

Hyderabad cybercrime police warn citizens against sharing OTPs

Hyderabad: With incidents of cyber fraud on the rise, the Hyderabad Cybercrime Police has cautioned citizens against sharing One-Time Passwords (OTPs) under any circumstances.

Police said fraudsters were using phone calls, text messages, WhatsApp chats, fake customer care numbers and phishing websites to deceive people into revealing OTPs, leading to unauthorised access to bank accounts, digital wallets and online platforms.

CM, KTR condole death of AIMIM leader Pasha Quadri

Hyderabad: BRS working president KT Rama Rao expressed grief over the death of All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) General Secretary and former MLA Syed Ahmed Pasha Quadri on Tuesday.

“Saddened to hear about the passing of former MLA Syed Ahmed Pasha Quadri saab. He was a courteous man always seen with a smile. I have had the opportunity of working closely with him as Municipal Minister for the improvement of heritage projects in the old city of Hyderabad,” he said on X.

CM goes into huddle with Ministers after surveys predict poor Congress show in municipal polls

HYDERABAD, FEB 3

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy convened a meeting with senior Congress leaders to strategise for the upcoming municipal elections after internal surveys suggested the party was trailing behind rivals, particularly the BRS.

Hyderabad: With surveys predicting a poor showing for the Congress in the ensuing municipal elections and indicating that the party was lagging behind its rivals, particularly the BRS, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Tuesday went into a huddle with his Cabinet colleagues to discuss strategies to be adopted.

AICC in-charge Meenakshi Natarajan, TPCC president Mahesh Kumar Goud and other senior leaders participated in the meeting. However, Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka's absence raised a few eyebrows.

During the meeting, the Ministers were reportedly reminded that it was their responsibility to ensure the victory of Congress candidates in their respective parliamentary constituencies. They were also told that the candidates had been finalised based on their recommendations after due consultation with local leaders.

It is learnt that the meeting discussed at length the outcome of at least four internal surveys, which indicated that the Congress was either weak or lagging behind in several districts, including erstwhile Adilabad, erstwhile Medak, erstwhile Nizamabad, erstwhile Karimnagar and



a few areas of Mahabubnagar.

Insiders said the Chief Minister asked the Ministers to campaign extensively in their parliamentary constituencies and to submit day-wise reports on the ground situation. Considering the protests by several ticket aspirants, the Ministers were also entrusted with the task of convincing rebel candidates and were asked to ensure that they do not impact the party's prospects in the elections.

In the wake of the Gram Panchayat election results, the Congress is placing greater focus on the municipal polls, as they are contested on party symbols.

Telangana assembly speaker to hear MLA Kadiyam Srihari's disqualification

HYDERABAD, FEB 3

Telangana assembly speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar will conduct an inquiry into the disqualification petition filed against MLA Kadiyam Srihari. The investigation is scheduled for Wednesday at 11 AM.

During the inquiry, the Speaker will record the arguments presented by petitioner K.P. Vivekananda Goud. The proceedings aim to examine the allegations and decide on the disqualification matter concerning the MLA.



Agri, dairy shielded: Goyal calls US deal best among global players, slams Opposition

New Delhi, Feb 4

The government on Tuesday said sensitive agriculture and dairy sectors had been protected in the just-announced India-US trade deal and that full technical details of the agreement would soon be released through a joint bilateral statement.

Describing the deal as “the best in the neighbourhood and the best among all Indian competitors”, Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said, “Sensitive sectors like agriculture and dairy have been safeguarded in the deal and no compromise has been made on farmers' interests.”

Goyal rejected Congress-led criticism over US President Donald Trump announcing the deal ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

“The US has reduced the reciprocal tariff from 50 per cent to 18 per cent. Naturally, the information of the tariff cut will come from the country that imposed it in the first place. For a long time, the Opposition kept asking when tariffs would be lowered. Now that this has happened, their double standards are out in the open. The country will teach Rahul Gandhi-led Congress and its allies a lesson for their negativity and anti-nationalism,”

Goyal said, attacking the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, who, while responding to the deal earlier, said the PM was compromised.

Goyal hit back at the Opposition, saying the PM's personal ties with the US President enabled the finalisation of a deal that had been stuck for months. “National and citizen interest is at the core of this pact,” the minister added.

He said, “Full technical details will be released through a formal India-US joint statement once final processes are completed.” Highlighting the significant tariff reduction by the US in the deal, Goyal said India would now have lower tariffs than other competitors such as Indonesia (19 per cent), Vietnam (20 per cent), Bangladesh (20 per cent) and China (34 per cent).

“US reciprocal tariffs on Indian goods have re-



Telangana Minister Seethakka Praises Success of Medaram Jathara

HYDERABAD, FEB 3

Telangana's Minister for Women and Child Welfare, Seethakka, described the recently concluded Medaram Jathara in Mulugu district as a great success. Speaking informally at the Secretariat on Tuesday, she expressed satisfaction that the festival and temple activities proceeded smoothly, criticising those spreading misinformation. She confirmed the festival ended without major incidents, apart from one theft, which some falsely reported. The Minister added that the deities' return journey would take place in a day or two.

Seethakka noted that opposition leaders also praised the organisation of the event. She highlighted that people from all social



backgrounds attended in large numbers, estimating approximately 2.5 crore devotees. She announced plans to widen roads around Medaram ahead of the next festival to prevent traffic congestion. The Minister also said she would review preparations with officials in anticipation of the Godavari Pushkarams next year.

Telangana HC asks State to frame policy on meat sale near temples, hospitals

HYDERABAD, FEB 3

Justice B Vijaysen Reddy of the Telangana High Court on Tuesday directed the State government to frame a comprehensive policy regulating the sale of meat and non-vegetarian food items within 100 metres of temples, educational institutions and hospitals, keeping in view public sentiments, cleanliness, traffic, and law and order concerns.

Hearing a writ petition filed by Bipin Ramdas. Justice Reddy asked Principal Secretaries of Municipal Ad-



ministration and Home departments to prepare clear guidelines within four weeks. The court also suggested that the proposed policy may include a requirement of obtaining a No Objection Certificate from the local police station before permitting the opening of meat-selling out-

lets in sensitive areas.

The petitioner had approached the court complaining of obstruction to his business by officials of the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation and the police. His counsel submitted that workers at the petitioner's restaurant were forcibly detained by the police on the allegation that the establishment was being run without permission. It was argued that several restaurants were functioning in the same locality and that the petitioner was being singled out in a discriminatory manner.

Opposing the plea, the government pleader for Home Department contended that the petitioner's non-vegetarian kitchen was located within 100 metres of a Hanuman temple, raising religious sensitivities and potential law and order issues. It was further submitted that the GHMC had recommended against grant of a regular licence citing traffic concerns in the area. Counsel appearing for the GHMC informed the court that the petitioner was operating the establishment on the basis of a temporary licence and was running a non-vegetarian restaurant.

After considering the submissions, Justice Reddy directed the State to evolve uniform guidelines on the sale of non-vegetarian food near temples, educational institutions and hospitals. Until such guidelines are finalised, the court ordered that the petitioner shall not operate the non-vegetarian restaurant.

Air India, IndiGo planes clip wings at Mumbai airport; passengers safe

MUMBAI, FEB 4

Wingtips of Air India and IndiGo planes came in touch with each other at the Mumbai airport on Tuesday evening, and both aircraft have been grounded for checks, according to officials.

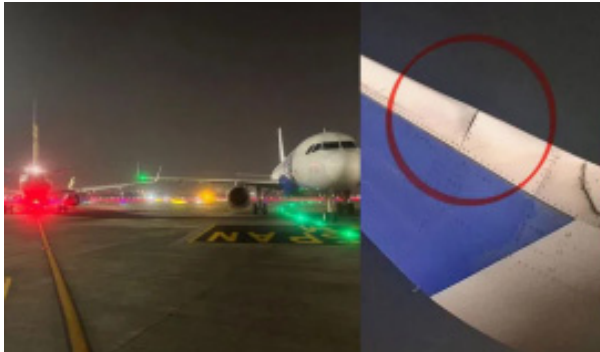
While Air India's plane was waiting on the taxiway prior to take off, the IndiGo aircraft was taxiing after landing at the airport, which has parallel runways. Both were Airbus A320 aircraft.

Aviation regulator DGCA's team is at the site and will be probing the incident, a civil aviation ministry spokesperson said.

Details about the number of passengers could not be immediately ascertained.

An Air India spokesperson said flight AI2732 operating from Mumbai to Coimbatore was delayed after the aircraft scheduled to operate the service came into contact with another airline's aircraft while waiting on the taxiway prior to take-off.

“The wingtips of the two aircraft made contact, resulting in damage to our aircraft's wingtip. As a precautionary measure, the aircraft has been grounded for further technical checks. All passengers were safely disembarked,” the spokesperson said in a statement. An IndiGo spokesperson in a statement said the wingtip of its aircraft operating flight 6E791 from Hyderabad to Mumbai



came in contact with a plane of another airline while taxiing, after landing. “All passengers are safe and disembarked after parking. The aircraft is undergoing maintenance inspections. In line with established protocols, the relevant authorities were promptly informed and the matter is being investigated,” the spokesperson said. The incident happened at around 7.30 pm on Tuesday at the Mumbai airport, which is one of the busiest airports in the country. Providing details, the civil aviation ministry spokesperson said that while AI2732 was taxiing from C1 towards M4 for departure and IndiGo arrival flight was taxiing to join B1, right wingtips of both the aircraft touched each other.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Onus on the accused
— acid attack cases
need tougher legal action

Despite stringent laws, India continues to witness cases of acid attacks against women. It is a matter of collective shame that trials in a majority of the cases are still pending. The Supreme Court’s recent suggestion that acid attacks should be treated on the lines of dowry deaths — where the onus of proving innocence lies with the accused — deserves serious consideration by the Centre and other stakeholders. The victims face life-long medical needs, job loss, social ostracism and mental-health trauma, and many slip into poverty and cannot pursue long legal battles. Despite their heinous nature, these crimes rarely provoke sustained public outrage or swift legal action. Survivors are left to endure years, sometimes decades, of trials and appeals. Take the case of acid-attack survivor Shaheen Malik, which has been dragging on since 2009. Here, justice delayed is far worse than justice denied; it’s justice held to ransom as perpetrators roam freely while victims relive their trauma endlessly. The apex court has called for “extraordinary” punitive measures, including retributive punishment, thus sending a clear message that the existing legal and institutional response to acid violence is failing survivors. Proposals such as attaching the assets of convicts to compensate victims reflect a pragmatic approach, acknowledging that rehabilitation is as critical as punishment. The fact that nearly 88% of the acid attack cases are still pending trial is a grim reminder of the serious flaws in the criminal justice system. The Supreme Court has rightly described the unending ordeal of Shaheen Malik as a national shame. In December last year, the SC had directed all high courts to submit details of pending cases within four weeks. The official figures on acid attacks — 207 cases registered in 2023 as per the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data released in 2025 — do not present a complete picture as many incidents go unreported and, in some cases, the survivors would be forced to withdraw their complaints.

Installation of New Electricity
Poles in Balakrishna Nagar
Colony: Akarapu Arun Patel



KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 3 (Indian Chronicle) :““Under the leadership of Uppal Constituency Youth Congress President Akarapu Arun Patel, a “Basti Bata” programme was conducted with officials about 20 days ago. Following the request of the residents of Balakrishna Nagar Colony, and with the support of Uppal Constituency In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy, 15 new electricity poles were installed within 20 days.“Akarapu Arun Patel personally inspected the installation works. The colony residents expressed their happiness over his prompt response and efficient completion of the works immediately after being informed about the need for electricity poles. Appreciating his commitment to public service, the residents thanked Arun Patel for considering the people’s problems as his own and for taking steps towards development. The programme was attended by Congress senior leaders Jillu Satish Goud, Colony President Venugopal Chary, Nagamallaiiah, Kasingoud, Nagaraju, Brahmaiah, Shankar, Shabhu, Ramachandra, Narasimha, Ramu, Srinivas, Balaji, Pranay, Pawan, Vishnu, Bharat, Charan, women representatives Sravanthi, Nagalakshmi, Nagamani, Jekka Sharada, along with several Congress leaders, colony elders, and residents.



Tandur Municipal Elections:
Nomination Withdrawals
Concluded – 135 Candidates
in the Fray

““The nomination withdrawal process for the Tandur Municipal elections in Vikarabad district concluded at 3 PM on Tuesday. A total of 183 candidates filed nominations for the 36 wards in the municipality. Of these, 48 withdrew their candidatures, leaving 135 candidates in the final contest, according to Municipal Commissioner



Madhusudan Reddy. ““Here’s the ward-wise breakdown of candidates still in the race:““ Ward 1: 4“- Ward 2: 3“- Ward 3: 4“- Ward 4: 7 (highest)“- Ward 5: 4“- Ward 6: 3“- Ward 7: 3“- Ward 8: 4“- Ward 9: 2 (lowest)“- Ward 10: 4“- Ward 11: 3“- Ward 12: 4“- Ward 13: 4“- Ward 14: 4“- Ward 15: 5“- Ward 16: 4“- Ward 17: 3“- Ward 18: 4“- Ward 19: 4“- Ward 20: 3“- Ward 21: 5“- Ward 22: 5“- Ward 23: 3“- Ward 24: 3“- Ward 25: 5“- Ward 26: 4“- Ward 27: 3“- Ward 28: 4“- Ward 29: 3“- Ward 30: 2 (lowest)“- Ward 31: 4“- Ward 32: 5“- Ward 33: 4“- Ward 34: 3“- Ward 35: 3“- Ward 36: 3““Ward 4 has the maximum number of candidates (7), while Wards 9 and 30 have the fewest (2 each).““Candidates from Congress, BRS, BJP, and MLM have been allotted party symbols after receiving B-forms. Independent candidates have been assigned symbols by election officials. The District Collector is set to release the final list of contesting candidates along with their allotted symbols, the Commissioner added.

Demand for Construction of Building for Uppal Press Club
New Committee Submits Representation to Parameshwar Reddy



““KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 3 (Indian Chronicle):““The newly elected committee members of the Uppal Press Club on Tuesday paid a courtesy visit to Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy, Congress Party In-charge of the Uppal Assembly Constituency. On the occasion, Parameshwar Reddy warmly felicitated the rep-



resentatives of the new committee. During the meeting, the Press Club representatives submitted a memorandum requesting the construction of a suitable building for the Uppal Press Club to conduct media interactions and other official programs. Responding to the request, Parameshwar Reddy assured them that he would take

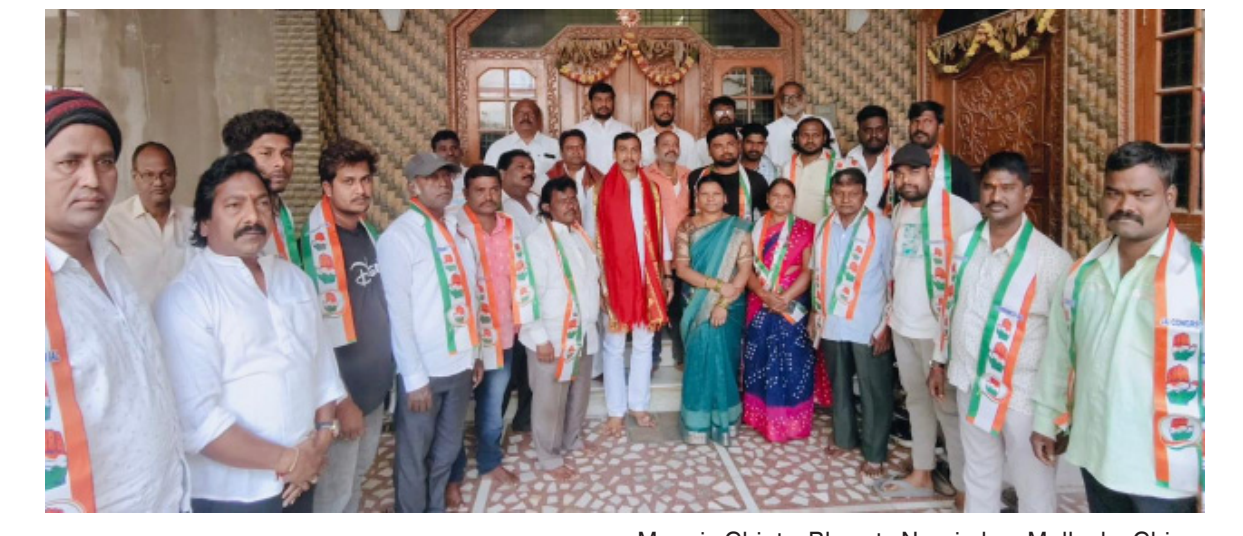
up the matter with the concerned officials. He advised the club members to work unitedly and strive for the progress of the Press Club. Parameshwar Reddy also assured that he would extend full support and cooperation to the newly formed committee. Members of the Uppal Press Club committee were present at the program.

Trade Unions Allege
Management Move to
Stall Labour Elections

““Taj Khan, Kagaznagar, January 3 (Indian Chronicle)““Trade Unions Condemn Alleged Bid to Delay Secret Ballot Elections at Sirpur Paper Mills““A joint meeting of trade unions was held today at the office of the Deputy Labour Commissioner, Velladi, concerning labour issues at Sirpur Paper Mills.““During the meeting, all participating trade unions strongly condemned what they described as attempts by the Sirpur Paper Mills management to delay the conduct of secret ballot elections by seeking to adjourn them to a later date. The unions alleged that these actions were part of a deliberate strategy to avoid the election process. They collectively demanded that recognition elections be conducted immediately without further postponement.““Responding to the unions’ demands, the Election Officer informed the gathering that a joint meeting of trade unions would be convened at Kagaznagar on February 18 to take the process forward. Following this assurance, the unions agreed to remain calm and cooperative.““In this context, the Sirpur Paper Mills Employees Union (Registration No. E-966) issued an appeal urging all workers to extend their full cooperation in the forthcoming proceedings.



Massive Joinings into Congress Party
Parameshwar Reddy Welcomes New Members by Draping Party Scarves



““KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 3 (Indian Chronicle):““The Congress Party continues to witness massive joinings in the Uppal constituency. In the presence of Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy, a large number of leaders and youth joined the Congress Party. From Uppal Division’s Gandhi Nagar Market Colony, senior members Hanumanth Reddy, G. Abraham, Balaraju, Narsing Rao, Amarnath, along with Gandhi Nagar Youth Association members Shekhar, Shivakumar, Sai Reddy,

Manoj, Chinta Bharat, Narsimha, Mallesh, Chinna, Mahender, Devender, Shiva, Kiran, Kranthi, Malli Kalyan, Bhaskar, Ambika, and Ashwini formally joined the Congress Party.““Parameshwar Reddy personally draped Congress scarves over each new member and welcomed them into the party.““Several Uppal Congress leaders participated in the programme, including Bazar Jagannath Goud, Uppal A-Block SC Cell President Lingampalli Ramakrishna, Kandi Shriram Reddy, Vijay Kumar, Rajanna, Javid, Gorige Jahangir, and others.

We Have Placed Secunderabad
at the Forefront of Development:
MLA Padmarao Goud

““ Indian Chronicle, “Secunderabad, February 03:““Secunderabad MLA and former Deputy Speaker Tigulla Padmarao Goud stated that the Secunderabad constituency has been placed at the forefront of development. However, he expressed concern that difficulties are being faced as the government has failed to fulfill its election promises.““On Tuesday, Padmarao Goud inaugurated various development works in the Bouddha Nagar Division. CC road construction works worth ₹94.20 lakhs were launched in Ashok Nagar, Lalitha Nagar, Shakunthala School area,



Eshwaribai Nagar, and Amber Nagar. Additionally, box drain (nala) construction works costing ₹55 lakhs were inaugurated near the Kanakadurga Temple in Bouddha Nagar.““Speaking on the occasion, Padmarao Goud said that his leadership always stands at the forefront in resolving public issues. He emphasized that all divisions of the constituency are being developed equally, with necessary infrastructure being provided to the residents.““Bouddha Nagar Division Corporator Kandi Shailaja stated that several development works have been successfully completed in Bouddha Nagar with the support of the Secunderabad MLA.““Officials from various departments including Suvarna Latha, Madhavi, Venu, Priyanka, along with Corporator Samala Hema, Coordinator Raja Sundar, party leaders, and officials were present at the program.““Later, Padmarao Goud extensively toured the Bouddha Nagar Division, responded to various public grievances, and issued instructions to the concerned officials for prompt resolution.

