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Cancellation of SGT teacher posts should be stopped

“Feb 8. Indian chronicle.” Go 25 should be revised, the leaders of the secondary grade teachers' association who met the Telangana state government chief secretary Ramakrishna Rao on the issues asked the leaders of the secondary grade teachers' union to revise the GO number 25 and take up the rationalization process and also granted secondary school principal posts. In this program participated sgtu state president mahipalreddy, general secretary arikela venkatesham, yadadri bhuvanagiri district president vanam venkateswarlu participated.



Revanth inaugurates reconsecration works at Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple



Kumuram Bheem Asifabad: Chief Minister Revanth Reddy on Sunday ceremonially inaugurated the reconsecration works of the Sri Lakshmi Narasimha

Swamy Temple at Kodavatanch village in Regonda mandal. The temple works are being taken up at an estimated cost of Rs 12.15 crore, while additional development works, including construction of guest houses and internal roads, are being undertaken at a cost of Rs 74.15 crore. During the programme, the Chief Minister planted a sapling in the temple premises and conveyed a strong message on environmental protection.

He said that the restoration of temples, coupled with the development of basic infrastructure, would play a crucial role in boosting economic growth and creating tourism opportunities in rural areas. The CM assured that Kodavatanch village would be developed into a prominent spiritual centre.

He stated that improved facilities for devotees, along with guest houses and better internal road connectivity after the reconsecration, would provide a new direction to the village's overall development.

‘No Due’ cert rule rakes in over Rs 20 cr for ULBs in three days

Hyderabad: The elections to the civic bodies are filling in coffers of the municipalities and corporations in the state as the municipal administration department has received over Rs 20 crore in the form of property tax dues

The candidate from Congress Katipalli Shamaantha Reddy and her husband K Narendra Reddy in Division 19 had to pay about Rs 8 crore in pending municipal tax dues to the no due certificate. She had cleared dues for a hotel property. The dues had reportedly accumulated due to a long-standing dispute over property tax assessment that was pending in the High Court.

As many as 12,944 candidates are in fray for the 2,996 wards in the 123 urban local bodies and because of the no due certificate rule, each and every ULB had received Rs 6 to 8 lakh in the form of property tax from the candidates.

While the Nizamabad Municipal Corporation got highest tax dues of Rs 8.68 crore, the other municipalities like Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation got Rs 89.10 lakhs, Kothagudem Corporation got Rs 69.24 lakhs, Karimnagar Corporation Rs 59.25 lakhs, Khammam Corporation Rs 56.02 lakhs, Siddipet Rs 45.08 lakhs, Mancherlai Corporation rs 37.66 lakhs, Gaddapotharam Rs 31.39 lakhs and Mahabubnagar Corporation got Rs 29.70 lakhs.

There were at least 20 Municipalities received money ranging from Rs 10 lakhs to Rs 30 lakhs. There were 38 municipalities which got money ranging between Rs 5 lakhs to 10 lakhs. There were 61 municipalities which got between Rs one lakh to Rs 5 lakh.

The officials said that they were also surprised to see the huge response to pay the property tax by the candidates. However, they wanted the citizens to utilize the facilities provided by the government like early bird incentive and other facilities like waiver of interest on property tax etc. and help the ULBs to provide better services to citizens.

Karimnagar's progress hinges on Congress victory: Ponnam

Karimnagar: Minister for BC Welfare and Transport Ponnam Prabhakar on Sunday appealed to voters to ensure a Congress victory in the Karimnagar Municipal Corporation elections, asserting that meaningful and sustainable development of the city would be possible only under Congress rule.

Addressing gatherings while campaigning in support of Congress candidates, the Minister said that a decisive mandate in favour of the party would allow him to demonstrate what “real development” truly means. He urged voters to elect Congress candidates with a clear majority to enable smooth governance and accelerated progress.

Ponnam Prabhakar said the Congress government had already fulfilled most of the guarantees promised to the people. He highlighted the free bus travel scheme, stating that it had instilled a sense of confidence and security among women across the state. He also pointed out that Telangana was the only state in the country providing fine-quality rice to the poor through the public distribution system.

Criticising the previous governments, the Minister noted that the BRS had ruled Telangana from 2014 to 2023, while the BJP had been in power at the Centre for the past 12 years. He challenged both parties to explain the development initiatives undertaken in Karimnagar during that period. “What they could not achieve in ten years, we have accomplished within two years,” he said.

Referring to Congress city president Anjan Kumar, Ponnam Prabhakar urged voters to elect him, stating that he would ensure comprehensive development of the city. He recalled that several basic infrastructure facilities were



created during earlier Congress regimes and alleged that the past decade witnessed neglect and lack of focus on urban development.

The Minister said that under the present Congress-led Praja Palana government, a range of welfare schemes and development programmes were being implemented. These include Indiramma housing, issuance of ration cards to all eligible beneficiaries, distribution of fine rice, 200 units of free electricity, gas subsidy and free bus travel for women and interest-free loans to women self-help groups. He added that Telangana was making rapid progress in education, healthcare, and other key sectors, and appealed to voters to support Congress candidates in the municipal elections.

Stating that development would be possible only if the ruling party held the Mayor's post, Ponnam Prabhakar expressed confidence that Congress would secure the mayoral seat in Karimnagar. He also announced that the party would declare its Mayor candidate in ad

Congress candidate Kondapalli Saritha

“Yellandu, February 8 (Indian chronicle):” Congress candidate Kondapalli Saritha is leading in 23 wards. A large number of leaders, workers and people participated in the campaign in the ward on Sunday. Speaking on the occasion, the Congress candidate said that every problem prevailing in the ward will be solved and developed and urged everyone to support the daughters of their house and cast their valuable vote and win.



India, Malaysia sign agreements on semiconductors, digital payments

New Delhi, FEB 8

India and Malaysia on Sunday announced separate agreements to cooperate in semiconductor manufacturing and enable digital payment linkages.

The announcements were made after Prime Minister Narendra Modi met his Malaysian counterpart, Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim, for a bilateral meeting. The two Prime Ministers unequivocally and strongly condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including cross-border terrorism — an apparent reference to Pakistan-sponsored terror.

Both leaders called for zero tolerance towards terrorism and for concerted international efforts to combat it in a comprehensive and sustained manner.

Secretary (East) in the Ministry of External Affairs P Kumaran told mediapersons after the meeting that the two sides also discussed the possible sale of India-made Dornier aircraft and the maintenance of Sukhoi-30 fighter jets. The Malaysian Air Force and the Indian Air Force operate the same Russian-origin aircraft. Malaysia is also among the five countries involved in maritime territorial disputes with China in the South China Sea.

In his opening remarks, Modi said the core message of his visit was that India wants to take relations with Malaysia “to a new level” and expand cooperation “in every field”.

India also announced the establishment of a Consulate General in Malaysia. In addition, a dedicated ‘Thiruvalluvar Centre’ will be set up at University Malaya in Kuala Lumpur. Malaysia is home to nearly three million people of Indian origin.

An agreement was signed between India's NPCI International Limited (NIPL) and Malaysia's PayNet to establish bilateral payment linkages. The integration is expected to enhance ease of doing business and provide seamless, low-cost remittance and payment solutions for tourists, students and small businesses. Bilateral trade between the two countries stands at around \$20 billion.

Further strengthening fintech cooperation, the two sides formalised the Malaysia-India Digital Council (MIDC), envisaged as a key platform to advance digital collaboration, foster innovation and explore projects in areas such as fintech, e-governance, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, digital public infrastructure (DPI) and other emerging technologies.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said India and Malaysia are connected by a shared affection for the Tamil, underlining the strong presence of the language in education, media and cultural life in the coun-



try. Earlier in the day, PM Modi pointed out that his Malaysian counterpart Anwar Ibrahim is a “big fan” of MGR, just like “several of us in India”, as a song from the Tamil actor’s movie ‘Naalai Namathe’ was presented during a lunch hosted for the Indian leader.

The Prime Ministers commended ongoing cooperation initiatives, including partnerships between IIT-Madras Global and the Advanced Semiconductor Academy of Malaysia, and between the Indian Electronics and Semiconductor Association (IESA) and the Malaysia Semiconductor Industry Association (MSIA).

Malaysia is a key player in the global semiconductor industry, accounting for about 13 per cent of global trade. India, meanwhile, is seeking to emerge as an international producer of semiconductors for commercial applications.

The two leaders also said the Reserve Bank of India and Bank Negara Malaysia would work towards promoting the use of local currency settlement in bilateral trade and investments. Industries on both sides were encouraged to facilitate invoicing and settlement in Indian Rupees and Malaysian Ringgit.

A joint statement said the two sides reaffirmed their commitment to further consolidate and expand the India-Malaysia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

The leaders held discussions covering the full spectrum of bilateral relations, including political engagement, defence and security cooperation, maritime cooperation, trade and investment, the digital economy, science and technology, energy, agriculture, health, education, culture and tourism.

165% rise in Naxal surrenders between 2024 & 2025: Home Ministry



NEW DELHI, FEB 8

There has been a 165 per cent jump in the number of Naxals who have surrendered between 2024 and 2025. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, 881 Naxals surrendered in 2024, while this number rose to 2,337 in 2025. Similarly, there was a 134 per cent rise in the number of surrenders between 2023, when 376 Naxals gave up arms, and 2024.

Meanwhile, 290 ultras were killed in 2024, and 317 in 2025. More importantly, last year also witnessed the killing of several top commanders of the outlawed CPI (Maoist).

According to the Union Home Ministry, the number of LWE-affected districts have also reduced from 126 in 2018 to only eight in December 2025, with only three districts now under the ‘most LWE affected’ category.

The number of incidents involving violence perpetrated by LWE elements also come down by 88 per cent in five years, from 1,936 in 2010 to 234 in 2025, said the official sources.

During the security review meeting held by Union

Home Minister Amit Shah in Raipur on Sunday, the security and police personnel of all Naxal-affected states like Chhattisgarh, Telangana, Jharkhand, Odisha and Maharashtra were asked to ensure that no surviving Naxals are allowed to escape to other states.

Incidentally while addressing a conclave later in the day, Shah urged upon all Naxals to surrender, especially women cadre of the CPI (Maoist), reminding that before the March 31 deadline, the country will be made completely Naxal-free.

However as has been reported by The Tribune earlier, sources have pointed out that it would not be an easy task to eliminate all the Naxals as around six top commanders or the Central Committee members of the outlawed CPI (Maoist) still remain at large, and might remain underground till the March 31 deadline, simply to file the claims of the Centre of making the country Naxal-free by the said date.

Also security personnel have flagged to the Centre the problems being faced in penetrating several pockets of South Bastar, where many surviving commanders of Naxals are currently in hiding.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Defence modernisation brooks no delay

Faced with a two-front threat from Pakistan and China, India cannot afford to be lax in modernising its military forces. 'Operation Sindoor' highlighted the urgency of maintaining battle-readiness in an ever-changing geopolitical environment. However, delays in defence production and delivery remain a major concern for the armed forces, whose valour and professionalism were on display during the recent operation against Pakistan. Air Chief Marshal AP Singh was spot on when he flagged constant delays in defence projects and failure to stick to delivery schedules, especially of fighter jets. While speaking at the CII's Annual Business Summit recently — his first public interaction post-Operation Sindoor — the Air Chief questioned why those involved in developing military hardware, particularly fighter jets, 'promise something which can't be achieved'. This is particularly relevant because the Indian Air Force (IAF) is now committed to the policy of 'atmanirbharta'. There is no denial of the fact that air power is most crucial in contemporary warfare and expeditionary missions. It is time for the Defence Ministry to take urgent measures to reduce procurement delays and implement structural reforms aimed at boosting private sector participation in the defence economy. Key components of these reforms are the removal of outdated practices such as product reservation for defence PSUs and streamlining of procedural bottlenecks that have historically slowed defence acquisitions. The Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP), 2020, also needs to be reviewed to better align with operational realities and expedite decision-making.

Inordinate delays in the acquisition of modern weapons can be very frustrating. The excruciating delays in the delivery of the Tejas fighter aircraft into service is one such concern. The first batch of 40 'Tejas' Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) ordered in 2009-10 is yet to be fully delivered by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL). The LCA saga holds hard lessons for the defence PSUs, which need to pull up their socks and step up their efficiency levels to meet the growing requirements of the armed forces. There is also an urgent need for an increased role for private partnership in developing defence products and providing more funds for Research & Development (R&D). Currently, the IAF operates 31 combat squadrons against an authorised strength of 42, with Rafale being the most advanced combat jets in its inventory. The air power deficit stands aggravated by an ageing fleet and delays in key indigenous projects, particularly the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA), and the LCA, at a time when China already has two variants of fifth-generation fighters in service and is trialling two new sixth-generation fighters, and Pakistan is fast-tracking acquisition of 40 Chinese J-35 stealth fighters. Unfortunately, in India, not a single indigenous defence project has been completed on time. At \$71 billion, the defence R&D spending

Grand Felicitation to the Newly Elected Uppal Press Club Committee under the Leadership of Gaddam Ravikumar

""KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 8 (Indian Chronicle).""Senior Congress leader of the Uppal constituency, Gaddam Ravikumar, led a grand felicitation ceremony honoring the newly formed committee of the Uppal Print and Electronic Media Club. The event



was held on Sunday, where the newly elected President Vaddepalli Kishore and the committee members were felicitated. The program took place at the office of Tavideboina Giribabu, Congress Party In-charge of Ramanthapur. On this occasion, the newly elected President of the Uppal Press Club (Print and Electronic Media), Kishore, along with the executive committee members, were felicitated under the leadership of senior Congress leader Gaddam Ravikumar. Speakers praised the initiative of senior journalists in establishing the first-ever Print and Electronic Media Press Club in Uppal, calling it a commendable and noteworthy step. The event was attended by Tavideboina Giribabu, Congress Party Ramanthapur In-charge (Contested Corporator), and Pabboju Bikshapathi Chary, President of the Viswabrahmana Greater Hyderabad, among others.

BRS councilor ticket to Madhavareddy who blocked BC reservation..

BC leaders in BRS should still open their eyes
In municipal elections people will sure questioning to KTR and Harish Rao



""Feb 8.indian chronicle.medak." Jagruti State Vice President Kottala Yadagiri Mudiraj expressed his anger that it was a shame that the TRS party gave Madhavareddy a Keshavapur (10 Ward) councilor ticket under Medchal Constituency Three Chintalapalli Municipality, which blocked 42 percent reservation in the state. While Jagruti President Kavitha has been saying that BRS is against the development of the weaker sections from the beginning, she made it clear by giving councilor ticket to Madhava Reddy. He said that it is unfortunate that the BRS leaders stood by Buttengari Madhava Reddy, who attacked the stomach of the weaker sections who stayed away from development, but this incident shows that cases were filed in the courts with their cooperation. He complained that BRS's true identity has been revealed as it made false statements about its support for BC reservations. He suggested that BRS party is the real traitor of more than 60 percent of the BCs, keeping this in mind, the people of the weaker sections should take note. He warned that if Madhava Reddy, who blocked BC reservations, was not expelled immediately, agitations would be taken up under the leadership of Jagruti. While the BRS party was believing and cutting its throat, the leaders of the weaker sections of the party opened their eyes and explained that KTR and Harish Rao should be deposed.

Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy and Corporator Bannala Geetha Praveen Lay Foundation Stone for Development Works Worth Rs 4.34 Crore in Chilkanagar Division



""KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 8 (Indian Chronicle).""Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy laid the foundation stone for development works worth ?4 crore 34 lakh 50 thousand in various colonies and bastis of the Chilkanagar Division. The program was conducted in the presence of Chilkanagar Division Corporator and former GHMC Standing Committee member Bannala Geetha Praveen. The development works include construction of CC roads and new storm water drain trunk lines. Key projects inaugurated and foundation stones laid include: "CC road works from Chilkanagar Hanuman Temple via Marla Maisamma Temple and Nagadevatha Temple to Chilkanagar Grand Masjid, with an estimated cost of ?54 lakh" CC roads and storm water drain works in Raghavender Nagar Colony" Construction of a Community Hall in Raghavender Nagar Colony" CC road works in Kalyanpuri Colony" Installation of gym and play equipment in the park at East Kalyanpuri" Inauguration of the first floor of East Kalyanpuri Community Hall" CC roads and storm water drain pipeline works in Bank Colony" CC road construction from Beerappa Gadda Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Temple to Prashanth Nagar Water Tank" CC road works from Jahid Nagar Pista House to Vignan School" CC road works in Indira Nagar, Kalyanpuri" Community Hall works and storm water drain pipeline works in Srinagar Colony" Speaking on the occasion, MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy stated that development works worth ?119.34 crore have been carried out in Chilkanagar Division over the last five years. He noted that Chilkanagar Division has received the highest funds in the constituency and appreciated Corporator Geetha Praveen for her continuous engagement with the public and for addressing division-level issues in a planned manner. Later, Corporator Bannala Geetha Praveen thanked MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy and Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi for their support in securing substantial funds for the development of the division. She stated that development is being carried out with equal priority across all three areas of the division and assured that all promises made during elections are being fulfilled. She added that around 90% of works worth ?119.34 crore have already been completed, and the remaining 10% will be completed soon. The program was attended by BRS party Chilkanagar Division members, presidents and secretaries of various colonies and bastis, and a large number of women residents.

Congress party is certain to lose in the next two years."

BRS Party State Working President KTR, who made allegations during the corner meeting as part of Tandur Municipal Elections

""Indian Chronicle, Tandur (Feb.8)" The election campaign in Tandur is heating up. On Sunday, under the leadership of former Tandur MLA Pilot Rohith Reddy, BRS Working President KTR held a corner meeting at Indira Chowk — turning the entire junction pink with BRS flags and supporters. ""Addressing Tandur's BRS cadre and the party's 36 councillor candidates across all wards, KTR said: "Two years ago, you voted once hoping the six guarantees would be delivered... now you're paying the price for five years." "Getting fooled once is a mistake. Getting fooled twice makes you a fool." "He reminded voters: "We were cheated two years ago. Now let's show wisdom — as the proverb says: 'Thorns are removed with thorns.' The municipal elections give us the chance to expose deceit with deceit itself." "He mocked Tandur MLA Buyyani Manohar Reddy: "He promised six guarantees... blew them away like dust in the wind. He's a leader who comes and goes — call him, he won't answer." "KTR praised Pilot Rohith Reddy: "A young, accessible leader who stayed close to the people. He secured Rs 1680 crores for Tandur's development and worked tirelessly for its progress." "Even after losing narrowly in the 2023 Assembly elections due to "evil forces", Rohith Reddy continues serving the people daily under KCR's leadership. "In coming days, Tandur will become Rohith Reddy's stronghold," KTR declared confidently. "Promises Are Mountains... Delivery Is Grains" "KTR slammed Congress: "In 2023, Congress leaders paraded 'Six Guarantees' like magic cards, fooled 4 crore Telangana people — now Revanth Reddy sits on the CM seat." "He criticized Manohar Reddy for failing to pressure Revanth Reddy to deliver: "If Congress gave Rs 2500 to women or tulam bungaram — then vote for Hand. Otherwise, vote for Car." "He highlighted failures: "No Ramzan Toffah, Christmas gift, or Batukamma sarees distributed." "KCR's welfare schemes — Rs 12,000 for baby boys, ?13,000 for girls, nutritious food for pregnant women — were scrapped." "Farmer's Bond money still unpaid after 6 months." "Bonus of ?500 promised for fine rice growers — never paid." "People lost faith in Congress. In recent Sarpanch elections, BRS won 70 seats — proving our strength. In municipal polls, we'll win maximum seats, hoist pink flag and Congress will be finished in Tandur!" "Do You Have Courage to Issue GO?" "KTR reminded: "Under BRS rule, Pilot Rohith Reddy got Medical College approved for Tandur under KCR's leadership." "But Revanth Reddy: "Shifted it to Kodangal — betraying Tandur's educated youth and people. Not just cheating state — he's bullying his own constituency!" "KTR challenged Revanth Reddy: "Before Feb 11 elections — issue a GO confirming Medical College belongs to Tandur. Show courage!" "BRS will stand with Rohith Reddy in fighting for Tandur's rights." "Pilot Is Purely Local Son" "KTR attacked Manohar Reddy: "He won using Congress's six-guarantee card — now he'll vanish the same way he came." "He assured: "Pilot Rohith Reddy — your son, your elder brother — will always serve Tandur, push its development." "Tandur's base will become Rohith Reddy's fortress in days to come." "Attendees Included: " TRS State Leader SriShail Reddy" "Former Vikarabad Library Chairman Raju Goud" "Senior BRS Leaders Dr. Sampath Kumar, Srinivas Chary" "Working President Narukul Narendra Goud" All 36 BRS Councillor Candidates.

