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Gold slips, silver tumbles over 3 pc on strong dollar, tech sell-off

Mumbai: Gold prices fell moderately, while silver lost over 3 per cent on Friday due to a stronger dollar and a rout in global technology stocks.

MCX gold February futures fell 0.97 per cent to Rs 1,50,590 per 10 grams around 10.40 am on an intraday basis. Meanwhile, MCX silver March futures plunged 3.71 per cent to Rs 2,34,775 per kg. On the MCX, silver prices had declined as much as 6 per cent to their day's low of Rs 2,29,187 per kg earlier during the session before a strong rebound.

Supreme Court adjourns hearing on Telangana MLA Disqualification Case

HYDERABAD, FEB 6

The Supreme Court heard the case concerning the disqualification of MLAs from Telangana. Following a previous hearing, advocate Abhishek Singhvi updated the court on the Speaker's recent decision regarding eight MLAs.

Despite substantial evidence, BRS party lawyer Mohit Wu argued that the remaining two cases also had clear evidence and required no further investigation. He pointed out that one MLA, elected on a BRS ticket, contested as a Congress MP candidate, and another BRS MLA's daughter also ran as a Congress candidate, with the MLA campaigning for Congress.

Singhvi requested additional time until mid-March to hear the petitions, citing ongoing municipal elections. Wu objected, criticising the delay, noting that the court was initially promised a hearing within four weeks. The bench granted three weeks for the hearing and adjourned proceedings.



The court expressed hope that the Speaker would adhere to previous orders and warned that contempt proceedings could be initiated if there was non-compliance. The case will be revisited after three weeks.



Lok Sabha paralysed amid Opposition protests

New Delhi, Feb 6

The Lok Sabha proceedings were washed out on Friday due to vociferous protests by the Opposition, with no business transacted after a couple of quick adjournments.

As soon as the House convened at 11 am, Speaker Om Birla adjourned it within minutes till noon, as Opposition members rushed into the well of the House carrying banners and posters.

The protests continued unabated the House reconvened, with the Opposition members raising slogans against the Centre over the military standoff between India and China in eastern Ladakh in 2020.

TDP MP Krishna Prasad Tenneti, who was presiding over the proceedings, allowed ministers to lay papers. However, as the uproar persisted, he adjourned the House for the day.

Meanwhile, Opposition MPs staged a protest against the India-US trade agreement at the main entrance of the Parliament building, holding a banner calling it a "trap deal."

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also joined the protest as MPs raised slogans such as "jo uchit samjhao, wahi karo" (Do whatever you think is right) and "tanashahi nahi chalegi" (dictatorship will not be accepted), criticising the Centre.

Hyderabad: Woman leaps to death from top floor in Kukatpally

Hyderabad: A 23-year-old woman died after jumping from the third floor of a private office building in the CBCID Colony at Kukatpally, under the KPHB police station limits on Thursday night.

The woman identified as Anita, a native of Maddinayanipalli village in Chittoor district in Andhra Pradesh had been residing in Hyderabad and was working in a private firm. Anita got married in 2021 to Srinivas, a resident of Bachupally, and the couple has a young daughter. On Thursday, she jumped from the third floor of the office building where she worked, suffering serious multiple bleeding injuries.

BRS and BJP parties have entered into a secret deal ahead of the municipal elections

District In-charge Minister Sridhar Babu



* Indian Chronicle, Tandur (Feb,06) "District In-charge Minister Sridhar Babu accused BRS and BJP of striking a "dark deal" ahead of the Tandur Municipal elections." Speaking at a corner meeting organized by Tandur MLA Buyyani Manohar Reddy near Nizam Shaheed Dargah in Old Tandur on Friday, Minister Sridhar Babu — who attended as Chief Guest — addressed Congress-backed councillor candidates and activists from Wards 13 to 22, 31, 32, and 33. "He said: "BJP and BRS lack the strength to directly challenge the ruling Congress party. So they've secretly agreed to divide the Chairman and Vice-Chairman posts like loot among thieves." He praised Congress for: "Issuing ration cards to every eligible poor family — feeding the hungry under 2 years of people-friendly governance." Implementing 6 guarantees from the election manifesto: "Free bus travel for women" — Gas cylinders at ₹500 — Zero electricity bill for consumption below 200 units" He urged voters: "Vote for Congress-backed candidates (symbol: Hand) on Feb 11" Ensure overwhelming victory to hoist Congress flag over Tandur Municipality" He assured: "With CM Revanth Reddy's initiative, massive funds will flow for Tandur's development. "Golla Cheruvu" — currently a sewage pond — will be transformed into a Mini Tank Bund with allocated funds." In Old Tandur, where minority voters dominate, Minister Sridhar Babu spoke partly in Hindi and paused during Azan — signaling respect for communal harmony." DCC President Jadhav Dharasing Naik- Senior leaders Rahuf, Amir Abdullah- Congress councillor candidates & others Attended.

Kukatpally Police Arrest Four Persons; 500 kg Copper Cables Worth Rs 6 Lakh Recovered

Indian Chronicle Feb 6: Kukatpally Police arrested four persons and recovered 500 kilograms of copper cables worth approximately ₹6 lakh in connection with a theft case reported in the Kukatpally area. On 04-02-2026 at around 2:00 PM, a complaint was lodged by Mr. Ulli Kunal, Site Engineer at Makuta Taranga, IDL Lake, Kukatpally, stating that seven bundles of copper armoured cables had been stolen by unknown persons during the previous night. Based on the complaint, Crime No. 183/2026 was registered under Section 305 BNS, and an investigation was immediately taken up. During the investigation, on 05-02-2026, Kukatpally Police noticed four persons moving suspiciously. Upon questioning, it was revealed that they were working as security personnel at the Makuta Tripura site. During interrogation, they confessed to committing the theft. Police arrested all four accused and seized 500 kg of stolen copper cables from their possession. Accused Details: A1: Lakhindra Boruah (26), Security Guard A2: Anupam Gogoi (26), Security Guard A3: Neetu Das (25), Security Guard A4: Nabajyoti Das, Security Guard. All the accused are natives of Assam who had come

to Hyderabad for security jobs. Police stated that the accused had developed habits of alcohol consumption and smoking and committed the theft to meet their personal expenses. Public Advisory: Kukatpally Police advise the public, contractors, and site owners to conduct proper background verification of security personnel before employment and to verify and retain their identity documents. Another Case – Two-Wheeler and Mobile Phones Recovered. In a separate case, Mohammed Salman, S/o Late Abdul Yacoob, resident of Moosapet, Hyderabad, was apprehended. During interrogation, he confessed to stealing a two-wheeler in December from Anjaneya Nagar, Moosapet, and stealing two mobile phones five days ago from Vinayi Hostel, Moosapet. The stolen vehicle and mobile phones were recovered. All the accused were produced before the Hon'ble Court today.



Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Task cut out for Manipur's new CM Khemchand Singh

The restoration of popular government in Manipur is a political gamble worth taking in a State torn apart by ethnic strife and desperate for lasting peace. Yumnam Khemchand Singh of the BJP took charge as the 13th Chief Minister, nearly a year after the much-discredited N Biren Singh resigned from the post, paving the way for the President's rule. The appointment of two Deputy Chief Ministers — Nemcha Kipgen from the Kuki-Zo community and Losii Dikho of the Naga People's Front — serves a symbolic purpose in a State that has witnessed extensive bloodshed over the past two-and-a-half years. Khemchand Singh has his task cut out as the deep wounds of the State need a healing touch. The bitter divide between the warring Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities has not yet been bridged. It will be a Herculean task for the new government to regain the trust of aggrieved stakeholders. Ethnic violence has claimed over 260 lives and displaced thousands of people in the key north-eastern State since May 2023, after tribal groups in the hills rose up against a High Court order directing the then Biren Singh government to consider granting Scheduled Tribe status to the majority Meitei community. The root cause of the ethnic conflict — the tussle over the majority Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe status — must be addressed on priority to regain the trust of Kukis and Nagas. The Centre has no time to lose — Manipuris have already waited too long for the healing touch.

A political solution involving civil society is the only way forward. Manipur, like most of north-eastern India, is an amalgamation of multiple cultures, faiths and ethnicities, many with a history of mistrust and violence. The arrangement of having a Meitei CM and one deputy CM each from the Kuki and Naga communities is clearly aimed at signalling inclusivity. However, the symbolism will be put to the test on the ground. Protests in Kuki-Zo-dominated districts like Churachandpur, demanding a "political solution" before government formation, lay bare a lingering sense of alienation and fear. The Kuki-Zo Council, a leading civil society organisation in Manipur, has urged all MLAs belonging to the community to "respect the collective will, sentiments, unity and political aspirations of the Kuki-Zo people". The subtle warning to these legislators is that they should be ready to face the consequences if they choose to join the government. A tripartite agreement in September last year between the Centre, Manipur government and Kuki-Zo insurgent groups provided a ray of hope for restoring peace and normalcy in the strife-torn State. With a year left for the Assembly elections, the BJP is keen to project a rosy picture. However, the Kuki-Zo demand for a separate administration — a Union Territory with a legislature — might impede efforts to restore normalcy. The new dispensation must make reconciliation and consensus-building its top priorities.

Harihara Kshetram Sri Chilukeshwara Anjaneya Swamy Temple Committee Felicitates Newly Elected Uppal Press Club Executive Members

"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 6 (Indian Chronicle):"The Harihara Kshetram Sri



Chilukeshwara Anjaneya Swamy Temple Committee grandly felicitated the newly elected executive members of the Uppal Press Club. Vaddepalli Kishore was unanimously elected as the President of the Uppal Electronic and Print Media Club (Uppal Press Club). The felicitation program was conducted under the leadership of Temple Committee President Dasari Krishna and General Secretary Gopal Reddy. Speaking on the occasion, the temple committee members highlighted the significant role played by journalists in the development of the Uppal Circle. They stated that journalists have the responsibility of informing the public about social issues, highlighting development activities, and bringing attention to public problems while creating awareness from time to time. The committee members also requested the continued support and cooperation of journalist fraternity in the renovation of Chilkanagar Shiva Temple. A large number of Uppal Press Club executive members and temple committee members participated in the event, including Jelly Mohan, Gopal Reddy, Kavali Narasimham, Masa Shekhar, Paidipala Gouraiah, Dandu Anjaiah, Poloju Srinivas Chari, Rudrarapu Shankar, Madugula Srinivas Yadav, Kasula Ramakrishna, Mallesh Mudiraj, Nani Mudiraj, and others.

Digital education is necessary : OU Vice Chancellor Professor Molugaram Kumar Library Science Workshop begins at OU Arts College

" Indian Chronicle OU February 06:Osmania University Vice Chancellor Professor Molugaram Kumar said that online-digital education is necessary for everyone in today's society. A two-day workshop titled "KOH" (Open Source Integrated Library Management System) is being organized by the Department of Library and Information Science at the OU Arts College. OU VC Professor M. Kumar attended the inaugural function on Friday as the chief guest and spoke. He said that we should use digital tools and mobile phones with patience so that we can get the information and knowledge we need."It is very important to get accurate and valuable information."The VC urged students and faculty to enhance quality teaching at the university and publish quality research papers in world-class journals."Explaining that citations to research articles bring great fame and name to the university and the individuals involved. He said that H index, G index, I index, Q index, E index, M index, etc. indicate the quality of research papers."The VC advised students and faculty to also obtain patents through their research."Arts College Principal and Workshop Director Professor C. Kaseem advised students and faculty to prepare appropriately for the changes in the education system that are taking place with the changing times. He said that many things can be accessed through the mobile in the palm of our hand."The principal explained that in addition to conducting classes regularly in the college, we are encour-



aging students and faculty by organizing seminars and various programs." Telangana State Library Association State President Prof. N. Lakshmana Rao, Workshop Convenor Dr. J. Viveka Vardhan, Resource Person Dr. Seshaiah, Library Science Workshop Organizing Secretaries "Dr. Vijay Kumar, "Dr. Lakpathi, faculty, research scholars, and students were participated in this programme.

People-Centric Governance Sets New Benchmarks in Bhadrachalam



perceptions associated with revenue offices, Bhadrachalam Tahsildar Daniyal Venkateshwarlu has emerged as a model administrator by introducing transparent, people-centric governance and swift reforms within just six months of assuming charge."Taking over as Tahsildar in July last year after serving as Deputy Tahsildar, Venkateshwarlu has transformed a system often criticized for red-tapism and middlemen influence. Through decisive administrative measures, he has ensured that public services reach beneficiaries directly,

effectively curbing the role of brokers and touts."During his six-month tenure, 75 eligible beneficiaries were provided Kalyana Lakshmi cheques, while 679 new white ration cards were issued following transparent verification processes. In addition, over 900 families received inclusion of additional family members in ration cards, offering a permanent solution to long-pending issues."Infrastructure Upgrade and Administrative Reforms" The Tahsildar office, which had deteriorated over the years, underwent immediate repairs and reorganization. Office interiors were modernized, staff seating was streamlined, and citizen-friendly service mechanisms were introduced to ensure quicker access to services."Beyond infrastructure, Venkateshwarlu initiated systemic reforms by eliminating intermediaries and directly communicating with beneficiaries through phone calls and official channels. This move restored public confidence in the revenue ad-

ministration and dismantled the long-standing broker-driven system."Transparent Land Acquisition and Dispute Resolution" Under the Bhu Bharati initiative, 67 land-related petitions were received, of which 33 genuine cases were resolved after fair and transparent inquiries."In a major administrative achievement, land acquisition for the expansion of Mada Veedhulu as part of the development of Sri Seetharamachandra Swamy Temple was completed efficiently. About 32.5 guntas of land were acquired by offering displaced families the highest compensation package, and the land was successfully handed over to the temple authorities."Further, 78 displaced families are set to receive 2 acres and 34 guntas of prime urban land under the Rehabilitation and Resettlement (R&R) package, reflecting the administration's commitment to justice and humane governance."Key Role in Major Festivals and Public Events" The Bhadrachalam Tahsildar office plays a vital role in managing large-scale religious events, particularly the Sri Rama Navami and Mukkoti Ekadasi festivals, which attract lakhs of pilgrims. Coordinating with departments such as Panchayat Raj, Irrigation, and Health, Venkateshwarlu ensured smooth arrangements and essential facilities for devotees."He also played a significant role in the successful conduct of the Eru Panduga and Nadi Harathi programmes, implemented under the close supervision of Bhadradi Kothagudem District Collector Jitesh V. Patil, strictly adhering to official guidelines."Restoring Trust in Revenue Administration" By issuing certificates promptly to students and beneficiaries, remaining accessible during emergencies and disasters, and ensuring fairness in decision-making, Tahsildar Daniyal Venkateshwarlu has redefined governance standards in Bhadrachalam."His administrative efficiency and unwavering commitment to public service have earned him appreciation from higher authorities and recognition as a dedicated and people-oriented officer in the Bhadravati region.

All Kapu Community Members in Uppal Constituency Must Unite: State Kapu Association Chief Advisors Gaddam Ravikumar and S. Vaikuntha Rao

" KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 6 (Indian Chronicle):"State Kapu Association Chief Advisors Gaddam Ravikumar and S. Vaikuntha Rao have called upon all members of the Kapu community in the Uppal constituency to unite. They attended a meeting held on Friday at the Kapu Community Hall in Ramanthapur, Sai Krishna Nagar, as chief guests. Addressing the gathering, they emphasized the need for unity among Kapus in the constituency to collectively work towards resolving their issues. They assured that they would stand by the Kapu community in any difficulty and ensure solutions to their problems. They advised local leaders to organize necessary meetings to bring all Kapu community members together in an organized manner. Urging the Kapu community in the constituency to demonstrate their strength and unity, they stated that they would make all possible efforts to ensure justice for Kapus in the upcoming Greater Hyderabad elections."On this occasion, Kapu Association leaders felicitated Chief Advisors Gaddam Ravikumar and S. Vaikuntha Rao in a grand manner. The meeting was attended by Kapu leaders D. Kameswara Rao, N. Vaikunta Rao, V. Minna Rao, V. T. Naidu, V. Pratap, V. Vasudeva Rao, B. Deva, M. Vasu, K. Lakshminarayana, B. Kantha Rao, B. Vishwanatham, B. Balakrishna, B. Venkata Rao, B. Srinivasa Rao, B. Tirupathi Rao, V. Mohan Rao, and others.



AITUC Calls on NHM Employees to Make Feb 12 Nationwide General Strike a Success

" Indian Chronicle" kumram bheem, Asifabad District Report, Jade Srinivas, February 06. "Komaram Bheem Asifabad District: AITUC District General Secretary Boge Upender has called upon all cadre employees working under the National Health Mission (NHM) scheme to actively participate and make the nationwide general strike scheduled on February 12 a grand success. On Friday, under the leadership of AITUC, a strike notice was formally submitted to District Medical and Health Officer (DMHO) Seetharam in Komaram Bheem Asifabad district. Speaking on the occasion, Boge Upender strongly demanded the immediate withdrawal of the four labour codes introduced by the Central Government, stating that



they are anti-worker and aimed at weakening labour rights."He further demanded that contract and outsourcing employees be regularised without any conditions, and that a minimum wage of ₹26,000 be implemented along with the resolution of long-pending issues of NHM employees. He pointed out that NHM workers have been regularised in several other states, but despite Telangana being a state achieved through struggle, NHM employees here continue to face exploitation of labour."Upender also demanded the grant of 240 days of maternity leave for women employees, calling it a basic right."The programme was attended by NHM Union District Secretary Nagesh, Joint Secretary Ramdas, leaders Mamatha, Venkatesh, Praveen, along with several NHM employees.

Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy Lays Foundation Stone for Rs 7.09 Crore Development Works in Chilkanagar Division

" KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 6 (Indian Chronicle):"Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy, along with Chilkanagar Division Corporator and former GHMC Standing Committee member Bannala Geetha Praveen Mudiraj, laid the foundation stone for development works worth ₹7.09 crore in the Chilkanagar Division."As part of these works, a new trunk pipeline with a 1000 mm diameter is being laid at an estimated cost of ₹6 crore on the Chilkanagar main road, from Chilkanagar Crossroads to Kaveri Nagar culvert, which is expected to significantly improve drainage and infra-



structure in the area."Additionally, CC road construction works were inaugurated at a cost of ₹54 lakh from Chilkanagar Hanuman Temple via Maisamma Temple and Nagadevatha Temple up to the Chilkanagar Grand Mosque. Another set of CC road works worth ₹54 lakh was launched in various lanes of Mallikarjun Nagar Colony in Chilkanagar. Addressing the gathering, MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy stated that over the past five years, development works worth ₹115 crore have been carried out in Chilkanagar Division. He noted that Chilkanagar has received the highest development funds in the constituency, crediting Corporator Bannala Geetha Praveen for consistently engaging with the public and systematically addressing civic issues. Speaking on the occasion, Corporator Geetha Praveen expressed her special gratitude to MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy and GHMC Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi for their support in mobilizing substantial funds for the division. She affirmed that all promises made to the people of Chilkanagar have been fulfilled and stated that development works worth approximately ₹115 crore have been completed over the last five years. She added that the remaining works will also be completed in the coming days."The program witnessed the participation of BRS Party Chilkanagar Division members, colony and basti presidents and secretaries, women, and a large number of local residents.