Looking Down on Small Newspapers Is a Big Threat to Democracy

“Manuguru, February 3 – Indian Chronicle:“Mandadi Sanjeeva Rao,“Telangana State Senior Vice President,“National Consumer & Human Rights Protection Committee.“In a democracy, the media is regarded as the fourth pillar. For this pillar to remain strong, it should not be confined only to large corporate media houses, but must also be equally upheld by rural, local, and small-circulation newspapers. The real issues of the people emerge from these very grassroots platforms.“In recent times, allegations surrounding journalist accreditation processes in the erstwhile united states and the growing dissatisfaction among small newspapers are not mere administrative issues. These are matters related to media freedom, administrative transparency, and constitutional values.“Accreditation is not a favor granted by the government to a journalist. It is only an administrative process meant for professional recognition. No authority has the right to declare that a person is not a journalist merely because accreditation is denied.“The Indian Constitution, drafted by the great visionary Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, guarantees the right to freedom of expression to every citizen. Journalists carry this right with greater responsibility. However, when the accreditation process lacks transparency, sidelines small-circulation newspapers, and keeps selection criteria undisclosed, it violates the principles of natural justice.“Article 14 guarantees the right to equality.“Article 19(1)(a) guarantees freedom of speech and expression.“These rights are not meant only for big media organizations.“The administrative machinery must understand the value of small newspapers. Local issues that often escape the attention of mainstream media—such as drinking water problems, roads, land disputes, local corruption, and lapses in welfare schemes—are brought to light by small newspapers. They stay close to the people and speak in the language of the people.“Distancing small newspapers means cutting off genuine feedback that reaches the government. In the long run, this harms governance. Public responses and ground-level realities are first voiced through local media.“Delays in granting accreditation, rejection with-



out stating reasons, and allegations of inequality in the selection process only increase suspicion toward the government and erode trust in administration. If the process is transparent, there would be no room for controversy.“The concerns raised by journalist organizations like the All India Working Journalists Federation (AIWJF) should not be taken lightly by the government. This is not merely a warning, but a signal highlighting systemic flaws. Criticism should be viewed not as hostility, but as an opportunity for correction.“What the government must do is make accreditation guidelines public, ensure transparency in the selection process, provide written reasons for rejections, establish an appeals mechanism, and frame a special policy to ensure justice for small and regional newspapers.“In a democracy, a strong government is not one that listens only to praise, but one that also listens to criticism. Respecting small newspapers means respecting the voice of the people. Even a small voice can speak a great truth—and only by listening to it can governance become complete, said Mandadi Sanjeeva Rao.

Representatives of Uppal Print & Electronic Media Club Pay Courtesy Call on Uppal CI Bhaskar



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 3 (Indian Chronicle):““The newly elected executive committee members of the Uppal Print & Electronic Media Club, under the leadership of Club President Vaddepalli Kishore, paid a courtesy visit to Uppal Circle Inspector K.

Bhaskar on Tuesday.“On this occasion, CI Bhaskar congratulated the newly formed committee members and assured them of his full support and cooperation to the Media Club. Later, the members of the new committee introduced themselves to the CI.Admin SI Madhava Reddy, SIs Chiranjeevi and Madhu, along with police station staff, were present during the meeting.

Ramanthapur Division Congress Party President Mohammed Rafiq Inspects CC Road Works



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 3 (Indian Chronicle):““Ramanthapur Division Congress Party President Mohammed Rafiq inspected the newly constructed CC road works in Indira Nagar, Metla Galli, Ramanthapur.“Speaking on the occasion, he stated that with the cooperation of Uppal Congress In-Charge Mandamula Parameshwar Reddy, all development works

in the Ramanthapur Division would be completed in a phased manner. He instructed the officials and the contractor to strictly follow quality standards in the construction of CC roads.“Senior Congress leaders Poosa Sattaiah, Adinarayana Goud, Poosa Mallikarjun, Satyanarayana, Surya, Icon Madhu, Swamy, Sai, Abdul, Mateen, Uppal Constituency Youth Congress Vice-President Mohammed Shakeel, along with Ramesh, Srinivas, Anji, and others participated in the program.

Demand for Construction of Building for Uppal Press Club



“— New Committee Submits Representation to Parameshwar Reddy“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 3 (Indian

Chronicle):““The newly elected committee members of the Uppal Press Club on Tuesday paid a courtesy visit to Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy, Congress Party In-charge of the Uppal Assembly Constituency. On the occasion, Parameshwar Reddy warmly felicitated the representatives of the new committee.During the meeting, the Press Club representatives submitted a memorandum requesting the construction of a suitable building for the Uppal Press Club to conduct media interactions and other official programs. Responding to the request, Parameshwar Reddy assured them that he would take up the matter with the concerned officials.He advised the club members to work unitedly and strive for the progress of the Press Club. Parameshwar Reddy also assured that he would extend full support and cooperation to the newly formed committee.Members of the Uppal Press Club committee were present at the program.



MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy Congratulates the New Committee of Uppal Print & Electronic Media Club

Courtesy meeting under the leadership of President, Senior Journalist Vaddepalli Kishore



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 3 (Indian Chronicle):““The newly elected committee members of the Uppal Print & Electronic Media Club, led by its newly appointed President and senior journalist Vaddepalli Kishore, paid a courtesy visit to Uppal Constituency MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy.On this occasion, MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy felicitated the new committee members by draping them with shawls and extended his heartfelt congratulations. Speaking thereafter, he emphasized that the role of the media is extremely crucial in resolving public issues, promoting social development, and ensur-

ing the successful implementation of government welfare programmes.He stated that the cooperation of media professionals is essential to effectively convey the development initiatives and welfare schemes being implemented by the government in the Uppal constituency to the public. The MLA further assured that he would extend his full support to the social service and public welfare programmes to be organized in the coming days under the aegis of the Uppal Print & Electronic Media Club.

Grand Felicitation of Journalists by Uppal Mandal MRO Pool Singh Chauhan



effectively reaching the public with the government's development programs and welfare schemes. The MRO assured that in the coming days, he would work in coordination with journalists in public welfare and social service activities.“The program was attended by Vaddepalli Kishore, President of the Uppal Print & Electronic Media Club, along with several journalists.

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 3 (Indian Chronicle):““Under the leadership of Vaddepalli Kishore, President of the Uppal Print & Electronic Media Club and Senior Journalist, journalists paid a courtesy visit to Uppal Mandal MRO Pool (Chauhan) Singh Chauhan. On this occasion, the MRO felicitated the journalists with shawls and extended his congratulations.“Speaking thereafter, the MRO praised the media for functioning as the fourth pillar of democracy and for bringing public issues to light. He stated that the role of journalists is crucial in conveying the problems of the people to the notice of the government.He further emphasized that the cooperation of media friends is essential in

Union Budget 2026-27 lays the groundwork for sustained growth with fiscal discipline: CareEdge Ratings

Hyderabad According to CareEdge Ratings, the Union Budget 2026-27 reflects a steady policy hand at a time when India's economy is transitioning from recovery-led growth to a phase of consolidation and medium-term planning. The emphasis on capital expenditure, alongside a continued commitment to fiscal consoli-



tion, reinforces macroeconomic stability and supports India's evolving credit profile.

Mehul Pandya, MD & Group CEO, CareEdge said, "The Union Budget for 2026-27 comes at a time when India's economy is undergoing a period of consolidation and planning. What stands out this year is not just the scale of announcements but the steady hand guiding them. The Budget continues many of the reforms already in progress, focusing on stability, productivity, and competitiveness. These qualities are crucial as growth needs to sustain itself in a changing global environment."

CareEdge Ratings believes that the Union Budget 2026-27 provides a stable and predictable policy environment. The combination of sustained public investment,

gradual fiscal consolidation and sector-specific support measures strengthens the resilience of the economy and supports medium-term credit stability.

According to Sachin Gupta, Chief Rating Officer, CareEdge Ratings, "Overall, the Budget reinforces a stable credit environment across sectors. The focus on long-term capacity creation, rather than short-term stimulus, augurs well for India's sovereign and corporate credit outlook over the medium term."

Update on the Recently Announced India-US Trade Deal

The recently announced India-US trade deal is a positive development for India's exports, particularly for sectors such as gems and jewellery, textiles, and marine products. A key highlight is that India has managed to secure a lower tariff rate compared to competitors including China, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Malaysia, Cambodia, and Thailand. Based on our estimates, this tariff reduction could add ~20 bps to GDP growth in FY27.

Additionally, easing trade uncertainties are likely to support a revival in foreign investment inflows, providing greater stability to the rupee. This could allow the RBI to scale back its forex interventions, which had intensified over the past few months amid heightened volatility. Furthermore, with a stable rupee the RBI could better support the borrowing plans of government and domestic liquidity conditions through higher quantum of open market operations.

Sonalika Delivers its Strongest 10-months Sales Performance with Fastest Ever 1.51 lakh YTD Overall Tractor Sales in FY'26



Hyderabad: Marking a dominant start to its grand 30th anniversary year celebrations in 2026, India's No.1 tractor export brand Sonalika Tractors has clocked its fastest ever YTD overall sales of 1,51,604 tractors during Apr'25-Jan'26. Driven by heavy-duty tractors equipped with future ready technologies, Sonalika has continued to lead agricultural prosperity across various regions and reflects on its ability to deliver consistent growth in an evolving agricultural landscape, where rising mechanisation and investment in rural infrastructure are driving long-term demand. Sonalika also recently reaffirmed its brand purpose of delivering 'Jeetne ka Dum' as part of an extensive All-India brand strengthening program reflecting the brand's aggressive growth strategy moving forward.

In just 30 years since inception, Sonalika has evolved from a small town company to become India's No.1 tractor export brand and the 3rd largest tractor brand in the country while securing 5th largest tractor brand position globally. Sonalika's heavy duty tractors are widely regarded as the long-term growth assets by farmers as the

company's progressive journey is built on strong fundamentals - frugal engineering, unmatched manufacturing scale and an unshakeable farmer-first approach.

While GST reforms have brought greater predictability, supporting farmer sentiment and mechanisation uptake, Sonalika remains fully equipped at its world's largest integrated tractor manufacturing facility to deliver future-ready solutions for farmers to secure their future and reinforcing agriculture's role in India's economic trajectory.

Sharing his views on the new milestone, Mr. Raman Mittal, Joint Managing Director, International Tractors Limited, said, "We are delighted to have clocked our fastest ever 1.51 lakh overall tractor sales in 10 months in Apr'25-Jan'26 that have given us a robust start for our 30th year anniversary celebrations in 2026. It reaffirms our simple belief that sustainable growth is built on strong fundamentals and marks as a clear reflection of farmer's trust in our brand. Every decision we take, from engineering to execution, is anchored in what delivers real productivity, reliability and value on the farmer's field.

MG Cyberster Emerges as India's Top Sports Car in 2025 MG SELECT secures 2nd spot in luxury EV segment within 6 months of launch

Hyderabad JSW MG Motor India announced that the Cyberster- World's Fastest MG, has emerged as the top selling sports car in the year 2025. With more than 500 units of Cyberster sold in just about 6 months, the luxury brand channel - MG SELECT has also become the second largest in India's luxury EV segment.

Responding to the strong demand and admiration received for the Cyberster, MG SELECT further elevated the offering with the recent introduction of Irises Cyan - a bespoke shade developed to accentuate the Cyberster's sculptural design. Alongside Cyberster, the MG M9, has also established itself as a segment leader. The Presidential Limousine has resonated strongly with discerning customers seeking chauffeur-driven luxury, further strengthening MG SELECT's presence at the upper end of the electric mobility spectrum

Milind Shah, Head - MG SELECT, JSW MG Motor India said, "2025 marked the foundation year for MG SELECT in India. Our focus was on building credibility in the luxury EV space, through distinctive products, thoughtfully designed experience centers, and meaningful customer engagement. The response to the Cyberster and MG M9 reaffirmed that there is a growing appetite for progressive luxury in the market. As we move into 2026, our priority remains strengthening this ecosystem and delivering experiences that reflect the evolving expectations of luxury EV customers."

MG SELECT has expanded its footprint to 15 experience centres across key markets in India, while also forging strategic collaborations with select high-end brands across design, lifestyle and luxury services. Together, these initiatives reinforce closer customer proximity, enable deeply immersive brand experiences, and ensure a consistently elevated ownership journey that extends well beyond the product itself.



Collector directs officials to finalise municipal vote counting arrangements



District Collector Abhilasha Abhinav has instructed officials to ensure that the counting of votes in the upcoming municipal elections is conducted transparently and under tight security arrangements. The Collector inspected the counting centres established at the Government Polytechnic College in Nirmal town on Monday. During her visit, she re-

viewed the strong rooms earmarked for Nirmal, Bhainsa and Khanapur municipalities and expressed satisfaction over the security measures in place.

Addressing officials, Abhilasha Abhinav directed that all arrangements at the counting centres be completed well in advance without any lapses. She emphasised that staff deployment should be finalised beforehand and that a sufficient number of tables must be arranged in the counting halls.

Special seating arrangements should be made for candidates and counting agents to ensure smooth proceedings. In view of the summer season, she also ordered adequate provision of drinking water and food facilities. The Collector stressed that the counting process must be completed peacefully and error-free. Additional Collector (Revenue) Kishore Kumar, Bhainsa Sub-Collector Ajmeera Sanket Kumar, Municipal Commissioners Jagadishwar Goud and Sundar Singh, Tahsildar Raju and other officials were present during the inspection.

Youth Congress leader resigns over ticket allocation row

MD Azeem, General Secretary of the Karimnagar district Youth Congress, has resigned from his post, citing dissatisfaction over the party's ticket allocation process in the current municipal elections. He has submitted his resignation to the State President of the Indian Youth Congress.

Addressing a press conference in Karimnagar, Azeem said he has been associated with the Indian National Congress since 2014 and stood firmly with the party during its most challenging phase in Telangana. He recalled contesting the 2020 municipal elections on a Congress ticket when the party was struggling to regain public trust and said he worked consistently to strengthen the organisation at the grassroots level.

Azeem expressed deep disappointment over being denied a B-Form in the present municipal elections despite his long-standing dedication and contributions. He alleged that the reasons cited for rejecting his candidature, particularly those linked to religious vote calculations, were against the secular principles traditionally upheld by the Congress party.

He further questioned the entry of Hindu-Muslim



polarisation into the candidate selection process and criticised the allocation of tickets to recently joined members while overlooking committed young leaders. Such decisions, he said, demoralise grassroots workers and undermine the purpose of nurturing young leadership within the organisation.

"With a heavy heart, and considering the injustice in the ticket allocation process, I feel it is appropriate to step down from my responsibilities," Azeem said, adding that he remains grateful for the opportunities given to him and will always cherish his association with the party.

Grace Cancer Foundation signs MoU with Meghalaya for cancer awareness programs

Hyderabad: Hyderabad-based Grace Cancer Foundation (GCF), which is actively involved in the field of cancer awareness and affordable diagnosis, on Tuesday announced that it has entered into an MoU with Governments of Meghalaya to take up cancer awareness and screening initiatives.

Senior robotic cancer surgeon and founder of Grace Cancer Foundation, Dr Chinnababu Sunkavalli, said that the MoU will enable the foundation to take up cancer awareness programs and affordable cancer diagnostic initiatives in the North-Eastern region of India.

On the occasion of World Cancer Day, the Foundation also announced that it will roll out free cancer screening programmes in Meghalaya and Tripura beginning February 2026.

In 2025, the Grace Cancer Foundation screened over 61,000 individuals, leading to more than 1,000

early cancer detections. In 2026, the Foundation aims to screen over one lakh people across its programmes.

Woman attempts suicide outside Huzurabad police station

Karimnagar: A woman, Gandrakota Pavani, on Tuesday attempted suicide in front of the Huzurabad police station, protesting alleged police negligence in delivering justice to her. Pavani tried to end her life by dousing herself with diesel. However, alert police personnel foiled the attempt. A native of Thigaram village in Station Ghanpur mandal of Jangaon district, Pavani married Kanchapu Aravind of Rampur in Huzurabad mandal two years ago.

Telangana: Congress infighting over ticket distribution in Jagtial district intensifies

Infighting within the Congress in Telangana's Jagtial district over allotment of party tickets for mu-

Rashtra Samithi (BRS) who switched loyalties to the Congress party in 2024.



Jeevan Reddy, who was defeated by Sanjay Kumar in the Jagtial constituency in the 2023 elections, has openly defied the party leadership for inducting him into the party.

On January 21, Jeevan Reddy walked out of a meeting at the party's state headquarters, Gandhi Bhavan, objecting to Sanjay Kumar's presence.

Reddy asked how the party allowed an outsider to join an internal meeting. "Why

municipal elections intensified with senior leader T. Jeevan Reddy openly expressing his anger over the party giving more tickets to the group of his rival M. Sanjay Kumar in Jagtial.

The former minister is angry as his group has been given 20 tickets while Sanjay Kumar's followers managed to secure 30 tickets for the February 11 municipal elections.

A large number of Congress cadres gathered at Jeevan Reddy's residence on Tuesday. He is holding a meeting with his supporters to decide the future course of action.

Jeevan Reddy is locked in a bitter fight with Sanjay Kumar, who is one of the 10 MLAs of Bharat

is a member of an Opposition party attending this meeting?" he asked.

Both groups have been at loggerheads over onepmanship in the district. The efforts of the leadership to pacify Reddy have not yielded results, as he is worried over the MLA's growing clout in the district.

The infighting also marred the allotment of party tickets for municipal elections in the district. Jeevan Reddy's group is unhappy over the party giving more tickets to the rival group for elections to Jagtial and Raikal municipalities.

Several aspirants from both groups filed nominations. However, the party has issued B-forms to the majority of the aspirants from Sanjay Kumar's group, deepening the rift.

Karnataka flags issues with e-Swathu 2.0 software used by rural property owners to Union Ministry



GNS News Agency, Feb 3

Rural Development and Information Technology Priyank Kharge said the department is coordinating with the National Informatics Centre to resolve issues related to e-Swathu software. Rural Development and Information Technology Priyank Kharge said the department is coordinating with the National Informatics Centre to resolve issues related to e-Swathu software. The Karnataka Government has written to the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY) to resolve technical glitches in e-Swathu (e-Assets) 2.0 software that has affected the registration of properties in rural regions.

This was informed by Minister for Rural Development and Information Technology Priyank Kharge in the state legislature on Wednesday. "A letter has been written to the Hon'ble Minister, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY), to resolve the issues of e-Swathu 2.0 software expeditiously and to develop the remaining modules on priority," the minister told the legislature. Among the issues that have cropped up in the usage of the citizens'

interface of the e-Swathu 2.0 software is the conversion of guntas and cents – the land measurements used in Karnataka – to square metres, which is the default measure in the e-Swathu 2.0 software. Apart from the issue of conversion of land measurements, the new software also has issues with the conversion of Form-11B (digital land ownership record or electronic khata for gram panchayats) to Form-11A (officially approved ownership record) in the e-Swathu 2.0 software. Other issues relate to applications for new housing layouts and apartment blocks, and applications for industrial area properties. The minister said that "steps are being taken to resolve issues expeditiously." "Several issues that arise while submitting applications and approving applications through the Citizen interface of the e-Swathu 2.0 software have been resolved. The department is continuously coordinating with the National Informatics Centre (NIC) to resolve issues related to the software," Kharge said. The minister was responding to a query by BJP MLA from Kundapura in the Udupi district, Kiran Kumar Kodgi, whether the government was aware of problems faced by the public in the usage of the newly introduced e-Swathu 2.0 software. The e-Swathu 2.0 software is being used after the state notified rules under the Karnataka Gram Swaraj and Panchayat Raj (Amendment) Act 2025 for the collection of property taxes in rural areas.

The amendment act, which received the approval of the Governor in April 2025, is intended to "bring in all assets under the purview of the rural local authorities under their network of financial resources". Under the amended law, the previous e-Swathu software was modified to be citizen-friendly, and the e-Swathu 2.0 software was rolled out on December 1, 2025. The state government has reported receiving 44,508 applications across the 31 districts of the state since December 2025, with 16,672 applications being accepted so far.