Uppal Corporator Mandumula Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy Attends Renuka Yellamma Kalyanam

""KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 8 (Indian Chronicle).""Uppal Corporator Mandumula Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy attended the Renuka Yellamma



Kalyanam organized under the leadership of Chandrasekhar Reddy at New Bharat Nagar, Uppal. The Renuka Yellamma Kalyanam was celebrated with great devotion and grandeur on Sunday. On this occasion, Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy participated in the wedding ceremony along with the colony residents and later performed special prayers. Those who took part in the program included Salla Prabhakar Reddy, Krishna Reddy, Prashanth Reddy, Hanumanth, Bobby, Ramakrishna, Suresh, Kiran, Raju, Krishna Reddy, Buchi Reddy, along with the local residents of the colony.

No Municipal Polls in Manuguru Since 2004

""Kranthikumar Dasari | pinapaka constancy | February 08 | Indian chronicle : Manuguru town in Bhadrakothagudem district of Telangana has been functioning without municipal elections for nearly two decades, triggering widespread resentment among residents who allege that democratic governance has been denied despite the town being declared a municipality in 2004-05, as no municipal council, ward members or elected public representatives have been in place since then, leaving citizens without a direct forum to raise civic grievances or seek



accountability, even as municipal elections are being held across the state and neighbouring Bhadrachalam, which had witnessed a prolonged delay due to court cases, recently conducted local body elections, prompting people to question why elections could be held there but continue to be denied in Manuguru, where petitions filed in the High Court challenging the applicability of municipal laws on the grounds that the town falls under the Scheduled Area have resulted in prolonged administrative uncertainty, with the government neither dissolving the municipality nor reverting it to a gram panchayat nor conducting elections, effectively leaving the town in administrative limbo, further compounded by the lack of clarity on the applicability of the 1/70 Act in Scheduled Areas, while the prolonged absence of elected local bodies has led to a pile-up of civic issues such as outdated house numbering and unupdated property records, in several cases still standing in the names of deceased persons, thereby depriving rightful heirs of legal recognition and entitlements, with residents alleging that although officials are in place, accountability is missing without an elected council, raising fundamental questions about paying taxes without having a say in local governance and possessing voting rights without representation, which they view as a violation of democratic and constitutional principles, and warning that the continued absence of elections has hampered development, weakened public oversight over public funds and reduced avenues to question corruption, leading them to demand that the government urgently resolve the legal disputes and take a clear decision either to conduct immediate municipal elections by continuing Manuguru as a municipality or to revert it to a panchayat system so that people can finally elect their representatives and restore democratic governance.

Ramanthapur Division Congress Leaders Organize Alms Distribution for Shiva Swamis



mis at the Satyanarayana Swamy Temple. The program was conducted for Shiva Swamis who had undertaken the sacred Shiva Mala Deeksha. Speaking on the occasion, Mohammed Rafiq said that offering alms to Shiva Swamis, irrespective of caste and religion, is a truly joyous and noble act. He emphasized that those who are observing rigorous spiritual discipline deserve such support, and everyone should contribute in their own way by organizing at least a one-day alms distribution program. He expressed happiness over conducting such inclusive programs that promote harmony beyond caste and religious boundaries. Rajesh Shiva Swami, Poosa Satyaih, Gangaputra Bhaskar, Adinarayana Goud, Gayatri Goud, Ambika, Mahesh, Cable Ashok, Mohammed Nayeem, Abdul, Madeen, Madhu, Balu, and others participated in the program.

““KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 8 (Indian Chronicle):““Under the leadership of Ramanthapur Division Congress Party President Mohammed Rafiq, an alms distribution program was organized for Shiva Swamis at the Satyanarayana Swamy Temple. The program was conducted for Shiva Swamis who had undertaken the sacred Shiva Mala Deeksha. Speaking on the occasion, Mohammed Rafiq said that offering alms to Shiva Swamis, irrespective of caste and religion, is a truly joyous and noble act. He emphasized that those who are observing rigorous spiritual discipline deserve such support, and everyone should contribute in their own way by organizing at least a one-day alms distribution program. He expressed happiness over conducting such inclusive programs that promote harmony beyond caste and religious boundaries. Rajesh Shiva Swami, Poosa Satyaih, Gangaputra Bhaskar, Adinarayana Goud, Gayatri Goud, Ambika, Mahesh, Cable Ashok, Mohammed Nayeem, Abdul, Madeen, Madhu, Balu, and others participated in the program.

BJP Flag Unveiled Under the Leadership of BJP Leader Puppala Venkateshwarulu — Former Councillor Bongulurui Srinivas Sharma Participated



““KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 8 (Indian Chronicle):““Under the leadership of senior BJP leader Puppala Venkateshwarulu, the Bharatiya Janata Party flag was formally unveiled at Adarshnagar Colony in Chilukanagar Division. The programme was attended by former councilor Bongulurui Srinivas Sharma and BJYM State leader Telangana Sampath, who jointly unveiled the BJP flag. Speaking on the occasion, the leaders stated that people across the country are highly appreciative of the public welfare programmes being implemented by

Prime Minister Narendra Modi. They expressed confidence that BJP candidates are certain to achieve victory in the forthcoming Municipal Corporation elections. The leaders called upon party workers and residents to ensure the victory of BJP candidates in the municipal elections. Senior leaders Palugula Yadagiri, Akula Anjaneyulu, Ajay Gupta, Ashok Reddy, Nallu Purushottam Reddy, Srinivas, Nagu Narasimha, Palugula Venkatesh, Amar, Venkateshwarulu, Sudhakar Reddy, Mahender, Prashanth, Sai, Sriram, and several others participated in the programme.

People should take advantage of the services of the postal department, a check of fifteen lakhs will be handed over to victims family at Veldurthi mandal center

““Feb8.indian chronicle.medak”“ Pampari Satyanarayana in Veldurthi mandal center of Medak district received fifteen lakh check from the post office today for their family due to taking accident insurance for 799 rupees. Sandeep Kulkarni, inspector of postal department, Medak North sub division, informed that the post office to services are continuing as a bridge to the people as the most efficient department in India. He informed that the rural people should take advantage of this opportunity. Pampari Satyanarayana's wife Kalavathi handed over the key cheque, Sarpanch Dandem Adarsh, Upasarpanch Kammari Shravan, senior postal employees MD Mazar, angadipet ashok goud, veldurthi people attended.



Urban progress is possible only with Congress. Malli Babu Yadav to campaign in wards 11, 12 and 13



““Yellandu, February 8(indian chronicle):““Addressing the voters, former ZPTC DCCB Director Mekala Mallibabu Yadav said that the development of villages and urban development was possible only with the Congress party. Since the completion of the nomination process in Yellandu municipality, political parties are trying to attract voters with innovative campaigns. On Sunday, district Congress leaders Mallibabu Yadav raided the houses of

potters. Campaigning was intensified by attracting voters through activities such as hammering and axe-throwing near the bunds. During the campaign, Mallibabu Yadav said that during the Congress government, the caste workers were given high priority, when the corporate parties were ruling, the caste workers were neglected, they were forced to work in big companies without proper livelihood. The party's 11 ward candidate Venkatalakshmi, 12 ward candidate Rampa Ramya, 13 ward candidate Madugu Sai Sudha, district Congress leaders Shaik Fateh Mohammed, Dhaniya Kula Hanumantha Rao and others were present. Among those present on the occasion were Ramesh Joshi, Shyam Sunder Malhotra, Palwinder Taggar, Raj Kumar Sood, Sunny Kainth, Rohit Pahwa, Navneesh Malhotra and Sanjay Sharma.

Pan-India Support Extended to Shantinagar-2 Anganwadi Centre



““KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 8 (Indian Chronicle):““Under the State Bank of India (SBI) Pan-India Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative, support was extended to the Shantinagar-2 Anganwadi Centre in Uppal. As part of this initiative, essential items including a television, toys, study material, a water filter, a rice cooker, and other necessary equipment were provided to the Anganwadi centre. Anganwadi

teacher Tirumala expressed her appreciation for the support extended through SBI CSR funds. She stated that the donated items would be highly beneficial for the Anganwadi centre and pre-school children, and conveyed her heartfelt gratitude to SBI for their commendable initiative. The programme was attended by SBI Chief Manager Sudhakar from Hyderabad Circle, Telangana Gandhi Road, Uppal Branch; Mitra Holistic Health Society Chairman Lakshmi Reddy; ICDS Alwal CDPO Swathi; Supervisor Venkataramana; and others.

Congress candidates will win Senior Congress leader Dr Gugulothu Ravi



““Yellandu, February 8 (indian chronicle):““Senior district Congress leaders Dr Gugulothu Ravi appealed to the people to vote for the Congress party candidates in the 24 wards of Yellandu municipality in the municipal elections to be held on November 11. He said the Congress government in the state had introduced several welfare schemes. He said that for many years, the Congress government has sanctioned ration cards with Andani grapes, provided electricity bills of less than 200 units free of cost, brought bus facilities free of cost for women, and worked for a 100-bed hospital in the town. The Congress has fielded candidates in 24 wards.

Collective Baby Shower Ceremony for Orphan Women Organised by Bhagyanagar Women's Association

LB Nagar MLA Devi Sudheer Reddy Attends as Chief Guest



““Kishore Vaddepalli, Hyderabad, February 8 (Indian Chronicle):““On the occasion of completing eight years of service, the Bhagyanagar Women's Association organised a grand collective Seemantham (traditional baby shower ceremony) for orphan women, following age-old traditions. On the same occasion, the new team was formally sworn in. The programme was graced by LB Nagar MLA Devi Sudheer Reddy as the chief guest. Speaking on the occasion, the MLA appreciated the commendable service activities carried out by the Bhagyanagar Women's Association over the past eight years. He assured that he would extend his full support and cooperation to all the initiatives undertaken by the

Association to empower women and help them excel in all fields. Several office bearers and members of the Bhagyanagar Women's Association participated in the programme, including Founder and President Uppala Nirmala, General Secretary Prasanthi Gupta, Treasurer Pavani, Vice President Srivani, Additional Secretary P.R. Sridevi, VRO Sailaja, Organizer Jayalakshmi, Organising Secretary Nagalakshmi, Tour Committee Member Saroja, Coordinator Sathy, Programme Chairperson Guntha Bharathi, Media Chairperson Vijay Gupta, Membership Development In-charge Sarada, Devotional Chairperson H. Sridevi, Cultural Chairperson Vanaja, and Tour Committee Member Samudrala Lakshmi, among others.

RSP and Konappa Reunite on One Stage



high command. The development has sparked considerable discussion in political circles. At a municipal election campaign meeting held on Saturday night at Ram Mandir Chowrasta in Kagaznagar town, former MLA Koneru Konappa and TRS State General Secretary Dr. R.S. Praveen Kumar shared the stage. Until just two days ago, the two leaders were known to hold differing views. Their joint appearance and coordinated campaign came as a surprise to many locals. Addressing the gathering, the leaders stated that they are working together in accordance with the instructions of TRS chief K. Chandrashekhar Rao (KCR) and former Minister K.T.

Rama Rao (KTR). They expressed confidence in securing a majority of seats in the Kagaznagar Municipality and winning the Chairman's post. They further asserted that their collective goal is to strengthen the party and work towards reinstating KCR as Chief Minister in the coming days. TRS councillor candidates were also present at the event. The leaders appealed to voters to cast their votes in favour of the party's symbol, the 'Car', in the upcoming municipal elections.

““Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), February 8, “Kagaznagar: Two key leaders from the same political party, who had recently been at odds due to internal differences, have reunited following directions from the party

Bhongir MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy actively campaigned, seeking victory for the Congress party candidate in Ward 31



“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhongir District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... February 8): A campaign program was conducted by the Congress party in Banjara Hills, Ward 31 of Bhongir town. During this program, DCC General Secretary MD Mazhar conducted door-to-

door campaigning. On this occasion, it was stated that under the leadership of Bhongir MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy, the development of Bhongir Municipality would address the ward's problems. Ward residents and others participated in this program.

On the occasion of Bhongir MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy's birthday, Kumbham Keerthi Reddy visited the Someshwara Temple in Pachala Katta, offered prayers, and performed special rituals

“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhongir District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... February 8):- At the Pachala Katta Someshwara Temple, on the occasion of Bhongir MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy's birthday, Kumbham Keerthi Reddy and others visited the deity and performed special prayers. On the occasion of the birthday of Bhongir MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy, special prayers were offered to the deity at the Sri Pachalkatta Someshwara Temple under the leadership of the temple chairman Kolluri Raju. The temple priests blessed MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy with Vedic chants. Speaking on the occasion, MLA Anil Kumar Reddy said that he has completed two years as an MLA with the blessings of the people of the Bhongir constituency. He said that with the help of the Chief Minister, he has secured Rs. 57 crore in

HMDA funds and is undertaking development programs in every village of the constituency. He mentioned that the construction and widening of a CC road from the main road to the Pachalkatta Someshwara Temple has been undertaken for the convenience of devotees. He also stated that CC roads, streetlights, and basic amenities have been provided around the temple premises. He further appealed to the people of Bhongir town to elect Congress party candidates in all 35 wards during the upcoming municipal elections. He emphasized that with a Congress MLA, a Congress MP, and a Congress Chief Minister in the state, government welfare programs will be effectively implemented in all 35 wards of Bhongir town. He highlighted the government's focus on both welfare and development,

mentioning the implementation of the six guarantee schemes, including free bus travel for women, cooking gas cylinders at Rs. 500, 200 units of free electricity for every household, the Aarogyasri scheme providing medical treatment up to Rs. 10 lakhs for the poor in private hospitals, loan waivers for farmers, a Rs. 500 bonus for fine paddy, and the Rythu Bharosa scheme, among many other programs of the Congress government. The government is undertaking numerous development programs for the urban residents, providing drinking water, streetlights, CC roads, and drainage systems on an unprecedented scale. On this occasion, the people of Bhongir town were requested to extend their blessings to the Congress party candidates. Former Market Committee Chairman and TPCC General Secretary Pothunna Pramod Kumar, former Municipal Chairman Pothamshetty Venkateshwari, Bhongir Town Congress Party President Koora Venkatesh, former councilor Padagala Renuka Pradeep, Gurrala Srinu, Sai, temple chief priest Kappa Ganthula Nagaraju Sharma, Puttappa Bhishma, former temple chairman Devarakonda Narasimha Chari, and other prominent figures from the Bhongir constituency participated in this program.



“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... February 8):- A scene of State Panchayat Raj Minister Seethakka, along with Bhuvanagiri MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy and others, participating in a door-to-door campaign in Bhuvanagiri town, seeking victory for the Congress party's councilor candidates.

Elect Vadepalli Yadagiri, the CPM candidate who works tirelessly for public movements: - CPM State Committee Member Kondamadugu Narasimha



“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... February 8):- CPM State Committee member Kondamadugu Narasimha appealed to all the people to vote for and elect Vadepalli Yadagiri, the CPM candidate for Pochampally's 4th ward, who constantly works for the resolution of public issues under the banner of the red flag, using the hammer, sickle, and star symbol. On Sunday, a door-to-door campaign was conducted in Pochampally town's 4th ward, urging people to elect CPM candidate Vadepalli Yadagiri. Speaking on this occasion, Narasimha criticized the BJP, Congress, and BRS parties for making numerous promises to gain people's votes, but lacking sincerity in implementing them after winning the elections. He criticized the BJP for breaking its promise of creating one crore jobs annually and for looting the country by handing it over to foreign and domestic corporate forces under the guise of 'Swadeshi' (self-reliance). He said that they have burdened the people and disrupted their lives. He criticized the Congress government, which came to power in the state, for giving numerous promises but lacking sincerity in their implementation. He said that they have cheated the poor by not implementing a single welfare scheme. Narasimha stated that the BRS party, having neglected people's welfare and urban development during its ten-year rule, received a fitting lesson from the people. He urged the public to defeat these parties, which are still trying to deceive the people in these elections. Narasimha appealed to the people to support and elect the CPM party, which considers people's problems as its agenda and continuously conducts movements for the development of workers, farmers, agricultural laborers, professionals, women, students, youth, and all sections of society, and its candidate, Vadepalli Yadagiri. Also participating in this program were district committee members Komatireddy Chandrareddy, Kota Ramachandra Reddy, CPM mandal committee members Manchala Madhu, Prasadam Vishnu, Guduru Buchireddy, town and mandal committee members Bugga Laxmaiah, Ponnamoni Krishna, Patti Bhikshapathi, and leaders Pothagalla Ramachandram, Gurra Bayalla, Nallagari Narasimha, Badugu Rajan Babu, Chandupatla Srinu, Nalla Mallesh, Repaka Naveen, Repaka Manoj, and others.

Decoding brain bleeds: evolving treatments promise encouraging results



eyelids, mild headaches, etc. According to data from a large study published in *The Lancet* involving patients from multiple countries, the prevalence of unruptured aneurysm in the group was 3.2% without any other known diseases. The average age at aneurysm diagnosis is 50 years, and overall, it is more common in women. Causes and diagnosis

The precise reasons behind aneurysm formations are still not fully clear. However, uncontrolled high blood pressure and smoking are known to be prominent risk factors for aneurysm development and rupture. In some cases, a family history of brain aneurysm also plays a significant role. Patients with polycystic kidneys or connective tissue disorders are prone to aneurysm development too. When symptoms point to an aneurysm, the diagnosis is usually confirmed by a CT or MRI scan with an angiography. In high-risk patients such as those with a family history, periodic brain scans are recommended even in the absence of symptoms. Once the diagnosis is established, a catheter angiography is often required for treatment planning. Here, interventionists introduce a catheter (thin tube) into the blood vessels of the neck through a pinhole made in the leg artery or artery at the wrist. Detailed images of the aneurysm are then acquired in the specialised X-ray machine (cath-lab/angi-suite) after an injection of radio-opaque dye through the catheter. Treating brain aneurysms

The treatment of an aneurysm depends on whether it was detected after minor symptoms, it ruptured or if it was a subarachnoid haemorrhage. In the case of a subarachnoid haemorrhage, treatment is done on an emergency basis. In other cases, it can be planned or elective treatment. Unfortunately, there is no medicine that can dissolve the aneurysm and heal the abnormal blood vessels. Broadly, there are two ways in which an aneurysm can be treated: one, via opening the skull surgically and two, via a minimally invasive or endovascular route through a pinhole in the leg artery. In open neurosurgical procedures, a metal clip is placed at the base of the aneurysm to prevent the blood from flowing inside the aneurysm. The most common endovascular option is coiling, where soft platinum coils are placed and aneurysm is packed. While the first open surgical clipping dates back to 1938, it has only been three decades since coiling was used. Now however, coiling has been established as an option as well. The choice of whether clipping or coiling is better in a given case is decided based on the location and shape of the aneurysm. The science of aneurysm treatment is changing rapidly now. Newer endovascular treatment options such as flow-diverters or flow-disrupters are emerging as promising treatment modalities with very high cure rates in difficult-to-treat aneurysms. A subarachnoid haemorrhage due to a brain aneurysm used to be challenging for surgeons. However, medical science is advancing by leaps and bounds and minimally invasive procedures and sophisticated devices are now available to help doctors take on these conditions and treat them with encouraging results. What this means for patients who suffer from strokes, is that there is hope. Getting help at the earliest through a proper diagnosis and right treatment is crucial.

