



26-01-2026
Total pilgrims: 75,791
Tonsures: 22,41
Hundi Kanuklu: 3,77CR
Waiting Compartments: 31

Approx. Darsan Time for Sarvadarshanam
(with out SSD Tokens)... 12 H



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IN BRIEFS

50 flights to and from Srinagar cancelled due to snowfall



SRI NAGAR (TSIT): As many as 50 flights to and from Srinagar International Airport were cancelled on Tuesday due to snowfall in Kashmir, officials said. "In view of adverse weather conditions and continuing snowfall at Srinagar Airport, airlines have cancelled most of the flights for today," an official of the Airport Authority of India said here. Around 50 flights - 25 inbound and 25 outbound - have been cancelled so far due to the snowfall, which was continuing until the last reports arrived. Four more flights were scheduled to arrive at the Srinagar airport but officials said they are unlikely to operate in view of the inclement weather. "Passengers have been advised to stay in touch with their respective airlines for the latest updates and alternate arrangements," an official said. The cancellation of flights has left hundreds of tourists, who were scheduled to return home after spending the weekend and Republic Day holiday in the Valley, stranded.

Six on-duty Kerala cops suspended for consuming alcohol

THIRUVANATHAPURAM: Six police personnel attached to the Kazhakkootam Police Station in Thiruvananthapuram have been suspended following an incident of public drinking that has embarrassed the force and triggered sharp scrutiny from senior officers. The suspended personnel have also been directed to undergo mandatory good conduct training, officials said. The action comes after visuals showing the policemen consuming alcohol while seated inside a car surfaced. The senior officials quickly conducted a probe, and on Tuesday, the suspension order was served. The footage, which went viral after being shared with senior police officials, shows the officers in civil dress drinking inside a parked vehicle right in front of the Kazhakkootam police station. This police station comes under the prestigious Technopark campus area. A preliminary inquiry ordered immediately after the visuals emerged has termed the incident a "serious lapse" and an act that is "completely unacceptable" for serving police personnel. The report clearly states that the officers were on duty at the time of the incident, aggravating the gravity of the misconduct.

India-EU free trade agreement: Mother of all deals



and jewellery set to gain immensely from preferential access under the FTA. To bring down tariffs up to 10 per cent on almost USD 33 bn of exports to zero duty on the first day of the implementation of the pact

On automobiles, a calibrated and carefully crafted quota-based liberalisation package will not only allow EU auto makers to introduce their models in India in higher price bands but also open possibilities for Make in India and exports from India in future. Indian consumers to benefit from high-tech products and greater competition

The reciprocal market access

in the EU will also open up opportunities for India-made automobiles. India has prudently safeguarded sensitive sectors, including dairy, cereals, poultry, soybean, certain fruits and vegetables, balancing export growth with domestic priorities. FTA provides measures to tackle non-tariff barriers through strengthened regulatory cooperation, greater transparency, and streamlined customs, Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) procedures, and Technical Barriers to Trade disciplines. Future-ready mobility framework expands global opportunities for skilled, semi-skilled Indian professionals

Congress key to \$3 trillion Telangana: Bhatti



Madhira (TSIT): Achieving Telangana's \$3 trillion economy vision depends on a strong mandate for the Congress party in the upcoming municipal elections, said Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka, while speaking to reporters in Madhira. He said rapid urban development and employment generation are possible only with people's support for Congress candidates. He said the government is implementing focused policies to strengthen urban economies and ensure inclusive growth. To promote women's financial independence, interest-free loans worth 6,000 crore have been provided to women through MEPMAs in municipalities. He added that the government has introduced CURE, PURE and RARE policies to ensure planned development of cities and strengthen rural-urban economic linkages.

Telangana municipal elections: Polling on Feb 11, results on Feb 13

HYDERABAD (TSIT): The Telangana State Election Commission on Tuesday, January 27, announced the schedule for the second municipal elections, with polling scheduled for February 11 and results in February 13. An election notice and ward-wise electoral rolls of urban local bodies will be issued by the Returning Officer on January 28.

Polling for 116 municipalities and seven corporations will take place between 7 am and 5 pm on February 11. Any re-polls, if necessary, will take place on February 12.

The counting of votes will start from 8 am onwards on February 13, and the results will be declared soon after.

Candidates can file their nominations till 5 pm on January 30. The nominations will be scrutinised the next day from 11 am onwards, and the final list of candidates will be published on the same day.

Appeals against the rejection of nomination can be filed before the District Election Authority till 5 pm on February 1. All appeals will be disposed of before 5 pm on February 2.

Candidates can withdraw



their nominations till 3 pm on February 3, after which the final list of the contesting candidates will be uploaded on the same day.

GHMC NOT INCLUDED
The election schedule does not apply to the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) as its term ends on February 10.

Additionally, Minister for Transport and BC Welfare Ponnam Prabhakar has said that the GHMC might split into three after the end of its term. GHMC may be divided into Hyderabad, Cyberabad and Malkajgiri corporations, with Hyderabad Corporation covering areas under 150 wards, while the other two other corporations may have 75 wards each.

I am calling it off: Arijit Singh retires from playback singing

NEW DELHI (Jan 27): "I am calling it off, it was a wonderful journey," said Arijit Singh on Tuesday, announcing that he will not be taking up any new assignments as a playback singer, a decision that sent shockwaves across his fan



base. In a message shared on his social media pages, Singh said he has decided to step away from playback singing, a move that comes at the peak of his career as one of the most popular and in-demand voices in Hindi cinema. "Hello, Happy New Year to all. I want to thank you all for giving me so much love all these years as listeners. I am happy to announce that I am not going to be taking any new assignments as a playback vocalist from now on."

Mamata Banerjee only leader in India who can take on BJP: Akhilesh Yadav



Kolkata (TSIT): West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is the only political leader in the entire country who has the courage and capability to take on Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), said Samajwadi Party (SP) President and former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav here on Tuesday.

He arrived in Kolkata on Monday night to attend a family function. On Tuesday afternoon, he reached the West Bengal state secretariat of Nabanna and had a meeting with Mamata Banerjee.

After the meeting, Yadav said at a press conference that in the West Bengal Assembly elections scheduled later this year, it would be proved again that Mamata Banerjee was the only leader in the country capable of taking on the might of the BJP.

"In the entire country, only Mamata Banerjee is countering the BJP in the

right manner. It is just a matter of time that BJP faces a landslide defeat in West Bengal. The Enforcement Directorate had lost to Mamata Banerjee. It will be time now for the BJP to accept that defeat. Again, I am saying that Mamata Banerjee is the only leader in the country who is countering the BJP in the right manner," the SP chief said.

He also echoed Mamata Banerjee's die-hard opposition to the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) in the state. "SIR is a reflection of the BJP's fear of defeat.

"In the entire country, only Mamata Banerjee is countering the BJP in the

Over 99 pc of Indian goods gain preferential entry into EU, \$75 billion worth exports to take off



NEW DELHI (TSIT): With the India-EU trade deal, the country has secured unprecedented market access for more than 99 per cent of Indian exports by trade value to the EU that also bolsters the 'Make in India' initiative, the Commerce Ministry said on Tuesday, adding that along with India's FTA with the UK and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), the latest EU deal effectively opens up the entire European market for Indian businesses, exporters, and entrepreneurs.

With this historic deal, which is touted as the biggest

under the FTA.

Union Minister for Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal said the conclusion of the India-EU FTA represents a defining achievement in India's economic engagement and global outlook. "This supports

India's approach to secure trusted, mutually beneficial and balanced partnerships. Beyond a conventional trade deal, it represents a comprehensive partnership with strategic dimensions and is one of the most consequential FTAs," he said.

India, powered by a young and dynamic workforce and one of the fastest-growing major economies, stands poised to leverage this FTA to create jobs, spur innovation, unlock opportunities across sectors, and enhance its competitiveness on the global stage, said the minister.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen jointly announced the conclusion of the "mother of all deals", marking a historic milestone in India-EU economic relations and trade engagement with key global partners. In 2024-25, India's bilateral trade in goods with the EU stood at Rs 11.5 lakh crore (\$136.54 billion) with exports worth Rs 6.4 lakh crore (\$75.85 billion) and imports amounting to Rs 5.1 lakh crore (\$60.68 billion). India-EU trade in services reached Rs 7.2 lakh crore (\$83.10 billion) in 2024.

President Murmu meets tribals, tableaux artists and NCC cadets who took part in R-Day Parade

New Delhi, Jan 27 : Aday after taking the salute at the Republic Day Parade on Kartavya Path, President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday interacted with special visitors, including students, tribals, tableaux artists and NSS volunteers and NCC cadets who took part in the Republic Day Parade, an official said.

