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## Malkajgiri Cybercrime officials nab 11 persons in a week

Hyderabad: The Malkajgiri Cybercrime Police solved seven cases and arrested 11 persons during the first week of February as part of a focused crackdown on online frauds.

The cases revealed a pan-India network of offenders involved in investment scams, digital arrest fraud, online betting and part-time job frauds. Police said four cases pertained to investment fraud, while one case each involved digital arrest fraud, online gaming/betting fraud and part-time job fraud. Several arrested persons were identified as mule account holders and account procurers who facilitated the transfer of cheated money.



## CM Revanth Reddy Signals Congress Confidence at Parigi Rally, Rs 567 Crore Cheque to Women's Groups

Hyderabad, Feb 7

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy on Saturday said that public support for the Congress party is growing steadily ahead of the municipal elections scheduled on February 11, after addressing a large public meeting in Parigi Assembly constituency of the erstwhile Rangareddy district under the Praja Palana – Pragati Bata programme. Sharing his message on X, the Chief Minister said the response at the Parigi public meeting clearly showed that people are ready to vote for the Congress hand symbol and ensure the party's victory.

Revanth Reddy said the enthusiasm of the people in Parigi reflected strong confidence in the

Congress government's development and welfare agenda. He noted that the party is moving forward by balancing development and welfare together, making its success inevitable in the upcoming civic polls.

He added that women, dressed in Indiramma sarees, are emerging as proud symbols of Telangana self-respect and will play a decisive role in the Congress victory.

A major highlight of the Praja Palana – Pragati Bata meeting in Parigi was the emphasis on women's economic empowerment. As part of this initiative, ₹567 crore was distributed as a cheque to district-level women's associations.

## Class 12 student slaps teacher over late-arrival reprimand in Gujarat's Panchmahal

Panchmahal (Gujarat): A mild reprimand for arriving late for a Class 12 preliminary test triggered an outburst of anger in a student who allegedly slapped the woman invigilator, for "daring" to question his behaviour in Panchmahal district.

Later, the student returned to the premises of the school with his father and a group of people, and allegedly threatened to harm the teacher who lives alone, police said. Amid an outrage after CCTV footage of the January 24 slapping incident went viral, police paraded the accused in public, an official said.

## We Are in Power and We Will Deliver Development: Ministers Assure

Second Phase of Indiramma Housing Scheme After Ugadi



“P. S. ASHOKAN” KARIMNAGAR BUREAU. “State Ministers Tummala Nageswara Rao and Ponnam Prabhakar Goud, along with Jubilee Hills MLA Naveen Yadav and Huzurabad Constituency In-charge Vodithela Pranav, assured the public that since the Congress Party is in power, it is fully committed to demonstrating tangible development in municipalities across the state. “The leaders participated in a corner meeting held on Saturday at the DCMS Complex in the town. Addressing the gathering, they stated that within 48 hours of assuming office, the Congress government implemented key welfare schemes, including free bus travel under the Mahalakshmi Scheme, 200 units of free electricity under the Gruha Lakshmi Scheme, Indiramma Houses to fulfil the dream of home ownership, and free distribution of fine rice to economically weaker sections. “They asserted that with the implementation of these landmark welfare initiatives, the Congress government has emerged as a national model in welfare governance. The ministers noted that the people are

expressing strong support for such a performance-driven government across the state in every election. “The leaders further stated that if the Congress flag is hoisted in the upcoming Huzurabad and Jammikunta municipal elections, the government is prepared to sanction additional development funds. They emphasised that securing the victory of Congress candidates is the final step required to accelerate development. “Praising Vodithela Pranav, they said that he has been working diligently as the constituency in-charge, while alleging that the sitting MLA has been indulging in trivial political theatrics and has emerged as an obstacle to Huzurabad's development. “Recalling their own service to the region in the past, the leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the overall development of the constituency. They assured the public that every promise made during the elections would be fulfilled within the next three years. “A large number of people from Huzurabad Municipality participated in the programme, reflecting strong public engagement and support.

## IND-Ustry boost as deal blueprint out

New Delhi, Feb 7

India and the US on Saturday unveiled a far-reaching framework for an interim trade agreement that marks a decisive reset in economic ties, sharply lowering tariffs, opening the world's largest market to Indian exporters and laying the groundwork for a full-fledged Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA).

Prime Minister Narendra Modi welcomed the agreement, calling it “great news for India and the US”, and thanked President Donald Trump for his “personal commitment to robust ties” between the two countries. He said the framework reflected the growing “depth, trust and dynamism” of the India-US partnership.

“This framework strengthens Make in India by opening new opportunities for our hardworking farmers, entrepreneurs, MSMEs, start-up innovators and fishermen. It will generate large-scale employment for women and youngsters, deepen investment and technology partnerships, strengthen resilient supply chains and contribute to global growth,” the Prime Minister said.

According to a joint statement issued by both sides, India has expressed its intention to purchase \$500 billion of US energy products, aircraft and aircraft parts, precious metals, technology products and coking coal over the next five years.

The joint statement outlines reciprocal and “balanced” market access commitments that are expected to deliver immediate gains for the Indian industry, MSMEs, farmers and fishermen, while deepening supply chain integration and cooperation in technology and investment.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said the trade agreement would give Indian exporters unprecedented access to the \$30 trillion US economy. “About \$44 billion worth of Indian exports will enter the US market at zero reciprocal tariffs in the first phase,” he said, adding that once US President Trump signed the Executive Order, reciprocal tariffs on most Indian goods would be reduced to 18 per cent from the current levels of up to 50 per cent.

The tariff reduction, Goyal said, would provide an immediate boost to labour-intensive sectors such as textiles, apparel, leather and footwear, while creating lakhs of new jobs, particularly for women and youth. “This is a very fair, equitable and balanced agreement. It opens massive opportunities for MSMEs, farmers, fishermen and India's young workforce,” he said.



## BRS–BJP in a Secret Pact for Survival, Not Victory: Minister Duddilla Sridhar Babu

“P. S. ASHOKAN” KARIMNAGAR BUREAU. “State Minister for IT, Industries, and Legislative Affairs, Duddilla Sridhar Babu, asserted that the Indian National Congress would decisively secure a majority of divisions along with the Mayor's post in the upcoming Karimnagar Municipal Corporation elections. “The Minister was addressing a public meeting at Algunur village, under the 8th Division of Karimnagar Municipal Corporation, where he participated as the chief guest in the election campaign organised in support of Congress Division candidate Gopu Malla Reddy. “Addressing the gathering, Sridhar Babu stated that survey reports clearly indicate Congress candidates are poised to win in 40–45 divisions, making the defeat of the BRS and BJP inevitable. Realising their impending loss, he alleged, both parties are now struggling merely for political survival rather than electoral victory. “He strongly criticised the BRS and BJP, accusing them of entering into a secret and opportunistic alliance despite their ideological differences, solely for electoral gains. “These two parties are partners in deception,” he remarked, warning voters that placing trust in them would only lead to disappointment. “The Minister further alleged that development was completely neglected during the ten-year BRS rule, asserting that meaningful progress is possible only under Congress governance. He highlighted that the Congress government is implementing multiple welfare schemes with a strong focus on the poor and marginalised sections. “Criticising the previ-

ous BRS regime, he said it failed even to issue new ration cards. In contrast, the Congress government not only introduced new ration cards but also enabled the inclusion of eligible names. He noted that fine rice is being distributed instead of coarse rice, ensuring food security for the poor. “The Minister listed several welfare initiatives, including free bus travel for women, free electricity up to 200 units, and LPG cylinders at ₹500. He also stated that while the previous government failed to provide loans at subsidised interest rates, the Congress government has already disbursed interest-free loans on four occasions. “He added that the government is fulfilling the dream of home ownership by sanctioning Indiramma houses to all eligible beneficiaries. Highlighting employment initiatives, Sridhar Babu criticised the previous government for failing to provide jobs to educated youth. He said the current government has prioritised employment generation and has already conducted Group-1, Group-2, Group-3, and Group-4 examinations, initiating recruitment processes. “Calling upon the people of Algunur, he urged them to ensure a resounding victory for Congress candidate Gopu Malla Reddy, assuring that a special development plan would be prepared for Algunur. He also promised to transform the Algunur crossroads into a model junction. “Manakondur MLA Dr. Kavvappalli Satyanarayana appealed to voters to elect Gopu Malla Reddy as Corporator, describing him as a leader who is approachable and committed to public service. He assured full cooperation and priority funding for Algunur's development if Malla Reddy is elected. “District Library

Organisation Chairman Sattu Mallesh accused the BJP of habitually creating divisions based on caste and religion during elections and warned voters to remain vigilant. He alleged that the previous BRS government converted a prosperous state into a debt-ridden one, plundering public resources instead of serving the people. “Former MLA Areppalli Mohan stated that the BRS regime weakened public institutions instead of strengthening them. He highlighted the Congress government's efforts to empower women's self-help groups by waiving pending dues and providing interest-free loans. He also criticised the previous government for denying even basic updates to ration cards. “Dr. Kavvappalli Anuradha, MLA's spouse and Managing Director of Ankit Multi-Speciality Hospitals, described Gopu Malla Reddy as a leader who rose from a humble farming background and possesses a deep commitment to village development and public welfare. She praised his integrity, determination, and selflessness, stating that leaders of his calibre are rare in politics. “The programme was attended by SUDA Chairman Komatireddy Narendra Reddy, Congress Division candidate Gopu Malla Reddy, Division Congress President Thammanaveni Ramesh Yadav, Mandal Congress President Bandari Ramesh, former Corporator Salla Ravinder, and several senior Congress leaders, party workers, and supporters.



# Indian Chronicle

English Daily

## 16th Finance Commission's balancing act

The 16th Finance Commission, whose report was recently accepted by the Union Cabinet, has managed to strike a fine balance between the imperatives of maintaining national equity and rewarding the performing States. Though it has not fully met the fiscal demands of the States, particularly the progressive and industrialised ones, a sincere attempt has been made to redefine the criteria for devolution of central taxes. Some of the changes introduced by the Commission, chaired by Arvind Panagariya, in the criteria for horizontal devolution are a welcome development. Significant among them is the inclusion of a State's contribution to national GDP as a new factor in the horizontal devolution formula. This parameter has been given a weight of 10%. This should cheer up the prosperous and progressive States in the South and the West. The other modifications are: Removal of the 2.5% weightage given to States' tax efforts; increasing the weightage given to population by 2.5 percentage points; reduction in the weightage given to area, demographic performance, and per capita GSDP distance. Per capita GSDP distance measures how far a State's income level falls below a benchmark set by the average of the top three richest States, helping poorer States get more funds. It has been a legitimate concern of the southern States that they were treated unfairly in fixing the share from the divisible pool of central taxes. Despite their credible performance on various parameters, including controlling population, economic progress, and making significant contributions to the country's growth, they were meted out a raw deal. The spirit of fiscal federalism, it was argued, was sought to be undermined by punishing the progressive and performing States while rewarding the poorly-governed ones. The declining share of States in real terms in the divisible pool of taxes, faulty implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime and restrictions on borrowings by the States are some of the issues that have created tensions in the Centre-State relations. On several occasions, the Finance Ministers from these States had argued that despite the 15th Finance Commission recommending that 41% of central taxes be devolved to States, the actual amount the States were receiving was only about 30% since the Centre was relying more on cesses and surcharges, which are not shared with States. Hopefully, this situation will ease in the future with the tweak, which resulted in increasing the share for the southern states to 17%, compared to 15.8% under the 15th Finance Commission period. Overall, the 16th FC has retained the States' share in the divisible pool at 41%. This is the same as the share recommended by the previous Commission. Along with the southern States, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Punjab, and Jharkhand will get an increased share. However, States like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan have seen a decline.

## Sri Mallikarjuna Swamy Temple Committee Takes Oath; Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy Attends

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 7 (Indian Chronicle):”The oath-taking ceremony of the newly formed committee of Sri Mallikarjuna Swamy Temple, located in Old Ramamthapur, was held on Saturday. Uppal Assembly Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy attended the programme as the chief guest. On this occasion, Shaga Sridhar took oath as the Chairman of the temple committee, while Chittikala



Krishna, Mudigonda Arun Sai, Shekhar Panthulu, Seemakandla Jangaiah, Sirish Goud, Kasarella Shekhar Reddy, and Menga Shobha were sworn in as members. Temple Executive Officer Surender, Endowments Officer Praneeth, and senior Congress leaders Kandi Aagi Reddy, Mohammed Toufiq, Rafiq, Medipally Vishal Reddy, Nani Raji Reddy, Vallapu Srikanth Yadav, Kandi Sravan Reddy, Boddapalli Ravi, Jaleel Pasha, Samuel, Muthyalu Jangaiah, Muthyalu Babu, Peddiraju Sandeep Kumar, Panthuluri Bhaskar, Satish Goud, Sirish Goud, Vijay, K. Swamy, Kasim Goud, Nagamalliah, Kashamalla Shankar, Shankar Goud, Bestha Bhaskar, Chintu, Sachin, Saleem, Ram Raju, Nayim, Menga Ravi, Santosh, Pentaiah, Yadagiri Reddy, Janga Reddy, Sandhya Rani, Ambika, Gayatri, and several others attended the event.

## ICAR Board Member Dr. Bhaskar Naik Lauds ITDA Tribal Museum in Bhadrachalam



“Bhukya RanjithNaik, Bhadradi Kothagudem Bureau, February 7, Indian Chronicle:ICAR (Indian Coun-

cil of Agricultural Research) Board Member and Minister of Agriculture, Government of India, Dr. Bhaskar Naik, appreciated the efforts of ITDA Project Officer B. Rahul for conceptualizing and developing a Tribal Museum that vividly reflects the culture, traditions, customs, practices, and indigenous art forms of tribal communities, making it both informative and attractive to tourists.”

“Dr. Naik visited the Tribal Museum located in the ITDA premises after offering prayers at the Sri Sita Ramachandra Swamy Temple in Bhadrachalam along with his family members. During his visit, he carefully observed the exhibits showcasing various aspects

of tribal life, including traditional tools, artifacts, paintings, and cultural representations.”

“Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Naik stated that he had been deputed from New Delhi

## Grand Godavari River Harathi to Be Held at Bhadrachalam on February 8

“Bhukya RanjithNaik, Bhadradi kothagudem Bureau, February 7, Indian Chronicle:”Bhadradi Kothagudem District Collector Jitesh V. Patil announced that the Godavari River Harathi will be conducted in a grand manner on Sunday, February 8, at the sacred bathing ghats of the Godavari River in the holy town of Bhadrachalam.”

“In a statement issued on Saturday, the Collector said that the Harathi programme will take place from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at the Sri Sita Ramachandra Swamy Temple town. He invited not only the devotees of Bhadrachalam but also residents of the entire district and all interested visitors to participate in the spiritual event.”

“The district administration has made necessary arrangements to ensure the smooth conduct of the programme and to facilitate devotees attending the river ritual.”



## “Online Applications Invited for Journalists’ Accreditation Cards for 2026–28



“Bhukya RanjithNaik, Bhadradi kothagudem Bureau, February 7, Indian Chronicle:”District Accreditation Committee Chairman and Bhadradi Kothagudem

District Collector Jitesh V. Patil has announced that online applications are being invited for the issuance of journalists’ accreditation cards for the period 2026–2028 under the aegis of the Department of Information and Public Relations (I&PR). “In a statement, the Collector said that the validity of the existing accreditation cards will expire on February 28. Eligible journalists will therefore be issued new accreditation cards for the upcoming term.”

“For district-level accreditation cards, media managements have been instructed to submit the list of their journalists to the District Public Relations Officer (DPRO). Journalists whose names are forwarded by their respective media organizations must apply online through the official website of the Department of Information and Public Relations at <http://i&pr.telangana.gov.in>. “Online applications at the district level will be accepted from February 9 onwards. The Collector urged all eligible journalists to make use of this opportunity and submit their applications within the stipulated time.”

## Traffic Police Tighten Safety Measures at Accident Prone Junction in Bhadrachalam

“Bhukya RanjithNaik, Bhadradi kothagudem Bureau, February 7, Indian Chronicle:”In view of frequent road accidents near the Potti Sriramulu statue junction close to Udaya Bhaskar Theatre in Bhadrachalam town, the Bhadrachalam Traffic Police have initiated comprehensive safety measures to prevent further mishaps. The proactive steps taken in the interest of public safety have drawn appreciation from local residents.”

“Bhadrachalam is home to the renowned Sri Sita Ramachandra Swamy Temple and witnesses the arrival of thousands of devotees every day. The influx increases significantly during weekends, festivals and special religious occasions. The town also serves as a junction connecting four states Telangana Andhra Pradesh Chhattisgarh and Odisha resulting in heavy vehicular movement throughout the day. Being a gateway to the agency areas, the route regularly experiences traffic from government and private buses goods carriers and other vehicles.”

“Traffic authorities observed that the junction near Udaya Bhaskar Theatre had become accident prone due to poor visibility at the curve overspeeding and inadequate traffic regulation. To address the issue and ensure the safety of devotees and commuters officials promptly implemented corrective measures.”

“The measures include installation of clear warning signboards speed limit indicators reflective road markings for better night visibility and placement of road dividers where necessary. Traffic personnel have been deployed during peak hours and CCTV surveillance has been strengthened to monitor violations. Strict action is being taken against overspeeding and violation of traffic rules.”

“Residents and devotees have welcomed the initiative stating that the measures will help reduce accidents and ensure smoother move-



ment of vehicles especially for pilgrims visiting the temple. Traffic officials have appealed to motorists to strictly follow traffic rules and avoid rash and negligent driving in the interest of public safety.”

## ZP Girls High School, Bhadrachalam Celebrates Annual Day with Grandeur



“Bhukya RanjithNaik, Bhadrachalam, were held in a grand manner under the chairmanship of Tota Malla Rama. The Headmistress presented the school's annual report, highlighting the institution's achievements and progress over the past year. The school, which has a proud history of 60 years, has shaped the future of many students and earned a good reputation in the district. The Headmistress stated that the school recorded an impressive pass percentage in the SSC examinations last year. She also noted that six students were selected in the NMMS examination, reflecting the academic standards of the institution. Bhadrachalam MLA Tellam Venkata Rao attended the programme as the chief guest. Addressing the gathering, he said the school is progressing steadily on the path of development and that infrastructure facilities are being improved with the support of donors. He appreciated the school's academic performance and encouraged students to strive for higher goals through discipline and dedication. District Educational Officer Nagalakshmi, speaking on the occasion, advised students to excel not only in academics but also in values and character. She appreciated the donors for their generous contributions and expressed hope for continued support in the future. She also commended the school's academic activities. On the occasion, Y. Hasini, who secured 569 marks in the SSC examination, was awarded



a cash prize of Rs 10,116 by Prasad Raju. Gnyana Vikasini, who secured second place, received Rs 5,016. Students who stood first in their respective classes were presented with mementos and cash prizes amounting to Rs 35,000 in total. Among those present were Amma Adarsha School Committee Chairperson Tammisetti Lakshmi, Bhadrachalam SI Swapna, Ramakrishna, Lions Club President Kamala Rajasekhar, Rotary Club President Varalakshmi, Vasavi Club President Charugulla Srinivasa Rao, Bhadrachalam Mahila Samiti Vice President Kiran Singh, and representatives of ITC PSPD Sarapaka. Cultural performances presented by the students entertained the audience. Teachers, parents, and students participated in large numbers, making the event a grand success.

## Rs 19 Crore Sanctioned for Development Works in Uppal Bhagath Layout

Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy hands over fund sanction letters to HMDA Layout residents



“Development works worth ₹19 crore have been sanctioned for the HMDA Layout in Uppal Bhagath. The fund sanction letters were distributed to local residents by Uppal Corporator Mandumula Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy, along with Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Parameshwar Reddy, on Saturday. Details of Sanctioned Works: ₹29.80 crore for the construction of a Sports Complex in the layout. ₹6 crore for the construction of a Community Centre building and compound wall for both the community centre and the sports complex. This also includes development of an open gym, children's play area, watchman room, green-

ery, and other allied works. ₹3.10 crore for the construction of compound walls to protect vacant plots in the layout. Speaking on the occasion, Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy stated that these development works would significantly improve civic amenities and enhance the quality of life for residents of the HMDA Layout.”

The programme was attended by Srinivas Rao, Gopal Reddy, Ravinder Reddy, Eega Santosh Mudhiraj, Poojala Prabhakar, Sihari, Chandrasekhar Reddy, Shiva Prasad Rao, Balayya, Sridhar Reddy, Raju, Vinod, Saptagiri Reddy, Som Jangaiah, Gorla Rajender, Som Bal Raj, and several others.