‘Conduct unbecoming’: Bombay HC upholds Raigad teacher’s termination over ‘romantic’ WhatsApp messages to students

GNS News Agency, Feb 3

The Bombay High CourtThe court passed an order on a writ petition by the teacher who challenged an August 2024 verdict by the School Tribunal, Mumbai, where his plea against termination from a school in Raigad district was dismissed. Dismissing an appeal against the termination of a probationary assistant teacher (Shikshan Sevak) for allegedly sending "romantic messages" to students on WhatsApp, the Bombay High Court last week observed that the teacher texting a student, with a "serious age gap", entitled the school management to take the decision.

The court passed an order on a writ petition by the teacher who challenged an August 2024 verdict by the School Tribunal, Mumbai, where his plea against termination from a school in Raigad district was dismissed.

"The opinion that his probation must not be continued is not at all based on the work and performance... On the contrary, what is apparent is that the termination is based on discomfort with behaviour outside the classroom. The issue involved is serious, inasmuch as it appears that there were complaints from parents of students and the local community about a teacher in his 30s being in touch with students with romantic messages between them on WhatsApp," a single-judge bench of Justice Somasekhar Sundaresan observed in the January 20 order, which was made available on Friday. The court clarified that "nothing in the judgment attaches stigma to the content of messaging," as no WhatsApp chats were on record.

"To my mind, the fact that a teacher had been texting a student, with a serious age gap, poses adequate grounds for the management being dissatisfied with the probationer-petitioner," the judge added. The court noted the petitioner issued a written apology the day the messaging was discovered, and he had "not retracted his written confirmation and apology on the ground of coercion". The high court noted the petitioner was engaged as a probationary assistant teacher on February 29, 2020, for three years. In December 2022, the school received complaints from parents about his messages to certain girl students. Thereafter, he apologised in writing to the principal, "confirming his electronic contact with the student". "Local unrest is said to have occurred with a mob having gathered over the matter, ne-



cessitating the principal having to intercede and save the petitioner," the court noted. On January 31, 2023, the school terminated his probation with effect from February 1 that year, with pay in lieu of a month's notice. Advocate Sugandh Deshmukh, for the teacher, submitted that as the probation was to end in February 2023, he "became a permanent employee before the notice period would potentially expire". Therefore, Deshmukh said, a law governing permanent employees was required to be invoked, and due inquiry should have been initiated before arriving at any decision, with an opportunity for the petitioner to be heard.

"In my opinion, the management is entitled to adopt a zero-tolerance policy in the specific factual matrix of the case and avoid future crisis, taking into account that the petitioner was on probation and statutorily, the management was entitled to terminate the probation with one month's notice or payment in lieu of the notice. In my view, the management had sufficient material to form a reasonable opinion, that conduct unbecoming of a school teacher is not satisfactory behaviour," Justice Sundaresan observed. The high court further observed that the petitioner, "without stigma being attached" to him, "has been given a soft landing within the ambit of Section 5(3) (school's power to terminate) of Maharashtra Employees of Private Schools (Conditions of Service) Regulation Act". The court, while dismissing the plea, held that the school management was entitled to terminate the probationer "without the entire exercise that would have been applicable to a permanent employee".

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GNS News Agency, Feb 3

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The amendment act, which received the approval of the Governor in April 2025, is intended to "bring in all assets under the purview of the rural local authorities under their network of financial resources". Under the amended law, the previous e-Swathu software was modified to be citizen-friendly, and the e-Swathu 2.0 software was rolled out on December 1, 2025. The state government has reported receiving 44,508 applications across the 31 districts of the state since December 2025, with 16,672 applications being accepted so far.

Bengaluru police inspector caught taking Rs 4 lakh bribe from builder



GNS News Agency, Feb 3

The Karnataka Lokayukta police on Thursday arrested a Bengaluru police inspector for allegedly accepting Rs 4 lakh from a builder who was facing a cheating case. The police identified the accused as Govindaraju, who was posted at the KP Agrahara police station. He was allegedly caught red-handed at the City Armed Reserve (CAR)

ground in Chamaraipet while collecting the bribe from Mohammed Akbar, the builder.

According to a Lokayukta officer, Akbar was facing a cheating case, and Govindaraju allegedly offered to bail him out, provided he paid Rs 5 lakh as a bribe. "Akbar and two others were booked in the case, and Govindaraju offered to drop his name from the cheating case," the officer claimed. On January 24, Akbar allegedly paid Rs 1 lakh cash and promised to pay the rest on Thursday. Akbar then filed a complaint before the Lokayukta police.

According to the police, on Thursday, Akbar asked Govindaraju to meet him at the CAR grounds to collect the remaining money. Around 4.30 pm, Govindaraju reached the spot in uniform, in his official vehicle. Akbar then handed over the alleged bribe, the currency notes coated with phenolphthalein powder. Soon after, the police apprehended Govindaraju and placed him under arrest. In another case, Lokayukta officers raided the properties of former Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board officer, Tejesh Kumar N, and seized properties worth Rs 26.5 crore, including four sites, eight houses, and 14 acres of agricultural land.

‘Audacious attempt’: Counter-intelligence unit foils ISI arms push in Fazilka; bid to disrupt war on gangsters, says police

GNS News Agency, Feb 3

Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) made a desperate bid on the intervening night of January 27 and 28 to push huge quantities of arms and ammunition into Punjab through its operatives who physically crossed the international border, but this was detected ahead of time by the Counter Intelligence (CI) wing of Punjab Police, senior officials revealed. The Indian Express reported the large recovery of automatic arms and ammunition from the Indo-Pak border in Fazilka on Thursday after Director General of Police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav made a statement in this regard. Senior officials of the Punjab Police have now revealed the inside story of how the cache of arms was a desperate ploy by the ISI to ratchet up the violence in Punjab, and the CI wing busted this plan through technical intelligence. The recovered arms and ammunition include 11 Glock pistols and 22 magazines, one Beretta pistol and one magazine, five Zigana pistols and 10 magazines, three Norinco pistols and five magazines, one Ghaffar Security pistol (MP-5 type) with one magazine, and 310 live cartridges (9MM). Two kg heroin was also recovered along with the arms and ammunition. The cache was recovered from Border Outpost (BOP) GG-3 at Teja Rahela village in Fazilka district.

"The ISI has been pushing arms and ammunition into Punjab regularly through drones and riverine routes in the recent past, especially after Operation Sindoor. However, this time an audacious attempt was made by crossing the International Border and reaching close to the border fencing to drop off the consignment of arms which was to be picked up by Indian agents of ISI," a senior counter-intelligence officer said.

Taking advantage of the heavy fog, ISI operatives entered Indian territory where a Punjab Police team and Border Security Force (BSF) personnel already lay waiting as technical intelligence had given away the Pakistani plans, the officer added. "The BSF personnel fired on the Pakistanis, upon which they fled and left behind a large number of weapons," the officer further said. "Preliminary investigation has revealed that Pakistan-based smugglers crossed the zero line and operated close to the border fence, attempting to exploit night conditions and dense fog to push arms and narcotics into Indian territory. Alert BSF troops fired several rounds to prevent the breach, followed by a thorough joint search operation leading to the recovery," said DGP Yadav. Senior Punjab Police officials said the consignment of weapons was meant to be supplied to various gang members who resort to extortion and killings in Punjab on the behest of gangsters who live in foreign countries. "The ongoing police crackdown on gangsters has disrupted their supply chain of weapons, and therefore the physical bid to push in the arms and ammunition was a clear bid to help out these criminal elements and vitiate the atmosphere in the state," an intelligence officer said.

The Indo-Pak border in Punjab remains a key area for cross-border smuggling of arms, ammunition, and narcotics from Pakistan. These activities commonly involve drones dropping consignments into districts such as Amritsar, Pathankot, Tarn Taran, and Fazilka. Punjab Police, working closely with the Border Security Force (BSF) and central intelligence agencies, has stepped up operations to address these threats. From mid-2025 to early 2026, several major seizures have occurred, often linked to Pakistan-based handlers, including operatives associated with Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) and elements linked to the ISI. The Amritsar Rural police recovered a large con-



signment, including 42.983 kg of heroin, four hand grenades, one Star Mark pistol, 46 live .30 bore cartridges, and an abandoned motorcycle. Two individuals from Amritsar were arrested. Investigations point to connections with a cross-border smuggling network, with drones suspected as the delivery method. Significance: This ranks among the largest combined heroin and arms recoveries in early 2026, highlighting the close link between drug and weapon trafficking.

Amritsar police arrested four operatives from Ranian village, dismantling a narco-arms smuggling module. The recovery included 1.5 kg of heroin, Rs 1.98 lakh in drug proceeds, one 9mm pistol, one .30-bore pistol, and 34 cartridges manufactured by Pakistan Ordnance Factory (POF). The accused, aged 19-33 and related to each other, were in contact with Pakistan-based smugglers via social media. Drones were implicated in the transport. Significance: The presence of POF-marked ammunition suggests involvement of Pakistani state-linked entities, raising concerns over state-sponsored smuggling. Pathankot police recovered a substantial arms cache near the India-Pakistan border in Narot Jaimal Singh. The consignment included three AK-47 rifles, five magazines, two pistols (one Turkish-made, one Chinese-made), two pistol magazines, and 98 live cartridges. The weapons were linked to a Pakistan-based BKI operative, Harvinder Singh alias Rinda, with alleged ISI support. Significance: The presence of assault rifles like AK-47s signals an escalation toward terror-related activities, with direct ties to external networks.

Punjab Police seized two AK-47 rifles near the Indo-Pak border in Amritsar as part of efforts targeting drone-dropped consignments. Significance: This reflects the ongoing interception of heavy automatic weapons intended for destabilisation. Punjab Police arrested two individuals and seized 16 pistols, 38 magazines, 1,847 rounds of ammunition, and one motorcycle near the border. Significance: The large quantity of ammunition indicates preparation for prolonged militant or criminal operations.

A pattern emerging: police Punjab Police officials say these seizures show a consistent pattern: drone-based delivery, foreign-manufactured weapons (such as Glock, Zigana, Beretta, Norinco, and AK-47s), and narcotics often accompanying arms as a funding source for trafficking. Links to Pakistan-based handlers and operatives like Rinda suggest attempts to support insurgency or crime in Punjab. "Punjab Police's approach—relying on intelligence-led actions, community involvement through Village Defence Committees, and coordination with BSF—has resulted in substantial recoveries of heroin and weapons in 2025–2026," DGP Yadav said. The continued incidents emphasise the need for stronger border measures, including advanced anti-drone systems.

3-4 hour wait, required nods from IAF render Mohali’s new ‘VIP helipad’ unusable

GNS News Agency, Feb 3

The "VIP helipad" constructed by the Greater Mohali Area Development Authority (GMADA) near Vikas Bhavan, the guest house of Punjab's Rural Development and Panchayats Department, earlier this month cannot be used for landing Punjab government helicopters as it falls within the "flight line" of Shaheed Bhagat Singh International Airport, a defence airport in Mohali. Sources in the government told The Indian Express that the helipad has not been used even once since its construction. "The helipad is in the flight line. There are several flights landing at the Mohali airport every day. If we land a chopper at the helipad, there will be a wait of at least three to four hours. Even then, permission from the Indian Air Force (IAF) will be required. It is a tiring process. After landing, another approval is needed to take off from the same point," said a government source privy to the developments.

"As per protocol, the Deputy Commissioner or the Department of Civil Aviation, Punjab, has to inform the IAF authorities about each take-off and landing. The airport is then informed to ensure the air funnel is clear for commercial and IAF flights," the official said, adding that while a helipad can be constructed anywhere, it is better to consult the concerned authorities beforehand to avoid technical issues later. GMADA constructed the temporary helipad in the first week of January in Phase 8, opposite its office and near the Vikas Bhavan, claiming that Rs 1.75 lakh was spent on the project. The helipad's construction had attracted at-



tention as the Vikas Bhavan is frequently used by Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener Arvind Kejriwal during his visits to Punjab. Following the controversy, GMADA issued a communique stating that the temporary helipad was laid using pavers due to challenging site conditions. Ajay Garg, chief engineer, GMADA, said the decision was taken after the site was found to be uneven and marshy following recent rainfall. "The soil condition made it difficult to ensure a stable landing surface. To provide a firm and safe base for helicopter operations, pavers were used for the helipad," he said. Garg also clarified that the construction was temporary and involved minimal expenditure. "The approximate cost of constructing the helipad is Rs 1.75 lakh," he said.

No beef tallow or lard in Tirupati laddu: CBI reveals how ‘synthetic’ material was used to mimic ghee



GNS News Agency, Feb 3

The CBI has filed its final chargesheet in the Tirupati laddu adulteration case and has found that there was no beef tallow or lard in the ghee used to make the laddu prasadam between 2019 and 2024. The chargesheet was filed on January 23 before the Anti-Corruption Bureau court in Nellore. About 16 months ago, in 2024, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and his deputy Pawan Kalyan had ignited a debate by alleging that the sacred Tirupati laddu had been adulterated with “animal fat”. A CBI special investigation team was set up to probe the matter following the intervention of the Supreme Court in October 2024. As per the chargesheet, the ghee used for laddu preparation was adulterated with vegetable oils and laboratory esters used to chemically mimic dairy parameters. It did not find that animal fat was used. The chargesheet reveals that the primary supplier, Bhole Baba Organic Dairy, based in Bhagwanpur, Uttarakhand, operated what investigators have called a “virtual” manufacturing unit. The probe revealed that while the dairy procured no milk or butter at its facility between 2019 and 2024, it managed to supply at least 68 kilograms of ghee to Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD), which runs the Venkateswara temple. The ghee, which was synthetically manufactured without milk, was valued at approximately Rs 250 crore.

The chemical analysis done by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) identified a specific

method used to hoodwink the TTD’s quality control protocols. The temple’s testing relied heavily on Reichert-Meissl (RM) values – a standard measure of purity with a range of 24 to 28 – to verify ghee. To mislead this test, a base of palm oil, palm kernel oil, and palmolein sourced from Budge Budge Co. Ltd. in Kolkata, was used, the chargesheet said.

The chargesheet details the addition of Acetic Acid Esters, supplied specifically by a Delhi-based trader named Ajay Kumar Sugandh (Accused No. 16). These esters were used to artificially spike the RM value, creating a “false positive” for pure ghee in standard lab tests. The syndicate also added Beta Carotene to replicate the golden-yellow colour of cow ghee and artificial flavouring to mimic the aroma of “danedar” (granular) ghee. The chargesheet explicitly states that the “S-value” deviations (cited by Naidu in 2024) were caused by these vegetable oils and chemical esters, not by the presence of animal tissue. The chargesheet names and implicates 36 individuals in a conspiracy to supply adulterated ghee. The key accused is RSSVR Subrahmanyam, the former General Manager (Procurement) at TTD, who is accused of knowingly approving tenders from a blacklisted entity. Also named is Vijaya Bhaskar Reddy, an external dairy expert who allegedly provided “favourable inspection reports” to Bhole Baba dairy. The chargesheet further implicates Chinna Appanna, a former aide to the TTD Chairman, and the directors of Bhole Baba — Pomil and Vipin Jain. The investigation alleges that after Bhole Baba was blacklisted in 2022, the Jains routed the same synthetic ghee through Vyshnavi Dairy (Tirupati) and AR Dairy (Tamil Nadu) to bypass procurement restrictions. With the revelations of the CBI chargesheet coming out, Andhra Pradesh’s Opposition, YSR Congress Party (YSRCP), which was in power in the state during the time of adulteration, has said that Naidu and Pawan Kalyan should apologise to former chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy for “false propaganda”. Rajya Sabha member of YSRCP, YV Subba Reddy, said in a press conference held in Delhi said that Tirumala is not a political platform but spiritual centre for crores of devotees and that Naidu and Kalyan should apologise for bringing politics into the mix.

Delhi extends water bill fine waiver scheme till August 15: clear your pending dues now

GNS News Agency, Feb 3

Over 3.3 lakh consumers have already availed the scheme, with the government aiming to recover more than Rs 5,500 crore in principal dues. The Delhi government has extended its water bill LPSC waiver scheme deadline from January 31 to August 15, benefitting domestic consumers with pending dues, Water Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh said. The Delhi government has extended the deadline for its Late Payment Surcharge (LPSC) waiver scheme on water bills from January 31 to August 15, Water Minister Praveesh Sahib Singh announced Friday.

The one-time amnesty scheme to waive off 100 per cent LPSC on water bills was announced last year in October. Under this scheme, domestic water consumers had to pay the principal amount of their bill by January 31 to get relaxation on the LPSC charges. Those who pay by March 31 were to get only a 70 per cent waiver on the bill. Since the implementation of this scheme, 3,30,000 consumers, which is over 20 per cent of the consumers, have availed the benefits, said the minister. “Since the scheme’s rollout, domestic consumers have received rebates worth Rs 1,493 crore, and the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) has collected revenue of Rs 430 crore through the principal amount. We observed that there are problems in our billing system also, due to which people who want to pay bills and avail the scheme are unable to do so. Thus, we have decided to extend the deadline till August 31,” said Singh. He said that they expect recoveries to rise significantly after the next billing cycle, once consumers get updated bills reflecting the waived



surcharges. He said that the total pending water bill amount is Rs 11,000 crore, of which the government aims to recover Rs 5,570 crore (principal amount) in pending dues by waiving off the LPSC.

The minister said that there are over 16 lakh domestic customers with pending water dues. “We also received several written requests from Residents’ Welfare Associations (RWAs), public representatives and people to extend the deadline of the scheme. Now, as DJB is also working to fix the software so that people can get updated bills after they pay the water bill,” said the minister. The minister appealed to people to come forward and pay their bills and said that the government also plans to set up camps and water Lok Adalats where people can resolve their water billing-related issues on the spot.

Karnataka Congress MLA K C Veerendra faces fresh ED action, assets worth 177 crore seized

GNS News Agency, Feb 3

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has provisionally attached assets worth ₹ 177.3 crore linked to Karnataka Congress MLA K C Veerendra alias Puppy and his associates following investigations into their alleged illegal online betting business, taking the total assets seized in the case to ₹ 320 crore. The ED said in an official statement on Thursday that it had “issued a provisional attachment order on 29.01.2026 under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA)” in the case.

The attached properties include immovable properties like agricultural land and residential sites, along with other movable assets which have been identified as being derived from the proceeds of illegal online betting and gambling operations, the agency said. “With this, the ED has attached assets worth more than ₹ 320 Crore in the present case under the provisions of the PMLA, 2002. Further, during the course of investigation, proceeds of crime exceeding ₹ 2,300 crore have been identified so far, which were generated through illegal online betting and gambling activities and subsequently laundered through multiple layers of transactions,” the ED said. The central agency also claimed that the Congress MLA from Chitradurga and his associates were “the masterminds behind a nationwide illegal online betting network operating through the same modus operandi”. The ED has alleged that “unsuspecting players were induced to stake money on rigged illegal gaming websites which were in nature of online casinos; their deposits (running into crores of rupees in aggregate) were collected via the payment gateways into designated payment aggregator accounts.” The victims were initially shown fake winnings to build trust, the ED said, and then “eventually blocked from withdrawals”. “Investigation has revealed use of hundreds of mule accounts and several payment gateways for laundering of proceeds of crime,” the agency added.

K C Veerendra is considered to be a close associate of Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar. He was arrested in Gangtok in Sikkim on August 23 while on a business visit, after the ED carried out searches at 31 locations linked to him, his brothers, and his associates. The ED has cited seven FIRs linked to cheating in online betting and gambling as the basis for the money laundering probe against Veerendra and others. The searches on the Congress MLA’s gambling and gaming businesses came close on the heels of Parliament passing a bill to ban online real money-based gaming activities. “ED investigation revealed



that K C Veerendra in association with other friends and family members is involved in operations of many illegal online betting websites viz. King567, Raja567 etc and cheating innocent players through the same. Further, the fund collection from players has been routed using several gateways like FonePaisa etc,” the ED said.

Government unveils new Aadhaar app for faster, safer digital verification

New Delhi: The government has unveiled a new Aadhaar mobile app designed to make identity verification faster, safer and more citizen-friendly by enabling users to carry and share their digital identity from their mobile phones.

The application allows users to present Aadhaar for verification without showing a physical card or submitting photocopies. Further, users can share only the specific details required on a use-case basis and will speed up identity checks at places such as airports, hotels, hospitals and on various service platforms. Key features include QR code-based offline verification for hotel check-ins and similar services, optional face verification to confirm presence, and age verification for services such as movie bookings. “Designed for ease of use across the entire spectrum of users, the Aadhaar App supports a wide range of real-life use cases. These include hotel check-ins through Offline Verification Seeking Entity’s (OVSE) QR code scanning.