Separate groups of students from Leh, Jharkhand and Jammu and Kashmir called on the President, said a statement by the President's Secretariat on social media.

"During the day, she also met guests from tribal communities, tableaux artists and tractor drivers, NSS volunteers and NCC cadets, officials and other participants of the Republic Day Parade 2026 at Rashtrapati Bhavan," said the official.

On Monday, Murmu hosted the traditional 'At Home' reception at Rashtrapati Bhavan on the occasion of the 77th Republic Day, bringing together prominent dignitaries to mark the conclusion of the day's cele-



brations.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Vice President C.P. Radhakrishnan, European Council President Antonio Costa, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, and several other distinguished guests attended the reception.

The 'At Home' event is a long-standing tradition held every year on Republic Day to commemorate the adoption of India's Constitution on January 26, 1950.

This year's reception carried added significance with the presence of the two European leaders, who had earlier served as joint Chief

Guests at the Republic Day parade on Kartavya Path.

Their participation highlighted the strengthening ties between India and the European Union.

Discussions on trade, security, and multilateral cooperation are expected to continue during the 16th EU-India Summit scheduled for January 27.

The invitation for the reception featured artistic elements inspired by the cultural heritage and diversity of India's North-Eastern states.

Guests gathered in the historic setting of Rashtrapati Bhavan, exchanging greetings and reflecting on the day's events.

This year's special invitation for the 'At Home' was handcrafted by artisans from the North Eastern states.

The invitation kit included a box made from a woven bamboo mat from Tripura for a wall-hanging-type, panelled invite that showcased traditional art from all eight states of the North East.

The decorative motifs on the cover and the box of the invitation drew inspiration from the Assamese manuscript painting style.

The motifs on the fabric panel represented the flora and fauna of the North-Eastern region. Other highlights included woven nettle fabric and embroidery from Sikkim, green bamboo weave from Meghalaya, Mon Shugu Paper from Arunachal Pradesh, Gogona -- a bamboo jaw harp from Assam, and bamboo jewellry from Tripura, orange wild rhea and stinging nettle fabric from Nagaland, handwoven Puan Chei from Mizoram, Longpi Black Pottery from Manipur and an Eri Silk stole.

Chennai, Jan 27 : Notorious criminal Azhaguraja was shot dead in a police encounter in Tamil Nadu's Perambalur, marking yet another addition to the list of high-profile encounter killings in the state.

The encounter, late on Monday night, took place near a forested stretch close to Thirumanthurai village in Perambalur, when the accused allegedly attacked police personnel while attempting to flee.

According to police sources, Azhaguraja sustained a bullet injury to the head during the encounter and died on the spot. He was a long-time offender with more than 30 criminal cases registered against him, including murder, attempt to murder, extortion, and contract killings.

Polic said he was considered extremely dangerous and had evaded arrest for several years by frequently changing hideouts across districts.

On Sunday night, a special police team led by Mangalamet Inspector Nandakumar arrested Azhaguraja along with six other accused from a hideout in Ooty, where they had been living under assumed identities.

Following their arrest, the suspects were taken to the forest area near Thirumanthurai to recover hidden weapons, explosives, and other incriminating materials.

Police claim that during the recovery operation, Azhaguraja suddenly at

History-sheeter Azhaguraja shot dead in police encounter in TN



tacked the escorting officers with a sickle in an attempt to escape. Despite repeated warnings to surrender, he allegedly continued the assault, forcing the police to open fire in self-defence.

One police personnel sustained injuries in the attack and was immediately rushed to a nearby hospital. His condition is said to be stable.

The arrest of Azhaguraja was linked to a recent incident in which another hardened criminal, Kalimuthu, was attacked by a gang while being transported to prison under police escort. Investigators believe Azhaguraja played a key role in planning and executing that attack.

Based on intelligence inputs suggesting that he was hiding in the Tirunelveli region, intensified surveillance and search operations were launched, eventually leading to his arrest.

Kerala HC slams SIT over delay in Sabarimala gold heist case, warns of credibility loss

Kochi, Jan 27 : The Kerala High Court on Tuesday came down heavily on the Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the Sabarimala gold theft cases, expressing serious concern over the delays in filing charge sheets that have enabled key accused to walk free on statutory bail.

So far, 13 people have so far been arrested in the two charge sheets filed by the SIT, and one person has now secured statutory bail.

A bench of Justice A. Badaruddin warned that such lapses erode public confidence in the investigation and raise doubts about the seriousness of the probe.

Observing that accused persons gaining release due to the failure to file charge sheets within the statutory time frame creates widespread suspicion, the court questioned why the SIT had failed to take timely and effective steps to prevent the situation.

"When accused are released by default, it inevitably casts a shadow over the credibility of the investigation," the judge noted.



The court pointed out that Murari Babu, former administrative officer of the Devaswom Board and an accused in both the Dwarapalaka and Kattilappala cases, had already secured statutory bail earlier.

It also flagged that Unnikrishnan Potti, the prime accused in both cases, had obtained bail in the Dwarapalaka case and would become eligible for statutory bail in the Kattilappala case as the 90-day period was set to expire on February 2.

The observations were made while considering a plea filed by accused and Smart Creations CEO Pankaj Bhandari seeking his release.

Bhandari contended that he had

given statements six times even before being arrayed as an accused and had fully cooperated with the investigation, arguing that his arrest was unnecessary.

However, the court made it clear that the arrest in the case was unavoidable.

At the same time, it stressed that arrested persons must be granted all legal protections, including statutory bail, in accordance with Supreme Court rulings.

Responding to the court's concerns, the SIT submitted that several procedural and evidentiary hurdles had delayed the preparation of the charge sheet. It said documents had been seized from Devaswom Board offices and other locations, while key scientific evidence required to conclusively establish the offences was still awaited.

The SIT maintained that even if the accused were released on bail, the investigation remained focused on securing convictions and ensuring that those responsible were ultimately brought to justice.

During the detailed search

Security forces recover, neutralise Maoist-planted IEDs in Bastar

Raipur/Dantewada, Jan 27 : In a major success for anti-Naxal operations in Chhattisgarh's South Bastar region, security forces recovered and neutralised two improvised explosive devices (IEDs) planted by Maoists in the forest hills near Gufa village under Barsur Police Station limits in Dantewada district.

The joint operation took place on January 27, following precise intelligence inputs. Acting on specific information received on January 22 from the Central Reserve Police Force, a coordinated search and de-mining mission was launched early in the morning. The operation began on Tuesday morning and involved personnel from CRPF, the Bomb Disposal Squad, and officers from Barsur Police Station.

During the detailed search



Bomb Disposal Squad in accordance with standard operating procedures, eliminating any risk they posed to security personnel and local civilians.

Anil Kumar Singh, Commandant of the 195 Battalion, with the Young Platoon and Bomb Disposal team led by Assistant Commandant Himansu, conducted the operation.

Both devices were immediately taken to a safe location and destroyed by the

R.K. Barman have been overseeing intensified anti-Naxal patrolling and area domination efforts across Dantewada district.

The latest recovery highlights the effectiveness of continuous ground operations backed by reliable intelligence sharing among agencies.

Officials described the operation as a significant blow to Maoist activities in the region, preventing potential ambushes or attacks on patrolling parties and villagers.

The swift neutralisation of the explosives underscores the high level of coordination between the Central Reserve Police Force, local police, and intelligence units.

Such recoveries are seen as crucial in weakening the logistical network of Naxal groups operating in the Bastar division.

New industrial revolution has begun in Odisha: CM Majhi

Bhubaneswar, Jan 27 : Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Tuesday said that a new industrial revolution has begun in Odisha, asserting that the state is steadily moving ahead with industrial proposals amounting to nearly Rs 20 lakh crore for the establishment of new industries across Odisha.

While inaugurating India's first Flat Rolled Products (FRP) aluminium unit at Hindalco Industries Limited's Aditya Aluminium plant at Lapangia in Sambalpur district, CM Majhi stated that once these industrial proposals become operational, around 15 lakh new jobs will be created in Odisha.

The project, set up with an investment of Rs 26,996 crore, is expected to generate employment for 5012 people, further strengthening downstream manufacturing and creating new livelihood opportunities in the region.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister said, "Western Odisha today stands as a symbol of confidence, discipline and enterprise transforming from forests and farmlands into a hub of world-class manufacturing."

He also described the workers as the real architects of Odisha's industrial success and said that their dedication ensures that production never stops and progress never slows.

SC suggests attachment of properties of acid attackers

New Delhi, Jan 27 : The Supreme Court on Tuesday expressed serious concern over the pendency of acid attack cases across the country and called for more stringent measures, including the attachment of properties of convicts to ensure meaningful compensation to victims.