## United Municipal Campaign in Aswaraopet: BRS-TDP Rallies Create a Stir

“Aswaraopet Battle: The Car-Bicycle Alliance is Surging Ahead!” “S Naga Manoj Kumar, Aswaraopet constituency, Feb 08, Indian Chronicle: - Politics has heated up in Aswaraopet during the municipal elections. Former MLA Mecha Nageswara Rao, former MPP Jallipalli Sriramamoorthy, Baragada Krishna, Chamber of Commerce President Sanka Prasad, town party president Satyavarapu Sampoorna, mandal leaders Jupalli Ramarao, Padmaja, Kasani Chandramohan, Nani, Katram Swamy Dora, Vaggela Pooja, Mohan Reddy, Anantha Mallikarjuna Rao, Chairman candidate Kasani Naga Sesha Padma, Naram Raja Shekhar, Moturi Mohan, Jeevana Rao, Soyam Veerabhadram, Akhil, Shettipalli Raghuram, Somani Ramesh, and other leaders and activists of both parties, along with the 22 ward councilor candidates contesting in the Aswaraopet Municipality with the support of BRS and TDP, conducted a shop-to-shop campaign on the main road of Aswaraopet, aiming for victory. They are jointly going door-to-door, urging people to elect their candidates for development. This campaign, which focuses on urban beautification and infrastructure development, is receiving strong support from the local people. Key leaders are touring the wards and appealing to the voters.



## Free Medical Camp Organised by Janahita and KIMS Foundation



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 7 (Indian Chronicle): “A free medical camp was organised on a large scale under the joint auspices of Janahita Seva Trust and KIMS Foundation at the premises of Sri Rama Sahita Satyanarayana Swamy Temple. The camp was successfully conducted with the cooperation of members of the Ramanthapur Satyanarayana RSS Shakha. Ten doctors from various medical specialisations participated in the camp and provided medical services to the public. Free medicines were distributed to those in need. The camp proved highly beneficial, especially for the poor and underprivileged sections of society. More than 300 people availed themselves of medical services during the camp. Speaking on the occasion, Corporator Bandaru Srivani Venkata Rao said that public health is a great asset and such service-oriented programmes are essential for society. She appreciated the representatives of Janahita Seva Trust and KIMS Foundation for standing by the poor and rendering selfless service, and congratulated everyone who contributed to the success of the camp. Senior leaders Mutineni Jagadish, Dr. Sunil, State BJP Medical Cell Co-Convenor, Kumaraswamy, and RSS Shakha members Naganna, Satyanarayana Reddy, Gopal Reddy, Sanjay, Shyam, Hari Prasad, Bhavani Prasad, Jagan Mohan, Purushottam, Damu, Satyanarayana, J. Vikram, B. Narasinga Rao, and others participated in the programme.

## Suresh Elected as President of Ramanthapur Press Club

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 7 (Indian Chronicle): “The newly elected executive committee of the Ramanthapur Press Club—covering Ramanthapur, Venkat Reddy Nagar, and Habsiguda—was unanimously elected on Saturday. Dhupati Suresh was elected as President, A. Vijayreddy as Executive President, M. Ashok as Vice President, M.D. Zakaria as General Secretary, P. Narsimulu as Secretary, Yadagiri Goud as Treasurer, and Muthyam Reddy, K. Raju, and Shaik Pasha as Executive Committee Members. Speaking on the occasion, President Suresh stated that the Press Club would function with a strong commitment to the values of journalism, upholding ethics and integrity. He also emphasized that the club would actively participate in social service activities.

“Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis Welcomed at Kagaznagar During Telangana Municipal Election Campaign

“Indian Chronicle” kumram bheem, Asifabad District Report, Jade Srinivas, February 07. “As part of the Telangana Municipal Election campaign, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis visited Kagaznagar as the chief guest for the municipal election campaign. Upon his arrival at the Elephant Landing, he was warmly welcomed by Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM) State Official Spokesperson Elagati Suchith, who extended a cordial reception and greeting. The visit is expected to strengthen the BJP's campaign in the Kagaznagar Municipal elections and energize party workers and supporters in the region.



Government of Telangana Revenue Department District Collector, Department of Land Acquisition Adilabad Form – VI (Primary Notification)						
(Under Section 11(1) of the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (Central Act 30/2013) and State Rule 19(1))						
Collector File No.: G1/328/2017 Date: 29.01.2026						
RDO File No.: B/109/2017 Date: 29.01.2026						
Sl. No.	Survey No.	Beat No.	Survey No.	Patta/ Metta Extent	Name of the Patta/ Metta Holder	Trees/ Borewell/ etc.
1	2/C/1		1.03	Patta 0.06	Kopula Peddachanna, S/o Ashiana	None
2		2/C/1		Patta Metta 0.15	Polla Gangamma, W/o Ashiana	K. Rama, S/o Ashiana
3	2/2	2/D/2		Patta Metta 0.22	Koppula Gangu Bai, W/o Narasimlu/Puruse	Own
4	14/2	14/G/2	0.03	Patta Metta 0.03	Palla Ramesh @ Ramayya, S/o Chandranna	Own
5	15/B/1		2.17	Patta Metta 1.10	Kurma Bhumma, S/o Asha Reddy	Own
6		15/D/1		Patta Metta 1.07	Annadham Somaji, S/o Gangadharayya	Own
7	16/2	16/B/2	5.23	Patta Metta 5.23	Kunta Pochu Bai, W/o Shiva Reddy	Own
8		19/B/1		Patta Metta 1.02	Badugu Ashok, S/o Potanna	Own
9		19/B/1		Patta Metta 1.12	Badugu Pochu Reddy, S/o Chinnana	Badugu, Arok, S/o Potanna
10	19/2	19/B/2	5.08	Patta Metta 1.12	Badugu Pochu Reddy, S/o Chinnana	Own
11		19/A		Patta Metta 0.31	Marsetti Venkati & Bolisetti Praveen Kumar (Joint Patta)	Arsetti Venkati, S/o Ramulu
12				Patta Metta 0.31		
13	24/2	24/A	0.14	Patta Metta 0.14	Palla Kishu, S/o Naranna	Own
14		24/A/3		Patta Metta 1.07	Poddukuri Harinath, S/o Krishna Reddy	Own
15		26/1	3.30	Patta Metta 1.20	Kurma Pentayya, S/o Shekanna	Fencing Borewell 7.5 HP Motor/ Pipeline
16		26/2		Patta Metta 1.03	Kurma Gangamma @ Gauramma, W/o Devayya	Own
17		55/A/2/1		Patta Metta 0.07	Poddukuri Deva Reddy, S/o Kista Reddy	Own
18	55/2	55/B/1	4.14	Patta Metta 1.38	Pasupu Swaroopa, W/o Dilip Reddy	Own
19		55/C/2		Patta Metta 2.02	Koppula Bhumka, W/o Ashok Reddy	Own
20		55/B/3		Patta Metta 0.07	Poddukuri Kishanna, S/o Kishanna	Own
Total Extent				22.32		

This notification is issued to inform all concerned persons in accordance with Section 11(1) of the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013.

Chapter-II and III of the Social Impact Assessment for the construction of the Inter-State Lower Penganga Project are not applicable to this proposal.

The land plan can be inspected at the office of the District Collector and the Revenue Divisional Officer on any working day during working hours. Subsequently, in the process of the Telangana Government/Collector and the concerned government deciding how much land to acquire, under Section 12, the officers, employees, and workers working under them are permitted to enter any place on the land mentioned above, conduct surveys, measure the land holdings, excavate the land or bore to determine the soil type, and take other necessary actions.

According to Section 11(4), no one shall undertake any transactions/transfers etc. related to the lands mentioned in this notification from the date of issuance of the preliminary notification without the permission of the Special Collector.

According to Section 15, if any person having any interest in the lands mentioned above has any objections to the land acquisition after the issuance of this preliminary notification, such persons may submit their objections in writing to the Land Acquisition Officer within sixty (60) days from the date of issuance of this notification.

Revenue Divisional Officer and Addl. Collector District Collector Land Acquisition Officer, Adilabad Adilabad Adilabad

DIPR RO No: 1109/LA-PP/ADVT/Pub/2025-26

## Uppal Police Solve Daytime House Burglary Case Within 24 Hours; Gold and Silver Worth Rs 14.35 Lakh Recovered



dent of Vasavi Nagar, Ramanthapur. He was arrested from his residence on Friday evening. "During interrogation, it was revealed that the accused targeted locked houses during daytime and committed burglaries by breaking doors and almirahs using iron rods. Police stated that the accused is a habitual offender and had earlier been involved in several house burglary cases in areas including Shabad, Shadnagar, Narsing, and Amberpet, for which he had previously served jail terms." The successful detection of the case was carried out under the supervision of Police Commissioner Avinash Mohanty, with guidance from Uppal DCP K. Suresh Kumar, DCP (Crimes) K. Guna Shekhar, Additional DCP N. Venkata Ramana, and ACP Y. Venkat Reddy. Inspector K. Bhaskar, Y. Rama Linga Reddy, DI Uppal, DS1 Rajniker, ASI Mahender, HC Srinivas, and PC Jangaiah of Uppal Police Station crime staff played a key role in the investigation. The accused has been remanded to judicial custody, and further investigation is underway.

...KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 7 (Indian Chronicle): "Uppal Police successfully cracked a daytime house burglary case within 24 hours and arrested the accused, recovering gold and silver ornaments worth approximately ₹14,35,000." Addressing the media at Uppal Police Station on Saturday, ACP Venkat Reddy disclosed the details of the case. The incident occurred in the Ramanthapur area under Uppal Police Station limits. An unidentified person broke into the house of Gunti Mallamma during daytime hours, broke open the almirah, and stole 85 grams of gold ornaments and 60 tolas of silver articles. Following a complaint, a case was registered on February 5. Acting on credible information, police identified the accused as Talla Raghavender alias Srinivas Goud alias Dakkali Ramesh Srinu (36), a resi-

## Cantonment MLA Sri Ganesh participated in the Mancherial Municipal Corporation election campaign



...Secunderabad Cantonment, February 7 (Indian Chronicle): "The Mancherial Municipal Corporation election campaign has gained momentum. In this context, Cantonment MLA Sri Ganesh, acting as the Mancherial Congress Party coordinator, is actively campaigning. As part of this, on Saturday, he conducted a padayatra (foot

## MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy Extends Birthday Greetings to Bannala Praveen Mudiraj



sincere gratitude to the people of Chilkanagar Division for reposing faith in his family and electing his wife, Corporator Bannala Geetha, for a second term. He stated that over the past five years, development works worth approximately ₹115 crore were undertaken in the division. He assured the public that every promise made to the residents of bastis and colonies would be fulfilled 100 percent. He also thanked everyone who supported and stood by them over the last five years. Several TRS (BRS) party family members participated in the programme in large numbers.

## District-Level CM Cup Sports Competitions from February 9

...Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), February 7, "District-level sports competitions under the CM Cup – 2025 will commence from February 9, according to the District Youth and Sports Officer. In an official statement, the officer said that as part of the second phase of the CM Cup – 2025, competitions at the village, mandal, and constituency levels have already been completed, and the district-level events will now be conducted. "Athletes who were selected at the mandal level, as well as those who have applied online, have been advised to contact the respective venue in-charges of their events for further details. "Competitions will be held in various disciplines including karate, wushu, taekwondo, badminton, powerlifting, swimming, lawn tennis, ball badminton, sepak takraw, kho-kho, kabaddi, volleyball, athletics, football, yoga, chess, carroms, handball, netball, hockey, kickboxing, and other sports. "Participants are instructed to report on time with their Aadhaar card and a copy of their online birth certificate application.



...KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 7 (Indian Chronicle): "Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy extended birthday greetings to BRS Party State leader Bannala Praveen Mudiraj on the occasion of his birthday. "As part of the celebrations, a birthday programme was organised at the open ground opposite Dolphin Swimming Pool in the division. Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy, along with Uppal Press Club President Vaddepalli Kishore and committee members, Corporator Prabhudas, State leaders Sai Jen Shekhar and Gandham Nageshwar Rao, along with several BRS party leaders from the constituency, conveyed their heartfelt wishes to Bannala Praveen Mudiraj. "Leaders from various colonies, colony presidents and secretaries, committee members, basti residents, BRS party leaders and representatives of other political parties participated in large numbers and extended their greetings. "Addressing the gathering, Bannala Praveen Mudiraj expressed his

## The attack on former minister Mallareddy is not right, said MLA K.P. Vivekananda

...Secunderabad Cantonment, February 7 (Indian Chronicle): "Kutubullapur MLA K.P. Vivekananda

stated that the attempt to attack former minister Mallareddy, the attack on his car with eggs, and the attacks by Congress leaders on BRS leaders are not acceptable and are undemocratic. In Medchal district's Aliabad municipality, clashes occurred between BRS and Congress factions. During this incident, Congress workers attacked BRS leaders and former minister and Medchal MLA Mallareddy's car with eggs. Following this, on Saturday morning, Kutubullapur MLA K.P. Vivekananda visited Mallareddy's residence in Bowenpally to inquire about his well-being and the incident. On this occasion, MLA K.P. Vivekananda said... He stated that attacking former minister and current Medchal MLA Mallareddy and beating BRS leaders is not appropriate for the Congress party. He said that elections are about winning the people's approval and securing votes honestly in the public arena, and that creating such disturbances and frightening the people to win elections is not right. He added that the people are observing everything. He alleged that Congress leaders are doing this because they cannot tolerate the sup-



port that the BRS party is receiving from the people. Later, Mallareddy stated that he had met with councilors at a house in Lal Gadi Malakpet on Friday in the context of the municipal elections. He said that at that time, Congress workers were conducting their campaign with the DJ sound turned up very loud. When their party workers requested them to lower the volume, the Congress members refused and stopped their vehicle there. He stated that their workers then removed the DJ's power cord, stopping the sound. Following this, a large number of Congress supporters arrived and violently attacked their workers, and also attacked his car with eggs. Mallareddy alleged that Congress leaders were carrying out these attacks because they could not tolerate the support the BRS party was receiving from the public.

## Women Should Take Tyagamurti Ramabai as an Ideal: Bhante Bharadwaj



...Indian Chronicle" kumram bheem, Asifabad District Report, February 7. "Bhante Bharadwaj, a Buddhist religious leader, said that women should take Tyagamurti Ramabai as their role model. He was speaking as the chief guest at the 128th birth anniversary celebrations of Ramabai, held on Saturday at the Jetavan Buddha Vihar in the mandal headquarters. "Addressing the gathering, Bhante Bharadwaj highlighted the immense sacrifices made by Ramabai in supporting Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's education. He stated that despite facing severe personal hardships, including the loss of four children, Ramabai ensured that there were no obstacles to Ambedkar's studies and responsibly managed the family. Her dedication and sacri-

fice played a crucial role in Dr. Ambedkar emerging as the chief architect of the Indian Constitution, he said. "Earlier, floral tributes were paid to the portrait of Ramabai by Indian Buddhist Mahasabha District President Ashok Mahulkar and leaders of Ambedkar associations. This was followed by the chanting of Buddha Vandana. The programme was attended by Samata Sainik Dal District President Durgam Sandeep, Ramabai Women's Mandali President Gangubai, Indian Buddhist Mahasabha Mandal President Durgam Durgaji, General Secretary Vijay Upre, Vice Presidents Durgam Sunil Kumar and Poole, Sahu Ambedkar Buddha Bhumi Chairman Saroj, and leaders Roshan, Rajeshwar, Arun, Ramesh, Manoj, Totapattu, along with a large number of women and youth.

## The minimum wage for Cantonment workers should be Rs. 26,000.

...Secunderabad Cantonment, February 7 (Indian Chronicle): "AITUC State Deputy General Secretary M. Narasimha demanded that the working class participate in large numbers and make the nationwide general strike on December 12th a success, in protest against the four labor codes introduced by the Central Government. On Saturday, a strike poster was released at Picket Garden under the auspices of the Secunderabad Cantonment Board Contract Workers Union. Speaking on this occasion, Narasimha demanded that the minimum wage for contract workers be Rs. 26,000, that the Iron Fire System introduced by the Central Government be abolished, and that bonus and festival holidays be implemented for Cantonment Board contract workers. "He said that the Central Government has introduced the current labor codes in a way that subjects workers to exploitation, and called upon the working class to prepare for struggles against it. He stated that it is a grave injustice to abolish the eight-hour workday system, which the working class fought for and achieved, and to introduce changes in the new law that allow for working up to 12 hours. He further stated that these labor codes are designed to snatch away the right to strike and the right to form unions, which are rights earned by the workers, and that the working class will not allow these labor codes. In this program, a large number of Secunderabad Cantonment Board contract workers participated and raised slogans demanding a minimum wage of Rs. 26,000 for workers, implementation of festival, national, and earned holidays, and payment of bonuses.



## G. Srivalli Reddy Appointed as Telangana Executive Member of Telangana Human Rights Justice Forum



...KISHORE, Hyderabad, February 7 (Indian Chronicle): "The Telangana Human Rights Justice Forum, which has been actively working across the state of Telangana, has appointed G. Srivalli Reddy as a Telangana Executive Member, according to an official statement released by the Forum's Chairperson, Dr. Vyasa Bhakti Srivani. "Speaking on the occasion of her appointment, G. Srivalli Reddy expressed her gratitude to Chairperson Dr. Vyasa Bhakti Srivani for placing trust in her and assigning this responsibility. She also thanked Joint Secretary Atli Renuka for her efforts in facilitating the appointment. "Srivalli Reddy stated that she would work to the best of her abilities for the protection of human rights and assured continuous efforts to stand by victims and ensure justice. She emphasized that the Forum would respond firmly whenever human rights violations occur and work with strong administrative commitment for the organization's development. "My appointment has increased my sense of social responsibility," she said, reaffirming her dedication to human rights advocacy through the Telangana Human Rights Justice Forum. "On this occasion, trust members, local dignitaries, and social activists felicitated the newly appointed Executive Member, G. Srivalli Reddy, and extended their heartfelt congratulations.

## PGIMER-Sarangpur and Tribune Chowk flyovers to cut travel time in Chandigarh



GNS News Agency, Feb 7

After years of planning delays, court hurdles and rising costs, the Chandigarh Administration's long-awaited push to ease traffic congestion is beginning to move towards execution, with two major flyover projects — at PGIMER-Sarangpur and Tribune Chowk — emerging as the centrepieces of the city's mobility strategy. Both projects are aimed at decongesting some of the most traffic-heavy corridors in the city, where peak-hour snarls have become routine and travel times increasingly unpredictable. As per UT officials, the flyovers are designed to segregate through-traffic from local movement, a step expected to improve average vehicular speeds once operational. Tribune Chowk flyover: Closest to construction

The Tribune Chowk flyover, envisaged as a grade-separated junction to streamline traffic between Panchkula, the Industrial Area and central Chandigarh, has reached the near-final stage of tendering. The project has received final financial approval at a revised cost of approximately Rs 247 crore, reflecting escalation from the original 2019 estimate due to delays, litigation and rising input costs. According to officials, technical bids submitted by prospective contractors have already been evaluated, and the financial bids are expected to be opened shortly. The project will be executed under the engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) model, under which the selected

## Darjeeling to Diamond Harbour: Towns to get modernisation push

GNS News Agency, Feb 7

In a renewed push to develop urban infrastructure, Minister of State for Finance Chandrima Bhattacharya on Thursday announced plans to modernise at least 25 towns and cities. Presenting the interim Budget in the Assembly, Bhattacharya said that the government has decided to undertake holistic development of a number of cities of the state to make them into "business-friendly, environment-friendly and employment-friendly modern cities with all amenities of modern life and digital infrastructure".

"At present, such modernisation will be taken up for the cities of Howrah, Diamond Harbour, Bardhaman, Durgapur, Bolpur, Krishnanagar, Barasat, Raiganj, Siliguri, Baharampur, Malda, Kalyani, Srirampur, Andal, Bankura, Purulia, Digha, Medinipur, Jhargram, the NKDA (New Town Kolkata Development) area, Gangarampur, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Alipurduar, and Darjeeling," she said. According to her, the government will constitute a committee to explore how the project can be taken up "without adversely affecting the existing inhabitants of these cities". "The committee, after completion of survey work, will submit the report by the end of this year," she added. The minister said the modernisation of towns and cities across the state was being undertaken as the state has become a major destination for investment. "In investment, West Bengal has become a major destination for industry, manufacturing, tourism, services like IT & Data Centre, and logistic hubs. West Bengal has emerged as a major hub in steel, cement, railway coach, metro coach, and wagon production," she said.

According to her, destinations such as Siliguri,

## Haryana CM announces pay parity welfare package for jail warders, reforms for prison staff



GNS News Agency, Feb 7

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini Thursday announced a comprehensive package of financial incentives and career progression, financial incentives, and welfare measures for jail warders and head warders to improve working conditions and address service-related anomalies. "Under the new policy, jail warders will now be eligible for promotion to the post of Head Warden after completing 18 years of service. Jail warders and head warders will be entitled to allowances at par with police constables. Effective from the next financial year, the monthly ration allowance has been increased two-and-a-half times to Rs 1,500. The conveyance allowance has been raised from Rs 50 to Rs 720, while the uniform allowance has been enhanced to Rs 7,500," a statement quoting the Chief Minister said.

