

SWATI

PEARLS & JEWELLERS



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Chappel Road, Ph: 9949971337/23200048

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CM Revanth Extends Republic Day Greetings to People of Telangana



HYDERABAD (TIST): Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy extended warm greetings to the people of Telangana on the occasion of Republic Day.

In his message, the Chief Minister stated that January 26, commemorated as the day of adoption of the Constitution of the Republic of India, is a moment of pride and celebration for all citizens. He said Republic Day stands as the foundation for India's progress as a democratic, republic, secular, socialist, and sovereign nation. CM Revanth Reddy emphasised that the Constitution embodies the ideals and aspirations of the leaders of India's freedom struggle and the architects who laid the framework for a just and inclusive society.

He further said that the People's Government in Telangana is implementing a wide range of development and welfare programmes in line with constitutional values, with a strong commitment to social justice, equality, and inclusive growth. The Chief Minister called upon citizens to uphold constitutional principles and actively participate in the collective effort to build a stronger and progressive Telangana.



TOP EU LEADERS IN INDIA; major EU-India trade deal on cards

NEW DELHI (TIST): European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President Antonio Costa are on a state visit to India, setting the stage for a significant deepening of India-European Union relations, with the much-anticipated EU-India Free Trade Agreement (FTA) — described by von der Leyen as the "mother of all trade deals" — expected to be announced during their visit. The two leaders were accorded a ceremonial welcome and guard of honour in New Delhi on Sunday. They will attend the 77th Republic Day Parade as Chief Guests and hold bilateral talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday during the 16th India-EU Summit.

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met the visiting leaders and expressed confidence that the discussions with Prime Minister Modi would "herald a new chapter in India-European Union relations." Von der Leyen said India and Europe

have chosen strategic partnership, dialogue and openness, demonstrating that cooperation is possible even in a fractured global environment.

The proposed EU-India FTA, expected to be announced on January 27, aims to eliminate tariffs on over 90% of traded goods and could boost bilateral trade from the current \$136 billion to over \$200 billion within a decade. The agreement is seen as a strategic move to diversify global supply chains amid growing trade uncertainties and potential tariff hikes elsewhere. In addition to trade, the summit is expected to

announce a new Security and Defence Partnership, expanding cooperation in maritime security, cyber defence and counter-terrorism. Indian companies are likely to gain access to the EU's 150 billion SAFE defence preparedness programme, allowing them to participate in European defence value chains.

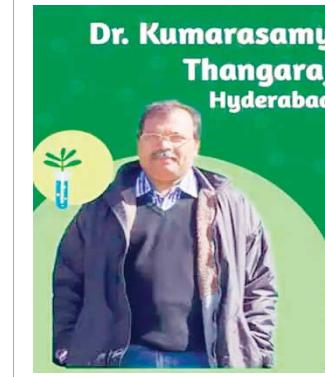
Both sides are also expected to sign a Mobility Framework MoU, facilitating easier movement of Indian professionals, students, researchers and skilled workers to Europe, while addressing skill shortages within the EU.

European leaders have described India as "indispensable" to Europe's eco-

nomic resilience, particularly in sectors such as clean technologies, pharmaceuticals and semiconductors. A new India-EU Comprehensive Strategic Agenda 2030 is also expected to be adopted, outlining cooperation across trade, security, climate action, digital transition and people-to-people ties. During the visit, the EU leaders will meet President Droupadi Murmu and participate in an India-EU Business Forum. India and the EU have been strategic partners since 2004, with ties significantly expanding following the visit of the EU College of Commissioners to India in February 2025.

The visit underscores the growing importance of India-EU relations, rooted in shared democratic values, a rules-based international order and commitment to multilateralism, as both sides look to strengthen economic, strategic and geopolitical cooperation in an evolving global landscape.

2 from Telangana named among 2026 Padma Shri awardees



Dr. Kumarasamy Thangaraj Hyderabad



Rama Reddy Mamidi Telangana

ing more than two million books in 20 languages along with rare manuscripts.

The 75-year-old bibliophile from Haralhalli village near Mysuru has been chosen for the Padma Shri for his unique effort to empower learners across India. Joining him will be Armida Fernandes, the Mumbai-based paediatrician who set up Asia's first human milk bank, improving the survival prospects of infants, Bundeli war art

trainers Bhagwandas Raikwar from Madhya Pradesh, Bhikly Ladakya Dhinda, a 90-year old tribal Tarpa player — a musical instrument made of bottle gourd and bamboo — from Maharashtra, and distinguished social worker from Jammu and Kashmir, Brij Lal Bhat, among others.



A MOBILE AUTONOMOUS LAUNCHER CARRYING BRAHMOS MISSILES PROCEEDS DURING FULL-DRESS REHEARSAL FOR THE REPUBLIC DAY PARADE IN NEW DELHI.

No place for Hindi in TN then, now and forever: Stalin

CHENNAI (TIST): DMK President and Chief Minister M K Stalin on Sunday hailed the "Language Martyrs" of the state who sacrificed their lives during the anti-Hindi agitation in the past and asserted that there was "no place" for the language here forever.

Paying tributes on the occasion of Language Martyrs Day, he said, "a state that loved its language like its life, unitedly struggled against Hindi imposition; protested with the same intensity every time it was imposed."

"Language Martyrs Day; there is no place for Hindi then, now and forever (in TN)," the Dravidian party chief said in a social media post.

He shared a brief video of the history related to the anti-Hindi agitation, which peaked during 1965, that included references to the 'martyrs,' besides the contributions of late DMK stalwarts, CN Annadurai and M Karunanidhi in the language issue.

Tamil Nadu, by leading the anti-Hindi agitation, "safeguarded the right and identity of various linguistic national races in the sub-continent," Stalin added. "I pay my grateful respects to those martyrs who gave their precious lives for Tamil. No more life will be lost in the language war; our love for Tamil will never die! We shall oppose Hindi imposition forever."

#LanguageMartyrsDay #StopHindiImposition," the CM said. The CM also paid tributes at the memorial of Language Martyrs Thalamuthu and Natarasan, here. Further, he inaugurated their busts at the Chennai Metropolitan Development



PAYING TRIBUTES ON THE OCCASION OF LANGUAGE MARTYRS DAY, HE SAID, "A STATE THAT LOVED ITS LANGUAGE LIKE ITS LIFE, UNITEDLY STRUGGLED AGAINST HINDI IMPOSITION; PROTESTED WITH THE SAME INTENSITY EVERY TIME IT WAS IMPOSED."

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Meanwhile, AIADMK chief Edappadi K Palaniswami and Tamilaga Vettai Kazhagam leader Vijay also paid tributes to the Language Martyrs. "Mother Tamil is equal to our life," Palaniswami, also state Leader of Opposition, said in a social media post.

India messenger of peace in conflict ridden world: Prez Murmu in R-Day Address

New Delhi (TIST) Amidst geopolitical tensions escalating across multiple continents, President Droupadi Murmu on Sunday said India is spreading the message of peace in the world which is crucial to secure the future of humanity. In her address to the nation on the eve of 77th Republic Day, she spoke about various issues, including Operation Sindo and women empowerment, and also touched upon the topics of Vande Mataram and growing economy of the country. President Murmu outlined India's position as a "messenger" of peace while reinforcing ancient civilisational commitment to universal harmony. "In our tradition, we have been offering prayers for peace to prevail in the entire universe. The future of humanity can remain secure only if there is peace in the whole world."

India votes against UNHRC Resolution on Iran

New Delhi: India voted against a UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) Resolution which condemned the recent crackdown on protesters in Iran by the Iranian government. India was among seven countries which voted against the Resolution brought by an independent Fact-Finding Mission on Iran. The other six countries which voted against are China, Pakistan, Cuba, Indonesia, Vietnam and Iraq.

The Resolution was passed by the 47-member UNHRC with 25 votes in favour, 14 abstentions and seven against. Iran's Ambassador to India, Mohammed Fathali, thanked India for its "principled and firm support" to Iran. "I extend my sincere gratitude to the Govt. of India for its principled and firm support of IR of Iran at the UNHRC, including opposing an unjust and politically motivated resolution. This stance reflects India's commitment to justice, multilateralism, and national sovereignty," Ambassador Fathali said on X. The Human Rights Council in its 39th special session on the "deteriorating human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran," strongly "deplored the violent crackdown of peaceful protests" resulting in the deaths of thousands of persons, including children, and large numbers of injured individuals, as well as the arrest of thousands in connection with the nationwide protests that started on December 28, 2025.



NEW DELHI: The Enforcement Directorate on Sunday said it has chargesheeted real-money online gaming app WinZO and its promoters, alleging that players lost Rs 734 crore on the platform as the company "embedded" bots and AI to "manipulate" the game's algorithms. According to an official statement, the ED's Bengaluru zonal office filed the prosecution complaint on January 23 before a local court designated to try cases under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

The company, Winzo Pvt. Ltd., its directors — Paavan Nanda and Saumya Singh Rathore — and its wholly-owned subsidiaries, including those based abroad, like Winzo US Inc., USA, Winzo SG Pte. Ltd and ZO Pvt. Ltd. have been named as accused in the chargesheet.

WinZO, through its mobile application, offered more than 100 games with a claimed user base of about 25 crore users, largely from tier-3 and tier-4 cities, the ED said.

The Union government banned real-money gaming apps in India in August 2025. "For providing these RMG (real money gaming) services, the company charged a percentage of the betting amounts from the users, as commission. The company also assured its users that its gaming platform was free from any BOTs (bots which are computer-controlled characters), was transparent and secure," the central agency added. However, it claimed,

"To suppress and conceal these unscrupulous acts, the company deliberately referred to the use of BOTs and simulated players under misleading terminologies such as EP (engagement play), PPP (past performance of player) and Persona," it said.