A Bench headed by Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant, while hearing a PIL seeking enforcement of guidelines earlier laid down by the top court, noted the submission that 15 High Courts have so far furnished details of pending acid attack cases.

As per the status report placed before the apex court, Uttar Pradesh alone has 198 pending cases, followed by Gujarat with 114, West Bengal with 60, Bihar with 68 and Maharashtra with 58 cases.

In its order, the CJI-led Bench noted that reports from the remaining High Courts are still awaited.

"We request the High Courts to consider the desirability of taking a decision for expediting and concluding matters concerning acid attacks in a time-bound manner on an out-of-turn basis," the Supreme Court said.

During the hearing, the CJI-led Bench made strong oral observations on the need for tougher punitive measures to act as a deterrent.

"Why should the assets of the accused not be attached? If a person is found guilty of an acid attack, why should all his immovable assets not be acquired and used to compensate the victim? You have to take some extraordinary punitive measures. Unless the action is so painful, the deterrent theory must be followed here," the top court observed. It also directed all states and Union Territories to place comprehensive data before it within four weeks, including year-wise incidents of acid attacks, filing of chargesheets, number of cases decided, pendency at the trial stage, and appeals arising out of concluded trials.

Mamata Banerjee cautions against attempts to instigate violence in Bengal before Assembly polls this year



While issuing the note of caution on Tuesday, the Chief Minister gave some subtle hints about certain sections of people whose actions might trigger greater tension in the state.

Chief Minister Banerjee asked everyone to be careful about possible attempts to create a riot-like situation in West Bengal before the crucial Assembly elections in the state, scheduled later this year.

While issuing the note of caution on Tuesday, the Chief Minister gave some subtle hints about certain sections of people whose actions might trigger greater tension in the state.

train services. I do not want this. I want everyone to live together. There might be an attempt to create a situation of unrest before the elections," the Chief Minister warned.

According to Chief Minister Banerjee, the most important thing is that people should stay together peacefully. "If there is peace in life, there will be progress. If the situation is peaceful, then the work becomes easier," she said.

At the same time, Chief Minister Banerjee once again became vocal on the issue of migrant workers

from West Bengal being subjected to attacks and humiliation in other states, especially the ones ruled by the BJP.

"Around 1.5 crore of migrant workers are in West Bengal. They do not face any kind of problem here. But when migrant workers from West Bengal go to other states to earn their livelihoods, they are being attacked. I am asking the migrant workers from the state who are currently in other states to return to West Bengal. The state government will take full responsibility for their livelihoods,"

submit affidavits on whether land along the border can be acquired on an emergency basis according to the law. The next hearing

Fence along Bangladesh border: HC directs Bengal govt to hand over land to BSF by March 31



central government has already provided the funds for this land acquisition, and the acquisition process has been completed. However, the land has not yet been handed over.

The High Court on Tuesday directed the state government to transfer the land as quickly as possible. The court also made it clear that the state cannot use the excuse of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process in this matter.

Furthermore, regarding the land acquisition that has not yet received the state cabinet's approval, the court will hear arguments from

both the central and state governments.

Considering the national security of the country, all parties have been directed to

in this case is scheduled for April 2.

A public interest litigation (PIL) was filed by former army officer Dr Subrata Saha regarding the state's negligence in constructing the barbed-wire fence along the India-Bangladesh border.

He alleged that illegal smuggling and infiltration are rampant through the portion of the India-Bangladesh border located in this state, and held the state government responsible for this.

In the last hearing of this case, the division bench of the Calcutta High Court, comprising Chief Justice Sujoy Paul and Justice Partha Sarathi Sen, had directed the Principal Secretary of the state's Land Acquisition Department to submit an affidavit.

On Tuesday, the state government informed the court that the 181 kilometres of land for which the central government has provided funds for the construction of the barbed-wire fence along the India-Bangladesh border would be handed over to the BSF by March.

After hearing the arguments of all parties, the division bench set March 31 as the deadline.

Editorial

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2025

Republic under democratic strain

The world is likely to witness several momentous changes, and India needs to brace itself to not only deal with them but also fulfil its vision of emerging as a developed, democratic country with matching global clout. It cannot be denied that there is a dire need for introspection and course correction. In her Republic Day address to the nation, President Droupadi Murmu reiterated that the Indian Constitution was a "foundational document" and that the ideals of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity enshrined in it define the Republic. Amidst fears and doubts regarding the future of the Constitution, it was heartening to note that the President made the point unequivocally, and the hope is that the government will follow the Constitution in letter and spirit. The Narendra Modi government has been in power since 2014 and with an enviable mandate, opportunity and power to reshape India as per Hindutva ideology. There has been a healthy tussle between two competing ideas of India—the Nehruvian and the Hindutva idea. Both have their flaws and fault lines.

The Nehruvian idea had laid the foundation for a modern, secular and united republic. It was progressive, forward-looking and celebrated a scientific temper. The Hindutva idea is more focused on reversing historical wrongs, restoring the lost glory and establishing the Hindu hegemony. In politics, it paves the way for a unitary form of government, which undermines federalism and excessive centralisation of executive power in one or two persons. It adversely affects religious and other minorities and also linguistic diversity.

There is ample evidence of the increase in hatred and acrimony in general, and religious divisiveness and bigotry in particular, among many sections of society. Secondly, in politics, the pursuit of absolute power through amoral and immoral means has been shrinking the space for a healthy political opposition, which does not augur well for an electoral democracy.

The nation is fast degenerating into what the V-Dem Institute has characterised as "electoral autocracy". Another worrying aspect is the seeping of election calculations into every aspect of government and governance. For instance, in the President's speech, it is difficult not to notice the selective and calculated references to Subramanya Bharati, Sri Narayana Guru, Rabindranath Tagore, Aurobindo, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and his Vande Mataram. Likewise, merit apart, the selection of Padma awardees appears to have been done with an eye on making electoral gains in Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and West Bengal. Only voters can make the party mend its ways in the national interest. Despite some notable achievements in economic development, poverty and inequality persist, and the fact that nearly 81 crore people continue to be dependent on the government for food is a testament to the failure of critical policy and implementation. On the other hand, the gap between the rich and the poor is not only widening, but in many key sectors, there are unhealthy oligarchy tendencies, and they are increasingly being dominated by de facto duopolies.

SPACE WEATHER:

Proposed mission creates artificial solar eclipses

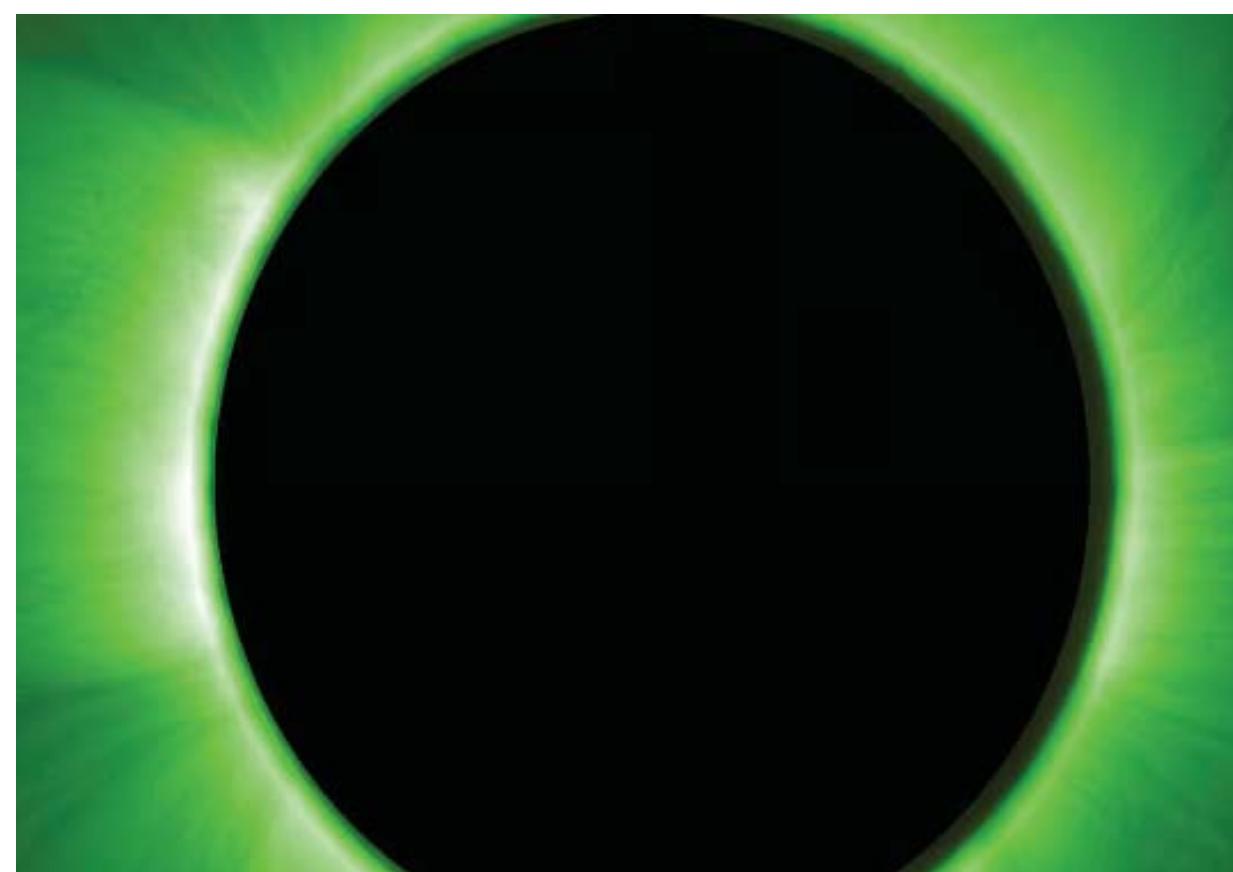
When a solar storm strikes Earth, it can disrupt technologies vital to daily life. These storms occur when bursts of electrically charged particles and magnetic fields from the Sun collide with Earth's magnetic field, producing what is known as space weather.