Saini made the announcements while addressing the first convocation parade ceremony of 116 newly trained officers and warders at the Jail Training Academy in Karnal. The CM said that officers and employees who receive the Correctional Service Medal will be granted a one-year extension in service. He said these reforms would improve the motivation and efficiency of prison personnel across the state. Congratulating the newly inducted Assistant Superintendents and Warders, Saini noted that the batch includes one woman Assistant Superintendent and eight women warders, which he described as a commendable step towards women's empowerment. Describing the prison system as a vital pillar of a democratic society, the chief minister said jails are not just places of punishment "but laboratories of reform, rehabilitation and human transformation". He said the government has taken several steps to modernise prisons, including digitisation of inmate records and the implementation of e-jail systems. To pro-

mote rehabilitation, skill development courses are being run for inmates and petrol pumps have been set up in eight prisons to provide employment opportunities. Saini added that a high-security prison for hardened criminals is in the final stage of construction at Rohtak. Appealing to newly recruited personnel, he urged them to uphold integrity, discipline and compassion, stressing that continuous learning and ethical conduct define an outstanding prison officer. Jails Minister Arvind Kumar Sharma said prison officers must balance firmness with sensitivity to ensure inmates emerge as better citizens. Director General of Prisons Alok Mittal said the training at the new academy is an important step towards the modernisation and professional efficiency of the department.

## Nabard projects Rs 3.67-lakh cr credit potential for Haryana, up 17% over last year

GNS News Agency, Feb 7

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini at the NABARD Seminar on Thursday. (Photo by Haryana government) Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini at the NABARD Seminar on Thursday. (Photo by Haryana government)

The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has projected a credit potential of Rs 3.67 lakh crore for Haryana in 2026-27, marking a 17 per cent increase over the previous year, Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini Thursday said.

Out of this, Rs 1.32 lakh crore has been earmarked for the agriculture sector and Rs 2.11 lakh crore for the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector.

Saini, who also released the NABARD State Focus Paper for the year 2026-27, said, "Rural prosperity is not possible unless agriculture is made profitable. We must put into practice the principles of 'more production with less land' and 'per drop – more crop'. Alongside credit facilities, infrastructure is equally important for rural development. Irrigation, storage, warehousing, rural roads, electricity and digital connectivity form the backbone of growth".

## Govt duty bound to carve out egalitarian society as preached by Guru Ravidas: Mann



GNS News Agency, Feb 7

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Thursday said his government is duty-bound to carve out an egalitarian society rooted in the timeless teachings of Guru Ravidas. "The Punjab government is duty bound to carve out an egalitarian society as preached by Sri Guru Ravidas Maharaj ji. To perpetuate the great legacy of Sri Guru Ravidas Maharaj ji, the Punjab government is organising a state-level function at Khurralgarh in Hoshiarpur district on February 6," Mann said.

He said the entire Punjab cabinet would join the congregation on February 6 during the state-level celebrations to mark the 649th 'Parkash Purab' of Guru Ravidas at Sri

Khurralgarh Sahib in Hoshiarpur. He also highlighted the world-class memorial constructed at Sri Khurralgarh Sahib at a cost of Rs 148 crore, and described it as the state government's humble tribute to Guru Ravidas's enduring legacy of equality, compassion and human dignity. Detailing the facilities at the memorial, Mann said it is equipped with a modern building with tourist facilities, multi-level parking, 'Minar-e-Begumpura', Sangat Hall, a state-of-the-art auditorium and other amenities. Guru Ravidas envisioned an ideal society where no one suffers any kind of discrimination or deprivation, he said, adding that the life, philosophy and teachings of the great guru continue to guide humanity. He said that Guru Ravidas gave the message of welfare of the entire humanity and equality of all sections of society, thereby laying the foundation for a society based on egalitarian values.

Describing Guru Ravidas as a towering spiritual figure, Mann said that he "taught us to lead a virtuous and noble life, and his teachings continue to inspire generations". The government has put in place extensive arrangements to mark the 649th Parkash Purab of Guru Ravidas, while simultaneously initiating year-long, state-wide preparations for the historic 650th Parkash Purab in 2027. A three-day state-level event has been organised at Sri Khurralgarh Sahib with large-scale participation of saints, spiritual leaders, culminating with the Bhog of Sri Akhand Path Sahib on February 6.

## Delhi court summons two police officers over death of man allegedly beaten, forced to sing National Anthem

GNS News Agency, Feb 7

Over five years after a 23-year-old Muslim youth died after allegedly being assaulted by a group of police personnel during the Northeast Delhi riots in 2020, a Delhi court on Wednesday summoned two officers after taking cognisance of the Central Bureau of Investigation's (CBI) chargesheet against them. "During the probe, evidence was collected by the Investigating Officer (IO), and on the basis of the investigation carried out, the present chargesheet has been filed against accused Head Constable Ravinder Kumar and Constable Pawan Yadav. There is sufficient material on record to take cognizance for commission of offences under sections 323, 325, 304(1) read with Section 34 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and substantive offences thereof," said Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate (ACJM) Mayank Goel in his order dated February 4.

The CBI had filed the chargesheet against Kumar and Yadav in January under sections 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), 325 (voluntarily causing grievous hurt), and 304(1) (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) read with Section 34 (common intention) of the IPC. Murder had been invoked in the FIR but was not retained in the chargesheet. The Delhi court summoned the two officers to appear before it on February 24. The mother of victim Faizan had filed a petition alleging that her son had died "at the hands of Delhi Police by reason of unlawful use of force and authority". The CBI was represented in court by Senior Public Prosecutor Prashant Kumar Sharma.

Murder charge removed as probe found no intent to kill. According to sources, the CBI chose to remove the murder charge as they concluded that the homicide took place during riot control and the officers did not have the intention to kill Faizan. A purported video of the incident showed police personnel assaulting five men, including Faizan, and forcing them to sing the National Anthem and



Vande Mataram, and prodding them with sticks as they lay on the ground. The men sustained injuries, while Faizan later died. In Faizan's case, the Delhi Police had in July 2024 initiated departmental inquiries against two policemen. The Delhi High Court in the same month had directed the CBI to probe Faizan's death. Acting on a petition by Faizan's mother that sought a probe by a court-monitored Special Investigation Team into her son's killing, the Delhi HC had stated that the police actions amounted to a "hate crime", "motivated and driven by religious bigotry". The HC had also termed the police probe as "tardy", "sketchy", and "conveniently sparing the persons who are suspected to be involved in brutally assaulting" Faizan. "What is worse is that the suspects were entrusted to act as custodians of the law and were in a position of power and authority, but seemed to have been driven by bigoted mindsets," the Delhi HC had underlined. On January 19, ACJM Goel had directed the IO to file a written reply in brief mentioning the reasons for filing the "chargesheet under Section 304 (2) IPC despite the fact that the FIR has been registered under Section 302 (murder) IPC".

## Politically motivated action to suppress dissent: Student leaders, faculty members, MPs on JNUSU rustication



GNS News Agency, Feb 7

Members of Parliament, university faculty staff and student leaders accused Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) administration of using disciplinary action to suppress dissent, during a press conference at the Press Club of India Wednesday. This follows the rustication of the current and former office-bearers of the JNU Students' Union (JNUSU). The action, taken earlier this week, stems from a protest last year against the installation of a facial-recognition system at the university's central library.

Speakers at Wednesday's press conference claimed that the rustications were politically motivated and warned that they marked a dangerous shift in how university administrations respond to students' protests. Lok Sabha MP Raja Ram Singh said the move reflected a familiar pattern. "When the voices of the poor and the marginalised rise, the response is an iron fist," he said, adding that the JNUSU office-bearers were "fighting for the very soul of India's democratic and secular education". Manoj Jha, a Rajya Sabha MP said, "A university is meant to be a space for dialogue, not a fortress of surveillance." He also announced that the matter would be raised in Parliament. Sashikant Senthil, also a Lok Sabha MP, accused the JNU administration of acting at the behest of "political masters".

Faculty members, meanwhile, warned against what they saw as "administrative overreach". Uma Gupta, a professor at Delhi University, said the rustications went beyond disciplinary action. "This is a declaration of war against the idea of a public university," she said. "They want campuses where students don't question and teachers don't think." Student representatives said there is an atmosphere of fear on the campus, citing steep fines and punitive measures imposed on those who questioned surveillance practices in common academic spaces. JNUSU president Aditi Mishra said the rustications were aimed at weakening collective resistance. "The administration thinks rustication will break us," she said. "Instead, it has only strengthened our

resolve." She also linked the action to students' demands for the restoration of equity-oriented regulations in higher education and for legal safeguards against caste-based discrimination, including what activists call the 'Rohith Act'. Students' body All India Students' Association (AISA), which backs the current JNUSU leadership, said in a statement that the administration had labeled peaceful protest as vandalism to justify punitive action. "The real vandalism," the statement said, "is the dismantling of constitutional values and social justice under the guise of discipline". According to AISA, the protest against facial recognition at the central library was driven by concerns that students were being treated "as suspects rather than learners", and that surveillance technologies were being introduced without meaningful consultation.

## Wandering tiger goes for the eighth kill in Telangana



Hyderabad: Even as the forest department is deploying teams to track the movement of wandering tiger, the animal made its eighth kill at Mandelagudem village in Raghunathpally mandal some 20 kilometers away from Kundaram village of Lingalaghapur mandal in Jangaon district on Friday.

A farmer P Raju complained that the calf he had tied in the cattle shed near his field was killed suspectedly by a tiger. Following which he informed the forest officials who then reached the spot and started checking for the pugmarks. The village elders and local police also arrived at the spot. The animal trackers and rescuers from Maharashtra have joined the operation to track the tiger movement so as to make a plan to sent it forest.

## Haryana notifies new transfer policy for district cadre teachers; bonus points for certain categories, special rule for Mewat



GNS News Agency, Feb 7

The Haryana government has come out with a Cadre Change Policy for District Cadre Teachers, providing a structured, merit-based framework that allows eligible individuals to voluntarily change their district cadre. The policy, issued by the School Education Department and published in the Extraordinary Haryana Government Gazette on Thursday, reflects the government's intent to fine-tune administrative processes. The notification was signed by Vineet Garg, Additional Chief Secretary to the state School Education Department, and will replace the cadre change guidelines issued in 2018.

A senior officer said that the primary objective of the policy is to provide district cadre teachers an opportunity to change their district voluntarily. "It helps improve job satisfaction and address genuine personal hardships, while simultaneously ensuring that the academic interests of students remain protected. The policy applies exclusively to teachers working on a regular basis in the Department of School Education (Elementary), Haryana," the officer stated. "Eligible categories include Primary Teachers (PRT), Junior Basic Teachers (JBT), Head Teachers (HT), and Classical & Vernacular (C&V) Teachers who belong to the district cadre. Guest teachers, as defined under the Haryana Guest Teachers Service Act, 2019, are not covered under this policy, though their positions may contribute to vacancy calculations," the policy reads.

The policy clearly defines critical terms such as "change of cadre," which refers to the movement of a teacher from one district to another against a vacancy in the same category. The Administrative Secretary, School Education Department, Haryana, has been designated as the competent authority for implementation, interpretation, and relaxation of the policy. Under this, the concept of 'immediate family' has been linked to the Parivar Pehchan Number under the Haryana Parivar Pehchan Act, 2021, ensuring administrative clarity. The policy also introduces the idea of rationalisation of posts, an exercise that calculates actual teacher requirements based on student strength as of a cut-off date.

**Eligibility and special provisions** Only district cadre teachers serving on a regular basis are eligible to apply. A key exclusion applies to teachers who were specifically recruited against the Mewat cadre, who will not be permitted to transfer out of Nuh district. However, teachers not recruited under the Mewat cadre but currently serving in Nuh remain eligible. Importantly, the policy clarifies that teachers working in Nuh district will not receive any additional incentive under this cadre change framework. How vacancies will be determined Vacancies in a district will be determined under two categories: actual vacancies and deemed vacancies. Actual vacancies arise from the difference between the rationalised requirement of posts and the number of regular teachers currently posted. Deemed vacan-

cies include posts vacated by teachers who voluntarily participate in the cadre change drive, as well as posts occupied by guest, contractual, ad hoc or part-time teachers. This dual approach is intended to provide a realistic picture of available positions while ensuring smooth redistribution of teaching staff.

Merit-based allocation District allotment under the policy will be strictly merit-based, using a composite score system, officials said. Age is the prime factor, calculated using a specific formula based on the difference between the qualifying date and the teacher's date of birth, with precision up to four decimal points. In addition, teachers can earn up to 20 points under special factors, which include provisions for unmarried female teachers above 40 years of age, widows, divorced or judicially separated teachers, spouses of serving military or paramilitary personnel, and those suffering from or caring for family members with debilitating disorders.

Further weightage is provided for teachers with differently abled children, teachers with disabilities as defined under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016, and eligible couple cases where both spouses are government employees. Negative marking of -10 points applies to teachers undergoing major disciplinary punishment under the Haryana Civil Services (Punishment & Appeal) Rules, 2016. Certain categories of teachers — such as those due to retire within 12 months, those undergoing treatment for cancer or dialysis, those with over 70 per cent disability, or widows with a youngest child up to 10 years — will automatically receive 80 merit points. Cadre change procedure Participation in the cadre change drive is entirely voluntary, with teachers required to record their consent on the online Management Information System (MIS) portal. Female teachers will be given preference in the allocation process. The department will publish a detailed schedule, calculate and display merit points, and release tentative district-wise and category-wise vacancy positions. Teachers may choose any number of preferred districts except their current one. Failure to exercise options will result in exclusion from that cycle. District allocation will be carried out in a defined order: female and protected categories first (category-wise), followed by male teachers category-wise, and then female and protected categories irrespective of category. In case of ties, age, gender, and alphabetical order will determine priority. Once allotted, teachers must compulsorily join the new district, which becomes their new cadre.

**Seniority, grievances and transfers** After cadre change, teachers will be placed at the end of the seniority list in the new district, and their lien in the previous district will cease. Seniority in future transfers will be determined based on joining dates, age, gender, and alphabetical order where necessary. Teachers aggrieved by the process may file a grievance within five days of order issuance on the Sugam Sampark Portal, with disposal mandated within three days by a committee constituted by the competent authority. After district allotment, teachers must participate in the General Transfer Drive for permanent school postings. The policy empowers the administrative secretary, with prior approval of the chief minister, to relax any provision in exceptional circumstances, provided reasons are recorded. Any ambiguity in interpretation will be clarified through binding, reasoned orders. Besides, all previous cadre change instructions issued in 2018 stand repealed, though pending cases under the old policy will continue to be decided as per the 2018 provisions. With this notification, the Haryana government has introduced a detailed, transparent, and humane framework aimed at balancing administrative efficiency, teacher welfare, and educational continuity across districts.

## New 'bio-warrior' species discovered in Bay of Bengal ecosystem; meet the worms thriving where others die



tide.

Nereidid worms help maintain coastal health, and they play a major role in nutrient cycling and sediment aeration. Interestingly, researchers noted that these species of marine worms were found in areas that were heavily impacted by human activities and subject to pollution. The team comprising researchers such as Jyoshna Pradhan and Dr Anil Mohapatra (ZSI), and Dr Tulio F. Villalobos-Guerrero (CICESE, Mexico) said that the presence of these species in such highly exposed, extremely polluted habitats is indicative of the remarkable resilience of polychaetes. They mention that the worms can serve as vital bioindicators and help in monitoring coastal health. Further studies, however, are required to learn more about the species and truly understand their potential for conservation. Marine habitats are already subjected to immense levels of pollution from different sources, but the presence and the discovery of *N. solenotognatha* and *N. dhritiae* act as a reminder that there is still a lot of hidden biodiversity that remains to be discovered and protected.

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

**Hyderabad:** Amazon India has announced a research collaboration with the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Roorkee to develop innovative packaging materials using agricultural waste, aimed at reducing dependence on virgin wood pulp and addressing stubble-burning challenges. The project focuses on developing non-wood paper technology by converting crop residues such as wheat straw and bagasse into high-quality pulp for paper mailers. The resulting packaging is expected to be lightweight, strong, recyclable, and home-compostable, offering a sustainable alternative to conventional wood-based paper and plastic packaging. 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.

## 'Project status misrepresented by fake signboards': UP couple allege Rs 64-lakh fraud, cheating in FIR against Gurgaon's 32nd Avenue



GNS News Agency, Feb 7

In an FIR against the developers and associated entities of Gurgaon's 32nd Avenue commercial project, registered following a complaint from a Uttar Pradesh couple, they alleged that they were defrauded of Rs 64 lakh through misrepresentation, cheating, and criminal breach of trust in a pre-leased commercial space investment. Several other investors had claimed that they were not receiving payments that were promised to them. For the past few months, groups of people have been gathering at the complex in Gurgaon's Sector 15 to protest against alleged delays in the payment of promised rentals, and to claim dues that they allege have not been paid to them since September last year.

The FIR registered at Civil Lines police station in December charges CEO Dhruv Sharma, his sister, parents, and other accused for criminal conspiracy, criminal breach of trust, cheating and dishonesty inducing delivery of property, and forgery. According to the Uttar Pradesh couple, they were approached with a "proposal to invest in a high-yielding commercial investment scheme". The accused allegedly represented themselves as joint owners of 3.95 acres at 32nd Milestone Complex and promised a lucrative scheme for the 32 Avenue project, assuring a 30-year lease with fixed monthly rental income and 10 per cent annual escalation every three years, plus property value appreciation.

The couple said they purchased a first-floor unit for

Rs 64 lakh in September 2023. A conveyance deed was executed and registered before the Wazirabad Sub-Registrar, followed by an allotment letter, a leasing rights agreement in favour of one Apra Motels, and a lease deed in favour of one Growth Hospitality LLP. The complainants alleged: "For the initial 1-2 years everything was fine. However, the accused persons suddenly stopped paying rent without giving any prior intimation/notice, and further stopped responding to my calls and messages, moreover, had also restricted our entry to our own property, citing frivolous reasons of contracts." They further claimed that the accused misrepresented the project's status during a site visit by displaying "fake and fabricated signboards" to suggest long-term leases with renowned brands, whereas inspections revealed only short-term, unregistered 11-month agreements. The complaints added that the accused, at the time of proposing their venture, falsely claimed "that they had several ongoing commercial ventures and that various vendors were already in long-term lease with them", which was "nothing but a deceitful act merely to entice and manipulate innocent buyers like us and earn unlawful gains from our hard-earned money".

They also alleged that the accused deducted TDS and issued 16A forms, but failed to deposit it, showing "malafide intent. They said all these caused them "grave and irreparable financial loss and injury" along with "severe mental harassment". Meanwhile, in a statement issued Tuesday, a company spokesperson said that recent delays in rental payments "have been driven by a short-term vacancy in a limited portion of our Gurgaon property, arising from normal tenant churn and a change in tenancy", and that "replacement leasing is already underway and being prioritised". "It is unfortunate that a brand widely regarded as both a customer and investor favourite has faced reputational impact due to cyclical vacancy in a minority of spaces, despite decades of strong operational performance and consistent delivery. We remain confident that ... we will continue to ensure investor security and stability going forward. Separately, the company is reviewing FIR-related claims internally and will cooperate fully with the relevant processes, while maintaining transparency and responsibility with all stakeholders," it added.

## How Virar-Dahanu rail quadrupling will transform suburban services beyond Virar



GNS News Agency, Feb 7

The Virar-Dahanu Road railway line quadrupling project is 47 per cent complete and is expected to be finished by March 2028. Here is how it is set to improve suburban train services beyond Virar. The project involves constructing two additional railway lines parallel to the existing up and down main lines between Virar and Dahanu Road. According to Mumbai Railway Vikas Corporation (MRVC) data, it includes about 63 km of new track, 16 major bridges, 64 minor bridges, 29 foot overbridges, and associated signalling, electrical and traction infrastructure.

While the CST-Virar corridor has segregated suburban fast and slow lines with peak-hour headways of three to four minutes, the Virar-Dahanu Road section currently operates on a double line shared by suburban, long-distance mail/express and freight trains. This mixed-traffic arrangement has limited the expansion of suburban services despite rising commuter volumes across Palghar district. Sanctioned at Rs 3,578 crore under the Mumbai Urban Transport Project Phase-3 and executed by MRVC, the quadrupling will expand the section from two tracks to four. How suburban services currently operate beyond Virar

Western Railway operates around 42 suburban services daily between Virar and Dahanu Road, roughly 21 in each direction, translating to about one train per hour. In contrast, the Churchgate-Virar section runs several hundred suburban services daily on dedicated fast and slow corridors. Beyond Virar, suburban trains are routinely regulated to allow passage of long-distance services bound for Gujarat, Rajasthan and northern India. Railway operational data shows that more than 40 long-distance mail and ex-

press trains use the Virar-Dahanu stretch everyday, along with scheduled freight movements. With no dedicated suburban tracks, delays to express trains often cascade into local services. Why the Virar-Dahanu section is a capacity bottleneck

On a two-line mixed-traffic corridor, suburban slots are limited because long-distance trains require higher speeds and uninterrupted paths. This constrains the number of local services that can be scheduled without affecting overall operations. Despite these limitations, commuter volumes north of Virar remain high. Western Railway estimates indicate that Palghar handles over 23,000 daily suburban commuters, Boisar about 22,000, Saphale more than 20,000, and Dahanu Road nearly 18,000. Together, stations along this belt account for well over one lakh suburban journeys daily, excluding smaller stations such as Vaitarna, Umroli and Kelve Road. Rapid population growth in Palghar district has further increased pressure on suburban rail, the primary mode of transport for Mumbai-bound commuters. What changes once four tracks are available

Quadrupling will allow operational segregation, two lines for suburban services and two for long-distance and freight trains, enabling planners to increase suburban frequencies without disrupting express operations. Western Railway planning documents suggest the section could eventually support more than 200 additional suburban services, subject to rolling stock and signalling upgrades. In the initial phase, peak-hour headways are expected to reduce from 20-30 minutes to around 10-12 minutes. "Approximately 80 additional trains can be introduced once the Virar-Dahanu quadrupling is completed. With the existing 42 services, the total could rise to about 122 suburban services, with scope for further increases based on demand," said Vineet Abhishek, Chief Public Relations Officer, Western Railway. The infrastructure is also being designed to accommodate 15-car suburban trains, which can carry roughly 25 per cent more passengers than 12-car rakes, increasing capacity without proportionate increases in train movements. For commuters from Palghar, Boisar, Saphale and Dahanu Road, the project is expected to reduce waiting times, improve punctuality and ease overcrowding through dedicated suburban tracks. Once completed, suburban services could increase to at least 122 trains, with potential expansion up to around 200 services in the future, depending on commuter demand.