The agency further said it found that users were initially "lured" with small bonuses and made to win against easy BOTs, while also being allowed to withdraw small winnings in order to create a "false" sense of trust. Once the users began



the probe found that most RMGs were manipulated.

Analysis of the game codebases, third-party developer agreements and internal communications shows that till December 2023, the RMGs were "embedded" with BOTs, AI and algorithm profiles.

From May 2024 to August 2025, Winzo changed its code-based BOT modus operandi to simulate historical match-play data of dormant, inactive players against real users without their knowledge or consent, the ED claimed.

"Evidence found from the seized electronic devices also revealed that this manipulative gaming structure of Winzo caused severe financial distress to users (especially those from a poor financial background), and some users reportedly experienced extreme mental distress and also suicidal tendencies," the agency claimed.

It also alleged that proceeds of crime generated by the company were laundered through shell companies created in the US and Singapore. The ED had conducted raids at the premises of Winzo and its promoters last year and had arrested Nanda and Rathore. Rathore is now out on bail.

ED chargesheets online gaming app WinZO, alleges players duped of Rs 734 cr using bots

playing with higher bet amounts, hard BOTs were deployed systematically, resulting in "significant" financial losses to the users. The genuine users lost to BOT profiles and "incurred loss" of about Rs 734 crore, it said. "Genuine winnings at higher stakes were often blocked through restrictive withdrawal mechanisms, forcing them (users) into continued gameplay," the ED alleged.

The central agency charged that Winzo "failed" to return legitimate user winnings and deposits worth Rs 47.66 crore, even after RMGs were banned by the central government last year.

In this manner, the company generated proceeds of crime to the tune of Rs 3,522.05 crore between 2021-2022 and 2025-2026 financial years (as on Aug 22, 2025), it said.

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SC issues notice to Centre, CBI, RBI

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi has issued notices to the Union of India, Central Bureau of Investigation, Reserve Bank of India and others on the plea filed by Naresh Malhotra



New Delhi, Jan 25: The Supreme Court has sought responses from the Centre, the CBI and others on a plea filed by a 78-year-old retired banker who was duped of Rs 23 crore after allegedly being put under "digital arrest" for nearly a month.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi has issued notices to the Union of India, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and others on the plea filed by Naresh Malhotra.

Over 70 fugitives wanted by India located abroad during 2024-25: Report

New Delhi, Jan 25: Over 70 fugitives, wanted by India, were located abroad during 2024-25, according to an official report. As many as 203 fugitives wanted by other countries were detected/located in India during the same period.

A total of 71 "wanted persons/fugitives wanted by India" were located abroad in 2024-25, according to the annual report of the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions.

The number of such wanted fugitives located abroad is the highest in the over a decade time, officials claimed. A total of 27 fugitives/wanted persons returned to India, from abroad in the last financial year, said the ministry's annual report for 2024-25.

It also gave details on the working of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which acts as the National Central Bureau (NCB) - the nodal point for Interpol in India.

During the period of April, 2024 to March, 2025, 74 Letters Rogatory (LRs) were sent abroad, out of which 54 pertained to CBI cases and 20 of them to state law enforcement and other central agencies, the report said.

It was confirmed by Indian law enforcement agencies including CBI that 47 LRs were fully executed during the said period and 29 were disposed of as closed/withdrawn on partial execution.

As March 31, 2025, a total 533 LRs were pending with other countries, out of which 276 pertained to CBI cases and 257 to state police and other central law enforcement agencies. As many as 32 LRs/treaty based requests were received from various countries requesting to provide assistance in the investigation of criminal matters.

T'gana: 900 strays killed so far, sarpanch booked

Hyderabad, Jan 25: In a fresh incident of alleged stray dogs killing in Telangana, about 300 canines were allegedly killed in Jagtial district, taking the toll to 900, animal rights activists claimed.

The killings are suspected to have been carried out by some elected representatives, including Sarpanches, allegedly to fulfil promises made to villagers ahead of gram panchayat elections held in December last year, to address the stray dog menace.

The latest incident came to light after a complaint was lodged, alleging that 300 stray dogs were killed in Pegadapally village by administering poison-



ous injections January 22.

Blaming the village Sarpanch and Gram Panchayat secretary for the gruesome act, the complaint alleged that the former hired few individuals to kill the strays.

Based on the complaint, police registered an FIR against the duo under relevant sections of BNS and Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, police said Saturday.

Inspector Ch Kiran said, during the inquest, around 70 to 80 dog carcasses were exhumed from the burial site. The burial appeared to have taken place three to four days ago.

"At this stage, we cannot confirm the involvement of the accused persons in the incident," he said, adding that post-mortem reports were awaited and further investigation was in progress.

In January alone, several incidents of stray dog killings were reported in the state.

As per the complaint lodged by animal rights activists, 100 dogs were allegedly poisoned to death at Yacharam village near here January 19 though 50 carcasses were found immediately.

Unapologetic on Op Sindoor: Tharoor on issues with Cong

Kozhikode (Kerala), Jan 25: Congress MP Shashi Tharoor Saturday said he has never violated the party's stated positions in Parliament, asserting that his only public disagreement in principle was over Operation Sindoor.

Answering questions during a session at the Kerala Literature Festival here, Tharoor said he had taken a strong stand on that issue and remained "unapologetic".

His statement comes amidst recent reports stating "Tharoor's differences with the party leadership", with a speculation that he is upset over Congress leader Rahul Gandhi not adequately acknowledging his presence at a recent event in Kochi and over alleged repeated attempts by state leaders to sideline him.

Explaining his position, Tharoor said that, as an observer and writer, he had written a newspaper column after the Pahalgam incident, stating that it should not go unpunished and that there should be a kinetic response.

Earlier, answering questions during a session at the Kerala Literature Festival here, Tharoor said he had taken a strong stand on 'Operation Sindoor' and remained "unapologetic," about it.

Explaining his position, Tharoor said that as an observer, commentator and writer, he had written a newspaper column after the Pahalgam terror attack, stating that it should not go unpunished and that there should be a kinetic response.

He said that while India is focused on development, it should not be dragged into a prolonged conflict with Pakistan, and that any action should be limited to targeting terrorist camps.

Tharoor said that to his surprise, the Indian government did exactly what he had recommended.

"How could I be expected to



criticise it when I myself recommended it. I supported it fully throughout Operation Sindoor and afterwards," he said.

When the government sent him abroad as part of a multi-party delegation over Operation Sindoor, his party, for some reason, did not like it.

"You can speak to them and find out," he said. Tharoor said it was Jawaharlal Nehru who posed the famous question: "Who lives if India dies."

"When India is at stake, when India's security and its place in the world are involved, India comes first," he said.

He added that political parties may have differences as part of the process of building a better India, but when national interests are involved, India must prevail.

Terrorists had gunned down 26 people, mostly tourists, in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam in April 2025, sending shockwaves across the country. In response, India launched Operation Sindoor, a precision military offensive targeting terror launchpads in Pakistan.

CBSE mandates mental health, career counselors in all affiliated schools

New Delhi: In a significant policy reform aimed at strengthening students' mental health and providing them with career guidance, the Central Board of Secondary Education has made the appointment of socio-emotional and career counsellors mandatory in all affiliated schools. For this, the national education board amended Clause 2.4.12 of the CBSE Affiliation Bye-Laws, 2018, following a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed before the Rajasthan High Court in July 2025 by Kota-based advocate Sujeev Swami and some psychology experts. The PIL highlighted rising mental health challenges among students, including academic stress and lack of structured career guidance, and sought mandatory provisions for qualified counsellors and a uniform mental health support framework in schools.



The President of the European Council Mr. Antonio Costa and the President of the European Commission Ms. Ursula von der Leyen met the

Union Minister of External Affairs Dr. Subrahmanyam met Jaishankar.

Techie death: Accident site draws curious crowds

Residents and commuters were seen peering into the area of Noida's Sector 150 and asking security personnel and media persons whether it was the same location where the software engineer was allegedly pleading for help for hours after his car plunged into the ditch.

the same location where the software engineer was allegedly pleading for help for hours after his car plunged into the ditch. Many paused briefly to take photographs and videos, discussing where the onus falls. Rakesh Chauhan, a retired teacher in his early 60s, slowed his car while passing through the area and asked, "Is this the place where the boy drowned?" Expressing anguish, he said the tragedy reflected "gross negligence" and lamented that the



victim could have been saved had timely efforts been made.

A car driver, Raman, pointed out that the trench lay only a few metres from the road

safety arrangements were put in place only after the tragedy. "If these steps had been taken earlier, his life could have been saved," he said before leaving the spot.

A police personnel deployed at the site said many people stop to inquire about the incident, often leading to crowding.

A tea vendor located about 200 metres from the site said there were "several other vulnerable spots" in the area that posed similar risks.

Mithlesh Kasana, a resident of Dadri, said the area has seen frequent visits by police officials, a Special Investigation Team (SIT) and local residents since the incident.

The software engineer died in the early hours of January 17 after his car skidded in dense fog and plunged into

an unbarriered, water-filled trench in Sector 150 crossing over a drain at a sharp, almost 90-degree turning road. The incident triggered widespread public outrage, leading the Uttar Pradesh government to remove the Noida Authority CEO on January 19 and earlier terminate the services of a junior engineer in connection with the case.

Police, who have lodged cases of negligence, culpable homicide not amounting to murder and for pollution and violations of environment laws, have arrested three builders and launched a probe against real estate developers MZ Wiztown and Lotus Greens, while investigations are continuing to fix accountability for the lapses that allegedly led to the fatal accident.

CM Stalin announces Republic Day medals for 44 intelligence, special operations personnel

CHENNAI: Chief Minister M K Stalin on Sunday ordered the conferment of the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister's Medal for Excellence in Intelligence and Excellence in Special Operations on 44 personnel on the occasion of Republic Day 2026.