Kannada actor Mayur Patel booked for drunken driving as his SUV rams into 4 cars in Bengaluru



GNS News Agency, Feb 3

The Bengaluru traffic police Wednesday night booked Kannada actor, music director, and singer Mayur Patel for allegedly driving under the influence of alcohol and ramming his SUV into four cars at a traffic signal in Domlur. No injuries were reported in the incident. According to the police, the accident occurred around 10 pm near the Com-mando Hospital traffic signal when Patel’s Toyota Fortuner

struck a taxi from behind, triggering a chain collision that damaged four vehicles.

Taxi driver Srinivas, who subsequently filed a complaint in this regard, said the impact caused significant damage to multiple cars. The traffic police immediately conducted a breathalyser test on Mayur Patel at the site of the accident and the actor’s test results indicated that his blood alcohol content (BAC) was above the permissible limit of 30mg per 100ml of blood (0.03% BAC) under the Motor Vehicles Act. An officer in charge of the investigation into the incident confirmed that Patel was driving the SUV in which he was travelling, and added that the actor did not dispute this. A police officer said Patel had also assured to repair the damaged vehicles. Later, speaking to mediapersons, the complainant Srinivas said he had just bought the car on a bank loan to drive a taxi in the city. “I had bought the vehicle a week ago, and I wanted to earn a living using it. But now the vehicle is damaged and I don’t even have the money to pay the first EMI, which is due on February 5,” he said. Patel must now appear before the jurisdictional court, pay a fine, and secure his vehicle’s release. Meanwhile, the police also found that his Toyota Fortuner’s insurance had expired for which a separate fine will have to be paid.

The man who tried to defeat me but never hated me: Vijay Shivtare on Ajit Pawar

GNS News Agency, Feb 3

Vijay Shivtare, Shiv Sena MLA from Purandar and one of the few politicians whom the late NCP leader Ajit Pawar had publicly vowed to politically finish in 2019, speaks to VALLABH OZARKAR about their long rivalry, eventual reconciliation and their last meeting just days before Pawar’s death. Ajit Pawar’s sudden demise has left me deeply shaken. What happened on Wednesday came as a complete shock. For some time, I could not even believe the news. I felt as though someone from my own family had passed away. His passing is not just a personal loss, but a loss for Maharashtra. Ajit Pawar was an asset to the state, not merely to his party. With his untimely and tragic demise, Maharashtra has lost a leader whose absence will be felt for a long time. This loss is irreparable.

When one listens to his speeches today, one understands the maturity, clarity of thought and long term vision he had for the state’s development. As soon as I learned about the incident, I rushed to Baramati and remained there until the funeral. When one sees Baramati and the scale of development there, from the medical college where he was taken after his demise to numerous other projects, one realises the depth and impact of his work. It speaks for itself.

Though in recent years we had become political rivals, there were never any personal differences or fights between us. We shared a good personal relationship. Our disagreements were always political and issue based. There were differences of opinion, but no differences of heart. All the statements we made against each other during elections were political. One thing must be said unequivocally. He never held any personal grudge against me. During the recent Lok Sabha elections, when I had gone to Baramati to campaign for Sunetra Pawar, he said openly from the stage, “Till now, everyone has seen the enmity between Vijay Shivtare and me. From here on, Maharashtra will see our friendship.” That single statement reflected the person he was. Political rivalry never translated into personal bitterness. Just four or five days before his death, I met him at Sahyadri Guest House in Mumbai. He stopped to speak with me, inquired about my health and urged me to take my kidney ailment seriously. He asked me to get a transplant done and questioned how long I would remain on dialysis. When I mentioned the upcoming Zilla Parishad elections, he told me, “Elections will keep happening. Take care of your health first.”

That was his nature. Compassionate, even towards political rivals. He never carried resentment. I began my



political career with the NCP at its inception in 1999 and have known Ajit Pawar personally since then. In 2004, when the NCP performed well electorally, I was among those who demanded that he be made Chief Minister. In the late 2000s, I joined the Shiv Sena and started building the party’s base in Purandar, which borders Baramati, a region where the Pawar family has traditionally held sway. At the time, Purandar lagged in development, and I often raised the issue that while Baramati was progressing rapidly, Purandar was being neglected. This became the core of our political disagreement. Yet even when he was Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister in a Congress led government, and I was in the opposition criticising him, he ensured that Purandar received necessary financial support. There was no discrimination.

In 2014, I campaigned for the BJP candidate in the region, which led to the defeat of the NCP candidate. In 2019, when his son Parth Pawar contested the Lok Sabha election from Baramati, I campaigned aggressively and he lost. Those developments angered him, and he publicly stated that he would ensure I did not win the 2019 Assembly election, which eventually happened. Yet, despite these episodes, whenever we met, he spoke with warmth, respect and concern. The rivalry never crossed into personal hostility. During the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, I had filed my nomination against Sunetra Pawar but withdrew it after the intervention of Eknath Shinde and Devendra Fadnavis. At that time, Ajit Pawar assured me that development works in Purandar would be completed. He kept that promise. In essence, my relationship with Ajit Pawar was shaped by sharp political rivalry and mutual respect. We challenged each other fiercely in public life and often stood on opposite sides of the political divide. Yet beneath that rivalry was a shared understanding that politics must never become personal.

Ludhiana MSMEs pin high hopes on Union Budget 2026 as bicycle capital looks for a shift to EVs

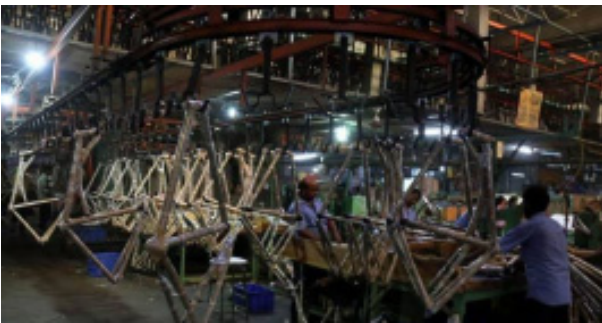
GNS News Agency, Feb 3

With the Union Budget 2026–27 scheduled to be presented on February 1, industry bodies across Punjab, particularly from Ludhiana’s strong manufacturing base, have outlined a comprehensive set of expectations, focusing on Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) revival, manufacturing competitiveness, tax rationalisation, and support for emerging sectors like electric vehicles and green mobility. Pankaj Sharma, president of the Association of Trade and Industrial Undertakings (ATIUI), said the association represents a wide base of MSMEs engaged in bicycle parts, auto components, EV components, railway supplies, hosiery, and garment manufacturing.

Presenting sector-specific demands, Sharma said, “the bicycle parts industry needs urgent policy support to revive demand and improve global competitiveness. Key expectations include: Reduction in GST on bicycle parts to improve affordability and stimulate domestic demand, strong anti-dumping measures to curb the influx of cheap and low-quality imports, export incentives and logistics cost reduction to enhance competitiveness, technology upgradation schemes for bicycle and light engineering units, promotion of India-made bicycles under the government’s ‘Green Mobility’ initiatives.” Highlighting the transition underway in Ludhiana’s industrial ecosystem, Sharma noted that many units are shifting from conventional auto and bicycle parts to electric vehicle (EV) components. “The industry expects continuation of EV incentives beyond the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles (FAME) framework. There is also a strong demand for Production Linked Incentive (PLI) support for EV motors, controllers, and battery components to help MSMEs scale up,” he said.

Echoing concerns of the garment sector, Sudarshan Jain, president of the Knitwear and Apparel Manufacturers Association of Ludhiana (KAMAL), said the MSME sector has struggled to recover even after the Covid-19 pandemic. Ludhiana, known as the ‘Manchester of India’ is also a major hub of bicycle manufacturing, auto parts, and sewing machines. “MSMEs have not been able to grow post-Covid. The government should focus on easing financial availability, particularly through interest subvention schemes. We are not asking for relief packages, only genuine ease of doing business,” Jain said.

From the bicycle manufacturing ecosystem, Lakhminder ‘Dicky’ Chhabra, Convener of the United Cycles



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Parts and Manufacturers Association (UCPMA), stressed the need for incentives that promote domestic manufacturing of components such as frames, gears, and precision parts. “‘Make in India’ should be visible on the ground. Industry needs simplified compliance norms, infrastructure support, and resolution of mixed-land use issues. Bicycle manufacturers in Ludhiana have long been advocating for the inclusion of e-bikes under existing PLI and EV support policies to help upgrade technology and compete globally,” Chhabra said. She also reflected broader household concerns, stating, “from a homemaker’s perspective- children’s education and healthcare should not become financial burdens, household savings must retain real value amid inflation, and families need greater income stability for stress-free monthly planning.” On the taxation front, Rajnish Ahuja, president of the Apex Chamber of Commerce and Industry, called for simplification and rationalisation of income tax slabs. “Tax rates need to be reduced to encourage transparency and widen the tax base. Multiple layers of taxation—GST, high fuel taxes, electricity duties—are already burdening taxpayers. Instead of overburdening a small segment, the focus should be on rationalising income tax slabs to bring more people into the tax net,” Ahuja said. Industry leaders across Punjab expressed hope that the upcoming Union Budget would acknowledge the critical role of MSMEs in employment generation and exports, and deliver policy measures that enable sustainable growth, competitiveness, and economic stability.

Digital addiction fuelling mental health crisis among youth: Economic Survey



GNS News Agency, Feb 3

New Delhi: Digital addiction is growing as a significant health problem among children and the youth and is also contributing to the mental health crisis in the country, said the government on Thursday in the Economic Survey 2025-26. The Survey tabled in the Parliament by the Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman, noted that digital addiction is closely linked with the degrading mental health of the youth in the country. "Digital addiction negatively affects academic performance and workplace productivity due to distractions, 'sleep debt', and reduced focus. It also erodes social capital," it said.

To address this problem, the CBSE has issued guidelines on safe internet use in schools and school buses. Other measures include the Ministry of Education's Pragyatah framework, which guides digital education planning with attention to screen time, and the National Commission for

Protection of Child Rights guidelines on screen time limits and online safety. Further, the Survey also mentioned the high prevalence of social media addiction among those aged 15-24, which is strongly associated with anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and cyberbullying stress. Other issues plaguing Indian youth include compulsive scrolling, social comparison, and gaming disorders. These are increasingly leading to sleep disruption, aggression, social withdrawal, and depression, with adolescent populations being especially vulnerable.

To address this issue, the government has taken multiple measures, the Survey said. This includes the Tele-MANAS (Tele Mental Health Assistance and Networking Across States), which has since its launch in October 2022, received over 32 lakh calls; the SHUT (Service for Healthy Use of Technology) Clinic at NIMHANS, Bengaluru, which provides specialised care for excessive and compulsive technology use, focusing on adolescents and young adults; and the Online Gaming (Regulation) Act, 2025, which represents a major step to address digital addiction and financial harm among youth. As digital access cannot be fully restricted, the Survey suggested the establishment of offline youth hubs, particularly in urban slums and rural areas, to provide alternatives to digital spaces; moderated online safe spaces hosted by schools or similar institutions. "Schools play a critical role in shaping digital habits, and hence, they should introduce a Digital Wellness Curriculum covering screen time literacy, cyber safety, and mental health awareness," it said, while calling for a "holistic approach, including physical and mental health, is essential to ensure a resilient future".

What is the Salman Khan personality rights case? | Explained

GNS News Agency, Feb 3

The story so far: The High Court of Delhi issued a notice on January 21, 2026, to actor Salman Khan on an application filed by a China-based AI voice generation platform seeking to vacate an interim injunction protecting the actor's personality rights. While the main matter was heard on January 23 by the Joint Registrar (Judicial), the Chinese app's application is listed for February 27.

Who is John Doe?

The original suit named 28 defendants, including major technology companies such as Apple Inc., Google LLC, Meta's Facebook and Instagram, X, e-commerce platforms including Amazon India and Flipkart, and intermediaries like Telegram FZ LLC. Mr. Khan also sought an injunction against unknown persons, joined as Defendant No. 1 ('John Doe' or 'Ashok Kumar'), a procedural device that allows courts to pass ex-parte orders where defendants cannot be identified. The Chinese AI platform was later added as Defendant No. 35, though it is yet to be formally impleaded following the order of the Joint Registrar (Judicial).

How do personality rights operate?

In K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017), the Supreme Court recognised privacy as a fundamental right under Article 21. Courts have since held that unauthorised commercial exploitation of an individual's persona may infringe the right to life. Personality rights recognise the economic value of identity, particularly for public figures, and are distinct from statutory intellectual property rights. In a 2025 order involving Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, the Delhi High Court noted that unauthorised use of a celebrity's identity could cause commercial harm. Courts have restrained false impersonation, unauthorised use of images and names by websites and AI tools, and the creation of manipulated or inappropriate content.

While Article 19(1)(g) guarantees Indian citizens the right to conduct business, this right is subject to reasonable restrictions. Courts have also protected artistic expression, provided such works do not mislead the public or imply endorsement. Foreign entities, however, cannot invoke Article 19 before Indian courts.

What is the Chinese app context?

In 2020, the Union government banned over 200 Chinese applications under Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, citing national security concerns related to data collection and storage. Although the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, has been passed, enforcement

UIDAI launches new Aadhaar app; can be used to verify age without oversharing data, IT Secretary says

GNS News Agency, Feb 3

The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has launched a new Aadhaar app that can be used for age verification under the Digital Personal Data Protection Act (DPDP Act) without sharing any additional data, a senior government official said. Speaking at the launch of the app on Wednesday (January 28, 2026), the Ministry of Electronics and IT Secretary S. Krishnan said the government has amended Swik Rules or the Aadhaar Authentication for Good Governance (Social Welfare, Innovation, Knowledge) Rules, 2020 to enable private entities to provide service by using Aadhaar authentication on secure basis.

"We frequently contend within the ambit of the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act is age verification and how age verification will be done. I think we are in a position where, with the Aadhaar app, there is actually a way that age gating can seamlessly apply without oversharing the data," Mr. Krishnan said. He later said there are firms that are developing solutions that have been put up for demonstration at the Aadhaar event. Age gating will help online platforms, including social media platforms, online games, and e-commerce, to verify age of users for providing services to them.

The age verification will also help online platforms in cutting down access to age inappropriate content or products for children. The UIDAI has launched a new app that can be downloaded from app stores on mobile phones. This will enable people and entities like hotels, cinema halls, online firms to verify an individual digitally for providing services.

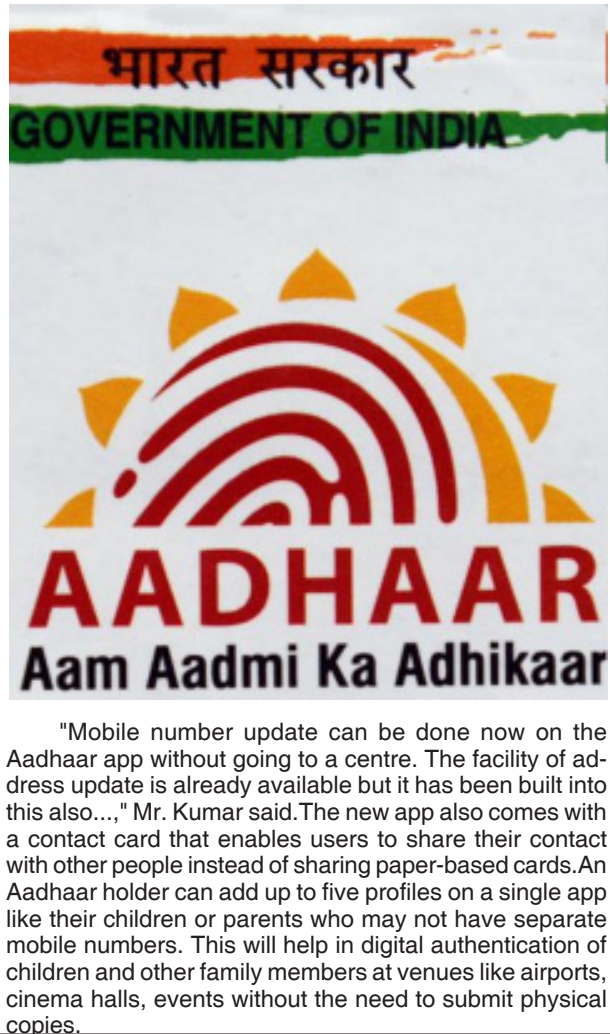
The app aims to discourage use of paper copies of Aadhaar that are generally used by several entities mainly hotels, government offices for verifying an individual. UIDAI CEO Bhuvnesh Kumar said besides easing access to Aadhaar services like address and mobile number update, the app will enable digital verification for entities and share with them information that are required for providing service.



remains pending, leaving gaps in regulation, particularly in the AI sector. Nandan Nilekani recently said voice-based AI is critical for digital equity and could be like a UPI-moment for India. A dismissal of the Chinese platform's application could have broader implications for misuse by AI companies.

What about fees in celebrity suits?

Personality rights claims are typically filed under the Commercial Courts Act, 2015, since celebrities rarely hold conventional IP rights over their identity. Courts have, however, allowed interim injunctions without upfront payment of court fees in several cases, granting extensions under procedural provisions. This practice has attracted scrutiny, given the high brand valuations often cited in such suits. Recent scrutiny in the European Union of generative AI systems such as Elon Musk's Grok highlights similar regulatory concerns. In India, while the IT Rules, 2021 provide takedown mechanisms, the limited effectiveness of grievance redressal systems has pushed public figures to seek relief directly from High Courts. Ensuring protection against digital impersonation from celebrities to citizens remains a pressing concern.



Trump warns U.K. about business with China after Starmer-Xi talks



U.S. President Donald Trump has warned the United Kingdom against getting into business with China after British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and Chinese leader Xi Jinping hailed a reset in relations. With Western leaders reeling from the unpredictability of Mr. Trump, Mr. Starmer became the latest to head to China, where he called for a "more sophisticated relationship" with improved market access, lower tariffs and investment deals in three-hours of talks with Mr. Xi on

During the premiere of the "Melania" film at the Kennedy Centre, Mr. Trump was asked about the U.K. pledging greater business cooperation with China, and he told reporters: "Well, it's very dangerous for them to do that, and it's even more dangerous? I think for Canada to get into business with China." Mr. Starmer, whose centre-left Labour government has struggled to deliver the economic growth it promised, has made improving relations with the world's second-largest economy a priority. His visit comes amid Mr. Trump's on-off threats of trade tariffs and pledges to grab control of Greenland, an autonomous territory of Denmark, which have rattled long-standing U.S. allies, such as Britain. Mr. Starmer told reporters on the plane on the way to China that Britain could continue to strengthen economic ties with China — without angering Mr. Trump — because of his country's long history of working closely with the United States. "The relationship we have with the U.S. is one of the closest relationships we hold, on defence, security, intelligence and also on trade and lots of areas," he said. Mr. Starmer said Britain would not have to choose between closer ties with the United States or China, highlighting Mr. Trump's visit to Britain in September where

they announced 150 billion pound of U.S investment into Britain. Mr. Trump has threatened to impose tariffs on Canada if it goes through with economic deals struck with China on a recent visit by its leader Mark Carney. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz is expected to travel to China soon and Mr. Trump himself has said he will visit in April.

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Burkina Faso's junta dissolves all of country's political parties, saying they cause divisions

GNS News Agency, Feb 3

Burkina Faso's military junta has dissolved all the political parties in the country and scrapped the laws governing them, according to a decree approved by the government on Thursday (January 29, 2026). The dissolution of political parties and similar groups follows similar measures that activists say have targeted civic freedom and the opposition since military authorities took power in a 2022 coup. Activities by political parties have long been suspended in the country under the junta. The new decree requires the assets of the parties to be transferred to the state, the government-run news agency said.

Minister of Territorial Administration Emile Zerbo said the dissolution comes after authorities found that the parties have deviated from the guidelines establishing them. "The government believes that the proliferation of political parties has led to excesses, fostering division among citizens and weakening the social fabric," he said after Thursday's (January 29, 2026) Council of Ministers meeting, where the measure was approved. Draft laws that will guide the establishment of future political parties and groups



will be submitted to the legislature "as soon as possible," the Minister said. Burkina Faso is among a growing number of countries in West and Central Africa that have been hit by a surge in coups and delays to the return of democratic rule. Since taking power in a 2022 coup, its military leaders have launched sweeping reforms, including postponing elections that were expected to restore civilian rule and dissolving the country's independent Electoral Commission.