A brain aneurysm is a balloon-like outpouching or protrusion affecting the blood vessels of the brain. A haemorrhage happens when the wall of the balloon becomes weak and ruptures. Brain aneurysms usually go undetected until they rupture and cause a subarachnoid haemorrhage. When the haemorrhage occurs, patients develop sudden severe headaches often termed as "thunderclap headaches" or "the worst headache of life". This is usually accompanied by nausea or vomiting. In most cases, the point of rupture becomes sealed temporarily after some blood leakage. However, in such cases, there is a high chance that the blood vessel may rupture again. When the amount of blood leakage is high, patients become unconscious and many unfortunately succumb even before reaching the hospital. Aneurysms can also produce less intense symptoms such as vision problems, drooping of

We need to talk more about Post-Polio Syndrome



It is common knowledge that poliomyelitis or polio for short, can cause acute paralysis, and fortunately, global vaccination efforts have made the disease vanishingly rare in many places. But what is less talked about is what happens years or even decades after recovery from polio. Survivors of polio may develop an insidious condition known as Post-Polio Syndrome (PPS). A light must be shone on this "long tail" of polio, because for many, the story doesn't end after the immediate recovery. Long-term consequences

The poliovirus attacks motor neurons in the spinal cord, leading to muscle weakness or paralysis in some victims. Many survivors recover significantly, thanks to the nervous system's capacity to "sprout" compensatory connections. However, decades later, that very compensation may start to fail. PPS is typically defined as the appearance of new muscle weakness, fatigue, muscle or joint pain, sometimes breathing or swallowing problems, occurring 15 to 40 years after the original polio infection. Estimates suggest PPS may affect anywhere from 25% to 40% of polio survivors, although depending on the criteria used it could range more widely (some reports say up to 80%).

Why does PPS happen? There is no clear answer as of yet, but the leading hypothesis is this: after the acute infection, surviving motor neurons expand their innervation territory (they sprout new axonal branches) to pick up the slack for destroyed neurons. Over the years, these "super-charged" neurons get overworked and eventually start to fail. In addition, normal ageing, added stress, disuse or overuse of muscles, may all contribute. Some research shows structural changes such as spinal cord grey matter atrophy in PPS patients that correlate with functional decline. At my clinic, I frequently hear polio survivors say: "I was fine for many years, but now, I am not able to walk as far any more,

I am fatigued more easily, my polio leg is weaker again, and I have more joint pain." These often are the classic symptoms of PPS: continuing weakness may occur in limbs previously affected by the original illness and, at times, in limbs that have never been affected. Fatigue, muscle cramps, joint pain and muscle pain, difficulties sleeping and cold intolerance also occur. While PPS rarely causes loss of life, significant muscle involvement may result in serious complications, such as falls, fractures, or issues with breathing or swallowing. PPS is a growing concern around the world. Since the severe polio epidemics of the 1940-60s led to millions of people surviving polio, many of these people are now older adults experiencing PPS. From a functional perspective, the decline in function can impact mobility, independence, work ability and quality of life. Currently, there is no cure for PPS. Treatment is symptomatic and supportive. Care for post-polio syndrome (PPS) predominantly aims at managing symptoms in order to allow individuals to maintain mobility. Gentle physical therapy and low-stress exercises help maintain muscle function without excessive exertion, because the more a person exerts themselves, the more fatigued they will become. Simple things such as taking breaks, pacing the day's activities, or using a cane or walker will save energy. A combination of physiotherapy, heat, and mild medication usually provides moderate-to-profound relief for pain and improvements in walking ability, offering a glimpse of better options ahead for those living with PPS. As the polio survivor population ages, clinicians and health systems need to be aware of PPS — it is frequently under-diagnosed or mis-labelled as "just ageing" or "arthritis." Vigilance involves asking about a past history of polio in older patients with new weakness/fatigue; evaluating for other causes, and then implementing a multidisciplinary care plan. From a public health perspective, it is also a reminder of just how powerful—and long-lasting—the benefits of vaccination are: preventing polio in the first place means you avoid not just the acute illness, but the decades-later burden of PPS. Surviving polio doesn't always mean you are done with it. Many people come through the acute phase, recover well and then decades later hit a second curve of new problems. As doctors, we must bring PPS into our radar, treat it with respect, and help our patients adapt their lives rather than suffer passively. For survivors, the message is: if you had polio, and you're noticing new fatigue, weakness or pain — don't just shrug it off as "ageing" — ask your doctor about PPS, get the right rehabilitation and support, and make sure mobility and quality of life remain in your hands.

Respect the health rights of India's children

The deaths of 25 children linked to contaminated cough syrup has shocked the conscience of the nation. In a news cycle that often highlights 'man bites dog' sensationalism, the general public is largely aware of two things: that 25 children died, and that a paediatrician in Madhya Pradesh who defiantly prescribed the syrup to the children is said to have received a paltry commission of ₹2.54 a bottle; thus the cost of each of those young lives was ₹2.54.

That

all this happened despite the Union Health Ministry having banned certain cough syrup formulations for children under the age of four years — as recently as April 2025 — citing the risk of contamination, is shocking. There has also been much discussion on responsibility — which agency failed in its duty to monitor and prevent the distribution of the syrup. The regulatory agencies in India responsible include the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation under the Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India which handles large manufacturers of drugs and export approvals, and State drug control officers who handle the regulation, care, manufacture, sale and distribution of drugs by small- and medium-scale manufacturers.

Where the focus needs to be Rather than apportion blame, it would be wise to allow the law to take its course. The focus must be on the regulatory framework behind the distribution of paediatric medicines in India, and the challenges India faces in ensuring the protection it has guaranteed to its children in Article 39(f) of the Constitution, which is also listed as an important Directive Principle of State Policy.

Children (the age group under 18 years) make up 39% of India's population. There are a catena of laws and policies in India — approximately 13 — that are specifically designed to protect children, from the seminal National Policy for Children 1974 to the India Newborn Action Plan 2014. There are also about 10 pieces of legislation with special provisions for children such as the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act to the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act. Significantly, while these are critical interventions, they focus heavily on protecting children in the workforce (labour laws), and preventing and punishing the sexual exploitation of children. There are important initiatives for children in health and education, but the specific area of pharmacovigilance in the dissemination of paediatric drugs requires far more oversight and also the development of robust infrastructure.

In a similar context, Dr. Harry Shirkey called children "therapeutic orphans". Children are not small adults. The pharmacodynamic responses of children and adults are vastly different due to a spectrum of different physiologies. Further, clinical trials of drugs are usually conducted on adults and for ethical and other reasons almost never on children, resulting in an alarming lack of paediatric guidelines of dosage and administration. All too often, the dosage and administration of drugs for children are extrapolated from guidelines for adults, leaving children in much danger of overdose and more serious consequences. Special development strategies of drugs for children are a cornerstone of their health-care needs, particularly public health care. Overseas, the regulatory framework for children-related pharmaceuticals is an eye-opener. In the European Union, it is under the Paediatric Use Marketing Authorisation and in the United States, under the Best Pharmaceuticals for Children Act (BPCA). Inter alia, such legislation also provides incentives for research into paediatric drugs. India does not have a specific policy or legislation and operates on general guidelines. Since children are totally dependent on their parents or guardians for their health needs, it is necessary that the government frames clear guidelines. Health-care-related financial burdens often cause many impoverished families to fall into deeper poverty, making it even more vital that the pharmaceutical needs of children are made affordable. The essential medicine concept

Therefore, the introduction of the essential medicine concept in the health-care sector contributes significantly to the greater availability and affordability of life-saving medi-



There needs to be a holistic framework to monitor medicine use for children

cines. Essential medicines are those which satisfy the priority health-care needs of the population, are intended to be available in all health-care systems and are of quality and affordable. Several years ago, the World Health Organisation (WHO) introduced an essential Medicine list for children (EMLC). This is used by policy makers to update the EMCL lists in their own countries. Although EMCL for adults are periodically revised, the EMCL for children is not addressed regularly. This requires immediate attention of policymakers. Other basic safe practices in the distribution of children's pharmaceuticals include constant education for care-givers and pharmacists, and making it mandatory to read the label, dispense the correct dosage and watch for side-effects particularly when buying over-the-counter medication. Regulation of over-the-counter medication for children especially for cough, cold and fever is an important dimension of public health care. The use of OTC medication varies in rural and urban areas, but is more common in an urban setting.

Public health-care outlets are another area of focus where clear guidelines need to be enforced in dispensing pharmaceuticals to children. A zero tolerance policy must be adopted against substitute or substandard medication. In the case of teenagers, attention must be paid to prevent the misuse of drugs. Over the last three years, WHO has issued several warnings on contaminated cough syrup. Some of these are related to cough syrup made in various places in India. Children have also died in the Gambia, Uzbekistan, Indonesia and Cameroon as a result of these contaminated syrups. India has emerged as the pharmacy to the Global South with huge exports of cough syrups, but this carries with it a responsibility to ensure the absolute safety of the medicines exported. Need for India's health policy with regard to paediatric medicines cannot be framed only on the basis of data on children available from other countries. Our genetics are unique to us and our research needs to be based on wholly Indian data. Nor should data on paediatric medicines be extrapolated from data that is related to adults. We owe a fiduciary duty to our children to take care in framing a health policy for them. We expect responsible policymakers to take into account diverse factors including awareness of environmental pitfalls such as how toxicity of a cough syrup may be exacerbated by malnutrition in children. Thus, adult medicines modified during administration to children can only be considered as off-label and unlicensed. They should not be used at all since they are contraindicated in terms of formulation, age and indicators. Clearly, monitoring safe medicine use in children is of utmost importance. The use of medicines not proven to be safe for children is a violation of the rights of voiceless children. India urgently needs a robust and holistic infrastructure to monitor and promote awareness of safety protocols with regard to medicines given to children.



The Louvre's director acknowledged a "terrible failure" at the Paris tourist attraction after a daylight crown jewel heist over the weekend, and said that she offered to resign but it was refused.

to 19th-century Queens Marie-Amélie and Hortense. They also made off with an emerald necklace and earrings tied to Empress Marie-Louise, Napoleon Bonaparte's second wife, as well as a reliquary brooch. Empress Eugénie's diamond diadem and her large corsage-bow brooch — an imperial ensemble of rare craftsmanship — were also part of the loot. One piece — Eugénie's emerald-set imperial crown, with more than 1,300 diamonds — was later found outside the museum, damaged but recoverable. Fears the jewels will be destroyed. Prosecutor Laure Beccuaud valued the haul at about ₹88 million euros (\$102 million), a "spectacular" figure that still fails to capture the works' historical weight. She warned that the thieves would be unlikely to realize anything close to that sum if they pry out stones or melt the metals — a fate curators fear would pulverize centuries of meaning into anonymous gems for the black market. Beccuaud said that expert analyses are underway; four people have been identified as being present at the scene, and roughly 100 investigators are mapping the crew and any accomplices, in addition to forensics experts. Security overhaul All this comes after Macron announced new measures in January for the Louvre — complete with a new command post and expanded camera grid that the Culture Ministry says is being rolled out. It also raises hard questions, including whether Sunday's breach is tied to staffing levels, and how uniformly the upgrades in the overhaul are being applied. Protection for headline works is airtight — the "Mona Lisa" is behind bulletproof glass in a climate-controlled case — yet the break-in exposed seams elsewhere in a 33,000-object labyrinth. For many French, the contrast is a public embarrassment at the landmark. It touches a raw nerve: the issue of swelling crowds and over-stretched staff. In June, a staff walkout over overcrowding and chronic understaffing delayed opening. Unions argue that mass tourism leaves security lacking and creates pressure points where construction zones, freight access and visitor flows intersect. On Wednesday, the Louvre's other star attractions — from the Venus de Milo to the Winged Victory of Samothrace — were open again. But the cordoned-off vitrines in the Apollo Gallery, guarded and empty, told a different story: one of a breach measured not just in minutes and euros, but in the fragility of a nation's patrimony

Then came the getaway on motorbikes through central Paris. Alarms had gone off, drawing agents to the gallery and forcing the intruders to bolt. As it reopened, the Louvre declined questions from The Associated Press to detail any reinforced protocols. It said that no uniformed police were posted in the corridors. With school holidays swelling demand, the day was fully booked and access limited. "I didn't notice extra security — guards as always, and no police inside. It felt like a normal day," said Tomás Álvarez, 29, a software engineer from Madrid. The loot — the thieves made away with a total of eight objects, including a sapphire diadem, necklace and single earring from a set linked

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Trump repeats claim he stopped potential nuclear war between India and Pakistan



GNS News Agency, Feb 8

New York/Washington: US President Donald Trump has repeated his claim of resolving the India-Pakistan conflict and asserted that Islamabad's leadership credited him for saving millions of lives. "We stopped a potential nuclear war between Pakistan and India. And the head of Pakistan, a highly respected General, he's a Field Marshal and also

the Prime Minister of Pakistan, said President Trump saved 10 million lives, maybe more..." Trump said Monday.

He made these remarks at Mar-a-Lago, Florida, flanked by Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth, Navy Secretary John Phelan, and Secretary of State Marco Rubio. "You know, eight planes were shot down. That war was starting to rage, and he actually said the other day that President Trump saved 10 million lives, maybe more. So we solved all these wars. The only one I haven't solved yet is Russia, Ukraine," he said. Since May 10, when Trump announced on social media that India and Pakistan had agreed to a "full and immediate" ceasefire after a "long night" of talks mediated by Washington, he has repeated his claim over 60 times that he "helped settle" the tensions between the two neighbours. New Delhi has consistently denied any third-party intervention. India launched Operation Sindoora on May 7, targeting terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in retaliation for the April 22 Pahalgam attack that killed 26 civilians. India and Pakistan reached an understanding on May 10 to end the conflict after four days of intense cross-border drone and missile strikes.

Bangladesh summons Indian envoy over security concerns for missions

GNS News Agency, Feb 8

Dhaka: Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Pranay Verma, was on Tuesday summoned to Bangladesh's Ministry of Foreign Affairs amid concerns over the security of Bangladeshi missions in India. Bangladesh's Foreign Secretary Asad Alam Siam summoned the Indian High Commissioner, Prothomalo.com reported. Diplomatic sources confirmed the matter. According to the sources, Verma was summoned in light of the emerging security situation surrounding Bangladesh missions located in various parts of India, including New Delhi and Kolkata, the report added. Diplomatic sources said that Verma has been requested to ensure strengthened security for Bangladesh missions located in various parts of India.

This marks the second time in the past 10 days that Verma has been summoned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The neighbouring country's envoy has been summoned at least six times over various incidents during the tenure



of the interim government. Before today, Verma was summoned to the Foreign Ministry on 14 December. A statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs following that meeting said that India's cooperation was sought to prevent the attackers who assaulted Inquilab Moncho convener Sharif Osman Hadi from fleeing to India, the report added.

New York Assemblywoman condemns mob killing of Hindu youth in Bangladesh



GNS News Agency, Feb 8

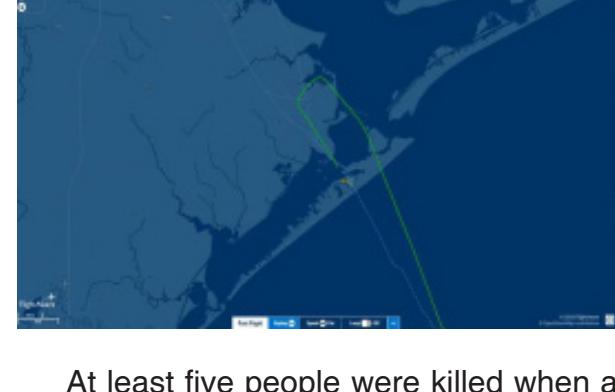
Washington: Condemning the mob lynching of a young Hindu man in Bangladesh, New York State Assemblywoman Jenifer Rajkumar warned of what she described as a troubling pattern of violence and persecution targeting religious minorities in the country. In a statement, Rajkumar said she was "deeply disturbed by the ongoing violence against Bangladesh's Hindu minority," citing the killing of Dipu Chandra Das as the most recent and brutal example.

"The horrific mob killing of Dipu Chandra Das underscores a troubling pattern of violence against Hindus and religious minorities in Bangladesh," Rajkumar said. "We must stand together—from Queens to across the globe—for human rights, justice, and religious freedom." Das, a Hindu Bangladeshi, was just 25 years old when he was killed. Rajkumar said a mob attacked him, beat him, set him ablaze, and left his body on a highway. Authorities have reportedly arrested twelve individuals in connection with the killing. "I am deeply disturbed by the ongoing violence against Bangladesh's Hindu minority, exemplified most recently by

the brutal lynching of Hindu Bangladeshi Dipu Chandra Das, who was just 25 years old," she said in the statement. The assemblywoman said the killing was not an isolated incident but part of a wider pattern of religious persecution and targeted violence against minorities in Bangladesh. "This incident is part of a troubling pattern of religious persecution and targeted violence against religious minorities in Bangladesh," Rajkumar said. She pointed to figures documented by the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council, which she said recorded thousands of incidents over the past year. "The Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council documented 2,442 incidents of violence against minorities and over 150 temples vandalized from August 2024 to July 2025," the statement said.

Rajkumar said such figures reflected a climate of fear and insecurity for minority communities, particularly Hindus, in Bangladesh. She added that the impact of such violence extends far beyond the country's borders. "From Queens to countries across the globe, we all share in the fear, pain, and uncertainty faced by Hindus in Bangladesh," she said. Rajkumar said she stood in solidarity with Bangladesh's Hindu community and reiterated her support for protecting human rights and religious freedom worldwide. "We stand in solidarity with Bangladesh's Hindu community and for human rights and religious freedom globally," she said. Rajkumar represents a district in Queens, New York, home to a large and diverse immigrant population, including members of the South Asian and Bangladeshi diaspora. She has frequently spoken on issues related to civil rights, religious freedom, and the protection of minority communities. The statement comes amid growing concern among diaspora groups and human rights advocates over reports of violence against religious minorities in Bangladesh, particularly following episodes of political unrest and social tension.

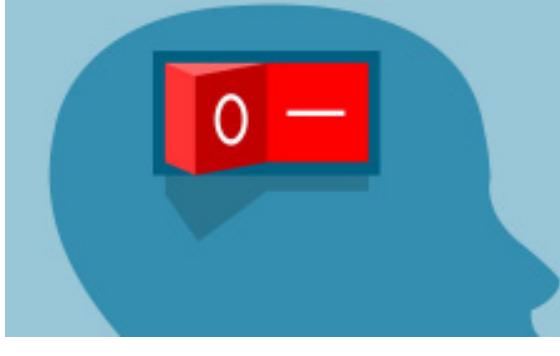
Mexican Navy aircraft carrying child patient crashes off Texas coast, five dead



At least five people were killed when a Mexican Navy plane on a medical mission crashed near Galveston, Texas. The aircraft carried Navy officers, civilians and a child patient. US authorities have launched a search and investigation as foggy conditions persist.

A popular beach destination. It's not immediately clear if the weather was a factor. However, the area has been experiencing foggy conditions over the past few days, according to Cameron Batiste, a National Weather Service meteorologist. He said that at about 2:30 pm on Monday a fog came in that had about a half-mile visibility. The foggy conditions are expected to persist through Tuesday morning.