Large-Scale Minority Joinings into Congress Party in Chiluka Nagar Division of Uppal Constituency

Uppal Congress In-charge Parameshwar Reddy Welcomes New Members by Draping Party Scarves“



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 6 (Indian Chronicle):“A large number of minority women from Chiluka Nagar Division in the Uppal Assembly Constituency formally joined the Indian National Congress. The joinings took place from areas including Zaid Nagar, Kalyan Puri, Bank Colony, Azmat Nagar, and Beerappa Gadda.“The mass induction was organised under the leadership of the Chiluka Nagar Division Congress Committee in the presence of Uppal Constituency Congress In-charge Mandamula Parameshwar Reddy. He personally welcomed the new members into the party by draping Congress scarves. Speaking on the occasion, Parameshwar Reddy stated that “people’s governance is being implemented in the state under the ‘Indiramma Rajyam’.” He said that due to the successful implementation of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy’s Six Guarantees, people from all parties are turning towards the Congress. The minority women who joined the Congress Party include: Uzma Jafar, Zainab Begum, Sabia Sultan, Sumayya, Gousia Begum, Razia, Ashra Fatima, Saida Fatima, Saida Humra, Shirikh, Nasreen, Firdaus, Akather, Muntaz Begum, Arafa Begum, Sultana, Noora, Muskan, and others. Several Congress leaders and party workers participated in the programme, including Chiluka Nagar Division In-charge Akiti Agam Reddy,

Division President Rajesh Mudiraj, senior leaders Komppali Bal Raj Mudiraj, Bottu Raju, Sandeep, Mahender Mudiraj, Amareshwari, Sushila, and minority leaders Faheem, Manchala Raghu, Sriramulu, Moinuddin, Amar, Satyam, Radha Krishna, Shankar, Jagadish, Jangaiah, Shravan, Tailor Srinu, Balu, Kiran, Tailor Balaraj, Ramulu, Palle Ramesh, Ramu, Shailu, Vamsi Krishna, Geetha, Jyothi, Shabana, and other Chiluka Nagar leaders.

Corporator Bandaru Srivani Venkat Rao inaugurates floodwater drain pipeline works at a cost of Rs 28 lakh



past five years, several development programmes worth crores of rupees have been successfully implemented across all colonies and bastis within the division. She emphasized that her primary objective is to resolve public issues promptly. She further clarified that public service is her core mission and assured that she would always remain accessible to the people. The programme was attended by Nehru Nagar President Mutthineni Jagadish, Executive President Kompelli Upender, Treasurer G. Suresh, R. Srikanth

Chary, BJP leaders Sanku Kumar Swamy, Padigam Nagesh, Masireddy Prabhakar Reddy, Erram Srinivas, President of Prajavani Organization, along with local residents and others.

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 6 (Indian Chronicle):“Floodwater drain pipeline installation works being undertaken at a cost of ?28 lakh in Nehru Nagar of Ramanthapur Division were inaugurated by the local Corporator, Bandaru Srivani Venkat Rao.“Speaking on the occasion, the Corporator stated that during the

Children’s Voices Promote Traffic Awareness at Radhika Chaurasta

“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, February 06, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):“An awareness programme on traffic rules was conducted at Radhika Chaurasta under the initiative of Gautam Model School, involving school children to educate the public on road safety. Traffic SI Lingareddy, ASI Narsimlu, and other traffic police personnel participated in the programme. As part of the initiative, students explained the importance of following traffic rules to commuters and pedestrians. The children created awareness on key aspects such as obeying traffic signals, precautions to be taken while crossing roads, and the necessity for motorists to strictly follow traffic regulations. The programme emphasized that awareness at a young age helps in shaping responsible and disciplined citizens in the future. Traffic officials stated that educating children on traffic rules plays a vital role in reducing road accidents and improving road safety awareness in society. The initiative attracted the attention of the public at Radhika Chaurasta and received appreciation from commuters. School Headmistress MV Seshu Kumari, PPT In-charge Swetha Reddy, teachers Ashwini, Rashmi, Sahana, Usha, Komal, Jitender, Naresh, PET Rajender, and others were present during the programme.



MLC Dande Vithal Participates in Door-to-Door Campaign at Sardar Basti



“Indian Chronicle“ kumram bheem, Asifabad District Reporte,Jade Srinivas,February,06 .“Kagaznagar:“United Adilabad District MLC Dande Vithal participated in a door-to-door election campaign held at Sardar Basti in Ward No. 5 of Kagaznagar Municipality.“Speaking on the occasion, MLC Dande Vithal stated that the people’s government has sanctioned ?19 crore in development funds for Kagaznagar Municipality. He emphasized that development is pos-

sible only under the Congress Party, which is committed to welfare and inclusive growth.“He appealed to the residents to support and strengthen the Congress Party by casting their votes for the hand symbol, and to ensure the victory of Congress-backed candidate Solleti Vijayalakshmi with a huge majority.“The campaign witnessed active participation from party leaders, workers, and local residents.

UPPAL CORPORATER RAJITHA PARAMESHWAR REDDY Reviews Rs 50 Lakh Community Hall Construction Works at Uppal Hills



and assured them that the community hall would be made available for public use at the earliest.“Officials and local leaders who participated in the inspection include AE Raj Kumar, Durgam Naveen Yadav, Govind Kumar, Swamy, Salla Prabhakar Reddy, Prashanth Reddy, P. Ramachander, T. Srinivas Reddy, G. Ramesh, T. Vijay Singh, Govind Sudhakar Reddy, K. Ramulu, Akku Ravi, Madhu, Amrutha Raju, Mahesh Goud, Shekhar Goud, P. Mahender, Sanjay, B. Anitha, Satyanarayana Chary, Gorige Sattaiah, Medishetty Climate, S. Ramaswamy, Govind Komaraiah, Govind Narasiah, Parvathai Yadav, N. Giri, Gorre Sattaiah, K. Beerayya, G. Beerayya, Chandu, and others.



BJP Urges Authorities to Protect Government Land Near Pedda Cheruvu Adjacent to Lakshmi Starch Company for Public Use



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 6 (Indian Chronicle):“The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) conducted an inspection of approximately two-and-a-half acres of vacant government land located beside Pedda Cheruvu, near Lakshmi Starch Company in the Chilkanagar Division, under the leadership of Uppal Assembly BJP Convenor Devasani Balachander. Local residents expressed serious concern that the land has recently become a hub for anti-social activities. They recalled that during the Telugu Desam Party government, former Minister T. Devender Goud had developed and beautified the Pedda Cheruvu for public benefit. Subsequently, when encroachers attempted to illegally construct huts on the remaining land, BJP leaders, under the leadership of former MLA N.V.S.S. Prabhakar, launched an agitation and successfully protected the government land. Considering the present situation, BJP leaders urged that the land should not be allowed to fall into private hands, and stressed the need to prevent youth from being misled. They appealed to Member of Parliament Etela Rajender and local Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy to



ensure that the land is developed as a public park and sports ground, providing recreation for the public, resting space for senior citizens, and facilities for sports development. The BJP demanded that the government take immediate action and, through coordination among the Irrigation, Revenue, HYDRA, and GHMC departments, convert this government land worth crores of rupees into a public asset. Given the high population density of the Chilkanagar area, leaders emphasized the urgent need to establish a park and sports complex for residents. BJP leaders warned that if authorities fail to take appropriate action, the party will launch large-scale protest programmes. The inspection programme was attended by local leaders, youth, village elders, and BJP representatives including Uppal Assembly BJP Convenor Sri Devasani Balachander, senior BJP leaders Tirupati Satyanarayana, Advocate Ale Narendra, Shamirpet Chandraiah, Vidyasagar, Orsu Shekhar, Bhavanand, Mutyala Krishna Reddy, Sadashiva Reddy, Ramesh, Karthik, Vivek, and others.

Collector K. Haritha Announces Accreditation Cards 2026-28 Process

“Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), February 6, “District Accreditation Committee Chairperson and Collector K. Haritha has announced that applications are being invited for the issuance of district-level accreditation cards.” In a statement, the Collector informed that the Information and Public Relations Department has launched an online accreditation module on its official website. Applications for accreditation cards for the period 2026-2028 will be accepted online. She further stated that the validity of the existing accreditation cards will expire on the 28th of this month. New accreditation cards will be issued to eligible working journalists. Media management are requested to submit the names of their representatives for district-level accreditation cards to the Office of the District Public Relations Officer. Candidates whose names appear in the submitted lists must apply online through the official website: <https://ipr.telangana.gov.in> starting from the 9th of this month.

Focus on resolving the problems at the Bowenpally Market Yard



“Secunderabad Cantonment, February 6 (Indian Chronicle): “Immediate steps will be taken to address issues such as providing basic infrastructure, drinking water, toilets, and improving storage facilities in the market yards, as well as ensuring a transparent procurement process (e-NAM). Bowenpally Market Yard’s senior secretary, Venkatesham, stated that continuous monitoring will be in place. Venkatesham recently assumed charge as the officer of the Bowenpally Market Yard, which is one of the largest vegetable market yards in the country. Speaking to an Indian Chronicle representative at a meeting held in this regard, he said that he would work to reduce the role of middlemen and ensure that farmers receive a fair support price. He warned that strict action would be taken against those conducting business in the market yard in violation of the rules. He also said that plans would be formulated to identify vehicles causing traffic congestion and impose fines on them. He warned that those who possess licenses but are occupying roads instead of their allocated spaces, and engaging in illegal activities by renting out those spaces to others, thereby causing a loss to government revenue, would be identified, and legal action would be taken against them, including the cancellation of their licenses if necessary. He said that he would bring the major problems prevailing in the market yard to the attention of the concerned officials and the minister of the department and work towards resolving them. He stated that he would take steps to bring the biogas plant in the market yard into full operation and would instruct the officials to ensure that the garbage and vegetable waste from the market yard are regularly transported to the plant. He also mentioned that he would be inspecting the market yard soon. He warned those involved in illegal businesses to stop immediately, otherwise, legal action would be taken against them. He appealed to the traders and farmers to bring any problems to his notice. He said that he would work towards ensuring good prices for farmers’ produce, providing basic infrastructure, and curbing corruption in the market yard. He added that he would formulate plans for the development of the market along with the governing body members and officials.

Strict Action for Exceeding Spending Limits in Municipal Polls



“Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), February 6, “Municipal Election Expenditure Observer Devender has directed candidates contesting in the 2nd General Municipal Elections to maintain clear and transparent records of their election expenses.” A meeting on expenditure management was conducted on Friday at the Integrated District Collectorate Complex with the contesting candidates. Addressing the gathering, the Observer emphasized that all candidates must properly document their expenses in accordance with election guidelines. He instructed candidates to obtain prior permission for organizing public meetings, gatherings, and rallies. Expenditure details

must be recorded as per the Model Code of Conduct and submitted within the stipulated timeframe. Candidates were also briefed on maintaining a separate bank account for election expenses, preserving records, and adhering strictly to the prescribed expenditure limits. The Observer warned that any violation of election rules or exceeding the prescribed spending limits would invite action under the Model Code of Conduct. The meeting was attended by Election Expenditure Nodal Officer Nadeem Khuddusi, Asifabad Municipal Commissioner Gajanan, Master Trainer Usanna, election officials, and contesting candidates.

During the municipal elections, duties must be performed responsibly without any room for even the slightest negligence:-

Additional Collector for Local Bodies, Bhaskar Rao

“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... February 6):- Additional Collector for Local Bodies, Bhaskar Rao, stated that during the 2nd general municipal elections, duties must be performed responsibly without any room for even the slightest negligence. On Friday, the Additional Collector participated in the training classes for Presiding Officers and Assistant Presiding Officers at the MPDO office in Mothkur Municipality as part of the municipal elections. Speaking on the duties of the Presiding Officers and Assistant Presiding Officers, the Additional Collector said that their role is very crucial in the municipal elections. He stated that Presiding Officers have the responsibility to ensure that the elections are conducted smoothly at the polling stations. He advised them to thoroughly examine every piece of polling material and to check the ballot papers and polling boxes twice. He emphasized that opening and sealing the polling box is a very important aspect and therefore they should be careful. He said that care should be taken to ensure that voters coming to the polling stations do not face any difficulties. He stated that the entire election process must be impartial.” The Municipal Commissioner, Tahsildar, Presiding Officers, Assistant Presiding Officers, and others participated in the training program.



Awareness Program on First Aid and Basic Life Support at Lalaguda Railway Degree College



“Kishore Vaddepalli, Hyderabad, February 6 (Indian Chronicle): “An awareness program on First Aid and Basic Life Support (BLS) was conducted at the Railway Degree College, Lalaguda, Secunderabad. The program was organized by Senior Civil Defence Instructor Sudheer Babu from the GM Office, South Central Railway, along with his team. During the session, Sudheer Babu delivered an impressive demonstration explaining critical emergency situations such as heart attacks, paralysis (stroke), and cardiac arrest. He practically demonstrated essential first aid techniques and basic life-saving methods required to handle emergency situations effectively. The program was attended by College Principal Dr. Sushil Tukaram Ambadkar, Academic Coordinator Govind, and Physical Training Instructor Dr. Samanta Kamani. Faculty members from various departments actively participated in the program. From the Commerce and Management Department, faculty members S. Abidha Banu, Dr. Chandrakala, Shwetha, Sunitha, and Aishwarya took part enthusiastically. English Department faculty Jamsheed Chaudhary and Kumari Reshma, Languages Department faculty Kumari Dhanalakshmi, Dr. Sandhya Das, and Sainath, Science Department faculty Sridevi, Kumari Deeksha, Devashish, and Kumari

Saba, and Computer Science Department faculty Mounika and Sucharita were also present. Along with teaching and non-teaching staff, a large number of students participated, making the program a grand success. Students appreciated



the informative demonstrations and interacted enthusiastically with the resource persons. The Principal congratulated Business Management and Commerce faculty member S. Abidha Banu for successfully organizing the program. The event was coordinated by Jamsheed Chaudhary, while Kumari Reshma proposed the vote of thanks.

District Revenue Officer Jayamma said that students should make a plan and study hard keeping the upcoming exams in mind.



“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... February 6):- District Revenue Officer Jayamma said that students should make a plan and study hard keeping the upcoming exams in mind. On Friday, the District Revenue Officer made a surprise inspection of the ZPHS school in Chandupatla village of Bhuvanagiri mandal.” On this occasion, the District Revenue Officer spoke to the students and their parents, inquiring about student attendance, teaching methods, and exam preparation. She held a special meeting with the students, especially those in the ‘C’ category, and advised them to study systematically keeping the upcoming exams in mind, and to review weaker subjects one or two times every day. She encouraged them, saying that they can achieve good passing results if they study hard. She also said that the students’ parents should pay special attention to their children’s studies. She instructed the school teachers to focus more on the ‘C’ category students and improve the results. The concerned officials participated in this program.

Secure Inter Exam Papers in Strong Rooms with Police Guard: Collector K. Haritha



“Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), February 6, “District Collector K. Haritha has directed officials to securely store Intermediate examination question papers and answer scripts in strong rooms under strict police security.” On Friday, the Collector inspected the vehicle carrying the question and answer papers allocated to the district. Speaking on the occasion, she stated that the Intermediate annual examinations will be conducted from February 25 to March 31, and therefore, all examination materials must be safeguarded in strong rooms with adequate police bandobust. The Collector informed that 19 examination centres have been set up across the district for the Intermediate annual examinations, and a total of 9,716 students are expected to appear. She instructed District Intermediate Education Officer Ramdas to make all necessary arrangements to ensure the smooth and secure conduct of the examinations. Officials from the concerned departments were present during the inspection.

How a man's death in hit-and-run accident near Bengaluru turned out to be a cold-blooded murder by his wife and her lover



Pushpa had been married for 17 years and had three children. Ashok recently developed a habit of consuming alcohol and allegedly subjected Pushpa to physical and mental harassment, said the police.

During this period, Pushpa came into contact with Devraj, a Nandini milk tanker driver from the same village who frequently visited her petty shop, the police said. The two had gradually grown close and been in a relationship for nearly two years, they said. Ashok reportedly began suspecting the relationship, leading to frequent quarrels. He allegedly closely monitored Pushpa's movements, restricting her meetings with Devraj. Police said this prompted Pushpa and Devraj to hatch a plan to eliminate Ashok, with Devraj allegedly assuring her of support for her and her children. On January 24, Devraj, along with Munindra and Siddappa, allegedly took Ashok out on the pretext of drinking alcohol. Near a lake, Ashok was allegedly assaulted with an iron rod and killed. The accused then dumped the body near a roadside curve to make the death appear accidental, the police said. Pushpa later approached the police and lodged a complaint claiming her husband had died in a road accident. However, investigators found inconsistencies. "The nature of injuries and the crime scene did not match an accident. The post-mortem report confirmed it was a case of murder," a police officer said. Based on further investigation and questioning, as Ashok was last seen with the accused, all four allegedly confessed to the crime. Further investigation is underway.

The Sulibele police in Bengaluru Rural district Thursday arrested a woman, her alleged lover and two others for the murder of her husband, a crime that was initially allegedly made to appear as a road accident in Hoskote taluk. On January 24, the body of Ashok, 40, was found near a curve on a village road in the Siddhenahalli village of Hoskote taluk of the Bengaluru Rural district. The death was first believed to be the result of a hit-and-run accident. However, discrepancies at the scene and residents' doubts led the police to conduct a deeper probe.

Investigations revealed that Ashok was killed as part of a premeditated conspiracy, the police said. His wife Pushpa, 33, and her alleged lover Devraj, 33, along with two associates, Munindra and Siddappa, were arrested and booked for murder. According to the police, Ashok and

'You are zero and will be zero': Mamata targets BJP as Assembly discusses Governor Ananda Bose's address

GNS News Agency, Feb 6

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee tore into the Opposition BJP on Thursday in her response to Governor C V Ananda Bose's address to the Assembly session, which will be the last before the next state elections. She also addressed allegations against her Government over illegal immigration and the electoral roll revision. "You are zero and will be zero. You can use all your agencies against us. Bengal's people will not accept you (BJP). You people will lose many seats," Banerjee said. Banerjee also replied to Leader of the Opposition Suvendu Adhikari's criticism that the governor's customary address, prepared by the Government, failed to mention women's safety and the law and order situation. Adhikari said the governor decided against reading the full speech because of these "omissions". However, the chief minister stated that the government had said what needed to be said.

"The honourable governor, as far as I know—I don't want to disclose what was discussed with me—he likely has a flight at 1.15. For that reason, he spoke for the time he had and wished to lay the rest with the permission of the chair," Banerjee said. The governor's address praised the Government's social welfare schemes.

Banerjee pointed to what she said she used to do in Parliament when she was the railway minister. "I would not speak in full. I would speak as much as was necessary with the honourable speaker's permission and leave the rest. That system exists in the parliamentary system," she said. Banerjee further attacked the Opposition. "When there is nothing to say, an idle mind is the devil's workshop—that is what we always feel. To those who are looting and lying, I say: the word 'infiltrator' has entered your heads and nothing else." Referring to BJP MLA Shankar Ghosh's claim that the number of voters had increased 70 per cent between 2009 and 2014, the chief minister said, "Will the new students and youths not be included? Will those completing 18 years of age not get voting rights? Tell me... I am answering because you mentioned these things in [the discussion about] the governor's address. Secondly, you mentioned 70 per cent. Where did this calculation come from? I don't think even a magician could prove this." Further targeting



BJP MLAs, Banerjee said, "As a Bengali, shouldn't you have protested when migrant workers (from the state) were being tortured in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Bihar, and UP?" You have been taught like a parrot'

Addressing the BJP's criticism over illegal immigration, Banerjee said the central agencies and departments related to border management did not share information about illegal immigrants with her Government.

"And you are talking about the border? When that meeting took place, you weren't even present. You are just repeating what you heard from someone else. You have been taught like a parrot. Forget it. I have seen many home ministers... I am asking you, why is data not shared with us?" Previously, when someone arrived from outside, the Customs Department, Aviation Department, and Rail Department would share details and data with our police, and we would take action. For the last 10 years, that has not happened," she said. Banerjee also said the agencies were still not sharing the information despite her raising the matter with Union Home Minister Amit Shah. "Secondly, to whom have we not given land? Should I give everything to the Government of India while you keep shouting? Are you going to occupy Bengal? When Coal India asked for land, we gave it. When SAIL asked for land, we gave it. We gave land to the SSB, the BSF, the CRPF, and the BSF again. We even gave land for the border," the chief minister went on.

HC seeks Centre, Punjab response on PIL over relaxed rules for de-addiction drugs

The Punjab and Haryana High Court on Thursday issued notice to the Punjab government and the Union of India on a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by Dr Paramjeet Singh Ranu, raising concerns over the relaxation of regulatory conditions governing the dispensing of highly addictive de-addiction drugs such as buprenorphine and its combination with naloxone. The PIL came up before a division bench of Chief Justice Sheel Nagu and Justice Sanjiv Berry, which sought responses from the Centre and the state on the issues raised, and fixed the matter for further hearing.