## After expressway mishap, MSRDC works on emergency plan to avoid repeat gridlock

GNS News Agency, Feb 7

In the aftermath of a one-and-a-half day traffic standstill on the Mumbai-Pune Expressway following a gas tanker accident, the Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC) has begun working on a special emergency traffic plan to better handle similar crises in the future. The disruption was triggered on Tuesday around 5 pm when a tanker carrying flammable propylene gas toppled near the Adoshi tunnel in Raigad and began leaking, forcing authorities to shut the Mumbai-bound carriage-way and divert traffic.

Acting on the directions of Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, MSRDC officials said they are analysing how the incident unfolded and identifying ways to manage such emergencies more efficiently until the Missing Link project becomes operational on May 1. "Such an incident has not happened before," said Managing Director of the MSRDC Anil Kumar Gaikwad. "As per the emergency response plan, quick response vehicles, ambulances and fire fighting vehicles immediately kicked into place. But as the situation was so grave, safety was paramount and there was little we could do." Gaikwad said that after the tanker overturned three of its valves were damaged leading to a continuous leak of propylene gas. With around 21 metric tonnes of highly flammable gas on board and a safety radius of at least 15 metres required to prevent explosions, authorities had no option but to stop traffic on the Mumbai-bound lanes.

expressway at a glance The 13.3-km Missing Link project which will bypass the 19.8 km accident-prone ghat section between Khandala and Lonavala is expected to significantly ease traffic flow. Vehicles were rerouted onto a single lane of the Pune-bound carriageway while two lanes were kept open for Pune-bound traffic. Additional diversions were made to the four-lane Old Mumbai-Pune Highway. The diversion effectively squeezed traffic from 10 lanes – six on the Expressway and four on the old highway – into just seven lanes, many of them carrying heavy vehicles resulting in massive congestion that lasted over a day. An MSRDC official said stopping the gas leak itself proved to be a major challenge. "Getting experts in the chemical and mechanical machinations of stopping the leak at the eleventh hour and have them reach the spot in time proved to be a challenge," the official said.

"In the case of a toppling of a tanker with non-hazardous cargo, our responses can get the tanker upright within an hour. But this was not such a simple task." While chemical experts and the National Disaster Response Force reached the site on Tuesday night, it took the entire day on Wednesday to transfer the flammable gas into other tankers. The overturned vehicle was finally towed away by 1 am on Thursday morning, allowing traffic to resume on the Mumbai-bound carriageway. Normal traffic flow was restored only by Thursday noon. "There is always scope of improvement which is what we will work on for the contingency plan," the official said.



GNS News Agency, Feb 7

New marine species worms -- *Namalycastis solenotognatha* and *Nereis dhritiae* New marine species worms -- *Namalycastis solenotognatha* and *Nereis dhritiae* -- that were discovered in the Digha and Bankiput regions of Purba Medinipur. Despite the heavy human activity and industrial pollution affecting the Bay of Bengal's coastline, researchers from the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), in collaboration with international experts, have uncovered two remarkable new marine worm species (polychaetes) from the coasts of West Bengal. The discovery was made in the Digha and Bankiput regions of Purba Medinipur. According to a statement from ZSI on Thursday, the discovery is meant to shed light on the fragile, yet rich marine biodiversity in the northern part of the Bay of Bengal. These worms are "bio-warriors" that thrive where other life withers, offering a fresh perspective on the fragile, hidden biodiversity of India's northern shores. The unique characteristics and habitat conditions of these marine worms have been published in a study titled 'Description of Two New Species of Nereidids (Annelida: Nereididae) from West Bengal, India, Bay of Bengal'. One species is named *Namalycastis solenotognatha*, deriving its name from the Greek words "solenotos" (channeled) and "gnatha" (jaw).

The "channeled jaw" refers to its unusual jaw structure with a large number of canals that emerge from the pulp cavity. Ideal conditions for its survival are extreme environments, sulfide-rich, foul-smelling mudflats, and they are mostly found on decomposing mangrove wood and hardened clay. The second species had been named *Nereis dhritiae*, after the first woman director of ZSI, Dhriti Banerjee. This species was found living inside wooden dock piles on sandy beaches, which are submerged during times of high



## Keerthana Pandian enters Asian snooker semifinal in Doha



GNS News Agency, Feb 7

Hyderabad: India's Keerthana Pandian stormed into the women's semifinals with a comfortable victory over Hong Kong's Chu Pui Ying in the Asian Snooker Championships in Doha on Thursday. The 3-1 verdict helped Keerthana set up a semifinal showdown against former champion and compatriot Anupama Ramachandran, the reigning IBSF World champion. Anupama took a tougher

route to the last-four stage, overcoming Hong Kong's Yee Ting Cheung 3-2. Amee Kamani, the third Indian to make the knockouts, frittered away the advantage to go down 2-3 after being 2-0 up against Hong Kong's Ho Yee Ki.

After a slow start, Keerthana found her rhythm as the match wore on, pushing her rival onto the backfoot with clever play. She scored when she got her chances and kept her opponent under control when she lost position. After levelling frame scores in the best-of-five contest, Keerthana came up with a frame-clinching break of 36 for a 2-1 lead. In the fourth, the Indian called the shots from the beginning to seal the frame and match 51-24. Keerthana, who lost to Anupama in the semis two years ago, will look to avenge that defeat when they meet later in the evening. Anupama had to dig deep to overcome Cheung. Despite an early flourish, including a break of 62 in the second frame, the Chennai cueist struggled with consistency through the tournament. After losing the fourth frame, she regrouped in time to clinch the deciding frame comfortably. In the men's Under-21 section, India's Aarav Sancheti went down 1-4 to Malaysia's Muhammad Wafi in the pre-quarterfinals.

## Norway's security service sees stepped-up Russian espionage in Arctic



OSLO, GNS News Agency, Feb 7 - Russia is expected to step up spying in Norway this year, focusing increasingly on the country's Arctic mainland and the Svalbard archipelago, the Norwegian domestic security service PST said on Friday, also warning of sabotage risks. Norway, an ally of Ukraine and Europe's top supplier of pipeline gas, has been increasingly concerned that Russian intelligence agencies could target its energy infrastructure, either physically or via cyber attacks. The Reuters Inside Track newsletter is your essential guide to the biggest events in global sport. Sign up here. "We expect Russian intelligence services to increase their activity in Norway in 2026, with a continued focus on military targets and allied exercises, Norway's support for Ukraine, and operations in the High North and the Arctic region," PST said in its annual threat assessment report. "The northernmost counties and Svalbard are of particular interest and therefore especially exposed to intelligence and influence activities," it added. PST said Russia is likely to continue surveillance along the rugged Norwegian coastline and mapping its critical infrastructure with the use of civilian vessels. ARCTIC ACTIVITY

Norway, a NATO member that shares an Arctic border with Russia, monitors Russian military activity in the North Atlantic and the Kola Peninsula, the base of Russia's Northern Fleet and some two-thirds of Russia's second-strike capability - its ability to answer a nuclear attack with its own. Last August, PST pinned a cyber attack on a hydropower dam that briefly took control of its operations on Russia-linked hackers, accusing Moscow of becoming a more dangerous threat.

## Iran, US start crucial talks in Oman as confrontation looms



DUBAI/WASHINGTON, GNS News Agency, Feb 7 - Iran and the United States started high-stakes negotiations in Oman on Friday in efforts to overcome sharp differences over Tehran's nuclear programme, but a dispute over widening the agenda risks derailing diplomacy and triggering another Middle East conflict. While both sides have signaled readiness to revive diplomacy over Tehran's long-running nuclear dispute with the West, Washington wants to expand the talks to also cover Iran's ballistic missiles, support for armed groups around the region and "treatment of their own people". U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said The Reuters Gulf Currents newsletter brings you the latest on geopolitics, energy and finance in the region. Sign up here. Iran has said it wants Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and U.S. Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff to discuss only nuclear issue in Muscat. U.S. President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, who helped mediate in Gaza ceasefire talks, is also due to take part in the talks. "Iran enters diplomacy with open eyes and a steady memory of the past year. We engage in good faith and stand firm on our rights. Commitments need to be honored," Araghchi said on X on Friday.

Tehran's clerical leadership remains deeply concerned that Trump may still carry out his threats to strike Iran after a military buildup by the U.S. Navy near Iran. In June, the U.S. struck Iranian nuclear targets, joining in the final stages of a 12-day Israeli bombing campaign. Tehran has since said its uranium enrichment work has stopped. The U.S. naval buildup, which Trump has called a massive "armada", has followed a bloody government crackdown on nationwide protests in Iran last month, heightening tensions between Washington and Tehran. Trump has warned that "bad things" would probably happen if a deal could not be reached, ratcheting up pressure on the Islamic Republic in a standoff that has led to mutual threats of air strikes. "While these negotiations are taking place, I would remind the Iranian regime that the president has many options at his disposal, aside from diplomacy, as the commander-in-chief of the most powerful military in the history of the world," White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt on Thursday told reporters. Iran has vowed a harsh response to any military strike and has cautioned neighbouring Gulf Arab countries hosting U.S. bases in the oil-rich region that they could be in the firing line if they were involved in an attack. Iran has one of the Middle East's biggest stockpiles of ballistic missiles. Negotiators in Oman will have to navigate Iran's red line on discussing its missile programme to reach a deal and avert future military action. Tehran has flatly ruled out talks on its defence capabilities, including missiles and their range. "In a show of defiance, Iran's state TV said hours before the talks that "one of the country's most advanced long-range ballistic missiles, the Khorramshahr-4," had been deployed at one of the Revolutionary Guards' vast underground "missile cities". However, Tehran is willing to show "flexibility on uranium enrichment, including handing over 400 kg of highly enriched uranium (HEU) and accepting zero enrichment under a consortium arrangement as a solution," Iranian officials told Reuters last week.

Iran also insists that its right to enrich uranium is not negotiable and demands the lifting of sanctions, reimposed since 2018 when Trump ditched Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with six powers. The United States, its European allies and Israel accuse Tehran of using its nuclear programme as a veil for efforts to try to develop the capability to produce

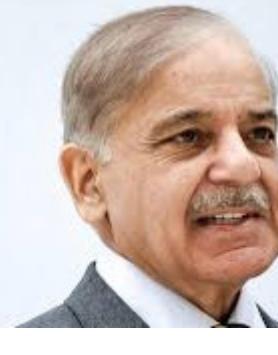
weapons. Iran says its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes only. Israel has likened the danger of Iran's missiles to its nuclear programme. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in January that Iran's "attempt to build atomic weapons" and "20,000 ballistic missiles" were like "two lumps of cancer". Tehran's influence throughout the region has weakened severely with its regional allies - known as the "Axis of Resistance" - either dismantled or badly hurt since the start of the Hamas-Israel conflict in Gaza and the fall of Bashar al-Assad in Syria.

## India dominates Asian Rifle Pistol Championship with 10 gold medals

Hyderabad: Reigning world champion Samrat Rana and world cup final winner Suruchi Singh joined forces to clinch silver in the 10m air pistol mixed team event, even as the hosts extended their domination of the Asian Rifle/Pistol Championship in Delhi on Thursday, with their gold count reaching 10 after two days of competition. Southpaw Rashmika Sahgal and Vanshika Chaudhary in the 10m air pistol women junior, and Priyanshi Purva and Chahak Kohla in the corresponding youth category, also delivered back-to-back 1-2 finishes. Their combined efforts saw India finish the day with a rich haul of 10 gold, five silver and one bronze medal, quite a distance ahead of Uzbekistan, who are second on the table with three gold. Uzbekistan's lone gold of the day came from the 10m air pistol mixed team pair of Nigina Saidkulova and Mukhammad Kamalov, who prevailed over Samrat and Suruchi by 481.3 to 479.6 in the 48-shot pair final. In the 10m air pistol women junior event, Rashmika Sahgal of India won gold with a score of 237.9, while teammate Vanshika Chaudhary came second with 236.7. Indonesian Asyifa Rihadatul won bronze in the event. A similar 1-2 was repeated in the third final of the day, when Priyanshi Purva won the 10m air pistol women youth gold with an effort of 234.8, while compatriot Chahak Kohla clinched silver with 233.0. Chinese Taipei shooter Liao Ke Rong won bronze. Two more gold for the hosts came through the team competitions where the trio of Rashmika, Vanshika and Agam Grewal won the junior women air pistol team gold with a combined tally of 1714, a good 43 points ahead of the silver-winning Kazakhstan team.

Iran also insists that its right to enrich uranium is not negotiable and demands the lifting of sanctions, reimposed since 2018 when Trump ditched Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with six powers. The United States, its European allies and Israel accuse Tehran of using its nuclear programme as a

## Kashmir will become a part of Pakistan: Shehzad Sharif tells PoK Assembly



GNS News Agency, Feb 7

Pakistan's civilian and military leadership reaffirmed their "unwavering support" for the Kashmiri people, as rallies and demonstrations were held across the country to show solidarity with them. "The solution to the Jammu-Kashmir dispute is to honour the wishes of the people of Kashmir and the implementation of the UNSC's resolutions," Prime Minister Shehzad Sharif told Pakistan-occupied Kashmir's (PoK) Assembly in Muzaffarabad as the country observed the "Kashmir Solidarity Day".

Mr. Shehzad said that he had come to stand in solidarity with "our brothers in Kashmir on behalf of the Pakistani people and the Pakistani leadership". India has repeatedly told Pakistan that the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh "was, is and shall forever" remain an integral part of the country. Recalling the four-day conflict

between Pakistan and India in May 2025, Mr. Shehzad claimed that the Kashmir issue was diplomatically "reignited with full force" in the wake of the conflict. He then turned his attention towards the surge in terrorism, alleging that "India is now intensifying terrorism through proxies." "We want peace, but this peace can be established on the basis of equality and justice," he said. Mr. Shehzad said Pakistan's founder M A Jinnah had declared Kashmir as Pakistan's "jugular vein", which continues to form the basis of the country's foreign policy.

He linked Kashmir with Palestine in his address and also mentioned the names of slain militant Burhan Wani, late separatist leader Syed Ali Geelani, Yasin Malik, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, other activists, journalists, women, including Asiya Andrabi. President Asif Ali Zardari reiterated Pakistan's steadfast moral, diplomatic and political support for the Kashmiri people. Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Asim Munir, Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf and Chief of Air Staff Air Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu reaffirmed their "unwavering support" for the people of Jammu and Kashmir, the Army said in a statement. Field Marshal Munir also visited Muzaffarabad, where he reiterated Pakistan's "unwavering political, moral, and diplomatic support" for the people of Jammu & Kashmir, it said. He also visited a forward post, where he interacted with troops. He reiterated that "any act of aggression would be instantaneously met with a swift and befitting response". Meanwhile, rallies, demonstrations and seminars were held across Pakistan. One-minute silence was also observed across the country at 10 a.m., state-run Radio Pakistan reported.

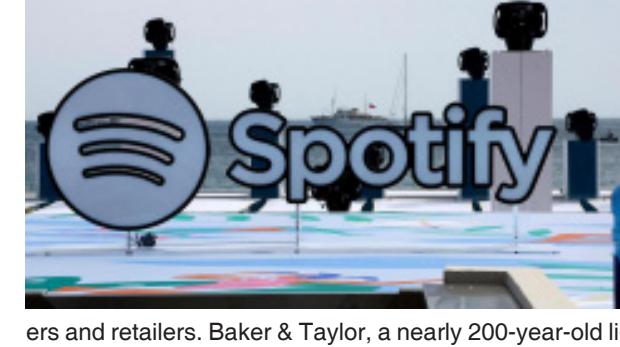
## Spotify to let users buy physical books on app through Bookshop.org partnership

GNS News Agency, Feb 7

Spotify said on Thursday it would begin selling physical books on its streaming platform through a partnership with online retailer Bookshop.org, marking an unexpected expansion beyond its audiobooks business. The company is doubling down on new features to better compete with rival streaming services from tech giants such as Apple and Amazon. Since launching audiobooks two years ago, Audiobooks in Premium has expanded to 22 global markets and its English-language catalog has grown to more than 500,000 titles, Spotify said. Its new listeners were up 36% from a year earlier and listening hours grew 37%, it added.

Spotify said the physical book purchasing feature will begin rolling out later this spring for users in the U.S. and the UK, with Bookshop.org handling pricing, inventory and fulfillment. Spotify will receive an affiliate fee for purchases made inside its app. The company's move comes at a time when physical book sales are sluggish because more users are increasingly turning to e-books and other sources on the internet.

News Corp, which owns HarperCollins, said last year that book publishing orders were slowing from both read-



ers and retailers. Baker & Taylor, a nearly 200-year-old library book distributor, also shut down operations in January. Spotify said it would launch "Page Match," a tool designed to let users scan a page from a physical book or e-book in the Spotify app to jump to the matching point in the audiobook. Page Match will be available at launch on most English-language titles, with plans to be fully rolled out to all audiobook users by February 23, the company said. Spotify has also increased the price of its monthly premium subscription plan by \$1 to \$12.99 in the U.S., Estonia and Latvia markets.

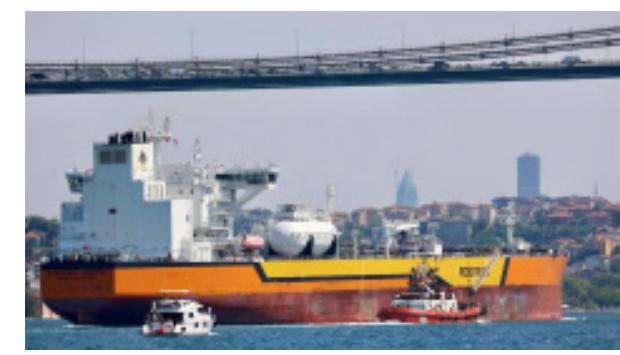
## Russian oil imports down to a 38-month low in December 2025 as India diversifies sources

The value of India's crude oil imports from Russia fell to a 38-month low of \$2.7 billion in December 2025, with Russian oil making up less than a quarter of India's imports, down from 34% just a month before, an analysis of the latest data shows. Imports from the U.S. grew nearly 31% over December 2024.

The latest data comes at a time when U.S. President Donald Trump and his team have repeatedly claimed over the last week that India will be stopping its Russian oil purchases in exchange for the U.S. cutting tariffs on Indian imports from 50% to 18%. India, however, has neither confirmed nor denied this specific assertion. Instead, it has maintained that it is diversifying its energy sources "in keeping with objective market conditions and evolving international dynamics".

Falling Russian imports India's Russian oil imports, at \$2.7 billion in December 2025, were 15% lower than the amount imported in December 2024, and 27.1% lower than the \$3.7 billion worth of imports in November 2025. As a result, Russia's share in India's overall oil imports fell to 24.9% in December 2025, the lowest in three years. In terms of volume, too, India imported 5.8 million tonnes, the lowest since February 2025.

Diversifying supplies India imported \$569.3 million worth of oil from the U.S. in December 2025. While this



was 60.5% lower than the amount imported in November 2025, that was because November saw oil imports from the U.S. surging to a seven-month high. Oil imports from the U.S. were nearly 31% higher than in December 2024. In volume terms, India imported 1.1 million tonnes from the U.S. in December 2025, 58% higher than in December the previous year. Overall, December 2025 saw India diversifying its oil imports in a dynamic manner, sourcing crude oil from 19 countries, up from 16 countries in December 2024. Among these 19 countries, 10 saw their shares in India's crude oil basket increasing, while nine saw their shares falling.

## ED arrests former Resolution Professional of Richa Industries Limited

The Enforcement Directorate has arrested the former Resolution Professional of Richa Industries Limited (RIL) and taken him into eight-day custody in connection with the allegation that he was a beneficiary of the Proceeds of Crime (PoC) in the case. The accused, identified as Arvind Kumar, worked the company's Resolution Professional from December 2018 to June 2025. The ED had earlier arrested RIL's former promoter and suspended managing director, Sandeep Gupta. Its probe is based on a First Information Report registered by the Central Bureau of Investigation alleging losses to the public sector banks to the tune of ₹236 crore from 2015 to 2018. The agency alleged that during Mr. Kumar's tenure as Resolution Professional, substantial funds from RIL were diverted to individuals and entities closely linked to him. "Large payments were routed from the corporate debtor's accounts to these intermediaries, who then transferred significant amounts back to Arvind Kumar's personal bank accounts," it alleged.

