eve of the one-sided pairing on paper.

"And our boys are looking forward to it. Because T20 is a game of momentum and the moments, and if you play those moments right, you can do anything on that particular day. Australia is not doing well at the moment... it is the best time to crush them. The boys are really positive. They are looking forward to the match against Australia to make their mark," Singh remarked.

Oman and Australia similarly met during the group-stages of the 2024 World Cup on a sticky Barbados surface. The Aussies did not romp home then either, with the



batters only mustering a 164-run total against the underdogs. But for a strong bowling attack, the Aussies eventually restricted Oman to 125 for nine in 20 overs. However, a long list of injuries and poor form will mean that Oman will bump into a wobbly bowling unit and the probabilities of an upset cannot be entirely overruled. The Oman captain also said that doors to franchise cricket could open up in the country for the betterment of his players. "Well if I have to sum up [how Oman can improve], it would be if we have the franchise cricket happening in the country or our guys get a chance to play franchise cricket elsewhere," Jatinder said. "I think we can fill that gap and they can bring vast amount of experience for our national team."

## Assi movie review: Kani Kusruti, Taapsee Pannu star in urgent, imperative call to arms, a must-



their own homes. No place is safe. The verbal clashes between the feisty Raavi (Taapsee Pannu, reuniting with Sinha after 'Mulk' and 'Thappad') who fights Parima's case and the rapists' lawyer (Satyajit Sharma), presided over by a seasoned judge (Revathi), may remind you of Sinha's previous films which used the court-room as a battlefield to stake out the ethical and moral ground rapidly slipping from under our feet.

As the cop stuck between a corrupt system and his conscience, Jatin Goswami catches your eye. As does Ayyub, as the husband who stands like a rock, shielding his grievously wounded wife from prying eyes, allowing her to heal at her own pace. Manoj Pahwa and Supriya Pathak appear briefly as the parents of one of the perpetrators, starting off shocked and horrified and then veering into the zone of hamara bachcha hai, usko bachaana hai, kya karein. Where the film falters is in the inclusion of a couple of characters, played by Kumud Mishra and Naseeruddin Shah, whose shadowy connection hints at something larger but remains fuzzy. The desire for vigilante-style justice takes away from the film's core which stays within the realm of the credible — if there's forensic evidence, it will be tampered with; if there are witnesses, they will be bought off — with the victim and her supportive lawyer being made to feel like there's no justice in the system hollowed out by ruttng, strutting men.

But I'm willing to ignore these contrived bits when it comes to the importance of this film, which calls out all those who are responsible for the state of things, including the men who feel able to toss off comments laden with casual misogyny, claiming that a rape can never happen without participation. And just so we can't pretend it never happened, the film unflinchingly captures the heinous act, without a shred of prurience, making us feel each wound being inflicted on the woman: that sequence is as terrifying as anything I've seen in the movies. It is not done to titillate. It is done to bear witness. And also when it comes to giving a shout out to Kani Kusruti, whose Parima refuses to succumb to weak victimhood even as she acknowledges how profoundly she has been impacted. In one of the most powerful lines in the film, she talks of feeling good upon hearing of a death: I never wanted to feel like this, she says, and that's a tight sock to the jaw. It is a quietly searing performance, without once calling attention to itself. Assi movie cast: Taapsee Pannu, Kani Kusruti, Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub, Advik Jaiswal, Revathi, Kumud Mishra, Jatin Goswami, Rajendra Sethi, Naseeruddin Shah, Manoj Pahwa, Supriya Pathak. Assi movie director: Anubhav Sinha. Assi movie rating: 3 stars

## Shashi Tharoor calls The Kerala Story 'a hate-mongering film' amid sequel facing petition challenging its release



While The Kerala Story 2 faces legal challenges, with a petition questioning its release and the certification granted by the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), political leaders are also raising concerns about the intent behind the film. The latest to join the discussion is Shashi Tharoor, who, while speaking to news agency ANI, criticized the makers of the sequel as well as its controversial predecessor, The Kerala Story. He said, "The first film, The Kerala Story, was a hate-mongering film. It lacked any foundation. They were saying that thousands of people were converted, which is not true. I think there were around 30 such cases over a number of years. Ours is a very big country. If a case occurs here and there, it doesn't mean you should turn it into a big story and use it as propaganda. What's the point of saying things that will only spread hatred in people's minds, and that too about things which are not even correct? I don't think such things should happen."