During the hearing, senior counsel for the petitioner submitted that the present petition was the fourth in a series of PILs on the same issue, with three earlier PILs and multiple special leave petitions pending. He said the Drugs Controller General of India had, on March 28, 2019, relaxed the conditions for dispensing buprenorphine-based drugs at the behest of a Punjab-based Association of Psychiatrists, allowing supply not only at designated government run de-addiction centres but also at private psychiatric clinics and hospitals.

The petitioner argued that such relaxation was granted without inviting objections, expert consultations or public discussion, and was contrary to guidelines issued by PGIMER in a report dated October 9, 2014, which had been accepted by the Punjab government in July 2018. He said the drug was psychoactive in nature and required strict medical supervision, but the relaxed norms would allow dispensing from small private clinics without adequate checks and balances. The counsel further alleged that subsequent regulatory changes were a "concerted effort" to frustrate earlier court orders. He referred to amendments to rules framed under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act and later notifications, including amendments to the 2021 rules and the introduction of new rules in 2025, which he said sought to legitimise outpatient facilities for substance use disorder treatment. According to the petitioner, the new framework permitted outpatient centres with minimal infrastructure requirements, such as a doctor's room of 100 square feet, which could enable fly-by-night operators to dispense addictive drugs.

The petitioner also submitted that the regulatory changes ran contrary to the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017,

and other expert recommendations, and warned that the opening up of outpatient facilities could lead to widespread misuse and illegal sale of de-addiction drugs. The bench observed that the issues raised were of public importance and directed the state and the Union government to seek instructions and file their responses. The petitioner also indicated that the matter required an early hearing, noting concerns that unregulated outpatient facilities could open the floodgates to misuse. The rules in question have been in force since December 12, 2025, and the petitioner sought an early date for further consideration. The bench granted four weeks for the respondents to file their replies.

Srinivas Goud slams Congress government for neglecting Mahabubnagar

Mahabubnagar: Former Minister V Srinivas Goud slammed the Congress government for neglecting Mahabubnagar and delaying projects initiated during the BRS government. "Women are complaining about insufficient supply of water. This apart, how can a library be established in a market," the former Minister asked while campaigning in a few divisions on Thursday.

He said the Town Hall, located in the heart of the town, had been closed for a long time. The 1,000-bedded hospital constructed during the BRS government was yet to be opened for the convenience of the people. For the past two years, the Haritha Hotel had been left to rot, he alleged. The Congress government had to float tenders to arrange the required equipment for the hospital. He said he failed to understand the reasons for delaying these projects, which were taken up in the larger interest of the people. The former Minister demanded that the State government drop plans to establish a library in the market. It should instead be set up at another location, keeping public convenience in mind, he said.

4.7-km double-decker elevated Metro rail-cum flyover extension to end Nagar road traffic nightmare



GNS News Agency, Feb 6

The Pune Metro rail has begun the second phase of work by undertaking the construction of extending the double-decker route from Ramwadi station, comprising a 4.7-km flyover at the first level and an elevated Metro line. We have started the process of developing the flyover-cum-Metro rail route on the Nagar road stretch. It is a very big work as the Metro stations would be constructed above the flyovers on the route," said Atul Gadgil, Executive Director of Pune Metro.

This will be the third such double-decker project after the Karve Road project, spanning the two metro stations between SNTU University and Garware College, and the Ganeshkhind Road project, which has partially become operational. The latest project will be a 4.7 km-long elevated stretch from Ramwadi to Tuljabhavani after merging with the proposed line at Kharadi bypass station and spur line at Viman Nagar proposed till Pune Airport. The first level will have a six-lane elevated road of 4.7 km, including a solid ramp ensuring a minimum statutory vertical clearance of 5.5 metres to the Metro and Elevated Road. This will help

resolve traffic on the highway from Pune to Ahilyanagar. Construction of platform and concourse girders, including the erection and casting of deck slabs at four stations at all levels, will be done. The construction of Metro route and spur lines, as well as the first-level six-lane elevated road, will be planned in such a manner that they do not obstruct or interfere with the existing roads, railways, and other utilities. "Where work is required to be carried out at locations adjacent to such roads, railways, utilities, structures, and monuments, suitable safety and protection arrangements will be ensured," Gadgil said.

The elevated road is proposed to be constructed to six-lane configuration with the provision for widening to an eight-lane configuration in the future. In June last year, the Central government had approved the construction for the extension of the Vanaz-Ramwadi route — to Chandni Chowk on one side and Wagholi on the other. However, the existing work to be undertaken will be from Ramwadi to Tuljabhavani with the construction of four stations: Vimannagar, Somnathnagar, Kharadi bypass, and Tuljabhavani. The Pune Metro has two operational routes from Vanaz to Ramwadi and Pimpri Chinchwad to Swargate.

The work on extending the Pimpri Chinchwad-Swargate route has already begun, with extension till Bhakti Shakti from Pimpri Chinchwad and Katraj from Swargate. These extensions are expected to serve key IT hubs, commercial areas, educational institutions, and residential pockets, increasing the share of public transport and ridership across the network. The Pune Metro has also started the work of extending the route from Vanaz to Chandni Chowk to 1,123 metres, which will be two stations — Kothrud Depot and Chandni Chowk. It is planning to develop a small flyover on the first level of the Metro route on a small stretch.

Minimum temperature in Pune steady at 14 degrees Celsius, clear sky ahead

GNS News Agency, Feb 6

The minimum temperature in Pune and its surroundings appear to have stabilized in the range of 14°C, leading to relatively cooler mornings since the mercury touched 18.2°C at the end of January. According to the Shivajinagar station on February 4, the minimum temperature was 14.9°C, which was 2.9°C above normal. The Pashan station recorded almost the same morning temperature. NDA experienced the coolest morning, registering 13.1°C. The minimum temperature, however, changed as one travelled across areas. Magarpatta and Chinchwad had the highest minimum temperature at almost 20°C, while Lavale was 16.2°C.

According to SD Sanap, Scientist at the India Meteorological Department, there might be a normal increase of 2-3°C in the morning temperature over the next few days. The forecast is for Shivajinagar to record 15°C morning temperature on February 5, falling to 14°C from February 6-8 and, then, rising again to 15°C on February 9 and 10. Chinchwad, Magarpatta and Koregaon Park will remain the warmest areas, with the morning temperature hovering around 18-19°C. "The South-Easterly winds are bringing moisture from the Bay of Bengal into the region, while the Northerly cold and dry winds have weakened, conditions that are responsible for the morning temperatures being on the higher side," said Sanap. The minimum temperature was

above normal across Maharashtra, with the departure highest in Central Maharashtra. Nashik woke up to 14.8°C on February 4, which was 4.8°C above normal. Ahilyanagar had the lowest minimum temperature of 14.3°C, 2.2°C above normal, on February 4.

The day-time temperature has stayed steady at 30°C for several days. The maximum temperature in Pune was 30.5°C on February 4, which was only 0.5 degree below normal.

The weather office has said that the sky will be clear for the next couple of days, before one starts seeing clouds towards the afternoon and evening from February 8.

'No escape route for Mamata': Suvendu Adhikari leads celebrations after SC orders Bengal to pay DA dues



GNS News Agency, Feb 6 Leader of the Opposition Suvendu Adhikari arrived at the West Bengal Assembly on Thursday in a jubilant manner and hailed the Supreme Court's order on dearness allowance (DA) dues for government employees as a "historic defeat" for the Mamata Banerjee-led Government. Adhikari, who arrived with supporters and traditional drum players (dhakis), described the order as a validation of a long-standing struggle of teachers, police personnel, and other state employees. The apex court has directed the Government to clear 25 per cent of dearness allowance dues to the employees by March 31.

Speaking to reporters at the Assembly gates, the BJP leader said the apex court had stripped the Government of its ability to delay payments further. "I thank the Supreme Court for three pivotal takeaways from the verdict," he said. Adhikari claimed that the Supreme Court had ruled that employee dues are a fundamental right. "The court has formed a committee of retired judges to determine the dues, pointedly excluding any state government representative," he said. "The Supreme Court has wiped away all conspiracies and interference. They have lost."

The committee will decide on the remaining 75 per cent of dearness allowance. Adhikari asserted that every penny would be recovered under the court-appointed committee's supervision, stating that approximately Rs 10,400 crore would be paid to the employees by March. Turning his attention to the legislative proceedings, Adhikari said the TMC Government lacked the longevity to implement proposals made in the vote-on-account. "Before a new Government arrives, other budgets will be presented. None of these current proposals can be implemented," Adhikari said. He took aim at the Lakshmi Bhandar scheme, suggesting that the current administration cannot fulfil the promised increases and that a future BJP government would be the one to honour such commitments and ensure women's protection, like in Madhya Pradesh and Haryana. Adhikari further labelled the salary increments for civic volunteers, ASHAs, and ICDS

workers as "meagre" and insufficient to meet their demands. Governor stood his ground. Adhikari also praised Governor C V Ananda Bose regarding his customary address to the Assembly session.

"I would like to thank the governor. He rejected the initial draft prepared by the state, which contained anti-Central Government and anti-BJP remarks," Adhikari said. "The Government was forced to send a new draft, removing those comments. They had to swallow their pride." Dismissing claims that the chief minister received favourable observations from the court, Adhikari said, "Where is she mentioned in the Supreme Court verdict? Her name is nowhere to be found. Mamata Banerjee has failed regarding the SLP (special leave petition)." Adhikari cautioned the public against "tea stall talk" regarding remarks made by advocates during the hearing, clarifying that only what is recorded in the court order carries weight. "If a BJP Government comes to power, we will honour this judgment in full. There is no escape route left for Mamata Banerjee," he said.

Surat realtor Tushar Ghelani dies days after suicide attempt amid preparations for daughter's wedding

The police said Tushar Ghelani attempted to kill himself following some disagreements about the guest list and expenses for the wedding.

Noted Surat realtor Tushar Ghelani died of a heart attack on Thursday, four days after he allegedly attempted suicide, the police said. His eyes were donated after he was declared brain-dead on Wednesday. On February 1, Ghelani, 58, his wife Pallavi, daughter Tanvi, and other family members were at his Citylight Road home preparing the guest list for Tanvi's wedding, which was slated for February 5.

Owing to some unknown reason, an argument took place between him and others, as a result of which he went inside his bedroom and attempted suicide, the police said.

"There were some arguments over differences of opinion about the guest list and expenses for the wedding," Umra police Inspector J A Rathwa said.

Bhagwant Mann's swipe at Radha Soami Satsang Beas chief sparks political storm, exposes unease within AAP

GNS News Agency, Feb 6

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann's veiled attack on the head of Radha Soami Satsang Beas, Gurinder Singh Dhillon, days after he accused Rasokhana Nabh Kanwal Raja Sahib Gurdwara in Banga of possessing unauthorised saroops (copies of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib), has placed the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) at odds with religious institutions in the state. On Tuesday, Mann appeared to take a veiled swipe at Dhillon by describing him as a "visitor to an undertrial acting as a judge." Mann's remark, posted on X, came a day after Dhillon met Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader Bikram Singh Majithia at Nabha jail and termed the charges against him "false and baseless".

Without naming Dhillon, Mann wrote that only God could save the courts when visitors to an undertrial start acting as judges. After his meeting with Majithia, the second in a little over four months, Dhillon said he had discussed "certain matters like friends do". "I cannot divulge everything in public, but the cases against him are false," he added. When asked whether Majithia was being framed, Dhillon declined to comment, saying it would not be "in my dignity" to speculate. In January, Mann had accused Rasokhana Nabh Kanwal Raja Sahib Gurdwara of possessing 169 "unauthorised" saroops, claiming that 139 of them lacked proper records and were linked to the 328 saroops missing from the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC). The remarks triggered a backlash within the party. Banga MLA Sukhwinder Kumar Sukhi, who also chairs the Punjab State Container and Warehousing Corporation, or CONWARE, resigned from the post in protest. The issue was eventually defused after the intervention of Finance Minister Harpal Cheema, Education Minister Harjot Bains and Anandpur Sahib MP Malvinder Singh Kang, who visited the gurdwara and said there was no issue related to the saroops. The matter then died down.

Even as the party was still grappling with concerns that taking on religious institutions could hurt it electorally, Mann's remarks on Dhillon have opened another front. Radha Soami Satsang Beas wields considerable influence among voters, prompting fresh unease within AAP ranks. Sources said Cabinet Minister Hardeep Singh Mundian was in touch with Dhillon. "Mundian is handling the issue. He is in touch with Baba ji. There is a feeling in AAP that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was behind the episode. We are trying to find a middle path," said an AAP leader, requesting anonymity.

An hour after Dhillon met Majithia on Monday, the Supreme Court granted the SAD leader bail, paving the way



for his release after seven months in jail. Majithia was arrested by the Vigilance Bureau in June last year in a disproportionate assets case allegedly linked to laundering nearly Rs 540 crore of drug money. He was released on bail on Tuesday. Majithia is a close relative of the Dera chief. Amid the controversy, state AAP president Aman Arora appeared to distance the party from Mann's remarks. "It was his private visit. Baba ji is honourable for me. I cannot raise questions on his statement or decision. I do not have that standing. We do not need to politicise it," he said on Tuesday.

Cheema also downplayed the issue. "Anybody can go to meet anyone in jail if they are relatives. There is no controversy. The matter is sub judice," he said, while reiterating that Majithia had amassed wealth disproportionate to his known sources of income and would be punished as per the law. BJP spokesperson Pritpal Singh Baliawal reacted to Mann's post, saying on Instagram, "Excess of everything is bad. Now you have even started schooling spiritual leaders? Baba Gurinder Singh Ji is the nucleus of faith for millions."

SAD chief spokesperson Arshdeep Singh Kaler described the post as "distressing," saying it directly challenged constitutional values and sacred institutions. BJP leader Ravneet Bittu said the chief minister "has not shed his stage habit" and "thinks he can cross all limits." Senior Congress leader and Leader of Opposition Partap Singh Bajwa demanded that AAP clarify whether Mann's remarks reflected the party's official stand or his personal opinion. In a social media post, Bajwa said he was deeply pained by the comment, which he claimed had hurt the religious sentiments of lakhs of followers in India and abroad. He said such remarks were alien to Punjab's cultural and spiritual ethos, where saints and spiritual leaders have traditionally been held in high regard.

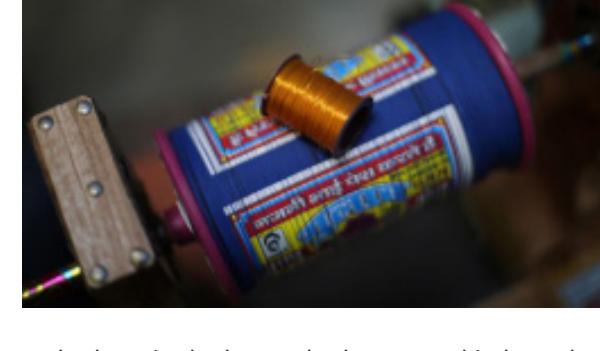
Death by Chinese manjha to be considered murder in UP: Yogi Adityanath issues orders after motorcyclist's fatal injury

GNS News Agency, Feb 6

CM Yogi Adityanath ordered to hold officials concerned responsible to face action for not keeping a check on the sale of the killer kite string in the market across the state. CM Yogi Adityanath ordered to hold officials concerned responsible to face action for not keeping a check on the sale of the killer kite string in the market across the state. A day after a 36-year-old medical representative died after a Chinese manjha cut his throat in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Thursday issued orders to lodge a murder case into all incidents of manjha-related deaths and also hold officials concerned responsible to face action for not keeping a check on the sale of the killer kite string in the market across the state.

A senior officer told The Indian Express that the chief minister took cognisance of the incident during a meeting held at his residence. The officer who was present at the meeting said the CM has instructed to conduct an extensive operation across the state to ensure a complete ban on its sale, and serious legal action against those selling Chinese manjha. On Wednesday, the medical representative identified as Mohammad Shoeb, a resident of Dubagga locality, met with a fatal accident while he was going towards the old city area of Lucknow on his motorbike, the police said.

The nylon string entangled around his throat while he was on the Haiderganj flyover, and heading towards the Eveready crossing. By the time he could stop his motor-



cycle, the string had caused a deep cut on his throat, leading to excessive blood oozing out, said an officer. Passers-by and local people came to his rescue and rushed him to the King George's Medical University (KGMU) trauma centre, which is around three kilometres from the place. The doctors, however, declared the patient dead due to excessive blood loss. Shoeb is survived by his mother, wife, and two minor daughters, and was the lone breadwinner of the family. A Division Bench of the Allahabad High Court had issued a direction to the UP Government to enforce prohibition on manufacturing, sale, and use of Chinese manjha while hearing a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) last month. The PIL had prayed for a complete ban on making, selling, and using Chinese manjha, which is causing deaths.

Foreign patients drive 7-8% revenue: Why Delhi-NCR hospitals are cheering Budget announcement on promoting medical tourism

The medical and healthcare industry in Delhi NCR has welcomed Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's announcement in the Budget on promoting India as a hub for medical tourism services through "a Scheme to support States in establishing five Regional Medical Hubs in partnership with the private sector". NCR with its dense cluster of large corporate hospitals, international airports, and long experience in handling overseas patients is already an established centre for international healthcare.

The region now finds itself in a unique position to benefit from the Budget announcement, Dr Vinay Aggarwal, senior physician and former president of the Indian Medical Association (IMA), said. Dr Aggarwal said 20-25 large corporate hospitals in Delhi NCR together generate an estimated monthly revenue of Rs 1,400-1,500 crore – and "around 7-8% of their business comes from foreign patients, which is a significant contribution." These large facilities can handle complex and high-value procedures that attract international patients, Dr Aggarwal said. Patients come from countries in the Middle East, Africa, South and Central Asia, the CIS, and even some developed nations. Until recently, Bangladesh used to be a major source country too, he said. International patients come for advanced cancer care, organ and kidney transplants, cardiac interventions, complex orthopaedic and neurosurgical procedures, and other high-end elective treatments. Some patients from the United States come for procedures that are not covered by insurance, including cosmetic surgery, hair transplants, and dental care.

A centralised system could be transformative for medical tourism in the region, Dr Aggarwal said. "Information

about hospitals and their capabilities will percolate through a single portal, allowing hospitals to showcase their facilities globally," he said. Approvals and documentation will be brought onto a single platform, and hospitals will be able to list their services in a way that would help patients make informed choices. "Medical tourism at Fortis is driven by a combination of clinical excellence, cutting-edge medical technology, internationally trained specialists, and transparent pricing," Dr Ritu Garg, Chief Growth Officer, Fortis Hospital, said. The hospital attracts patients mainly from the Middle East, including Iraq and Oman; Kenya, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Mauritius, Tanzania, and Zambia in Africa; SAARC countries; and CIS countries like Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. Patients travel primarily for advanced cancer care, organ transplants, bone marrow transplants, and complex neurosciences procedures, the hospital said. Dharminder Nagar, Managing Director, Paras Hospital, said their foreign patients require "complex, life-saving, or long-term treatments that may not be easily accessible or affordable in their home countries". They commonly seek liver transplants, advanced cardiac care, oncology services, neuro and spine surgeries, and IVIG therapy for immune-related and neurological conditions, he said. Patients come from the Middle East (Iraq, Yemen), Central Asia (Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan), and Africa (Liberia, Kenya, Cameroon). The hospital has partnerships with 30-40 international medical travel facilitators who provide medical visas, accommodation assistance, interpretation services, treatment coordination, and post-discharge follow-up, he said. Anas Abdul Wajid, Senior Director and Chief Sales and Marketing

BJP faces uncertainty as NCP asserts control leadership question remains unresolved

GNS News Agency, Feb 6

With Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar joining the Maharashtra government, the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) has moved to assert control over its organisation. However, uncertainty over who will ultimately wield authority within the party continues adding to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) challenges in the ruling coalition.