According to the ED, bank records showed unexplained cash deposits exceeding ₹80 lakh in his personal accounts, along with credits of over ₹1 crore received from his related parties who had earlier been beneficiaries of payments from the company. Based on the findings, he has been accused of projecting illicit funds as legitimate receipts under the guise of Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process-related operations. He allegedly colluded with the former RIL promoters by allowing them continued operational control over key projects and assets, authorising their involvement in decision-making.

There was "deliberate non-filing of avoidance applica-



tions under relevant IBC (Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code) provisions despite clear indicators of preferential, undervalued, fraudulent, and extortionate transactions identified in audit reports, enabling the retention and enjoyment of illicit proceeds by the original perpetrators". He allegedly forwarded ineligible resolution plans submitted by entities controlled by the promoter-family and "grabbed" crores of funds from parties on the pretext of sale of company or its assets to them without any authorisation or proper documentation. "Due to acts of RP (Resolution Professional) in orchestrating a 'pro-promoter' conspiracy, it has resulted in a staggering 94% loss (haircut) to public sector banks. After liquidation of RIL, banks have just received ₹40 crore against the admitted claims of ₹708 crore...the RP's registration was suspended by the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India for two years on related contraventions," the ED said.

## Cubans rendered powerless as outages persist and tensions with U.S. escalate



GNS News Agency, Feb 7

The smell of sulfur hits hard in this coastal town that produces petroleum and is home to one of Cuba's largest thermoelectric plants. Yet, even as the plant cranks back to life, residents remain in the dark, surrounded by energy sources they cannot use. As tensions deepen between Cuba and the U.S. after it attacked Venezuela and disrupted oil shipments, so have the woes of Santa Cruz del Norte.

People in this town east of Havana are plunged into darkness daily and forced to cook with coal and firewood, but not everyone can afford this new reality. Kenia Montoya said she recently ripped the wooden door off her bathroom in the crumbling cinderblock home that she shares with her children because she needed firewood, and they needed to eat. "Things are getting worse for us now," she said. "They don't supply us with petroleum. They don't supply us with food. Where does that leave us, then?" A faded purple sheet now hangs over their bathroom. Nearby, only a handful of coal remains in a small bag. The 50-year-old mother doesn't know how she'll cook once the coal runs out because supplies in the region have dwindled.

It's one of many uncertainties gripping towns like this one across Cuba after U.S. President Donald Trump threatened to impose tariffs on any country that sells or provides oil to Cuba. "Well, it's a failed nation now," Mr. Trump said this week. "And they're not getting any money from Venezuela, and they're not getting any money from anywhere." But people wonder how long they can hold out. The island's crisis is deepening: severe blackouts, soaring prices and a shortage of basic goods. Meanwhile, the Cuban government remains mum over its oil reserves, offering no word on whether Russia or anyone else would increase their shipments after oil supplies from Venezuela were disrupted when the U.S. attacked and arrested its President in early January. Cuban officials recently lauded a phone call they had with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, although they did not share details. Meanwhile, Mexico has pledged to send humanitarian aid, including food, after Trump said he asked that it suspend oil shipments to the island.

Many in Santa Cruz del Norte feel the worst is yet to come. "With all those tariffs they're going to impose on countries, no oil will come in, and how are we going to live?" said Gladys Delgado. The 67-year-old had cracked open her front door on a recent chilly afternoon to get some fresh air as

she sewed small, colorful rugs made of clothing scraps to make extra cash because her pension is only \$6 a month. A couple of houses down, Minorkys Hoyos dropped a handful of cassava cubes into an old pot she filled with water from a barrel and placed it over a tiny, makeshift grill inside her home. "You live with what you have," she said, noting she had no other food available at that moment. The few rechargeable items that used to light her small, disheveled home have broken down, and she began to bump into things until a neighbor gifted her an improvised lantern made with fuel and a reused baby food jar. "When it's dark, I don't see," said the 53-year-old diabetic. It was late afternoon as she cooked, but her home was already dark.

Outside, two children sat on a dusty sidewalk. They stacked dominoes one atop the other to see how high they could go before the whole thing tumbled down. For the past three months, Santa Cruz del Norte had electricity while most of Cuba was hit with constant outages stemming from aging infrastructure and fuel shortages at power plants. People like Iván Amores were wary of rejoicing, fearful they would be plunged into the dark again like most of last year. Their fears materialized a week ago, when the outages hit again. "This used to be wonderful," he recalled of his town when it had electricity. "Now, it's truly torture." He uses a tiny, makeshift barbecue pit to cook for himself, his daughter and young granddaughter, buying pricier coal at \$3 a bag because it generates less smoke inside their tidy home. Amores also invested in a single tube light that a Cuban man in another town builds and sells; it can be charged and even comes with a USB port. But even those kinds of brilliant inventions Cubans are known for are out of reach for people like 67-year-old Mariela Viel; she and her husband still cannot afford to add a bathroom to their cinderblock home with a dirt floor.

Growing up, Viel said she never knew what a black-out was: "We were living well. We had food, money." She worked more than 40 years at the cafeteria of Cuba's power company and now receives \$8 a month in pension. "What can I afford? Nothing. Not even a package of chicken," she said. When there's power, she cooks rice and beans and listens to her favorite music: Cuban big bands.

Viel sat outside one recent afternoon, watching a couple neighbors walk briskly with buckets of warmed up water so their families could take showers during a cold snap that began in late January, with a record low of 32 degrees (0 degrees) recorded in a town southeast of Santa Cruz del Norte. Celebrations also start earlier now, with one family organizing a boy's 15th birthday — a milestone age across Latin America — mid-afternoon before he and his friends opted to finish partying outdoors under a big yellow moon. It glowed on a group of people nearby who danced and sang outside next to a scooter blasting music from its speakers to celebrate the birthday of Olga Lilia Laurenti, now 61. "I'm telling you, whatever's meant to be, let it be, because we can't stop it," she said as she paused dancing. "You're not going to waste part of your life on something that's out of your control. If only we could do something, but what are we going to do? We can't suffer. You need laughter, you need joy."

For P. P. Devananda, a Plus Two student from Thrissur, it meant being old enough to donate her liver to P.G. Pratheesh, her father, who was battling liver cirrhosis and in urgent need of a transplant. But time wasn't in her favour and she couldn't wait until she turned 18, as her father's condition was worsening. The family's attempt to get the organ from one of their relatives failed as the proposed donor backed out citing some personal reasons. It was around this time that Devananda began to pursue the idea of donating her liver. "Initially, everyone was opposed to the idea. They said it could cause severe pain. But I was determined to do it to save my father as time was running out for him," she remembers.

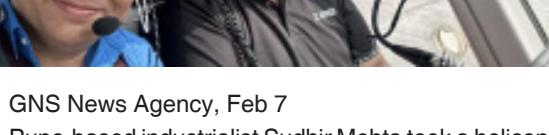
She moved the Kerala High Court seeking permission for donating the organ as law forbids minors from donating organs. Eventually, she secured a favourable order from the court. And on February 9, 2023, two months before she turned 18, Devananda donated her liver to her father, thus becoming probably the first minor to do so. Now 21, Devananda says she just did what any daughter would do. "We had to save him somehow. The surgery had to be carried out immediately and there was no time," recalls Devananda. Pratheesh says that the family always dissuaded her. "I never knew that she went to the court to get the order. She kept all those from me. I had told her not to think about donating; she was too young," says Pratheesh.

The Class 12 student had to convince the system — the court, medical board, and clear a psychiatric evaluation. She also had to build up emotional strength to fight the naysayers, too. "My father's case was one of the non-alcoholic liver diseases. People just assumed it was caused by alcohol intake and questioned my donation. It was really bad, life-changing. But now we are strong enough to face anything," says Devananda. Pratheesh considers himself extremely lucky to receive the organ at the right time. Yet, over 3,000 patients are waiting for donors as the life-saving practice of organ donation continues to be fraught with controversies, misrepresentations and misinformation, which the medical community keeps trying to fight. In 2014, Akshay Manoj, a resident of Marampally, Aluva, in Ernakulam, was just 13 when he underwent dialysis. A major part of his growing-up years was spent in hospitals. He was suffering from kidney failure following a genetic disease.

"Three visits per week," recalls Akshay about his earlier life. "At first, I thought the transplant would happen without much delay. Then some ten years passed; I lost hope and got used to it," says Akshay. And then several years later, his elder brother, Anandhu Manoj, also had to be put on dialysis, as he fell victim to the same disease. "I used to accompany Akshay earlier for dialysis. Then I had to undergo the treatment," says Anandhu. P. P. Devananda along with her father P.G. Pratheesh. Devananda had donated her liver to her father when she was just 17, saving his life and probably becoming the first minor to do so. P. P. Devananda along with her father P.G. Pratheesh. Devananda had donated her liver to her father when she was just 17, saving his life and probably becoming the first minor to do so. P. P. Devananda had donated her liver to her father when she was just 17, saving his life and probably becoming the first minor to do so. | Photo Credit: K.K. Najeeb

It wasn't something the family was prepared for; they waited for a donor. And then in 2024, Anandhu received a deceased donor transplant. "I don't know the family who donated the kidney. I asked, but they didn't want to reveal the identity of the donor," says the 26-year-old. Eventually in 2025, after waiting for more than ten years, Akshay too received a kidney from deceased donor Biju.

Eight organs were harvested from the youngster who was declared brain-dead following a road accident in Kochi and Akshay was one of the beneficiaries. Incidentally, the donation came less than 24 hours after six organs were harvested from a 28-year-old brain-dead Isaac George, a restaurateur in Kottarakkara in Kollam district, who was hospitalised following a road accident. The two back-to-back cases of organ donations went viral and ignited a wave of organ pledging in the State. The next few days witnessed over 500 people pledging their organs. The year 2025 thus saw a renewed enthusiasm in deceased organ donation, with the donor numbers more than doubling compared to the previous year. A total of 25 deceased donor donations have been recorded at the Kerala State Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (K-SOTTO) in 2025. The total number of deceased donor organs donated stood at 75, with kidney being the most donated organ (41), liver (21), and heart (seven), as per data from K-SOTTO. The total number of organs donated in the past 13 years stands at 1,171, with a total donor number of 403. Over the years, deceased



GNS News Agency, Feb 7

Pune-based industrialist Sudhir Mehta took a helicopter to return to the city after being stranded for eight hours on the Mumbai-Pune Expressway due to a massive traffic jam caused by an overturned gas tanker. Commuters were stuck on the expressway for over 30 hours after the tanker accident on Tuesday (February 3, 2026) evening, as it led to the suspension of traffic movement for safety reasons due to leakage of the highly flammable gas from the vehicle.

Sudhir Mehta, Chairman of Pinnacle Industries and EKA Mobility, in a post on X, said he took a helicopter to get back to Pune on Wednesday (February 4) after being stuck for eight hours. He also posted some aerial shots of the massive traffic jam on the expressway. Reacting to the prolonged traffic disruption, he said such incidents highlight the need for better emergency preparedness on high-speed

## Death by cyberchondria

"The investigation revealed that Sanju Devi was regularly watching reels on Instagram about the correlation of mouth ulcers with cancer and malignancy," says Mandalgarh Deputy Superintendent of Police B.L. Vishnoi.

Now, she is in "severe mental distress", he says. "Her medical examination did not show any signs of cancer. Our probe so far has not found any indication of a family feud," Vishnoi adds. He says he has not seen or heard of a case where a person takes such an extreme step due to health misinformation. Manpura sarpanch Chanda Devi says Lal's family did not have any complaints against them in the village with a population of about 5,000. Neighbours at Balaji Ka Chowk locality were left stunned by the crime. One neighbour, Kamla Devi, says Sanju spent a great deal of time with her children — feeding them, playing with them, and getting them ready for school. Another neighbour, Sita Devi, wishes Sanju had spoken to them about her fears. "I used to meet her and talk to her almost every day, but I didn't get a hint about her mental distress." As India hits one billion Internet subscriptions and access to health information proliferates through social media, algorithms feed health anxieties. If the 2020s is the age of fake news, medical misinformation is a large part of this. Influencers on social media often make health claims not based on current scientific consensus. This is amplified by algorithms that are designed to cater to anxieties and fears. What hypochondria, or illness-anxiety disorder, was in a pre-digital time, cyberchondria is to the information age of this millennium. A peer-reviewed research analysis in the International Journal of Indian Psychology describes cyberchondria as "an excessive, anxiety-driven online health search" that has emerged as a "significant mental condition in the digital age".

## Congress slams PM Modi as Donald Trump repeats India-Pakistan claim



GNS News Agency, Feb 7

The Congress on Friday (February 6, 2026) took a swipe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi after U.S. President Donald Trump repeated his claim that he stopped the conflict between India and Pakistan last year, saying the PM's "good friend in Washington DC" is fast moving to the century mark of stating that he had intervened to halt Operation Sindoar and yet he maintains "complete silence". The Opposition party also lashed out at Modi over his address in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday (February 5, 2026) when he replied to the discussion on the motion of thanks to the President's address, saying he is a prisoner of his own pet hates and answered none of the serious questions raised by the Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge in the Upper House.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said, "The PM revealed yet again last evening in the Rajya Sabha what a huge bundle of insecurities, what a perennial peddler of lies, what a storehouse of prejudices, and what a source of sheer bile and poison he is. One thing is clear. He can continue to proclaim that he is a great man. But the more he does so, it becomes more and more obvious that he is not and can never be a good

man." "To say that his 97-minute speech was pathetic is to make an understatement. He is a prisoner of his own pet hates. He answered none of the serious questions raised by the LOP in the Rajya Sabha," Mr. Ramesh said on X.

Meanwhile "his good friend in Washington DC" is fast moving to the century mark of saying that he had intervened to halt Op Sindoar on May 10, 2025, he said. "And yet the Prime Minister maintains his complete silence on this issue - like he does on his infamous clean-chit to China on June 19, 2020 after over twenty jawans were martyred in Eastern Ladakh," Mr. Ramesh said. His remarks come after Mr. Trump repeated twice in a single day the claim that he stopped the war between India and Pakistan last year. "In one year, I've ended eight raging wars, such as (the war between) Cambodia and Thailand, Kosovo and Serbia, Pakistan and India, Israel and Iran, Armenia and Azerbaijan," Mr. Trump said at the National Prayer Breakfast on Thursday (February 5, 2026). Later, in a post on Truth Social, Mr. Trump reiterated the claim that he stopped a nuclear war from breaking out between India and Pakistan.

"The United States is the most powerful Country in the World. I completely rebuilt its Military in my First Term, including new and many refurbished nuclear weapons. I also added Space Force and now, continue to rebuild our Military at levels never seen before. We are even adding Battleships, which are 100 times more powerful than the ones that roamed the Seas during World War II -- The Iowa, Missouri, Alabama, and others. I have stopped Nuclear Wars from breaking out across the World between Pakistan and India, Iran and Israel, and Russia and Ukraine," Mr. Trump posted. The U.S. President has claimed several times that he stopped the conflict between India and Pakistan. He has been making the assertion repeatedly, on various platforms in the U.S. and around the world, since May 10 last year when he announced on social media that India and Pakistan agreed to a "full and immediate" ceasefire after a "long night" of talks mediated by Washington.

## Transplanted lives: Organ donation in the state gains traction



organ donation dipped, with just eight deceased donors in 2018. But a rise in awareness among the community contributed to the increase in the number of deceased organ donations, with families of brain-dead patients coming forward for organ donation, say medical experts. Though many advancements have been made in the area of organ transplantation globally, it's in its nascent stages in Kerala. It hasn't been long since transplant as a treatment option for end-stage organ failure was considered, says Noble Gracious, Executive Director of K-SOTTO and State convener of the Mrithasanjevani organ transplant programme. "All challenges are within the hospital community, rather than societal. On the medical front we face the challenge of reluctance to certify brain stem death among patients. It has been observed that the organ donation process is often initiated by the donor family, rather than hospitals," observes Dr. Gracious.

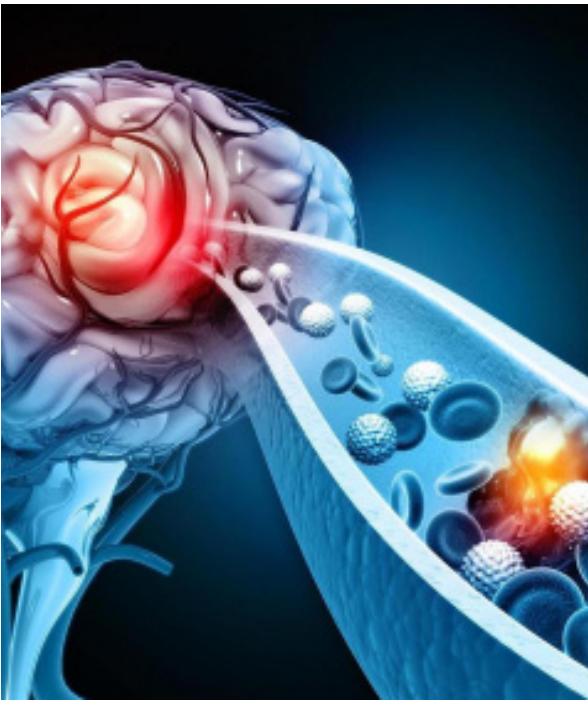
There are operational and logistical challenges too. "There are more than 50 registered transplant centres in our State. Yet, not all of them can actively execute and implement organ transplantation. This is because cadaveric transplants are unplanned high-intensity activities and the scale of preparation is extensive," he adds. Life after transplant After organ donation, life is never the same for the donor family nor for the recipient. A. Babu, father of Amal Babu, whose organs were donated last year, says that his son continues to live with six people even after his death.

For Jose Jacob, an Ernakulam native, who received a liver transplant from his son Rohit Jacob Jose, it was not an easy decision to take as his son was in the springtime of his life. "Initially, I was opposed to the idea considering his age and the risks the decision would bring upon him. However, Rohit stood his ground and forced me to accept his decision," he says. On his part, Rohit says he was convinced of the idea of being the donor for his father from the beginning. "I was sure that I was the best choice for him given my age and health conditions. I was not scared of the possible risks involved though doctors had warned me about it. I know it was the best decision that I took for my father," says Rohit. Jose, who is penning a memoir covering post-transplant days, jokingly adds that his relationship with his son has changed slightly after the procedure. "I often find myself not being able to scold him."

He teases me, saying that he has given me everything he could in his lifetime," he laughs. Everyone who has had a transplant talks about having received a new lease of life, of priorities getting changed, families getting stronger as a unit, chasing life with a passion, and following healthier and intentional choices moving forward. For T.R. Manu, a Thodupuzha native, life's trajectory and career itself went through a sea of change. It was in 2013, at the age of 27 that Manu lost both his palms after being pushed off a moving train.

"I just remember falling from the train; when I woke up and realised that I lost both my palms, my first thought was that my life had ended. I didn't want to live any more," recounts Manu. While prosthetic limbs were an option, he wasn't keen on that due to a host of reasons. "I hit on the idea of considering an arm transplant after being alerted by a cousin, who chanced upon a TV programme on organ transplant," says Manu. A hand transplant was something unheard of in India at that time. Yet, he decided to give it a go. "When you have no other choice, you start believing in doors that open. I had complete faith that it could work," recalls Manu. Then it happened. A family was ready for cadaver donation. The hand transplant took place in 2015, a first in the country. Life had kept more surprises for Manu at the hospital. There he met V.S. Sreeja, a nurse, who would later become his life partner. "I saw him at the hospital and I felt like sharing my life with him. So I proposed," Sreeja says, blushing. "At first he said no. He insisted that the doctor treating him should give permission."

## Indigenously built stroke device approved on domestic trial data, launch set for February 2026



device's manufacturing and marketing in India after the trial demonstrated good safety and efficacy outcomes. It is the first time a stroke device has been approved in India based solely on domestic clinical trial data. AIIMS Delhi was the national coordinating centre and the lead enrolling site of the GRASSROOT trial for the Supernova Stent.

"This trial is a turning point for stroke treatment in India. Supernova stent showed strong performance in real-world clinical settings involving severe stroke cases," said Shailesh B. Gaikwad, professor and head, Department of Neuroimaging & Interventional Neuroradiology, AIIMS Delhi, and National Principal Investigator of the GRASSROOT Trial.

"The Supernova stent has shown excellent safety and efficacy outcomes in the treatment of severe strokes," according to findings published recently in the Journal of Neurointerventional Surgery (JNIS). In the first prospective multicentre thrombectomy (procedure to physically remove a blood clot from a blocked artery) trial, the Supernova stent retriever achieved high successful restoration of blood flow with brain bleed (3.1 per cent), mortality (9.4 per cent), and 50 per cent functional independence at 90 days. The India trial was conducted across eight centres. The device has already been used to treat more than 300 patients in Southeast Asia and will now be manufactured and made available in India at affordable prices, offering new hope to the 1.7 million Indians who suffer strokes each year, added Dileep Yavagal, professor of Neurology and Neurosurgery, University of Miami, who was part of the global trial. Shashvat M Desai, chief technology officer at Gravity Medical Technology, said the approval reflects India's ability to conduct globally competitive trials. "The Supernova stent is tailored to India's unique stroke profile, where strokes tend to occur at a younger age compared to Western populations. The device has already been used to treat patients in Southeast Asia, reinforcing its safety and versatility," he said.