He further added, "I feel films should be made that bring everyone together. Like in our childhood, films such as Amar Akbar Anthony used to get entertainment tax exemption. It

was a film about three children, raised in three different religions, coming together to fight the villain. Films like these, which highlight the spirit of unity between Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and Christians, should be the motivation, not vehicles that spread hatred." Recently, Kerala's Chief Minister, Pinarayi Vijayan, also voiced concerns about the sequel, describing it as "made with the agenda of spreading hatred against Kerala" and emphasizing the seriousness of the matter. In a statement, he said: "The release of a second part of The Kerala Story, which was made with the agenda of spreading hatred against Kerala and insulting our secular traditions, should be seen seriously." For those unaware, on Thursday, the Kerala High Court issued a notice to the producers in response to a writ petition challenging the film's certification. The petition raises concerns over the film's promotional materials, which reportedly depict women from several states being lured into relationships and coerced into religious conversion. The petitioner claims that while the storyline spans multiple states, the film repeatedly links alleged incidents of terrorism and forced conversion specifically to Kerala.

## After Aamir Khan, Vishal Bhardwaj eyes adapting the Mahabharata, says it is going to be a 'huge task': 'I have already done some work on it'

Just a week after the release of O Romeo, a violent love story starring Shahid Kapoor and Triptii Dimri, filmmaker Vishal Bhardwaj has turned his attention to what could be one of the most ambitious projects of his career. Known for drawing inspiration from classic literature, most notably adapting works of William Shakespeare, Bhardwaj has now revealed his desire to reinterpret an epic of a different magnitude: the Mahabharata.

Speaking to Press Trust of India, Bhardwaj shared his thoughts on the possibility of adapting the epic for contemporary audiences: "I feel like adapting the Mahabharata into contemporary times, the entire Mahabharata. But it's such a huge task, and I have already done some work on it. I don't know if that will be my next project. Right now, the time is to celebrate O'Romeo."

Vishal Bhardwaj is not alone in expressing interest in bringing the epic to the big screen. Filmmakers such as SS Rajamouli have also spoken about their desire to adapt the Mahabharata. For Aamir Khan, the project has long been a dream. In a recent conversation with News18, Aamir reflected on the cultural weight of the epic and the responsibility it carries. "That's my dream, let's see if it becomes a reality one day. I really would love to have the opportunity to do that, but it is a big responsibility. Indians are so strongly connected, it is in our blood. I don't think there is any Indian who hasn't read the Bhagwat Gita or, at the very least, heard it from their grandmother. Making a film, which is so fundamental for all Indians, is also a big responsibility. I often say this, 'You can let Mahabharata down, Mahabharata will never let you down.' You do a bad job, you'll let it down. I want to make sure that if I ever make this film, I make it in such a way that all Indians feel really proud." Calling the



Mahabharata the "mother of all" Hollywood fantasy films, Aamir further elaborated: "Over the years, we have seen a lot of Hollywood films which are big entertainers, Lord of the Rings or Avatar. The world has seen it all. But this (Mahabharata) is the mother of it all. So I think Indians will be really proud if it comes out well. I am taking my time because I want to make sure I get it right." Last year, in a conversation with The Hollywood Reporter India, Aamir Khan officially confirmed that he is working on adapting the epic and envisions it as a multi-part film series with different directors. "It's too early to say, but we might need multiple directors. If we have to plan it in a certain timeline... because if you do one after another, it will take very long. Like they did in Lord of the Rings. So something like that, in that case, you will need more than one director."

## Prabhas flew food from Chennai restaurant to Mumbai for Adipurush shoot cheat day: 'Someone boarded a flight with food...'

Prabhas is many things — one of Indian cinema's biggest stars, the face of franchise films, a man of a few words. But if there is one thing his colleagues will tell you without hesitation, it is that his generosity with food has no geographic boundaries. In a conversation with the team of Couple Friendly, Prabhas stopped by to congratulate the cast and crew and ended up sharing a story that has since left everyone equal parts amused and astonished. It goes back to the sets of Adipurush, director Om Raut's mythological epic. It was a cheat meal day, one of those rare, much-anticipated breaks from routine where a film crew finally gets to eat what they actually want. Prabhas offered to take care of the food for everyone. The team, Om Raut included, was grateful and thought nothing more of it. Food was coming and Prabhas had it handled. What nobody knew was where exactly he was getting it from.

Hours passed as the crew waited. Hunger turned into confusion, and confusion into quiet concern. When word got around that Prabhas was ordering food from Chennai, the team assumed he meant a nearby Tamil restaurant, a reasonable enough conclusion. What they did not anticipate was that Prabhas meant the city Chennai itself. "The food had been packed into a hot box in the city, handed to a person who boarded a flight, and was now making its way to the set from several hundred kilometres away." Prabhas said. Nobody had thought to clarify. Nobody had thought they needed to. Eventually, the food arrived. And with it came the revelation that left the entire crew speechless — Prabhas



actually had the food flown in for a cheat meal. "Everyone was like, you are something else Darling," he added.