In the absence of a leader who commands acceptance across the Sharad Pawar-Ajit Pawar combine at the grassroots level, BJP leaders concede that managing coalition politics may become more difficult. The task is complicated by the NCP's strong Maratha support base, particularly after the death of Ajit Pawar, who was seen as a key mobiliser of that constituency. NCP SP president Sharad Pawar on Wednesday publicly expressed his displeasure over BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis questioning the proposed merger between the two NCP factions. His remarks were seen as a clear signal to party workers.

Officially, Pawar said, "I am happy that Sunetra Pawar has taken the oath of office as DyCM in the government. On the merger issue, the talks were going on between Ajit Pawar and Jayant Patil. What right does Devendra Fadnavis have to question the merger when he was not involved?" He added, "At the moment, he was focusing on family ties. There have been no talks on politics." BJP strategists, meanwhile, acknowledged internal challenges but maintained their support for the Ajit Pawar faction. "The NCP versus NCP SP will be played out on multiple fronts. But our concern is to strongly back the NCP, which has pledged support to the NDA. We are committed to the family of Ajit Pawar and his NCP faction," a party functionary said.

At the same time, senior leaders admitted there is no clear roadmap. "There are no final solutions as we don't know how things will evolve ahead. From what we understand, Sunetra Pawar, along with NCP, will be able to keep the organisation intact and consolidate as it is in power," a minister said, adding that with elections still three and a half years away, sitting MPs were unlikely to explore alternatives, including the Sharad Pawar-led NCP SP. Rajendra Kondhare, president of the Akhil Bharatiya Maratha Mahasangh, said sections of the Maratha community were unsettled. "A sizeable Maratha community, especially those connected with institutional and cooperative networks, has always looked upon Sharad Pawar as their leader for support and guidance. It was the same base which also followed Ajit Pawar. Now, some unrest in this segment is inevitable. We will have to see how it manifests with Sunetra Pawar stepping into government," he said. He added, "To



attain the leadership and stature like Ajit Pawar requires 20 to 25 years. His death has created a vacuum for the community." An NCP minister who served under Sharad Pawar noted that ideological continuity had kept the party's support base intact despite the split. "Those who don't subscribe to right-wing politics always found a credible alternative in NCP S. Despite the split in the party, we shared a common ideology and electoral base," he said, adding that cadres did not distinguish between the senior and junior Pawar.

Now with Ajit Pawar's death, they naturally see in Sharad Pawar their godfather. Therefore, sooner than later, both factions will have to take some concrete decision to address the unrest within the cadre," he said while expressing confidence that a solution would eventually emerge. The BJP core electoral base has traditionally been among Other Backward Classes (OBCs). Its 2024 Assembly victory was driven in part by OBC consolidation amid sharp polarisation over Maratha reservation demands. By bringing in leaders such as Shiv Sena Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and NCP Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, the BJP projected strong Maratha representation within the Mahayati alliance.

However, the party has struggled to project an in-house Maratha leader capable of matching the influence of the Pawar family. Its strategy of inducting prominent Maratha leaders from other parties, including Ashok Chavan, Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil and Narayan Rane, did yield electoral gains. "In a three-party coalition government with inbuilt friction, BJP always played Ajit Pawar versus Eknath Shinde. It gave them an upper hand in controlling the government and politics in the state," a political observer said. He added, "With Ajit Pawar in the government ruling combine could tackle the Maratha backlash ably. As the NCP ensured it did not get out of control."

'There will be no jobs in the future anyway': inside Pune students' turn to gig economy

GNS News Agency, Feb 6

"There will be no jobs in the future anyway, only those who understand AI will be able to keep up," says Dilip Wagh (name changed), a 19-year-old student who joined Swiggy Instamart as a gig worker around a month ago. Enrolled in a mechanical engineering degree course in Pune's Balewadi area, he logs in during weekends or when incentives are lucrative. Disillusioned with classroom learning, he says he largely relies on online resources to learn.

Avinash and Ishaa (names changed), both 18, joined Blikit as delivery partners at the beginning of 2026. Both are pursuing a Bachelor of Business Administration in Computer Applications (Honours) degree at a college in the Bund Garden area and started working to cover their monthly expenses. They pull regular shifts after college hours. When asked about their experience with classroom learning, the two quickly exchange a glance and offer a sneering smile in response. Many like them initially joined to sustain themselves financially. Nitin Parihar (name changed), 26, was enrolled in an MCom degree at a popular college in the Deccan area when he first started working part-time with Uber around the time of the Covid pandemic. He completely shifted to delivery work with Swiggy Instamart after completing college, as Covid clouded any conviction of campus placements.

Circling back to Covid while discussing similar cases among his friends, he pauses, then expresses his disappointment with education. "It is better to find a college and put up a stall in front of it, at least you will earn money." Many others, like Parth Jadhav (name changed), 18, had joined the workforce while under age. Parth has been delivering food for two years after taking a gap year following his Class 12 studies at a city-based junior college. He says he will apply for a BBA degree this year.

Others, like Siddharth Sawant (name changed), have lost interest in returning to college. Siddharth, 20, has been working as a Swiggy Instamart delivery partner for one and a half years while managing his food stall nearby. He landed here after switching between a few part-time jobs after his Class 12. He says that studying till Class 10 was fine, after which he couldn't understand much and lost interest. He



now looks forward to starting something of his own. "Ab interest hi nahi hai, ab kuch khud ka karna hai (There is no interest anymore; now I need to do something for myself)." So is the case with Gagan Yadav (name changed), 25, who graduated in political science from his hometown in Madhya Pradesh and took a job as a security guard at a Swiggy Instamart store in Pune. He has now transitioned and works as a gig worker. He prefers not to dwell on his degree. "What is the point of studying? What will I get out of it? You don't get money by studying," he comments. He plans to return to his hometown to take up farming in the near future.

Not all of them happy about gig work Nimesh Gade (name changed), 19, also enrolled at the commerce college in Deccan, has been working as an Instamart delivery partner for a year now, following his father and uncle. He also signals dissatisfaction with college and speaks about wanting to start something of his own soon and eventually discontinuing this work. He recounts several incidents that have added to his bitterness. Speaking about the phone he now holds, bought with his own money, he recalls the day, his birthday, when he had to make a down payment for it. As he entered wearing the Swiggy T-shirt, the store employee gave him an earful about wanting to buy an iPhone as a delivery worker. He also makes a point of avoiding the mandatory Swiggy Instamart T-shirt while delivering to IT companies, unwilling to be identified as a delivery worker in those spaces. "It hurts me how they look at me when I enter wearing the delivery T-shirt. They think I am beneath them," he says.

'This was much needed': Upper Arrival level at Kolkata airport gets new washroom facility

GNS News Agency, Feb 6

In a big relief to passengers arriving at Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport in Kolkata, a new washroom block has opened on the Upper Arrival level, where travellers enter the terminal from the aerobridge. The new facility—the first of three planned on this level—opened on Monday, ensuring passengers will no longer have to make a frantic dash after deboarding. Two other washroom blocks are under construction and expected to be ready within the coming months.

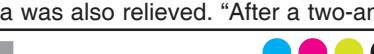
The new washroom block addresses a significant design 'oversight' that had persisted since the terminal was built 13 years ago. While most airports provide washrooms right next to the aerobridges, Kolkata required passengers to walk the entire length of the Upper Arrival area and descend to the Lower Arrival level. Even then, they often had to cross the luggage belts before finding a washroom. Now, as soon as passengers step off the aerobridge, they are greeted by washrooms for men, women, and the differently abled.

"This facility was much needed and is extremely convenient. As soon as the pilot announces the landing, people start lining up for the plane's toilets. The crew often closes them 20 minutes before landing for safety. It is particularly difficult for elderly passengers to wait," Arvind Mehta, a frequent traveller from Ahmedabad, said. Frequent flyer Rashmi Jha was also relieved. "After a two-and-a-half-hour flight



The new washroom block at the Kolkata airport has fixed a 13-year-old 'oversight' that had caused great inconvenience to passengers.

from Delhi, those final 15 minutes felt incredibly long," she explained. According to airport sources, the two other under-construction washroom blocks will be completed by April. These new washrooms will cater to passengers arriving at the 11 arrival gates (Gates 14 to 25) on the Upper Arrival Level.



New START's expiry risks pushing the world to unchecked nuclear rivalry



GNS News Agency, Feb 6

On February 5, the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) officially expired, marking the end of the last remaining bilateral agreement constraining the nuclear arsenals of the U.S. and Russia. The New START treaty emerged from a period of diplomatic reset between Washington and Moscow in the late 2000s. Its predecessor, START I, was signed in 1991 and expired in December 2009. While the 2002 Moscow Treaty was still in effect, it lacked the rigorous verification and monitoring mechanisms typically of the START era. Negotiations for a successor began in earnest in April 2009 after a meeting between then U.S. President Barack Obama and his Russian counterpart Dmitry Medvedev in London. The drafting process involved several rounds of talks in Geneva and Moscow. In April 2010, the two leaders signed the treaty in Prague and, after a contentious ratification process in the U.S. Senate and approval by the Russian Federal Assembly, entered into force on February 5, 2011.

New START set up verifiable limits on the strategic offensive arms of both nations and mandated that both parties reach these limits within seven years (by February 5, 2018) and maintain them thereafter. It capped the number of deployed strategic warheads to 1,550 and imposed similar limits on the numbers of heavy bombers, ICBMs, and SLBMs, allowed 18 on-site inspections a year, prohibited each party from interfering with the other's National Technical Means (e.g. satellites), mandated data exchange, and set up a bilateral commission to resolve issues.

However, throughout its existence, New START faced several hurdles that eventually contributed to its demise. Perhaps foremost: Russia often argued that U.S. missile defence systems undermined the strategic balance, suggesting that if one side could neutralise the other's retaliatory strike, the 'mutually assured destruction' dynamic would be broken. Conversely, the U.S. expressed concerns over conventional prompt global strike capabilities, where precise conventional warheads are placed on ballistic missiles — systems that New START counted under its nuclear limits.

In the latter half of the treaty's life, Russia also unveiled several novel strategic systems, including the Sarmat heavy ICBM and the Avangard hypersonic glide vehicle. While the U.S. successfully argued that these should be counted under New START, other systems like the nuclear-powered underwater drone Poseidon and nuclear-powered cruise missile Burevestnik remained outside the treaty's technical definitions, creating friction. The treaty was originally set to expire in 2021. Just days before the deadline, the Biden administration and the Kremlin agreed to a one-time, five-year extension, moving the expiration date to February 5, 2026. But in February 2023, after the conflict in Ukraine escalated and undermined bilateral relations, President Vladimir Putin said he was suspending Russia's participation in New START because, Moscow said, the U.S. was seeking a "strategic defeat" of Russia and that western aid to Ukraine made on-site inspections in Russia impossible.

possible. The U.S. soon followed by withholding its own data and notifications.

Negotiations for a successor treaty, often called Post-New START, have been stalled throughout 2024 and 2025. In late 2025, a Russian proposal for a voluntary one-year informal adherence to the 1,550 limit was met with scepticism in Washington, where the Trump administration signalled a preference for a "better deal" instead.

Thus, today, the legal constraints on the world's two largest nuclear arsenals have dissolved. For the first time since 1972, there are no legally binding limits on the number of strategic nuclear weapons the U.S. and Russia can deploy. The formal channels to verify the locations and status of nuclear forces have ceased to exist, forcing intelligence agencies to rely entirely on satellite imagery and other unilateral methods. And sans the 1,550 cap, both nations possess the technical capability to move thousands of stored warheads to existing missiles, an action previously prohibited by the treaty.

As a result, while the classical logic of deterrence, that each side refrains because it expects a catastrophic response, still holds, the environment in which each government assesses the credibility of the other stands to change. Without the New START infrastructure, both sides will fall back to unilaterally collecting and interpreting data, which is more error-prone and easier to politicise. This uncertainty also interacts with contemporary deterrence problems that weren't there during the early Cold War, when deterrence took shape: the entanglement of nuclear and non-nuclear strategic systems and the premium both sides place on non-contact options like precision conventional strikes and cyberattacks, which can threaten nuclear command and control without crossing a nuclear threshold. This is why analysts such as Karim Haggag of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute have stressed the loss of predictability rather than the appearance of new warheads alone.

You do it firstSecond, the expiry of New START makes the prospect of including China and other nuclear states in a larger nonproliferation regime harder in practice. Washington can now argue that it shouldn't be the only state constrained while Beijing grows, and Moscow can argue that it shouldn't accept constraints while NATO's aggregate capabilities shape its security environment. Exactly these arguments have been the stumbling block for the Post-New START talks. It's also harder because China's public line has been that its arsenal isn't comparable in size to those of the U.S. and Russia and that therefore it's "not fair or reasonable" to demand it enter their disarmament framework at this stage. Without an active U.S.-Russia treaty that demonstrates reciprocal restraint, China's incentive to accept intrusive transparency measures is also weak. Beijing can plausibly argue that the two largest arsenals first need to reestablish verifiable limits and only then can they ask others to take on similar obligations. The same logic already complicates the involvement of other nuclear-armed states, including India, Pakistan, Israel, and North Korea.

In 2025, Arms Control Association board chairman Thomas Countryman argued that the most realistic near-term path is a regime with three prongs: the U.S. and Russia establishing measures to restore a basic level of transparency, even informally at first; the P5 group standardising definitions and modest transparency practices; and setting up of nonproliferation tools such as hotlines, launch notifications, incident prevention, and fissile material security, to involve more states without immediately forcing them to count each other's warheads. In fact the existing P5 process is often cited as one of a few standing forums for this kind of incrementalism even though its output and momentum have been uneven in recent years.

Bill Gates says he regrets 'every minute' with Jeffrey Epstein

GNS News Agency, Feb 6

Bill Gates has voiced regret over "every minute" he spent with Jeffrey Epstein, even as the Microsoft co-founder's former wife Melinda said he still had questions to answer over his relationship with the convicted sexual offender.

The latest tranche of documents released by the U.S. Justice Department last week contained emails between many prominent figures and Epstein, often revealing warm friendships, illicit financial dealings and private photos. In a draft email among the documents, Epstein alleged Mr. Gates engaged in extramarital affairs, writing that his relationship with Mr. Gates ranged from "helping Bill to get drugs, in order to deal with consequences of sex with Russian girls, to facilitating his illicit trysts, with married women." "That email was never sent. The email is false," he said. "I don't know what his thinking was there. Was he trying to attack me in some way?" A Gates spokesperson issued a similar denial after the fresh cache of millions of files related to the investigation into Epstein, who died in prison in 2019, were released. "The only thing these documents demonstrate is Epstein's frustration that he did not have an ongoing relationship with Gates and the lengths he would go to entrap and defame," the spokesperson said. Melinda French Gates told U.S. National Public Radio in an interview that the document dump brought back "memories of some very, very painful times in my marriage." "For me, it's personally hard whenever those details come up," she said. "Whatever



questions remain there of what — I can't even begin to know all of it — those questions are for those people and for even my ex-husband. They need to answer to those things, not me." The couple divorced in 2021.

Mr. Bill Gates told 9News that he met Epstein in 2011 and had several dinners with him over three years, but never visited his Caribbean island and didn't have relations with women. "The focus was always, he knew a lot of very rich people, and he was saying he could get them to give money to global health. In retrospect, that was a dead end," he said. Someone's name in the Epstein files does not imply any wrongdoing, but the documents revealed connections between Epstein and public figures who have often downplayed — or even denied — such ties.

Taiwan-U.S. ties are 'rock solid', says President says after Trump-Xi call

GNS News Agency, Feb 6

Taiwan's ties with the United States are "rock solid," the island's president said hours after President Donald Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping spoke on the phone about topics that included the self-ruled island's future.

The Taiwan-U.S. relationship is rock solid, and all cooperation projects will continue uninterrupted," Taiwan President Lai Ching-te told reporters during a visit to textile merchants in western Taiwan. The comments came after Mr. Xi, in his first call with Mr. Trump since November, warned the U.S. President to be "prudent" about supplying arms to the self-ruled island, according to a readout of their call provided by China's Foreign Ministry.

Taiwan is a self-ruled democracy that China claims as its own territory, to be annexed by force if necessary. Beijing prohibits all countries it has diplomatic relations with — including the U.S. — from having formal ties with Taipei. Still, while the U.S. doesn't officially recognize Tai-

wan as a country, it is the island's strongest informal backer and arms supplier.

In December, the U.S. State Department announced its largest-ever arms sales package to Taiwan, valued at more than \$11.1 billion and including missiles, artillery systems and drones. The package is yet to be approved by Congress. China reacted angrily to the proposed arms sales, conducting two days of military drills around the island in late December, for which it dispatched air, navy and missile units. The arms sales are also facing pushback from Taiwan's opposition KMT party and some of its population, along with a proposed increase of defence spending to 3.3% of Taiwan's gross domestic product. Taiwan's opposition-controlled parliament has blocked Mr. Lai's budget plan, including a \$40 billion special defence budget, proposing instead a much smaller defence spending plan. Mr. Trump said the call with Mr. Xi was "excellent" and "thorough" in a post-late on Wednesday (February 4) on Truth Social.

A turning point for nuclear deterrence



The rupture between Europe and Donald Trump's U.S. over Greenland may be papered over in time, but Europe's trust in the U.S. as a reliable North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) ally has been irreparably broken. As the last remaining arms control treaty limiting Russia's nuclear arsenal comes to an end, conversations about defending Europe are acquiring a sharper edge.

NATO came together in 1949 as a defensive nuclear alliance against the Soviet Union with the U.S. as its primus inter pares — the ultimate guarantor of the security of its western European members. Now, the hegemon has turned on its own alliance, over Mr. Trump's desire to acquire Greenland, a sovereign territory under the jurisdiction of NATO member Denmark. Mr. Trump's bullying and economic warfare has broken trust, and without trust NATO as a nuclear alliance is hollowed out. How Europe responds to this rupture will shape not only the future of the continent's security, but also the future of conversations about nuclear deterrence. Depending on whether the new security architecture of Europe privileges nuclear deterrence, thinking about nuclear weapons will either be updated to reflect the lessons of the 80 years since a nuclear weapon was last detonated, or continue to echo conversations that took place when the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) separated the world into nuclear haves and have-nots.

The nuclear conversationThe intervening years since the NPT restrained horizontal proliferation have seen threats to world security shift from nuclear rivalry to terrorism and extremism; climate change; economic stress; inequality; and regional rivalries. While none of these is easily addressed by nuclear weapons, conversations about nuclear possession and use continue to privilege nukes as the ultimate guarantor of peace and security even as great power rivalry returns to the global stage.

Moreover, discussions about 'what deters' appear to have ossified. At the dawn of the nuclear age, when possessors were still building their arsenals, there was a debate on whether deterrence rested on certainty or uncertainty. Some believed that uncertainty was enough; that allowing an adversary to be not certain that any adventurism would not be countered with a nuclear response was enough for deterrence to work. A form of this deterrence

arguably operated between India and Pakistan between the 1980s and 1998. Israel, with its opaque nuclear status, also relies on this uncertainty. For the rest of the nuclear possessors, a complex interplay of great power politics led to growing stockpiles and an emphasis on the certainty of a nuclear response. Testing demonstrated intent and number of weapons indicated resolve. Yet, even as nuclear states were racing to stockpile warheads, a taboo on nuclear use was gaining strength. A nuclear weapon has not been deployed since 1945. While nuclear threats have been issued, and states have developed ever smaller and more 'useable' weapons (tactical or battlefield nukes), nuclear use, to the best of our knowledge, has never been seriously contemplated.

Arms control agreements between the U.S. and the Soviet Union/Russia, along with the global non-proliferation architecture may have contributed to sparing the world another Hiroshima, but thinking on nuclear deterrence remains essentially unchanged. And now, after a sharp reduction in nuclear stockpiles between the U.S. and Russia, the pendulum may be swinging back. China, Russia and the U.S. are ambitiously modernising their nuclear stockpiles. China has reportedly added 100 warheads a year since 2023 to reach a total of 600. In 2015, the U.K. reversed a 2006 decision to reduce its stockpile and is at 225 warheads. The last remaining arms control agreement between Russia and the U.S. — New START — expires on February 5, and if both states start increasing their stockpiles from the current 5,459 and 5,277, respectively, it will send a clear message of moving back to Cold War ideas of deterrence.