French PM forces full 2026 budget through without vote



GNS News Agency, Feb 3

France's Prime Minister Sebastien Lecornu made

use of a special constitutional power on Friday (January 30, 2026) to force his 2026 budget bill through the deeply divided Lower House of Parliament without a vote, a move that will likely trigger further votes of no confidence. "France must have a budget. And so, before this chamber, I am committing the government's responsibility for the entire Finance Bill for 2026," he told the National Assembly while invoking a constitutional power to avoid a vote on the bill. Mr. Lecornu has already endured a string of no-confidence votes as he pushed the first sections of the 2026 state budget through Parliament without a vote, after negotiations reached an impasse. Mr. Lecornu had already invoked Article 49.3 of the Constitution on the income side as well as on the expenditure side of the legislation to get it through the Lower House, where it had become deadlocked after three months of discussions.

Donald Trump files lawsuit over unauthorised IRS tax data disclosure

Washington: President Donald Trump has filed a civil lawsuit against the Internal Revenue Service and the US Treasury Department, seeking at least \$10 billion in damages over the unauthorised disclosure of his tax return information by an agency contractor who later pleaded guilty to a felony. The lawsuit, filed Thursday in federal court in the Southern District of Florida, names the IRS and the Treasury Department as defendants and was brought by Trump alongside his two eldest sons, Donald Trump Jr. and Eric Trump, as well as the Trump Organization. The complaint centers on Charles "Chaz" Littlejohn, a former IRS contractor who is currently serving a five-year prison sentence after pleading guilty to unlawfully accessing and disclosing confidential taxpayer information. Prosecutors have said Littlejohn sought employment linked to the IRS with the intention of obtaining and leaking tax records. "Defendants have caused Plaintiffs reputational and financial harm, public embarrassment, unfairly tarnished their business reputations, portrayed them in a false light, and negatively affected President Trump and the other Plaintiffs' public standing," the lawsuit states. The lawsuit relies on federal statutes that allow taxpayers to seek damages from the government for the knowing or negligent disclosure of protected return information. Trump and the other plaintiffs argue that the IRS had a legal duty to safeguard their tax data and failed to implement adequate administrative, technical, and physical protections.

According to the complaint, Littlejohn accessed and disclosed tax return information belonging to Trump, his family members and hundreds of Trump Organization entities between 2018 and 2020. The materials were later used in reporting by media outlets including The New York Times and ProPublica. The plaintiffs contend that although those stories were published years ago, they were not formally notified by the Treasury Department until much later that an IRS contractor was responsible for the disclosures. The lawsuit argues that this delayed notification is relevant because federal law generally imposes a two-year deadline for filing such claims. "Plaintiffs had no reason to believe that an unauthorised disclosure had occurred for at least two reasons," the complaint states, citing the absence of attribution to the IRS in early reporting and an internal review that, at the time, concluded the disclosure did not originate within the agency. The filing seeks statutory damages, punitive damages and recovery of legal costs, asserting that the scale of the breach — involving multiple years of tax returns and hundreds of related entities — justifies an 11-figure claim. The lawsuit comes days after the Treasury Department announced it was canceling contracts with Booz Allen Hamilton, the consulting firm that employed Littlejohn while he was performing work connected to the IRS. Federal officials have said the move followed concerns about the firm's failure to adequately protect sensitive taxpayer information.

From the moon to MRIs: how space research has transformed healthcare on earth



Many of us may not be aware of healthcare spinoffs that come about as a byproduct of space exploration. A significant number of them, however, have contributed to better healthcare here on earth. Under the United States' space programme, NASA, there are over 2,000 such spinoffs profiled since 1976, in which NASA technologies have benefited life on earth in the form of commercial products. India too, has made some progress in this regard. While ISRO's current annual budget of ₹13,416 crore is 6% of NASA's annual budget, over 350 technologies have been transferred to Indian industries, including several in health/ biomedical sectors (implants, sensors, medical electronics), through ISRO's Technology Transfer Programme.

Just a few examples include ISRO's VSAT terminals and VSAT-enabled mobile medical units to facilitate healthcare delivery in remote locations; an endoscopic catheter mounted impedance probe to assess mucosal health, a capacitive sensor to detect malignancy in leukocytes; the ISRO smart limb – a low-cost bionic limb for amputees, and an artificial polyurethane foot. Here's how healthcare applications on earth that are secondary to space exploration, developed. Patients and even doctors seldom realise that the digital image processing deployed in ultrasounds, CTs, MRIs and mammography images was initially used in planetary and astronomical image analysis. NASA technologies improved MRI and CT imaging primarily by providing advanced digital image-processing, segmentation, and fusion methods that enhance contrast, reduce noise, and help with better distinguishing of tissues, especially at low doses or low signals. These tools originated in processing planetary earth observations, and plasma-physics data. They were then used in clinical radiology as software and workflow concepts. Engineers at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory and other NASA centres developed digital enhancement techniques (contrast stretching, filtering, deblurring, edge detection) to analyse lunar and planetary images. These were later adapted to improve CT and MRI images, especially in low-contrast situations. Advanced ultrasound techniques using portable, networked systems, speckle reduction, and elastography algorithms were initially refined on Shuttle Spacecrafts and on board the International Space Station. Infrared ear thermometers using IR sensors and optics were developed for stellar temperature measurement.

Compact blood analysers and miniaturised "lab-on-chip" devices used in Point of Care Diagnostics will eventually make available, a sophisticated laboratory in our homes and perhaps even in our pockets. The impetus and initial funding for this research, which today benefits earthlings, came from sheer necessity for blood tests in microgravity situations 400 km above the earth.

The now commonplace wearables, those monitoring heart rate, ECG, respiration and movement, were originally derived from astronaut biotelemetry. Non-invasive glucose and metabolic monitoring concepts using optical and microwave sensing were initially investigated for in-flight monitoring. Smart clothes with embedded strain gauges, accelerometers, and ECG electrodes evolved from space-suit

biomonitoring. Advanced air and water purification systems (HEPA/particulate filters, catalytic oxidizers) were originally designed for closed spacecraft. Microbial monitoring and sterilisation approaches have all been refined in the context of spacecraft contamination control. Antimicrobial and low-outgassing materials from spacecraft cabins are now used in clinical surfaces, catheters, and implant coatings.

Telemedicine and logistics Satellite-based telemedicine consultations still play a significant role in remote areas where terrestrial internet may not be available. Satellite communication also facilitates disaster management, teleradiology and specialist support including for the health of astronauts. Global disease surveillance and epidemiological mapping using earth-observation and satellite data (environmental correlates, vector habitats, disaster impact on health systems) have played a major role in containing global outbreaks. Solar-powered vaccine refrigerators and medical coolers developed to support off-grid space-related field operations, are now widely used in immunisation programmes. Drone delivery systems for medical supplies rely on satellite navigation and communication. These, too, evolved from space missions.

Devices and interventions Certain Ventricular Assist Devices were co-developed with NASA flow-dynamics expertise to create very small, low-shear blood pumps for management of end-stage heart failure. Programmable pacemakers and rhythm-management hardware resulted from radiation-hardened electronics, miniaturisation and power-management work done for spacecraft. In 2016, ISRO developed a low-cost heart pump that assists the human heart, notably in cases of left ventricle failure, using lightweight rocket material. This device is composed of a special bio-compatible titanium alloy and can pump 3-5 litres of blood every minute. It has been experimented with successfully on animals, and holds promise for eventual clinical trials. Astronaut exercise hardware gave a fillip to robotic and sensor-based advanced rehabilitation systems. Prosthetic limbs and orthoses improved, using space shuttle foam-insulation and composite-material know-how for lighter, better-fitting components. In 1977, the first patent for a cochlear implant was with NASA assistance. Invisible braces are a type of transparent ceramic called translucent polycrystalline alumina (TPA).

The company Ceradyn, developed TPA in conjunction with NASA Advanced Ceramics Research, as protection for infrared antennae on heat-seeking missile trackers. A sunglasses manufacturer, Foster Grant, first licensed a NASA technology for scratch-resistant lenses, developed to protect space equipment from scratching in space, especially helmet visors. Spaceblankets, developed in 1964 for the space programme, are lightweight and reflect infrared radiation. These items are often included in first aid kits. Tech startup BeeHex developed 3D printing systems for food such as pizza, desserts, and icings following a NASA-funded project.

Biomechanical and physiological models (bone loss, muscle atrophy, cardiovascular deconditioning) developed from astronaut data, have contributed to current management of osteoporosis, sarcopenia and enforced bed rest. Radiobiology and radiation-risk models from deep-space exposure studies help cancer risk assessment and radiotherapy safety. Human factors, alarm fatigue and cockpit-style interface design methods from spacecraft have been used in intensive care units (ICUs) and operating room monitoring systems. While the debate about funding space research continues, there is no doubt that investment in space exploration has contributed to better life on earth in a number of ways, particularly in healthcare. For emerging economies in particular, techniques and applications produced by space research can go a long way towards better healthcare delivery and service.

Life is a stink for Eloor-Edayar residents



As she opened the door to her modest rented home near the Pathalam bridge road in Ernakulam district's Eloor-Edayar industrial belt, 48-year-old Umaira looked tired. It was around 8:30 a.m. The cough that began the previous night seemed to have lasted far longer than usual. Her eyes remained dry as the persistent cough refused to leave her. "As the wind flows in carrying the pungent smell, I often gasp for breath," she says, pointing across to the Edayar industrial area located on the other side of the Periyar River flowing nearby. The acrid air has equally affected the lives of her family members, including her 52-year-old husband Kabeer, a lottery ticket seller, her daughter, and three grandchildren.

"I worry just as much for my grandchildren. We have been living in this house for over a decade. Unable to bear the situation, some of our neighbours have left the place," she says in a strained voice.

The Continuous Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Station set up by the Kerala State Pollution Control Board near the Eloor depot is defunct as the annual maintenance contract of the facility expired in February 2025. With the system becoming non-functional, public have no access to data on the air quality index levels in the industrial town.

The Continuous Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Station set up by the Kerala State Pollution Control Board near the Eloor depot is defunct as the annual maintenance contract of the facility expired in February 2025. With the system becoming non-functional, public have no access to data on the air quality index levels in the industrial town. | Photo Credit: R.K. Nithin Two houses away, 60-year-old Sreekumar had just returned from the nearby Employees State Insurance Corporation Hospital at Pathalam, where his wife, Geetha, 58, had been rushed that morning after her breathing troubles worsened.

Once an employee of Fertilisers and Chemicals Travancore at Udyogmandal, it was a natural decision for him to settle in some place close to the industrial heartland. But over the years, resignation replaced hope. "We have learned to live with it. The air was not this heavy when we arrived nearly two decades ago," he says. The decline, he recalls, began five or six years ago, when odour-causing units sprouted along the banks of the Periyar River. Life remains miserable for many residents like Umaira and Sreekumar along the Eloor-Edayar industrial area as the recurrent odour and persistent air pollution continue without any sign of relief. As per the estimates of the Kerala State Pollution Control Board (PCB), there are about 350 industrial units in the Edayar industrial area of the Ernakulam District Industries Centre located in the Kadungalloor grama panchayat limits. In 2022, the worsening stench caused by the operation of a total of 20 bone meal units, chicken-waste rendering plants, fish-oil extraction units, and rubber-processing facilities in Edayar prompted the PCB to commission a study.

The study by the National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology, Thiruvananthapuram, to assess the extent and sources of the emissions revealed high non-compliant odour threshold levels — up to 2,50,00,000 Odour Units per cubic metre — in one erring unit. The incidents of uncontrolled emissions from the industrial units along the Eloor-Edayar stretch have taken a toll on the lives of the nearby residents. Lack of sustained enforcement and strict implementation of environmental norms have aggravated the situation.

The incidents of uncontrolled emissions from the industrial units along the Eloor-Edayar stretch have taken a toll on the lives of the nearby residents. Lack of sustained enforcement and strict implementation of environmental norms have aggravated the situation. R.K. Nithin Though there is no Indian standard prescribed for odour emission, the nuisance threshold level is defined as the concentration at which not more than a small proportion of the population (less than 5%) experiences annoyance for a small part of the time (less than 2%), says the report. It was revealed that the majority of the units had inadequate storage facilities for raw materials and lacked proper ventilation and refrigeration systems for storing raw materials. Insufficient closure of reactor vessels, reliance on crude odour emission control technologies during processing, and improper design and specifications of odour-emission control units were some of the drawbacks identified by the study.

"Though foul odour may not cause direct health issues, toxic stimulants associated with odour may cause ill health or respiratory symptoms. Secondary effects may include nausea, insomnia, and discomfort in some individuals. A strong odour can lead to nasal irritation and trigger symptoms in people with breathing difficulties or asthma. On the economic front, the loss of property value near odour-caus-

ing operations or industries and in odour-affected environments is partly a consequence of offensive odour," the report says. Though the board had issued closure notices to the 20 erring units between April 2024 and January 2025, it was relaxed following an assessment by the board's Environment Surveillance Centre, Eloor, that the managements had implemented the recommended corrective measures.

Elders residing in areas near the Edayar industrial area are worried as they see no solution to the issue. Stepping out from his flour mill located beside his home near St. Jude's Church, near Pathalam, 70-year-old T.T. Varghese voices his concern. "The authorities shall at least take steps to stop the unbearable stench — an odour like rotting meat that hangs in the air. It's intolerable," he says. "We put the plans to shift to a safe location on hold after real estate prices hit a low in view of the pollution scenario," he laments. Health workers are aware of the impact of the pollution on the residents. Deepthi Santhosh, an Accredited Social Health Activist worker in Ward 6 of the municipality, says that most of the affected residents suffer from respiratory issues. "Besides odour pollution, black fine particles seen on leaves of plants and the exterior of houses are also causing distress to the residents. Doctors often advise them to shift to another place. But it's not that easy for most of the residents," she says.

Despite the concerns of the residents, PCB authorities claim that the odour problem is under control. "Biofilter units for odour control are functional in about 90% of the bone meal, meat rendering, and rubber processing units," says P.K. Baburajan, Chief Environmental Engineer, Ernakulam. "Weekly reviews involving representatives of the Industries department and management of the units are being held," he adds. V. Narendra Kumar, president of the Edayar Small-Scale Industries Association, says that the remedial action taken over the last two years has resulted in improved odour control measures in the 21 bone meal, waste rendering, rubber and fish processing units. "There have been no major complaints over the last month. The lapses, if any, are being addressed promptly, he claims.

The Industries department has also given a clean chit. "No major pollution issue has been reported since the 2024 mass fishkill along the Edayar stretch," affirms Najeeb P.A., manager of the District Industries Centre. However, Neethu M.R., a former civic representative, refuses to buy the board's position. "The rotten smell of processing raw chicken and other waste emanates both in the morning and evening hours," she complains. Odour nuisance becomes particularly severe during festival occasions and in the days that follow, when huge loads of raw materials are brought to the chicken-waste rendering plants and bone meal units, she says.

Environmentalists too have voiced their protest over the 'blatant violation of the environmental norms' caused by the erring units. Purushan Eloor, spokesperson of the Periyar Malineekarana Virudha Samiti campaigning for the protection of the Periyar river, cites the inordinate delay on the part of the PCB to ensure that the industrial units comply with the various environmental norms.

"The pollution control measures are yet to prove effective even 20 years after a Supreme Court-appointed monitoring committee pulled up the government and the industrial units in the Eloor-Edayar industrial belt for violation of the environmental norms. It continues unabated. In a recent incident, a large pile-up of waste from a chicken waste rendering unit was found dumped close to the Periyar river on January 25, 2026. The stench from the site was unbearable," he complains. Suresh Muttathil, former chairperson of the Kadungalloor panchayat, says that the wards near the Edayar industrial area experience odour issues, especially during the rains. "However, the impact is less compared to the problems faced by the people in Pathalam and Eloor," he says.

Environmentalists have also pointed out the shortcomings on the part of the PCB in tracking the pollution sources and carrying out regular air quality monitoring. A senior board official admitted that the agency lacked an olfactometer for smell measurement. "The continuous ambient air quality monitoring station at Eloor remains non-functional after its annual maintenance contract expired in February 2025," he says. Though the Eloor municipality lacked official data on the health impact caused by air pollution, former chairperson A.D. Sujil says that 500 litres of free drinking water is daily provided to about 3,200 families in the region following the shortage of drinking water caused by industrial pollution of water sources. Health experts have cautioned about the implications of getting exposed to various types of pollutants regularly. Rajeev Jayadevan, convener of the research cell of the Indian Medical Association, Kerala, says that symptoms like nausea, vomiting, and headache could sometimes be biological signals that the body needs to escape a harmful environment. "Industrial emission of chemicals can cause chronic airway irritation, aggravating asthma and existing lung diseases. Symptoms such as headache and nausea could be from airborne toxins that are triggering the brain's chemoreceptor trigger zone — an instinct to detect and avoid toxic exposure," he adds. B. Madhusoodana Kurup, former Vice-Chancellor of the Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies, Kochi, who led a people's committee report on the massive fish kill in the Periyar river in May 2024, says that it's high time the authorities conducted a carrying capacity study in the Eloor-Edayar industrial area.

Alcohol, liver cirrhosis, and the point of no return



A 40-year-old male with a long history of daily alcohol consumption presented with yellowish discoloration of the eyes and urine, swelling of the lower limbs, and progressive abdominal distention over a short span of 15 days. These symptoms, which were ignored in the early stages (as is common), revealed significant liver damage. Medical testing and imaging showed severe liver disease, revealing how slowly alcohol-related liver damage might proceed. In this case, the diagnosis of cirrhosis was confirmed after scan results from an abdominal ultrasonography that also revealed a substantial buildup of fluid—known as ascitic fluid—in the abdominal cavity. Bilirubin levels were high, well outside the usual maximum limit of 1.2 mg/dL. Put together, these tests showed that this patient's liver had reached decompensation due to liver cirrhosis, an important point at which the liver can no longer adequately perform all its basic metabolic and detoxifying processes.

Alcohol-related liver disease goes through various phases, the first of which is steatosis (fat buildup). Steatosis can be completely reversed if individuals stop drinking alcohol. Hepatitis is defined as the development of acute inflammatory changes within the liver due to alcohol consumption, and can appear as a change in liver function (i.e., liver parameters/levels), jaundice, abdominal pain, and worsening liver function; alcoholic hepatitis can appear with multiple levels of clinical severity, but if the patient remains abstinent and receives nutritional support and appropriate medical treatment, the outcomes of alcoholic hepatitis are reversible. The most severe form of liver disease is cirrhosis. At this point, scar tissue that cannot be healed completely replaces healthy liver cells. This scar tissue leads to a condition known as portal hypertension, with further possible concerns such as fluid buildup in the abdominal cavity (ascites), bleeding from varices, infections, and issues with brain function (hepatic encephalopathy). As such, a patient with cirrhosis has a poor prognosis. Medical intervention can stabilise the patient's liver, but it won't undo any structural damage or alterations.

It is commonly believed that there is "safe" limit to alcohol intake, an amount one can consume that does not

damage the liver. . This is a dangerous myth: there is no set amount of alcohol that is safe for anybody. It has been shown that most men develop alcoholic liver disease after consuming an average of 40–80 grams of alcohol per day, whereas women develop this condition after consuming an average of 20–40 grams of alcohol per day. However, this does not imply that those who consume less alcohol are not at risk of developing liver disease: nutrition and concomitant metabolic disorders can also influence a person's risk. If a patient is diagnosed with steatosis or alcoholic hepatitis, the most important step is to entirely abstain from alcoholic drinks, since at these stages of the disease, a person can still recover their health. For cirrhosis, a liver transplant surgery is often the only effective treatment; this procedure is the last option for those who continue to suffer problems related to liver deficiency, even after receiving all the necessary medical care for this complicated condition. What is crucial to understand is the need to treat liver cirrhosis early, rather than trying to cure cirrhosis-related issues after a patient has reached this irreversible stage. Early detection of alcohol-related liver disease and quitting alcohol intake can prevent cirrhosis and the eventual need for surgery and transplants.

Preventing recurrent urinary tract infections

A urinary tract infection (UTI) is a common health problem affecting women. One in three women will have at least one episode of a UTI requiring antibiotics by the age of 25. Half of all women will have at least one episode of a UTI at some point in their life. Approximately 25–30% of women may then have a recurrent infection within six months. Recurrent episodes of UTIs cause discomfort, lead to increased sick leave and increase the risk of antibiotic abuse. Preventing these infections is important — not only for women's health but also to reduce the growing problem of antibiotic resistance. Women have a shorter urethra compared to men, and its opening is close to the vagina and anus, making it easier for bacteria from the bowel to reach the bladder. Vaginal tissues are naturally more receptive to certain bacteria, and this risk is higher during early adulthood (with the start of sexual activity) and again after menopause, when hormonal changes reduce natural protection.