The indigenously developed Supernova stent retriever—approved in India using only domestic clinical trial data—is expected to be manufactured in the country and launched in February 2026. The device is used to treat severe strokes by removing clots and restoring blood flow to the brain within 24 hours. Developed by Gravity Medical Technology, its clinical trial was led by the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi. The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) has approved the

## An initiative to give children specially designed helmets

Recently, 48 students of Kesari Higher Secondary School in T. Nagar and their parents received free helmets. When this initiative kickstarted at the beginning of the academic year, 15,000 helmets had to be given away. The stock has dwindled hugely, which is commendable; every helmet cleared off the shelf is a safety measure in place for an individual. Road Guru Trust, a non-profit committed to improving road safety in Chennai is distributing these helmets provided by ICICI Lombard General Insurance Company as part of its corporate social responsibility.

K.P. Sendil Kumar, who runs Road Guru Trust, explains: "In June, I attended this national summit 'Dialogue to Action: VRU's and Road Safety' organised by NGO TRAX S. Society and Central Road Research Institute in New Delhi. Under the CSR programme 'Ride to Safety', the company has been giving away helmets for the last seven years, focusing on one metropolitan city every year. Chennai was their focus for 2025 and I happened to be the only person from the state at the summit, so I volunteered to drive the distribution." Sendil, 58 year old IT professional who retired from a multinational company. The campaign resonated with Sendil for many reasons including the fact that his Trust promoted road safety through education and awareness programmes.

The highlight of this initiative is the equal focus on distributing junior helmets. It therefore serves as a silent but effective advocacy for children's helmets, largely ignored because many parents are unaware of their availability. "Most children dropped at schools by their parents in a two-wheeler do not wear a helmet. In fact, many do not buy one for their children. So this campaign was unique as it targeted both parents and children, each nudging the other to wear an ISI helmet while driving," says Sendil. The Trust received close to 15,000 helmets for distribution. Since June, Sendil has been reaching out to government and less-privileged institutions asking school heads to identify students who would need them the most. This turned out to be the most challenging task for the Trust. "We reached out to 170 schools in Chennai and only



65 got back to us with a list of names," says Sendil. The next task for the Trust was conducting a session at the schools for students and parents about road safety and the importance of wearing a proper headgear, before giving them a helmet. "My sessions are made interactive and engaging with stories and live examples," he says. The Trust has 15 more schools to cover. The number of helmets distributed in a school ranges between 48 and 540, and they are only given to students from classes IV to VIII, given the size of the junior helmets. Sendil is grateful to a few school heads who helped spread the word. The headmaster of Chennai Public School in Thiru-Vi-Ka Nagar contacted other GCC schools. Likewise, Natasabapathy, principal of Anjugam Higher Secondary School in West Mambalam collected details of 15 educational institutions and got a list ready. T. Nagar traffic SI Manjunath and traffic warden Mala have also been great support. Volunteer for road safety K.P. Sendil Kumar's longstanding desire was to wear the police uniform and he fulfilled that by becoming a member of Tamil Nadu Traffic Warden Organisation in 2011. "Various statistics on road accidents was the trigger for me to do something more on road safety," says Sendil Kumar. In 2015, Road Guru Trust was registered and works on a lean team mainly volunteers from Rotaract clubs. "We conduct awareness campaigns at schools and apartment complexes," says Sendil, adding that they invite volunteers to join them in efforts to make city roads safe.

## CITU leader counters BJP claims on 'saving' Visakhapatnam Steel Plant from privatisation



Recently, the Central and State governments were keen on provision of captive mines to the private sector Arcelor Mittal Steel Plant, which was yet to be set up. The CPI(M) leader said that the statements of the BJP State president that VSP would be saved by the BJP were 'far from the truth' and were meant to deceive the public.

## Cotton farmers call for urgent focus on yield-related issues

Cotton farmers in Telangana are struggling to get the minimum support price (MSP) of ₹8,110 a quintal as unseasonal and heavy rains have affected the quality of cotton. Jaipal, a cotton grower, said the farmers get just ₹7,800 for a quintal in the market.

"The farmers are getting just about five quintals [one quintal amounts to 100 kg] an acre, where they should have got 12 quintals. That is the reason we are incurring losses," says Jaipal. The Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) has purchased more than 45 lakh bales of cotton this year, since October 1, from the farmers at MSP. The farmers who meet the norms of the CCI get the MSP, there are many who are unable to meet the quality standards and also the other norms that the agency prescribes. For instance, in Tamil Nadu, CCI procurement from cotton farmers is nil. "The daily arrivals are approximately 2.5 lakh bales. Last year, the CCI purchased about 38 lakh bales of cotton at MSP during the first 2.5 months of the season. This year, it has crossed 45 lakh bales. We expect to buy close to 125 lakh bales this cotton marketing season," said Lalit Kumar Gupta, the Chairman and Managing Director of CCI. Union Minister of State for Textiles Pabitra Margherita said in a written reply to a question in Rajya Sabha on Friday that there were over six million cotton farmers and to ensure remunerative prices to farmers, the MSP for the 2025-26 cotton marketing season was fixed at ₹7,710 per quintal for medium staple cotton and ₹8,110 per quintal for long staple cotton, providing a minimum 50% return over the cost of production.

The claims of BJP State president P.V.N. Madhav on the 'privatisation of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP)', Andhra Pradesh CITU general secretary Ch. Narasinga Rao challenged him for a public debate on the issue in presence of the media. Speaking to media persons in Visakhapatnam on Sunday, Mr. Narasinga Rao alleged that the Modi government was keen on privatisation of VSP. He strongly condemned the statements of the BJP leaders that the ₹11,440 crore financial package and restarting operation of the third blast furnace in VSP were aimed at stopping the privatisation of the plant. After the third blast furnace was revived this year (2025), the plant had suffered losses to the tune of ₹1,000 crore. He alleged that no attempts were being made to repair the damaged equipment in resulting in accidents at the plant.

He also alleged that the removal of 10,000 permanent and contract workers was a ploy to push the plant into losses. The financial package was given on the condition that the amount should be utilised only for clearing the loans taken by VSP. This was done to favour the private company, which came forward to acquire VSP. The funds given under the special package were not used for purchase of raw material to run the plant, repair of equipment or for payment of salaries of employees. He alleged that the BJP was trying to mislead the public in the name of 'financial package' to VSP.

The failure of the Centre to provide captive mines to VSP was an impediment in the plant securing profits. Ironi-

## The significance of a strong defence industrial base



matic profile further strengthen its potential to emerge as a credible supplier of defence equipment. Simplify procedures But realising this potential will require sustained focus on reforms. Regulatory complexities continue to hinder private-sector participation, especially for micro, small and medium enterprises and startups. Export licensing, joint ventures and technology-transfer approvals need to be speeded up. Long-term demand projections will give the private sector the confidence to make large investments. The pathway to achieving India's stated ambition of ₹50,000 crore in defence exports by 2029 will require simplifying procedures and ensuring policy continuity.

The role of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) also needs to evolve. The DRDO has been instrumental in building India's strategic capabilities, but the next phase demands a sharper division of responsibilities. Frontier research must remain its core focus, while production, scaling and commercialisation should increasingly shift to industry, public and private. Such an approach aligns with global best practices and will strengthen competitiveness. A dedicated, professionally staffed export facilitation agency would streamline outreach and provide a single-window interface for global partners. It will also help overcome the challenges arising from fragmented institutional arrangements across Ministries and the resultant coordination issues. Key steps to take are:

Equally important is the need to overhaul financial, testing and certification frameworks. Indian manufacturers often face challenges in securing competitive credit lines, meeting excessively stringent domestic standards and conducting trials within reasonable timelines.

Establishing specialised export financing instruments, expanding integrated testing facilities and adopting international certification protocols can dramatically improve competitiveness. A more proactive use of lines of credit, government-to-government agreements, and long-term service commitments would further enhance India's credibility in a market dominated by established players. Defence exports are not merely a commercial undertaking. They signify technological maturity, strategic reliability and the emergence of a nation as a major actor in the international security architecture. Strengthening the defence industrial base is essential not only for reducing import dependency but, equally, for generating high-skilled employment, and enhancing geopolitical leverage. The progress in recent years is encouraging. What is required now are consistent efforts to deepen reforms and build an ecosystem that encourages innovation and investments. India's security and economic ambitions demand nothing less. The pursuit of a strong defence industrial base is not just a strategic necessity. It is a defining step toward India's emergence as a confident, capable and influential global power.

## Nirmala stresses on AI, regulatory predictability for Viksit Bharat

Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday set a strategic roadmap for India's economic future, emphasising the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the establishment of regulatory predictability to achieve the vision of a Viksit Bharat. She, along with Union Minister of State for Corporate Affairs Harsh Malhotra, was chairing a high-level Chintan Shivir (brain-storming session) of the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Corporate Affairs that commenced at the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Hampi in Vijayanagara district.

The session brought together the top brass of India's financial policy-makers, including all Secretaries of the two Ministries, the Chairmen of the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) and the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), and the Chief Economic Adviser to the Central government. The primary deliberations centered on the theme of "AI, Ease of Doing Business, and Financing for Viksit Bharat", where officials engaged in intensive discussions on strengthening institutional capacity and policy-making through technology-enabled systems.

The Union Finance Minister underscored the importance of process reforms to improve the ease of doing business, highlighting that the simplification of procedures and coordinated inter-departmental functioning are essential for a robust economy. The sessions also covered critical areas such as ensuring efficient fund flows, establishing a future-ready tax administration and identifying financing pathways for sustained growth, all while leveraging digital tools to enhance transparency, efficiency and accountability in governance. Reflecting on the choice of venue, Ms.



Sitharaman spoke on the profound historical significance of the Vijayanagara region. She noted that the erstwhile empire represents the peak of Indian imperial power from barely 500 years ago, with its cultural and administrative imprint still visible across large parts of the subcontinent. She, however, balanced this historical pride with a call for pragmatism, drawing the attention of senior officials to the stark contrasts within the Vijayanagara district. The Union Finance Minister pointed out that while the region is home to magnificent world-heritage monuments, it also encompasses drought-prone areas struggling with low agricultural productivity and persistent human-animal conflict. She emphasised that the vision for a developed India must remain grounded in these present-day development realities to ensure that economic policies effectively address the challenges faced by such regions.

## Villagers hopeful of renovation of Periya Aruvi Reservoir to sustain farming near Melur

Madurai Villagers hope that renovation of Periya Aruvi Reservoir may sustain farming activities near Melur. The recent announcement made by Chief Minister that ₹2.6 crore has been sanctioned for the renovation of the Periya Aruvi Reservoir located in Kesampatti panchayat in Kottampatti union and also its 26 feeder tanks has been welcomed by farmers in the region.

The reservoir was opened in 1962 by the then Agriculture Minister Kakkan and PWD Minister V. Ramaiah. Built to collect rainwater flowing down from Azhagarmalai, this reservoir has a storage level of 23.6 mcf. Of late due to changing climatic conditions, this region in Melur has been seeing insufficient rainfall and the storage capacity in the reservoir has also dipped. With the northeast monsoon on its way out, the reservoir as on date has only 10 feet of water. Farmers fear that a scorching summer would again make the reservoir bone dry. Though it is a rain-fed agricultural belt, Senthil from Sekkipatti says that farmers here had been into paddy cultivation for many years but with monsoon playing truant, many have shifted to coconut and mango cultivation. A. Sevugaperumal from Sekkipatti, who has 10 acres of land, says "My land is the first to get water if the shutters of the reservoir opens. But for 10 years no water has come. My lands are lying fallow and now I have switched over to farming groundnut in some portion of my land." He blames massive encroachments on the feeder canals and also the unchecked growth of Prosopis juliflora. Another farmer C. Vellakannu, who has one acre of land, says many large-scale farmers in the area have gone in for borewell irrigation. "Tapping this water source they are able to go in for drip irrigation making it easier to raise coconut and mangoes," he points out and adds that for farmers like him with small land holdings, agriculture is no longer a



The reservoir was opened in 1962 by the then Agriculture Minister Kakkan and PWD Minister V. Ramaiah. Built to collect rainwater flowing down from Azhagarmalai, this reservoir has a storage level of 23.6 mcf.

feasible option. Echoing the same sentiments, C. Vellakannu, another farmer, says that the recent announcement by the Chief Minister is a favourable development because for more than three years no steps have been taken to desilt the various feeder canals of the reservoir. A WRD official says renovation work will soon begin on the reservoir that has an area of about 860 acres. "Though of late there is less storage of water due to sparse rainfall activity in Azhagarmalai, the reservoir has helped increase the groundwater level in the region. Being in the foothills the water table in these parts is also high," he adds. Upkeep of Periya Aruvi Reservoir and the feeder tanks will help recharge the water sources. With replenishing aquifers, there will be a stable underground water supply and it will surely help farmers go in for less water-intensive crops, says the official.

# FM Nirmala Sitharaman: 'Expect funds inflow after the call between Prime Minister and (the US) President'



Growth estimates realistic, implementation to make capex work is our government's strong point, Prime Minister himself monitors last mile of projects, says Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in an interview to Aanchal Magazine, Liz Mathew, Sandeep Singh & Anil Sasi. The Budget projects a nominal GDP growth of 10%, implicit in it is also the inflation expectation. So are you being conservative even in the growth estimates? No, I think I have been realistic in the way in which I've assessed what kind of growth (rates) are possible. It's not conservative ... for every one of my budget I'm accused of being very conservative and I keep telling that I take a very realistic call. We are able to also achieve each one of the targets. We've not overshot nor we've been conservative. Even this year, it was very realistic.

What is still holding back the private sector and how do you see it going forward?

'Still holding back', should be calibrated because there is a clear sign that one is able to see that they are coming out. They are investing, some of the investments which were invested in passive-income earning rather than investment with risk and producing and expanding capacities. That is now moving out of the passive mode to investments in expanding capacities or setting up new businesses. Interestingly, they probably are moving towards greater partnership with people who are in the newer, frontier sectors and — this is a bit too early but I'm still saying — probably less on the usual core manufacturing, old industries, which are core industries as well, whether it's sand and steel and so on. So, they are moving, signs are there that they are coming forward.

You have continued with higher capex. But implementation remains a challenge...

Implementation is, in fact, one of the big, strong points of this government. The last mile is monitored even by the Prime Minister himself in his PRAGATI meetings. Once in a month, on a Wednesday, he groups up issues and brings the district magistrate or collector on board and asks them: what's stopping, what is it which is making it slow? And then asks them if there is anything that you want from our PMO side? Do you want me to do in Delhi? To that extent the monitoring is happening for the last mile. Overall, reaching out to the last (mile) and delivering is a signature point of this government. So, implementation is not the issue.

So what is the problem?

There can be states which are a bit laidback. States which are politically finding it not prudent for them to go along with the scheme because the benefit might go to Modi ji than themselves. These kinds of obstructions are there. An industrialist recently said the next gen is more into managing family offices and not taking risk. I'm not sure I'll put the argument completely on the next generation. I'm sure the next generation is interested and they are also looking for avenues. They're doing it in their own time but as I said earlier, the passive income attraction is probably receding and people are getting to come in to invest. India needs solutions. You need tech, innovation to solve day-to-day problems faced by the citizens. And for giving solutions, do we have enough people who can deal with it and get it applied for such situations? We are taking that route while addressing labour-intensive sectors. How concerned are you about global capital flows? In the Budget, you did relax investment limits for Persons Residing Outside India.

There is a narrative that net inflow has reduced. For that, countries like Norway, Canada are showing keen interest for their pension funds and their larger sovereign funds to come here. But there are some in North America — big fund managers — who wait and watch to see which way the trend moves, if I can say that, and then they take a call. And I'll be open in saying this that since the call between the US President and our Prime Minister, I get the feeling that is why the stock market in India, and particularly, the rupee has covered some lost ground.

You refer to PROI decision in the Budget, I'll equally refer to you the Economic Survey which said that despite all your fundamentals being strong, the rupee unfortunately faces the global uncertainty where fund flows don't seem to depend on these considerations anymore. All numbers are fine, rating upgrades happened, not by one but several agencies — so you expect the funds to flow this way. But it's clear from what's happening — that they're waiting for some other signal from somewhere else. My observation post this call between the Prime Minister and (the US) President is that there should be a change in the direction of where the funds will go. Surely I expect it to flow towards India. Union budget, Union Minister for Finance Nirmala Sitharaman poses with her team for a photo op before leaving to present the Budget in New Delhi on Sunday.

Your trip to Norway and Canada, is it linked to this pitch?

Yes, they themselves have invited me and I will be going.

Do you think there was an overhang of what some said a deterioration in the India-US relations?

Maybe a reason. May not be the only reason but maybe a reason.

Anthropic's new AI tool led to a big sell-off in the Indian IT companies. Is this a bigger risk that listed companies face with one invention in one market by one company? I don't think it is that granular. But it is and several others are influenced by larger strategic considerations, not just commercial considerations. Lot of data is collected by the AgriStack — they've done very well in having a complete set of digital instruments. The data that we have now is yet raw, it has to talk to each other — the portals. But Digital AgriStack is the next UPI, you can take it.

On Wednesday, the Competition Commission of India ordered an investigation into abuse of dominance by IndiGo. With just a couple of airlines in the market, a regulatory change can create such a mess. That regulatory change was not unilateral. It was for all... Yes, it was for all after due considerations and consultations. We will have to put it in context. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Are you concerned that few companies have cornered big chunks of the market in

very pivotal sectors such as cement and infrastructure sectors? The Competition Commission is surely very seriously looking at all this. It has powers to suo motu take up an issue. It doesn't have to wait for somebody to come and complain. If there are practices which are indicative of monopoly or indicative of collusion, the Competition Commission is well within its right to investigate, get a report done, and act on it. That's what they're doing.

Has there been some internal deliberations on this commitment on imports between the US and India?

First, what the Prime Minister said was related to the tariff coming down to 18%. Nothing else was said. Only when the agreement, as and when it happens, and their details come out, will we know anything at all about it. Is AI being seen as a threat to employment? The Budget did give a push towards labour-intensive sectors termed as AI-immune. See India needs solutions. It's not only solutions for the youth in the name of jobs. You need technology, need innovation to solve day-to-day problems which are faced by the citizens. Using AI, for instance, we want to focus on solving problems. Now if we look at AI displacing people from work alone, you'll be obsessed in that rather than looking at — is it giving solutions? And for giving solutions, do we have enough people who can deal with it and get it applied for such situations? We are taking that route.

There has been a lot of focus on skilling over the last few years. But where's the constraint coming?

Constraint comes in standardising them. When you say standardising — it can be different places as giving AI-based training or any other skilling for different items and requirements. In some places you want people who are capable of using AI in agriculture, in some other places, you want AI only for buildings or construction. You want AI to improve productivity in tool rooms and so on. So, you're looking at a situation where you want people to be trained even in AI. So, when you talk of skilling, it's not one thing, it has so many different components. When I talk of standards, I'm talking about standard within this, quality training and standard within this.

What is the agenda of the high-level committee on banking?

It's about the financial sector. It's about the banking sector as a whole. Whatever they want to say, they can because the terms of reference also got to be made. They've not yet been made. But that doesn't mean that I'm not going to continue with what has been approved by the Cabinet already in the banking sector reforms, including disinvestment. How long can you continue the heavy lifting on capex? You mentioned private sector is investing in some sectors. At the moment we are looking at sustaining growth and therefore we will have to do it, so we are doing it. That will be our primary object — sustaining growth. So, we'll have to. I can't say I'll do it as long as it takes. Because that's not singularly my decision, it has to be the government's cabinet's decision.

You announced an infrastructure risk fund. Is that a reason why private sector is not coming in?

See, when you're looking at small, medium sized enterprises, their risk is not just obtaining the money from the bank. Their risk is, let us say, one MSME, which is doing very well, it's also exporting with its existing setup, but it increasingly realises that it would do lots more if it brought in robots or if it brought in AI-driven efficiencies. For investing in them, they don't have the money. We need to support them. So the fund is required for upgrading these kinds of requirements within an existing flourishing industry. It can also mean a company is doing very well but its human skilling needs upgrading, at one go, all the employees (need) to be upskilled.

Another (example), there is a medium-sized industry which has everything in it to become big. Last year, we cleared that fear that if I grow and become outside of MSME, I lose all the benefits. We gave them the assurance that the benefits will continue. By these kind of funds and making champions out of them, you are assuring them that we are not cringing on the money element. You want more funds, you take it, but grow big is what we want to convey. Grow modern is what we want to convey. So if you're saying all this, are we backing it with money, if required? Yes, we are backing it with money, if required. So it can be for any of these.

You have set an ambitious target for reduction of Centre's debt-to-GDP ratio. Also, what are you doing about high state debt impinging on your borrowing costs?

No, but with the states I must say I have been nudging them to look at their finances. I'm not saying I will deny you the borrowing right. You borrow, but within your FRBM limits. If there are state public enterprises, which have revenue sources and they are borrowing for expanding or something else, I can agree. But if you're making welfare boards, which have no revenue source of their own to borrow for you, and for that you pledge what is supposed to be a budgetary provision to them (say tax from excise duty you take for the next 5 years), that cannot be allowed. For five states, which had gone well beyond the 3% and which made boards which had no revenue of their own to borrow from outside, we said you please pay that back. We allowed them to spread it over 3-4 years, and even relaxed it when they cited it was an election year. Article 293 in the Constitution gives me the power to monitor the debt of states. Kerala went to the court, but the court said go sit and sort it out (with the Centre).