The awards will be given to 43 police officers and personnel and one Special Branch Assistant from the Intelligence Unit in recognition of outstanding performance in intelligence work and special operations. The medals are instituted to acknowledge exemplary service and motivate personnel engaged in sensitive and high-risk assignments.

Each awardee will receive a gold medal weighing 10 grams along with a cash award of Rs 25,000. The medals will be presented by the Chief Minister at a function to be held later.



Free turtle excluder devices worth Rs 6.40 cr to be distributed to TN fishermen

CHENNAI: In a conservation initiative aimed at protecting endangered sea turtles without affecting fishermen's livelihoods, the Tamil Nadu government on Sunday announced a Rs 6.40 crore scheme to distribute Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) free of cost to mechanised fishing vessels operating along the State's coastline.

The programme, implemented through the Fisheries and Fishermen Welfare department, seeks to prevent sea turtles, particularly during their annual nesting season, from being trapped in fishing trawl nets. The nesting period extends from January 1 to April 30 every year.

As part of turtle protection measures, the State has imposed a ban on mechanised fishing with



in five nautical miles from the shore and prohibited the use of mechanised traditional boats with engines exceeding 10 horsepower in notified turtle nesting zones. The use of specific fishing nets has also been restricted during the breeding season.

According to the government, monitoring and enforcement are being strengthened through joint patrols and real-time tracking of fishing vessels using ISRO-enabled transponders via the 'Nabhimitra' online application. Action has been initiated against violators under the TN Marine

Fishing Regulation Act. Awareness campaigns are also being conducted in fishing hamlets in coordination with the Forest department, Coastal Security Group, Coast Guard, fishermen associations, NGOs and village panchayat leaders. A total of 270 awareness programmes have been held during the current nesting season. The TEDs, designed with technical support from the ICAR Central Institute of Fisheries Technology, Kochi, allow turtles caught in trawl nets to escape safely without damaging the catch. In the first phase, TEDs worth Rs 11.75 lakh were distributed to 50 vessels on a pilot basis, followed by distribution to 2,613 boats at a cost of Rs 6.29 crore. Installation work is currently underway, officials said.

RAIN LIKELY IN 16 TN DISTRICTS, INCLUDING CHENNAI, TILL 1 PM

CHENNAI: The Chennai Regional Meteorological Centre has forecast rain in 16 districts of Tamil Nadu till 1 pm today, with light to moderate rainfall accompanied by thunder at a few places. According to the weather bulletin, light to moderate rain with isolated thunderstorms is likely in Chengalpattu, Cuddalore, Mayiladuthurai and Villupuram districts. Light to moderate rain may occur in Chennai, Kanchipuram, Nagapattinam, Thanjavur, Tiruvalur and Tiruvarur districts. Light rain is expected in Ariyalur, Tiruvannamalai, Ranipet, Kanchipuram, Tiruchirappalli and Pudukkottai districts. Earlier, the weather department had stated that light to moderate rain accompanied by thunder and lightning was likely at a few places across Tamil Nadu and in Puducherry and Karaikal today.

Humanitarian sector must be prepared for cyberattack threat

The growing sophistication of cyberwarfare has resulted in a notable escalation in recent years. Cyberattacks have evolved beyond mere disruptions of digital systems and now have the potential to cause real-world harm with devastating consequences. This may be a paradigm shift in the landscape of modern conflict. As our reliance on digital technologies continues to expand across various sectors, so does the potential for cyber threats and attacks.

Last month, a hacking group known as "Gonjeshke Darande" (Predatory Sparrow) claimed responsibility for a cyberattack that knocked out the majority of gas stations across Iran, leading to long queues. Almost 70 percent of the country's gas stations experienced service disruptions, according to Iranian state TV. The disruption was attributed to a "software problem" and the public was advised against rushing to those stations that were still operational.

Already this year, the global landscape has been marred by a series of more than 15 major cyberattacks spanning diverse sectors and affecting numerous countries. These incidents underscore the pervasive and evolving nature of cyber threats in our interconnected world. From critical infrastructure to financial institutions, government entities to private enterprises, the targets have been varied, highlighting the indiscriminate reach of malicious actors in the digital realm.

Nation states, nonstate actors and even individuals are increasingly leveraging advanced cyber capabilities in order to achieve financial, political and strategic objectives.

The humanitarian challenges stemming from cyberattacks have unfortunately emerged as a pressing concern, as hospitals, power grids, financial institutions and critical infrastructure are no longer immune to the reach of such adversaries. As the world becomes increasingly reliant on technology for essential services, communica-



tions and commerce, the vulnerabilities exposed by malicious cyber activities pose profound threats to humanity's well-being.

This is why it is important to look at the intricate web of humanitarian challenges associated with cyberattacks by delving into the implications for individuals, communities and global organizations and ways to tackle this issue.

First of all, it is critical to point out that the infrastructure that is essential for the functioning of societies has increasingly become a target — and is susceptible — to cyber threats. The interconnectivity of systems controlling energy, water supply, transport and healthcare leaves these sectors vulnerable to malicious cyber activities. Disruptions in these areas can have cascading effects, jeopardizing the delivery of vital services and posing significant challenges for humanitarian organizations responding to crises. As humanitarian organizations collect and store vast amounts of sensitive data, the risk of data breaches looms large. More fundamentally, the healthcare sector, a core pillar of humanitarian efforts, has increasingly become a prime target for cyberattacks. Ransomware attacks on hospitals have the potential to disrupt patient care, compromise sensitive medical records and even endanger lives. Unfortunately, the humanitarian consequences are dire in such cases because, if the integrity of medical services is compromised, vulnerable popula-

tions would be left without access to critical healthcare during times of need. Cyberattacks can also compromise emergency response systems. Attacks can disrupt communication channels, hinder logistics and compromise the efficiency of relief efforts. This not only endangers lives but also exacerbates the challenges faced by communities already grappling with the aftermath of disasters. Humanitarian crises, whether caused by natural disasters or conflicts, demand swift, immediate and coordinated emergency responses. It is also critical to focus on vulnerable and marginalized communities, as cyberattacks disproportionately affect these communities, exacerbating existing inequalities. Access to essential services, financial systems and communications platforms is critical for marginalized populations and any disruption in these areas further marginalizes and isolates them. In addition, as humanitarian organizations collect and store vast amounts of sensitive data, the risk of data breaches looms large. It is evident that safeguarding the confidentiality of personal information is paramount for maintaining the integrity of humanitarian efforts. But the problem is that cyberattacks that compromise the privacy of affected populations can erode trust and deter individuals from seeking assistance.

One of the key challenges in tackling cyberattacks is related to the

issue of accountability. It is often difficult to identify the perpetrators of cyberattacks with certainty. This lack of clear attribution can hinder efforts to hold the responsible parties accountable for their actions. This ambiguity also undermines the potential for legal recourse and international cooperation in addressing cyber threats with a humanitarian impact.

This is why it is critical for humanitarian organizations to enhance their cybersecurity capabilities and resilience. Capacity-building initiatives ought to concentrate on training personnel, implementing robust cybersecurity measures and developing contingency plans to respond effectively in the event of a cyberattack. Proactive investment in cybersecurity infrastructure is also crucial for mitigating the impact of cyber threats on humanitarian operations.

In addition, efficiently addressing the humanitarian challenges of cyberattacks requires a collaborative approach. Strengthening international cooperation on cybersecurity and fostering diplomacy to establish norms and regulations are essential. The establishment of clear guidelines and frameworks can contribute to a more secure cyberspace, reducing the potential for humanitarian crises resulting from malicious cyber activities. In a nutshell, the humanitarian challenges of cyberwarfare underscore their impact on people's well-being. The evolving nature of cyber threats poses multifaceted risks to critical infrastructure, healthcare, emergency response systems and marginalized communities. This underscores the urgent need for international cooperation — including on fortifying defenses and enhancing resilience. Only through concerted efforts to fortify cybersecurity measures and foster a global understanding of the humanitarian consequences of cyber threats can we navigate the complex terrain of the digital age, while ensuring the protection and well-being of individuals and communities worldwide.

Dharmapuri sugar mill worker's son sweeps 23 medals at Tanuvas

CHENNAI: At the 25th convocation of Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University, 25-year-old EL Aruneshwaran stole the spotlight by sweeping 23 awards.

A graduate of the Veterinary College and Research Institute, Namakkal, his haul included prestigious honours like the Dorabji Tata Prize and the Tanuvas Alumni Association Medal for his 2018-19 academic performance.

The Dharmapuri native credited his success to his parents — his father is a sugar mill accountant, while his mother is a homemaker — and his sup-



portive faculty. "This is a proud moment. I am grateful to my parents, who struggled to educate me," he said. "My father was very particular about my education. The dean and

teachers of various departments motivated and guided me," he added. Aruneshwaran is currently pursuing an MSc at the Indian Veterinary Research Institute in Uttar

Pradesh. While completing his master's, he is preparing for civil service exams with a mission: to become a government veterinary doctor and serve the farming community.

CM Stalin unveils statues of Tamil language martyrs Thalamuthu and Natarajan

CHENNAI: Marking Tamil Language Martyrs' Day, Chief Minister M K Stalin on Sunday paid homage to freedom-era language activists Thalamuthu and Natarajan at Moolakothalam here and later unveiled their busts at the Thalamuthu-Natarajan Maaligai in Egmore, commemorating their role in the historic anti-Hindi agitation of 1937-39.

Observing Tamil Language Martyrs' Day, the Chief Minister recalled that the agitation erupted after Hindi was made a compulsory subject in schools in 1938, with failure to pass resulting in denial of promotion. The move, he

said, triggered widespread protests cutting across parties and social movements, drawing participation from students, scholars and reformers.