Right to Disconnect: Drawing the line after work



The Right to Disconnect Bill has been introduced as a private member's bill, a form of legislation that is rarely enacted. It comes in the context of India's recent consolidation of labour law through the four labour codes, which regulate working hours, overtime, and employer control. Against this background, the Bill marks a pivotal moment in Indian labour law. In this age of digital technologies, work increasingly extends beyond the physical workspace. Therefore, it is only prudent for the legislature to reconsider how labour law responds to constant connectivity. However, it does so in a framework that regulates work primarily through time-based constructs. Indian labour law is yet to define what constitutes 'work' in a digital economy. While the Bill regulates after-hours communication, it does so without clarifying the scope of 'work'. This omission becomes crucial when the Bill is read alongside other codes governing working time and employer control. Therefore, we examine unresolved questions concerning the definition of 'work', the scope of the proposed right, and its potential constitutional character, while drawing a comparison as well. Some ambiguity

The Bill provides employees the right to not respond to work-related calls or mails beyond the prescribed working hours. However, it fails to address whether such after-hours engagement falls within the legal constructs of work. This ambiguity is particularly obvious in the interaction of the Bill with the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020, which continues governing working hours and overtime in Indian labour law. However, the Bill does not clarify whether after-hours digital engagement amounts to "work" under the Code. This inadvertently creates a conceptual gap where communication is regulated without being integrated in the legal framework governing working time. As a consequence, the right to disconnect operates more as a behavioural norm than a labour standard. Approach of other jurisdictions

The gaps become apparent when compared with ju-

risdictions that have already imbibed the right to disconnect in their legal regimes. In the European Union, employer control became a key parameter for assessing working time. Through judicial precedents, an expansive definition was adopted, which included on-call time, standby periods, and other forms of availability, even where no active work is performed but the employer continues to exercise control. This principle further evolved through decisions such as SIMAP, Tyco, and Jaeger, where the European Court of Justice equated employer's control with work. Similarly, France does not try to redefine work. Instead, its labour law demarcates working time and rest time. Periods of availability under employer control are considered working time, and digital communication is integrated into this framework through collective bargaining. Germany enforces strict working time and rest period regulations as well. These comparisons are not offered for replication in India, but to engage with an unresolved legal question: when does an employee's time belong to the employer? The Indian labour code contains mandatory rules, prescribing limits on working hours, and contractual terms negotiated through employer policy and agreements. The Right to Disconnect Bill does not specify whether the given right is a mandatory labour standard or its term can be modified via a contract. Another question concerns the Bill's constitutional character. The freedom to disengage bears an evident relationship with Article 21 of the Constitution. Yet the Bill neither traces its constitutional lineage nor articulates how these guarantees are to be realised within the workplace. The Bill leaves unresolved whether the right to disconnect is purely statutory or indicative of a deeper constitutional engagement between work and individual autonomy. Conclusion The Bill recognises that digital work has blurred the traditional boundaries between working time and personal time, but it does not explain how this transformation is to be accommodated within the legal framework which governs working hours, overtime and employer control. A comparative study reveals that the right to disconnect becomes effective when an employee's time is treated as working time. This gap is yet to be filled. Until the Bill addresses how digital labour complies with existing labour laws, it will continue to rely on a framework designed for regulating physical workplaces. The Bill leaves open whether the right has a constitutional character. Although there is an evident connection between Right to Disconnect and individual autonomy under Article 21 of the Constitution, this is not made apparent by the legislature. The Bill neither identifies this gap nor acknowledges it, which leaves it open to divergent interpretations. For these reasons, the Bill is best seen as the beginning of a broader conversation, one that the Indian labour law jurisprudence will eventually address.

Zelenskyy says progress in U.S.-led peace talks is 'quite solid'



GNS News Agency, Feb 8 Initial drafts of U.S. proposals for a peace deal between Ukraine and Russia meet many of Kyiv's demands, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Monday (December 22, 2025). However, he suggested that neither side in the almost four-year war is likely to get everything it wants in talks on reaching a settlement. "Overall, it looks quite solid at this stage," the Ukrainian leader said of recent talks with U.S. officials who are trying to steer the neighbouring countries toward compromises.

"There are some things we are probably not ready for, and I'm sure there are things the Russians are not ready for either," Mr. Zelenskyy told reporters in Kyiv. U.S. President Donald Trump has for months been pushing for a peace agreement. However, the negotiations have run into sharply conflicting demands from Moscow and Kyiv. But U.S. envoy Steve Witkop said on Sunday (December 21) he held "productive and constructive" talks in Florida with Ukrainian and European representatives.

Mr. Zelenskyy said that "nearly 90%" of Ukraine's demands have been incorporated into the draft agreements. The backbone of the proposed deal is a 20-point plan, he said. There is also a framework document on security guarantees between Ukraine, European countries, and the United States, as well as a separate document on bilateral security guarantees granted to Ukraine by the U.S.. Mr. Zelenskyy mentioned several key points, such as the Ukrainian army remaining at a peacetime level of 800,000; membership in the European Union; and European forces, under the leadership of France and the UK and with a "backstop" from Washington, ensuring "Ukraine's security in the air, on land, and at sea." "Some key countries will provide presence in these domains; others will contribute to energy security, finance, bomb shelters, and so on," the Ukrainian president said. Ukraine is arguing that the bilateral document with the US should be reviewed by the U.S. Congress, with some details and annexes kept classified, Mr. Zelenskyy said. The U.S. team is now in talks with Russian envoys, and Washington has asked that no

details be released, he added.

Ukraine strikes deep inside Russia Mr. Zelenskyy said on Monday (December 22) he met with his military commanders, who reported that defensive lines are holding firm against the Russian onslaught. "In (recent) weeks, the Russian army has significantly increased the intensity of attacks, and the number of Russian losses has increased accordingly," he said in a post on Telegram. Ukrainian forces hit an oil terminal, a pipeline, two parked jet fighters and two ships in a series of strikes on Russian soil, officials said Monday. The attacks are part of an ongoing campaign to disrupt the Russian war effort and sow fear behind the front line, where outnumbered Ukrainian troops are straining to hold back Russia's bigger army.

The strikes also seek to undermine President Vladimir Putin's attempt to portray Russia as negotiating from a position of military strength in U.S.-led peace efforts, which have yet to make a breakthrough on key points. The killing of a top Russian general by a car bomb in Moscow on Monday, with investigators suspecting Ukraine was behind it, could be another instance of Kyiv picking surprise targets.

Ukrainian partisans burn Russian fighter jets Ukrainian forces struck the Tamanneftegaz oil terminal, an ammunition depot and a launch site for attack drones inside Russian territory and Russian-held Ukrainian territory, Ukraine's General Staff said in a statement on Monday (December 22). A pipeline, two docks and two ships were damaged in the southern Krasnodar region, and a large blaze broke out, the statement said, without specifying what kind of weapons were used in the attack. It added that a Ukrainian-made missile also hit a temporary base for Russia's 92nd River Boat Brigade in Olenivka, in the occupied Crimean Peninsula. A separate strike targeted an ammunition depot in a Russian-controlled portion of the Donetsk region, aiming to slow the Russian advance there, the General Staff said. A Russian launch site for attack drones was also hit. Ukrainian partisans set fire to two Russian jet fighters in an operation on Sunday evening at a base near Lipetsk, a city in western Russia, according to Ukraine's military intelligence. Russia's Ministry of Defence said only that its forces shot down 41 Ukrainian drones overnight, three of them over the Krasnodar region. Meanwhile, Russian forces kept up their targeting of Ukraine's energy sector, aiming to deprive civilians of heat and running water during the frigid winter. Russia has tried to knock out power in Ukraine throughout the war, in a tactic that Ukraine refers to as "weaponising winter." Energy infrastructure across five regions was attacked during the night, Ukraine's Ministry of Energy said. Russia struck Ukraine with 86 drones of different types overnight, Ukraine's air force said. Ukrainian forces stopped 58 of them, it said.

Shriram Finance expects MUFG transaction likely to finalised around March-April

We would want the MUFG transaction to be finalised by April-March next year. Parag Sharma, managing director and chief executive officer at Shriram Finance told The Hindu in response to a query about the timeline for completion of the transaction. "We would ideally want the transaction to be completed around March-April next year," he stated, adding, "We would be calling for an extraordinary general meeting (EGM) for [seeking] shareholders' approval around the middle of January."

Mr. Sharma informed that the transaction would require approval from the Competition Commission of India (CCI) and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). He exuded confidence about receiving approval from the apex banking regulator considering their positive push in the non-banking

financial services space. In a deal suggested to be the largest foreign direct investment in a financial services company in India, the non-banking financial company (NBFC) informed Monday that their board of directors approved acquiring an investment of ₹39,618 crore from Japanese financial services provider MUFG in return for a 20% stake in the Chennai-headquartered company. The deal would be facilitated through a preferential issuance of equity shares. Further, responding to a query about MUFG potentially increasing their stake in the Chennai-headquartered company, Yasushi Itagaki, Group Head of the Global Commercial Banking Business Group at MUFG said they were happy with their present status as the "significant minority shareholder".

Four firms owned by Arunachal CM Pema Khandu's family got 146 govt contracts in Tawang



Arunachal CM family firms: Four firms, two owned by Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu's wife Tsering Dolma, and one each by his brother Tashi Khandu and sister-in-law Nima Dremma, were awarded 146 work contracts worth Rs 383.74 crore by the state government in Tawang district alone between 2012 and 2023, as per an affidavit submitted to the Supreme Court.

Of this, 59 contracts worth Rs 16.83 crore were awarded directly through work orders without a tender being floated. At least 11 of these work orders exceeded the Rs 50 lakh limit set in 2020 for contracts issued without tenders, which was meant to promote local professionals and entrepreneurs in the state. The contracts were for the construction or maintenance of roads, bridges, drains, irrigation channels, power lines, retaining walls, community halls, cultural centres, residential quarters, office and commercial buildings, tourism facilities, a war memorial, etc.

The Indian Express reviewed the list of contracts submitted in an affidavit by the Arunachal Pradesh government, after the Supreme Court directed the state to furnish the details this March. In a PIL filed last year, Save Mon Region Federation and Voluntary Arunachal Sena had alleged that government work orders were awarded to firms linked to the chief minister's family. The two Arunachal-based organisations have sought the court to direct an investigation by the CBI or an SIT into the award of contracts. On December 2, the apex court took note of the submission of the petitioners' counsel, Prashant Bhushan, that the information provided by the state was not "complete/up to date" and directed the Arunachal government to file a comprehensive affidavit covering all the districts, including Tawang, pertaining to the period 2015 to 2025 within eight weeks. There are 28 districts in Arunachal. Emails and messages sent to Khandu and his office remained unanswered.

In the affidavit, the state named four firms: M/s Frontier Associates and M/s Brand Eagles owned by Pema Khandu's wife Tsering Dolma; M/s RD Construction owned by Pema Khandu's brother Tashi Khandu; and M/s Alliance Trading Company owned by Nima Dremma, wife of Pema Khandu's brother and Tawang MLA Tsering Tashi. In

Tawang district alone, M/s Frontier Associates and M/s Brand Eagles bagged 42 contracts worth Rs 209.6 crore, while M/s RD Construction secured 13 orders worth Rs 29.1 crore and M/s Alliance Trading Company 91 orders worth Rs 145.04 crore, the affidavit states. Of these, 59 contracts were awarded without a tender. As per the affidavit, contracts were awarded to firms owned by Khandu's wife by the Public Works Department, the Rural Works Department, and the Water Resources Department in Tawang, as well as the PWD and the Block Development Office in the district's Jang subdivision.

In 2015, the state government passed a law to give preference to local professionals and entrepreneurs "to secure equitable distribution of state development work" as part of the government's policy. An amendment in 2020 specified the list of works requiring "no special technical know-how" and "costing up to Rs 50 lakh" through work orders, without tenders, at justified rates to local contractors. However, 11 work contracts awarded to the four companies prior to the 2020 amendment exceeded the Rs 50 lakh limit, while another five were capped at Rs 50 lakh, the affidavit shows. For example, the work contract for "establishment of government college in Tawang" issued to M/s Alliance Trading in 2018 was worth Rs 2 crore.

In its affidavit, the state sought to explain the awarding of contracts through work orders, stating that it is normal practice in Arunachal Pradesh given "the historic development of the transition of the state of Arunachal Pradesh from predominantly tribal way of life to a modern-day state". Stating that the land for developmental activities in villages is given by villagers free of cost for employment in the contract work, the state's affidavit says, "The normal practice adopted here is that the government contract work is initially allotted to one contractor who is accustomed and used to the concerned village and is eligible, available and willing to undertake the contract work. The villagers normally prefer the contract firm provided by their elected representatives as they have maximum trust and flexibility to carry out the work under such contract firms." It states that the tender system is adhered to "wherever complicated works require high competence, skill and capability is involved." The affidavit also stated that 95% of the contracts awarded to firms and individuals concerned were through the process of open tender. "Since almost all the contracts were awarded through the process of open tender after inviting and evaluation of technical and financial bids, there can be no allegations of pick and choose or that undue favours were made to the respondents or firms/individuals related to them," it states. The Supreme Court Bench of Justice Vikram Nath and Justice Sandeep Mehta remarked that the allotment of these many contracts to the CM's family is a "remarkable coincidence". The next hearing is scheduled on February 3.

Who was Major Mohit Sharma, why his family claims 'Dhurandhar' is based on him



Dhurandhar controversy explained: The upcoming Bollywood movie Dhurandhar, starring Ranveer Singh, ran into legal trouble after the family of a highly decorated Army officer claimed it is based on his life without due acknowledgement. Major Mohit Sharma laid down his life battling militants in J&K in 2009. He was posthumously awarded the Ashok Chakra, India's highest peacetime gallantry award. His parents approached the Delhi High Court against Dhurandhar, scheduled for release on December 5, seeking protection of their son's legacy and persona. They also wanted the film privately screened for the family before its release.

Filmmaker Aditya Dhar has said the movie is fictional and not based on the Major's life. The censor board on Tuesday (December 2) gave its go-ahead to the movie. Who was Major Mohit Sharma, what did he win his gallantry award for, and what are his family's objections to Dhurandhar?

Who was Major Mohit Sharma?

Major Mohit Sharma was a Special Forces (SF) officer. Before the Ashok Chakra, he had been awarded a Sena Medal for gallantry, for infiltrating a terrorist group in J&K and killing two militants. Major Mohit Sharma, Major Mohit Sharma's wife Major Rishima Sharma receives his Ashok Chakra from then President Pratibha Patil on January 26, 2010. (Photo: Wikimedia Commons) Born in Rohtak in 1978, Major Mohit Sharma joined the National Defence Academy (NDA) in 1995. He was commissioned in December 1999 in the 5th Battalion of The Madras Regiment after passing out from Indian Military Academy (IMA). After a stint in J&K in Rashtriya Rifles, Major Sharma volunteered to join the Special Forces. After training and probation, he finally joined 1 Parachute Battalion (Special Forces). It was during his tenure with this battalion that he earned the Sena Medal for gallantry. He is said to have successfully infiltrated a Hizbul Mujahideen group under cover in 2004. In 2009, Major Sharma was again deployed with a Special Forces unit in Kupwara in Jammu and Kashmir. He took part in an action in which several militants were killed, but in the process he was grievously injured and lost his life. For acts of bravery beyond the call of duty, Major Mohit Sharma was awarded the Ashok Chakra posthumously. Why is Dhurandhar being linked to Major Mohit Sharma?

The family members of Major Mohit Sharma have al-

leged that Ranveer Singh's character is based on him. This character infiltrates a terrorist network in Pakistan and destroys it. They have stated that no permission was sought from the family before using the story and actions of Major Sharma in the movie.

On social media, speculation has been rife that various other characters in the movie are also based on real-life persons. Sanjay Dutt is supposed to be playing Chaudhary Aslam Khan Swati, an 'encounter specialist' of the Karachi police, who was killed in a bomb blast carried out by the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in 2014. Akshaye Khanna's character is also said to be based on Sardar Abdul Rehman Baloch, a well-known criminal based out of Karachi's Lyari locality who was killed in 2009. Another character allegedly resembles National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, a former intelligence officer. The petition came up for hearing on December 1. The plea said that 'Dhurandhar' is being publicly promoted with a view to create a perception that it is based upon the life, persona and operations of Major Mohit Sharma. It was alleged that the same is being done without any consent, consultation or authorisation from the family. The director, screenwriter and co-producer of the movie vehemently denied that the film is being promoted as having been inspired by Major Sharma's life. It was stated that the film is purely a work of fiction and though inspired by true events, bears no connection with the Major. (i) The Central Board of Film Certification shall consider all relevant aspects of the matter, including the concerns articulated by the petitioners, before granting requisite certification for the release of the film. (ii) If considered appropriate, the censor board will refer the matter to the authorities concerned of the Indian Army before taking a final decision.

Worried about data tracking? Here are some open-source alternatives for all Google apps on your phone

If you are an Android user and are worried about Google tracking your data through its apps such as Chrome, Maps and Photos, this article is for you. We have listed alternatives for Google apps that may have you concerned about your privacy and the safety of your data. Cromite can be your option for browsing if you feel that Google Chrome works like a tracking tool which runs background connections you never asked for. Cromite's UI is very similar to Chrome and makes browsing easy for Chrome users without forcing them to change their habits. LibreTube (Alternative to YouTube): LibreTube connects you to YouTube through a privacy-friendly backend, letting you watch YouTube videos without using Google's servers. This option is also helpful for users who are tired of ads before and during videos. Organic Maps (Alternative for Google Maps):

Although Google Maps is a very useful tool, it is slowly turning into a space filled with sponsored location listings. If you do not like seeing such listings on Maps, try Organic Maps, which is based on OpenStreetMap data. It lets you download entire regions for offline use. Heliboard (Alternative

for GBoard): Heliboard is a good option for those who want an alternative to GBoard, which some users may not realise can be a privacy risk. Since keyboards know everything you type, from your address to your passwords, they can pose silent risks on your phone. Heliboard, an open-source keyboard based on OpenBoard, is safer as it needs no internet permissions. Its clean layout, which feels similar to GBoard, is also easy to adapt to. Kvaesito launcher (Alternative to Google launcher): Google's stock launcher is designed to keep you within the Google ecosystem. The Discover feed is a swipe away, the search bar is linked to Google Search, and many features guide you to Google services. Kvaesito changes this by designing the home screen around your usage instead of Google's needs. It is an open-source launcher that can improve your Android experience if the device feels slow or cluttered.

Thunderbird for Android (Alternative to Gmail): Gmail works well, but features like labels, smart sorting and promotion tabs often tie you to one platform's way of handling email.

Economic offenders who fled the country owe 39000 crores to Indian banks



Just nine Fugitive Economic Offenders (FEOs) owed Indian banks over ₹58,000 crore in principal and interest. Despite having arrest warrants issued against them, these FEOs have left India and refuse to return to avoid criminal prosecution. Of this, the principal amount owed is ₹26,645 crore, while interest accounts for ₹31,437 crore. To date, banks have recovered just over ₹19,000 crore — roughly 33% of the total dues. Earlier this week, the Ministry of Finance informed Parliament that 15 individuals had been declared FEOs as of October 31. Nine of them are involved in large-scale financial fraud, and the amounts they owe have been made public.

State Bank of India (SBI) is owed over ₹22,000 crore, followed by Punjab National Bank and Bank of India. The chart below shows the amount owed to the banks and the amount recovered. Notably, the SBI has achieved the high-

est recovery rate among these lenders, retrieving close to 52%. This is largely attributed to effective recovery measures, including liquidation, in Vijay Mallya's account. In contrast, the recovery rate for other banks remains below 40%.