Prabhas, recounting the story, seemed entirely unbothered by the logistics of it all, which, in many ways, is the most Prabhas part of the entire episode. For him, if the food was worth eating, the distance was irrelevant. The crew, who had spent hours not knowing whether to laugh or panic, now had their answer. The conversation did not stop there. Prabhas also opened up about the pace at which he works, and why fans sometimes feel the wait between his films is longer than it should be.

## Salman Khan 'displeased' over hospital's health update on Salim Khan; Aamir Khan visits veteran screenwriter



He is fine. He is stable. He has been shifted to the ICU. By tomorrow, he will be off the ventilator. He is doing quite well. Age is a factor, I understand. That is why the process of recovery will take time," he said. He also clarified that no surgery was required. "There was no surgery performed. It was a procedure which we usually do. Yes, he had a brain haemorrhage, which was very minimal and did not require any surgical intervention. There was no need for any surgery." Aamir Khan and Gauri Spratt visit Salim Khan

In the days since his admission, family members including Salma Khan, Arbaaz Khan and his wife Sshura Khan, daughters Alvira and Arpita, and Helen have been seen visiting him at the hospital. Actor Aamir Khan also arrived at Lilavati Hospital on Thursday along with his girlfriend Gauri Spratt to meet the veteran screenwriter. The two later left together after checking on his health.

Veteran screenwriter Salim Khan is currently admitted to Mumbai's Lilavati Hospital, where he is undergoing treatment. While the hospital had earlier shared a medical bulletin about his condition, it will no longer issue any updates. The move comes after his family requested that all information regarding his health remain private. Salman Khan and his family were reportedly unhappy after the hospital made a public statement about the screenwriter's condition.

A source close to the family told Variety India, "Health is a private matter. Ideally, no updates should be shared with the media and any communication should be left entirely to the family, if and when they choose to address fans and well-wishers." The source added, "Salman and his family were displeased with the doctor's public statement and have clearly conveyed to the authorities that they do not want any further details disclosed." "It can be understandable that there is immense public interest in Salim Saab's well-being, but medical information is a confidential matter. The family wants to avoid any unnecessary speculation or media scrutiny surrounding Salim Khan's condition," the source stated.

Salim Khan, 90, was admitted to the Mumbai hospital on February 17, 2026, after suffering a minor brain haemorrhage. He was brought to the emergency department at 8:30 am by the family doctor and later shifted to the ICU for monitoring under the care of pulmonologist Dr Jaail D Parkar. Earlier, addressing the media outside the hospital, Dr Parkar confirmed that Salim Khan was stable but had been placed on ventilator support as a precaution.

"He was having jerks and his blood pressure was high. We treated him. We had to put him on a ventilator so that he would not worsen. It wasn't because he was critical. We did the investigations that were required. Today, we have done a small procedure on him. I will not go into its details.

## 'Mohanlal insulted SN Swamy' controversy: Screenwriter breaks silence, says, 'Anyone who knows Lal...'



told Onmanorama, "I was not insulted. Mohanlal and I go a long way back, nearly 40 years. During this entire period, the actor has never spoken ill of me. Rather, we share a good bond and also respect each other. Anyone who knows Lal, would know that he isn't a person who treats others with disrespect. Rather, he ensures he is respectful to everyone around him. I know social media can be misleading, but this is the first time an incident involving me was dissected like this. I guess, we have no control over social media and the narrative formed through it." Swamy also clarified that Mohanlal's "You came in between?" reaction was aimed at a photographer who had returned to take another photo of the superstar, causing more congestion in the area.

The recent trailer launch event of director B Unnikrishnan's Nivin Pauly-starrer Prathichaya was a starry affair, but one moment featuring Malayalam superstar Mohanlal, who attended the ceremony as the chief guest, created headlines for the wrong reason. Following the event, a short clip went viral on social media, showing Mohanlal and legendary screenwriter SN Swamy climbing down a set of stairs, struggling to wade through the crowd that had gathered around them. Amid much clamour, the microphones caught one or two sentences of the superstar apparently muttered in a low voice, and a set of netizens immediately interpreted those words and his subsequent actions through their own perceptions, quickly concluding that "Mohanlal insulted SN Swamy!"

However, the veteran screenwriter has now stepped forward to refute the allegations against the actor, calling them baseless, while maintaining that their bond dates back four decades. He also asserted that Mohanlal isn't a person who would disrespect anyone. For the unversed, the viral clip featured Mohanlal quickly leaving the venue after the event. As he was descending the stairs, Swamy was next to him, as was producer Antony Perumbavoor. Suddenly, Mohanlal was heard asking, "You came in between?" He then leaned towards Swamy and said, "If you could move a bit, I could leave." The incident soon caught the attention of netizens, some of whom alleged that Mohanlal disrespected the scriptwriter, and that too one who had given him several blockbusters. Refuting the allegations, Swamy