The Earth is currently experiencing one of the most intense solar storms of the past two decades, highlighting the need to better understand these events. An international team of researchers is working on a spacecraft mission designed to study the solar conditions that generate such storms, with the aim of improving space-weather forecasting.

The proposed mission, known as Mesom (Moon-enabled Sun Occultation Mission), would create total solar eclipses in space. By doing so, it would allow scientists to observe the Sun's outer atmosphere—the solar corona—in unprecedented detail.

Past disruptions show why this matters. In 1989, a coronal mass ejection (CME) triggered a nine-hour power blackout in Quebec, affecting Canada and the US and costing tens of millions of dollars in lost productivity and damaged equipment. More recently, in May 2024, a series of

During total solar eclipses, the Moon blocks the Sun's visible surface, revealing the faint glow of the corona.



weaker solar eruptions caused thousands of satellites in low-Earth orbit to lose altitude. GPS outages alone cost US farmers an estimated \$500 million. These events pale in comparison with the 1859 Carrington Event, the most powerful solar storm on record. Electrical currents surged through telegraph wires across North America and Europe, shocking operators and even starting fires. A storm of similar magnitude today would have catastrophic consequences for our technology-dependent world, a risk recognised by successive UK governments.

Yet our view of the solar corona—where CMEs originate—remains obscured by the Sun's own intense brightness. During total solar eclipses, the Moon blocks the Sun's visible surface, revealing the faint glow of the corona. Studying this region is crucial for understanding how solar storms form and for improving forecasts that could protect Earth's infrastructure. Unfortunately, total eclipses are rare and brief, lasting only a few minutes and occurring roughly once every 18 months. Ground-based observations are further limited by weather and atmospheric distortion. Artificial alternatives, known as coronagraphs, use disks and optical filters to block sunlight and have pro-

vided valuable data, including from the Soho spacecraft since 1995. However, even the most advanced coronagraphs struggle to observe the deepest layers of the Sun's atmosphere.

Mesom proposes a different approach: using a natural celestial body as the occulting disk. The Moon, with its near-perfect spherical shape and lack of atmosphere, is an ideal candidate. By flying a mini-satellite into the Moon's shadow, Mesom would recreate eclipse conditions without Earth's atmospheric interference.

Developed by engineers and scientists at the Surrey Space Centre and partner institutions, Mesom would exploit the dynamics of the Sun-Earth-Moon system to observe the inner solar corona once a month for up to 48 minutes at a time—far longer than eclipses seen from Earth. Funded by the UK Space Agency, the project has grown into an international consortium led by UCL's Mullard Space Science Laboratory. Recently submitted to the European Space Agency for consideration, the mission could launch in the 2030s. Over two years, Mesom would return at least 400 minutes of high-resolution coronal observations—data that would otherwise take more than 80 years to collect from Earth.

Edit

BENGALURU
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28, 2026

4

Voluntary contribution of Asha-Anganwadi workers



PRIYANKA SAURABH

Women's empowerment, nutrition, and health in India's rural society depend heavily on ASHA and Anganwadi workers. These are the women who go door-to-door to administer vaccinations, detect malnutrition in children, assist pregnant women in safe delivery, and play a crucial role in reducing maternal and infant mortality. In pandemics like COVID-19, they were used as frontline soldiers, but these days, these women are on the streets, their destinations being Sealdah Railway Station in West Bengal or Fountain Chowk in Karnataka. Their situation is no better: will these women, who care for the nation's health, not be given the status of workers? The needs of ASHA and Anganwadi workers are not extraordinary; they receive minimum wages, pensions, gratuities, Class III employee status, and social security. Yet, governments deny them formal labor rights and label them as volunteers or project workers. The nationwide strikes from December 2025 to January 2026 are a public expression of this long-term neglect.

The Anganwadi Scheme and Asha Scheme were launched in 1975 under the ICDS and in 2005 under the National Health Mission. Their aim was to strengthen rural health and nutrition systems through the participation of local women. Initially, a voluntary system was adopted to limit government expenditure, but the reality on the ground is that these women are employed as full-time workers. An Asha worker has to care for 1,000 people, while Anganwadi workers care for 40 children, including pregnant women, distributing nutrition, and maintaining records.

In 2006, the Supreme Court ruled that they were government employees because they did not hold statutory positions, but this decision was ignored. However, a 2022 decision granted Anganwadi workers the right to gratuity under the 2013 ICDS Act. Later, in 2024, the Gujarat High Court recognized them as state employees based on

the principle of equality, while the Calcutta High Court directed consideration of the issue of promotion. Despite this, central and state policies remain inconsistent and erratic.

The practice of honorarium is shameful. ASHA workers receive a minimum honorarium of Rs.3,500 to Rs.6,000, and that too is based on incentives. In Karnataka, the honorarium is fixed at Rs.6,000, but it is paid eight to nine months late. Anganwadi supervisors receive an average of Rs.15,000. There are no holidays, no transportation allowance, and no proper personal protective equipment. Maternity leave is also limited, and the workload is constantly increasing. Because the term applies to volunteers, they are outside the scope of the Minimum Wages Act 1948, the Equal

Opportunity Act 1976, and four new labor laws. The 45th Indian Labor Conference's recommendation of Rs.26,000 for a minimum wage has not yet been implemented. There are no social security schemes like EPF and ESI. The demand for an increase of Rs.1,200 in retirement pension has persisted for years, but no action has been taken on it. The e-Shram card does not provide any eligibility, but only collects data.

Ironically, women, who play a crucial role in reducing malnutrition and infant mortality in the country, are themselves vulnerable. According to the NFHS-5 report, 35 percent of children in India suffer from stunting, and the infant mortality rate is 28 per thousand. ASHA workers and Anganwadi workers have played a crucial role in increasing these figures. More than 500 workers lost their lives during COVID-19, and compensation was announced, but payments were severely delayed. The situation is further exacerbated by mental stress, workload, and 20 percent vacant posts in states like Haryana.

This is a politically recognized problem. Sonia Gandhi raised the issue in the Rajya Sabha on December 16, 2025. Some hints were given in Budget 2026, but no definitive and binding decisions were taken. The unions have made it clear that if their demands are not met, they will launch more agitations.

Solutions must be structural, not half-measures. Workers under the

working is a blatant injustice. In the 77th year of the Republic, when India claims to be a global leader, the issue of respecting these women is not a question of policy, but a constitutional question of morality. These protests are a message; justice delayed is revolution.

ASHA and Anganwadi workers are not supplements to any scheme, but rather the backbone of India's public health system. Denying them labor rights by labeling them as volunteers is an affront to social justice and constitutional equality. Women, who are on the front lines of saving the country from epidemics, malnutrition, and maternal mortality, are themselves vulnerable in the current situation. These protests indicate that time is running out. If the republic is to be strengthened, these women must be afforded respect, secu-



rity, and rights. Justice may be delayed, but it cannot be avoided.

ASHA and Anganwadi workers are not contributing to any programs, but they are the backbone of India's public health sector. Denying them labor rights by calling them volunteers is an affront to social justice and constitutional equality. The women who worked to save the country from epidemics, malnutrition, and maternal mortality are themselves vulnerable today. These protests are a sign that time is running out. If the republic is to be strengthened, these women must receive rights, security, and respect. Justice may be delayed, but it cannot be avoided.