Lessons from UkraineThe war in Ukraine should have led to a more serious debate about what deters. Russian President Vladimir Putin had made nuclear threats before his invasion and then again in October 2022. Yet those threats were countered not by the certainty of a nuclear response, but by the certainty of a robust response that left the nuclear element unclear. It is worth remembering that Ukraine — a non-nuclear country — has been able to defend itself against a nuclear adversary. Yes, it has had help and yes, it has lost territory, but Ukraine has not yet been defeated by its nuclear neighbour. Therefore, what happens in the next few months as Europe comes up with a security architecture that does not rely on the U.S. could reshape nuclear thinking. Apart from some tepid discussion about how France and the U.K. might extend their nuclear umbrella to cover Europe, most of the previous debate appeared to return to hugging the U.S. ever closer. In the meantime, an ad hoc grouping of mainly European states, called the Coalition of the Willing, has come together to guarantee Ukraine's security. Ukraine now has experience in defending itself against a nuclear state. Against this backdrop, whether Europe chooses to base its new security architecture on some sort of replacement nuclear alliance, or on a defensive alliance that may have a nuclear element, will shape future discussions about nuclear weapons and deterrence.

Iran, U.S. to hold nuclear talks in Oman on February 6

GNS News Agency, Feb 6

Nuclear talks between Iran and the United States will take place on Friday (February 6, 2026) in Oman, the Iranian Foreign Minister said, as tensions between the countries remain high following Tehran's bloody crackdown on nationwide protests last month. The announcement by Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Wednesday (February 4, 2026) came after hours of indications that the anticipated talks were faltering over changes in the format and content of the talks.

"I'm grateful to our Omani brothers for making all necessary arrangements," Mr. Araghchi wrote on X on Wednesday (February 4, 2026) evening. Earlier on Wednesday (February 4, 2026), a regional official said Iran was seeking a "different" type of meeting than that what had been proposed by Turkey, one focused exclusively on the issue of Iran's nuclear programme, with participation limited to Iran and the United States. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to brief the media. The Trump administration confirmed the U.S. will take part in high-level talks with Iran in Oman instead of Turkey as originally planned, according to White House official.

The official, who was not authorised to comment publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity, said that several Arab and Muslim leaders urged the Trump administration on Wednesday (February 4, 2026) not to walk away from talks even as Iranian officials pressed to narrow the scope of talks and change the venue for the negotiations.

The official added that the White House remains "very skeptical" that the talks will be successful but have agreed



to go along with the change in plans out of respect from allies in the region. Tensions between the countries spiked after U.S. President Donald Trump suggested the U.S. might use force against Iran in response to the crackdown on protesters. Mr. Trump also has been pushing Tehran for a deal to constrain its nuclear programme. Turkey urges diplomacyOn Wednesday (February 4, 2026), Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan reiterated Turkey's opposition to foreign intervention in neighbouring Iran, calling for the resolution of issues through dialogue. Turkey has been urgently working for the past week to bring the U.S. and Iran to the negotiating table, and was previously expected to host the talks. "We believe that external interventions involving our neighbour Iran would pose significant risks for the entire region," Mr. Erdogan said during a visit to Cairo. "Resolving issues with Iran, including the nuclear file, through diplomatic means is the most appropriate approach."

India and Gulf Cooperation Council nations signs Terms of Reference for an FTA

Representatives of India and the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) on Thursday (February 5, 2026) signed the Terms of Reference for negotiations on a free trade agreement (FTA). The GCC countries are together India's largest merchandise trade partners, with total merchandise trade exceeding that done with even the European Union and the U.S. The Terms of Reference (ToR) were signed by India's chief negotiator for the FTA, Additional Secretary Ajay Bhadoo, and his counterpart representing the Secretariat General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Raja Al Marzouki. The signing of the ToR is a necessary precursor for the start of formal negotiations. The GCC countries are Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). "Strategic economic partner"

"Many of us are aware that discussions [on moving towards a trade deal] have been going on for nearly two decades," Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, who presided over the signing, said in his speech. "Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, the six-nation GCC group has transformed into a strategic economic partner." "It is most appropriate that we now enter into a much stronger and robust trading arrangement, which will enable a greater free flow of goods and services, bring predictability and stability to policy, help encourage greater degree of investments and take our bilateral relations between the six nation GCC group and India to greater heights," Mr. Goyal added. Largest goods tradeData from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry shows that India's total bilateral



merchandise trade with the GCC countries stood at \$178.5 billion in 2024-25, the latest full year for which there is data. This is higher than India's total bilateral merchandise trade with the European Union (\$136.5 billion), the U.S. (\$132.1 billion), and China (\$127.7 billion), making the grouping India's largest goods trading partner.

There are about 10 million Indians living and working in the GCC region.

However, the data also shows that 56% of India's total bilateral merchandise trade with the GCC countries is with just the UAE, with which India already has a separate FTA. Further, the data shows that India had a trade deficit of \$64.8 billion with the GCC countries in total in 2024-25, with the UAE itself accounting for \$26.7 billion of this deficit amount due to India's large gold, oil, and petroleum products imports from that country.

Nvidia's AI chip sale to ByteDance hinges on conditions set by Trump administration



The Trump administration is willing to allow China's ByteDance to buy Nvidia's H200 chips, but the AI chipmaker has not agreed to proposed conditions for their use, according to a person familiar with the matter. The U.S. said it would approve the license about two weeks ago, the person said, but Nvidia has not accepted the U.S. government's Know-Your-Customer (KYC) requirement as now drafted, to ensure China's military does not access the chips, among other conditions. More broadly, Nvidia is negotiating with the U.S. over the terms of licenses to ship its H200 AI chips to companies in China, according to the person and two others familiar with the matter.

Nvidia said it was an intermediary between the U.S. government and potential customers that would have to comply with the U.S. restrictions. "We aren't able to accept or reject license conditions on our own," a company spokesperson said in a statement. "Although KYC is important, KYC is not the issue. For American industry to make any sales, the conditions need to be commercially practical, else the market will continue to move to foreign alternatives."

ByteDance, which owns TikTok and is one of the biggest AI companies in China, could not be immediately reached for comment. The Commerce Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Nvidia and

its Chinese customers have once again found themselves caught in the crossfire of the U.S.-China tech war. China has already granted preliminary approval to three of its largest tech companies - ByteDance, Tencent, and Alibaba - along with AI startup Deepseek to import the chips, though the regulatory conditions for China's approvals also are still being finalized. This news from the U.S. side represents the latest twist on whether China will get chip shipments first promised by President Donald Trump in early December, with a 25 percent cut to the U.S. government. The same arrangement applies to similar chips from firms such as Advanced Micro Devices and Intel. Trump's decision was decried by China hawks, who viewed it as a risk to national security, and fear that China will use the chips to strengthen its military capabilities.

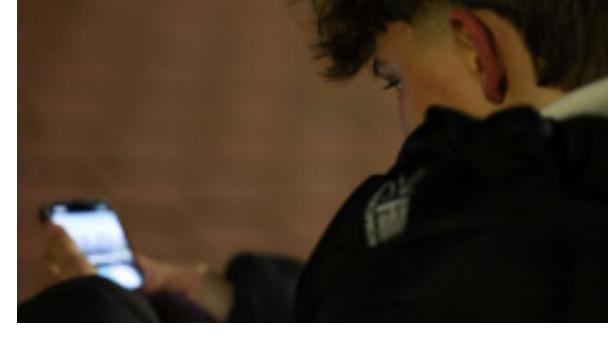
On January 15, the Commerce Department issued a regulation formally loosening the licensing policy for the chips, but stipulating conditions. For example, it said the applicant had to certify and provide data to support that its customer will use "rigorous" Know Your Customer procedures to screen and prevent unauthorized remote access. In addition, it is required to provide a list of remote users tied to companies in Iran, Cuba, Venezuela and other countries of concern. Before the chips could go to China, a U.S. third-party lab also is required to test the chips to ensure they meet specifications, a requirement viewed by many as a way for the U.S. to collect its 25 percent fee. The Commerce Department typically circulates licenses pending approval to other agencies with the proposed conditions, according to a former Commerce official. Once they agree, the conditions may be sent to the license applicant, in this case, Nvidia, essentially asking the company if they can live with them. The applicant may suggest changes, which would be sent back to the agencies involved for their agreement. The departments of State, Defense and Energy are included. One source suggested at least some chips are likely to go to China by the time Trump plans to meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping in April.

US Senators unveil bill to prevent scam ads on social media platforms

U.S. Senators Ruben Gallego and Bernie Moreno have introduced anti-scam legislation requiring social media platforms to vet their advertisers. The bipartisan bill, called the Safeguarding Consumers from Advertising Misconduct Act, or the SCAM Act, would require social media platforms to take "reasonable steps" to combat fraudulent advertising or face legal action by the Federal Trade Commission and state attorneys general.

"We can't sit by while social media companies have business models that knowingly enable scams that target the American people," Moreno, a Republican from Ohio, said in a statement. "If a company is making money from running ads on their site, it has a responsibility to make sure those ads aren't fraudulent," said Gallego, a Democrat from Arizona. A press release outlining the bill cited Reuters reporting in November that revealed how Meta Platforms - the owner of Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp - expected to earn 10% of its 2024 revenue, or about \$16 billion, from ads for scams and other illicit products, according to internal company documents. Following the story, U.S. Senators Josh Hawley and Richard Blumenthal asked the heads of the FTC and the Securities and Exchange Commission to probe Meta over illicit advertising on its platforms.

Meta has said that its internal statistics overestimated the proportion of its revenue that came from scams and other ads that violated its own safety rules. "We aggressively fight fraud and scams because people on our platforms don't want this content, legitimate advertisers don't want it and we don't want it either," a Meta spokesman told Reuters last year. The text of Gallego's and Moreno's bill states: "Some online platforms have abandoned tighter advertiser verification processes to avoid driving away profits from advertisers." It notes that "online platforms have become a primary conduit for online scams or other digital advertising-related fraud."



The legislation is endorsed by the American Bankers Association and consumer advocacy organisations, including the AARP. It would require social media platforms to verify government-issued identification of advertisers or the "legal existence" of businesses, as well as promptly review and act on reports of scams by users or government entities. Non-compliance with the proposed legislation would be treated as a violation of the FTC's prohibition of unfair or deceptive business practices. The bill authorises state attorneys general to bring civil actions over alleged violations. The legislation's introduction comes amid what Meta has internally acknowledged is a global push by regulators to crack down on social media scams. Reuters reported in December that the company has developed a "global regulatory playbook" seeking to halt or delay advertiser verification regulations, according to internal Meta documents. A Meta spokesman has said that such verification requirements were "not a silver bullet" and that the company works with regulators on anti-scam initiatives. He disputed that Meta has sought to stall or weaken regulations, and said the company's work with regulators is just part of its broader efforts to reduce scams.

50,000 crore investment being made in Energy Sector: Bihar Energy Minister Bijendra Prasad Yadav



Bihar State Power Generation Company Limited (BSPGCL) signed a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) on Wednesday (February 4, 2026) from the 185 MW solar energy with 282 MWh battery energy storage project at Kajra in Lakhisarai district, in the presence of Energy Minister Bijendra Prasad Yadav. "Currently, approximately 750,000 crore is being invested in the State's energy sector," the Minister announced.

"This is a historic day for Bihar. The Kajra solar energy project will ensure uninterrupted power supply in the State and give new strength to Bihar's energy sector," Mr. Yadav said. He emphasised that solar energy is a significant contribution to preventing global warming. Bihar's double-engine govt will work with more energy to realise PM's vision: Amit Shah. "This project is not just about providing electricity, but is also an inspiration for green energy and the future," he said. Mr. Yadav added that this investment policy and work will ensure convenience and security for future generations as well, and the Energy Department is continuously working toward this goal. He asserted that the agreement marks a significant achievement for Bihar in the direction of self-reliance in the energy sector.

Energy Secretary and Chairman-cum-Managing Director of Bihar State Power Holding Company Limited, Manoj Kumar Singh (IAS), said, "Today is an important milestone for the Energy Department and after signing the PPA, the path for commercial operation will be paved." He mentioned that during the public hearing organised by the Pollution Control Board (PCB) for Pirapait Thermal Power

Plant, approximately 3,500 people welcomed and gave their consent for the plant's construction, which was extremely significant and historic.

Managing Director of South Bihar Power Distribution Company Limited and Bihar State Power Generation Company Limited (BSPGCL), Mahendra Kumar, said the signing of the agreement for Kajra Solar Power Project is not just a formal process, but a celebration of fulfilling a promise made to the people of Bihar. The work on 185 MW solar energy and 282 MWh battery storage capacity is in the final stage. The project was issued a work order on July 1, 2024, and was successfully connected to the 132 kV grid on December 31, 2025 - in less than 18 months. The under-construction second phase will add 116 MW solar energy and 241 MWh battery capacity at an estimated cost of 71,055 crore. By January 2027, Kajra plant's total capacity will reach 301 MW solar energy and 523 MWh battery storage. This will not only strengthen energy supply but also maintain grid stability during peak demand. On this occasion, the Energy Minister also released a booklet titled 'The Power Year 2025 - Bihar Energy Highlights' based on key achievements in Power Sector of the year 2025.

Man gets 10 years rigorous imprisonment for cheating woman in Asifabad

Kumram Bheem Asifabad: A court here on Thursday sentenced a man to 10 years of rigorous imprisonment and imposed a fine of Rs. 20,000 for cheating a woman under the pretext of marriage five years back. District and Sessions Court principal judge MV Ramesh delivered the judgement awarding the term and fine against Bomma Prasanth after finding him guilty for cheating a woman from Asifabad and raping her several times under the guise of marriage. The then Inspector C Balaji Varaprasad launched investigations into the case and filed a charge-sheet before the court establishing the crime of Prashanth.

Trump, Xi discuss Iran in wide-ranging call as U.S. presses China, others to break from Tehran



GNS News Agency, Feb 6

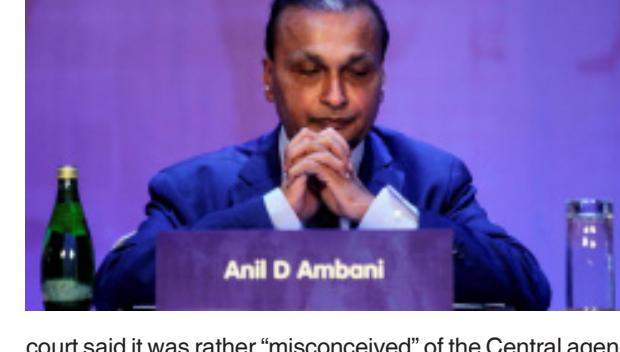
President Donald Trump said on Wednesday (February 4, 2026) that he and Chinese President Xi Jinping discussed the situation in Iran in a wide-ranging call as the U.S. administration pushes Beijing and others to further isolate Tehran. Mr. Trump said the two leaders also discussed a broad range of other critical issues in the U.S.-China relationship, including trade and Taiwan and his plans to visit Beijing in April. "The relationship with China, and my personal relationship with President Xi, is an extremely good one, and we both realise how important it is to keep it that way," Mr. Trump said in a social media posting about the call.

The Chinese government, in a readout of the call, said the two leaders discussed major summits that both nations will host in the coming year that could present opportunities for them to meet. The Chinese statement, however, made no mention of Mr. Trump's expected April visit to Beijing. Mr. Trump and Mr. Xi discussed Iran as tensions remain high between Washington and Tehran over Iran's bloody crackdown on nationwide protests last month. The U.S. President says he is weighing taking military action against the Middle Eastern country.

Mr. Trump is also pressing Iran to make concessions over its nuclear programme, which his Republican administration says was already set back by the U.S. bombing of three Iranian nuclear sites during the 12-day war Israel launched against Iran in June. White House officials on Tuesday (February 3, 2026) said special envoy Steve Witkoff is slated to take part in talks with Iranian officials later this week. Mr. Trump announced last month that the U.S. would impose a 25% tax on imports to the United States from countries that do business with Iran. China is Iran's biggest trading partner.

Years of sanctions aimed at stopping Iran's nuclear programme have left the country isolated. But Tehran still did nearly \$125 billion in international trade in 2024, including \$32 billion with China, \$28 billion with the United Arab Emirates and \$17 billion with Turkey, the World Trade Organisation says. China also made clear that it has no intention of stepping away from its long-term plans of reunification with Taiwan, a self-governing, democratic island operating independently from mainland China, though Beijing

Anil Ambani bank fraud case: If public funds are siphoned off, willingness to pay may not help, says Supreme Court



The Supreme Court on Wednesday (February 4, 2026) said even a willingness to pay up may not save those involved in an alleged bank scam linked to the Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group (ADAG) and its promoter Anil Ambani from criminal prosecution, if the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Directorate of Enforcement (ED) were able to unearth a deliberate intention to "siphon off" public funds. A three-judge Bench headed by the Chief Justice of India Surya Kant directed the ED to constitute a Special Investigation Team (SIT) of senior officers to investigate the scam, while ordering the CBI to conduct a "fair, dispassionate" probe into the "nexus, connivance, conspiracy, collusion" among bank officials, authorities, and the managements of the companies.

"If there was an intention to siphon public funds from the very beginning, such kind of offences cannot be compounded just because you are willing to pay," Chief Justice of India Kant, heading a three-judge Bench, addressed senior advocates Mukul Rohatgi and Shyam Divan, appearing for Mr. Ambani and the ADAG, respectively. The court was responding to a suggestion made by Mr. Rohatgi that a committee could be formed, which could look into the amount due to the banks. "I am not opposing a SIT, but the gentleman could pay rather than face prosecution... They are saying there was siphoning of money. I am denying the allegation," the senior counsel offered.

Mr. Divan said the amounts "bandied about" in the court were not true. He sought, and was given time, to file a reply. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the CBI and the ED, said the forensic auditor had pointed to the siphoning of approximately 40,000 crore of public money. It was "not possible to compound" if the acts involved misappropriation of public funds, Mr. Mehta said. The top law officer said the acts in question involved the giving of "forged bank guarantees". "In the forensic report, it is shown money was taken from one bank to pay another," Mr. Mehta submitted. Advocates Prashant Bhushan and Neha Rathi, appearing for petitioner E.A.S. Sarma, who has sought the constitution of an SIT and a comprehensive investigation into what he termed as "one of the biggest financial frauds in the country", flagged the possibility of Mr. Ambani fleeing the country.

Taking strong objection to Mr. Bhushan's submissions, Mr. Rohatgi said he was giving a statement that Mr. Ambani had no such intentions and would remain in the country. In fact, Mr. Rohatgi said he was at the office every day. "I am not running. I am very much here," Mr. Rohatgi submitted on behalf of his clients. Mr. Bhushan said there was no point to a statement after the promoter flees the country.

"The gentleman who owns these companies has not been arrested to date. He is the kingpin. There are outstanding dues of 1.78 lakh crore, and bankruptcy proceedings have only recovered 15,000 crore... Only an ex-director of the company has been arrested so far, that too after the Supreme Court issued notice in the petition on January 23. Now, with the Supreme Court monitoring the case, some preventive measures have to be taken against his leaving the country," Mr. Bhushan submitted. The Supreme Court recorded the statement given by Mr. Mehta that the necessary preventive action would be taken to ensure the smooth conduct of the investigation. The Supreme Court was critical of the fact that the CBI and ED delayed registering a First Information Report in the case for about five years. It noted that findings of discrepancies had come to light in a forensic audit report way back in 2020, yet an FIR was registered only in 2025. "If the forensic auditor had said there was collusion, why was the RC [Regular Case] not registered?" Justice Joymalya Bagchi asked Mr. Mehta. The

court said it was rather "misconceived" of the Central agencies to think that a prior sanction under Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act was required to initiate investigation into the alleged collusion involving bank officials and other authorities. "The CBI and ED have taken their own time to swing into action, any further delay will not be tolerated... The ED has to constitute a SIT of senior officers and take all lawful measures to investigate the case to its logical conclusion... There has been an unexplained delay in the commencement of the investigation," the court underscored.