In terms of total dues owed initially (principal plus interest), businessman Mallya tops the list with nearly ₹27,000 crore. The chart below shows the amount owed by the offenders and the amount recovered. He is followed by the Sandesara family (Sterling Group) and Nirav Modi. Over 56% of amount owed by Mallya has been recovered till date, date show, while for others, the rate is much lower at 17% for the Sandesara family and 7% in the case of Modi. The charts below detail the loan exposure and recovered amount for the top offenders. SBI led in exposure to Mallya, whereas PNB bore the brunt of Modi's defaults. For the Sandesara family, the exposure was shared among multiple banks. The chart below details the loan exposure of various banks and the recovered amount in accounts related to Vijay Mallya. The chart below details loan exposure and the recovered amount in accounts related to the Sandesara family.

The chart below details loan exposure and the recovered amount in accounts related to Nirav Modi. The data for the charts were sourced from Parliament Questions and Answers. This analysis includes the two fugitive economic offenders who have negotiated loan settlement under One Time Settlement (OTS). In the graphs, members of the Sandesara family refers to amount borrowed by/recovered from Nitin J. Sandesara, Chetan J. Sandesara, and Dipti C. Sandesara as mentioned in the parliament document.

Does Google's Quantum Echoes bring Q-day closer?

Using a 65-qubit Willow superconducting processor, Google researchers measured how quantum information spreads and refocuses within an entangled system. This technological leap in quantum computing was called Quantum Echoes. Unlike the 2019 Sycamore experiment, which claimed "quantum supremacy" for completing a random-number task faster than any supercomputer, Quantum Echoes was not a speed race but a test of understanding. Scientists measured out-of-time-order correlators (OTOC) — tiny echoes that reveal how disturbances travel through a network of qubits.

The method resembles giving a material a microscopic "poke", reversing time evolution, and listening for the returning echo. The echo's strength reveals how quickly information disperses, offering insight for chemistry, materials science, and superconductivity. Despite its scientific importance, the experiment does not bring the world closer to breaking encryption or to Q-day.

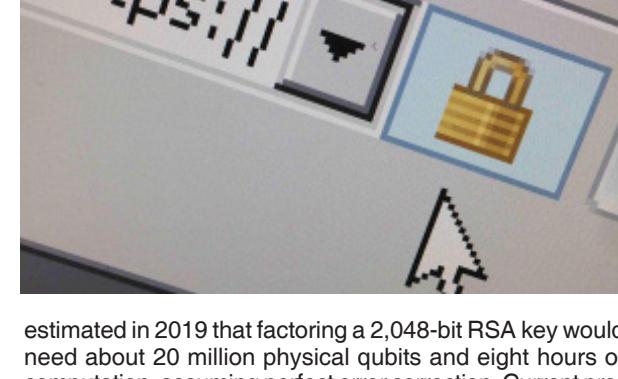
"Harvest now, decrypt later"

Q-day refers to the day a cryptographically relevant quantum computer becomes powerful enough to break public-key encryption. It would not instantly expose all secrets, but any encrypted data stored today could be decoded later if intercepted now — a risk known as "harvest now, decrypt later."

Governments and researchers are already preparing. The U.S. National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) has standardised new post-quantum cryptography (PQC) algorithms — CRYSTALS-Kyber for encryption and Dilithium for digital signatures. These rely on mathematical problems that are believed to resist both classical and quantum attacks. Experts expect that machines capable of breaking RSA-2048 will need millions of logical qubits, which could take 5 to 8 years to build. [RSA-2048 is a commonly used standard for public-key cryptography.] Until then, Q-day remains a theoretical horizon, but one the cybersecurity world takes seriously. Public-key cryptography secures nearly all online communication. RSA encryption works by multiplying two large prime numbers to create an enormous product. Multiplication is easy, but reversing it and finding the original primes is so difficult that even the fastest classical computers would need billions of years to solve it.

Machines that test multiple possibilities Quantum computers operate under the laws of quantum mechanics. Their building blocks, called qubits, exploit superposition — the ability to exist as both 0 and 1 simultaneously — and entanglement — where qubits influence each other instantly, even when far apart. These features let quantum machines test many possibilities at once rather than sequentially. This aspect of existing in multiple places at the same time powers Shor's algorithm, which converts the hard task of factoring numbers into one of finding repeating patterns, or periods, in modular arithmetic. To expose those patterns, the algorithm uses the Quantum Fourier Transform (QFT), a mathematical tool that acts like a detector of hidden rhythms within a signal. Scaling this method to large RSA numbers would let a quantum computer find their prime factors exponentially faster than classical machines.

Craig Gidney and Martin Ekera of Google Research



estimated in 2019 that factoring a 2,048-bit RSA key would need about 20 million physical qubits and eight hours of computation, assuming perfect error correction. Current processors, such as Google's Willow and IBM's Condor, have only a few hundred noisy qubits. A true fault-tolerant quantum computer would require millions of logical qubits, which are stable, error-corrected versions capable of long calculations. That scale remains far beyond present technology. Shor's algorithm and encryption systems in theory, Shor's algorithm is a computational tool designed to factor large numbers efficiently. Its purpose is mathematical and, eventually, cryptographic: it challenges the foundations of today's encryption systems.

And Quantum Echoes is an experiment in physics. Instead of solving equations, it studies how quantum information spreads and re-emerges within entangled particles. While both — Shor's algorithm and Quantum Echoes — use quantum hardware, they serve very different goals. Shor's algorithm seeks computational advantage; Quantum Echoes seeks physical understanding. So, the Willow experiment differs as its results can be verified through repeated measurements and signal-to-noise analysis. It represents progress in scientific reproducibility rather than in cryptographic power. But experts caution that some entities may already be storing encrypted information today to decrypt in the future once quantum machines reach the necessary scale. To prepare, as mentioned earlier, the U.S. NIST has introduced post-quantum algorithms, while companies like Google and Cloudflare are adopting hybrid encryption to secure internet traffic. Regulators, including India's central bank, are urging organisations to transition to quantum-safe systems before the end of the decade. But most networks remain unprotected until that migration is complete. So, what does this preparation by regulators and advances in quantum hardware tell us? Simply put, it will take a long time to break encryption using quantum computers. Google's Quantum Echoes does not bring Q-day any closer. But it does mark a scientific milestone in understanding quantum behaviour. The experiment shows that quantum processors can now verify complex physical interactions within entangled systems — a sign of maturity in quantum science rather than a cybersecurity threat. As quantum technology evolves, its real promise may lie less in defeating today's encryption and more in unlocking the secrets of nature itself. Ensuring our digital infrastructure evolves just as thoughtfully will determine how securely we enter the quantum era.

Health security se National security: Why does Centre want to levy cess on tobacco?

Story so far: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman introduced the Health Security se National Security Cess Bill, 2025 on Thursday (December 4, 2025), kicking off the Centre's reform agenda for Parliament's Winter session. The Bill proposes to levy cess on "machines installed, or other processes undertaken in the manufacture of pan masala" to fund India's 'health and national security'. The Lok Sabha has already passed the Central Excise (Amendment) Bill, 2025 and the amended Manipur Goods and Services Tax (GST) Bill, 2025 while the above-mentioned Bill is currently slated for debate and passage. Introduced as a money Bill, the Health security se National security Cess Bill, 2025 need only be passed by the Lok Sabha. The Upper House has 14 days to provide its recommendations on such a Bill which may or may not be accepted by the Lok Sabha. What does the Bill propose?

Termed the 'Health Security se National Security Cess', the Centre proposes to tax all those people who have machines installed for production of pan masala. The machines include fill and seal machines and any packing machine used to fill pan masala in pouches, tins or other containers.

The cess will be decided as per number of pouches (tins or containers) produced by the machine per minute and pan masala weight packed in a pouch, tin or container. It will be collected at the beginning of each month, but no

later than the seventh. Those paying the cess can self-declare the machine installed or processes undertaken in their factories producing pan masala. Centre can exempt anyone or any class from this cess, if it deems necessary in public interest. The cess has been classified into four categories based on the number of pouches it produces per minute — upto 500, 501-1000, 1001-1500 and above 1500. Correspondingly based on the weight of pan masala packed in each pouch (varying from 2.5 grams to above 10 grams), the cess varies from ₹101 lakh per month per machine to ₹2.5 crores (approximately). It also criminalises any violations upto 5 years imprisonment. According to the Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS-2), nearly 42% of men and 14% of women in India use tobacco. Moreover, India amounts to 70% of the world's smokeless tobacco (SLT) users i.e. gutkha, pan masala and among smoked tobacco, bidis are preferred over cigarettes, especially in rural and lower income families. As both SLT and smoked tobacco use increase cancer risk in lung, head, neck, stomach, and pancreas, India ranks first globally in male cancer deaths. Experts found that the economic cost of both SLT and smoked tobacco amounted to ₹1.77 lakh crore in 2016-17. Centre's ban on use of gutkha has more or less remained ineffective as the tobacco industry has ensured wide accessibility of its products via policy interference, pricing tactics, targeted marketing and dense tobacco shop networks.

A perfect blend of finesse and power



The frisson of excitement that precedes the announcement of the squad for a major cricket tournament was conspicuously absent this time around. No one expected any surprises, not on the basis of the personnel that were selected to represent the country in the 20-over format over the last few months. The established order, it was believed, would be entrusted with the responsibility of fuelling India's title defence at the T20 World Cup. India won the previous edition of this competition in the Americas in June 2024. Under Rohit Sharma, they mounted a fantastic, unbeaten campaign. They swept every game they played in the league (their match against Canada in Lauderhill was a non-starter owing to an unfit outfielder) and Super Eight stages, brushed England aside in the semifinal and overcame a spirited challenge in the title round from an eventually self-destructing South Africa, who somehow went down by seven runs when it appeared a lot easier to wrap their hands around the trophy.

As is inevitable irrespective of the outcome, there was a churn after the last World Cup, with preparations for the next edition beginning almost immediately. Unlike the 50-over iteration which comes about every four years, the T20 World Cup is a biennial affair. Rohit, Virat Kohli and Ravindra Jadeja retired from internationals T20s immediately after the World Cup, which automatically meant alternative resources to fill giant boots had to be identified. There were also exigencies of form that needed to be factored in, alongside the increasingly dynamic demands of the format and the emergence of new talent that could not be overlooked or ignored. There are several common threads to the 15 chosen for the title defence with those that played a year and a half ago – Suryakumar Yadav (now the skipper), Axar Patel (his new old deputy), Hardik Pandya, Shivam Dube, Arshdeep Singh, Jasprit Bumrah, Sanju Samson and Kuldeep Yadav were all part of the side that lifted the trophy in the Americas – and also a host of different, if not new, faces. The seven who figured in 2024 but are missing now are Rohit, Kohli and Jadeja (all retired), reserve opener Yashasvi Jaiswal, wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant, pacer Mohammed Siraj and leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal, who have been replaced (for want of a better word) by Abhishek Sharma, Tilak Varma, Washington Sundar, Ishan Kishan, Harshit Rana, Varun Chakaravarthy and Rinku Singh.

Anyone who doesn't think India boast a formidable, deadly dangerous outfit that is both ranked and is playing like the No. 1 T20 team in the 20-over world needs to think again. And maybe have themselves scrutinised mentally. India have won each of their seven assignments since Suryakumar replaced Rohit on a full-time basis from the tour of Sri Lanka in July last year. Either side of six bilateral conquests, three each at home and away in Sri Lanka, South Africa and Australia, is a flawless 7-0 scoreline stacked up at the Asia Cup in the Emirates in September, when they swatted Pakistan aside thrice in as many Sundays though they were forced to dig deep in the final. India have lost a mere four of their last 29 matches and never more than once in a series; to install them as favourites to go all the way when they will play all matches (except those against Pakistan) at home will appear the most natural thing to do.

The Gill conundrum was leading into the said Asia Cup that those tasked with making the big cricketing decisions in Indian cricket bared their hand. Whether they got carried away by Shubman Gill's inspirational Test display in England, or whether their decision was driven by the necessity to have an all-format captain not too far into the future is debatable. What is not is the selectors throwing most of their eggs in the Gill captaincy basket. In his first outings as the Test captain, Gill was at his subliminal best as a batter, having the connoisseur and the layman eating out of his hand with his command over the England bowling. In the preceding four, Gill had failed to announce himself outside the subcontinent, with a high of just 36 in 18 Test innings in the Caribbean, England, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. But entrusting with leading the side into the future once Rohit called it quits from the five-day game, the real Gill stood up, batting with flair and authority and absolute dominance on his way to 754 wondrous runs. Gill also acquitted himself creditably in the leadership stakes, his exploits rubbing off on his mates as young India came

away with an honourable 2-2 draw against Bazballing England. There is no such thing as a moral victory in sport, but if it was a thing, India would have walked away with that honour.

Did that convince those running Indian cricket that Gill was ready to assume charge as the next poster boy of Indian cricket? Potentially, because immediately after the team returned from Old Blighty with its head held high, Gill replaced Rohit as the 50-over skipper and was brought back from the cold to occupy the throne of the T20I vice-captain to Suryakumar. It wasn't a warning of sorts to the older Mumbaikar, just a loud and unequivocal assertion that Gill was being readied to follow in the footsteps of Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Kohli and Rohit and become the next captain across formats, most likely after the T20 World Cup at home and in Sri Lanka in February-March. Even at the time, without the luxury, benefit and wisdom of hindsight, it seemed as if Gill was being burdened with too much too soon. As it is, before he spearheaded India's Test challenge in England, he had very little experience of captaincy at the first-class or 50-over levels. His only real tryst with a designated leadership role was in the IPL, where he led Gujarat Titans for the last two seasons after Pandya moved back to Mumbai Indians. Given his hitherto limited scope as a captain, to saddle him with so much responsibility in such a compressed period of time seemed overkill, and particularly so given that India were flitting from continent to continent and back, and from format to format, at the drop of a hat. Predictably, Gill felt the heat, professing to mental more than physical fatigue but not immune to physical setbacks either. First came the neck spasms during the first Test against South Africa in Kolkata last month which forced him to miss the second Test (he batted just three balls at Eden Gardens) and the subsequent ODI series. Then, he sustained a blow to his toe which ruled him out of the final two T20Is last week. By this time, his T20I form had taken a spectacular nosedive. Since making it back to the T20I squad at the Asia Cup after 13 and a half months on the sidelines, his highest in 15 innings was a modest 47 against Pakistan. He had come into the 20-over side at the expense of Samson, in a manner of speaking, slotting in as Abhishek's opening partner and forcing the wicketkeeper to drop down the order. At an unfamiliar position, Samson failed to get going and eventually lost his spot in the XI to Jitesh Sharma, more accomplished and experienced as a middle-order keeper-batter.

But as Gill's batting woes continued to mount, it was becoming increasingly difficult for Ajit Agarkar's selection panel and for head coach Gautam Gambhir to reconcile to the new normal where two of the top four batters, both in a leadership role, were delivering practically nothing. Gill alone in poor run-making touch might still have been tempting to overlook if all the other top-order cogs were ticking over smoothly. But Suryakumar has been in an even more prolonged drought. The explosive 35-year-old started his career as captain in his own right with a blazing half-century in Pallekele in July last year but has added only one more 50-plus knock in the last year and a half. In 2025, 19 innings have yielded a highest of 47 not out to go with nine single-digit scores and a mere two efforts of more than 25. These are terribly disappointing numbers, offset somewhat by the stellar record Suryakumar has stacked up as captain, which gives him greater leeway than Gill. It took three and a half months for Agarkar's panel to recognise what was evident to almost everyone else far earlier and axe Gill, if only for the time being. The official line is that team combination exigencies led to Gill's exclusion once the think-tank was convinced that India needed a wicketkeeper-batter to partner dynamic opener Abhishek. How they suddenly came to this conclusion after splitting the extremely successful Abhishek-Samson pair to accommodate Gill is baffling, but no more than what has been the norm in the last few months when questionable calls have pretty much been de rigueur.

A dramatic recall from out of the blue of Ishan Kishan is in keeping with the selectorial mood-swing that has been the flavour of the Agarkar-Gambhir combine. Kishan was put out to pasture when he returned from South Africa midway through an all-format tour in December 2023, citing the need for a break from the game, and then rebuffed suggestions to turn out for Jharkhand in domestic action. Dumped from the central contracts list, he found himself confronted by a rocky road back though to his credit, he has gutted it out and has now been rewarded with a national call-up, ostensibly at the expense of Jitesh. Apart from being a finisher who is a terrific force of nature in the middle order, Jitesh has done nothing wrong and still finds himself having to watch the World Cup on TV, like the rest of us. And to think that only last week, Jitesh appeared a shoo-in for the mega competition. Most of the rest of the squad has picked itself. Samson for Gill, a belated if forced development, is the right call, though the decision should have been more organic and timely instead of being a last-minute afterthought, almost, with so much at stake.

U.S. FDA approves Wegovy pill for weight loss

GNS News Agency, Feb 8

U.S. regulators on Monday (December 22, 2025) gave the green light to a pill version of the blockbuster weight-loss drug Wegovy, the first daily oral medication to treat obesity. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration's approval handed drugmaker Novo Nordisk an edge over rival Eli Lilly in the race to market an obesity pill. Lilly's oral drug, orlistat, is still under review. Both pills are GLP-1 drugs that work like widely used injectables to mimic a natural hormone that controls appetite and feelings of fullness. In recent years, Novo Nordisk's injectable Wegovy and Lilly's Zepbound have revolutionised obesity treatment globally and in the U.S., where 100 million people have the chronic disease. Available within weeks.

The Wegovy pills are expected to be available within weeks, company officials said. Availability of oral pills to treat obesity could expand the booming market for obesity treatments by broadening access and reducing costs, experts said. About 1 in 8 Americans have used injectable GLP-1 drugs, according to a survey from KFF, a nonprofit health policy research group. But many more have trouble affording the costly shots.

"There's an entire demographic that can benefit from the pills," said Dr. Fatima Cody Stanford, a Massachusetts General Hospital obesity expert. "For me, it's not just about who gets it across the finish line first. It's about having these options available to patients." The Novo Nordisk obesity pill contains 25 milligrams of semaglutide. That's the same ingredient in injectables Wegovy and Ozempic and in Rybelsus, a lower-dose pill approved to treat diabetes in 2019. Clinical trials in a clinical trial, participants who took oral Wegovy lost 13.6% of their total body weight on average over about 15 months, compared with a 2.2% loss if they took a placebo, or dummy pill. That's nearly the same as injectable Wegovy, with an average weight loss of about

15%. Chris Mertens, 35, a pediatric lung doctor in Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin, joined the Novo Nordisk trial in 2022 and lost about 40 pounds using the Wegovy pill. The daily medication worked to decrease his appetite and invasive thoughts of food, he said. "If there were days where I missed a meal, I almost didn't realize it," Dr. Mertens said. Participants in a clinical trial who took the highest dose of Lilly's orlistat lost 11.2% of their total body weight on average over nearly 17 months, compared with a 2.1% loss in those who took a placebo. Both pills resulted in less weight loss than the average achieved with Lilly's Zepbound, or tirzepatide, which targets two gut hormones, GLP-1 and GIP, and led to a 21% average weight loss. Dosage directions

All the GLP-1 drugs, oral or injectable, have similar side effects, including nausea and diarrhea. Both daily pills promise convenience, but the Wegovy pill must be taken with a sip of water in the morning on an empty stomach, with a 30-minute break before eating or drinking. That's because Novo Nordisk had to design the pill in a way that prevented the drug from being broken down in the stomach before it could be absorbed by the bloodstream. The drugmaker added an ingredient that protects the medication for about 30 minutes in the gut and makes it easier to take effect. By contrast, Lilly's orlistat has no dosing restrictions. That drug is being considered under the FDA's new priority voucher program aimed at cutting drug approval times. A decision is expected by spring. All about the price! Producing pills is generally cheaper than making drugs delivered via injections, so the cost for the new oral medications could be lower. The Trump administration earlier this year said officials had worked with drugmakers to negotiate lower prices for the GLP-1 drugs, which can cost upwards of \$1,000 a month. The company said the starting dose would be available for \$149 per month from some providers. Additional information on cost will be available in January.