Natarajan, the first martyr of the agitation, died in custody in January 1939 after pro- longed illness following his arrest at a protest in Adyar. His death galvanized the movement, drawing thousands to his funeral procession. Two months later, Thalamuthu, a young protester from Kumbakonam, died in

prison in March 1939 after being sentenced for participating in demonstrations against compulsory Hindi.

"The sacrifice of Thalamuthu and Natarajan stands as a beacon for Tamil consciousness and linguistic self-respect," Stalin said, noting that their legacy continues to inspire generations.

Earlier, the Chief Minister participated in a commemorative procession and paid respects at the memorial of social reformer S Dharmambal. Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin, senior ministers, legislators, Mayor Priya and officials were present at the events.

AI GUIDES TO SMART PARKING: TECH-DRIVEN TRAFFIC PLAN TO STEER REPUBLIC DAY CROWD TO KARTAVYA PATH

NEW DELHI: From AI-generated informational videos to car-calling systems, Delhi Traffic Police has rolled out a slew of technology-driven measures to ensure smooth traffic flow and a hassle-free commute for people heading to Kartavya Path for the Republic Day parade and the Beating Retreat ceremony.

In a first, the traffic police has prepared detailed animated videos with the help of Artificial Intelligence (AI), depicting the arrival, alighting, departure and parking plans for invitees. Officials said the videos are aimed at familiarising visitors with the movement and parking arrangements well in advance.

The videos are available on the Ministry of Defence website and can also be accessed through the QR code-based parking system issued to invitees. They explain in detail how arrival, alighting and parking will be managed on the day of the event, a senior police officer told PTI.

The parking management system covers 22 designated parking lots and has been designed to accommodate around 8,000 vehicles. Every year, nearly 77,000 passes are issued to spectators for the Republic Day parade, of which about 8,000 are earmarked for those arriving by private vehicles, the police said.

Another first this year is the introduction of shuttle services for security personnel deployed



for Republic Day arrangements. Shuttles will operate from four locations — Khan Market, Amritsar, Sher-Gil Marg, Patel Chowk Metro Station and HC Mathur Lane — to ferry personnel to their respective destinations.

The shuttles will run at a frequency of 10 minutes, he said.

To assist commuters in reaching their designated parking areas on Republic Day, invited guests and ticket holders can use Google Maps or Mappi for real-time navigation support. A senior police officer said the platforms will provide details of appropriate routes to Kartavya Path and the exact location of allotted parking spots.

On Mappi, a dedicated Republic Day tab has been created, while Google Maps will display specially marked parking locations along with entry and exit routes to help visitors reach their destinations without confusion, he said. Apart from digital assistance, the traffic police has significantly expanded on-ground support by setting up 12 help desks at key locations — up from just two in previous years. Personnel deployed at these help

desks will guide commuters on parking facilities, pedestrian movement routes and security arrangements, the officer said.

The help desks will be located at Moti Lal Nehru Place roundabout, Sunehri Masjid roundabout, Man Singh roundabout, Jaswant Singh roundabout, GPO roundabout, Windsor Place roundabout, Mandi House roundabout, Q-point, Teen Murti roundabout, Crossing Janpath/Dr Rajendra Prasad Road, Gate number 14 of Jawahar Lal Nehru Stadium and Palika

Parkings, they added.

Car-calling systems have also been introduced this year to avoid crowding after the conclusion of the programme and to ensure smooth dispersal of invitees. Under the system, invitees can inform an officer stationed at the exit gate, following which announcements mentioning the car number or the driver's name will be made. The traffic police has advised people to follow official advisories, use public transport as far as possible and rely on digital navigation tools for a smoother commute to Kartavya Path.

Editorial

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2025

Rescue units or spectators to tragedy?

The utter incompetence of multiple civic agencies in saving a drowning man in the heart of Greater Noida last week throws light on an effete state that is simply unable to summon up the will to serve its citizens. Yuvraj Mehta's desperate cries for help from atop his sinking car, and the lack of capacity as well as courage among rescue personnel on the shore amid a fog enveloping the dreadful night make for a depressing picture of India under the current dispensation. The man, 27-year-old Yuvraj Mehta, was driving back home under poor visibility conditions at midnight Friday, January 16, when his SUV plunged into a 50-ft flooded construction site that had neither a protective barrier nor warning signage. Mehta survived the initial fall and climbed onto the roof of his sinking car.

For nearly 90 minutes, he desperately signalled for help using his mobile phone's torch and spoke to his father on the phone, who rushed to the site. Rescue personnel from four agencies—the Noida civic authority, the fire brigade, police and the National Disaster

Response Force—assembled on the shore but quibbled over the conditions, the equipment, the method and even the temperature of the water as the car went under the water, taking the young man with it.

The case has sparked nationwide outrage after the naked truth of the lack of prowess of our emergency services played out for everyone to see. Supposedly, trained rescue personnel refused to enter the water because the water was cold and feared the presence of iron rods under water. They lacked the thermal gear to operate at 30-foot depth and the fog lights needed to work in darkness. Even in terms of derring-do, they were shown up by a local delivery agent who jumped in to help with a rope tied around his waist. But by then, the vehicle had submerged and Mehta had succumbed to asphyxiation and cardiac arrest. This tragedy highlights failure at multiple levels, a many-headed failure that shows up at every crisis and in every disaster, be it a stampede at a crowded event, an outbreak of fire at an establishment with no safety arrangements, and the all-too-common and annual bouts of urban flooding in multiple cities. In the crisis management aspect, we have been witness to poorly trained and poorly equipped responders, as was glaringly evident in Greater Noida last week. But also, we see all too often contributory failings in the form of derelict safety regulation and administration. It's a shame that basic safety measures such as cautionary signage, working streetlights, and concrete barricading were absent on the street on which Yuvraj Mehta met his death. The fact that these were the conditions in the streets of a much-touted urban area is the least of it. Badly contoured lakesides and open excavation pits are universal conditions in the cities of India. Municipalities ignore them and local people normalise them, converting them into death traps. Yuvraj Mehta's death must jolt civic administrations and rescue agencies to overhaul their training methods, response protocols and equipment.

THE MAN, 27-YEAR-OLD YUVRAJ MEHTA, WAS DRIVING BACK HOME UNDER POOR VISIBILITY CONDITIONS AT MIDNIGHT FRIDAY, JANUARY 16, WHEN HIS SUV PLUNGED INTO A 50-FT FLOODED CONSTRUCTION SITE THAT HAD NEITHER A PROTECTIVE BARRIER NOR WARNING SIGNAGE.

77 Years of the Republic: Achievements, Challenges and a Pledge for the Future



DR. SATYAVANI SAURABH

The Republic of India turns 77 today. The Constitution, which came into effect on January 26, 1950, laid the foundation for a new India, inspired by the sacrifices of the freedom struggle. Since independence, we have progressed in many areas—from literature, sports, agriculture, science and technology, to economic and military capabilities. Strengthening our diverse culture, the nation has established its identity on the global stage. The Chandrayaan missions made us pioneers in space science, the digital revolution of UPI transformed the payment system, while a slew of medals at the Olympics and Asian Games took sports to new heights. Today, the world sees India as the fourth largest economy, where a growth rate of seven to eight percent has contributed to poverty alleviation. But this journey has not been smooth. Internal challenges, cross-border threats, and social inequalities persist. On Republic Day, introspection is necessary: what have we gained, what have we lost, and what resolutions should we take for the future?

India's first and greatest challenge was unity in diversity. This continent-sized country was a blend of over 1.3 billion people, hundreds of languages and dialects, diverse religions and cultures. At the time of independence, there were fears that it would not remain united. The tragedy of Partition reinforced these fears, resulting in the loss of millions of lives. However, the Constitution ensured unity through a federal structure. Article 1 declared India a united state. The reorganization of linguistic states, a unified judiciary, and constitutional institutions integrated regional aspirations into the mainstream. Despite challenges like Naxalism and separatism, we maintained unity. Over the past 25 years, the removal of Article 370 from Jammu and Kashmir and the peace process in the Northeast are proof of this. Today, schemes like "One Nation, One Nation" are turning diversity into strength. This achievement is no small feat—most pluralistic countries in the world have disintegrated, but India stands firm.

The third challenge was development. In 1947, the GDP was 230,000 crore rupees, today it is over 400 lakh crore rupees. The Green Revolution filled the food reserves, and the White Revolution set a world record in milk production. ISRO's 100-plus satellite missions and the Covishield vaccine demonstrated self-reliance. Digital India added over 100 million Aadhaar cards, while Startup India spawned over 100,000 startups. On the social front, the National Food Security Act provided affordable food grains to 800 million people, and Swachh Bharat built 120 million toilets. Ayushman Bharat provided health insurance to 500 million poor people. But inequality persisted—the top 10 percent owned 57 percent of the wealth, while the bottom 50 percent owned only 3 percent. The rural-urban divide and farmer suicides are worrying. Nevertheless, 250 million people emerged above the poverty line—a matter of pride.

The second challenge was to enliven democracy. The Constitution provided adult suffrage, fundamental rights, and secularism. A parliamentary system was adopted, inspired by the British model but tailored to Indian needs. Eighteen Lok Sabha elections were held peacefully, continuing a tradition dating back to the Nehruvian era. The judiciary established the rights of the poor through public interest litigation—the Vishakha Guidelines ensured women's safety, and the Right to Education ensured the right to education. Women's reservation revolutionized Panchayati Raj from 33 to 50 percent, a process awaiting national expansion. The

Right to Information increased transparency, while the Goods and Services Tax facilitated economic integration. Challenges persisted—dark chapters like the Emergency—but institutions were revived. Today, the pillars stand strong: the Election Commission is impartial, and the Reserve Bank of India is a guardian of economic stability. The world's largest democracy proved that democracy can flourish despite poverty and illiteracy.