The Bench also flagged how the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) was being used by family members to undervalue assets and acquire them at a fraction of their original market value.

"Reliance Communications Infra had 47,000 crore of outstanding dues. In bankruptcy, it was sold off for 455 crore to the brother's company," Mr. Bhushan submitted. Mr. Rohatgi objected, saying anyone could come forward and buy. But the Bench took a skeptical view, saying more such cases of undervalued buying, taking advantage of the IBC platform, were making their way to the apex court. "Unfortunately, the IBC platform is being misused like anything. You get the company and assets undervalued. Then you indulge in a kind of an auction which is also pre-planned. Friends or family come and buy. Valuation of the assets would not be even 1% of the original market value," the Bench said.

Tiger sightings rumoured across Telangana villages, officials on alert

GNS News Agency, Feb 6 Hyderabad : Rumours of sightings of tiger or pugmarks in fields at different villages are keeping the forest officials on their toes. On Thursday, while the forest teams were busy tracking the tiger in Jangaon district, their phones kept ringing with villagers reporting spotting pug marks in fields in Rajapet, Yadadri, Alair and other mandals.

"Taking into consideration the fear among the public, we have to send teams everywhere. It is an unavoidable task," said a forest official.

Following the attacks on cattle in three districts Jangaon, Siddipet and Adilabad Bhuvanagiri, forest teams from all three districts are coordinating efforts.

Tiger trackers from Kurnool and Amaravati have reached the affected areas and are assisting local forest officials.

Can rural education stop youth migration? Rethinking opportunities beyond cities



Migration has always shaped India's social and economic landscape. For millions of young people, moving away from villages to towns and cities is not simply a matter of aspiration but often one of compulsion. Much like the protagonists of the recent Indian film *Homebound*, they find themselves torn between the promises of the city and the pull of home — between opportunity and belonging. While mobility is a natural feature of an evolving economy, the alarming scale and patterns of youth migration highlight deeper structural issues: the failure to generate dignified rural employment, inadequate educational linkages with jobs and uneven regional development. The Covid-19 pandemic laid bare these vulnerabilities when nearly 40 million workers were forced to return home during the first lockdown in 2020 (RBI, 2020). This mass exodus was not only a humanitarian crisis but also a reminder that rural India continues to be both a source of labour and a potential site for revitalization.

According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2020–21, almost 29% of India's population were classified as migrants, with 89% originating from rural areas. Among youth, migration is especially significant: over 50% of migrants are aged between 15 and 25, suggesting that India's most productive workforce is leaving its villages. Gender patterns are sharply divided. For men, migration is predominantly work-related, while for women, 86.8% migrate due to marriage. This leads to a peculiar paradox: while women form the majority of migrants statistically, their mobility rarely translates into economic participation. Men, on the other hand, migrate largely in search of livelihoods but often end up in insecure, informal work. The economic profile of migrants shows that migration is strongly tied to poverty and marginalization. Households in the lowest Monthly Per Capita Expenditure (MPCE) groups and those dependent on casual labour are far more likely to migrate. Studies further reveal that Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) record higher migration rates, reflecting structural inequities. Education, once seen as a guaranteed escape from poverty, no longer insulates young people from migration pressures. Many who leave villages for cities carry little formal schooling, while others hold degrees that fail to translate into secure jobs. The irony is striking: while India has expanded access to higher education, opportunities have not kept pace. Graduate unemployment has surged over the past decade, highlighting a growing mismatch between what education promises and what the labour market delivers. Urban centres absorb these migrants, but often under exploitative conditions. Data indicate that nearly 49% of youth migrants work as daily wage labourers and another 39% as industrial workers, mostly on short-term or contract arrangements. India's urban workforce remains overwhelmingly informal, leaving migrants without social security, health coverage, or stable incomes. The pandemic amplified these vulnerabilities, as millions of workers were stranded without jobs or shelter. Young women were especially disadvantaged, as they were more likely to lose employment and slower to regain it compared to men (ILO, 2021). Beyond the human cost, migration exerts enormous pressure on cities. With India projected to add 416 million urban residents between 2018 and 2050 (UN World Urbanization Prospects), the strain on housing, transport,

water, sanitation, and air quality is already acute. Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru struggle with overcrowded slums, mounting waste, traffic congestion, and worsening pollution levels. Migration, therefore, becomes both a symptom and a stressor: it reveals rural distress while deepening urban crises. Yet, the Covid-19 reverse migration also revealed another possibility. Agriculture proved unexpectedly resilient during the pandemic. The Ministry of Agriculture reported a 39% increase in sown area in 2020 compared to previous years, largely because returning workers helped boost farm labour. Stories like that of Balaram Mahadev Bandagale from Raigad, Maharashtra, illustrate the potential. Once confined to a factory job in Mumbai, he returned to his village during the lockdown, used an irrigation scheme to diversify from paddy to mango orchards and today enjoys both higher income and better quality of life. Similarly, Chandrakant Pawar, who once worked odd jobs in Mumbai, returned to dairy farming in Raigad and is now the Sarpanch of his village, a symbol of reverse migration success.

New ways to boost rural jobs

These experiences point to the urgent need for rethinking India's development geography. If rural and peri-urban regions are to retain their youth, they must offer viable non-farm opportunities alongside modernized agriculture. Beyond traditional avenues like dairy, poultry and food processing, promising sectors include handicrafts, rural logistics, renewable energy services, agri-tourism and eco-tourism, rural BPOs and digital gig work.

The rise of e-commerce has opened markets for local products, whether artisanal crafts, processed foods or niche organic produce, allowing rural youth to become entrepreneurs rather than wage seekers. Government schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana, Start-up India and the expansion of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) provide platforms for enterprise creation, but they need greater scale, integration and youth-focused design.

Similarly, the renewable energy push with solar panel maintenance, microgrid operations and biofuel units has potential to create thousands of decentralized rural jobs. Strengthening rural digital infrastructure is critical, not only to bridge the digital divide but also to enable access to e-commerce, online services, telemedicine and remote work. Together, these opportunities can transform migration from a compulsion into a choice, offering rural youth dignified livelihoods without abandoning their communities. Dismantling the stigma

The deeper challenge lies in dismantling the stigma that associates returning to villages with failure. Migration should not be a forced necessity but a genuine choice. Showcasing success stories of reverse migrants who built dignified livelihoods at home can reshape perceptions and inspire others. At the same time, social protection systems must be portable, ensuring health, education, and security follow migrants regardless of location. Migration in India is not inherently negative. In a globalized economy, people must have the freedom to move for opportunities. But what is troubling is that most youth migrate not out of aspiration but because their villages offer little future. The result is a dual crisis: overstretched, inequitable cities on one side, and depopulated, economically stagnant rural areas on the other. A balanced strategy that invests in rural enterprise, skills, infrastructure, and social dignity can transform migration from a story of compulsion into one of empowerment. If India fails to act, its next generation will continue to stream into cities driven by desperation, perpetuating cycles of hardship. But if it chooses to invest in rural futures, migration can be redefined, not as an escape, but as an option among many dignified livelihoods. That is the critical shift India now needs. (Vinaya Kumar HM is Assistant Professor, Keladi Shivappa Nayaka University of Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences, Shivamogga (Karnataka), India. Vegard Iversen, Professor of Development Economics, Natural Resources Institute, University of Greenwich.

Is landlockedness the reason for Bihar's underdevelopment?

It is election season in Bihar. While the Opposition often speaks about the lack of development and industrialisation in the State, in its campaigns, the National Democratic Alliance, which is in power, argues that a change of government will bring back the 'Jungle Raj' of the earlier decade. What makes Bihar one of India's most underdeveloped States? Is landlockedness a reason for its underdevelopment, as some argue? R. Nagaraj and Manindra Nath Thakur discuss the question in a conversation moderated by Saptaparno Ghosh. Edited excerpts:

It is often argued that Bihar is disadvantaged because it is a landlocked State. Punjab and Telangana are landlocked as well, and they are doing relatively well. So how is being landlocked a constraint for Bihar? R. Nagaraj: If you look at the success of Telangana, especially Hyderabad, it is mostly because of the tertiary sector; it has nothing to do with geography. If a State has an educated workforce and good infrastructure, being landlocked will not be an issue. Punjab, too, has a developed network of railways and roads, and has FCI (Food Corporation of India) godowns across the country to help with export of crops. Manindra Nath Thakur: Let us look at Bihar's prominent exports: makhana, litchi, and corn. It has been difficult for Bihar to transport these items from Patna to West Bengal or to any port. These, alongside the vegetables Bihar exports, are perishable. Moreover, significant costs are incurred due to road transport; time and distance are crucial factors in agrarian exports. One way Bihar is attempting to resolve this issue is by launching projects along the Ganga. So, it is not that concerns about being landlocked are not genuine, but they cannot be cited as a major reason for the State's economic backwardness. Prof. Nagaraj spoke of the tertiary sector; you spoke of agrarian exports. Bihar has been assessed as an agrarian economy. What should be its imperative going forward: industrialisation or agriculture?

Manindra Nath Thakur: In the last 10 years, the Chief Minister has tried to engage with industrialists. However, industrialists have often raised concerns about access to ports, citing the need to spend more on transportation. Having said that, I do think that in this modern capitalist system, no society can think of surviving with just agricultural products. While Bihar should capitalise on its potential in terms of agricultural production and processing, it must ultimately transition to industry. Without that, there is no future. R. Nagaraj: Before we think of high-technology and/or manufacturing industries, we should consider where the comparative advantage lies. Four-fifth of Bihar's labour force is in agriculture. But despite Bihar having fertile land and irrigation facilities, agricultural productivity is mostly less than

the national average. Why is agriculture not picking up? That is the big question. In the 1970s or 80s, a committee set up under the agricultural economist, S.R. Sen, was figuring out how to take the Green Revolution to the Indo-Gangetic belt. It came up with a plan for massive State investments in infrastructure and electrification to ensure that States have abundant water for the cultivation of wheat and rice. Surprisingly, the Green Revolution spread to the Malwa region of Madhya Pradesh rather than the Indo-Gangetic belt. We must understand what went wrong. I think it will be both in Bihar's interest and the national interest to get basic wheat, rice, and sugarcane cultivation going. This way, western India will be burdened less; it can conserve more water and move to value-added crops.

Manindra Nath Thakur: On the agrarian front, I don't think Bihar should repeat the mistake that Punjab made during the Green Revolution, which produced a water crisis. Although Bihar has abundant water, it may face the same consequences as Punjab if water is overused. Moreover, increasing agricultural production is linked with the heavy use of fertilizers and pesticides, creating a health crisis. Therefore, I don't support the shifting of agriculture to eastern India. Agriculture is not profitable anywhere in the world unless it is heavily supported by the State. R. Nagaraj: Madhya Pradesh was also seen as a backward State. It does not have the same water resources as Bihar, yet the Green Revolution expanded there. Prosperity in the Malwa region is amazing. Therefore, I am sceptical about the idea that agriculture has no potential.

So what do you think are the factors that contributed to Bihar's underdevelopment? Manindra Nath Thakur: Apart from what I have said, there are also notions that the Centre is not interested in Bihar's growth. The State, I think, is frozen in its transition from feudalism to capitalism. One of the reasons for this is the internal colonisation of the State. Earlier, Bihar supplied raw materials, but due to policies such as freight equalisation, it suffered significantly, and industries didn't develop locally, despite having the advantage of raw material availability. Bihar ultimately lost revenues and its natural advantage. Now, with a supply of labour from Bihar, nobody is interested in developing the State. R. Nagaraj: A commodity where freight equalisation was done and which benefited eastern India was cement. Steel did not accrue the same advantage. Cement has heavy transport costs compared to steel so the freight equalisation policy for it helped eastern India. Furthermore, why Biharis are leaving Bihar has no element of capitalist conspiracy. In fact, when investments in agriculture were made in Bihar, migration to Punjab declined. It is clear that if people have more options at home, they will not move out. Literature of

Why pigeons are significant for public health managers



On July 3 this year, the Maharashtra government ordered the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) of Mumbai to immediately shut down all 51 kabutarkhanas in the city, citing health hazards arising out of pigeon droppings and feathers. The BMC subsequently banned public feeding of pigeons, leading to legal challenges in the Bombay High Court. The Court did not stay the order, but said a committee of experts could study if the old kabutarkhanas should continue, while stressing that "human life is of paramount importance". The Corporation's decision, however, triggered opposition from sections of the Jain and Gujarati communities who consider feeding pigeons a daily act of compassion. The disagreement has moved beyond civic hygiene to questions of health communication, faith, and evidence. Large cities create stable conditions for pigeon colonies. Continuous feeding at kabutarkhanas and open markets ensures an uninterrupted food supply for pigeons. Modern buildings provide nesting ledges and shaded ducts. The absence of predators and the surplus food grain availability further support survival. In densely-populated neighbourhoods, this output accumulates on rooftops, ducts, balconies, and public squares. The droppings dry into fine dust and are dispersed through the air or during cleaning. The organic matter in them supports bacterial and fungal growth.

Pigeon droppings are known reservoirs of *Histoplasma capsulatum* and *Cryptococcus neoformans*. Inhalation of these spores can lead to respiratory illness, particularly in people with weakened immunity. *Chlamydia psittaci* may cause psittacosis, and enteric bacteria such as *Salmonella* and *E. coli* have been detected on contaminated surfaces. Workers who clean terraces or monuments often face repeated contact with accumulated droppings and may inhale fine particulate matter carrying microbes, which could potentially cause illnesses.

Health effects arise primarily from allergies rather than infections. Proteins from pigeon feathers and droppings can trigger hypersensitivity pneumonitis in some people. The immune response produces inflammation in the alveoli and surrounding lung tissue. Over the years, chronic inflammation may lead to fibrosis and progressive reduction in lung capacity. This condition, sometimes called pigeon fancier's lung, does not spread from one person to another. It represents an immune reaction unique to those genetically predisposed to allergy. In sensitised individuals, even short exposure can precipitate symptoms and cause serious health hazards. Early symptoms include dry cough, breathlessness, and fatigue that worsens on re-exposure. Imaging often shows diffuse lung shadows. Pulmonary function tests reveal a restrictive pattern. Removal of pigeon droppings from the exposure environment usually improves symptoms, while continued exposure can lead to irreversible fibrosis. Corticosteroids remain the main line of management. Diagnosis requires clinical suspicion and immunological testing for bird antigens. Because it mimics other respiratory diseases, many cases remain undetected or are labelled chronic bronchitis. Systematic recording of cases under the Integrated Health Information Platform (IHIP) would help estimate the true burden, but such surveillance is absent in routine health statistics. The prognosis of dis-

eases arising from pigeon droppings varies with the underlying condition, duration of exposure, and host susceptibility. In hypersensitivity pneumonitis, early recognition and removal from exposure usually lead to a good prognosis, but chronic or repeated exposure can result in irreversible interstitial fibrosis and long-term respiratory limitation. Fungal infections such as histoplasmosis and cryptococcosis, if diagnosed late, lead to disseminated disease in immunocompromised individuals and carry a guarded prognosis. Psittacosis caused by *Chlamydia psittaci* responds effectively to tetracycline-based treatment with minimal sequelae. Allergic bronchitis and asthma-like conditions improve with corticosteroids and avoidance of exposure. Overall, the outlook ranges from complete recovery in early, self-limiting cases, to chronic respiratory impairment or fatality in severe, untreated, or immunocompromised patients. Urban health authorities estimate that thousands of pigeons inhabit a single ward in Mumbai. Multiplying by their average annual droppings gives a load of several hundred tonnes of droppings across the city each year. The droppings contain uric acid, nitrates, and organic debris that decay and release ammonia and other gases. Rainwater mixes with droppings and washes residues into drains. When dry, they become airborne, contributing to fine particulate matter. Although their share in air pollution is minor, local exposure near dense colonies is significant. Maintenance costs for cleaning and restoration of building surfaces rise proportionally. Droppings deposited on monuments and facades react chemically with stone and metal. Over time, they erode surfaces and increase corrosion. On the ground, nutrient enrichment changes soil composition and plant diversity. Accumulated nests attract mites and fleas that can enter nearby homes. Combining aesthetic nuisance, material damage, and microbial growth makes pigeon control an environmental rather than a purely medical issue. Ecologists note that cities with high pigeon density also show lower diversity of native birds, suggesting competition for nesting sites. Communicating the risk of allergic disease is challenging because it is selective, not universal. Unlike an infectious outbreak, where transmission affects all community members, allergic reactions depend on host susceptibility. People with certain genetic markers or a background of asthma and atopy are more likely to react to pigeon antigens. The majority of residents may remain unaffected despite identical exposure. This uneven pattern of vulnerability complicates public messaging. When health authorities describe pigeon droppings as a hazard, some citizens question the warning because visible illness is rare. The difference between infection and allergy must therefore be conveyed clearly. Allergic risk demands preventive awareness rather than alarm. Explaining this selective risk requires precise language. Overstatement may generate unnecessary fear, while understatement sustains risky practices. Authorities must describe the biological mechanism and the preventive behaviour expected from citizens.

Pigeons multiply rapidly under urban conditions. A monogamous pair can produce up to six broods a year, with two eggs in each, and their offspring mature for breeding within six months. One pair can thus yield 45-50 pigeons in a single year. Abundant food, stable climate, and few predators sustain this expansion. Unlike migratory birds, pigeons remain near feeding zones, forming dense flocks of 20 or more. The absence of natural predators such as hawks or kites makes control dependent on human action. Increasing the population of pigeon predators can gradually restore ecological balance in crowded city environments. Uncontrolled proliferation of pigeons alters environmental and health dynamics. Each bird's annual contribution of 12 to 15 kilograms of droppings, multiplied by thousands, represents a significant urban waste load. The health effects are uneven and tangible among susceptible groups. Effective policy will depend on transparent communication, shared responsibility, and consistent application of scientific evidence.

WhatsApp could soon let users chat using username instead of phone number



Hyderabad: WhatsApp is taking a significant step towards modernizing its platform by testing a "username reservation" feature in the latest Android beta build (version 2.25.28.12). This development signals the impending introduction of usernames, allowing users to connect without relying solely on phone numbers, similar to competitors like Telegram. Since its launch in 2009, WhatsApp has required phone numbers for registration and contact discovery. The new username system aims to provide greater flexibility and privacy. The current beta test, visible in the Settings menu, focuses on reserving usernames rather than full messaging access. Users can secure their preferred handles ahead of the official rollout, ensuring fairness in the allocation of popular names and helping WhatsApp manage demand and maintain platform stability. Only lowercase letters (a-z), numbers (0-9), periods (.), and underscores (_) are allowed. Additionally, WhatsApp is testing a four-digit "username key", which users must share along with their username to connect with others. This adds an extra layer of privacy, preventing anyone from messaging a user simply by knowing their username. Some beta users can already customize and reserve usernames, allowing them to secure their preferred handle before the global release. WhatsApp will use this phase to gauge demand and ensure fair access. No official global release date has been announced. Apart from usernames, WhatsApp has recently introduced AI features and enhanced call scheduling to facilitate professional meetings. WhatsApp is also preparing a major policy shift to curb spam. Meta plans to limit messages sent to contacts who do not reply, counting each message toward a monthly quota. This measure, which will roll out in several countries in the coming weeks,

Amazon partners with IIT Roorkee to develop sustainable packaging from farm waste



cessful performance outcomes, Amazon will support the transition to industrial trials, process validation, and commercial production by mid to late next year.