Death knell for the rural job guarantee



The Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G), 2025 Act, which replaces the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), received the President's assent on Sunday. Article 21 of the Constitution guarantees the right to life. The Supreme Court in Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corporation in 1985 ruled that "if there's an obligation upon the State to secure to the citizens an adequate means of livelihood and right to work, it would be sheer pedantry to exclude the right to livelihood from the content of the right to life."

MGNREGA, arrived at through sustained social movements and passed unanimously in Parliament, envisions the right to work as a necessary condition for the right to life. It is, therefore, a departure from earlier public works programmes as MGNREGA's provisions amount to justiciable rights — the right to work on demand, the right to unemployment allowance if work is not provided within 15 days, the right to payment of wages within 15 days and payment of delay compensation otherwise, gender parity in wages, minimum wages, among others. The Act also envisaged relief from ecological distress through the creation of long-term sustainable assets. As an engine to implement the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, MGNREGA strengthened the panchayat raj institutions.

Five broad positive outcomes of MGNREGA can be identified as (a) it is universal and not targeted, (b) it resulted in an increase in rural incomes, (c) it counters gender and caste inequalities, (d) it creates quality assets and (e) it empowers communities. Within a few years of MGNREGA, studies showed that incomes of workers increased, overall poverty fell and school enrolment increased. According to an India Human Development Survey, reliance on money lenders decreased by 21%. About 45% of female MGNREGA workers were either not working or worked only on family farms before the Act. Women's participation has been around 58% in MGNREGA over the last five years. In the face of mounting evidence, even the World Bank changed from referring to it as a "barrier to development" in 2009 to calling it a "stellar example" of rural development in 2014. MGNREGA's role during the COVID pandemic is widely known. Perhaps the chronicle

of death was foretold over the last decade. Chronic underfunding has resulted in persistent wage payment delays, a fact acknowledged by the Ministry of Finance. Budget constraints have meant that officials have resorted to rationing work. Activists and researchers routinely brought up exclusions leading to denial of rights arising from opaque technocratic initiatives such as a photo-based attendance app and complex payment systems. Such initiatives gave new ammunition for corruption as these widened the gulf between workers and officials. Staff shortage exacerbated corruption. Built-in principles to mitigate corruption like social audits have been underfunded.

The VB-G RAM G Act was steamrolled in Parliament in such a scenario. Section 5(1) of this Act gives arbitrary, discretionary powers to the Union government to decide where, what and how public works will happen. According to Section 4(5), the Union government will determine and prescribe "State-wise normative allocations" of funds based on "objective parameters". Instead of demand-driven, as MP Manoj Jha put it, this makes it "command-driven" rendering it to a centrally sponsored allocation based model, putting States at the mercy of the Centre. Local autonomy ideas of MGNREGA stand compromised. In the Swaraj Abhiyan case in 2018, the Supreme Court ordered the Union government to pay compensation for delays in payments caused by it. The new Act places no obligation on the Union government for payment delays. Roughly 90% of the MGNREGA expenditure is borne by the Union government and 10% by the States. As per Section 22 of the new Act, barring some States, the Centre to State ratio of funds has been altered to 60:40. Further, the new Act states that "expenditure by a State in excess of its normative allocation shall be borne by the State government". Taken together, these clauses might lead to political favouritism towards some States and victimisation of others. Forced to be fiscally prudent, States are likely to stifle work demand leading to increased unemployment and distress migration.

The opportunity to work anytime in the year is vital, especially for the landless and women. However, the proposition (Section 6(2)) in the new Act to not provide any employment for 60 days during the agricultural season, will only ossify the entrenched land, caste and gender inequalities. Despite support for MGNREGA from farmers' platforms and evidence pointing to farmers benefiting from MGNREGA, the new Act attempts to legally pit farmers with labourers. The new Act claims to provide 125 days of employment per household per year. However, if in the current funding situation, average days of work per year per household was around 50, the claim of 125 days of employment in a year is a red herring. Finally, the new Act has no new provisions to mitigate corruption. MGNREGA combines Mahatma Gandhi's ideas of local governance with B.R. Ambedkar's spirit of empowering citizens with rights. By formalising the decade-long slow poisoning of the MGNREGA, the new Act undermines both Gandhi and Ambedkar.

Biofabri, Bharat Biotech ink tech transfer pact for MTBVAC tuberculosis vaccine



Human vaccine development company Biofabri, which is a part of Spain's Zendal group, and Hyderabad-based vaccine maker Bharat Biotech International (BBIL) announced on Monday (December 22, 2025) signing of a technology transfer agreement for tuberculosis vaccine candidate MTBVAC. The agreement follows the signing of a licensing agreement in 2022 and reinforces their partnership. The technology transfer process has already begun to ensure BBIL's manufacturing readiness by the time of MTBVAC licensure in India, they said in a joint release.

Designed by Carlos Martín from the University of Zaragoza (UNIZAR) and Brigitte Gicquel of the Institut Pasteur in Paris and licensed to Biofabri, MTBVAC is the only live, attenuated *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* vaccine in the pipeline. MTBVAC is being developed by Biofabri, in collaboration with BBIL, IAVI, Fundação Ataulpho de Paiva (FAP), TB Vaccine Initiative (TVI) and UNIZAR. The vaccine is being

targeted for newborns, adolescents and adults—groups for whom there is currently no effective prophylactic vaccine against TB disease. Bharat Biotech will guarantee production and supply of MTBVAC in more than 70 countries across Africa and Southeast Asia, regions with a high disease burden. The signing of the agreement aligns with the WHO Finance and Access Working Group Solution that seeks to accelerate equitable access of novel tuberculosis vaccines for adults and adolescents through licensing and technology transfer to at least one manufacturer in a high burden region. MTBVAC has undergone Phase I and II clinical trials in India. The vaccine candidate has demonstrated safety and immunogenicity. Based on the initial results, BBIL is preparing for a pivotal Phase III vaccine efficacy study, which is expected to begin recruiting participants in the first quarter of 2026. Considering the significant disease burden in India, MTBVAC is poised to be a leading candidate in the TB Mukt Bharat initiative championed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the companies said. The implementation of the technology transfer signifies a crucial progression towards establishing comprehensive manufacturing of MTBVAC at Bharat Biotech, thereby enabling worldwide access and bolstering tuberculosis control initiatives. The forthcoming Phase 3 trial in India, the country with the highest disease burden, constitutes a vital step in enhancing the global response to tuberculosis and its effects, said Bharat Biotech Executive Chairman Krishna Ella. Biofabri CEO Esteban Rodriguez said the agreement represents a decisive step ensuring the vaccine reaches the populations that need it most. Enabling sustainable manufacturing in high-burden countries is essential to improving equitable access.

Himachal Pradesh needs a financial boost

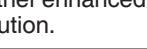
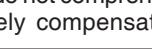
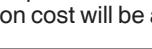
Growing up in Himachal Pradesh in the eighties, I have often heard my civil engineer father lament about the lack of adequate budget with the State government to make a good hill road while also containing and managing the damage to the mountain slope. He understood the importance of forests but always spoke of the disproportionate burden on the State. He thought that since the forests provide many important services which benefit the entire country, the State should be provided more resources to protect and preserve them. His ideas stayed with me and when the concept of ecosystem services gained currency much later it instantly resonated.

Similar thoughts were expressed in a letter written by the Constitutional Conduct Group, a group of former civil servants, to the chairman of the 16th Finance Commission. The letter refers to a 2025 report of the Institute of Forest Management Bhopal. It pegs the total forest wealth of Himachal Pradesh at 97.95 lakh crore. It calculated the annual total economic value of Himachal's forests at 73.20 lakh crore; this includes 21.65 lakh crore for carbon sequestration, 76.941 crore for ecosystem services, 73.901 crore as the value of biodiversity, 15.132 crore for water provisioning and 73.000 crore for regulatory services such as flood control and sediment retention. These contributions benefit the entire country. The regulatory system understands the importance of forests for the ecological security of the country, and the costs mountain States incur and the support they need to pursue an eco-centric developmental model. Despite the understanding, till date, most regulatory instruments in the country do not comprehensively address these issues or adequately compensate the mountain

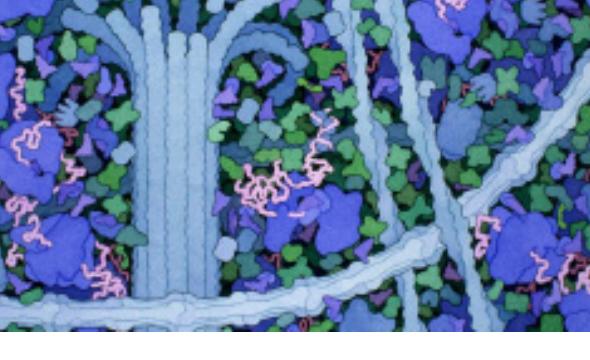
States so that they are not unduly encumbered.

Himachal Pradesh has been a Special Category State since its inception in 1971, because of its geographical and climatic conditions resulting in limited resource generating capacity. This got the State some preferential financial treatment from the Centre till it was abolished by 14th Finance Commission (FC) in 2015 due to increase in allocation from the Central taxes devolved to the State. Himachal Pradesh like other States had to enact the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act in 2005, which imposed limits on its fiscal and revenue deficits, and influenced its expenditure patterns without adequately taking into account the limitations of its largely agrarian economy and higher developmental costs.

Some amends have been made over the years to accommodate the special circumstances of the State. The FCs specifically evolved a mechanism to compensate the States which maintain, protect and preserve forests but the same has fallen short on delivering the intended results in Himachal Pradesh. It started with 12th FC when a total of 21,000 crore was allocated as Green Bonus to be distributed among States on the basis of their share of the country's total forest area. This was changed to an incentive-based grant by 13th FC to reward States for maintaining and improving forest covers, focusing on canopy density. The 14th FC went a step ahead and incorporated "forest cover" as a criterion in its formula for horizontal tax devolution, assigning it a weight of 7.5%. The 15th FC increased both the scope and weightage of this criterion to "forest cover and ecology" and 10% respectively, which needs to be further enhanced significantly to make any meaningful contribution.



Google's new AI for drug discovery is a win for scientific discovery



thing new about cancer biology.

"It's very good. Not great. The average laboratory in India will not have access to a vast library of chemical compounds where they can be tested. This one had, and while it has certainly shortened the time [in this case] for a potential discovery, it isn't a path-breaking discovery." LLMs are at the core of AI and are trained on human-annotated data to understand human language and solve problems. Drs. Azizi and Perozzi have contended that their results demonstrate that it's possible to create LLMs that don't have to be trained on the rules of biological systems. Instead, they wrote, the models can be encouraged to figure the rules out just by having their successes 'rewarded' and failures 'punished'. This is how some of the most powerful chess-playing LLMs were trained. Good reasoning Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, mathematics professor Siddhartha Gadgil interpreted the findings as significant and reckoned that the best AI models in mathematics were today at the level of a "skilled mathematician but not at genius-human levels". He said there were "no reasons" to suppose that AI development would one day not be able to solve the most challenging maths problems. "We can't say when an AI model will solve the Riemann Hypothesis but there's no reason to suppose it never can. Already there are several initiatives and even companies that are tackling unsolved mathematical problems and they do come up with novel hypotheses." Dr. Gadgil cited the International Mathematical Olympiad 2025, where OpenAI, the maker of ChatGPT, said an "experimental reasoning model" had figured out answers to the questions, which, if it were a human, would have won it a gold medal. The model followed the same time limits as human participants. Significantly, this model wasn't trained for the Olympiad but was a general-purpose reasoning model with sufficiently good reasoning powers. This said, the Olympiad's problems aren't representative examples of the problems professional mathematicians work on; they're intended for talented high-schoolers and constitute a gold standard test of mathematical talent. The Riemann hypothesis on the other hand is a problem many mathematicians are working on. It's a statement about the nature of prime numbers whose proof has eluded mathematicians for over a century. The Clay Mathematical Institute in the US has promised to reward its solver with \$1 million. "Still divided" Given the vast literature to which these LLMs are exposed, they're expected to come up with novel and useful ideas about how to approach a mathematical problem an equivalent human expert wouldn't always immediately see, he added. Prof. Gadgil, who embraces LLM tools in his own research, added that his field is "still divided" on incorporating them. According to him, there were several good models that "showed no signs of plateauing and had a lot of latent capabilities that still weren't fully explored", and therefore ought to be encouraged as tools that a working researcher ought to be incorporating.

As a nationalist who loves his country like crazy, I ponder the same question as I go to bed every night: how to improve Indian democracy. One epiphany I got: ban all protests. Be 'One Nation, One Opinion'. Why can't we simply lock up any and all dissenters? I know most of you feel this way. And yet, we patriots are helpless, faced with the pseudo-democratic posturing that even certified autocrats can't seem to do without. The older I get, lesser the patience I have for imported, zero-tariff luxury items like dissent, privacy, and human rights. If I ever become the Supreme Leader of any country, I will give two options to anyone who thinks I'm wrong and they are right. One, agree with me publicly and unequivocally; two, keep applying for bail. People at protest sites are typically on a journey towards option 2, and I'm sorry to say I've known a few in my lifetime. The other day, I got a call from Balu, an anarcho-syndicalist-turned-Trotskyist-turned-corporate honcho-turned-reptile rights activist. "Which is the best place in Delhi to stage a protest," he wanted to know. "It should be centrally located," he said. "With ample parking, easy access to cholera-free drinking water, and clean washrooms, preferably stocked with Charmin Ultra Soft toilet paper." "Well," he paused to think. "It would be good if there are decent pubs within walking distance, so we can unwind with a drink or two after a long day of protesting." "I see," he said. "I once did a major anti-corruption protest there back in 2013, with someone called Thambi Hazare." "For some reason, I always thought it was Anna Hazare," I said. "How did it go?" "We won," Balu said. "People became aware. They

If you really must protest



voted out all corrupt leaders in 2014. Since then India has enjoyed a clean government led by caring politicians who are not at all dynastic or nepotistic." Exactly," I said. "So where is the need for protests?" "Still, some harmless protests are needed to maintain the facade that we are a democracy." "Don't disturb tourists!" wasn't convinced. Even if we do need performative protests, do they have to be in a public place? Jantar Mantar, a tourist attraction, is now listed on Google as a 'protest site'. Its rating of 4.4/5 would have puzzled Maharaja Jai Singh II. As it is, tourist traffic is falling. Now, even the two-three foreigners who come to see Jantar Mantar will go back thinking injustices are rampant in a great country like India. Is that necessary? History tells us that all bad things — like communism, human rights, MGNREGA — came from protests. That's why the British banned protests in New Delhi. Now even the British are gone. So why do we need protests at all? But I understand some people are temperamentally protest-prone. They can't help it. Fine. Protest if you must. But then do it in ways that benefit the nation. Protest by paying more tax, or by donating your EPF money to the government. But don't occupy a public space and make a nuisance — that's the old way. There are a thousand new ways that don't require a protest site. Build your life around injustice. For instance, if you are as great as you think you are, you must have won some award by now — return that award in protest. If you have no awards to return, then work hard to win one, then return it. So many people won Nobel Prizes this month. If you've won any, you could decline it in protest. Or, if you're looking for something easier than the Nobel, you could win an Oscar, like Satyajit Ray did, and turn your acceptance speech into a protest speech that will reverberate around the world. But if you can't win a Nobel or an Oscar or any other return-worthy award, then shut up and sit down, or take a knee, like the Indian cricket team did. If you can't take a knee because of arthritis, take a boat, like Greta did. And that's what I told Balu also. "C'mon," he said. "Have you never been to a Bondi concert? Surely you know that protesting against injustice can also be fun, with singing, dancing, catching up with old friends?" "No," I said. "I am not the protesting type. Injustice is a part and parcel of life. If you're smart, instead of protesting it, you'll build your life around injustice."

Gogji for a broken heart



It was a late September afternoon. Autumn had taken hold; the earth had shed her vibrant costumes from spring and summer, and was getting ready for some much-needed rest. I was sitting on the verandah watching Phuphee pottering about in her kitchen garden. She walked towards me with a small kraenjul (wicker basket) full of turnips and a big smile on her face. "Walle, gogji rogan josh rannao [come, let's cook turnip rogan josh]," she said, walking towards the kitchen. Inside, I watched her perform her magic and turn the humble turnip into a dish fit for a wedding feast. She was nearly done when one of the helpers came in to inform her that a lady was waiting for her. She motioned for me to join her and directed the helper to cook extra rice for lunch.

In Phuphee's room, a woman was waiting. She lived locally. Her name was Asma. She was the headmistress of a small girls school on the outskirts of the village. After greeting her, Phuphee asked her how she could help. For a while the woman was quiet, but you could see the storm clouds gather in the corners of her eyes until they could no longer be held back and they fell in tears. Phuphee watched her for a while and then slowly got up and went to sit next to her. She put her arm around her and held her close while she cried.

When Asma had exhausted all her tears she spoke. She was married and lived with her husband and two children. She had two brothers whom she loved dearly, but for the past decade or so everything had gone wrong in her relationship with them. She still spoke to the elder one, though he had stopped making any effort to be in her life. While the younger one, whom she had been very close to, had not only stopped speaking to her, but had at different points in time abused her trust and broken her heart. She told Phuphee it had happened when he got married. She was sure his wife had cast some spell on him or poisoned his ears. Phuphee listened as Asma continued to speak about how she sometimes dreamt about the happier times they had when they were children and how much her heart ached for her brother. She asked Phuphee if she could give her a taaveez (talisman) to undo whatever spell had been cast on her brother. Or, if that wasn't possible, could she be given something to make the pain stop.

When Asma had finished, Phuphee called out for the helper and asked her to serve lunch for everyone. Spells could not be broken and hearts cannot be mended on an empty stomach, she said. The helper served the gogji rogan josh with hot rice and all of us had a second helping. As we ate, Phuphee talked about random things — the state of the

roads, the weather, and everything that was happening in the world. When we were done, she turned to Asma and said, "When someone very dear to us does cruel things, unthinkable things, it is natural to look for reasons why. After all, we are not supposed to hurt the people we love, at least not intentionally." "You know my dearest Asma, of course it is possible that some of the blame can be laid at your sister-in-law's door, but not all of it. Your brother is not a child. He is a grown man with a will of his own. And while you hold your sister-in-law responsible, you must not absolve him of the accountability he has in his actions. Your heart hurts because you have lost your brother. You know, it sometimes happens that people die before they actually die. The brother you had, who was loving and kind, has gone. The person he is now is not your brother in any real sense. The memories you have, hold them close and honour them. Do not ever feel yourself to be weak because you feel hurt or you still feel the love, because it stems from a reality you once lived.

You are not deluded, you are human. "We sat quietly. I had so many questions, but I didn't ask. I hoped Asma would ask Phuphee some more questions, but she didn't. After lunch, they walked to the gate while I watched from the window. Phuphee handed her a small bag and bid her goodbye. Later that day, I sat thinking about what Phuphee had told Asma and I struggled to make sense of it. Twenty years later, on an autumn day, I too would come to understand that sometimes you can lose people without them dying. In that moment all you could do was acknowledge and honour the love you once felt for a person who, though still physically alive, was dead in every other way. And despite the confusion that ensued this terrible situation, you had to honour the person you once loved and grieve the person no longer present.