I have also taken positive steps, not with just one state but with many. And in fact one of the state chief ministers, from the opposition, took up the offer, to bring down high cost debt, and lower the interest burden. He was gracious and said in the Assembly that the finance minister said this and after that we had our team go, our debt burden has come down.

How do you address competitive populism?

If your state budget has that cushion, go ahead giving your freebie. Don't do it with borrowed money because it becomes intergenerational. You do it, you take the loan, give the freebie, you enjoy your 5 years and you go home. Who pays it back? This generation and the next. Do we have the right to go on burdening?

Subsidies at Rs 4 lakh crore have remained high for three years, and are almost one per cent of the GDP. What is holding you back from pushing reform?

Technology compatibility is a thing in work-in-progress. We need technology to not only give us doubly verified data about the farmers and then data about the quantum of fertilizer required for a particular crop on a particular extent of land. The fertiliser used can be urea, DAP, or liquid nano. We need a data bank, based on each farmer's profile (the land profile). That's when you know what will be the quantum of urea/ DAP needed. I need all this granular data. Your capacity to produce fertilisers is very limited.

# 'Not a nanny, not a house help': Why urban India is paying ?1 lakh a month for home managers



For generations, Indian homes have been held together by mothers. Whether they were homemakers or working women, running a household was never framed as a task — it was a way of being. A choreography of meals, school schedules, repairs, relatives, rituals, and relentless emotional labour. It was unpaid, unquestioned, and largely unseen. But what happens when the same home is managed by a professional? Not a house help. Not a maid. Not a nanny. But a trained lifestyle manager. Someone whose job is to organise your house more meticulously. That question gained traction after a social media post by Aman Goel, an IIT graduate, who shared that he and his wife hired a full-time home manager to run the house. He wrote on X, "Harshita (my wife) and I both run business so we have limited time to manage household. My parents stay with us and are both senior citizens so I don't want to burden them. It's a task to manage the house — cooking, cleaning, groceries, maintenance, repair, etc. We felt that we can delegate this work."

Goel's now-viral post has left netizens fixated on the home manager's monthly salary of ?1 lakh, prompting discussion of the quiet transformation of domestic labour in urban India and the people behind this demanding role.

'Every home has a rhythm' The lifestyle manager (her official designation) at the centre of the online chatter, Sheetal Sharma, who earns a handsome salary at Goel's house, tells [indianexpress.com](http://indianexpress.com), "No one understands what it takes to run a house." Every home has a rhythm, she explains. "As a lifestyle manager, I don't just run the house; I read it. Once you understand how people live, what stresses them, and what they care about, things become easier than people think." With a background in hospitality and corporate events, Sharma spent years managing vendors, people, and high-pressure situations. Home management, she says, is simply a more intimate version of the same skill set. "You're not just managing a space. You're managing people — security guards, chefs, housekeepers, and drivers. Everyone comes from different backgrounds, and you have to speak their language." For the past 1.5 years, Sharma has worked with multiple clients through Pinch, a lifestyle management company founded in 2021. Her workday runs from 9 am to 6 pm, Monday to Saturday. But like most roles built on responsibility rather than clock-in-clock-out rules, it stretches when life demands it. "If there's an event, guests, or something unexpected, I stay back. But on most days, I go home like anyone else. And sometimes, chores appear without notice. "If the fridge stops working, it's my responsibility to get it fixed," she says. "If my patron wants fresh groceries daily and the store is nearby, I'll go down multiple times."

Once, a client asked her to help buy a car. "He told me his budget and requirements. I shortlisted options, arranged test drives, and even did the pre-delivery inspection," she says, laughing. "I'd never done a PDI before — I spent hours on YouTube." Now, as a multitasker, Sharma proudly vouches for her skill set. "I've procured milk. I've procured a car. Anything in between, I can do."

How much do lifestyle/home managers earn?

According to Elite Butlers, founded in 2020 by Shiv Kumar Yadav and Vipul Chauhan, entry-level home managers earn ?9–12 lakh annually; experienced professionals earn ?12–18 lakh; and senior managers overseeing multiple properties or large estates command up to ?40–60

lakh. Having worked with high-net-worth individuals (HNIs) in India and overseas during their hospitality days, Yadav and Chauhan sensed a shift. "India's wealthy were traveling more, hosting globally, and expecting hotel-level service inside private residences." "Home management has always existed in India, but it was never professionalised," says Yadav, pointing to a gap between global service standards and Indian homes that widened after Covid, when "managing a large home with multiple staff, properties and guests" became far more complex. "Today, these professionals function like CEOs of private homes, handling finances, staff payrolls, travel, vendors, events and privacy," the duo explains. They added, "Underpaying them is a risk. Clients see this role as an investment in peace, efficiency and discretion, reflecting why India's ultra-rich are willing to pay a premium to remove decision fatigue, ensure trust and bring five-star efficiency into their private lives."

Saying that "salary mattered" when she switched professions, Sharma explains, "One of the reasons why I became a full-time lifestyle manager is the monetary satisfaction and comfort." Home manager in India How is the concept of home managers panning out in India (Photo: Freepik)

Not a maid, not a PA The biggest misconception around lifestyle or home managers is that they replace domestic help. Both Sharma and Pinch's founder, Nitin Mohan Srivastava, dismiss this notion. "Instead, my job is to supervise the household staff, which is challenging at times. If someone has worked in a home for 15–20 years, it's their territory. That's why we ask patrons to introduce us as the point of contact. Once that happens, things become smoother." "Managing patrons is a task, but managing their long-time associates is often a bigger one, Sharma adds with a sigh. "Pinch was born in the aftermath of COVID, when homes became offices, schools, and social spaces overnight. We realised there's a growing segment in India that's money-rich but time-poor," Srivastava explains. "People were trying to solve life through multiple vertical services — cooks, apps, assistants. But nothing addressed life as a whole."

Instead of tackling fragments, Pinch positioned itself as a horizontal layer between individuals and the world, a service that filters decisions, tasks, and daily noise. "Our job is to mirror how someone would live if they actually had the time," he says.

The friction nobody talks about Perhaps the most sensitive part of this shift plays out between generations. "We do feel friction sometimes — especially with parents, particularly mothers," says Sharma. "They've run the house for decades. So when someone new comes in and starts managing things, it can feel intrusive." That tension, she explains, is not about ego. It's about identity. "Mothers have managed homes without ever calling it work. Now suddenly it has a title, a salary, and a system." That transition can be uncomfortable. "Telling a cook what to cook sounds trivial," she explains. "But it's a micro-stress. These micro-stresses accumulate over time. If I had to sum up lifestyle management in one line, it's removing micro-stresses that could even compel me to hire a manager for my own home one day."

Who becomes a lifestyle manager?

Around 70 per cent of Pinch's lifestyle managers come from luxury hospitality brands like Taj, Oberoi, Marriott, Ritz-Carlton, and Leela. Cabin crew are increasingly part of the talent pool. "They're trained in anticipation, discretion, and patience," Srivastava says. The rest come from diverse backgrounds, including MBAs, engineers, and therapists, to ensure depth in problem-solving. Unlike app-based home services or subscription concierge models — where one manager may oversee multiple households remotely — Elite Butlers' model is "deeply personal." "This role requires physical presence and emotional intelligence," Chauhan explains. "Homes are not offices. You can't run them with rigid rulebooks." Many placements last five years or more. The firm deliberately avoids frequent job-hoppers, prioritising professionals with 5–10 years of experience in five-star hospitality or estate management.

## This is what happens to the body when you drink chai on an empty stomach for one month



For many people, the day doesn't begin without a hot cup of chai. But when this daily ritual occurs on an empty stomach, it can gradually affect digestion, acid levels, and even energy levels. While the impact may not be obvious at first, over a month, the body begins to respond. According to Aditi Prasad Apte, Senior Clinical Nutritionist, Aster RV Hospital, Bengaluru, chai contains tannins, caffeine, milk, sugar, and spices — all of which stimulate the digestive system. Without a food buffer, this stimulation can be harsh. "Drinking chai on an empty stomach can impact digestion, metabolism, and gut comfort," she explains. "In the absence of food, this stimulation can be abrupt, leading to increased gastric acid secretion."

Increased acidity and stomach irritation One of the earliest changes people may notice is acidity. Tea naturally increases acid production, and when consumed first thing in the morning, that acid has no food to act on. Dr. Shankar Zanwar, Senior Consultant Gastroenterologist, Gleneagles Hospital, Parel, explains that over time, this may irritate the stomach lining. "Drinking tea on an empty stomach over time may irritate the stomach lining because tannins increase acid production," he says. This irritation can present as chest burning, nausea, bloating, or a heavy feeling in the upper abdomen. For those already prone to reflux or gastritis, symptoms may become more frequent.

Milk in chai can slow digestion in some individuals, leading to gas or a feeling of heaviness. At the same time, caffeine stimulates the nervous system and the gut. Ms Apte notes that this can sometimes trigger urgent bowel movements in the morning. While some people see this as a digestive "kickstart," repeated stimulation without food can make the gut more sensitive over time. Energy spikes, crashes and nutrient absorption That alert feeling after morning chai is real — but it may not last. Caffeine can cause a

temporary energy boost, sometimes followed by jitteriness or a crash, especially if breakfast is delayed. "Skipping breakfast in favour of chai may blunt natural hunger signals, leading to irregular eating patterns," Ms Apte says. If sugar is added, blood glucose may spike and drop quickly, which can increase cravings and mid-morning fatigue. Tea contains compounds called tannins that can reduce iron absorption, especially when consumed without food. Over a month or longer, this may matter more for people already at risk of low iron levels. However, you don't have to give up on your morning chai completely. There's a simple fix. Having it after breakfast — or at least with some food — can reduce acid irritation and make it gentler on the stomach.

## Why no single cooking oil is ideal for Indian households

Hyderabad: Over the last decade, a majority of Indian households have witnessed a significant shift in cooking practices, with industrial trans fats and saturated fats increasingly finding their way onto the Indian thali. With high intake of these fats directly linked to heart ailments, hypertension and insulin resistance, choosing the right cooking oil has become critically important. So what is the ideal edible oil for Indian households? There is no single silver bullet. Nutrition researchers believe it is healthier for Indian families to rotate different types of cooking oils rather than relying on just one. The Hyderabad-based National Institute of Nutrition (NIN), in its Indian Dietary Guidelines 2024, has stated that no single vegetable oil contains all essential fatty acids in the right proportions. The ICMR-NIN guidelines advise households to include variety in oil consumption. "A blend of two oils or rotating oils periodically will ensure a balanced intake of saturated, monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fatty acids. This variety is crucial because while oils such as groundnut or mustard are rich in heart-healthy monounsaturated fats, others like soybean or rice bran provide essential Omega-3 and Omega-6 fatty acids that the body cannot produce on its own," the guidelines note. However, noted public health specialist and senior neurologist from Hyderabad, Dr Sudhir Kumar, advocates balance rather than frequent switching of oils. "Choose a stable oil, avoid excess and aim for balance, not constant switching," Dr Sudhir Kumar said.

## How Rohit Sharma and Suryakumar Yadav made India and T20 soulmates to trigger a grand transformation



There was a delightful moment on Pakistani cyberworld the other day. On the YouTube channel Game Plan, the host rattled through the names in India's batting lineup, ending with an almost rhetorical question: 'Har ek banda akela match jita saka hai, inke khilaaf, plan kya ho saka hai?' (Each one of them can win a game on their own — what can be the plan against them?) Former Pakistan batsman Basit Ali cupped his palms skyward and smiled: 'Dua kar sakte hain' (We can pray!).

For years leading up to the last T20 World Cup in the USA and West Indies, India seemed to have forgotten they owned the IPL. The disconnect was glaring. Their approach to the shortest format felt outdated, particularly in batting — as if they were rolling along without a proper plan. In some ways, they resembled that first Royal Challengers Bangalore side that didn't quite know what to do with T20 cricket. Even in the 2024 edition they won, India were almost dragged into the new style of play by their captain Rohit Sharma, with support from coach Rahul Dravid — incidentally, the captain of that inaugural RCB team. Rohit had seized the zeitgeist a year earlier during the ODI World Cup, and from then on, India began to turn around, following their Pied Piper. And here they are at the start of another World Cup, totally transformed. For the first time in any global tournament — ODI or T20 — India stands as the most dominant team in the world. Never mind that the buzz around the tournament centers more on political developments than cricket itself.

Even in the 2024 edition they won, India were almost dragged into the new style of play by their captain Rohit Sharma. (Reuters Photo) Even in the 2024 edition they won, India were almost dragged into the new style of play by their captain Rohit Sharma. For the first time, India are in total sync with the T20 format they've watered, nourished, and grown since the inaugural IPL in 2008. They've ticked

all the boxes of contemporary T20 theory.

Floaters are in: every batsman can slot in anywhere in the order. Everyone must hit, regardless of the match situation. During the recent series against New Zealand, Ishan Kishan responded to a semi-crisis by smashing his way out of trouble. Like the floating batsmen, the drifting bowlers have arrived too — Jasprit Bumrah can take the first over or bowl the fifth, Hardik Pandya can open the bowling, and so on.

That old-world term 'pinch-hitters' is passé. Axar Patel can walk in at number four; Rinku Singh can float up the order. Intriguingly, both can hold an end if wickets tumble or counterattack depending on the team's plan for the night. Or they can deploy Tilak Varma, a fundamentally sound batsman with the natural game to blunt and attack, possessing the nous to build an innings even in this frenetic format — as he demonstrated under pressure in the Asia Cup final.

The bowling mix looks equally synchronised with the format. They have Varun Chakaravarthy, who must be at the top of his game to handle the flat pitches under dewy nights, and Kuldeep Yadav providing the spin options. They have Jasprit Bumrah, who looks in fiery form; Arshdeep Singh, who has quietly been scaling up his game and remains one of the rare new-ball bowlers in the world brave enough to hunt for swing; and Mohammad Siraj, who does what Siraj does. Then there's Axar, Hardik, and a couple of batsmen who can turn their arms over — unlike Indian teams of recent vintage. The presence of their MVP — a fit Hardik Pandya to blaze away with the bat in the final overs and take the new ball if needed, allowing Bumrah to target the more run-leaking fifth and sixth overs of T20 — cannot be understated.

Does all this enthusiasm mean India will surely win the World Cup? Only time will tell. We've seen truly formidable teams stumble, especially when hosting. If dew kicks in — as expected in India — how will this bowling attack hold up? A couple of recent ODI games against South Africa at home offered a preview, and the verdict wasn't encouraging. Not that they can be blamed when the ball turns into soap, but it's worth noting that dew can neuter any attack, India's included. But the overarching point isn't whether they'll win or stumble. It's that for the first time, they genuinely look like a proper T20 outfit. And it's perhaps no coincidence that at the helm are two men intimate with this format: Suryakumar Yadav and Gautam Gambhir. It's an organic evolution that began with Rohit and has now been bolstered by the current pair.

## Vaibhav Sooryavanshi blasts maiden U19 World Cup century in final, becomes first man to hit 100 Youth ODI sixes



record-extending sixth title, Sooryavanshi continued his menacing form by racking up another rapid half-century in only 32 balls. Pairing up with his captain, Ayush Mhatre, the left-handed Sooryavanshi unfurled his big shots gradually and soon had smashed five sixes by the time he had reached 70 in only 40 deliveries. With a thunderous slog over down the ground, his fifth maximum, the 14-year-old Sooryavanshi became the first batter in Under-19 ODI cricket to record 100 sixes. Staggeringly, only one other batter has managed more than 50 sixes in Youth ODIs — Bangladesh's Zawad Abrar with 55.

In his maiden appearance at the showpiece event, Sooryavanshi also rewrote the tournament record for most sixes, surpassing South Africa's Dewald Brevis to become the highest six-hitter in U19 World Cup history. In only seven innings in this edition, the Bihar batter became the first batter to record more than 20 sixes in U19 World Cup cricket. Sooryavanshi now has three centuries in under 60 deliveries in Youth ODI cricket, the most by any in the format. Last year, Sooryavanshi had brought up a 52-ball century against the England colts, then the quickest by any batter in the world. The hard-hitting batter progressively went into overdrive after reaching his century, backing it up with more sixes in succession.

Opening the batting for India as they aim to clinch a

**'If you don't play good football, it's (almost) impossible to win something': Liverpool boss Arne Slot remains adamant on his tactics of pressing high**



sixth, 14 points behind leaders Arsenal this season. According to Sky Sports, Liverpool have scored six goals this season through non-penalty set pieces and have conceded 14 such goals, the second highest in the league. When asked about this, Slot explained that Liverpool's strategy is not built around big, tall players suited for set-pieces, and noted how the increasing emphasis on set-piece goals in the league has changed the dynamic.

"For sure, things have changed. Things have changed massively. I didn't expect the league to be as it is this season, because I was here last season and for me that was completely different. Maybe once, twice, three times we saw similar things as we are seeing this season, but this season it has been a massive, massive, massive change. Look at the one that's on top of the Premier League (Arsenal). It's fair for me to say that they are by far the best set-piece team in the league. If one team has success—and Arsenal already has had success for a few years in terms of set-pieces—others try to copy that. We are trying to do much better than we are doing at the moment as well, but maybe we went the other side. If you look at our players, we didn't buy the biggest and the tallest ones that are a big, big, big threat in set-pieces," said Slot. Earlier this week, the Dutch manager had spoken about his belief that winning means playing the 'nicest football to watch'. Slot shared how this remains his long-term goal at the club.

"As a manager, you can win the league, Champions League, the FA Cup or the League Cup but the biggest thing you can win is that you can play the nicest football to watch. Although, at this moment in time, fans might argue a little bit. It is absolutely something that I am aiming for. I always want to have the ball, I want it to be intense and want the fans to like what they see. Not all of our fans see it as a joy to watch and the hardest thing is I even understand, I agree with them."

After winning the Premier League last year, Liverpool

never do time-wasting. We always want to press high. We always want to bring the ball out from the back. But unfortunately, we face teams that have a different approach, which is completely fair for them. Every team should play the style best equipped for playing against us, and it's shown that we sometimes struggle with that style. It's not always possible for a team to get pace in the game or to get things going if the other team tries to do everything to take that pace out of the game," Slot told Sky Sports in an interview.

After winning the Premier League last year, Liverpool

## 'Koi problem nahi': How Smriti Mandhana led RCB to second WPL title despite having high fever before final



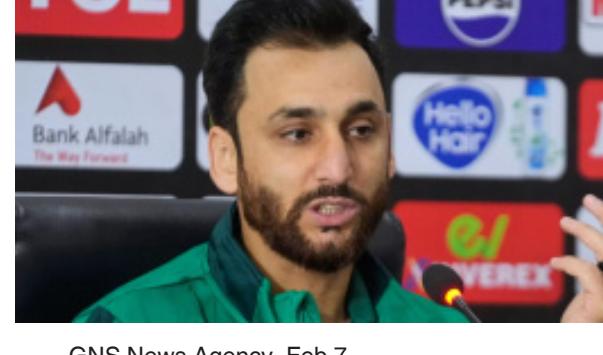
GNS News Agency, Feb 7

Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) won their second Women's Premier League (WPL) title on Thursday, defeating Delhi Capitals by six wickets in Vadodara. One of the stars of the 204-run chase was captain Smriti Mandhana, who made 87 runs off 41 balls to play a central role in the title win. Following the victory, head coach Malolan Rangarajan said that the 29-year-old had been battling high fever before the final and told him that she would play the match, despite being ill. "She was seriously unwell with a high fever. But to turn up, not even show it, nobody in the team [knew]... for one second also didn't show it. That's the

person Smriti is. When I spoke to her this afternoon, she said, 'Nahi, Malo, koi problem nahi (there's no problem), I'll be there.' So that's her with her work ethic," Rangarajan told the media after the win on Thursday. Mandhana put on 165 runs for the second wicket with Georgia Voll, which formed the bedrock to RCB chasing the score down in the final over. Rangarajan admitted that the left-hander seemed to have saved her best performance for the finale. "I think she saved one of her best innings for the final. The way she batted was....inhuman? I don't even know the word to use." "So classy, so elegant...it didn't feel...when you looked at her, you could see that she was in control of what she wanted to do. She was timing the ball, she was hitting, picking the pockets in which she wanted to attack."

"She trained two days prior to the game and we've been having a lot of chat about her batting, how she's feeling and I reckon that her last training session [on Wednesday] was among the best she had batted," he said. Rangarajan also praised Mandhana for her leadership qualities, revealing how the 29-year-old had led from the front. "She led the team by example, set the standards in every training session. I'd be doing a disservice even if I tried saying how good Smriti has been in these last months," the head coach said.

## 'We are not hurt... but it is not good for game': Pakistan skipper Salman Agha on IND-PAK tensions



GNS News Agency, Feb 7

"We are not hurt. But it is not good for the game," this was Pakistan captain Salman Agha's response when asked about the recent tensions between his team and India in the past two big events. Last year India had refused to travel to Pakistan for the ICC Champions Trophy and six months later when they faced off in the Asia Cup in the UAE, Suryakumar & Co had refused to shake hands with Pakistani players.