Diagnosis and prevention A recurrent UTI is defined as two or more culture-proven infections in six months, or three or more in a year. Lifestyle changes can go a long way towards preventing UTIs. Some tips include: Appropriate antibiotics must be taken as per the culture report for five to seven days. Low-dose antibiotic prophylaxis — a small daily dose of antibiotics at bedtime. Preferred drugs are Nitrofurantoin, Trimethoprim or Fosfomycin for 3–6 months after completion of the appropriate antibiotic course. Post-

coital antibiotics — A single dose after intercourse if infection is clearly linked to sex. Non-antibiotic measures include: vaginal oestrogen cream - in postmenopausal women, restoring vaginal oestrogen levels can help prevent UTIs. Cranberry products - Patients may be advised to use cranberry products, preferably juice for recurrence prevention, but should be informed that current evidence is of low quality and findings are contradictory. In diabetic patients, cranberry juice with added sugar may worsen glycaemic control, though this can be avoided by drinking it without sugar. Immunomodulatory prophylaxis - Vaccines such as Strovac, OM-89, ExPEC4V, MV140, and Solco-Urovac aim to stimulate the body's immune response against urinary pathogens. However, current evidence doesn't support their routine use. Probiotics - Lactobacillus species may help restore healthy vaginal flora. But benefits remain uncertain. Phytotherapeutics - Plant-derived preparations aim to reduce antibiotic use and support urinary health. Examples include: Xyloglucan, Gelose, Hibiscus, and Propolis, Centaury herb, Levisticum officinale and Rosemary leaf, traditionally used for urinary tract health. Evidence of these, however, is limited. Overuse of antibiotics can lead to multidrug-resistant infections. Hence, an accurate diagnosis, antibiotics for a short duration and preventive measures must be prioritised. If you have frequent UTIs, consult your doctor. A specialist referral may be needed if there is a sus-



picion of a complicated UTI.

An oft repeated adage for kidney stones is – 'Once a stone former, always a stone former.' However, there are certain measures that can minimise the risk of stone recurrence. The first and most important step would be to ensure two litres of urine output every day. The amount of fluids to take cannot be prescribed by a physician but would depend on the climate and the individual's activity levels. Unhealthy diets can increase stone formation. High levels of salt in junk food increase calcium levels in the urine, and phosphoric acid in some carbonated beverages increase urinary acidity. Irregular food habits and a lack of physical exercise compound the risk of stone formation.

Making affordable generics more reliable



A study by doctors of the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh, published in *Mycoses*, investigated the efficacy of itraconazole in treating chronic pulmonary aspergillosis using the innovator drug and 22 generic formulations. The innovator itraconazole achieved therapeutic drug levels in 73% of patients within two weeks, compared to only 29% for generics, which often required 6–8 weeks, dose escalation, or switching to the innovator. Further, generic capsules had significant defects, including fewer and unevenly sized pellets, critical for optimal drug absorption and bioavailability. But why do generic and innovator drugs differ in some cases despite being made from the same active ingredient? Generics can differ significantly in their excipients and manufacturing processes, leading to variability in therapeutic outcomes. First, differences in excipients — such as binders, fillers, disintegrants, and coatings — can alter a drug's dissolution rate, stability, and delivery mechanism. Second, manufacturing processes, including the type of punching machines, compression force, and granulation methods, can influence the drug's physical and chemical properties. Variations in tablet hardness, particle size, and porosity can affect disintegration and absorption. In some cases, while an innovator drug is designed to re-

Try India's first Christmas cake from Mambally's Royal Biscuit Factory in Kerala

Artificial Intelligence and Data-Driven Economies are projected to contribute between \$450 billion and \$500 billion to India's GDP by 2025, accounting for nearly 10% of the \$5 trillion economic target. The sector is expected to create 2.73 million new jobs by 2028 across healthcare, manufacturing, logistics, and finance domains. The Fourth Industrial Revolution (Industry 4.0) brings smart manufacturing, IoT, and robotics to the forefront, demanding a workforce equipped with technical expertise and creative problem-solving skills. Sectors such as automotive, pharmaceuticals, and agriculture are rapidly adopting automation to enhance productivity. As digital transformation accelerates, safeguarding digital systems becomes paramount. India faces a massive shortfall of cybersecurity professionals. It is estimated that 1.5 million jobs in this domain will remain unfilled by 2025 due to a lack of skilled talent. The trajectory is clear: India's economy will increasingly rely on a workforce adept in technological literacy, interdisciplinary problem-solving, and continuous innovation. However, this transformation demands a higher education system capable of anticipating and responding to these demands in an agile, forward-thinking manner. Institutional reforms. Structurally, another major change is crucial for meeting tomorrow's needs. And that is Institutional reforms. To deliver on a transformative vision, India's higher education institutions require another systemic reform and that is granting greater academic, financial, and administrative autonomy to HEIs—particularly regional and affiliated colleges—will empower them to innovate. However, autonomy must be accompanied by transparent accountability frameworks to ensure quality outcomes. In States such as Tamil Nadu, autonomy hardly exists even among so-called autonomous colleges. They typically don't get the go-ahead to create new age courses or make major academic reforms involving industry. The government tends to call all the shots in academic issues. At the national level only a handful or private universities have the financial muscle to make major initiatives to equip students with futuristic capabilities. Among government-funded institutions, a major chunk of funding goes to the 80 IITs, NITs, IIITs or such, while public-funded general universities continue to struggle for meeting infrastructure needs. Many of the public universities sit on vast stretches of land, but they don't get the mandate to use this for raising funds in innovative ways. It is clear that significant investments are required to upgrade digital infrastructure, laboratories, and innovation centres. Ensuring equitable distribution of resources across public and private institutions will mitigate regional disparities. Besides a major mark up in grants, State and Centrally funded Universities need the regulatory go-ahead to utilize their land assets, for forging innovative funding collaborations with industry and alumni, local communities, and creating a robust set of executive education or continuing education programs that benefit the industry. Finally, public universities also need to come out of the outdated methods of appointing vice-chancellors and other university leaders. A major change in the legal framework is required to identify and appoint vice-chancellors who can be not only academic leaders, but also focus on fundraising and meeting international quality standards in skilling and manpower creation. Conclusion India's higher education system holds the key to unlocking the nation's positioning as a global hub of technological and economic innovation. However, achieving this requires a decisive departure from incremental, linear growth. The confluence of AI, robotics, green technologies, and digital transformation demands an education ecosystem that is adaptive, skill-driven, and future-focused. By reimagining curricula, fostering industry-academia collaboration, embracing lifelong learning, and implementing systemic institutional reforms, India can transform its higher education sector as well as its youth into a globally competitive, technologically fluent workforce.

For preparing the cake, the baking doyen procured spices and replaced the brandy with local arrack made from cashew apples and bananas. He also had a blacksmith from Dharmadam, Thalassery, prepare a custom-made mould. As Murdoch returned to taste the cake, he was spellbound and called it one of the best he had ever eaten. This incident which eventually contributed to Thalassery being branded the City of Three C's – Cricket, Cakes and Circuses – is so popular that there is even an Amar Chitra Katha



tions. The batter is baked in a traditional wood fire oven that uses coconut shells. Since she got into the business, Renuka, who has about 20-odd years of experience in her last role as vice president and head, Marketing, has ensured that the bakery started selling their goods online which has made it accessible to people in different parts of the globe. She says, "We have got orders coming from Mizoram, Manipur, Meghalaya, Jharkand, Agra, Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, Chennai, and Kolkata. We also get orders from Australia, the US and from Canada as well." For 76-year-old retired Army doctor Uma Shankar Menon, from Thalassery currently settled in Pune, the cakes were part of his childhood. He says, "There are two reasons why I buy it. One, it is a product originally from Thalassery. Two, it's taste is unmatched. I have had plum cakes from a lot of places but nothing has come close to this." Uma Shankar used to ensure that he bought it when he went back to Pune but is glad that they are delivering there now. "It brings back good memories of a great, simple life back then," says 57-year-old Jayant Prabhakaran, based in Dubai, who used to travel to Thalassery during the childhood vacations he spent in his ancestral home in Mahe, eight kilometres away. Despite being an integral part of Christmas celebrations all across the globe, the Mambally family members rarely meet on Christmas day, says Renuka, adding "Nobody really has time to even socialise. Even if you want to do a Christmas party, there is no such time because people are working through the day, through the night, fulfilling orders." However, they did have time to eat a very special slice of cake last year. Paul Brown, a fourth-generation descendant of the Brown family came to Thalassery in 2023 bearing a cake prepared by a French chef back in England as tribute to the relationship between the two families. Royal Plum Cakes from Mambally Royal Biscuit Factory is available online at mamballys.com for ₹700. History of plum cakes The origins of plum cake can be traced back to medieval England. A porridge said to have been made with oats, dried fruits, spices, honey and occasionally, meat was served on Christmas Eve. In the 16th Century, eggs and butter were added to the mixture and oats was replaced with flour. Meat was already removed before. Initially, the batter was cooked in boiling water wrapped in a muslin cloth and was only baked in rich households that could afford an oven. The reason why it is called plum cake is not clear. Some say, it is because raisins which are abundantly found in the cakes were earlier called plums in England, while others believe that they used to have dried plums or prunes

Economic Survey 2026 bats for simplertaxsystemsanddecrimin alisation of technical offences



The Economic Survey 2025-26 called for simpler tax systems, time bound dispute resolution mechanism and decriminalisation of technical offences to foster certainty and enable effective capital mobilisation. The Survey, which was tabled in Parliament on Thursday, said that the country’s aspiration to become a Viksit Bharat by mid-century demands a fundamental rethinking of finance, not merely as funding, but as the architecture of economic transformation.

“A nation does not develop by spending more but by expanding its productive base — enabling firms to invest and scale, households to earn and save securely, and markets to channel capital efficiently. This requires an enabling environment: rational taxation that supports enterprise, regulators that foster competition, financial markets that deepen and diversify, and administrative systems that operate transparently and promptly,” the Survey noted. It said fostering certainty and predictability demands, “Tax systems that are simpler and service-oriented, dispute resolution that is time-bound and fair, and the decriminalisation of technical offences”. Regulators must promote competition and innovation while safeguarding stability. Credit and capital supply must move beyond bank dominance through deeper markets and modern financial infrastructure. Deepening long-term finance To finance sus-

tained growth, the Survey said that the country must strengthen long-term capital markets. The Survey projected the domestic economy to grow at 6.8-7.2% in FY27, and also lifted the country’s medium-term growth potential closer to 7%.

“Corporate bond markets remain shallow and illiquid, dominated by top-rated issuers. Securitisation is limited, municipal bonds are underdeveloped, and pension and insurance funds remain conservative investors due to regulatory and cultural inertia,” it stated. To address these barriers, it suggested a six-point agenda — rationalising tax treatment of debt instruments; creating credit enhancement facilities for lower-rated issuers; standardising securitisation structures and disclosures; building municipal financial capacity and pooled bond mechanisms, and revising investment guidelines for long-term funds. Such reforms, it said, would supply the scale and maturity needed for infrastructure and climate financing while lowering the economy’s cost of capital.

Elevated cost of capital hampers private investment The Survey noted that the country’s relatively high cost of capital is widely recognised as a constraint on private investment and long-run growth. Over the past three decades, between 1995 and 2025, India’s weighted average long-term interest rates averaged 7.61 per cent, far above the average long-term rates seen in Canada (3.13), Italy (2.94) and Switzerland (1.04). Even so, India has maintained a favourable average long-term interest rate as compared to other emerging economies such as Indonesia (14.1), Mexico (11.05) and South Africa (9.08).reducing India’s cost of capital requires attention not only to financial intermediation but also to the drivers of production, exports, and surplus generation,” it said. Policies that support firm-level scale and deregulation, improve logistics, infrastructure, and trade facilitation, deepen technological capabilities and research and development (R&D), and enable sustained participation in global value chains can strengthen productivity and margins in manufacturing, the Survey added.

Economic Survey flags India Inc’s ‘lack of investment appetite’, says Swadeshi ‘inevitable’

The Survey said that unlike private corporations in post-war America, Germany, Japan, and East Asia — which either participated in ‘nation building’ while pursuing profits or behaved in an ‘arm’s-length and rules-bound manner’ — Indian corporates have a relative ‘lack of appetite’ to invest efforts towards long-term risk absorption. “There is a relative lack of willingness and appetite to invest efforts towards long-term risk absorption and becoming globally competitive. Regulatory arbitrage, protected margins, and firm-specific accommodations often dominate productivity enhancement, scale competition, or learning-by-doing,” the Survey said. The report, however, said that this preference is “rational in an environment” where downside risks are socialised through bailouts, banking forbearance, tariff protection, or retrospective renegotiation. “A corporate sector that externalises risk to the state does not exert pressure for higher state capacity; instead, it generates demand for discretion,” the report said.

Making the case for transformation in corporate culture, Survey said that India is now operating in an environment where access to inputs, technologies, and markets cannot be assumed to be frictionless or permanent.

“In such circumstances, Swadeshi becomes a defensive as well as offensive policy lever: a means to ensure continuity of production in the face of external shocks, and a pathway to build enduring national capabilities that reinforce economic sovereignty. The policy question is no longer whether the state should encourage Swadeshi, but how it should do so without undermining efficiency, innovation, or global integration,” the Survey said. There has to be a balance between manufacturing and imports, with Swadeshi-oriented policies giving rise to complacency and inefficiency in the past due to a lack of global competition. Substituting imports for local products is justified when production cost is feasible, but the industry has been hindered by coordination failures or long-standing regulatory burdens.

The Survey pointed out that national transformation is most durable when business leaders see themselves not merely as beneficiaries of growth but as trustees of a larger developmental project. The most successful corporate histories in post-war America, Germany, Japan, and East Asia were marked by firms that invested ahead of immediate returns, treated technological capability and workforce upgrading as civic obligations, and derived legitimacy from strengthening national resilience, enhancing export competitiveness, and promoting social stability, the Survey said. The survey stressed that a well-designed regulatory



architecture is not in itself enough to generate higher state capacity, and must thus be helped out by the corporate sector. “In India, the private corporate sector is not merely a subject of regulation; it is a structural participant in the incentive environment that determines whether the state upgrades its capacity or governs through discretion,” the survey said. The document also highlighted the short capital allocation horizons of Indian corporates. “Despite notable exceptions, Indian corporate investment is characterised by low R&D (research and development) intensity, caution in frontier manufacturing, and concentration in real estate-linked, regulated, or quasimonopolistic sectors. This reflects not merely culture, but governance structures (in such firms)—family control, succession orientation, weak managerial labour markets, and underdeveloped long-horizon capital,” the document said. “When firms do not require fast courts, skilled labour at scale, or predictable regulation to generate returns, they cannot function as a forcing mechanism for institutional upgrading. Comparative experience shows that corporates induce state upgrading only under specific conditions, when productivity is the sole path to survival,” it added. The document then went on to cite examples such as post-World War America (with players like Ford, General Motors, and Caterpillar) and Japan’s post-war industrialisation (with players like Toyota, Sony, and Nippon Steel), where private corporations weaved in focus on profitability with responsibility towards broader national projects. Private capital expenditure, or capex, has been a particular pain point for the economy in recent times as the government has taken steps to revive consumption demand. While the central government has pushed hard on capex in recent years, with effective capex as a share of GDP rising to 4 per cent from 2.6 per cent between FY20-25, economists are of the view that private investment remains subdued.

Sakthi Aviation, OMNIPOL to introduce Czech-made L410 NG aircraft in India



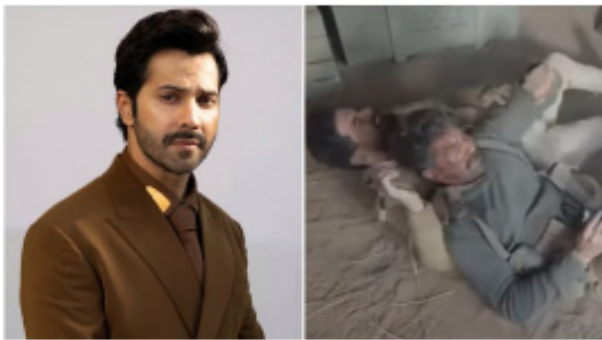
Sakthi Aviation and Defence Systems Private Limited has signed a MoU with OMNIPOL Group to bring the Czech-made L410 NG 19-seater aircraft to India. The agreement, formalised at Wings India 2026, includes plans to explore a final assembly line in India, enabling Transfer of Technology and strengthening the domestic aviation ecosystem

Hyderabad: Sakthi Aviation and Defence Systems Private Limited and OMNIPOL Group here on Thursday signed a MoU to bring the world-renowned L410 NG 19-seater aircraft to India. The modern, next-generation 19-seater turboprop from the Czech manufacturer Aircraft Industries is expected to strengthen India’s regional connectivity ambitions.

As per the agreement signed at the ongoing Wings India 2026, OMNIPOL Group and Sakthi are assessing the modalities to set up a final assembly line in India, thereby enabling Transfer of Technology (ToT) and boosting the local aviation ecosystem. The L 410 NG’s ability to operate from short and unprepared runways makes it ideally suited for connecting remote areas and unlocking new routes across the country.

“Our partnership with OMNIPOL Group will not only offer carriers a compelling solution to expand regional air connectivity but will also catalyse domestic industry through Transfer of Technology and expanded workshop opportunities,” said Dr. M Manickam, Chairman of SADSPL. OMNIPOL Group Chairman of the Board of Directors and CEO Artem Movsesyan said the company believes that the L 410 NG is well suited to revolutionise regional air travel in India given the aircraft’s versatility and capability for operating in diverse conditions.

‘Worst pain I ever felt’: Varun Dhawan recalls suffering from a tailbone injury while shooting for Border 2; why coccyx fractures hurt more and heal slower



Some injuries, even when they appear minor on the surface, can cause persistent pain and prolonged recovery if not managed carefully. Tailbone injuries are a classic example. Commonly underestimated, yet notoriously uncomfortable and slow to heal. Recently, actor Varun Dhawan shared a glimpse into such an experience while filming Border 2, opening up about what he described as the most painful injury he has ever faced. In an Instagram reel caption where he is seen shooting a demanding scene for the movie, he wrote: “The worst injury I ever got on Border 2. I smashed my tailbone into a rock when I tried to avoid banging into the camera. It was the worst pain I ever felt. I sustained a hairline fracture on the tailbone, which I feel I am still healing from. Thankful to my team for helping me continue that day, I could barely walk, but we kept going. Grateful for the journey (sic).”

His account highlights that tailbone injuries can occur suddenly and that individuals often persist in severe discomfort, sometimes continuing physical activity despite limited mobility. For everyday individuals, whether athletes, fitness enthusiasts, or people with physically demanding jobs, this raises important questions about recognising the seriousness of tailbone injuries, understanding recovery timelines, and knowing when continuing activity might do more harm than good. But why are tailbone injuries and hair-

line fractures often considered ‘minor’?

Dr Raghu Nagaraj, director at Institute of Orthopaedics, Sports Medicine and Robotic Joint Replacement at Kauvery Hospitals, Bengaluru, tells indianexpress.com, “Tailbone injuries are labelled minor because they are rarely life-threatening and usually do not require surgery. However, the coccyx is a highly sensitive structure surrounded by ligaments, muscles, and nerve endings that are constantly engaged during sitting, walking, and even basic posture changes.” He continues, “A hairline fracture or bruise in this area causes persistent pain because there is no way to completely immobilise the tailbone. Every movement places micro-stress on the injured area, which is why healing tends to be slow, and discomfort can linger for weeks or even months.”

Risks of continuing physical activity or work immediately after sustaining a tailbone injury

According to Dr Nagaraj, continuing physical activity after a tailbone injury can significantly worsen the damage. “What may begin as a bruise or hairline fracture can progress into chronic inflammation, nerve irritation, or improper healing. Persisting through pain may also alter posture and gait, leading to secondary issues such as lower back pain, hip strain, or muscle imbalance. When walking itself becomes painful, it is a clear signal that the body needs rest and medical evaluation rather than exertion.”