Apple foldable iPhone expected in 2026 could make foldables mainstream

portfolio expansion and ecosystem readiness are defining the market. Samsung is set to maintain its leadership with the refreshed Galaxy Z Fold and Flip lineup, having added an FE variant to broaden accessibility, while also preparing to unveil its long-awaited tri-fold device later in the year. Meanwhile, Motorola is rapidly scaling its Razr series through wider carrier partnerships in the prepaid market, narrowing the share gap with Samsung faster than in prior cycles. According to the report, Google's Pixel 10 Pro Fold, launched in October 2025, sits between Samsung's premium offerings and Motorola's lifestyle-driven designs, testing how effectively the brand can turn its AI-first Android experiences into tangible hardware differentiation. Liz Lee, Associate Director at Counterpoint Research said that while Samsung continues to lead in maturity and ecosystem strength in 2025, Motorola's rapid expansion in the clamshell segment and Google's AI-driven approach are reshaping competition.

Navi Mumbai airport and the making of a city



Like greenfield airports around the world that created tremendous opportunities for their regions and led to the making of global cities around them, the recently inaugurated and soon-to-open Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA) is poised to have a similar impact. Set up by Adani Airports and state entity CIDCO, it is expected to transform the Ulwe-Panvel corridor into an emerging global city and a real estate gold mine.

This airport was first conceived about 35 years ago. It is expected to not only ease the burden on Mumbai's existing airport but also to emerge as the epicentre of economic and real estate transformation. "We are seeing a pattern of building new airports in India emerging from Navi Mumbai to Noida's Jawahar and earlier in Hyderabad and Bengaluru. It begins with rapid-fire infrastructure upgrades such as expressways and Metro connections, and then proceeds to the development of aerocities," said Anuj Puri, chairman, Anarock Group.

"These include commercial office spaces, hotels, retail, and logistics hubs within a 5km to 10km radius. Housing demand rises by between 20% and 30%, more or less in tandem with the rate of job generation. Naturally, this results in prices rising by anywhere between 10% and 20% annually in the first few years," he said. "Such airport-based ecosystems emulate the best practices seen around the world and gradually become self-sustaining economic zones in their own right. They will draw in massive aeronautical and non-aeronautical revenue over the coming years," he added. Obviously, early investors in micro-markets near airports have a strong first-mover advantage and will turn very decent profits as India's aviation industry continues to grow, he pointed out. With the NMIA, the second airport in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) is becoming a reality. The real estate price in the airport's catchment area, which is already galloping, is headed for skyrocketing growth.

As more airport staff and airline crew would soon populate this region, the added demand would be created for residential real estate. Demand for commercial real estate would also see a quantum jump, sending the prices upwards. Earlier this month, the airport was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The flight operations have been scheduled to commence from December. "Navi Mumbai is poised to further elevate its status as a premier global metropolitan destination," said Karan Singh Sodhi, senior managing director (Mumbai MMR & Gujarat) and head-alternatives, India, JLL. He said the integrated infrastructure — encompassing rail, road, and metro connectivity — would unlock unprecedented avenues for growth across all segments of real estate. "The seamless last-mile connectivity and strategic positioning of the airport are setting new benchmarks for urban development, economic opportunity, and global connectivity, reaffirming Navi Mumbai's emergence on the world stage," he emphasised. As per recent data released by Magicbricks, a real estate platform, the average property rates have climbed from 79,981 per sq.ft. in Q3 2023 to 714,299 per sq.ft. in Q3 2025, marking a remarkable 43.26% increase. In the last two quarters alone, prices have jumped by 15%, underlining the city's emergence as a high-growth investment corridor. "During the last quarter, with the news of the new airport starting soon, the buyer demand rose 6.4% quarter-on-quarter (QoQ), while supply declined 10.7% QoQ, underscoring heightened competition in a tightening market," the platform mentioned. Popular micro-markets such as Panvel (₹14,400 psf), Kharghar (₹16,900 psf), and Taloja (₹9,500 psf) have emerged as top choices, attracting first-time buyers and investors alike, analysts said. Stating that the inauguration of the airport would redefine the growth trajectory of the MMR, real estate developer and president of CREDAI-MCHI, Sukhraj Nahar, said that now with the airport, Navi Mumbai's stature would be truly realised as a 'global city'. According to him, the reduction in travel time between key nodes such as Panvel, Kharghar, Ulwe, Dronagiri and Mumbai's core business districts, would further strengthen the region's economic fabric. Tata Realty and Infrastructure, a major player in residential and commercial real estate, is of the view that the airport would be a game-changer for the region, driving an expected 3% capital value appreciation till 2027 specifically for the IT sector. Its aerotropolis-style development, integrating business, housing, retail, and logistics — creates one of India's most efficient, future-ready, and economically vibrant hubs," said Sanjay Dutt, MD & CEO, Tata Realty and Infrastructure Ltd. "We are already seeing strong traction across commer-

cial, residential, retail, and data centre segments. Commercial segment has already witnessed a notable uptick in demand from domestic corporates as well as global players looking to set up GCC units in the market," Dutt said. Highlighting that commercial demand would likely be fuelled by the development of logistics parks, offices and hotels, Anshuman Magazine, chairman & CEO, South-East Asia, Middle East & Africa, CBRE, said the airport would catalyse transit-oriented development, further amplified by its synergy with other mega-projects like Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL), and Navi Mumbai Metro Line 1. As per estimates by PropEquity, over 1 lakh units each have been launched and sold in Navi Mumbai in 2022-2025 (till August). Close to 75% of the units launched and 80% of the units sold were priced under ₹1 crore in 2024. The share of the affordable segment is the largest in launch and absorption in 2024. The majority of consumers are more inclined towards affordable segment houses (₹50 lakh). According to the firm, the demand for homes is so high that the inventory overhang reached a historic low of 14 months in 2024, the lowest since 2020. This greenfield airport will further accelerate the growth, driving sustained demand and significant price appreciation, presenting lucrative long-term investment opportunities," said Vimal Nadar, national director & head of research, Colliers India. "Further, Navi Mumbai's strategic positioning as a sub-dollar office market [monthly leasing rates below a dollar], coupled with enhanced connectivity and global access offered by the airport, is expected to drive heightened office leasing activity in the area over the next few years," he added. The proposed aerocity in the vicinity, designed to seamlessly integrate top-notch commercial, residential, and recreational spaces, will foster a new urban ecosystem that blends work and lifestyle, he added. "The market response has been strong, with apartment prices in the Panvel region rising by nearly 74% between FY 2021 and FY 2025, compared to 45% growth across the rest of Navi Mumbai. The airport is set to drive the next wave of value creation, reinforcing Panvel's position as one of the most promising growth hubs not only within the MMR but beyond," said Deepak Khandelwal, principal partner and chief sales officer, Square Yards. NMIA's inauguration comes at a time when Navi Mumbai and its surrounding growth corridors are witnessing unprecedented infrastructure development. Enhanced mobility. The Atal Setu (MTHL) — India's longest sea bridge — has already bridged the gap between South Mumbai and Navi Mumbai, cutting travel time to less than an hour. Complementing this will be the Mumbai Metro Line 8, connecting T2 of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) to the Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA), offering smooth intra-city mobility. The Panvel-Karjat railway line, currently under advanced development, will strengthen linkages between Navi Mumbai, Raigad, and the hinterland, paving the way for new residential and industrial clusters. Together, these mega infrastructure projects are positioning the Navi Mumbai region as one of the most promising investment destinations in India's real estate landscape, according to analysts. Big urban centre. Among the biggest beneficiaries of this infrastructure wave is Panvel, which has steadily evolved from a peripheral suburb to the next big urban centre. With its proximity to the airport and connectivity via the MTHL, Metro, and rail corridors, Panvel is now emerging as the preferred choice for integrated townships and self-sustained communities. Navin Makrha, managing director of The Wadhwa Group, said, "The inauguration of the Navi Mumbai International Airport marks a transformative moment for Navi Mumbai and the Panvel region. The region's accessibility, connectivity from the main Mumbai centre and infrastructure undertaken within the region have made it an ideal destination for large-scale development, and its growth is inevitable."

High capex to sustain growth, private investment also coming: FM Nirmala Sitharaman



High capex to sustain growth, pvt investment also coming: Sitharaman 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. (Express Photo by Tashi Tobgyal) Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said Thursday the government's primary objective is to sustain growth, and even though the private sector is "moving out of the passive mode to invest", her ministry has continued with the heavy lifting in capital spending in the Budget for 2026-27. In an interview to The Indian Express, Sitharaman said, "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." The government has allocated Rs 12.22 lakh crore towards capex for next year, which is more than 11.5 per cent compared with 2025-26.

The Finance Minister, however, said that there is a clear sign that one is able to see the private sector coming out to invest. "Investments earning passive income are now moving to investments in expanding capacities or setting up new businesses. This may be happening more in partnerships with people in the newer, frontier sectors, and prob-

ably less — this is a bit too early — in the usual core manufacturing, old industries. There are signs they are coming forward," she said. Sitharaman also said that the sentiment of global investors is changing. "Countries like Norway, Canada are showing keen interest for their pension funds and large 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, and then take a call. After the call between the (US) President and (India) Prime Minister, I get the feeling the stock market in India, particularly the rupee has covered some lost ground," she said.

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. (Express Photo by Tashi Tobgyal) Responding to a question if she was being conservative in the estimates of the 10 per cent nominal GDP growth rate, Sitharaman said it was a "realistic" estimation. "I think I have been realistic in the way in which I have assessed what kind of growth (rates) are possible. It's not conservative... I've also maintained that I come up with realistic numbers and we are able to also achieve each one of them. Even this year, it was very realistic," she said. The Finance Minister also defended the Budget move to tax capital gains on sovereign gold bonds in the secondary market. "This scheme was for people who take it at the issuance and who will hold it till maturity. But leaving that aside, if you procured or you've taken it from the secondary market, you're not in the same category, are you?" When pressed if the rules were changed midway, she said the Budget announcement was a clarification. On hiking the Securities Transaction Tax on futures and options despite the sharp reduction in trading volumes, Sitharaman said, "Even after (the interventions by Sebi), the market regulator came up with a report that 90 per cent of people who are participating in futures and options were losing money... that study is the answer for your question."

Profit-booking leading FIIs to sell; investments yielding good returns: FM

foreign institutional investors Finance secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey said foreign investors keep moving their investments depending upon where they want to park their funds. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday said the current outflows from foreign institutional investors (FIIs) is a result of profit booking by them as their domestic investments have delivered good returns. "FIIs also go out when they are in a position to book profits. The Indian economy today has an environment in which investments are also yielding good returns and profit booking (by overseas investors) is also happening," Sitharaman said during the post Budget interaction with the media. Foreign investors have been relentlessly selling domestic equities since the beginning of 2025. So far (till February 17), they have offloaded Rs 1.04 lakh crore of local shares.

Finance secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey said foreign investors keep moving their investments depending upon where they want to park their funds. He said it was not true that these investors are moving from one emerging market to another. The secretary said whenever there is global uncertainty, foreign investors return to their origin country, which is largely the US. "In terms of resilience, Indian markets have held. The strength of the Indian economy will continue to grow despite global headwinds," Pandey said. He said the country has faced global headwinds in the past and continues to face it but it is in a strong position to handle challenges.

When asked about the tariff wars and the risk of reciprocal tariffs from the US, Sitharaman said India has been taking several measures from the last two years. "This Budget shows that there is a lot of rationalisation happening in terms of basic customs duty and their application, safeguard duties or any anti-dumping duties that we levy are also periodically reviewed. And this Budget shows that there is a major step forward in reforming India's customs duty



and that regime which governs it." "We are building to be an investor friendly country and as a result, the duty cuts and the rationalisation that has been announced is a continuing process and we shall keep doing that," she said. To a query on how the government was attempting to manage spill overs of rising inflation due to geopolitical pressures and tariffs wars around the globe, the finance minister said the inflation is being monitored regularly, both from the supply side and from the monetary side by the RBI. She said inflation has been well within a certain band, and the last print showed that it has come down, very close to 4 per cent. Consumer price index (CPI) eased to a five-month low of 4.31 per cent in January from 5.22 per cent in December. "That is one of the reasons why the RBI has chosen to cut the interest rate after nearly 5 years. So inflation related management of supplies and also the monetary policy are working in sync and that is going on in order to favour the growth cycle," she said. Earlier this month, the RBI reduced the repo rate — the key policy rate — by 25 basis points (bps) to 6.25 per cent, after keeping it at 6.5 per cent for almost five years. One basis point (bps) is one-hundredth of a percentage point.

Raising insurance cover for depositors above Rs 5 lakh under active consideration: Financial Services Secretary M Nagaraju



India Cooperative Bank would be entitled to receive deposit insurance claim amount of their deposits up to a monetary ceiling of Rs 5 lakh from the DICGC. It will be based on submission of willingness by the depositors concerned and after due verification, the RBI said. The RBI is also in favour of a hike in deposit insurance coverage limit. On August 19, 2024, RBI Deputy Governor M Rajeshwar Rao had said that a periodical upward revision of the deposit insurance coverage limit, currently at Rs 5 lakh, may be warranted considering multiple factors like growth in the value of deposits, inflation and increase in income level. DICGC insures all commercial banks including branches of foreign banks functioning in India, local area banks, regional rural banks and urban cooperative banks. The insurance cover for bank depositors in insured banks was last raised from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 5 lakh from February 4, 2020. The hike in this limit followed the RBI's action on Mumbai-headquartered Punjab and Maharashtra Cooperative Bank Ltd (PMC Bank), with deposits of over Rs 11,000 crore.

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

Mumbai: Gold prices fell moderately, while silver lost over 3 per cent on Friday due to a stronger dollar and a rout in global technology stocks. MCX gold February futures fell 0.97 per cent to Rs 1,50,590 per 10 grams around 10.40 am on an intraday basis. Meanwhile, MCX silver March futures plunged 3.71 per cent to Rs 2,34,775 per kg.

On the MCX, silver prices had declined as much as 6 per cent to their day's low of Rs 2,29,187 per kg earlier during the session before a strong rebound. Commodities denominated in dollars became more expensive for holders of other currencies as the US dollar got poised for its strongest weekly performance since November, hovering close to a two-week high.

Silver's sharp correction has reignited concerns over stretched valuations and heightened volatility, even as analysts maintained that the white metal's longer-term fundamentals remain constructive.

According to the RBI, the eligible depositors of the New

'The body can still be covered a bit': When Chhaava actor Akshaye Khanna opened up about premature balding at 19-20



Chhaava actor Akshaye Khanna once spoke about how premature balding at a young age affected his self-confidence. "It started happening to me at such a young age. For me, it was like a pianist losing his fingers. It almost felt like that in those days. Till you come to terms with it. It then starts bothering you less. It's heartbreaking," said Khanna. "You might lose a year or two years of your career. Because the way you look as an actor is very important. Especially the face. The body can still be covered a bit. At 19-20, it is devastating. It is heartbreaking. It can mentally kill you," Khanna told Mid Day in 2020, adding that it did "affect my self-confidence a lot as a young actor." "It did affect more than I would like to admit," he expressed. Taking a cue from his admission, let's understand all about premature balding and how it affects one.

Premature balding at 19-20 years of age can be caused

by genetics, family history, hormonal changes, and lifestyle factors like stress, alopecia areata, nutritional deficiency, weight loss, certain medications, supplements, excessive hairstyling, and treatments, or thyroid problems, said Dr Shareefa Chause, dermatologist at Dr Shareefa Skin Care Clinic, Mumbai. The most common cause is male pattern baldness, which is driven by sensitivity to dihydrotestosterone (DHT), a hormone that shrinks hair follicles over time. "The symptoms of excessive hair loss are excessive hair shedding, hair coming out in clumps, a receding hairline, or thinning at the crown," explained Dr Chause. As pointed out by Khanna, early balding can take a toll on one's mental and emotional well-being. "One can feel ashamed, embarrassed, frustrated, and avoid socialising too.

This can lead to stress, anxiety, depression, and frustration," expressed Dr Chause. She stressed that optimism and acceptance of the changes, understanding that self-worth is beyond the way your hair looks, can be helpful. "Remember, confidence comes from how you feel from the inside out, not just how you look," said Dr Chause. While there's "no overnight cure," treatments like biotin supplements and lifestyle changes such as a nutritious diet and de-stressing through yoga and meditation can help slow or even partially reverse hair loss. "A diet rich in proteins, vitamins like biotin, and proper scalp care can also support hair health. Consulting an expert is key to identifying the cause and getting the right treatment plan before hair loss progresses further," said Dr Chause.

All about 'kakeibo', the Japanese technique to manage your money better

Discover Kakeibo, the Japanese money-saving technique that promotes mindful spending and financial awareness. Learn how this simple budgeting method can help you save more and spend smarter. Discover Kakeibo, the Japanese money-saving technique that promotes mindful spending and financial awareness. Learn how this simple budgeting method can help you save more and spend smarter. Financial mindfulness has become more important than ever in an age of impulsive spending and digital transactions. Enter Kakeibo (pronounced kah-keh-bo), a J that has been around for over a century. Rooted in mindfulness and simplicity, Kakeibo isn't just about tracking expenses—it's about developing a thoughtful, intentional approach to money.

What Is Kakeibo?

Kakeibo (meaning "household finance ledger") was introduced in 1904 by Hani Motoko, Japan's first female journalist. The system encourages individuals to write down their income and expenses manually, promoting a deep awareness of spending habits. Unlike modern budgeting apps, Kakeibo is traditionally practiced with pen and paper, fostering a personal connection to money management. At its core, Kakeibo involves asking yourself four key questions every month: By analysing spending patterns and setting realistic goals, Kakeibo helps you make intentional financial decisions rather than falling into mindless consumption. After each choice or coin flip, participants had to assign money to another person (the same person each time). By integrating Kakeibo into your financial routine, you can cultivate better money habits, reduce unnecessary expenses, and achieve long-term financial stability.



Spending Unlike automated budget trackers, Kakeibo requires you to physically write down expenses. This act of recording creates an emotional connection to your spending, making you more mindful about where your money is going. Kakeibo encourages financial introspection. Instead of buying something impulsively, it asks you to consider whether the purchase aligns with your financial goals. Over time, this awareness leads to better spending habits. A unique aspect of Kakeibo is its emphasis on saving before spending. Instead of saving what's left after expenses, you allocate savings first, making financial security a priority. Unlike restrictive budgeting methods, Kakeibo is flexible and sustainable. It doesn't rely on apps or complex spreadsheets—just a notebook and a commitment to mindful spending. By integrating Kakeibo into your financial routine, you can cultivate better money habits, reduce unnecessary expenses, and achieve long-term financial stability.

Gen Z has added a new dating term to their dictionary: Chameleoning

Gen Z-ers, known for their evolving perspectives on relationships, has coined a new term in their ever-growing dating dictionary: 'chameleoning.' The concept captures a familiar yet often overlooked behaviour in modern dating— changing one's personality, interests, or behaviour to blend in with a partner's preferences. This might be a survival strategy for some, while others see it as a red flag that signals a lack of authenticity or self-identity. But what drives this phenomenon? Is it a harmless way to connect with someone or a deeper sign of insecurity and a need for acceptance?

Dr Sneha Sharma, psychiatrist and co-founder, Anvaya Healthcare mentions, "Some individuals mould their personalities according to their partner's expectations and preferences, and this is often referred to as 'chameleoning' or changing colours to blend into the relationship. While compromising and adapting to your partner's preferences and needs can be helpful in building relationships, it can become problematic if it's at the expense of one person's authentic self." Psychological factors behind chameleoning There are several factors behind this behaviour, according to Dr Sharma. These are:—Strong need for external validation and approval can drive individuals to mould themselves to fit in their partners' ideal version. Fear of rejection also leads individuals to hide their true feelings and preferences. They feel that they will only be liked and accepted if they fall within their partners' ideas of them. -Low self-esteem and poor sense of self can lead to negative views of self. A partner might not feel worthy of love and affection and hence hide their true self. -Some individuals prefer avoiding conflict in a relationship. They either feel incompetent to put across their values and priorities or feel that their voices and concerns will not be heard and addressed correctly. Some individuals also see a relationship without conflict as an ideal relationship and strive to fit in that. Open communication will lead to both partners communicating their point of views and arriving at consensus or agreeing to disagree. Open communication will lead to both partners communicating their point of views and arriving at consensus or agreeing to disagree.