Abhinav Singh, Vice President of Operations at Amazon India, said the company is committed to building a sustainable operations network. "India generates nearly 500 million tonnes of agricultural waste annually. By repurposing this waste into packaging materials, we can support a circular economy while reducing reliance on conventional materials," he said. Prof. Kamal Kishore Pant, Director of IIT Roorkee, said sustainability has become an urgent national priority. He added that the collaboration aligns with government initiatives such as Swachh Bharat, Startup India, and the National Resource Efficiency Policy, while addressing stubble burning and dependence on virgin materials through scalable, biodegradable packaging solutions. The research project will be led by Prof. Vibhore Kumar Rastogi and Dr. Anurag Kulshreshtha from the INNOVAP Lab (Innovations in Paper and Packaging) at IIT Roorkee's Saharanpur campus.

As part of its broader sustainability efforts, Amazon currently ships more than 50 per cent of customer orders in India either in original product packaging or with reduced packaging, reaching over 300 cities. Since 2019, Amazon India has eliminated single-use plastic from packaging across its fulfilment centres. Amazon is also working towards its Climate Pledge goal of achieving net-zero carbon emissions across its operations by 2040. The company has invested in carbon-free energy, packaging innovation, electric transportation, circular economy initiatives, artificial intelligence, and water stewardship, with a goal to return more water to Indian communities than it uses in its direct operations by 2027.

By diverting agricultural waste from burning, the initiative seeks to help curb stubble burning in India while reducing reliance on imported virgin wood pulp. The project could also create additional income opportunities for farmers by establishing a market for agricultural residues. The collaboration with IIT Roorkee's Department of Paper and Packaging Technology will begin with laboratory-scale development and testing over a 15-month period. Subject to suc-

Google revenues cross \$400 billion as Gemini AI user base surges

New Delhi: Alphabet and Google CEO Sundar Pichai has said that the company's annual revenues exceeded \$400 billion for the first time, with Gemini AI app reaching over 750 million monthly active users. In the company's quarterly earnings call, Pichai said they have sold more than 8 million paid seats of Gemini Enterprise launched just four months ago. In addition, "We are also seeing significantly higher engagement per user especially since the launch of Gemini 3 in December. Overall, we are seeing our AI investments and infrastructure drive revenue and growth across the board to meet customer demand and cap on the growing opportunities ahead of us, our 2026 CapEx investments are anticipated to be in the range of \$175 to \$185 billion," he explained.

"We partnered with Reliance Jio to provide over 500 million consumers with an eighteen-month free trial of our Gemini suite of products and two terabyte of cloud storage. Reliance Enterprise customers will also get access to Google Cloud Gemini Enterprise and TPUs, bringing the best of Google AI to every employee and workflow," he added. In the December quarter, Search continued to accelerate with revenues growing 17 per cent, YouTube's annual revenues surpassed \$60 billion across ads and subscriptions.

"Cloud significantly accelerated with revenues growing 48 per cent now on an annual run rate of over \$70 billion. Backlog grew by 55 per cent quarter over quarter to \$240 billion representing a wide breadth of customers driven by demand for AI products. We have over 325 million paid



subscriptions across consumer services, strong adoption for Google One and YouTube Premium," Pichai informed. Pichai further said that since launch, Gemini 3 Pro has consistently processed three times as many daily tokens on average as 2.5 Pro. "Our latest model powers Google Anti Gravity, our new development platform where agents can autonomously plan and execute complex software tasks. It already has more than 1.5 million weekly users after launching just over two months ago," he noted.

India safeguards sensitive sectors in US trade deal; exporters set to gain



will open huge opportunities for Indian labour-intensive sectors, such as textiles, plastics, apparel, home decor, leather and footwear, gems and jewellery, organic chemicals, rubber goods, machineries and aircraft. Import duty on most of these sectors will come down soon to 18 per cent from the present 50 per cent in the US markets.

The Minister said that India is a fast-growing and large economy and demand is continuously increasing for goods such as ICT products, data centre equipment, high-quality technology and innovation items, and raw materials. "And in that situation, this deal also opens up opportunities for India to get the best-in-class, world-class technologies to further power the India growth story," he told reporters here.

He added that India has got a "very good" trade deal with the US, better than the competitors. Trump's announcement via a social media post late Monday night is part of a general agreement under which India has apparently agreed to stop buying Russian oil, reduce "their tariffs and non-tariff barriers against the United States to zero", and India buying an incremental USD 500 billion of "US energy, technology, agricultural, coal, and many other products" over the next five years.

The commitment to stop buying Russian oil nullifies the additional 25 per cent punitive tariff previously levied, and thereby reduces the effective applied tariff on Indian exports to the US to 18 per cent from 50 per cent. The major countries which compete with Indian labour-intensive sectors in the global markets include China, Vietnam (20 per cent), Malaysia (19 per cent), Bangladesh (20 per cent), Cambodia and Thailand (19 per cent each).

Without giving details of what has been agreed with Washington, Goyal said the trade deal is in the final stages, and an Indo-US joint statement will be issued shortly detailing the contours of the agreement. Sectors such as leather and footwear, marine products (including shrimp), chemicals, plastics and rubber, home decor and carpets, machineries, and select agricultural products, including processed items, will gain a major advantage in the US market vis-a-vis competing nations as the American duties will come down to 18 per cent.

"These goods will now get the best rates in the US," a source said, adding that different Indian clusters like Tirupur (apparel), Surat (gems and jewellery), which were affected by the high tariffs, will now gain. India's exports from these sectors stood at USD 30 billion to the US. Now duties on these will come down to 18 per cent from 25 per cent. The country's shipments worth USD 4 billion are already in the exempted category like minerals and natural resources, and certain agri products.

Further, pharma and mobile phones worth USD 25 billion are also out of the ambit of US tariffs. Though the US is a major market for these segments of goods, Indian exporters have started diversifying their sales in other countries.

But with little details available about the actual agreement between the two sides, opposition parties attacked the government for selling out the interests of Indian farmers. Goyal, in a news conference, said a joint statement will be issued by both countries "shortly", which will have details of the pact, but rest assured, the government has built enough safeguards that will ensure protection for sensitive sectors. There may be duty concessions on some imports from the US, but no duty-free imports will be allowed in crops and agri products that are important for the country.

Sitharaman in an interview to PTI Videos said, "So, actually our exports will pick up now, that is my expectation... along with having found new markets where they will continue to operate." The new 18 per cent levy undercuts tariffs on key regional competitors such as Vietnam and Bangladesh, both facing duties of 20 per cent, restoring India's price advantage in the US market. The move offers significant relief to a broad range of labour-intensive exports, including apparel, footwear and jewellery makers, which had been hit by punitive 50 per cent tariffs imposed in August, sharply denting competitiveness and order flows.

The punitive US tariffs caused India's bilateral trade surplus with the US to shrink by USD 2.5 billion each month on average during September-December 2025 (versus the monthly average in January-August 2025), according to HSBC Global Investment Research. There was also USD 14 billion of equity outflows by foreign investors since July 2025 amid weak sentiment. Goyal said that the agreement

With seven new corridors, India will be 100% atmanirbhar in making Bullet trains, says Union Minister for Railways Ashwini Vaishnaw



or South Korean — was considered for the seven corridors?

We have to work according to our country's needs. We have a very unique geography. Our culture, the way our cities have developed, the way our states are organised, we have to keep all this in mind to design a high-speed corridor. On the technology part, we must have our own technology by learning the best from each part of the world. We should learn from wherever we get the best solutions and develop our own technology. We will be 100% atmanirbhar in the high-speed corridor. The propulsion system — including the converter, inverter, and motors that run and control the train — is being manufactured in India and exported to Europe and the US.

The first Bullet train project has been delayed. What will be an action plan to get the seven new corridors completed on time?

In the first project, the design was very complex. Initially, it was planned on an embankment, similar to Japan. However, this would have disconnected villages on either side of the track and raised environmental concerns, similar to those seen in Kerala's SilverLine project (K-Rail). Later, it was decided to construct the corridor on a viaduct, and a detailed design was prepared. However, two years were lost due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and another two years were lost because of the denial of Maharashtra government under (the then Chief minister) Uddhav Thackeray. Once the work began, it progressed at a rapid pace, with an average of 15 km being completed each month.

Wouldn't land acquisition be a hurdle for these projects as well?

Definitely, that is a factor. But I am confident that all the states will support this because this is something which people deserve and desire.

What about the earlier prepared DPRs for the seven projects? Have they been put on the back burner?

No. These projects are largely based on the earlier DPRs. The overall thinking was to ensure that at least one project comes up in each part of the country. This has been planned keeping major cities and strategic considerations in mind.

The cost of first project has escalated from Rs 1.08 lakh crore to Rs 1.98 lakh crore. How will it be financed?

That is yet to be decided.

What are the benefits of the new East-West dedicated freight corridor?

There are many industries in the hinterlands of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha, including steel plants, power plants, mines, and manufacturing units. The aim is to connect all of these to ports on both the East and West coasts. On the East Coast, several lines — Baribol, Jharsuguda, Sambalpur — lead to Paradip.

Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh will be connected to the West Coast. A junction near Surat will link the Western and East-West corridors. The Vadnagar Port, set to become one of the top ports in the world, will also be connected. The DPR of this project is also being prepared.

The Budget data shows that AC-3 tier passenger numbers are slipping. Is that a cause for concern since it generates Railways' highest passenger revenue?

A major focus is on increasing general coaches to ensure dignified travel for low-income passengers. The induction of 17,000 general and sleeper coaches is underway, and work on nearly 4,000 of them is already complete. As soon as more Vande Bharat Sleeper trains are rolled out, these numbers will also increase. A total of 200 Vande Bharat Sleeper trains are being manufactured.

How will you achieve diversification of freight? Will e-commerce see an increase?

We are doing commodity-wise reform. The first reform we did was in the cement sector. We introduced a specialised container and flat freight rate for cement. Similarly, the work on automobiles is ongoing. Along with this, there will be reforms for steel, containers, parcels that will be rolled out in the coming months. We will do 52 reforms this year. The nature of the train is that it is always hub-to-hub unlike road, which is door-to-door. A ship is always major hub to major hub, and the same goes with the airways. So, in the train, we focus on making it multi-modal and that is being done.

Dermatologist warns that laser hair removal can sometimes trigger more hair growth, especially on your face

Laser hair removal is widely regarded as a long-term solution for unwanted hair, offering smoother skin and reduced need for shaving or waxing sessions. However, a dermatologist recently took to Instagram to note that the treatment doesn't always produce the expected results for everyone. Dr Abigail Waldman, in her post, mentions, "I'm a dermatologist and paradoxical hypertrichosis or paradoxical hair growth is possible after using laser hair removal. This is more common on the face than it is on the body." She adds, "Cooling the skin, before and after laser, can help reduce this unwanted side effect. A lot of lasers actually have cooling inside the laser. But make sure that if it doesn't, then you are cooling with ice before and after laser hair removal, especially on the face."

But what causes paradoxical hypertrichosis after laser hair removal, and how common is this reaction?

Dr Archana Lakshman, consultant dermatologist & cosmetologist, GVG Invivo Hospital, tells indianexpress.com, "Paradoxical hypertrichosis is a rare phenomenon where fine, thin hair in the treated area becomes thicker or denser instead of reducing. It is believed to occur when the laser energy is insufficient to completely destroy the hair follicle but still stimulates it, triggering hair growth." Factors such as low fluence settings or using the wrong wavelength for a person's hair and skin type can play a role. Dr Lakshman adds that although it can be alarming, "this reaction is uncommon and is estimated to affect only a small percentage of patients undergoing laser hair removal." The reassuring point is that this can be addressed in the following laser sessions and brought under control.

Are there specific skin types, hair types, or treatment settings that increase the risk of experiencing increased hair growth following laser sessions?

Dr Lakshman mentions that individuals with darker skin types, fine facial hair, or hormonal conditions such as polycystic ovarian syndrome may be more susceptible.



She adds, "Cooling the skin, before and after laser, can help reduce this unwanted side effect."

"Using an inappropriate laser or incorrect laser parameters for the person's skin and hair combination can also increase the likelihood. Areas with fine vellus hair, such as the face or neck, are more prone compared to coarse hair on the body," notes the expert.

According to Dr Lakshman, the best way to reduce risk is to undergo treatment with a board-certified dermatologist who uses the correct laser type and energy settings after a thorough assessment of the skin and hair. Sticking to the recommended number of sessions and avoiding unregulated clinics is equally important. "If paradoxical growth does occur, the dermatologist may adjust the laser parameters or recommend alternative treatments such as electrolysis or prescription topical therapies to gradually reduce the new hair growth," concludes Dr Lakshman.

'These moments are priceless': Rishabh Pant wishes India U-19 team luck ahead of World Cup final vs England



GNS News Agency, Feb 6

With the India U-19 team just one win away from clinching a record-extending sixth title, Rishabh Pant wished Ayush Mhatre and Co all the best for the final vs England on Friday. "All the best to the U-19 boys. You are playing some amazing cricket. From my U-19 experience, I can say this – these moments are priceless, so enjoy them with your teammates and give it your best," Pant, who was part of India's team for the 2016 U-19 World Cup, posted on X. "Playing for India is always a proud moment, at any level. Enjoy the occasion, play with heart, wear the jersey with

pride and get the cup home," he added.

India will bank on its swashbuckling batting line-up when it takes on a gritty England in what promises to be an evenly-matched summit clash. India's successful chase of a massive total to humble Afghanistan in the semifinal where skipper Ayush Mhatre and opener Aaron George finally produced innings of substance, augurs well for the five-time champions, aiming to regain the trophy they last lifted in 2022.

India have shown tremendous resolve from the very first group match against the United States. In the semifinal, they decimated a hardened Afghanistan side to maintain an unbroken record despite being in pursuit of a 300-plus target. They now face another unbeaten team in England. India will be aware that England have reached this far after knocking out defending champions Australia and will be high on confidence. To pull off the win, India will need a collective performance befitting the quality in their line-up, studded with batting prodigies Vaibhav Suryavanshi, whose firestorm approach has left opposition teams struggling for answers. Suryavanshi, who turns 15 next month, has already struck three half-centuries and a blazing century in the final could be the driving force that propels India to the title.

'Our flight is booked and we are going to Colombo': India skipper Suryakumar Yadav on travelling to Sri Lanka despite Pakistan's boycott call



GNS News Agency, Feb 6

India skipper Suryakumar Yadav said that despite Pakistan announcing the boycott of the India match at the T20 World Cup, the Men in Blue will still be travelling to Colombo. The two arch-rivals are scheduled to face off in a group stage match in Sri Lanka on February 15 but the Pakistan government have urged its team to not take part in the India match in response to Bangladesh's ouster from the competition after refusing to travel to India citing security concerns.

"I feel their decision is not in my control. I wish I could take their decisions call but it is their call. We had played in the Asia Cup as well and we played them three times. Our

mindset is pretty clear. We have not said no (to playing against Pakistan). They have. ICC has given the fixture. Our flight is booked and we are going there (to Colombo). The team discussion is that we are playing first on February 7, then we will go there," Suryakumar said during the pre-tournament captains' press meet on Thursday.

"We played some good cricket against them. We have been told that the game is on 15th, the game is at a neutral venue and if we get an opportunity we will play. It's a difficult call for them (Pakistani players) as well," he added. Ever since Bangladesh put in a request to move its matches from India to Sri Lanka citing security concerns and failed, Pakistan had been protesting against the decision. In a show of support to the Bangladesh Cricket Board, they voted in favour of their request in the ICC board meeting and Naqvi even threatened to boycott the tournament. When Bangladesh refused to play their matches in India, they were eventually replaced by Scotland for the tournament.

After the Pakistan government's unprecedented intervention on Sunday, the ICC released a statement reminding the PCB of the potential consequences. While the world body didn't specify sanctions, there has been talk that the Pakistan board might end up facing a hefty fine since their action would result in the broadcaster suffering a big loss in the high-value game. The ICC can also punish the PCB with a temporary ban on bilateral series, leading to international isolation.

'India game is not in our control': Pakistan captain Salman Agha on boycotting IND match at T20 World Cup



GNS News Agency, Feb 6

Pakistan captain Salman Agha reiterated on Thursday that the decision to not play against India in the T20 World Cup comes directly from the government and the players can't do anything about it. The future of the February 15th match between the arch-rivals at Colombo is currently in jeopardy with the Pakistan government announcing the boycott of the game in response to Bangladesh's ouster from the T20 World Cup. "The India game is not in our control. It's the government's and the PCB's decision and we respect that. Whatever they are going to say, we

will do that," Agha said during the captain's conference. "If we have to play them again in the semifinal or final, we will have to go back to them and act on their advice," he added. Earlier on Thursday, Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that the boycott of their T20 World Cup match against India was an "appropriate decision, adding that it was a "considered stance" to support Bangladesh. "We have taken a very clear stand on the T20 World Cup that we won't play the match against India because there should be no politics on the sports field," Sharif stated after a government meeting.

"We have taken a very considered stance, and we should completely stand by Bangladesh, and I think this is a very appropriate decision. We are with Bangladesh," he added. In response, Bangladesh sports advisor Asif Nazrul posted "Thank You, Pakistan" on his official Facebook page, while quoting Sharif's statement. A few days ago, Agha had echoed the same comments that he said on Thursday, saying playing the match against India was not in their hands. "We are going to the World Cup. Humara decision nahi hai, hum kuch nahi kar sakte. (The decision not to play against India isn't ours, so we cannot do anything about it.) Whatever our government, the PCB chief tells us to do, we will do that only," Agha told reporters after the conclusion of the third T20I against Australia on Sunday.

Tilak Varma thanks BCCI after injury comeback, says India ready for World Cup

GNS News Agency, Feb 6

New Delhi: India all-rounder Tilak Varma, who joined the national side after recovering from an injury recently, expressed gratitude to the BCCI and the Centre of Excellence (CoE) for helping him return to action sooner than expected. Inspired by the aggressive batting around him, he said the atmosphere was electric and added that both he and the Indian team feel ready for the World Cup.

Tilak described the packed DY Patil Stadium and the crowd chanting his name as a big confidence boost, even in a warm-up match as India wrapped up their T20 World Cup preparations in style, defeating South Africa by 30 runs in a high-scoring warm-up match in Navi Mumbai on Wednesday.

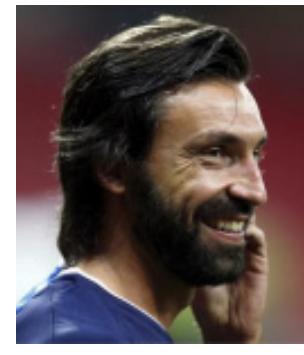
"To be honest I did not expect but I will be back on the field this early. Really thankful for COE and BCCI. I always say that World Cup is my biggest dream to play. The way, I entered the ropes and, everyone was shouting 'Tilak Tilak.' So I didn't expect that. I really felt nice and it also boosted me when I was going in. The way Ishan was batting, I have seen him, the way Abhishek and everyone was batting, so I was also a bit like 'Mai bhi maarunga jaake.' I did not ex-

pect full crowd, the DY Patil was fully packed. It was just a warm up game but still the craze... Really thanks to everyone. The vibe was really terrific, and yeah- Tilak and the Indian team is ready for the World Cup," Tilak said in a bcci.tv video.

Opting to bat first, the hosts put on a batting exhibition, led by Ishan Kishan's explosive 53 off just 20 balls. Kishan and Abhishek Sharma gave India a flying start, racing to 80/1 inside six overs before both openers retired out to give others game time. Tilak (45 off 19) and captain Suryakumar Yadav continued the onslaught with a rapid 66-run stand, while late cameos from Axar Patel, Rinku Singh, and a blistering 30 off 10 balls from Hardik Pandya powered India to an imposing 240/5.

In response, South Africa's chase was rocked early when Arshdeep Singh dismissed George Linde for a duck. Aiden Markram and Ryan Rickleton briefly revived hopes with a 65-run partnership, but Markram retired out, and Deval Brevis, Rickleton and David Miller's wickets fell in quick succession, swinging momentum firmly back to India. Despite fighting contributions from Jason Smith, Tristan Stubbs, and Marco Jansen, South Africa fell short by 30 runs.