The three matches that they contested in the Asia Cup saw a tense atmosphere in the middle and in the T20 World Cup, Pakistan's government has already taken a stand to not take the field against India on February 15 at Colombo. Given the tensions, all the talk in the build up to the fixtures have been mostly around the off-field tensions. And speaking specifically on the handshake episode, Agha said, "We are not hurt. But it is not good for the game. I can say that with my chest open. Growing up as kids, we have all looked up to cricketers. We are role models and if we behave like this, kids will pick up these things. This should not happen in sports." Agha said on the eve of the World Cup opening match against The Netherlands on Saturday.

The cloud of uncertainty around the India vs Pakistan fixture next week has also had a domino effect in Sri Lanka, where hotels are facing cancellations. With thousands expected to land in Colombo, the tourism industry has been eagerly awaiting the fixture, but it has left a bad taste in their mouth. In the past Sri Lanka have played a huge role in international cricket returning to Pakistan and Agha said they have three matches to give their best. "They have supported us before. But, Sri Lanka has three games. In the past their fans have turned up in numbers to support and this time also they can come and watch us play and we will entertain them," Agha said. In a 15-odd minute inter-

action, the majority of the questions that Agha took was around the India vs Pakistan fixture which the latter is boycotting as things stand. In case Pakistan stick to their stance, they will miss out on two points and that makes their remaining three fixtures against the Netherlands, USA and Namibia as must-win matches to go through to the Super 8 stage.

With any slip-up having the potential to ruin their qualification chances for the next round as not turning up against India will dent their net run-rate also, pressure is already on Pakistan before they take the field. But Agha put up a brave face. "Because we are not playing India there is no pressure of having to win all the matches. It is a World Cup, and you come here to win all the matches. So it doesn't bring any additional pressure. We have done our preparation and it is time to execute it rather than worrying about external factors," said Agha while confirming he will bat at No 3 in the tournament. There is one element that Pakistan would be keeping their fingers crossed — the unpredictability of the Colombo weather. Though this is supposed to be a dry season in the Island nation, the past week has seen heavy rain in the capital city. After arriving in Colombo, Pakistan's lone warm-up fixture against Ireland was washed-out on Wednesday evening at the Singhalese Sports Club because of heavy rain. The forecast for Saturday has predictions of rain in the afternoon and with this being a 11 AM start on Saturday, Pakistan will be keeping their fingers crossed. Even for the week ahead, where Pakistan are scheduled to play USA on Tuesday in the night fixture, the weather doesn't look all that promising.

"The weather is not in our control. As a team we are not talking about it. Our focus has been on executing our plans rather than looking at weather and net run-rate. If we win three games we will go through. There is no need to worry about net run-rate then," Agha said. Having come together as a group, in the recent months Pakistan have shown signs of improvement in the format. However, doubts still remain about them. In the last edition of the T20 World Cup, they lost to USA in a Super Over which ultimately pushed them to the exit door after India defeated them in a low-scoring thriller. The Netherlands, one of the stronger teams among Associates, has pulled-off upset wins in the past and Agha said it is important for his team to bring their A-game into play straightforward. "It is very important we start on a strong note. Since we don't play them regularly, you don't know their weaknesses and strengths. So we have to bring the A-game and get the job done," Agha said.

## Nasser Hussain named in ICC T20 World Cup 2026 commentary panel despite boycott remarks



GNS News Agency, Feb 7

The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Friday announced the list of commentators who will be working at the upcoming T20 World Cup 2026, to be co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka. The roster includes some well-known names such as Ravi Shastri, Ian Bishop, Michael Atherton, Mpumelelo Mbangwa and Ian Smith. It also includes former England captain Nasser Hussain, who recently made headlines for his comments on the ongoing India-Pakistan boycott, where he had questioned whether the ICC would have taken a similar stance on India had they objected to playing in a specific country at a World Cup.

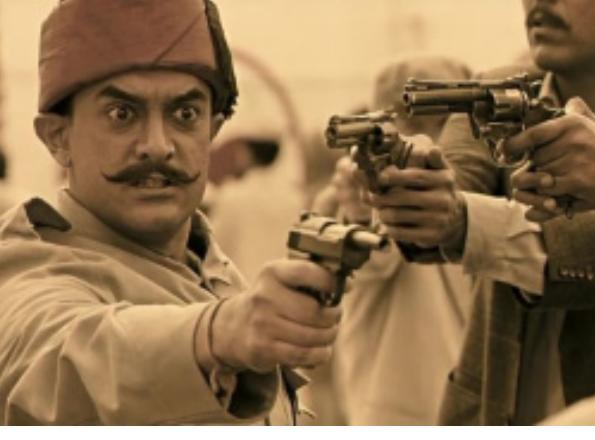
"If India, a month before a tournament, said 'our government does not want us to play in a country for a World Cup', would the ICC have been so firm and said, 'You know the rules, bad luck, we're knocking you out?'" The only question all sides ask for is consistency. Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India must 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," Hussain had said on the Sky Sports Cricket podcast. The roster also includes South Africa's current Test and ODI captain, Temba Bavuma. The right-hander has been commenting at the ongoing Under-19 World Cup in Zimbabwe and is not part of the South

African squad for the T20 World Cup. Former Sri Lanka captain Angelo Mathews, who won the title in 2014, is also a part of the list. List of commentators for ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026: Ravi Shastri, Nasser Hussain, Ian Smith, Ian Bishop, Aaron Finch, Dinesh Karthik, Kumar Sangakkara, Samuel Badree, Robin Uthappa, Carlos Brathwaite, Eoin Morgan, Wasim Akram, Sunil Gavaskar, Matthew Hayden, Ramiz Raja, Dale Steyn, Michael Atherton, Waqar Younis, Simon Doull, Shaun Pollock, Kately Martin, Harsha Bhogle, Mpumelelo Mbangwa, Natalie Germanos, Danny Morrison, Alan Wilkins, Ian Ward, Mark Howard, Nick Knight, Athar Ali Khan, Kass Naidoo, Bazid Khan, Raunak Kapoor, Niall O'Brien, Preston Mommsen, Andrew Leonard, Russel Arnold, Roshan Abeyasinghe, Angelo Mathews, Temba Bavuma

## India assured of 19 medals at BOXAM Elite International

Hyderabad: The Indian contingent is assured of bringing home 19 medals at the prestigious BOXAM Elite International in Spain, extending its impressive run on Day 3 as Nitu (51kg) and Preeti (54kg) powered into the semifinals, while Jadumani Singh (55kg) delivered yet another dominant performance in the men's draw. The Indian women's team, under the guidance of new head coach Santiago Nieva, has confirmed 12 medals, while the Indian men's team is assured of 7 ahead of the semis. Nitu was in imperious form, shutting out Canada's McKenzie Wright with a commanding 5-0 win to secure her place in the last four. Preeti followed with a clinical showing against Spain's Maria Gonzalez, forcing an abandonment in Round 3 after dictating the contest with sustained pressure. Poonam (54kg) added another emphatic 5-0 victory over Thailand's Natthicha Chongprongklang, while Priya (60kg) and Pranjal (65kg) registered unanimous wins against Spain's Laura Galano and Czech boxer Viktorie Jilkova, respectively. Kajal (65kg) edged Kazakhstan's Akbar Ichshanova 4-1 in a tightly contested bout.

## 'Aamir Khan came prepared to cry': Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra on Rang De Basanti at 20, says it's 'stupid' to ask if it can be made in today's times



up. They never provided the money. I kept investing my own funds. That, of course, was not enough; I'm not a rich guy. Finally, we had to mortgage our office first, and then our house in Pali Hill, just to keep pre-production running. But despite this, the original producers still didn't come through. They kept saying, "Take that actor; why are you doing this? Go for a known face for this one." I understand collaboration, but I hate interference of any kind because it spoils the film. Not for any egotistical reason, it's because I believe there needs to be singularity in the vision.

There's a particular scene where Aamir Khan's character DJ finally breaks down in front of Sue. He felt he hadn't performed up to the mark because it was initially supposed to be shot another day, but you changed plans last minute. What happened there?

Nothing much. We were supposed to shoot that scene on a Monday, and come Monday, everyone reported, and I saw Aamir. His eyes were all red. I felt he was over-prepared. I didn't want him to come into the scene with so many tears already in his eyes. My idea was that the angst, frustration, and sadness, all of it should just burst out naturally. So I told Aamir, "We are not shooting." And he said, "You cannot do this. I've been preparing for it all last week, and now if you touch me, my tears will follow." I said, "That's what I'm trying to tell you." So we didn't shoot it. He was grumpy for a while, but he's very cool in such situations, and I love him. We kept shooting for the entire week, and then on Thursday, I told him, "We'll shoot that scene now." He said, "You can't do it." I said, "Let's just try." And in one single take, we got it. I'm sure if we had shot it on Monday, it might have been a better scene, as Aamir himself has been saying. But at that point, my job was to direct, and I did what felt right for the film. These are just all the fun, cool things that happen on a film set. Rang De Basanti Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra talked about how the release date of Rang De Basanti was pushed by a week due to hurdles amid a censor board row.

Since its release, the ending has always been a point of contention, and even now people remain divided about it. But were you certain it should end that way?

Yes, absolutely. I always knew that's what I wanted. But just before the release of the film, when we had edited the final version, it was supposed to release in January, and it was the end of December while we were finishing the background score and giving the final touches, I kept feeling that something was missing. So I guess it was the 26th or 27th morning when I woke up and told Bharathi (the editor) what was missing. The thing was, these boys had lit the fire, but it hadn't spread. So I called Radhika Roy at NDTV and said I needed her help. I told her I wanted to shoot all over India in the next three days with her crew and her cameras. That day itself, I flew to Bangalore and shot at the engineering college with the kids there. From there, I took a flight to Calcutta to Jaipur, my assistants went to Srinagar, Indore, Delhi, and back in Bombay. We covered 7-8 cities in two and a half days, and that's when the film was completed. I remember Aamir was getting married in Panchgani at the same time, and he told me, "Don't come for my wedding, finish your film." A lot of people today keep wondering if a film like Rang De Basanti could be in times like these. It's a stupid question. If you want to do something, do it. It's a choice. If your heart is in the right place, your intentions are pure, and you are dying to tell a story, then you have to tell it. There is no such thing as "in these times." While the film was relevant 20 years ago, it will be relevant 200 years later.

Talk to me about Binod Pradhan's camerawork. The usage of Dutch angles, unusual close-ups, distinctive lighting, and even grainy textures at times. What was the thinking behind these choices?

We used Dutch angles only at seminal moments, never for effect. For instance, you'll notice them when Sue begins to imagine the boys as freedom fighters. It was a way of entering her mind. We also used the technique as a transition, moving from Sue or James's voiceovers into the documentary layer, and then back into the principal narrative. As for Binod, I often call him "Bingogh": a mix of Binod and Van Gogh. I genuinely believe that if I were blind and he shot my films, they would look better, because I wouldn't interfere as much. During the readings, I kept telling him that I saw these characters as a single collective, no lead star, nothing like that, just as one solid group. That idea defined our lens choices. In the first third of the film, we stayed largely on wider lenses, between 24 and 35mm. There may have been one or two exceptions, but otherwise it was a conscious decision. In the middle third, we shifted to lenses between 50 and 70mm. And in the final third, we moved almost entirely into portrait lenses, 75mm and above. The visual journey mirrors the emotional one: we begin with the group, then gradually isolate them as individuals, creating an increasing sense of claustrophobia. The audience is slowly drawn inwards, forced to focus, to concentrate, to feel the grip of the narrative. And then, in the very last scene, we finally open up, the wide shot of that final stretch, set against mustard fields. You breathe. Until then, the film holds your breathe. Rang De Basanti Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra reveals that Karan's character, played by Siddharth, was in love with Sonia, played by Soha Ali Khan.

I ask this because I feel what people mean when they say it can't be made today is that many filmmakers struggle to get such anti-establishment political narratives off the ground. A huge section of people believe that even if RDB were made now, it would never see the light of day, it wouldn't get released because it wouldn't pass the censors. See, all this is supposition and conjecture. You have to do it to find out. Even when we made RDB back then, the bureaucrats at the Defence Ministry told us: "Don't call a MiG a MiG, don't call a Defence Minister a Defence Minister, you won't get a Censor Certificate. You have to remove the scene on television where the Defence Minister says: 'The soldiers aren't in their senses, but high on spirit while flying the planes.' You can't do all of this." I said, "All of this is derived from real life. I have facts to support everything." They said, "Your film is releasing on 19th January. It will take six weeks for the film to go through the process, and you will suffer." I said, "Take six years, don't take six weeks. We will release it after six years, it's okay."

### Ravi Teja-Shiva Nirvana film titled 'Irumudi', first look unveiled



Hyderabad: The makers of director Shiva Nirvana's upcoming film, featuring actor Ravi Teja in the lead, on Monday announced the title of the film as 'Irumudi'. The film, which happens to be Ravi Teja's 77th film and was therefore being tentatively referred to as #RT77 until now, is being produced by leading production house Mythri Movie Makers.

Marking Ravi Teja's birthday, the makers on Monday unveiled the film's title and its striking first-look poster.

The title 'Irumudi' carries deep spiritual significance, as it symbolizes a devotee's sacred offering and surrender to Lord Ayyappa. The striking first look poster presents Ravi Teja in a powerful, spiritual avatar- draped in traditional Ayyappa mala attire. He is seen showcasing an ecstatic mood in a celebratory procession filled with devotees. Ravi Teja is seen carrying a young girl in his arms, hinting at a warm father-daughter dynamic in the film. Expressing his excitement, Ravi Teja wrote,

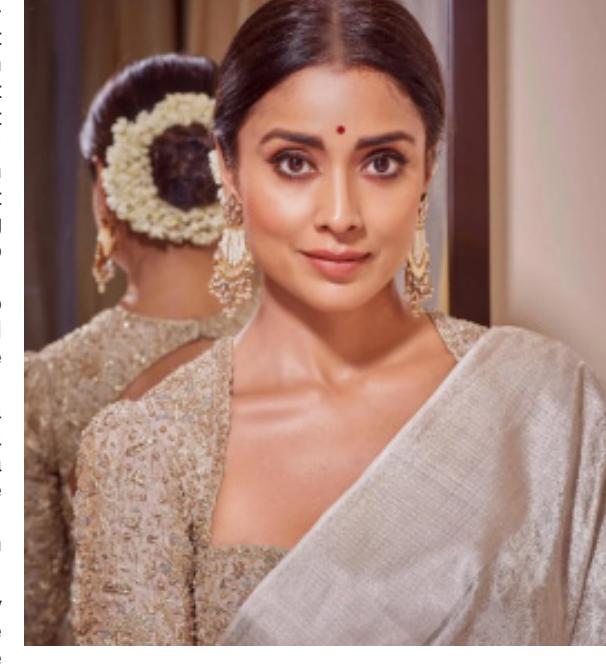
## 'How did he get the award?': Singer exposes Alka Yagnik's shocking remark on his Chak De India win, 'thought of her as Ma Saraswati'



and they asked me what I have done in this song. I asked them 'don't you know what I have done? You are giving me the award'. They said two people are credited in the song, Salim Merchant and me. Then I explained to them that Salim gave his voice in the beginning of the song, but the rest of the song, I have sung. They had told me that I am getting the award in that category and asked me to come to the award show."

He went on to say, "There Bappi Lahiri and Alka Yagnik were giving away the award. I took the award from them. I touched their feet. I respect them. After Lata Mangeshkar, the person who reached that level is Alka Yagnik. I thought Alka would appreciate me, but she said two words, 'Yaar Isko kaise de diya award' (how did they give the award to him?). I was very sad at that time. At award show, they edit out parts of it, so I wasn't rude with anyone. The only thing I said was, 'I am thankful to Sanjay Dutt who gave me opportunity in this industry. Salim-Sulaiman for giving me the opportunity to sing this song and I thanked other people. I said, 'I will try to sing better so that Alka Yagnik also gets happy.' I don't think I said anything wrong in this. This was not telecast." Sharing his thoughts on Alka Yagnik's comment, Krishna further said, "I thought of her as Ma Saraswati. I was nominated with big singers like Kunal Ganjawala, Sonu Nigam, Neeraj Shridhar, the film Sawariya's songs were also nominated but I got the award. This was not my fault, but I feel sad with what she said." For the unversed, Alka Yagnik has recently been named for the Padma Bhushan. Thanking her listeners and the government, she told HT City, "I want to thank the government for giving me this prestigious honour. And of course I really, really want to thank all my listeners for their unconditional love."

## Shriya Saran recalls emotional pregnancy journey; says Nakuul Mehta was 'very lost' during wife's pregnancy



Shriya Saran, who is currently seen in the series Space Gen Chandrayaan, recently opened up about how pregnancy is an emotional phase not just for women but also for men stepping into parenthood. The actor also spoke about the struggles her co-stars Nakuul Mehta and Danish Sait experienced as their wives went through pregnancy. Shriya Saran on challenges of pregnancy in a conversation with News 18, Shriya recalled her experience with perinatal depression and spoke at length about the emotional and physical changes a woman undergoes during pregnancy. She described how transformative and overwhelming the phase can be. "When a wife gets pregnant, there's a lot that happens in her body. You're creating another child and it's the most beautiful

experience. But you're changing emotionally and physically and your organs are getting compressed. You've this crazy outburst of emotions sometimes. You don't even know what's going on with your body. Just to walk around with a child in your body... your body looks like somebody else's. Eventually, you become a cow (laughs)," she said.

Shriya also highlighted the emotional support a woman needs from her partner during this time, while also acknowledging how unprepared men often are for these changes. "All through this time, a man is supposed to be there and take care of you. There's also a lot they aren't prepared for. When I was pregnant, I used to sometimes feel so low and say things that I didn't mean. There are times when you feel so needy that you want your man to be around. And then you also need to be at work." Shriya shares Nakuul Mehta and Danish Sait's experience. Shriya Saran also revealed that her Space Gen Chandrayaan co-actors Nakuul Mehta and Danish Sait were on the brink of fatherhood while filming the series. Sharing behind-the-scenes moments, Shriya explained how the demands of work often clashed with their responsibilities at home. "Danish was shooting and he may've missed a lot of appointments. I'm sure he felt that guilt somewhere. During the shoot, Nakuul's wife was also expecting a second time. Imagine what it was for Jankee! She was already taking care of one child and was pregnant with another. There was a lot going on for her with Nakuul at work. He was very lost. He's a very giving performer. I'm sure that at home also, he was thinking about work. He missed an appointment or two," she shared. Shriya further pointed that this phase is emotionally demanding for men too, an aspect that is often overlooked. "It's also hard for a man because he sees his woman go through so much of change and become another person. And once she becomes a mother, she's a totally different human being. There's not much credit given to a man. There's a lot that he too goes through," the Drishyam actor said. Shriya Saran is married to Andrei Koscheev, and the couple are parents to a daughter, Radha. Danish Sait and his wife Anya welcomed a baby boy last year, while Nakuul Mehta and

## Govinda performs 'Kisi disco mein jaaye' at a school's annual day event as wife Sunita Ahuja again levels cheating allegations



Govinda has been away from films since a few years now. However, the actor chose to keep himself busy with various events. Recently, he made a striking appearance at a school's annual day function in Pratapgarh, Uttar Pradesh. On Saturday, videos of him attending the event surfaced on social media. Fans felt nostalgic as Govinda was seen performing on his classic track 'Kisi disco mein jaaye' from his film Bade Miyan Chote Miyan. He also sang a Bhojpuri song for the audience, on the stage. During the day, he attended the Sangam International School's annual function, where he was dressed in a black-and-white outfit. After listening to cheers from the audience, he performed an impromptu dance on 'Main Toh Raste Se Jaa Raha Tha' and sang 'Angna Mein Baba'. He also delivered his popularity dialogues, which received a lot of love from the audience, and even impressed fans on social media. Several students and staff members were present at the event, expressing excitement about his presence. The actor also attended another event in the evening, and set the stage on fire with his appearance there as well. For the evening annual day function, Govinda sported a white suit and danced and sang on the stage again. He also lit the celebratory lamp to commemorate the annual day event. In other news, Govinda and his wife Sunita Ahuja's son Yashvardhan Ahuja will be marking his acting debut soon. According to Bollywood Hungama, he will play the lead in Sajid Khan's next horror flick, starring alongside Nitanshi Goel. "The makers of Hundred began the shoot of the film in Mumbai's Film City on Friday, January 23. They purposely chose this day to coincide with the commencement of filming on the occasion of Basant Panchmi," a source told. Hundred is produced by Guilty By Association Media, led by Amar Butala, in collaboration with Ekta Kapoor and

Shobha Kapoor's Balaji Telefilms. Earlier, Govinda was also in the headlines for his alleged affair with a young woman. The actor's wife Sunita accused him of an extramarital affair recently. Now, in a new interview with Miss Malini, she said, "Mere bache bade ho gaye (My kids are grown up now). I have always said that they get disturbed. I always say that ye tumhari umar nahi hai (this is not the age for this). Lekin kya hai na, aajkal ki jo ladki aati hain struggle karne ke liye, they need a sugar daddy jo unka kharcha chalaye. Shakal do kaudi ka hai, heroine banna hai. Phir kya karke hain phasa lenge, blackmail karenge (The girls who come today to struggle, they need a sugar daddy to pick up their expenses).