HortiConnect India Expo 2026 returns to Bengaluru with Messe Muench India onboard

The 2026 edition of HortiConnect India Expo, scheduled from October 1 to 3 at the Bangalore International Exhibition Centre (BIEC), will see an expanded focus as it begins to engage more directly with India's wider agriculture sector. The trade fair will be co-hosted by Messe Muench India in partnership with Bengaluru-based HortiConnect Global Pvt. Ltd. Originally positioned as an international-standard trade fair centred on horticulture, the organisers said the broader scope reflects increasing convergence across crop segments. Technologies first adopted in horticulture, such as protected cultivation systems, precision irrigation, climate-resilient inputs, and post-harvest infrastructure, are now being deployed across field crops and mixed farming systems.

Horticulture will continue to anchor the exhibition, with coverage across greenhouse technologies, seed and planting material, irrigation solutions, bio-inputs, and post-harvest management. The additional agriculture lens is intended to draw participation from players whose products and services serve multiple crop categories, particularly in water management, mechanisation for high-value crops, and supply chain integration. India's horticulture sector has gained policy prominence in recent years, driven by rising domestic demand, export growth, and the



need to improve farm incomes. At the same time, pressure on land and water resources has pushed farmers towards intensive production models, many of which originated in horticulture but are now influencing broader agricultural practices.

"This platform was created to respond to how the sector is evolving," said S.K. Gutgutia, Chairman, Florance Flora, and a member of HortiConnect Global. "Advanced technologies first adopted in horticulture are now influencing broader agricultural practices, and the exhibition reflects that shift."

Blupinder Singh, President – IMEA (India, Middle East, Africa), Messe München and

CEO, Messe Muench India, said the partnership aligns global exhibition standards with regional sector strengths. "Karnataka and larger South India have developed into key centres for horticulture-driven enterprise, particularly in floriculture, precision farming, and export-oriented production. HortiConnect provides a focused business platform anchored in these strengths."

The 2026 edition will focus on key growth areas such as protected cultivation, smart irrigation, climate-resilient crop inputs, and post-harvest management—areas that are critical for both domestic supply chains and agri-export ambitions.

What to Expect at HortiConnect India 2026

Unlike broader agri expos, HortiConnect India maintains a sharp focus on the horticulture segment—covering the entire value chain from input to market. The 2026 edition will feature: Live technology zones with working demos and product launches

A dedicated visitor connect app to enable seamless B2B meetings and lead generation. International brand participation across irrigation systems, seed tech, substrates, greenhouse automation, and sustainable solutions. Curated networking zones, digital badges, and premium amenities for exhibitors and

business visitors

Organisers say the event also aims to foster stronger policy-industry collaboration, especially in the context of India's push for FPO-led market development, horticulture exports, and climate-smart agriculture. In addition to technology showcases and product demonstrations, the organisers expect participation from grower clusters, farmer-producer companies, exporters, and agri-input firms across the country. Policy and market-linked discussions around FPO-led supply chains and climate-smart agriculture are also likely to feature. The 2026 edition will also see the co-location of the first edition of AgriCon India, a new platform positioned to address cross-cutting challenges in the agriculture sector. AgriCon India is intended to bring together stakeholders from technology, policy, finance, academia, and farmer networks, with a focus on bridging gaps between innovation and on-ground adoption.

With agriculture facing structural pressures related to productivity, resource efficiency, and market access, platforms that integrate technology, capital, and policy dialogue are increasingly seen as part of the sector's transition. The co-location of AgriCon India alongside HortiConnect India reflects an attempt to address these broader agricultural challenges while retaining horticulture as the exhibition's specialist anchor.

GITAM inaugurates two-day workshop on Big Data Analytics



Hyderabad (TSIT) GITAM School of Technology, Hyderabad, inaugurated a two-day workshop titled "Big Data Analytics: Hands-On Training" for M.Tech students on January 27, 2026. The programme is being conducted in offline mode and is organized by the Department of Computer Science and Engineering. The workshop is convened by Prof. Pritee Parwekar, with Dr. Kamalakant Laxman Bawankule from the Department of CSE, Government College, Nagpur, serving as the key resource person. The primary objective of the workshop is to provide students with practical exposure to distributed computing using Hadoop. Sessions focus on core concepts of big data analytics, system architecture, and hands-on training in distributed systems, enabling participants to gain a strong understanding of large-scale data processing. The initiative reflects GITAM's commitment to equipping students with industry-relevant skills through experiential learning in emerging technologies.

LIC South Central Zone celebrates 77th Republic Day in Hyderabad

Sri Punit Kumar, Zonal Manager, Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), South Central Zone, Hyderabad, unfurled the National Flag at the Zonal Office premises on Sunday, marking the 77th Republic Day celebrations. The event was attended by senior officials, employees and agents of LIC. Addressing the gathering, Sri Punit Kumar reflected on India's journey since becoming a Republic and underlined the importance of unity and rapid development for the nation. He highlighted that technological advancements in LIC have significantly improved service delivery to policyholders, enabling customers to access services in the minimum possible time. At the same time, he stressed that the value of human interaction should not be overlooked and called upon employees and



agents to work with honesty and dedication to strengthen the nation. He further stated that LIC remains sensitive to the evolving needs of customers and is continuously developing new products to cater to insurance and investment requirements. Emphasising social responsibility, Sri Punit Kumar urged LICians to focus on three key aspects — "My LIC, My Country and My Earth." He also appealed to all to avoid the use of plastic, protect the environment and support the 'Make in India' initiative. Senior officials including Sri P. Kelkar, Executive Director (Audit), Central Office, Mumbai, along with Sri M. Ravi Kumar, Sri S. Sarvana Ramesh, Sri G. S. Sastry, Sri A. A. M. Hilali, and employees from the Zonal and Hyderabad Divisional Offices were present on the occasion.

Globally educated youth opt for retail training to build careers from the shopfloor

At a time when many young Indians aspire for global corporate roles and desk-based careers, a quiet but significant shift is unfolding on India's retail shopfloors. Increasingly, even globally educated graduates are choosing hands-on retail training to become job-ready, recognising that academic degrees alone do not always prepare them for real-time customer engagement. This trend is clearly reflected in Samsung's DOST Sales Programme, a structured retail skilling initiative that has emerged as a pathway for young professionals to learn the business from the ground up. The 2026 cohort stands out for its diversity, featuring participants from varied academic backgrounds, includ-

ate, highlight how shopfloor experience builds confidence, decision-making ability, and cultural understanding. The cohort also includes internationally trained graduates such as Tushar from the University of Technology, Sydney, underscoring the growing belief that frontline exposure can accelerate careers.

Industry leaders note that structured retail skilling programmes are addressing a critical gap by transforming education into experience and experience into opportunity. As India's organised retail sector expands, the demand for skilled, customer-centric professionals continues to rise—making the shopfloor a smart starting point for ambitious, globally minded youth.

Kia India Re-launches 'Kia Inspiring Drive (K.I.D)' Program with the New Seltos to Promote Safer and Smarter Driving

NEW DELHI, India, 27th January 2026: Kia India, a leading premium carmaker, today announced the re-launch of its Kia Inspiring Drive (K.I.D) Program with the New Kia Seltos, further strengthening the brand's commitment to road safety, responsible driving behaviour and enhanced customer engagement. The K.I.D program will be available to customers across Kia's connected product portfolio in a phased manner, and can be accessed through the Kia Connect app.



promotes road safety but also enhances customer engagement through progress tracking, recognition and community-based leaderboards that allow drivers to compete for the top safety spot.

A Community-Driven Approach to Safety – Beyond individual data, Kia is turning road safety into a collaborative experience. The K.I.D program now serves as a community-building initiative where customers can engage in healthy competition. Kia owners can compare scores with one another, track their standing within the community, and be inspired to improve

their driving behavior to outdo their peers, making the journey toward safety both interactive and rewarding.

Commenting on the re-launch, Mr. Atul Sood, Senior Vice President – Marketing & Sales, Kia India, said, "Safety remains at the core of Kia's philosophy, and with the re-launch of the Kia Inspiring Drive program alongside the New Seltos, we are taking another meaningful step towards encouraging responsible driving behaviour. By offering customers clear, data-driven insights into their driving patterns, the K.I.D program empowers

ALL INDIA BANK STRIKE ON JANUARY 27 OVER FIVE-DAY WORK WEEK DEMAND

Hyderabad : The United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU), an umbrella body comprising nine unions of bank employees and officers, has called for an All India Bank Strike on January 27, 2026, pressing for the implementation of a five-day work week in the banking industry. Nearly eight lakh employees and officers from public sector banks, private sector banks, foreign banks, regional rural banks and cooperative banks are expected to participate in the strike.