The third challenge was development. In 1947, the GDP was 230,000 crore rupees, today it is over 400 lakh crore rupees. The Green Revolution filled the food reserves, and the White Revolution set a world record in milk production. ISRO's 100-plus satellite missions and the Covishield vaccine demonstrated self-reliance. Digital India added over 100 million Aadhaar cards, while Startup India spawned over 100,000 startups. On the social front, the National Food Security Act provided affordable food grains to 800 million people, and Swachh Bharat built 120 million toilets. Ayushman Bharat provided health insurance to 500 million poor people. But inequality persisted—the top 10 percent owned 57 percent of the wealth, while the bottom 50 percent owned only 3 percent. The rural-urban divide and farmer suicides are worrying. Nevertheless, 250 million people emerged above the poverty line—a matter of pride.

The achievements of the Republic are a reason for pride, but a lot was also lost. Corruption took root—scams like 2G, coal allocation looted billions. Questions on electoral bonds, black money return after demonetization failed. Women's reservation at its peak—from Nirbhaya to Hathras, rape incidents are not

stopping. Caste violence, Dalit atrocities continue. Farmers' crisis deepens: Demand for minimum support price, loan waiver is insufficient. Youth unemployment is at three percent, violence is erupting due to dissatisfaction. Pollution is fatal, the poison of provincialism persists. Abuse of freedom of expression. Naxalism, terrorism have become a headache. These wounds are staining Mother India with blood.

It may be lost, but a solution is possible. Direct benefit transfer on corruption has stopped leakage. Fast-track court for women's safety, increase the use of Nirbhaya Fund. Prime Minister Kisan Samman Nihi for farmers, strengthen farmer producer organizations. Skill India for employment, self-reliance, creation of three to ten crore jobs is possible. Run Constitution awareness campaign for social harmony. Electric vehicle policy on pollution, speed up Namami Gange. Empower Panchayati Raj—local governance strengthened with women's representation. Include youth in the mainstream. Spread of hatred can be stopped with Artificial Intelligence-Big Data. Unite to realize the dream of developed India by 2047.

Republic Day is not just a parade and flag hoisting, it is an opportunity for introspection. We gained unity, democracy, and development; we lost corruption and inequality. But youth power is our weapon. Be optimistic—adopt the Indian model. Follow the principles of Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, and Ambedkar, the architect of the Constitution. Let us extricate the Republic from the thorny bushes and build a bright future. Jai Hind, Jai Bharat!

(The Writer, is a poet and social thinker.) PhD (Political Science)

How to feed 10 billion people

With the world struggling to feed 8 billion people today, how will we feed 10 billion by 2050? Meeting the nutritional needs of a growing population requires not just a radical increase in food production—almost all of it plant-based—but also a more equitable distribution to ensure that no one is food-insecure.

That is a tall order. The current food system is already buckling. About 673 million people go to bed hungry every night and, in 2025, we witnessed two famines (in Gaza and Sudan), each driven by conflict, climate shocks and soaring food prices. At the same time, 1.66 billion hectares—60 percent of which is agricultural land—have been degraded by the very practices we rely on to feed the world.

Global hunger stems not from a lack of capacity to produce enough food, but partly from our failure to produce it efficiently and distribute it evenly. Conflict and insecurity remain the dominant causes of hunger across 20 countries and territories, leaving nearly 140 million people facing acute food insecurity. Disasters have inflicted an estimated \$3.26 trillion in agricultural losses worldwide over the past 33 years—an average of \$99 billion annually, or roughly 4 percent of global agricultural output; and recent supply-driven food price spikes have pushed tens of millions of people into hunger almost overnight. Worse, these are not one-off shocks. They represent the new normal.

We already have the knowledge and the tools to optimize what we use and diversify what we grow. One priority is to improve



decades, the agriculture sector has responded well to rising demand by developing higher-yielding crops and using more of everything: more fertilizer, more pesticides and more water. Yet this trend has produced unnecessary waste, polluted rivers, degraded the soil and released ever-more greenhouse gases. We need to find a better path—and science can show us the way. We already have the knowledge and the tools to optimize what we use and diversify what we grow. One priority is to improve

efficiency. Between 1990 and 2020, fertilizer use rose 46 percent and pesticide use doubled. But only 30 percent to 60 percent of fertilizer nutrients and 20 percent to 70 percent of pesticides are effectively absorbed; the rest washes into rivers, degrades soil or releases greenhouse gases. Fortunately, research shows that optimizing nitrogen use can boost yields by up to 19 percent and slash fertilizer use by 15 percent to 19 percent. Improved pesticide management—through precision spraying,

biopesticides and residue monitoring—reduces chemical waste while safeguarding biodiversity. Agroecological practices, such as intercropping, crop rotation and integrating trees into farm systems, further enhance soil health, lower input dependence and strengthen long-term resilience.

The next priority is to diversify the food system. Decades of productivity gains have fostered a dangerous dependency on just three crops. Wheat, rice and maize now provide

most of the world's calories. Such reliance on monocultures creates profound vulnerability to pests, diseases and climate change. The solution lies in the crops we have marginalized. Traditional and underused species—hardy millets, nutrient-dense legumes, indigenous fruits, robust yams—offer ample nutrition alongside other benefits such as climate resilience. UN Food and Agriculture Organization initiatives like "Future Smart Food" (in Asia) and "100 Crops for Africa" demonstrate how these "forgotten" crops can simultaneously expand diets, boost farm incomes and restore degraded soils.

The objective is clear: agriculture must produce more with less everywhere.

Finally, we must scale up effective technologies. Data analytics and precision agriculture tools are already reshaping farming. Drones can plant seeds and deliver inputs with pinpoint accuracy. Artificial intelligence platforms can use satellite imagery to provide tailored, real-time recommendations. Robots can detect weeds for targeted spraying, avoiding the need for blanket herbicide applications. Digital soil tests and weather stations can guide day-to-day decisions and blockchain systems can link smallholders to transparent and traceable markets.

Scaling these tools will require substantial investments in agricultural extension services (to promote best practices), major science-based policy shifts and knowledge-sharing platforms to help farmers optimize inputs. Likewise, ongoing

innovation must be incorporated into local practices, which calls for greater collaboration among governments, investors, the private sector and farmers. The objective is clear: agriculture must produce more with less—more crop per drop, more calories per kilogram of fertilizer and more nutrition per hectare—every season, everywhere. That requires replacing one-size-fits-all industrial packages with resilient, context-specific systems finely tuned to local soils, water regimes, crops and climates.

Publicly funded research must lead where markets fall short to ensure equitable access to precision agriculture, while private innovation continues to scale up what works. Knowledge is no longer the bottleneck; political will and aligned incentives are.

Even in the face of recurring conflict, drought and market chaos, stable production and affordable prices are possible. Resilient soils, diversified cropping and precision management hold the key. A world where nearly everyone eats well, farmers prosper, soils regenerate, waters run clean, biodiversity recovers and agri-food systems emit minimal greenhouse gases is not utopian. It is the realistic reward for embracing a different agricultural model before the old one collapses. The only question is whether we use the knowledge, science and proven tools already in hand. Future generations will not ask whether the solutions existed; they will ask what took us so long to implement them. The choice is ours and it starts with turning science into real-world practice.

Mcap of 9 of top-10 most valued firms plunges by Rs 2.51 lakh cr

New Delhi: The combined market valuation of nine of the top-10 most valued firms slumped by Rs 2.51 lakh crore last week, with Reliance Industries taking the biggest hit, in line with a weak trend in equities. Last week, the BSE benchmark Sensex tanked 2,032.65 points or 2.43 per cent.

"Markets witnessed a sharp sell-off during the week, with bears firmly in control. Weak global cues, persistent FII outflows, a depreciating rupee, and subdued corporate earnings kept pressure elevated throughout the week," Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said. The combined market valuation of nine of the top-10



most valued firms, including Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank and Bharti Airtel, plunged by Rs 2,51,711.6 crore. The market valuation of Reliance Industries tumbled by Rs 17,533.97 crore to Rs 96,960.17 crore to Rs 18,75,533.04 crore.

ICICI Bank's valuation eroded by Rs 48,644.99

crore to Rs 9,60,825.29 crore. The valuation of HDFC Bank tanked Rs 22,923.02 crore to Rs 14,09,611.89 crore and that of Bharti Airtel diminished by Rs 17,533.97 crore to Rs 14,093.93 crore to Rs 5,15,161.91 crore. Mcap of Bajaj Finance declined by Rs 5,77,353.23 crore and that of State Bank of India edged lower by Rs 11,907.5 crore to Rs 9,50,199.77 crore.

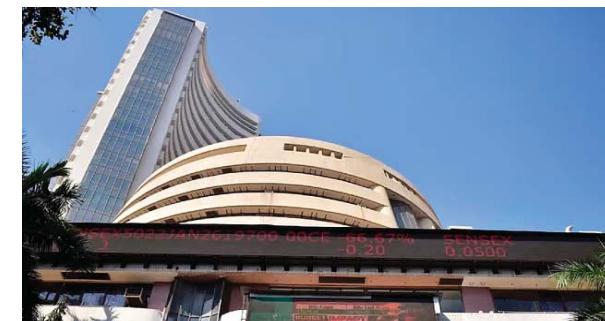
Market capitalisation (mcap) of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) dropped by Rs 16,588.93 crore to Rs 11,43,623.19 crore and that of Larsen & Toubro tanked Rs 15,248.32 crore to Rs 5,77,353.23 crore and that of State Bank of India edged lower by Rs 11,907.5 crore to Rs 9,50,199.77 crore.

Market valuation of Infosys dived Rs 7,810.77 crore to Rs 6,94,078.82 crore. However, mcap of Hindustan Unilever climbed Rs 12,311.86 crore to Rs 5,66,733.16 crore. Reliance Industries remained the most valued firm, followed by HDFC Bank, TCS, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, Infosys, Bajaj Finance, Hindustan Unilever and Larsen & Toubro. "The correction was fuelled by a confluence of factors: escalating geopolitical tensions, aggressive FII selling, and panic regarding the Rupee's weakness," Santosh Meena, Head of Research at Swastika Investmart Ltd, said on markets sell-off last week.