Proper recovery from a tailbone fracture “Proper recovery focuses on rest, pain control, and gradual return to activity,” notes Dr Nagaraj, adding that this includes avoiding prolonged sitting, using cushioned or doughnut-shaped pillows, applying ice in the early phase, and taking prescribed anti-inflammatory medication if needed. “Physiotherapy can help restore pelvic and lower back strength once pain subsides. Most importantly, people should listen to their bodies and avoid rushing back into strenuous activity. Adequate rest in the initial weeks is crucial to prevent chronic tailbone pain, which can otherwise persist long after the original injury has healed,” concludes the expert.

Neurologist reveals the single habit with the highest health return: ‘People are getting up at 4 am for yoga, morning walks...’

Consultant neurologist Dr Sudhir Kumar, Apollo Hospitals, Hyderabad, recently conducted a health poll on X, asking about the single habit with the greatest health benefit for the least effort. The choices were: 30 min of brisk walking, 7–8 hours of sleep, cutting sugar and ultra-processed foods, or strength training twice weekly. “All are powerful. But if you had to pick just ONE, which would it be? As a doctor, my answer may surprise you, and it is backed by evidence,” he noted. He then answered the question: “If I had to pick ONE habit with the biggest health return for the least effort, it would be: 7–8 hours of good-quality sleep,” he said. According to him

•Poor sleep increases risk of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, obesity, depression, dementia, and early death

•Short sleep worsens blood pressure, glucose control, appetite, immunity, and pain

•Sleep improves the benefits of exercise and diet; without sleep, other habits work less well

•Extending sleep by even 30–60 minutes improves metabolic and cardiovascular markers

He also cited large cohort studies and meta-analyses, which consistently show that short sleep (<6–7 h) is associated with higher all-cause mortality, while adequate sleep lowers cardiometabolic and brain disease risk. However, this doesn’t mean that walking, a healthy diet, or strength training don’t matter; they absolutely do, he asserted. “But sleep is the foundation. Fix sleep first, and everything else becomes easier,” he added. He also noted that he often sees patients exercising more, but sleeping less. “People are getting up at 4 am for yoga, morning walks, jogs, morning runs, or cycling. That’s working against their health,” said Dr Kumar. Taking a cue from his revelation, we reached out to Dr Prashant Makhija, consultant neurologist at Wockhardt Hospitals, Mumbai Central, who asserted that sleep is indeed the highest-return health investment with the least effort. Before adding more workouts or stricter diets, fix sleep first. When the brain rests well, the rest of the body follows. Notably, sleep affects almost every system in the body, including the brain, hormones, metabolism, immunity, and even emotional balance. “You can eat well and exercise regularly, but without enough sleep, those benefits fade. Sleep is not just passive rest; it’s when the brain repairs itself and the body resets its internal balance,” said Dr Makhija.

What exactly happens in the body during 7–8 hours of good sleep?

Dr Makhija said that during deep sleep, the brain clears out waste, consolidates memory, and recalibrates stress hormones. “REM sleep helps with learning, emotional resilience, and mental health. At the same time, the body manages insulin sensitivity, blood pressure, appetite hormones, and immune responses. Short sleep disrupts all of this and raises the risk of diabetes, obesity, heart disease, anxiety, depression, and cognitive decline,” Dr Makhija contended.

Many people wake up at 4 am because they believe it’s healthier. Can that backfire?

Dr Makhija said that if it doesn’t match your natural sleep cycle, it can backfire. “The body runs on a circadian rhythm that is influenced by light and darkness. For most adults, regularly waking at 4 am often results in missing deep and REM sleep, especially if bedtime is late. This can create a chronic sleep deficit, even if the person feels productive,” said Dr Makhija.

When can waking up too early be stressful for the brain?

Waking up early causes a premature rise in cortisol, the stress hormone. “Over time, this can increase fatigue, anxiety, sugar cravings, and poor focus. The brain performs better with rhythm than with rigidity. Forcing an unnatural schedule may seem disciplined, but it can put the nervous system into constant overdrive,” said Dr Makhija. Health Poll:

Which single habit gives the maximum health benefit for the least effort?

- 1. 30 min brisk walking
- 2. 7–8 hours of sleep
- 3. Cutting sugar & ultra-processed foods
- 4. Strength training twice weekly All are powerful.



But if you had to pick just ONE, which would it be?... — Dr Sudhir Kumar MD DM (@hyderabaddoctor) January 26, 2026 Does sleep matter more than diet or exercise? Emphasising that it’s not about competition, Dr Makhija said sleep is the foundation. “Poor sleep increases hunger, lowers motivation to exercise, impairs muscle recovery, and worsens decision-making around food. When sleep improves, people often eat better, move more, and feel mentally sharper without needing to try harder.” Health Poll The answer (with evidence): If I had to pick ONE habit with the biggest health return for the least effort, it would be: 2. 7–8 hours of good-quality sleep Good sleep is not just about hours. It depends on three key factors: duration, depth, and consistency. Duration means getting enough total sleep. “For most adults, this is usually 7–9 hours per night. Sleeping significantly less than this can gradually build sleep debt and affect long-term health, even if you feel functional the next day,” said Dr Makhija. Depth relates to sleep quality, specifically if the body is getting enough deep sleep and REM sleep, which are vital stages in the sleep cycle. “Deep sleep aids physical repair, immune function, and hormone regulation. REM sleep is crucial for memory, learning, and emotional balance. Spending enough time in these stages is what makes sleep restorative.” Consistency is often the most ignored factor. Good sleep needs going to bed and waking up at roughly the same time every day, even on weekends. Sleeping less on weekdays and trying to make up for it on weekends disrupts the body clock and lowers sleep quality, even if the total hours seem adequate.

UAE-based influencer posts heartfelt ode to snow-draped Valley



Srinagar: A shikara ride on the Dal Lake, snow painting the hills a picture postcard white and a “snow bath” while enjoying a bonfire. UAE-based social media influencer Kahlid Al Ameri admits that he has been bowled over by the snowy paradise that is Kashmir. The 42-year-old Stanford graduate, who boasts of nearly 18 million followers across social media platforms, says that he travelled around four hours from Dubai and is mesmerised by the serene views of the Valley draped in snow. Many parts of Kashmir, especially the tourist hotspots of Gulmarg and Pahalgam, have been blanketed by snow at the fag-end of ‘Chilla-i-Kalan’, a 40-day period of extreme cold during which night temperatures often drop several degrees below the freezing point, and the chances of snowfall are the highest. Al Ameri, who has been in Kashmir for the past four days, posted several videos of his stay, including a Pheran-clad boat ride on the Dal Lake. In another of his videos,

India vs New Zealand T20I series: Previously just a six-hitter against spin, Shivam Dube no longer a sitting duck against pace



Mitchell Santner's tactical retreat told the story before the over was complete. As Shivam Dube launched his first ball over long-on in Vizag on Wednesday, the New Zealand captain hastily turned around, knowing he'd erred by feeding the left-hander's arc. But the real statement came moments later — instead of summoning Matt Henry's raw pace or Jacob Duffy's variations, Santner called for Glenn Phillips, the off-spinner, in what felt less like strategy and more like admission: Dube had become a problem without a ready-made solution. The New Zealand captain didn't want to feed him spin in the death overs in case the game got tight, but also knew Dube's game against pace has improved to such an extent that he couldn't just have his pacemen knock him over easily. What followed was a 23-ball 65 that provided India's biggest takeaway ahead of the T20 World Cup: their middle-order enforcer hasn't just arrived, he's evolved from the ducking, uncertain batsman against pace he was two years ago.

"I've seen him do that a lot and he hits it very far," Santner said later, his admiration undisguised. "Dube is very clear in what he wants to do. When the spinner comes on, he knows that's a good match-up for him, and it doesn't matter if it's the first ball or his 20th ball, he's going to try to take it on."

From one-trick pony to complete threat. The numbers tell the story of Dube's transformation. Since Chennai Super Kings (CSK) signed him in 2022 as their designated middle-overs six-hitter, he's launched 67 maximums against spin in T20s — expected from someone Chennai's faithful call "Aaru Saamy" (Six God). But it's the 78 he's hit off pace that signify the real evolution. This wasn't always the case. Rewind to 2022, and Dube was a favourable match-up only

against spin, a batsman who ducked awkwardly at short balls, defended hesitantly, and waited anxiously to get set before attempting attacking shots against pace. Captains had their blueprint ready: attack him with seamers early, neutralise his power. But CSK batting coach Mike Hussey has noticed a change in recent times. "Teams would come in and bowl a lot of short balls and he would either duck out of the way or defend," the Aussie observed before Dube's India recall in 2024. "Now the bowlers are still coming in with the same plan, but he's been able to score off it as well. He's been able to find boundaries."

On Wednesday, that evolution was on full display. Dube welcomed Duffy's off-cutter by depositing it over mid-wicket, sent a low full-toss sailing over square-leg, and launched Henry over long-on — three towering sixes that announced a batsman who'd conquered his demons in off-season nets.

Clarity breeds confidence. CSK gave Dube something precious: role clarity. Not just in team meetings but in how the franchise built him up publicly, reinforcing his identity as a six-hitter. In the middle, Dube carved out an undeniable space for himself, turning reputation into reality. His composed 33 in the Asia Cup final against Pakistan — an innings built on temperament as much as power — proved he'd become integral to India's plans. Now captains face an impossible choice: bowl spin and feed his strength, or try pace and watch him clear the rope anyway. It's not just the free flow of hands but the way his hips swivel like a golfer's that powers his game. The left-hander doesn't get locked in a position and can let his hands scythe through.

"There are many things people upgrade. For me also, it is very important. I can't be the same as I was," Dube said with the quiet confidence of someone who's done his work. "Match-ups are very important. They want me to hit spinners. My role is to get the strike rate high in the middle overs. That is what I always try. Not just against spinners but fast bowlers as well." That final sentence — delivered almost as an afterthought — carries the weight of his journey. Natural advantages help: long levers, exceptional reach, a gifted bat-swing that's pure nightmare fuel for spinners. But it's the manufactured skill, the off-season grind against quick bowlers, that's turned Dube into the complete package. Though Wednesday's fireworks came in a losing cause, they injected life into a game that seemed lost long ago and provided India with their most valuable commodity heading into the World Cup: a finisher ready, evolved, and almost unmatchable.

Carlos Alcaraz reaches his first Australian Open final after winning record semi-final against Alexander Zverev

GNS News Agency, Feb 3

Top seed Carlos Alcaraz reached the Australian Open final for the first time in his career after beating German third seed Alexander Zverev in an epic semi-final that lasted 5 hours 27 minutes at the Rod Laver Arena. In a match in which momentum swung one way and another, Alcaraz prevailed 6-4, 7-6(5), 6-7(3), 6-7(4), 7-5. Alcaraz, 22, is looking to become the youngest male player to win a Career Grand Slam and will face either his rival Jannik Sinner or 24-time Grand Slam winner Novak Djokovic in the final.

Alcaraz was within a game of sealing victory at 4-4 in the third set when he started cramping. It resulted in him struggling to move, returning serves with hardly any foot movement at all. He took on fluids and received massages, including in a controversial medical timeout opposed by Zverev. Although Zverev had his moments, Alcaraz was well ahead before he started having issues with his leg. This was typified in the second set, in which Zverev built up a 5-2 lead, only for Alcaraz to come roaring back to make it 5-5. The set was pushed to the first tie-break of the match which Alcaraz won 7-5.

Once he started having trouble with his thigh in the third set, Alcaraz switched between big-hitting and drop shots to go 5-4 up before taking a medical timeout that left Zverev infuriated. The German called for a supervisor and stated that his opponent cannot be allowed to take a time out for cramps according to rules.

Zverev was infuriated by Alcaraz taking a medical timeout for what the German said was cramps. (AP Photo)



Zverev was infuriated by Alcaraz taking a medical timeout for what the German said was cramps. (AP Photo) Alcaraz soldiered on, holding to go up 6-5 and taking a big swig of pickle juice before giving it his all in the ensuing tiebreak, but Zverev showed no mercy and pulled back a set. With his movement slowly improving, Alcaraz pumped his fists to roaring applause after vital holds in the fourth set to force another tiebreak, where Zverev stepped up his serving game to ensure a deciding fifth set. Third seed Zverev broke for an early lead but Alcaraz began to look like his usual self again as he chased down a drop shot at the net and pulled off a stunning winner at full stretch in the sixth game to give his fans hope. Alcaraz finally broke in the 10th game as Rod Laver Arena shook, before sealing an epic win in the first five-sets match on centre court this year.

‘Insulted’ Karim Benzema refuses to play for Al-Ittihad: Why Ballon d’Or winner feels he’s being asked to ‘play for free’



GNS News Agency, Feb 3

Karim Benzema may not be playing in the Saudi Pro League after this season. The French striker, who plays for Al-Ittihad, is reportedly incensed at the contract extension offer put forward by the League, who are his employers rather than the team. So incensed that according to media reports he has refused to play for the club anymore until the contract situation is dealt with. A report in French publication L'Equipe noted that Benzema's camp found the offer "insulting" and believed that accepting it would amount to "playing for free". Last season, Benzema had captained Al-Ittihad to a league and cup double, which had raised his hopes that he would be offered a bigger contract from the league. This season too, Benzema has discovered his hot streak, scoring 16 goals in 21 league and cup matches.

But when the offer from SPL's director of football Michael Emenalo reportedly arrived on Wednesday, just days before the transfer window shuts, Benzema was livid, according to Foot Mercato. Benzema has reportedly also

been contacted by multiple clubs in Europe. Benzema is a Ballon d'Or winner, who, over the course of a glittering career, scored 503 goals in 967 club matches besides the 37 goals in 97 appearances he banged in for France. Established as one of the greatest goalscorers in history, Benzema is currently Real Madrid's second-highest scorer, behind only Cristiano Ronaldo. It was just a couple of months back that Benzema was talking up his love for playing at Al-Ittihad.

"I'm part of the project, I'm in the right place," Benzema had told L'Equipe in an interview. He has spoken at length about wanting to extend his contract in Saudi Arabia. Now, as reported by the French media outlet, the striker will likely be absent against Al-Najma on Sunday, while the clash against Cristiano Ronaldo's Al-Nassr is in just over a week.

Who ranks as the most attacking pacer in T20s – Lasith Malinga or Jasprit Bumrah?



Before oppositions began to trim expectations for the Jasprit Bumrah equation in T20 cricket, Lasith Malinga had checked the unfettered batting advantage by simply being its first great nemesis. The Sri Lankan daakaththa, the sickle-like slingman, would also be an unlikely mentor to the boy from Ahmedabad during his early days in the IPL at Mumbai. Malinga was the ripening Bumrah's first life-skills coach, a veteran who would make him believe that he could sustain a living with his hyperextended right arm and other eccentricities. That was 13 years ago. Cut to Wednesday in Visakhapatnam, on an uncharacteristically insipid evening against New Zealand, Bumrah still touched a special feat with a caught-and-bowled dismissal. The current era's pace bowling freak brought his 107th T20I scalp, equalling the outlier of the previous generation a decade after first donning the India blues.

While his round-armed sorcery inspired a steady cult in the sub-continent, none have lived up to Malinga's exalted status. None, barring his perpendicular adherent, who brought his own geometry set to T20I bowling and reproduced eerily similar numbers. A cursory glance cannot separate Malinga and Bumrah, differing by mere fractions, across phases, conditions and on sheer invincibility. Malinga stacked up 107 for Sri Lanka in 83 innings while sending down 1799 deliveries in all. In his 83rd innings for India, Bumrah picked up his 107th after sending six extra deliveries, off his 1805th ball.

Across the 12 Full-Member countries, only 12 pacers have reached 100 T20I wickets. Malinga and Bumrah are the only men to concurrently satisfy three back-breaking factors – a sub 7.5 economy, producing a wicket within every 17 deliveries and averaging below 21. While being nearly as deadly, Bumrah eclipses Malinga (7.42) with an

astounding 6.44 economy rate – the benchmark for all bowlers from Test-playing nations, with at least 40 wickets. Malinga noses ahead by a whisker on the wicket-taking front, producing a dismissal every 16.8 balls to Bumrah's 17.0. Despite the rapidly surging batting intent, Bumrah bags a wicket for 18.28 runs. Malinga nabbed each for 20.79. About 40 percent of their dismissal patterns are synchronous: Malinga has bagged 43 of his wickets bowled, while Bumrah has collected 41. There are negligible variances in their efficiency across the course of play, too, though Bumrah remains a standout on the economical front.

The death-overs confines have yielded them the most wickets, with Malinga producing a wicket every 11.3 deliveries, marginally ahead of Bumrah (11.9). Yet, the Indian pace god's 6.97 economy for 49 wickets in overs 17-20 not only eclipses Malinga (8.39) but also stands as a super-natural number amidst the evolved T20 sluggers. Slam-bang cricket seldom allows such romanticism, but Malinga's peak years were fittingly wedged between T20 cricket's early expansion and the year of Bumrah's international debut and first significant IPL season in 2016.

Between January 2010 and December 2015, Malinga topped the T20 format (including leagues) across the world with 243 wickets at 16.0 SR, totalling 62.3 percent of his career wickets (390) in this period. Then came along Bumrah. When he hung up his boots in 2020, Malinga had finished as the second-highest wicket-taker in all T20s, behind Dwayne Bravo. Six seamers stand ahead of his 390 career scalps, yet none can pose a better economy (7.07) or strike rate (16.6). With only 59 wickets separating their career hauls, a snapshot would derive Bumrah (6.9 eco, 17.6 SR) as his worthy successor here too. But for the out-and-out wicket-taker that he was, Malinga remains the most attacking pacer in that he reeled in wickets in clumps more often than other pacers, standing comfortably at the top with 15 instances of producing four or more wickets in a match. In contrast, Bumrah only has five such spells across 261 games and none at the international level as yet. There is a World Cup defence heating up, and another counter for Bumrah to catch up with the Lankan laser gun. Malinga leads the pace pack in T20 World Cups (38), with Bumrah (26) close on his heels. It is vexing to pick one. Bumrah's mastery in an increasingly batting-oriented era or the first-of-its-kind Malinga experience that bent T20 cricket to his wont.

Sha'Carri Richardson arrested: One of fastest female sprinters in history caught speeding over 100 mph

GNS News Agency, Feb 3

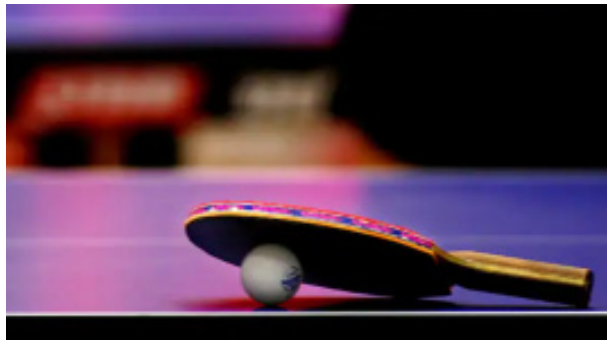
One of the fastest women of all time on the track, Sha'Carri Richardson, was arrested and charged with speeding in the US state of Florida on Thursday. Media reports noted that the American Olympic gold medalist was arrested for allegedly going 104 mph (167 kph) on a parkway just outside of Orlando. A report on the local NBC affiliate WESH said that Richardson posted a \$500 bond and has since been released from jail.

The Associated Press quoted a spokesperson for the Orange County sheriff's department as saying that Richardson was "dangerously tailgating and traveling across lanes of travel to pass other motorists." For the 25-year-old sprinter, this is not the first brush with law. Last year, Richardson issued a public apology to her boyfriend, Christian Coleman, after she was arrested on a fourth-degree domestic violence offense for allegedly assaulting Coleman at the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport in July. The case was reportedly cleared after Coleman declined to press charges against her. Richardson won a silver medal in the 100 meters in the 2024 Paris Summer Olympics,



and gold in the 4x100 relay that same year. Richardson's Olympic medals came after she was disqualified from the 2020 Olympics when she tested positive for chemicals found in marijuana. While she accepted a 30-day suspension from the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency for the violation, her absence during the Tokyo Olympics had led to a debate over the criminalization of marijuana, given its growing acceptance and legalization in multiple states.

Table Tennis Federation of India secretary general Kamlesh Mehta suspended with immediate effect in AGM



GNS News Agency, Feb 3

The Table Tennis Federation of India has suspended its secretary, former player Kamlesh Mehta, throwing the faction-ridden federation into fresh administrative chaos. TTFI president Meghna Ahlawat, who is wife of former Haryana Deputy CM Dushyant Chautala, and secretary Mehta were representing different factions in the governing body after being elected back in December 2022 as part of a "compromise".