The key demand of the unions is government approval for declaring all remaining Saturdays as bank holidays, in addition to the existing second and fourth Saturdays, by introducing extended working hours from Monday to Friday. This proposal was recommended by the Indian Banks' Association (IBA) based on Memorandums of Understanding signed with UFBU on December 7, 2023, and reiterated in the Settlement/Joint Note dated March 8, 2024.

UFBU leaders recalled that during the 10th Bipartite Settlement and 7th Joint Note in 2015, it was agreed that the



demand for a five-day work week would be considered in due course. After prolonged discussions, the IBA and unions agreed in 2023 to increase daily working hours by 40 minutes on weekdays to facilitate Saturday holidays. However, the proposal has been pending government

approval for over two years. Despite assurances that the matter was under active consideration—following the deferment of a proposed two-day strike in March 2025—the unions argue that with digital banking and alternative service channels in place, customer inconvenience would be minimal.

US-CANADA TRADE TENSIONS RISE

Trump warns of 100% tariffs



Credit: Tennessee Whig/Shutterstock

Washington, Jan 27: President Donald Trump Saturday threatened to impose a 100 per cent tariff on goods imported from Canada if America's northern neighbour went ahead with its trade deal with China.

Trump said in a social media post that if Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney "thinks he is going to make Canada a Drop Off Port" for China to send goods and products into the United States, he is sorely mistaken."

While Trump has waged a trade war over the past year, Canada this month negotiated a deal to lower tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles in return for lower import taxes on Canadian farm products.

Trump initially had said that agreement was what Carney "should be doing and it's a good thing for him to sign a trade deal."

Carney's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Trump's threat came amid

an escalating war of words with Carney as the Republican president's push to acquire Greenland strained the NATO alliance. Trump had commented while in Davos, Switzerland, this week that "Canada lives because of the United States." Carney shot back that his nation can be an example that the world does not have to bend toward autocratic tendencies.

Trump later revoked his in-

vitation to Carney to join the president's "Board of Peace" that he is forming to try to resolve global conflicts.

Trump's push to acquire Greenland has come after he has repeatedly needed Canada over its sovereignty and suggested it also be absorbed by the United States as a 51st state.

He resumed that this week, posting an altered image on social media showing a map

of the United States that included Canada, Venezuela, Greenland and Cuba as part of its territory.

In his message Saturday, Trump continued his provocations by calling Canada's leader "Governor Carney." Trump had used the same nickname for Carney's predecessor, Justin Trudeau, and his use of it toward Carney was the latest mark of their soured relationship.

Russian air attack on Ukraine knocks out power for millions



Moscow carried out the strikes as trilateral, US-brokered talks between Russia and Ukraine continued into a second day in the UAE, with no sign of compromise Friday

since its full-scale invasion in 2022, is conducting its heaviest bombardment campaign on energy facilities this winter, leaving people across Ukraine with only a few hours of power a day and some without heat or water.

Over 800,000 people in the capital and another 400,000 in the northern region of Chernihiv were without power after the latest attacks, Deputy Prime Minister Oleksiy Kuleba said.

Ukraine's air force said Russia had unleashed 375 drones and 21 missiles, including two of its rarely deployed Tsirkon ballistic missiles, in its overnight attack.

The sky over Kyiv was lit up by regular orange flashes as air defences fired on missiles and drones descending on the capital, with loud booms echoing around the city's tall buildings.

Tymur Tkachenko, head of Kyiv's military administration, reported strikes in at least four districts. A medical facility was among the buildings damaged.

Before Saturday, Kyiv had already endured two mass overnight attacks since the New Year that have knocked out power and heating to hundreds of residential buildings.

Emergency workers were still engaged in restoring services to residents that had been knocked out by those attacks, and Klitschko said many of the buildings that had lost heating Saturday had only recently had it restored. In Kharkiv, a frequent target 30 km (18 miles) from the Russian border and much closer to eastern battlefronts, Mayor Ihor Terekhov said 25 drones had hit several districts.



Indonesian rescue members carry a body bag containing the remains of a victim from the site of a landslide following heavy rains in Pasirlangu village, West Bandung regency, West Java province, Indonesia

IMMIGRATION CRACKDOWN

Federal agents fatally shoot second person in Minneapolis

Minneapolis, Jan 27: A man shot by federal agents in Minneapolis Saturday has died, local and federal officials said, the second fatal shooting involving federal agents this month during a surge in immigration enforcement in the northern US city.

The man, who has not been identified, was armed with a handgun and two magazines, the Department of Homeland Security said in a statement.

A video circulating on social media and aired on cable news stations showed people wearing masks and tactical vests wrestling with a man on a snow-covered street before shots are heard. In the video, the man falls to the ground, and several more shots are heard.

Minnesota Governor Tim Walz called for an immediate end to the Trump administration's immigration enforcement operations in the state.

"I just spoke with the White House after another horrific shooting by federal agents this morning," Walz wrote on social media platform X. "This is sickening. The President must end this operation. Pull the thousands of violent, untrained officers out of Minnesota. Now."

Tina Smith, a Democratic US senator from Minnesota, called the shooting "catastrophic."

Minneapolis officials urged calm as the incident is investigated. Video from the area showed immigration agents deploying tear gas on a growing crowd of onlookers.

Winter storm forces over 10,000 flight cancellations across US

Dallas, Jan 27: More than 10,000 flights across the US set to take off over the weekend were cancelled as a monster storm started to wreak havoc Saturday across much of the country and threatened to knock out power for days and snarl major roadways with dangerous ice.

Roughly 140 million people, or more than 40 per cent of the US population, were under a winter storm warning from New Mexico to New England. The National Weather Service forecast warns of widespread

heavy snow and a band of catastrophic ice stretching from east Texas to North Carolina.

All Saturday flights were cancelled at Will Rogers International Airport in Oklahoma City, and all Sunday morning flights also were called off, as officials aimed to restart service Sunday afternoon at Oklahoma's biggest airport. The airport was nearly deserted Saturday morning, with only a few TSA agents and a couple of travellers remaining inside the departures side. The Texas Department of Transportation Saturday posted images of snow-covered highways in the suburbs north of Dallas.

Zhang Youxia serves as second-in-command under President Xi Jinping as vice-chairman of the Central Military Commission - the supreme

China places highest-ranking general under investigation

Beijing, Jan 27: China's most senior general is under investigation, China's defence ministry said Saturday, in the highest-profile purge to date of senior military leadership just as Beijing modernises its forces and tries to further project its might.

Zhang Youxia serves as second-in-command under President Xi Jinping as vice-chairman of the Central Military Commission - the supreme

command body - and has long been seen as Xi's closest military ally.

The ministry said Zhang and Liu Zhenli, chief of staff of the CMC's Joint Staff Department, were under investigation for suspected serious violations of discipline and law.

Zhang is also a member of the elite Politburo of the ruling Communist Party and is one of just a few leading officers with combat experience.

The military was one of the

main targets of a broad corruption crackdown ordered by Xi in 2012. That drive reached the upper echelons of the People's Liberation Army in 2023 when the elite Rocket Force was targeted.

Zhang's removal is the second of a sitting general on the Central Military Commission since the 1966-76 Cultural Revolution. He has not been seen in public since November 20, when he held talks with Russia's defence minister in Moscow.

Indian crew world's most abandoned seafarers in 2025

The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) said that abandonment worldwide hit record levels last year as it released new data showing 6,223 seafarers abandoned across 410 ships

London, Jan 27: Indians are the most abandoned nationality of seafarers for the second consecutive year as 1,125 cases of abandonment were logged at the end of 2025, a UK-headquartered global union of transport workers has found.

The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) said that abandonment worldwide hit record levels last year as it released new data showing 6,223 seafarers abandoned across 410 ships.

The ITF welcomed the Indian government's "blacklisting" measures to protect its seafar-

ers from ships as a result of repeat abandonments and other bad practices.

"It's nothing short of a disgrace that, yet again, we are seeing record numbers of seafarers abandoned by unscrupulous ship owners," said David Heindel, Chair of the ITF Seafarers' Section.

"Every day, all around the world, seafarers face horrific violations of their human and labour rights, all so that bottom-feeding companies can make a quick buck at their expense. It's very clear that this is a systemic issue in the industry and that means we need the entire industry to come together



with seafarers and their unions to say, 'enough is enough', and take action together to end this crisis," he said.