Why stock markets often trade lower ahead of Union Budgets

NEW DELHI: As the government prepares to present the Union Budget 2026-27, data from 2010-2022 shows that markets often trade lower ahead of the event due to fear of policy surprises, though post-budget rebounds are common — with an average 1.36 per cent gain in the following week, according to market watchers. This pre-budget weakness is attributed to elevated volatility, as seen in the average 2.65 per cent intraday trading range on budget day itself, they said.

Over the past 15 years, the average return for Nifty one week before the budget has been negative at -0.52 per cent, with the index closing higher only on 8 occasions. This pattern aligns with broader trends, where Nifty posted negative returns in the month preceding the



budget in four out of the last five years, including a drop in January 2025.

"For the Union Budget 2026, expectations centre on balancing fiscal prudence with growth stimulus amid global headwinds like US tariffs under President Donald Trump," said Rahul Sharma, Director, Head - Technical and Derivative Research, JM Financial Services Ltd. Key anticipations include increased capital expenditure on

Infrastructure, Defence, and Railways to shield the economy from external shocks, with a hike in defence allocation. Industry bodies seek boosts for MSMEs, manufacturing, green energy, AI and exports through incentives like faster GST refunds and investments in logistics. "Fiscal deficit is projected at 4.4 per cent of GDP, with emphasis on job creation, rural demand, and sustainable development to propel India toward a \$5 trillion economy.

RBI may cut rates further if India-US trade deal is delayed: Goldman Sachs



MUMBAI: India's strong economic fundamentals continue to support a healthy growth outlook, but prolonged uncertainty over the India-US trade deal could push the Reserve Bank of India to step in with further rate cuts.

According to Goldman Sachs, if trade-related headwinds persist beyond the first quarter of FY27 and start weighing on growth, the RBI may use its remaining policy space to support the economy through additional monetary easing. The brokerage said India's mass consumption story, especially in rural areas and among lower-income households in cities, is still in the early stages of recovery.

This recovery is being supported by a good crop cycle, higher state-level transfer payments to women in lower-income families and GST cuts that benefited the bottom end of the consumption ladder.

Goldman Sachs believes these factors are helping demand gradually pick up, even though broader global uncertainties remain.

In an interaction with NDTV Profit, Santanu Sengupta, Chief

The brokerage said India's mass consumption story, especially in rural areas and among lower-income households in cities, is still in the early stages of recovery.

India Economist at Goldman Sachs, said the India-US trade deal is expected to be finalised by the first quarter of FY27.

However, he warned that if the agreement is pushed beyond this period and into the second half of the next financial year, it could create growth headwinds.

sumption through income tax and consumption tax cuts. This helped India record a strong real GDP growth of 7.6 per cent year-on-year in calendar year 2025. However, nominal GDP growth fell to a six-year low, excluding the pandemic period, mainly because of very low inflation.

MAHE Bengaluru's MAHETHON 2026 Makes Spectacular Debut, Inspiring a Healthier, Greener Tomorrow

Bengaluru, January 25, 2026: The inaugural edition of MAHETHON 2026, organized by MAHE Bengaluru Campus of Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE), Institution of Eminence Deemed-to-be University, was a spectacular success. MAHE Bangalore campus, brought together over 10,000 runners across multiple categories, spanning all fitness levels and age groups. The marathon featured an AIMS-certified route, with the race commencing and concluding at the MAHE Bengaluru Campus, Yelahanka. Powered by AXIS Bank, MAHETHON united students, professional athletes, corporate teams, armed and police forces, families, and children, all sharing a commitment to health, community well-being, and the environment. MAHETHON 2026, Bengaluru's Biggest Running Festival, was officially flagged off by Shri S. R. Vishwanath, Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA), Yelahanka. The Senior leadership from MAHE, including Dr. Madhu Veeraraghavan, Pro Vice-Chancellor of MAHE Bengaluru Campus and MLHS, MAHE Manipal, Dr. Sharath Rao Pro Vice-Chancellor, Health Sciences, MAHE, Chief Operating Officer Dr. Anand Venugopal, MAHE, and Dr. Raghavendra Prabhu P, Additional Registrar, MAHE Bengaluru joined him. The event was also attended by members of the civil society, governing body, academic leaders, corporate partners, and



senior administrators, who actively encouraged and motivated participants across all race categories.

Addressing the gathering, Shri S. R. Vishwanath, MLA remarked, I sincerely appreciate the Manipal Group of Institutions for bringing quality healthcare and education institutions closer to the people. It is heartening to see participants travel all the way from Bengaluru and other places, which reflects the trust and confidence people have in Manipal institutions. The work being done by MAHE Bangalore campus is truly commendable. Such programmes open new opportunities for our region, and I am very happy that this initiative was conducted locally for the benefit of our people... I have ensured that the state of the roads in Yelahanka has been addressed; however, some areas still require repair and attention. I assure everyone that by MAHETHON 2027, all roads in Yelahanka will be

well-maintained and in good condition. Reflecting on the spirit of the event, Dr. Madhu Veeraraghavan noted: "Today, as we witness the energy and enthusiasm of every participant at MAHETHON, I extend my heartfelt appreciation to each runner who chose to be part of this journey, and my sincere gratitude to our sponsors whose support has made this event possible. Together, we've created something truly remarkable for our MAHE community.

The marathon featured multiple race categories, including the Half Marathon (21.1K), 10K, 5K, and 3K Fun Run, promoting broad participation and inclusivity. A defining feature of MAHETHON 2026 was the dedicated participation of armed forces personnel and persons with disabilities, reflecting the event's commitment to inclusivity and community engagement. The fastest runners in each category were celebrated for their outstanding performances.

es, with a total prize money pool of 13.75 lakh.

Held under the theme "Run Green, Breathe Free" with the tagline "Bengaluru Runs for Earth," the event seamlessly combined fitness with environmental stewardship. As part of the celebrations, a tree-planting drive was organised, highlighting MAHE Bengaluru's commitment to eco-friendly practices, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable mobility, while promoting healthy lifestyles and community well-being.

The event was conducted ahead of India's 77th Republic Day, celebrating national pride, unity, and community participation. Dr. Raghavendra Prabhu, Additional Registrar, MAHE Bengaluru, observed that MAHETHON will now be held annually on the fourth Sunday of January, establishing it as a flagship event that promotes fitness, environmental awareness, and MAHE's ongoing commitment to the community.

The success of MAHETHON 2026 underscores MAHE's dedication to health, sustainability, and social engagement. Alongside the Manipal Marathon hosted at Manipal, MAHETHON strengthens MAHE's pan-India presence in community-driven sporting initiatives. By combining fitness, inclusivity, and environmental responsibility, the event has set a benchmark for future editions, inspiring communities to come together in celebration of well-being, sustainability, and civic pride.

Future-ready lineup available immediately; consumers set to save up to Rs.19,000 with enhanced energy efficiency.



Key Highlights of the 2026 Lineup: Enhanced Energy Savings: The new norms are designed to drastically reduce power consumption for households. Industry estimates indicate that upgrading to a new 5-star AC under the 2026 norms can help consumers save approximately 19,000 over a 10-year period, depending on usage and tariff rates.

Understanding the New Ratings: Under the stricter 2026 framework, the efficiency threshold has been raised; for instance, a model previously rated as 5-star may now be classified

as 4-star. This reclassification reflects a higher standard of efficiency rather than a drop in performance, encouraging the adoption of superior, low-power technology. Availability: LGEIL future-ready line-up has been available in the market since early January – making it among the first brands to offer its 2026 BEE compliant residential air-conditioners. This ensures that customers purchasing early for the summer are not buying outdated technology.

Key features: This year our focus on empowering customers with features

like Precool and Energy Manager+. Pre cool, An innovative feature designed to ensure your home is perfectly cool and comfortable the moment you step in. Precool feature uses Geo fencing technology to locate user and ThinQ operates Air conditioner basis Automation applied by user once you enter the pre-defined distance range. Energy Manager+ analyses your AC usages History and recommends realistic operating hours and consumption. Users can set Periodic Budget target as required basis recommendation.

Sanjay Chitkara, Co-Chief Sales & Marketing Officer, LG Electronics India Limited

Commented on the launch: "As India moves towards stricter energy efficiency norms, LG Electronics India Limited remains committed to supporting this transition through early compliance

Egypt aims to double trade with India to \$12 billion

NEW DELHI: Egypt has set a strong goal to nearly double its trade with India, aiming to reach \$12 billion in the coming years. Currently, trade between the two countries stands at around \$5 billion, which Egypt believes is far below the real potential of the partnership.

Speaking at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of South Asia here, Egypt's Ambassador to India, Kamel Zayed Galal, said both nations have many opportunities to grow together, especially in sectors like energy, manufacturing, agriculture and connectivity.

He also shared that Indian investments in Egypt, which are now around \$3.7 billion, are expected to cross \$10 billion in the future. The Ambassador encouraged Indian companies to see Egypt as a long-term strategic partner rather than just

a short-term business destination. Energy cooperation is becoming a major focus, especially in renewable energy and green hydrogen.

Galal explained that Egypt has strong solar and wind resources, along with growing infrastructure and easy access to major global shipping routes. These advantages could help Egypt become an important hub for green energy production and exports. He also pointed to fertilisers, agriculture and industrial manufacturing as areas where closer supply chain links could quickly increase trade. The Ambassador highlighted Egypt's industrial zones and its free trade agreements with African and European countries as major benefits for Indian businesses. He said Egypt is not just a market to sell products but also a base for production and exports to wider regions.