Impact of chameleoning on relationships

Dr Sharma says, "While chameleons might initially help in creating a bond and reducing conflict, it can have detrimental consequences in the long run, both individually and for the relationship." The person who is constantly trying to fit in will develop a growing sense of resentment and frustration, which will lead to dissatisfaction in the relationship. Lack of authenticity will lead to a lack of connection between partners, leading to fractures in the relationship. Additionally, increasing distance as both partners cannot adapt to a partner's preferences and losing one's sense of self in the process. Adapting is healthy behaviour which in-



volves mutual understanding and respect and hence leading to behaviour change which resonates with both partners. This strengthens the values and identity of both individuals and the relationship," explains Dr Sharma. Losing a sense of self means a person suppresses their own authentic identity, feelings, values and preferences and hence can no longer recognise or relate to themselves. Advice for someone who feels they are 'chameleoning' in their relationship: Here's what Dr Sharma says you should do: 1. Regular introspection about your own feelings and values can allow you to be aware when you feel inauthentic. 2. Open communication will lead to both partners communicating their point of views and arriving at consensus or agreeing to disagree. 3. Boundaries need to be established to protect your own interests and feelings while still being supportive and considerate of your partner's needs. 4. Consider talking to a counsellor or psychotherapist if you struggle with expressing yourself in a healthy manner. Work on self-esteem issues and together in a relationship, if necessary.

Elon Musk launches 'the smartest AI on earth'

Hyderabad: Elon Musk-owned xAI has launched its AI chatbot Grok-3. The Tesla chief calls it 'the smartest AI on Earth.' At the launch event, Musk explained why he chose the name 'Grok.' "The term comes from Robert Heinlein's novel Stranger in a Strange Land. It's used by a character raised on Mars and means to fully and profoundly understand something." He also stressed that deep understanding and empathy were some of the key aspects of Grok's capabilities. The company claimed that Grok-3 has over 10 times the computing capability of its predecessor. Musk said the AI model completed pre-training in January and is already improving by the day.



Jemimah Rodrigues named new Delhi Capitals captain ahead of WPL 2026



GNS News Agency, Feb 8

Indian batter Jemimah Rodrigues was announced as the new captain of Delhi Capitals (DC) on Tuesday, ahead of the fourth season of the Women's Premier League (WPL) 2026, which will commence on January 9 in Navi Mumbai. The 25-year-old, who was one of DC's retained players ahead of the WPL mega auction in November, will take over from Meg Lanning, who was released by the three-time finalists before the auction.

"It is an absolute honour to be named captain of the Delhi Capitals, and I am deeply grateful to the owners and the support staff for placing their faith in me to lead this team. It has truly been a dream year for me and my family, winning the World Cup and now being entrusted with this wonderful opportunity at a franchise that has held a very special place in my heart since the very first season of the WPL," said Rodrigues in a DC statement. "I have learned so much over the last three years and have shared some

of my best moments with the Delhi Capitals. This team is my family. While I will miss the players who were part of our journey in the first cycle, I am excited to create new memories with both familiar faces and new teammates. We have a strong group, and I can't wait to get going as we look ahead to what we hope will be a very successful season, and finally cross that line that has eluded us in the last three years."

Franchise owner Parth Jindal had announced on auction day that DC was looking for an Indian player to lead the side, ahead of the new season. "I think we are very clear that we would like to have an Indian as the captain. So, depending on you know, what who else we land. We already have our mind made up, but let's see what happens. Laura (Wolvaardt) will add a lot of leadership into the dressing room, but we are clear that we want to go with an Indian captain," Jindal had said. Rodrigues has scored 507 runs in 27 matches for DC at a strike rate of 139.66 with three half-centuries. She was vice-captain to Lanning for the first three seasons of the league. After her appointment, Rodrigues credited Lanning for the way she had led the side and inspired her with her presence. "We are gonna win this year. That's the change I want to bring. Credit to Meg, too, for the way she has led the team over the last three years and the culture she has set for the team. She has inspired me and I have to owe that credit to her," Rodrigues told Parth Jindal in an interaction. The right-hander was part of India's victorious ODI World Cup campaign and played a central role in her side entering the final with an unbeaten 127 off 134 balls in the semi-final against Australia. Rodrigues made an unbeaten 69 against Sri Lanka in the first T20I at Visakhapatnam, helping India chase down the target of 122 runs with eight wickets in hand and more than five overs to spare.

Rohit Sharma at Vijay Hazare: Up to 3,000 spectators expected, extra security, a star-struck Sikkim team

GNS News Agency, Feb 8

Leeyong Lepcha, the 34-year-old offspinner from Gangtok, believes Wednesday will be the biggest match he has ever played as captain. What would have otherwise been a nondescript game of the Vijay Hazare Trophy, between domestic cricket minnows Sikkim and giants Mumbai, has been given heavier weightage thanks to the man opening the batting for the latter team. "It is not every day that we get the opportunity to go up against a player of Rohit Sharma's stature," Leeyong told reporters. "It is huge for us to compete against him and just be in his shadow, just be around him. If we can go back home and share this experience, it will definitely help more youngsters take up the sport." Two months ago, as Rohit fended off and narrowly escaped a fiery spell from Josh Hazlewood on a bouncy, seaming track in Adelaide to labour to a 97-ball 73, all sorts of speculation was drawn about his future in international cricket. On a lowkey afternoon at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium here on Tuesday, as he joined dozens of other players in the domestic cricket grind, training on the eve of the opening fixture of India's premier 50-over tournament, a lot of the confusion seems to have settled.

Rohit Sharma VHT Mumbai team player Rohit Sharma during a net practice session ahead of their Vijay Hazare Trophy Match against Sikkim at Sawai Mansingh Stadium in Jaipur on Tuesday. (Express Photo by Rohit Jain Paras) The 38-year-old batting star, now only playing the ODI format, seemingly wishes to have one last shot at a World Cup title, with cricket's marquee tournament taking place in two years' time in South Africa-Namibia-Zimbabwe. The question over his form has been answered: three of his four innings since the game in Adelaide have been 50+ scores. That includes a match-winning, unbeaten 121 in the third ODI in Australia in Sydney, and two half-centuries in India's 2-1 home series win over South Africa. Determination does not seem to be lacking either. That Rohit has shown up for two league-stage fixtures, the next one is on Friday against Uttarakhand, which are not even going to be televised, says what needs to be said. The BCCI may well have forced his and Virat Kohli's hands; the new diktat does not allow even the glittering stars any respite from fine-tuning their games on the domestic circuit. Even more so if they only play one format and have big gaps in between their international schedules. The long debates around that diktat may well continue to rage on. Will Rohit's form improve in any way by facing two teams that don't have a single player who has ever represented



India in their ranks? Does his presence help Mumbai fare better if he just disappears after two games? Is this merely a case of ticking off a box – for the star to prove his motivation and for the board and Indian team management to prove the seriousness of their orders? To the fans who will turn up to catch a glimpse, none of those questions matter.

And unlike in Bengaluru, where Kohli's mad faithful have been denied a chance to watch him play due to orders from the state government to have the games behind closed doors, preparation for a crowd of around 2,000-3,000 strong fans has been made in Jaipur. The East stand, with a capacity of around 5,000, has been opened for the public who can watch the match free of cost, as is the norm in domestic games. More seating can be made available if needed. Security has been beefed up too after Yashasvi Jaiswal faced a scare from over-excited fans here during a Ranji Trophy game last month. After many of them descended upon the dressing room for pictures and autographs, Jaiswal had to make a hushed back-door exit. Local authorities are hoping to avoid that kind of lapse this time around. On Tuesday, a few fans even got the chance to watch Rohit train at the RCA Academy ground, just behind the stadium. His languid hour-long session in the nets, with him seemingly preparing for facing new-ball seamers, playing everything late and under his eyes, was watched by small groups, mostly full of kids, who thronged to him even in the brief windows of opportunity during his entry and exit. The fanfare has extended to the opposition, too. Leeyong hopes that Sikkim's playing group will get to have a chat with Rohit after the game. "We want to ask him about his mindset as a player who has played at the highest level for so long, won so many things. We won't ask him about the pull shot! He's the best, nobody can play it like him," Sikkim's beaming captain says.

India's Deepti Sharma tops ICC Women's T20I bowling rankings for first time in career



GNS News Agency, Feb 8

India allrounder Deepti Sharma, who was part of the ODI World Cup winning team one and a half months ago, now has another feather in her cap when she became the top-ranked bowler in the T20I ICC rankings for the first time in her career. Deepti took 1 wicket for 20 runs in the 1st T20I match of the ongoing Sri Lanka series which was enough for her to dethrone Australia fast bowler Annabel Sutherland, pipping her by one rating point to sit at the top of the table with 737 points. This was the latest in the spate of good news that have come Deepti's way with the allrounder bought back by UP Warriorz for Rs 3.2 crore at the Women's Premier League (WPL) 2026 auction last month after entering at a base price of Rs 50 lakhs.

The all-rounder was initially bought by Delhi Capitals (DC) for Rs 50 lakh, but the UP Warriorz opted to use the Right-to-Match (RTM) card. DC valued her at Rs 3.2 crore, and the Warriorz accepted the bid to regain the player in their squad. Deepti also had a terrific ODI World Cup becoming the top wicket taker of the tournament with 22 scalps.

Meanwhile, Pacer Arundhati Reddy has climbed up five places to be 36th while spinner Shree Charani is up 19 places to 69th. Jemimah Rodrigues, who was adjudged the player of the match in Visakhapatnam for her unbeaten 69

off 44 balls, moved up five spots to ninth among T20I batters while vice-captain Smriti Mandhana continues to be the top ranked Indian, occupying the third spot. Shefali Verma who has moved down a spot to 10. On the other hand, South Africa skipper Laura Wolvaardt has replaced Mandhana as the No.1 batter in the women's ODI batting rankings. Wolvaardt slammed successive centuries in the second and third matches of their home series against Ireland – 124 and 100 not out – to run up a nine-point lead over the India opener and reach a career-best 820 rating points.

Iniyen wins Ekagra International Open Rapid Chess Tournament in Hyderabad

Hyderabad: The prize distribution ceremony of the Ekagra International Open Rapid Chess Tournament held at the second hall of Hitex Exhibition Centre in Hyderabad was conducted with great pomp. Iniyen from Chennai, who emerged as the winner of the tournament, was awarded the first prize with prize money of Rs 5 lakh. Mitroba Guha was awarded Rs 3 lakh as the second prize and Harikrishna received Rs 1 lakh as the third prize. The remaining amount, Rs 13 lakh 22 thousand 222, was distributed to the winners according to their various categories and rankings.

Speaking at the event as the chief guests, Varun Agarwal and tournament chairman Panasha Agarwal said that chess plays a very important role in developing concentration and intelligence in children. They said that to excel in this sport, one has to practice hard and continuous effort is the way to success. Congress leader Feroz Khan said it was a joy to organize such an international level chess tournament in Hyderabad.

Indonesia's Gede Priandana becomes first bowler to take 5 wickets in an over in T20Is



GNS News Agency, Feb 8

Gede Priandana has played 63 T20I matches for Indonesia and has scored 1040 runs with a high score of 65 not out. He has also taken 24 wickets in the 63 matches he has played with his 5/1 against Cambodia his best bowling figures. Indonesia's Gede Priandana made history on Tuesday when he became the first bowler to take 5 wickets in an over in a T20I match. Priandana notched up the feat in Indonesia's match vs Cambodia in the 1st T20I at Bali. Cambodia were 106-5 needing 168 for victory when Priandana was called on to bowl the 16th over and the 28-year-old absolutely ran through the middle and lower order in a seven-ball over, handing the Indonesians a 60 run win. The right-arm dismissed Shah Abrar

Hussain, Nirmaljit Singh and Chanthoune Rathana in successive deliveries to complete his hat-trick and followed up with a dot ball. Priandana then removed Mongdara Sok and Pel Vennak with the last two legitimate deliveries of his over, separated by a wide, to bundle out Cambodia for 107.

Earlier, Dharma Kesuma slammed 110 runs which helped Indonesia post 167 runs. Etienne Beukes and Shah Abrar Hussain had taken 2 wickets each for Cambodia. Priandana had scored 6 off 11 while opening the batting for Indonesia. Priandana has played 63 T20I matches for Indonesia and has scored 1040 runs with a high score of 65 not out. He has also taken 24 wickets in the 63 matches he has played with his 5/1 against Cambodia his best bowling figures. Bangladesh's Al-Amin Hossain and Indian Abhimanyu Mithun had claimed five wickets in an over in domestic T20 matches.

There are 14 instances of bowlers claiming four wickets in an over in international matches, including Sri Lankan Lasith Malinga's four in four balls against New Zealand in a T20 in 2019. West Indies bowler Jason Holder also picked 4 in an over in 2022 against England while Ireland's Curtis Campher also pulled off that feat against Netherlands in 2021. In the IPL, Yuzvendra Chahal and Andre Russell have also taken 4 wickets in an over for Punjab Kings and Kolkata Knight Riders against Kolkata Knight Riders and Gujarat Titans respectively. Both of them notched up this feat in IPL 2022.

'It's been a challenging time': Tahlia McGrath opens up on form struggles in Women's World Cup and why she didn't pick up her bat after WBBL

GNS News Agency, Feb 8

Australian vice-captain and allrounder Tahlia McGrath has admitted she underperformed at the 2025 Women's World Cup, adding that it was 'probably' the toughest period of her career. The 30-year-old said that she was trying her best to ensure her WBBL side, Adelaide Strikers, got to the finals, but one part of her mind also wished for a breather from the game. McGrath made a mere 69 runs in eight matches at an average of 13.75 in the World Cup and also captained Australia in Alyssa Healy's absence for a couple of matches late in the group stage of the tournament. Australia couldn't win a record-extending eighth title after a stunning defeat to eventual champions India in the semi-final. "Cricket's a pretty brutal game, and it's very much based around confidence. And when it's not going your way, the world gets pretty big on you. I definitely underperformed and felt the pressure a bit." "Probably (on whether it was the toughest period of her career). I think you add captaincy into that, you add time away from home, and, obviously, when you lose a World Cup, it's pretty hard to get over as well. It's been a challenging time." "As much as I was doing everything possible to get us playing some finals cricket [in the WBBL], I was hanging out for a bit of a break," McGrath



said. The allrounder opted against playing in the Women's Premier League in India in January, and once the Strikers were out of contention for a WBBL finals spot, decided against picking up a bat. "It's properly distancing myself at the moment. There's not much point in me picking up a bat." "I wouldn't achieve much. So, it's get away from the game, go for walks along the beach, play a bit of golf, see some friends and family. And just refresh, get that energy back and put in the work after Christmas," she said.

Vidit Gujrathi, India's flagbearer in chess for the past decade, shifts focus to 'vibe coding' chess apps for elite players

GNS News Agency, Feb 8

When a 41-player contingent from India heads to Qatar next week to compete at the prestigious FIDE World Rapid and Blitz Championship, one player's name will be conspicuous by its absence: Vidit Santosh Gujrathi. Currently playing in the Global Chess League for Triveni Continental Kings, Vidit says he has taken a 'conscious decision' to ease up on his chess. Instead, the veteran says he's focussing on his next act in the sport, which includes pursuits like vibe coding chess websites for other professional players.

Vidit says that next year, besides playing in the Tata Steel Rapid and Blitz in Kolkata, his tournament calendar is bare. "This is a conscious decision I took last year that I will reduce playing chess. I did not play in all the serious events that I could have this year. Before some tournaments like the Grand Swiss, where I had confirmed my participation, I was even thinking till the last minute should I play or not? I did not feel like playing," Vidit says. Taking a step back

Vidit says the need to take a step back from the sport and ease up on tournaments came after an 'intense burnout' he felt while chasing his world championship dream in the last cycle. He made it all the way to the elite eight-player Candidates tournament last year, but that pursuit took a toll. "After the Candidates I felt a burnout. And then I felt lost: 'Okay, I've reached the Candidates, now what? What is the next thing?' After that, I just did not feel the motivation. I gave around three years from 2021 to 2024 to this dream. It got very intense. In 2023, for example, I was working 14-16 hours a day, like non-stop thinking about chess. I am not doing that now. I personally feel that difference, and it bothers me a bit. But it was not sustainable. That got me questioning: Do I really want to keep up this schedule? Or do I want to take a step back? And when I was doing other things, I was enjoying it." The 31-year-old says he doesn't quite know what he will end up doing once the tournaments reduce to a trickle. He says he is open to mentoring youngsters and maybe 'living the dream of becoming world champion through someone else'. But for now, the pursuit that has caught his fantasy in earnest over the last couple of months is creating training tools for professional chess players: he's birthed at least three chess websites for elite players: 'vibe coding' them himself. Vibe coding is a way of creating software, a website, or an app by using artificial intelligence, where a human gives a prompt while AI writes the background code for the website or app. He also points out that he's received positive feedback already from GMs like Anish Giri and Vasif Duraybari in the couple of months the sites have been up and running.

Website launches in the first website (memory.viditchez), you are shown a position on the board for 10 seconds, before you try to recreate the position on a blank board. The second site (tactics.viditchez) uses games from tournaments like the recent FIDE World Cup to ask users to find the best move in an actual match situation. Vidit also has at least one more chess website that he's vibe coded, but he says that one's for his private use. "The already existing training tools are for the masses. Not for the elite level chess players. But these ones that I have made are for elite players, and they're free to use." Vidit says that he's always looked to create similar learning tools



to get better, but back in those days, the technology couldn't keep up with his ambitions. "I was always a person who enjoyed tech, gadgets, all that stuff. When I was working with Anish Giri in 2016, I tried to create a tool which would help with our opening preparation, thus reducing our manual work. But those times were very different. It was not so easy to do it. But we still managed to do something. Back then, I had to work with a software engineer. He would do it manually and give me that tool after two-three weeks. Even then, it might still have bugs. But right now, I can do it myself. I feel like I can solve my own problems. Such an enabler the year 2025 has been." As he reflects on his career, there are some regrets and some moments that make him proud. "Somewhere in my heart, I feel like I still haven't reached my potential. One of the regrets I have is that if I could get better control over my nerves or handle my emotions better, I would have added at least 30-40 points more to my ELO rating. But there's also the feeling that when I give my best, as I did for three years in the last cycle, I can reach the Candidates."

India eye 12 golds on final day of BOXAM Elite International 2026

Hyderabad: Indians are in line to clinch 12 gold, eight in women's and four in men's section, on the final day of BOXAM Elite International 2026, following another session full of assured performances on Friday in Spain.

Leading the men's charge was Sachin (60kg), who extended his brilliant run with another dominant win over England's Jack Dryden. Over in the women's section, Olympic medallist Lovlina Borgohain (75kg) stormed through to the finals with a unanimous victory over Wales' Rosie Eccles. Held in La Nucia, Alicante, Spain, the BOXAM Elite 2026 has featured over 200 boxers from 20 nations. India (12) is the most well-represented nation in Saturday's finals-ahead of heavyweights Kazakhstan (11), Ukraine (5), and hosts Spain (4)-and is assured of at least one gold, with the Elite Women 54kg final being an all-Indian affair. India's women continued their strong showing with commanding semifinal wins across divisions, headlined by the confirmation of a gold in the 54kg category, where Preeti and Poonam will face off for the title. Elsewhere, Manju Rani (48kg),



GNS News Agency, Feb 8

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