Seafarer abandonment is defined by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), headquartered in London, under three criteria: failing to cover

the cost of a seafarer's repatriation; leaving a seafarer without necessary maintenance and support; unilaterally severing ties with a seafarer, including failure to pay contractual wages for a period of at least two months.

According to the ITF analy-

sis, the worst region for abandonment was the Middle East, followed by Europe. The two countries where most ship abandonments took place and the highest number of vessels on which abandonments occurred were Turkey (61) and the United Arab Emirates (54) both of which were found to have significantly higher abandonment rates than any other country.

The ITF data, to be submitted in a report to the IMO ahead of its discussion at a legal committee meeting later this year, also shows that seafarers were owed a total of 25.8 million dollars in 2025 as a consequence of the abandonments. From this total, the ITF said it has recovered and returned 16.5 million dollars to seafarers.

"In 2025, we've yet again seen the worst year on record for seafarer abandonment. But this isn't just a story about

numbers, these are the people the workers who keep our economy moving forward being forced into absolutely desperate situations, far from home and often without any clear resolution in sight," said ITF General Secretary Stephen Cotton.

"As we've long said, the solutions to abandonment lie in accountability in the shipping industry ensuring that ship owners can't dodge their responsibilities. The International Maritime Organisation must be given more power to play a co-ordinating role in eradicating abandonment," he said.

The union has been campaigning against the misuse of the 'Flags of Convenience' (FOC) system. An FOC vessel is one that flies the flag of a country other than the country of ownership, at the same time adopting the regulations set down by that flag.



Dominant India eye sparkling outing from spinners in 4th T20I against NZ



VISAKHAPATNAM: With the series already sealed, India will be hoping for a positive turn in their spinners' performance while attempting to extend the total domination over New Zealand to the fourth T20I here on Wednesday. The batting storm kicked up by Abhishek Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav and Ishan Kishan and the resultant 3-0 series lead has so far masked the underwhelming outings of two premier spinners -- Kuldeep Yadav and Varun Chakravarthy.

Kuldeep has picked up two wickets in as many matches, but looked a distant shadow of his bewitching self, conceding 9.5 runs an over. The left-arm wrist spinner had three expensive overs, that leaked 32 runs, even when India limited the Kiwis to 153 for 9 riding on brilliant spells by Jasprit Bumrah, Ravi Bishnoi and Hardik Pandya.

In fact, the modest effort was a continuation from the

preceding ODI series in which he took three wickets across three matches and gave away 7.28 runs an over.

Chakravarthy, who was rested for the third T20I, is a slightly different case as he has played in two high-scoring matches when the visitors scored 190 and 208. But the usual zip has not been there in his bowling. The little time away might have been useful in replenishing him.

Kuldeep or Bishnoi?

In that context, India will ponder whether to persist with Bishnoi (4-0-18-2 at Guwahati) in the fourth match, and bring back Chakravarthy in place of Kuldeep to allow the latter some breathing space. India will also keep a close eye on the fitness of all-rounder Axar Patel, as he has not played since the first game at Nagpur because of a finger injury.

Bats of fury

While the bowling pieces in this series have still not

entirely fallen in their places, the hosts' batting has been a different story.

The top-order reshaped India's T20 batting in this series and third match resembled an extended Power Play. Abhishek has scored at a strike-rate of over 300 while Suryakumar and Kishan

have maintained a strike-rate close to 230. Such has been the fury in their batting that India have so far spent only a combined 25.2 overs in the park while chasing 209 and 154 (363 runs in total) in the second and third T20Is. If the nature of the pitch and the amount of dew in Visakhapatnam are anything to go by, this match too will not be offering a different script.

They offer a stunning read too. Matt Henry (13.80), Kyle Jamieson (14.20), Mitchell Santner (13.14) and Ish Sodhi (12.50) have all been taken to the cleaners by the home side.

There are some peripheral concerns such as a possible promotion of in-form Daryl Mitchell higher up in the order, but if the bowlers do not self-heal their scars and manage their fears quickly then another round of walloping awaits them.

Sabalenka ends Jovic's dream run, reaches fourth straight Aus Open semifinal



Melbourne, Jan 27: World No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka ended the 18-year-old American Iva Jovic's dream run, securing a 6-3, 6-0 win to reach her fourth consecutive Australian Open semifinal on Tuesday.

Sabalenka is the only player still standing in the women's field to have previously lifted the Daphne Akhurst Memorial Cup. With her place in a fourth consecutive Melbourne semifinal, the top seed has reached the last four at a major for the 14th time.

In a dominant display, the top seed struck 31 winners to Jovic's 12 and won 61

per cent of points on the 29th seed's second serve.

Jovic at 18 was the youngest player to reach the last eight at the Australian Open without dropping a set since Venus Williams in 1998. Sabalenka, who is yet to drop a set, will face either No. 3 seed Coco Gauff or No. 12 seed Elina Svitolina next.

In the pair's first-ever meeting, Sabalenka immediately exerted her authority by pouncing on Jovic's second serve to break and quickly consolidated for a 3-0 lead. Jovic prevented herself from falling to an even bigger deficit. Her stunning ball-striking trou-

bled Sabalenka. Serving for the set at 5-3, the top seed saved one break point before Jovic fended off a first set point. The four-time major champion saved another two break points with her trusty serve and set up a second set point with a cracking forehand winner down the line, only to be denied when Jovic returned her serve, the Australian Open reports.

Sabalenka then struck a brilliant backhand to earn a third set point and pummeled another backhand down the line to claim the set. In the second set, Sabalenka surged to an early lead, placing yet another backhand winner, leading her to break in the 29th seed's opening service game. Sabalenka then gained an insurance break and a 3-0 lead, then held to love to put the match within two games of its conclusion. The 29th seed, Jovic, benefited from a double fault from Sabalenka and produced winners off both wings to earn a pair of break points as the top-seeded rival served for the match. Sabalenka saved the two serves and seconds later claimed victory and a semifinal berth with an ace out wide on match point.

Australian Open: Pegula knocks out defending champion Keys



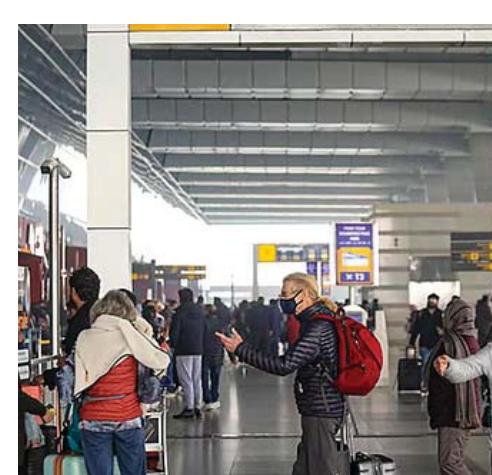
MELBOURNE: Jessica Pegula knocked out defending champion Madison Keys on Monday and moved into a quarterfinal against Amanda Anisimova, another all-American match. Their fourth-round win on Day 9 meant four Americans reached the women's singles

quarterfinals in Australia for the first time since 2001, when Serena and Venus Williams, Jennifer Capriati, Monica Seles and Lindsay Davenport made it to the last 8. "Sucks that one American has to go out in the quarterfinals," Anisimova said. Pegula had a slightly different view: "At least one of us will get through, and I think that's great for American tennis. Yeah, it's been pretty crazy how well the women have been doing and how many top-ranked girls there are," she added. "I'm just happy to be a part of that conversation." Pegula and Anisimova advanced a day after No. 3 Coco Gauff and 18-year-old Iva Jovic earned their places on the other side of the draw.



The move to Germany saw him win a long-awaited first major trophy of his career as Bayern won the Bundesliga last season.....

Scotland hopeful of timely Indian visas ahead of T20 World Cup opener



it doesn't matter whether you've got three days or whether you've got 45 days. "Certainly that's been our focus in the last 48 hours: just getting those visas done so our players are all ready to go. They're all in the middle of submitting their visas and we will be there on the ground in India as quickly as we can, so it's just a matter of time now." Sharif, who was born in Huddersfield to a Pakistani father and a British-Pakistani mother, shifted to Scotland as a seven-year-old.

"(The ICC) can only give us the assurances of the bits that they can control and, absolutely, of the bits that they control, we are working with them and obviously they're working with the BCCI and local people on the ground there to make sure that we are getting all of that support that we need," Lindblade said. "So, absolutely, (they

have given) the assurance that they can provide of things that were in their control. There is a team working very, very hard to not just help us, but to help 19 other teams as well that are also going to a World Cup. But we are their intense focus right now."

As a contingency plan, Scotland will also apply for visas for two travelling reserves and three non-

travelling reserves to ensure they can field a team in case of delays.