Football legend Andrea Pirlo sends best wishes to Italy cricket team for T20 World Cup 2026



GNS News Agency, Feb 6

Federazione Cricket Italiana got football legend Andrea Pirlo to record 'all the best' wishes for their cricket team debuting at the T20 World Cup. The 2006 football World Cup winner, scion of a ridiculously rich steel empire and classy fan favourite, is seen donning a generic grey tee, and saying 'Ciao a tutti voglio farvi un grande in bocca al lupo ciao.' It means, "Hello everyone, I want to wish you all a big good luck."

The message might not reveal any deep emotional

Nasser Hussain to ICC: 'Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India must be treated the same'

GNS News Agency, Feb 6

Former England captain Nasser Hussain has criticised the International Cricket Council (ICC) for the way they have handed the recent issue of Bangladesh Cricket Team refusing to travel to India for the T20 World Cup and Pakistan boycotting the group stage game against India. Bangladesh team's ouster came after the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) refused to send their team to India for the T20 World Cup citing security concerns after the Board of Control for Cricket in India had forced Kolkata Knight Riders to dump a Bangladesh cricketer from its roster for the upcoming Indian Premier League. After the ICC booted out Bangladesh, Pakistan government announced that its team will play in the T20 World Cup, but will boycott the game against India. This led the ICC to ask the PCB to rethink the decision.

Now, former England captain Hussain has asked the ICC to be consistent with the way they handle situations. While speaking on the Sky Sports Podcast, where he was joined by Michael Atherton, Hussain pointed out that the ICC was giving preferential treatment to some boards, particularly India.

Hussain said: "If India, a month before a tournament, said our government does not want us to play in a country for a World Cup, would the ICC have been so firm and said, 'You know the rules, bad luck, we're knocking you out?' Suryakumar India's captain Suryakumar Yadav, left, and Pakistan's captain Salman Agha stand for the coin toss of the Asia Cup cricket final between India and Pakistan at Dubai International Cricket Stadium, United Arab Emirates, Sunday, Sept. 28, 2025. "The only question all sides ask for is consistency. Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India must be treated the same. Yes, India fans may say, 'Cry more, we have the money!' But with power comes responsibility. Constantly knocking Bangladesh or Pakistan diminishes their cricket. That's why the great games between India and Pakistan or India and Bangladesh have become one-sided over time," he added. Hussain praised Pakistan team and the Bangladesh Cricket Board for standing up for its players. He added that the sport was "risking shooting itself in the foot." "I'm amazed at how well Pakistan have done and continue to do with everything that they are working against. And I actually quite like Bangladesh sticking to their guns, standing up for their players. I quite like Pakistan sticking up for Bangladesh as well. At some stage, someone should say, enough with this politics, can we just get back to playing cricket," Hussain added.

Is Ronaldo's Al Nassr strike over? Star could return for crucial Al Ittihad clash after joining team training

GNS News Agency, Feb 6

Cristiano Ronaldo's strike at Al Nassr might be over after the talismanic forward returned to team training as they sharpen their weapon to face Al Ittihad in a crucial game of the Saudi Pro League. Ronaldo, who will turn 41 on Thursday, is also expected to lace up against Al Ittihad on Friday. The game has massive ramifications for the league standings: if Al Nassr win, they will go on top of the Saudi Pro League. After refusing to play in Al Nassr's last game, Ronaldo posted a picture of himself in training on X on Wednesday. It must be noted that the Portuguese star's return has not been confirmed either by the player or the club.

Ronaldo earns a reported £500,000 a day at Al Nassr (according to a report in Sky Sports) and contractually obliged to play unless he is injured. The star now has 18 months left on his contract, which has a £43 million summer release clause.

After Ronaldo had skipped the team's Saudi Pro League win over Al Riyadh on Monday, reports suggested that he was unhappy about the running of the club. Al Nassr are owned by Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund PIF, just like Al Hilal, Al Ahli and Al Ittihad. However, reports stated that Ronaldo is angry that Al Nassr was not getting the same financial support from the sovereign wealth fund PIF as the other three clubs.

Ronaldo's "strike" started after the former Real Madrid star was signed by Al Hilal, who are Al Nassr's rivals for

investment into the cricket T20 squad, but is nevertheless an acknowledgment that the Italian Federation are trying to drum up support in a different sport. The national football team is still awaiting qualification for the Football World Cup, which many hoped would've been secured a little earlier.

The cricket T20 side however, are riding a wave of confidence, after recent win against Canada, and have surprised everyone after qualifying ahead of higher ranked other sides. Crucially, they are in the same group as England, and while an upset of that level is unlikely, Gli Azzurri will fancy their chances based on the effect Italians in general have on the English. Italy won football's Euro after two straight failures to qualify for the Football World Cup, and Pirlo's mate Gennaro Gattuso is really trying to push them to at least secure a spot in the 48-team football quadrennial – Wales and Northern Ireland need to be beaten. Meanwhile, a team of ICC top officials is simultaneously in Milan, wooing assorted Europeans to take up the easier bat ball sport. Gli Azzurri are enjoying the sun and attention in the subcontinent. Christian Vieri was a bona-fide Allan Border fan, and the cricket body of Italy is likely to convince many more Azzurri to smile like a million dollars and send messages to their men in India and Sri Lanka.



Sunday, Sept. 28, 2025. "The only question all sides ask for is consistency. Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India must be treated the same. Yes, India fans may say, 'Cry more, we have the money!' But with power comes responsibility. Constantly knocking Bangladesh or Pakistan diminishes their cricket. That's why the great games between India and Pakistan or India and Bangladesh have become one-sided over time," he added. Hussain praised Pakistan team and the Bangladesh Cricket Board for standing up for its players. He added that the sport was "risking shooting itself in the foot." "I'm amazed at how well Pakistan have done and continue to do with everything that they are working against. And I actually quite like Bangladesh sticking to their guns, standing up for their players. I quite like Pakistan sticking up for Bangladesh as well. At some stage, someone should say, enough with this politics, can we just get back to playing cricket," Hussain added.



the league title. Al Hilal poached Benzema from Al Ittihad. Ronaldo's anger arose from the fact that his own side have not been able to buy players in the ongoing transfer window, with a young Iraqi midfielder, Hayder Abdulkareem, being the only incoming transfer for Al Nassr in January. Ronaldo has not managed to help Al Nassr win the Saudi league title yet. Currently, Al Hilal hold a one-point lead over Al Nassr at the top of the Saudi Pro League standings. A report in Sky Sports noted that Benzema's move to Al Hilal was bankrolled by a private billionaire Saudi investor Prince Alwaleed bin Talal rather than the league or the PIF. Al Nassr, meanwhile, have not been constrained by the PIF from signing more players with the backing of private investors like Al Hilal have with Benzema.

Ayush Shetty beats Kenta Nishimoto, Satwik-Chirag give India 2-0 lead over Japan

GNS News Agency, Feb 6

Ayush Shetty, who entered Top 25 this Monday, started his team stint with a 21-18, 15-21, 21-11 win against Japanese veteran Kenta Nishimoto, who has often posed headaches for Indians with his doughty play. Ayush playing the first singles of the group men's tie at the Asian team championship in Qingdao, China, did well to reverse a 11-15 and 16-18 deficit in the first set, taking five points in a row to claim the opener 21-18. The match that went on for 74 minutes, saw the 20-year-old Indian falter in the second, but he was in stomping form in the decider that he centered to 21-11.

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty are currently battling Takuro Hoki and Yugo Kobayashi in the second match of this tie. HS Prannoy and Tharun Manepa are designated to take on Yushi Tanaka and Koki Watanabe in the next two singles. Earlier, the women's team went down 2-3 to Thailand despite Tanvi Sharma putting them 1-0 ahead beating familiar Indian punching bag Busanan Ongbamrungphan. Tanvi won 21-14, 17-21, 21-18, after the Thai accelerated from 17-17 in the second. She made heavy weather of the decider against the opponent ranked No 61, aged 29, but India's young No 42, aged 17, did well to close out the match eventually.

Treesa-Gayatri too hiccups on way to a 21-14, 20-22, 21-11 win, and the second set stutters saw them go from 15-12 up to 17-19 down and get dragged into a decider



Snapping out of that reverse, they did well to race to wrap up the match against World No 65 Nattamon Laisuan – Teedapron Kleebyeensu.

Rakshitha Ramraj disappointed 21-19, 21-17 but she was up against the player in red hot form on the circuit. Pitchamorn Optaniputh, a.k.a. Pink. Tanisha Crasto and Shruti Mishra could do very little against Hathaithip-Napaipakorn, after a spirited first set. They went from 13-18 to winning it 21-19, but we're outplayed thereafter.

Malvika Bansal tasked with downing Pornpicha Choeekiwong went down 21-18, 21-14 in a match she ought to have converted, ranked 47 as against No 69.

'You'll make Kal Ho Naa Ho again': Irrfan Khan refused D-Day, accepted only when Anurag Kashyap said 'Nikkhil Advani behak gaya tha'



was Kashyap who told him, 'Arey, isn't Raat Ki Subah Nahin likhi thi. Yeh behak gaya tha abhi, wapas aa gaya hai. Tu kar le, kar le.' (He wrote Iss Raat Ki Subah Nahin. He had gone off track for a bit, but he's back now. You should do it, go ahead.) Irrfan Khan Irrfan Khan was briefly insecure when he heard that Rishi Kapoor would play Dwood Ibrahim in D-Day.

Advani also pointed out the irony that despite Kashyap's influence on many of Irrfan's career decisions, the two never actually collaborated on a film together. Several projects Irrfan took up, he said, were based on Kashyap's informal advice, "do this, do that", rather than formal collaborations. The filmmaker further revealed that Irrfan briefly felt insecure when he learned that Rishi Kapoor would be playing the role of Dwood Ibrahim. "When I called him and told him that Rishi Kapoor is doing Dwood, he said, 'Yaar, abhi toh sab kuch le jaayega woh phir.'

Lines bhi saari achhi ussi character ke paas hain. Rishi sir is too good." (Man, he's going to take everything away now. All the best lines are with that character. Rishi sir is too good.)

In the same conversation, Advani reflected on how D-Day became a turning point in his career. "D-Day didn't just change me as a filmmaker, it made people call me a filmmaker. Till then, I was struggling to be known as one. When the D-Day reviews came, somebody wrote, 'Can't believe the director of Kal Ho Naa Ho has made this film.' Suddenly, they acknowledged that I was the director of Kal Ho Naa Ho."

Watch the episode of Cult Comebacks on D-Day here:

He also addressed the film's box-office failure, noting that despite its commercial fate, D-Day was widely appreciated within the industry. "I was very happy just with the fact that I made the film the way I wanted to. We did around 20 previews, and from Amitabh Bachchan to Javed Akhtar, everyone came. By the time it was about to release, people from the industry would call and say, 'Can we come watch it? We've heard it's fantastic.' We had back-to-back shows, one 6 o'clock, then 9 o'clock, for days."

Allu Arjun turns cheerleader: Inside brother Allu Sirish and Nayanika's 'magical' pre-wedding yacht bash



Earlier, Sophie Choudry had also shared a series of photos and videos from the pre-wedding party on her social media. Sharing her joy at being part of the celebration, Sophie wrote, "The most amazing time celebrating my dearest, sweetest Siri @allusirish & his gorgeous bride to be Nayanika. You guys are so so beautiful together Stay this happy, blessed and aligned always ???? And Arjun thank you for being you ??? #memoriesforlife @alluarjunonline. #bestiesgettingmarried #allusirish #dubai #sophiechoudry (sic)." Her posts also included pictures with the couple, Allu Arjun, and Sirish's brother Allu Bobby, highlighting the close bond shared by the guests.

Sirish and Nayanika had earlier exchanged rings in Hyderabad on October 31, in the presence of their closest friends and family. Announcing the engagement, Sirish had shared how their story began, revealing that they first truly connected at a wedding party hosted by Nithiin and Shalini, Nayanika's best friend, for Varun Tej and Lavanya Tripathi. "That night was the first time Nayanika and I truly met. And now, two years later, we're happily in love and engaged. Someday, when my kids ask me how it all began, I'll tell them that's How I Met Your Mother," he wrote at the time.

March 6 also holds special significance for the family, as it marks the wedding anniversary of Sirish's elder brother Allu Arjun and Sneha Reddy, who tied the knot on the same date in 2011.

Allu Arjun too got married on March 6. Explaining how the date was chosen, Sirish said, "When our wedding dates were being arrived at as per charts and kundalis, we were given two favorable dates – 25 February and March 6. Our next thought was to pick the date that matched our venue's availability. And that just happened to be, well, March 6. It was only then that we even realized this very happy coincidence – of sharing our wedding date with Bunny and Sneha's! This date has been deeply meaningful for all of us, and knowing that I'm marrying Nayanika that same day feels like a blessing... feels like destiny!" He added that witnessing the life his brother and Sneha have built together has been deeply inspiring, and that he hopes to create a journey rooted in love, understanding, and mutual respect with Nayanika.

AP Dhillon laughs off 40 mobile phones being stolen at his Delhi concert: 'People bought 1 ticket for Rs 6.5 lakh so...'



In the latest trailer of The Great Indian Kapil Show on Netflix, Kapil started by cracking jokes about AP Dhillon's concerts, including tickets reportedly costing around Rs 6 lakh, and the phones and wallets of the audience going missing. "AP stage pe apna talent dikha rahe the... aur log audience mein apna talent," Kapil said. The rapper-singer instantly gave a witty reply, reasoning, "Jisne 6 lakh diye hain, poora toh karna hai (whoever paid that high amount, has to balance the payment)." Their fun banter left everyone laughing, promising a humour-filled episode.

In the promo, Kapil left everyone in splits when he introduced AP Dhillon and Anubhav Bassi in his hilarious style. He said, "Aaj is manch pe do global stars majaood hain – AP Dhillon aur Kapil Sharma (Today, two global stars are present on this stage – AP Dhillon and Kapil Sharma)," leaving out the actor-comedian in the introduction. Later on, the whirlwind of punches started in full speed when Kiku Sharda entered as Chota Shaikh and Krushna Abhishek as Bada Shaikh. On the other hand, Sunil Grover marked his appearance as Diamond Raja. The trailer will give glimpses of pure Punjabi swag of the 'brown mundi' taking over Kapil's stage. During AP Dhillon's One of One India Tour in December 2025, the highest-tier VVIP-Crystal package in Mumbai is priced at around Rs 6.25 lakh (inclusive of booking fees). This luxury package accommodated a group of 15 people, offering several premium and exclusive benefits, including private entry, better viewing experience, and gourmet dining. After the Delhi concert, many attendees complained about their stolen electronic gadgets. Similar incidents were also reported in Chandigarh and Mumbai. The crime branch even caught the four offenders behind this mass mobile theft, recovering around 40 smartphones worth several lakhs of rupees. According to the crime branch, an organized interstate gang was behind the theft, stealing high-end mobile phones, including iPhone 17 Pro Max and Samsung S24 Ultra.

Chris Hemsworth is 8 to 10 times more likely to develop Alzheimer's, wondered If people would believe him as Thor: 'This is not a death sentence'



Marvel star and action hero Chris Hemsworth revealed a concerning detail about his health a couple of years ago. The actor shared that his grandfather had Alzheimer's disease and that his father is currently battling the same condition. Hemsworth also discovered that he carries a genetic predisposition that significantly increases his risk of developing the disease. In a recent interview, the actor opened up about the disease and the fear he felt before revealing it to the world.

While talking to The Guardian about his new film with Mark Ruffalo, Crime 101, Hemsworth also touched upon his diagnosis and how that made him feel. He said that he was reserved about letting people know about his condition because he felt that this could get in the way of getting more work as an action superhero. He said, "I wondered if I was letting people too far in. Are they no longer going to believe in the action star or the Marvel character? And do I want people to know my fears and insecurities at this level?" The Thor star also said that he has a very different approach towards work and life now. He said, "My appetite for racing forward has really been reined in. I've become more aware of the fragility of things. You start thinking, 'My dad won't be here forever.' And my kids are now 11 and 13. Those nights where they'd fight over sleeping in our bed – suddenly they're not happening any more."

Chris Hemsworth admitted to taking up roles that felt more personal since his father's diagnosis. Hemsworth talked about coming from "nothing" and how he felt ridiculous about turning down roles that would help him financially. He also expressed anger at how people took the news and said, "It's not like I've been handed my resignation. It's not a deterministic gene, but it is a strong indication. Ten years ago,

'Ranbir Kapoor does not allow Alia Bhatt to follow his Finsa, but he watches everything,' says blogger



count as the fans could decipher that it actually belongs to him.

Malini shared on InControversial Podcast, "Ranbir Kapoor has a Finsa and he doesn't even let Alia follow it because it will be obvious that it's him because he loves to watch what everyone's doing but he doesn't want to be on social media. Everyone has tried to get him on social media but he doesn't want to have his own social account so he is not on social media but he has this fake account but nobody knows what it is and he watches everything."

Previously, at an event in Dubai, Ranbir confessed to the same. He also shared that he did make a reel with his daughter Raha on this account. "Actually, on my Finsa account, I did make a reel with my daughter (Raha) and posted it. But I have no followers, so it's just for the air," he said. At the same event, Ranbir said that he does not want to be on Instagram officially. "Then I'll have a responsibility to really show myself off to the world and I felt that I already have a medium, which is acting in movies, and that's enough for me to show myself to the world," he said. Alia, who was also present at this event, added, "He wouldn't even let me follow him. He's like 'no because if you follow me, everyone will follow me'. So I'm like peeking into his phone. He's got like all of two reels on his finsa account, which only he and maybe two people will see."

Paramount CEO David Ellison promises 'no monopoly' amid bid for Warner Bros; Donald Trump vows to stay out of deal



window and HBO's independent functioning. The letter is to increase his chances to win the bidding war, as Netflix has already sweetened the deal by moving to an all-cash offer. On the other hand, David has his father, Larry Ellison, and several sovereign wealth funds from places like Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Abu Dhabi backing him.

US president Donald Trump and Oracle founder Larry Ellison have long been associated with each other. Just a few months ago reports came that Trump was leaning on his friend so that he could get his son David to make Rush Hour 4 with Brett Ratner. Even if Rush Hour 4 doesn't happen, Ratner got the chance to helm the Melania Trump documentary. This close association with Paramount has made people question Trump's potential involvement in the deal. The president has spoken up now and clarified to NBC News that he "hasn't been involved." This is the complete opposite of what he said in December, after Paramount offered \$83 billion to Warner Bros. Now he is saying that he has been contacted by both sides. "I guess I'm considered to be a very strong president. I've been called by both sides. It's the two sides, but I've decided I shouldn't be involved. The Justice Department will handle it."

Rajasekhar plays 'Bullet' Sunil in Sharwanand's 'Biker'

Hyderabad: The makers of director Abhilash Reddy Kankara's high-octane sports-family drama 'Biker', featuring actor Sharwanand in the lead, have now disclosed that well known actor Rajasekhar plays a character called 'Bullet' Sunil in the eagerly awaited sports film. The disclosure came by way of a glimpse video that the makers chose to release on the occasion of Rajasekhar's birthday. The glimpse video opens with a voiceover. Former motocross racer Sunil – widely known as

The whole of Hollywood has been holding its breath ever since Paramount put in a hostile bid for Warner Bros Discovery. The other big dog in the fight is Netflix, who are also trying to acquire the vast library of content owned by WB. The obvious concern with any of these is how the illusion of choice will get even worse. To put some minds at ease or strengthen his company's position, Paramount CEO David Ellison has voiced his intentions in an open letter to the creative community.

WB going to Paramount will also mean that the news outlet CNN would come under the control of basically the opposite camp. It's not exactly democratically healthy for multiple nationwide news corporations to be owned by the same person. Everyone fears that Paramount will monopolise news, movies and more, but David has promised that he wishes to do no such thing.

He wrote in the letter that the audience is better served by "greater choice – not less – and by a marketplace that encourages the full spectrum of filmmaking, content creation, and theatrical exhibition, not one that eliminates meaningful competition by creating a monopolistic or dominant entity." David has also committed to 30 theatrical releases each year, while ensuring that the market retains its competitive nature. David Ellison has made several other commitments regarding the deal, such as the theatre-to-OTT