Egypt's ports on the Red Sea and Mediterranean Sea, along with the Suez Canal – which handles about 12 percent of global trade – make it a key global trade gateway. India and Egypt upgraded their relationship to a Strategic Partnership in 2023 after meetings between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. According to Galal, the focus has now moved from building ties on paper to delivering real economic results. Talking about Egypt's foreign policy, the Ambassador said the country supports strategic independence, cooperation among many nations and respect for national sovereignty. It avoids strict political blocs and believes this approach closely matches India's views, especially on the need to reform global bodies like the United Nations.

New FBI-style UK police force to take over counter-terrorism, fraud investigations

LONDON: A new National Police Service made up of "world class talent" will be created to take over counter-terrorism, fraud and other serious gang violence investigations in the UK, Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood said on Sunday.

"We will create a new National Police Service – dubbed 'the British FBI' – deploying world-class talent and state-of-the-art technology to track down and catch dangerous criminals. In doing so, local forces will be able to spend more time fighting crime in their communities," she said. The NPS will cover England and Wales but be able to operate in the wider United Kingdom including devolved Scotland, setting national standards and training. It will be led by a national Police Commissioner, who will become the most senior police chief in the country. The announcement forms part of wider police reforms unveiled by the UK Home Office, including a reduction in the



overall number of police forces in England and Wales, with some merged to create bigger regional constabularies tackling complex crimes, such as murder, drugs and county lines gangs. Meanwhile, counter-terror policing currently led by the Metropolitan Police, the National Air Service run by West Yorkshire Police and National Roads Policing will all be brought under the new NPS.

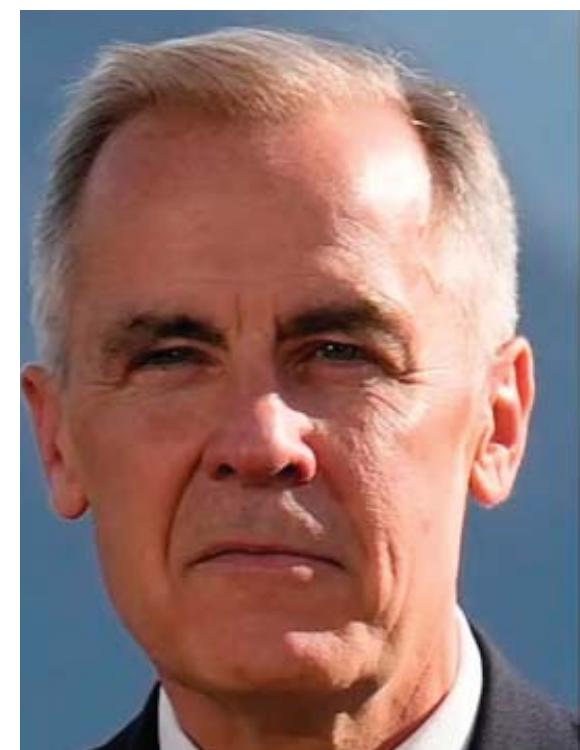
Intelligence and resources will be shared across different forces in stages to ensure the public receive the same level of security no matter where they live, the Home Office said. In a joint article in 'The

Telegraph', the heads of the NCA, Met Police, counter-terrorism, National Police Chiefs' Council and College of Policing backed the new national force to replace the "outdated" 43-force model in the face of growing complexity of organised crime.

They wrote: "Criminals do not respect local boundaries or national borders – yet too often our policing structures still do. The system [our officers] operate within is too messy and too complicated. Expertise is locked away in silos."

"Technology systems do not speak to each other and front-line officers have to wade through complexity or battle with bureaucracy rather than focusing on protecting communities." The Opposition Tories said the changes must not come at the expense of local and community policing. "Labour wants to force through mega-forces after stripping 1,316 officers from the front line. More top-down reorganisation risks undermining efforts to catch criminals and it delivers no real improvement on the ground," said Chris Philp, shadow home secretary.

Trump threatens Canada with 100 per cent tariffs over its new trade deal with China



WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump on Saturday threatened to impose a 100 per cent tariff on goods imported from Canada if America's northern neighbour went ahead with its China trade deal, intensifying a feud with Prime Minister Mark Carney, a rising voice in the West's push-back to Trump's new world order. Trump said in a social media post that if 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. "Canada doesn't live because of the United States. Canada thrives because we are Canadian," he said.

Trump later revoked his invitation 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 the United States as a 51st state. He posted an altered image on social media this week 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 first use of it toward Carney was the latest mark of their soured relationship.

Carney has emerged as a leader of a movement for countries to find ways to link up and counter the US under Trump. Speaking in Davos before Trump, Carney said, "Middle powers must act together because if you are not at the table, you are on the menu" and he warned about coercion by great powers – without mentioning Trump's name. The prime minister received widespread praise and attention for his remarks, upstaging Trump at the World Economic Forum.

The prime minister even spoke of a "rupture" between the US under Trump and its Western allies that would never be repaired.

Trump, in his Truth Social post Saturday, also said that "China will eat Canada alive, completely devour it, including the destruction of their businesses, social fabric, and general way of life."

Carney has not yet reached a deal with Trump to reduce some of the tariffs that he has imposed on key sectors of the Canadian economy. But Canada has been protected by the heaviest impact of Trump's tariffs by the Canada-US-Mexico Agreement. That trade agreement is up for a review this year.

In the fall, the Canadian province of Ontario aired an anti-tariff ad in

the US that prompted Trump to end trade talks with Canada. The television ad used the words of former President Ronald Reagan to criticize US tariffs. Trump pledged to increase tariffs on imports of Canadian goods by an extra 10 per cent. He did not follow through.

As for China, Canada had initially mirrored the United States by putting a 100 per cent tariff on electric vehicles from Beijing and a 25 per cent tariff on steel and aluminum. China had responded by imposing 100 per cent import taxes on Canadian canola oil and meal and 25 per cent on pork and seafood.

But as Trump's pursued pressure tactics, Canada's foreign policy has been less aligned with the US, creating an opening for an improved relationship with China. Carney made the tariff announcement earlier this month during a visit to Beijing. "The China trade deal is quite limited as is the US deal with China on (semiconductor) chips. The China deal may grow, however. I expect Chinese interest in funding a pipeline to northern British Columbia," said Nelson Wiseman, professor emeritus of political science at the University of Toronto. Carney has said that Canada's relationship with the US is complex and deeper and that Canada and China disagree on issues such as human rights. Canada is the top export destination for 36 US states. Nearly USD 3.6 billion worth of goods and services cross the border each day. About 60 per cent of US crude oil imports are from Canada, as are 85 per cent of US electricity imports. Canada is also the largest foreign supplier of steel, aluminum and uranium to the US and has 34 critical minerals and metals that the Pentagon is eager for and investing in for national security.

Hiding an unsightly but what Macron says is a benign medical issue with his right eye, the sunglasses bled into news feeds, triggered a jab from US

US envoys urge Netanyahu to move into Gaza ceasefire's second phase

CAIRO: Top US envoys met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Saturday, urging his government to move into the second phase of the ceasefire in Gaza. Netanyahu met with US President Donald Trump's envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and Middle East adviser, according to the prime minister's office, which did not give details. A US official, speaking on condition of anonymity to describe the talks, told reporters the envoys had been working closely with Netanyahu on recovering the remains of the last hostage in Gaza, and on the next steps for demilitarising the territory.

The US is anxious to keep the Trump-brokered deal moving, but Netanyahu faces pressure to wait until Hamas returns the hostage's remains. The biggest signal of the second phase would be the reopening of the Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt.

Ali Shaath, the head of a future technocratic government in Gaza that is expected to run day-to-day affairs, said Thursday the border crossing will open in both directions this coming week. There was no confirmation from Israel, which said it would consider the matter this week. The crossing's Gaza side is currently under Israeli military control.

The family of Ran Gvili, whose body is still in Gaza, urged more pressure on Hamas. "President Trump himself stated this week in Davos that Hamas knows exactly where our son is being held," the family said Saturday. "Hamas is deceiving the international community and refusing to return our son, the



last remaining hostage, in what constitutes a clear violation of the agreement it signed."

Hamas said Wednesday it has provided "all information" it has on Gvili's remains to ceasefire mediators, and accused Israel of obstructing search efforts in areas it controls in Gaza. The ceasefire took effect on Oct 10.

Egypt pushes for Rafah crossing to open

Egypt's top diplomat pressed for an immediate opening of the Rafah crossing with the director of Trump's new Board of Peace in Gaza, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry said Saturday, including the ability of Palestinians to enter and exit the territory. Foreign Minister Bader Abdellatif spoke by phone with Bulgarian diplomat Nickolay Mladenov, the high representative for Gaza, the ministry said in a statement. They discussed the implementation of the ceasefire's second phase, including the

deployment of an international monitoring force, the opening of the Rafah crossing in both directions and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the strip, the statement said.

The Egyptian minister said implementing the second phase is a "key entry point" to launch Gaza's reconstruction. The statement didn't say when the crossing will open for travellers and the evacuation of sick and wounded.

Israel's military said it had targeted several militants who crossed the Yellow Line and planted explosives, threatening troops. It denied that those killed were children. Since the ceasefire, more than 480 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. The ministry, which is part of the Hamas-led government, maintains detailed casualty records that are seen as generally reliable by UN agencies and independent experts. Israel disputes its figures but has not provided its own.

SUSPECTED RUSSIA SHADOW TANKER ANCHORED OFF FRENCH COAST

MARTIGUES: An oil tanker seized by France in the Mediterranean and suspected of being part of Russia's sanction-busting "shadow fleet" lay anchored Sunday near a southern French port and guarded by the French navy. The Grinch was intercepted Thursday morning in international waters between Spain and North Africa. The French navy escorted it to the Gulf of Fos in southern France, the regional maritime prefecture said in a statement on Saturday. The vessel will be kept at the disposal of the Marseille public prosecutor as part of a preliminary investigation for failure to fly a flag, it added. The captain and crew will also be questioned, according to a source close to the case.