More recently, they were at loggerheads over the scheduling of the AGM that was eventually held on Wednesday when the secretary was suspended. Yatin Tipnis, representing the Maharashtra State Association, was nomi-

nated as the senior joint secretary in the TTFI AGM and would look after the day to day running of the federation now that secretary's post is suspended. Earlier this month, an Emergency Special General Meeting (SGM) was convened by Kamlesh Mehta in Mumbai.

In a letter dated 15 January, TTFI president Ahlawat declared the SGM called by Mehta as unconstitutional and invalid. "The post of senior joint secretary was vacant so I was nominated in the AGM. Now that the secretary's post is suspended, I have been instructed to look after the day to day running of the TTFI affairs so that athletes are not impacted," Tipnis told PTI. When contacted, former India international and Arjuna awardee Mehta said he has not been formally communicated on his suspension.

"I have been hearing about the suspension. I have not got anything in written from TTFI. I have not been able to access the official email since yesterday."

Agenda driven politics is being played as they (the other faction) never wanted me as secretary in the first place," claimed Mehta. Back in February 2022, the Delhi High Court had suspended the TTFI after observing "a sorry state of affairs" in the national federation and appointed a Committee of Administrators (CoA) to look after its day-to-day activities. Fresh elections were held in December 2022 when Ahlawat and Mehta were elected.

Asian Shooting Championship: With new gun, Manu Bhaker keen to make new start after low-key 2025

Manu Bhaker is talking about marginal gains. That extra one percent which could well be the difference between a podium finish or nothing. "I try to do everything that can even help for a little bit in my sport," she says. "Even if that's like one percent, I will just go right ahead." Last year, it meant making the long trip to the workshop of Italian pistol-makers Pardini in search of a new, better weapon. Pistol-related heartbreaks have plagued Manu on more than one occasion. In 2019, she was in joint lead in the 25m pistol

final at the World Cup when her weapon malfunctioned and her event ended in tears. A couple of years later, at the Tokyo Olympics, the cocking lever of her pistol broke during the qualification round and as she got it fixed, Manu lost approximately 15 minutes, affecting her rhythm. So, when the Paris Olympics double bronze medalist got to know about the latest model from the Italian gun-maker, she hopped on a flight to test it. "The company claims that they are better in terms of precision and balance," she explains. "So, I went ahead and gave it a shot. The balance has defi-

nately improved." Manu is quick to add that the skill ultimately lies with the shooter; any suggestion of technology overshadowing skills is bluntly dismissed. "How we work, how we think about a competition, the approach to a competition and the execution, it remains the same," she says. "It's on us how we shoot. The results depend on us, not on the pistol." In a crucial year, when there'll be the Asian Games, the World Championships and the Los Angeles Olympics qualification will get underway,

Mardaani 3 movie review: Rani Mukerji returns, but familiarity dulls the impact



Mardaani 3 movie review: The chief difficulty even with popular franchises is the scourge of familiarity: how do you build in difference when the lead character and their line of work is the same? With Rani Mukherji returning for a third go round of Mardaani, her doughty cop Shivani Shivaji Roy arrayed against a new set of antagonists, we are left scrambling to discover new beats.This time around, there's the formidable human trafficker Amma (Mallika Prasad) whose goons have been tasked with picking up pre-pubescent girls– now that's certainly a difference– from disadvantaged backgrounds. A kidnapping-gone-wrong in a small UP town reverberates in Delhi: the girl's father is a senior official, and the cops are given orders from on high to crack down.

Cue Shivani's entry, armed with her faithful helpers, one of them a young woman (Janki Bodiwala) having a hard time finding her head in a workplace overrun by men. An-

other key character is a young man (Prajesh Kashyap) whose NGO's stated mission is to rescue street children, and who has been responsible for putting some of the bad 'uns behind bars. Jisshu Sengupta reprises his role as Shivani's ultra-supportive spouse who doesn't mind fixing his own dinner while she leaves the house on her business.

Which is, as in the first two instalments, out in 2015 and 2019, focussed on rescuing young women from fates worse than death. In the line of scary women whose job is to traffic young girls (the last one was Huma Qureshi's Badi Didi in Delhi Crime 3), the flint-eyed Prasad is vivid, humming a ditty while putting her victims to rest. But some of the unease she generates is blunted by the tacked-on rigmarole about deadly illnesses, viruses, human guinea pigs and greedy medical corporations.No other character is allowed to be bigger than Roy– understandable as she is the hero of this Yash Raj-produced enterprise—which is both a good thing and a bad thing. Mukherji is a solid actor, and we go along with her as she leads from the front, with everyone else following in her rear. But even she can't do much with the degree of over-writing and predictable plot-points: when a character says aap rath chalaao, aur mujhe saarthi banne do, or words to that effect, we know exactly where this is going, just as we do when too-good-to-be-true characters crop up.Shivani gets to deliver the mandatory speech about how girls and women are perpetual victims, and how there will always be brave ones who come to the rescue, which is fine, but the eagerness to frame Mukherji centre-stage– literally in more than one scene– dulls the rest of the enterprise.Mardaani 3 movie cast: Rani Mukherji, Janki Bodiwala, Mallika Prasad, Prajesh Kashyap, Jisshu SenguptaMardaani 3 movie director: Abhiraj MinawalaMardaani 3 movie rating: Two stars

How Nikkhil Advani's Freedom at Midnight uses Mahatma Gandhi assassination not as a polarising event, but a unifying one

Season 1 of Nikkhil Advani's period drama Freedom at Midnight, which released a couple of years ago, ends with signs of an angry nation demanding, "Gandhi must pay." It's befitting then that season 2 culminates with the assassination of the Mahatma, which took place on this day 78 years ago in 1948. But it's designed less as a price that Gandhi had to pay, and more like a smaller sacrifice he had to make for the larger interest of a divided nation. The most violent excess towards a symbol of non-violence comes across isn't a victory of hinsa as much as it is a plea for peace.

Gandhi is killed five months after India's Independence and Partition. It's a phase of extremes — the joy of liberation from a colonial rule of over 200 years, coupled with the irrevocable heartbreak that comes with a nation divided on religious lines. It's no ordinary territorial bifurcation, but large-scale riots and displacement in both the eastern and western corners of India.In his seminal 1981 novel Midnight's Children, Salman Rushdie narrates that turbulent time in the chapter 'Snakes and Ladders' as a macro equivalent of the board game — the ladder of Independence and the snake bite of Partition, the jolting descent with Mahatma Gandhi's assassination and the gradual ascent with a nation that doesn't want to let that sacrifice go in vain.

Also, in that novel, protagonist Saleem recalls learning about Gandhi's killing during the screening of a film, which prompts his family to rush back and seek refuge in home, under the assumption that a Muslim killed the Father of the Nation. The escapist fantasy of a film is hijacked by the harsh truths of reality. As it were, the assassinator wasn't a Muslim, but does that matter?Would history take a different course if Mahatma Gandhi was killed by a Muslim? Season 1 ends with a hint at that alternate reality, but season 2 spells out how Gandhi ensures that even if his assassination is inevitable, he must make it count. Probably having foreseen and accepted his imminent end, Gandhi goes on fast unto death, once to urge all rioters to drop their weapons and then to ensure the terms of Partition are fairly met not only by Pakistan, but also the Indian government.By allegedly turning on those perceived as "his own", whether it's members of Congress like Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Home Minister Vallabhbhai Patel, as well as fellow Hindus, Gandhi takes a firm stand in the face of communal riots. His allegiance lies not with any religion or any half of the country, but with a larger moral code that governs a land divided by politics. If he's the Father of the Nation, he's not the Father of the Naya Bharat, but of an India that once was, which extends far beyond the Radcliffe Line.

"Don't discriminate pain as ours and theirs. Shed as many tears on others' pain and loss as you do on yours," Gandhi's advice to a despondent rioter in Calcutta wasn't just a tokenistic pearl of wisdom, but his way of life. He made peace in Pakistan as much his mission as harmony in India. Alas, he was killed before he could fulfill his last wish to go to Pakistan. Was it an attempt to thwart the Mahatma from spreading peace in Pakistan like he did in India? Or was it an act of revenge towards the man who cost India its promised sum to Pakistan?

With the way he builds up to that episode, Nikkhil Advani underlines that the religious or nationalistic identity of the killer doesn't matter as much as their existential one. More than the man who assassinated Gandhi, the show traces the journey of his attempted assassinator — Madan Lal Pahwa. A Partition refugee from Pakistan, Pahwa didn't attempt to kill Gandhi because he was attached to the land he came from. Surely, he was instigated by those spreading vitriol against Gandhi, but they wouldn't have been half as impressionable had he not been encountering existential issues of his own.Freedom At Midnight strips down the primary cause of Gandhi's attempted assassination to a rather relatable, rampant existential phenomenon — Daddy issues. Pahwa's fundamental beef with Gandhi was that he was the proverbial Father of the Nation. Having been disowned by his own father for fleeing away alone from a communal encounter, he desperately seeks an opportunity to align himself with an identity. He's been stripped off from not only his home, but also his family. Killing his own father wouldn't give him as much of a purpose as killing the father of all fathers.

When Pahwa is arrested after his failed assassination attempt, Gandhi's actual killer shows up. It's only his silhouette that's shown as he shoots Gandhi in the chest. Because his face or religion isn't as important to the history of the nation as is his state of mind. It doesn't matter if he's a Hindu or a Muslim, but the fact that he's a lost soul in a lost nation trying to make sense of a traumatic past and a



challenging future.Richard Attenborough's 1982 biopic Gandhi ends with the Mahatma saying his last words, "Hey Ram," as the screen goes black. It feels like a sudden blow to the head. But in Freedom at Midnight, Advani zooms in on Gandhi as he takes the bullet on his chest. It plays out at a glacial speed, forcing the audience to take in this extreme onslaught in full sight. Because it's not the interpretation of a British filmmaker who wants to brush it under the carpet, but that of an Indian who knows better. An Indian who realizes what Gandhi was trying to demonstrate all his life — death, even that of the Father of the Nation, is not the death of the nation itself.

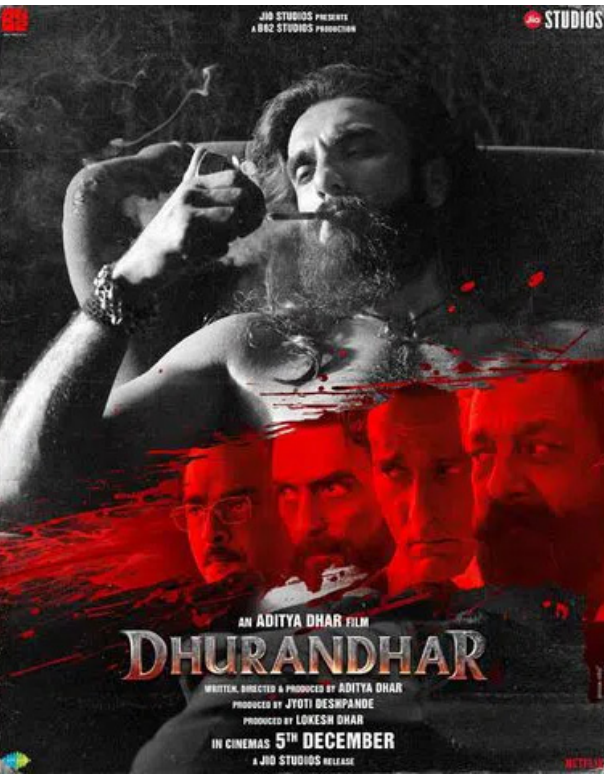
The final episode is prophetically titled "Hey Ram," but Gandhi's utterance of that expression is only seen, never heard. The two words may have a new context in a new India, but Gandhi's invocation of Lord Rama was like a brief prayer for peace. He was a practicing Hindu till his last breath, but religion was only a means to a higher end. The screen doesn't go black either as the writers of Freedom at Midnight can't divorce Gandhi's sacrifice with its positive outcome.

What Gandhi couldn't achieve in life, he did so with death. He brought closer not only two warring religions and countries, but also two political ideologies. Nehru's socialism and Patel's iron-grip pragmatism were at loggerheads in a newly independent and divided India. These mirror the crossroads that India has been at in the past 15 years. Does it want to continue to be a country that celebrates unity in diversity or does it want to consolidate its identity on religious grounds? But religion was never a point of contention back then, just like it's not right now. What's contentious is the way in which India asserts its identity — by slow, gradual consensus or by brute force?Gandhi maintained that both Nehru and Patel, the frontrunners of Congress and of a new India, have the nation's best interests in their respective agendas. But they're like "the two oxen yoked to the government cart", where both will have to match their steps and not go astray. There's a reason why the day of the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi is celebrated as Martyrs' Day. He died a martyr so that Nehru and Patel could put their differences aside and join forces in the interest of an India that couldn't afford more divisions.It's unfortunate that it took the most extreme violent act towards the most non-violent man to uphold peace and harmony in the country. But with Freedom at Midnight, Advani reminds us that more than the death on this fateful day, it's the life that Gandhi lived for 78 years that shapes and defines India even today. Patel may have been appropriated now and Nehru may have been villainized, but it's holding on to Gandhi that gives all Indians an abiding identity.

Madhavan meets Ajith Kumar at Dubai Autodrome as pictures go viral

Chennai: Well known actor Madhavan on Thursday met actor Ajith at the Dubai Autodrome, where the latter's racing team will be seen in action later this week.Pictures that showed Madhavan interacting with Ajith at the Dubai Autodrome have now gone viral on social media platforms.Madhavan is the latest in a list of stars to have called on Ajith on the race tracks in Dubai.It may be recalled that earlier this month, actress Nayanthara and her director husband, Vignesh Shivan, had arrived at the Dubai Autodrome to cheer for actor Ajith, who took part in the popular Dubai 24H Series event.A video clip that showed the actress and her husband being greeted by Ajith Kumar at the Dubai Autodrome had then gone viral on the Internet. Prior to Nayanthara and Vignesh Shivan, actor Sibi Sathyaraj had taken to his X timeline to share a video clip that showed Ajith warmly receiving him and his family members at the circuit.

'Dhurandhar' starts streaming on Netflix



New Delhi: After smashing box office records by earning over Rs 1,000 crore in its theatrical run, "Dhurandhar" started streaming on Netflix from Friday with director Aditya Dhar calling it a new chapter for the movie that stayed in cinemas for more than a month.Starring Ranveer Singh, Akshay Khanna, R Madhavan, Sanjay Dutt, Arjun Rampal, Sara Arjun and Rakesh Bedi, the film broke many records to emerge as the highest-earning single-language Hindi film in India with India net collections crossing a massive Rs 1,000 crore. The film released in theatres on December 5 but continued to be watched till January before its Netflix premiere. The audiences can also watch the film in Tamil and Telugu in addition to Hindi on the streaming plat-

form.

"The theatrical response to 'Dhurandhar' was deeply humbling, especially witnessing audiences connect with its story, characters, and scale. With its release on Netflix, the film begins a new chapter. Reaching farther, inviting new viewers to discover its layers and revisit its moments in their own time," director Dhar said in a statement.Monika Shergill, VP of Content, Netflix India, said "Dhurandhar" has become a true pop-culture moment, a blockbuster that has captured audience imagination and conversation at scale."We are excited to bring this film to Netflix, making it available to audiences in over 190 countries. Ambitious and bold, 'Dhurandhar' is crafted with exceptional vision by director Aditya Dhar and produced by Jio Studios and B62 Studios and its Netflix journey marks our creative partnership that has grown with many successful films over the years.The stellar performances by Ranveer Singh, Akshaye Khanna and the brilliant ensemble make it one of the most anticipated films on streaming. It's thrilling when we are able to surprise and delight our members with the best of Indian cinema for fans here and around the world," she said.Producer Jyoti Deshpande, President – Jio Studios, said, "'Dhurandhar' not only reset the bar and set new box office records worldwide for an Indian film, it equally raised the bar to showcase India's command over the craft of cinema and brave new style of storytelling that transcends language or geography and drew the audiences into an unforgettable immersive experience.. 'Dhurandhar' epitomizes our vision for India to the world with stories rooted in india with a narrative that crosses over."In many ways, we opted for almost an OTT style binge watch chapter style format for the film which resonated with audiences worldwide. We fully expect to amplify Dhurandhar's place in popular culture with the film's Netflix premiere which will help reach it to even more audiences in India and across the world," she said.Producer Lokesh Dhar, B62 Studios said from script to screen, 'Dhurandhar' has been driven by vision and scale."Its record-breaking box office run marks a proud moment for Indian cinema, and with its Netflix release, the film is set to reach and resonate with audiences worldwide," he said.

Mahesh Babu and Priyanka Chopra-starrer Varanasi's release date out; fans expect it to be 'bigger than Baahubali'



Filmmaker SS Rajamouli's highly-anticipated film Varanasi, starring Mahesh Babu, Priyanka Chopra and Prithviraj Sukumaran in pivotal roles, has finally got a release date. The movie will hit the big screen worldwide on April 7, 2027.Ahead of the announcement of the release date, the makers installed cryptic hoardings in the titular Indian city, hinting at the release date.Talking to Variety about the hoardings, Varanasi producer Karthikeya said, "Varanasi lies at the heart of this film, so beginning the release conversation from the city itself felt instinctive. The cryptic on-ground installation was intended to spark curiosity, and audiences connected the dots organically."

He added, "April 7, 2027, sits within the festive period of Ugadi and Gudi Padwa, flows into the weekend, and is followed by Ambedkar Jayanti and Rama Navami, creating a strong extended theatrical window. It's a date that perfectly aligns with us and all our stakeholders."Following the

announcement of the release date, fans flooded social media with excitement over the upcoming Telugu film. "It will be bigger than Baahubali," a person wrote on X. "Can't wait!! Come soon," another commented. "Mahesh Babu X Priyanka Chopra wowwww. April 7 2027," a third comment read.For those unversed, SS Rajamouli unveiled the first look of Varanasi at a grand event in Hyderabad last year. The promo showcased diverse locations such as Antarctica, Varanasi, and Kenya across different time periods, including 512 CE, 2027 CE, and the Treta Yuga, hinting at a possible time-travel theme. The teaser ended with Mahesh Babu charging forward on a bull, set against the backdrop of the pilgrimage city of Varanasi.Varanasi is being produced under the banner of Sri Durga Arts and Showing Business. It will mark Priyanka Chopra's official entry into Telugu cinema. It will also reunite Rajamouli with RRR composer MM Keeravani.

Everything you should know about the US first lady's documentary

Documentary films are supposed to act like a mirror for the society — an honest, uncensored account of reality. However, some realities are less interesting to people, and in some cases, these stories face harsh criticism. That is exactly what is happening with the documentary Melania, which is based on the life of the United States' first lady, Melania Trump. The film already had a target on its back because of director Brett Ratner's involvement, and now it is receiving poor reviews.

What is Melania about? The Amazon MGM Studio synopsis of Melania reads, "Step inside Melania Trump's world as she orchestrates inauguration plans, navigates the complexities of the White House transition, and moves her family back to the Nation's Capital. It will have "exclusive footage capturing critical meetings, private conversations, and never-before-seen environments."Ahead of its January 29 release date, Melania premiered at the Kennedy Centre in the US. The event was attended by Trump's closest confidants and other celebrities like Dr Phil, Nicki Minaj, and Ratner himself. The reviews soon started flowing in, and right off the bat, it was all bad news. Letterboxd users swarmed the platform with bad reviews, with most pointing out that there was absolutely no need for this.

One user wrote, "Death of cinema and death of American democracy," while another said, "Nobody asked for this absolute piece of flaming garbage." It does feel that the Trump administration expected this, because according to a report by Variety, most of the mainstream media was barred from attending the premiere. A user on X wrote, "If they were going to make a movie about a First Lady, they should



have done it like Jackie Kennedy because at least she's interesting. Nobody cares or should care about Melania's life." To add to the fire, The Guardian reported that Melania had sold just one ticket during a screening at Islington Cinema in London.

Amazon MGM Studios is releasing the documentary on 1500 screens in the US, after acquiring the rights for a reported sum of \$40 million. According to The Guardian and The New York Times, Amazon has also spent \$35 million on just the marketing of the film.Another reason why people might not go and see the film is the director himself. Brett Ratner was a huge name in the business but was ousted by the industry after being accused of sexual assault. According to People, no charges were filed, and Ratner still doesn't accept the accusations, but Hollywood decided to step away from him.