"We [also] anticipate some support whenever we can [get it] from the BCCI," Scotland's head of performance, Steve Snell said. "I don't think we need to escalate that any further to get into the country, because you'd suggest that Scotland being invited to attend the World Cup and

then not being able to get there wouldn't be a great look for anybody."

Scotland will play warm-up matches against Afghanistan and Namibia in Bengaluru on February 2 and 4 before their opening match against West Indies in Kolkata. Their other first-round matches are against Italy, England and Nepal, with the top two teams in Group B

qualifying for the Super 8s stage. We do feel for Bangladesh.

Lindblade said Scotland sympathise with Bangladesh and that this was not how they wanted to compete in the ICC showpiece.

"We certainly have for the Bangladesh team," Lindblade said when asked if she had sympathy for the side they had replaced.

"Obviously, this is not how we wanted to go to a World Cup. There is a qualification process and nobody wants to qualify or attend or be invited to a World Cup in the way that we have done. We acknowledge it is certainly unique circumstances by our participation, and we do feel for the Bangladesh players." Scotland had missed out on qualification after losing matches against Italy and Jersey at the Europe Regional Final last July.

Sanju is one knock away from getting that confidence and form back: Morne Morkel

VISAKHAPATNAM: The struggling Sanju Samson on Tuesday received a big vote of confidence as bowling coach Morne Morkel said the opener was just one knock away from breaking free from a lean run. Samson has so far made just 16 runs in three T20Is with a highest of 10 when other top-order batters like Abhishek Sharma, Ishan Kishan and Suryakumar Yadav were punishing the New Zealand bowlers.

"Sanju is one knock away from getting that confidence, getting that form back. For us, building up to the World Cup it's important for the guys to find that peak performance at the right time. He's training well, he's hitting the ball very well," Morkel said on the eve of the fourth T20I here.

Despite it being an optional nets, Samson spent more than 30 minutes at nets facing various bowlers such as Axar Patel, Varun Chakravarthy, Abhishek and side-arm Raghu.

After an initial few minutes of struggle, the familiar Samson surfaced with him sending the ball to the far corners of ACA-VDCA Stadium. The Kerala batter then proceeded to have a long chat with head coach Gautam Gambhir and batting coach Sitanshu Kotak on the sides of nets where Shreyas Iyer went about his task.

They were seen patiently explaining a few things to the beleaguered batter. Fittingly, Morkel was not overly worried about Samson's form and said team's victory mattered more than individual efforts. "So, I think it's just a matter of time for him to get his foot on the board. But the main focus is that the team is winning, and I think that's important. We're 3-0 up in this series at the moment, the boys are playing some very good cricket. 'We've got a couple of games now before the start of the World Cup, and I have no doubt that Sanju will find his form," added the South African.



Dubbing begins for Ustaad Bhagat Singh, post-production gains momentum

The much-awaited film *Ustaad Bhagat Singh* has entered a crucial phase of post-production with the commencement of dubbing on an auspicious note. The development has heightened excitement among fans eagerly awaiting updates from the film. Renowned for his impactful writing and mass-loaded dialogues, director Harish Shankar, popularly known as the "Cult Captain," is spearheading the post-production work at a rapid pace. The makers promise powerful and whistle-worthy dialogues that are expected to significantly enhance the film's cinematic appeal. Power Star Pawan Kalyan is expected to join the dubbing sessions shortly, further adding to the buzz surrounding the project. With post-production progressing steadily, the team has assured that major updates from *Ustaad Bhagat Singh* will be revealed soon, keeping



Peddi director Buchi Babu launches first look of CAT

Renowned filmmaker Buchi Babu, director of *Peddi*, unveiled the first look of the upcoming film *CAT* at a special event held in Hyderabad on Monday. The film is presented by Y. Gangadhar IPS under the VRGR Movies banner and produced by Rajani Gongati. *CAT* marks the directorial debut of G. V. Naidu, who also features as actor in the film. The first copy of the film, which is gearing up for a release soon, was formally launched by Buchi Babu, drawing attention from film industry circles. Speaking on the occasion, Buchi Babu said he had known director G. V. Naidu for a long time and had heard the story of *CAT* earlier. He described the storyline as innovative and interesting, expressing confidence that the film would appeal to audiences. He extended his best wishes to



the director, producers, actors and technicians, hoping the film would achieve grand success and bring recognition to the entire

team. The makers stated that *CAT* is ready for release shortly and called upon movie lovers to support the film.

Director Jayanth C Paranjee launches romantic song Malli Malli from Barabar Premistha



The romantic melodious track "Malli Malli" from the upcoming film *Barabar Premistha* was officially launched by renowned director Jayanth C Paranjee. The film stars Attitude Star Chandra Hass in the lead role and is directed by Sampath Rudra. It is produced by Geda Chandu, Gayatri Chinny and AVR under the banners of CC Creations and AVR Movie Wonders, with Kakarla Satyanarayana presenting the film. *Barabar Premistha* features Miss India finalist Meghna Mukherjee as the female lead, while Arjun Mahi of

Ishtamga fame plays the antagonist. The posters, teaser and songs released so far have received a positive response, especially from youth audiences. The film is slated for a grand theatrical release on February 6. The newly released song *Malli Malli* showcases the refreshing on-screen chemistry between Chandra Hass and Meghna Mukherjee. Composed by RR Dhruvan, the song stands out for its soothing melody, heartfelt lyrics and soulful rendition by Mohammed Irfan, making it an appealing romantic duet. Speaking at the launch, director

Jayanth C Paranjee praised the song and extended his best wishes to the team. "Malli Malli" is a lovely song. The film is releasing on February 6. I wish the entire team great success and hope audiences watch and encourage the movie," he said. The film's technical crew includes cinematographer YR Sekhar and editor Bonthala Nageswar Reddy. The supporting cast features Muralidhar Goud, Laxman Meesala, Madhunandan, Abhay Naveen, Rajasekhar Aningi, Dr. Bhatini, Keerthilatha Goud and Sunitha Manohar in key roles.

Jr NTR's Devara 2 happening or not? Official confirmation is here



After weeks of confusion and online rumours, *Devara 2* is finally back in the news with an official update. Fans of Jr NTR, fondly called Tarak, had been worried that the sequel might be quietly shelved. Now, the makers have put those doubts to rest. Producer Sudhakar Mikkilineni confirmed at a recent public

event that *Devara 2* is very much happening. He stated that the film is planned to go on floors from May 2026, with a targeted theatrical release in 2027. This announcement has brought relief and excitement among NTR fans, who were waiting for a clear signal from the team.



Devagudi to appeal to all sections with love, friendship and family emotions: Director Bellam Ramakrishna Reddy

The upcoming film *Devagudi*, set against the backdrop of Rayalaseema, is all set for a grand worldwide theatrical release on the 30th of this month. Written and directed by Bellam Ramakrishna Reddy, the film is self-produced and presented by Bellam Sudhareddy under the banner of Pushyami Film Makers. Abhinava Shaurya, Narasimha, Anusree and Raghu Kunche play the lead roles.

Sharing the highlights of the film in an interaction with the media, director and producer Bellam Ramakrishna Reddy said *Devagudi* will appeal to all sections of the audience with strong themes of friendship, love and family emotions, though it carries a factional backdrop. He explained that unlike conventional faction films, the faction element appears only briefly, while the story primarily revolves around the emotional journey of three childhood friends and the circumstances that lead to



their separation. Recalling his journey, Ramakrishna Reddy said *Devagudi* is his second film as a director after *Drishya Kavyam*. He noted that the recently released trailer and songs, especially the lullaby sung by Chitra, have received a very good response, with strong digital viewership. The film has received an 'A' certificate from the censor board with minor cuts due to violence and romantic song. He added that the film features a special 11-minute action episode, sharp screenplay, real-life-inspired incidents and no lag, supported by music composed by Madeen. The film is being released through Suresh Distribution, with good demand for OTT and satellite rights.

Actor and music director Raghu Kunche, who plays the role of *Devagudi Veera Reddy*, said he believes the film will bring him a good name as an actor. He described the character as a powerful and emotionally rich role, performed in the Rayalaseema dialect and shot entirely in real locations. He praised director Bellam Ramakrishna Reddy for his clarity and dedication as both director and producer, and said the film was executed with meticulous planning. Raghu Kunche added that *Devagudi* is packed with friendship, love, revenge and family emotions, while keeping the faction backdrop minimal. He also revealed that he has composed and sung a song in the film and expressed confidence in music director Madeen's future. Stating that he entered the industry as a singer and music director, Raghu Kunche said he continues to take acting opportunities seriously and is currently working on multiple projects.