India and the EU are likely to announce the closure of negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) soon.

India had described the US action as "unfair, unjustified and unreasonable" while maintaining that its energy policy is guided by its own national interest. India fell to third place among buyers of Russian fossil fuels in December, after Reliance Industries and state-owned refiners sharply reduced their crude oil imports, according to the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA).

US Treasury Secretary sees 'path' to remove 25% tariff imposed on India for buying Russian oil



they wanted to sign this big trade deal with India," he said.

Bessent accused India of importing and refining more oil from Russia after the invasion of Ukraine.

"Before the Ukraine invasion, approximately 2 per cent or 3 per cent of Indian oil that went into their refineries came from Russia. The oil was sanctioned. It got deeply discounted and moved up into the high teens-17,18,19 per cent was being refined. Huge profits from the refiners," he said.

He accused Europe of funding Russia's war by purchasing the oil refined in India. "But in the ultimate act of irony and stupidity, guess who was buying the refined products from the Indian...refineries made from Russian oil."

the Europeans. They... are financing the war against themselves," he added.

When asked if he called the Europeans "stupid", Bessent said, "I said there was an act of stupidity."

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All you need to know about Macron's Davos sunglasses

PARIS: At the power gathering of world leaders in Davos, Switzerland, the reflective shades worn by French President Emmanuel Macron captured attention in ways that words didn't.

Hiding an unsightly but what Macron says is a benign medical issue with his right eye, the sunglasses bled into news feeds, triggered a jab from US

shades and what they say about Macron and politics. The shades were made by a French firm, Henry Jullien, Macron's office told The Associated Press. They were its Pacific S 01 model, which don't come cheap, retailing for 659 euros (USD 775) on the manufacturer's website. It struggled with demand after Macron wore them for a hard-hitting speech

in Davos, publicity that money can't buy. It launched a dedicated page to capitalise on the buzz, saying "our eShop website is experiencing an exceptional volume of visits and enquiries." Shares of its Italian parent company, iVision Tech SpA, soared on Milan's stock exchange - from 1.51 euros (USD 1.78) a share when Macron spoke Tuesday.



Sainyam and Gaurav win 10m Air Pistol Trial 2 Finals

NEW DELHI: Sainyam of Chandigarh and Gaurav Kumar of Uttar Pradesh came on top in the women's and men's 10m Air Pistol Trial 2 finals respectively as the National Selection Trials 1 & 2 concluded here Sunday.

World Cup Final silver medalist Sainyam continued her good run of form, finishing on top in the finals with a dominant final score of 243.1, 5.4 points more than Rhythm Sangwan (237.7).

Meenu Pathak once again finished in the top three in the finals, finishing with a score of 218.5. Earlier in qualification, Suruchi Singh finished on top with an impressive 587.31x, but could only finish in eighth place in the finals. Palak shot 579.16x to finish second in qualification and shot 178.2 in the finals to finish fifth. The experienced Shwetha Singh took the third



spot in qualification with a score of 578.18x and came back in the finals to finish on sixth place. Meenu Pathak shot 577.12x in qualification while Priya Muralidhar hit 576.16x. Rhythm Sangwan and Sainyam scored 576.15x and 576.13x while Divya T.S completed the top eight with a score of 575.19x.

Gaurav improved on his second-place finish in Trial 1, finishing on top in T2 in a tightly contested final. Gaurav, who qualified third for the finals with a score of 584.21x, shot 245.5 in the finals to take the top spot ahead of Yogesh Kumar who finished second with a final score of 244.6. Harsh Swami of Uttar Pradesh took the third spot with a final score of 221.9 after qualifying for the finals in second place with a score of 585.26x.

GRATEFUL TO ICC FOR T20WC INVITE, PREPARING TO ARRIVE IN INDIA IMMEDIATELY: CRICKET SCOTLAND CEO



NEW DELHI: Cricket Scotland's chief executive Trudy Lindblade on Saturday expressed gratitude towards the International Cricket Council for inviting his country to next month's T20 World Cup in place of Bangladesh, adding that they are "preparing to arrive in India immediately".

Scotland were on Saturday confirmed as replacement of Bangladesh in Group C, after Bangladesh withdrew from the competition. Details around squad selection for the tournament will be shared in the coming days," Cricket Scotland said.

"Earlier today I received correspondence from the ICC asking if our men's team would play at the Men's T20 World Cup, and we have accepted," Lindblade said on Cricket Scotland's website.

"We are grateful to the ICC for extending this invite. This is an exciting opportunity for Scotland's players to compete on the global stage in front of millions of supporters. We also acknowledge this opportunity has arisen out of challenging and unique circumstances. "Our squad have been training for some weeks in preparation for upcoming tours and are now preparing to arrive in India

Haaland dropped as Guardiola rejigs Manchester City squad

MANCHESTER: In a turn of events few expected even in the brutally result-oriented world of the English Premier League, Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola left out Erling Haaland from the starting lineup for the league game against Wolverhampton amid a slump in form.

The Norwegian striker, one of the most prolific strikers in the EPL and also in top-tier leagues around the world, was



named on the bench after a rare poor run in the recent matches, with only one goal in his last eight games in all competitions, which came off a penalty against

Brighton. Guardiola made the big call after two straight losses — to Manchester United in the league and Bodo/Glimt in the Champions League. The Norwegian striker, one of the most prolific strikers in the EPL and also in top-tier leagues around the world, was named on the bench after a rare poor run in the recent matches, with only one goal in his last eight games in all competitions, which came off a penalty against Brighton.

Top seeded Indian Grandmaster Arjun Erigaisi, meanwhile, benefited from a similar oversight by Matthias Bluebaum of Germany to salvage half a point. On a day filled with drama,

Inexplicable blunder causes Gukesh's loss

WIJK AAN JEE: World champion D Gukesh was himself to blame as he fell into a blindspot and made an unimaginable blunder to go down to Nodirbek Abdusatorov of Uzbekistan in a sixth round match of the Tata Steel chess tournament here on Saturday.

Indian GM Gukesh blundered almost with a blind eye and had to resign immediately in a position he would have survived with a possible draw. It's very clear to what is referred as a blind-spot in chess when at a given moment the player is not able to recognize for a few seconds what's happening. While this was the first instance for Gukesh to go through this after becoming a Grandmaster, his fans and followers would hope that it was also the last time.

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Babar, Afridi return; Rauf dropped as Pakistan name T20 WC squad

LAHORE: Pakistan on Sunday announced the Salman Agha-led squad for the ICC T20 World Cup, which will be played in India and Sri Lanka from February 7, with the veteran duo Babar Azam and pace spearhead Shaheen Shah Afridi making a return.

Having recently become the all-time leading run-getter in Men's T20Is, Babar Azam adds rich experience to the Pakistan batting lineup, while pacer Haris Rauf, who has performed well in the ongoing Big Bash League, having taken 20 wickets in just 11 matches, has been omitted from the 15-man squad. Skipper

Agha, Faheem Ashraf, Khawaja Mohammad Nafay, Mohammad Salman Mirza, Sahibzada Farhan and Usman Tariq have received their maiden mega-event call-ups to the Pakistan squad. Meanwhile, Abrar Ahmed, Babar Azam, Fakhar Zaman, Mohammad Nawaz, Naseem Shah, Saim Ayub, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Shadab Khan and Usman Khan have played in at least one or more editions of the tournament since 2021.

Pakistan boasts a strong batting lineup, which includes the likes of Fakhar Zaman, Saim Ayub, and Sahibzada Farhan. In the absence of Rauf, Pakistan have relied on Afridi and Naseem Shah in their pace unit.

There is also a strong presence of all-rounders in the squad, with the likes of Faheem Ashraf, Shadab Khan and Mohammad Nawaz providing multiple options with the bat and ball.

The 2009 winner are slotted in Group A alongside co-hosts and defending champions India, the Netherlands, the USA and Namibia. They will kickstart their campaign against the Netherlands on February 7 in Colombo at the Sinhalese Sports

Club (SSC) Ground. Pakistan's squad announcement comes just a day after the PCB chief Mohsin Naqvi said a final decision on their T20 World Cup participation would be made after talking to government.

Pakistan squad:

Salman Ali Agha (captain), Abrar Ahmed, Babar Azam, Faheem Ashraf, Fakhar Zaman, Khawaja Mohammad Nafay (wk), Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Salman Mirza, Naseem Shah, Sahibzada Farhan (wk), Saim Ayub, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Shadab Khan, Usman Khan (wk) Usman Tariq.

Novak Djokovic advances to Australian Open quarterfinals on a walkover after Jakub Mensik withdraws



MELBOURNE: Novak Djokovic has had a walkover into the Australian Open quarterfinals after Jakub Mensik withdrew 24 hours ahead of their scheduled fourth-round match with an abdominal injury. The tournament confirmed Mensik's withdrawal late Sunday. The match had been scheduled for Rod Laver Arena on Monday night.

"After last couple of matches, I started to feel worse, and actually the problem is my abdominal muscle on the left side," Mensik said in comments published by the tournament. "Like I said, last few matches it got significantly

worse, and I think if I would step on the court tomorrow, it would be such a big risk for me for my next weeks, for my next tournaments, and actually for my health."

No. 16-seeded Mensik beat Ethan Quinn in straight sets on Saturday.

Novak Djokovic has won the Australian Open a record 10 times. The 24-time major winner became the first player to reach 400 wins in Grand Slam singles when he beat Botic van de Zandschulp 6-3, 6-4, 7-6 (4) on Saturday night in the third round of the Australian Open.

Bangladesh's exit from T20 World Cup "sad moment": Global players' body

LONDON: The World Cricket Association (WCA) on Sunday expressed concern over Bangladesh's exit from the upcoming T20 World Cup, saying it was "a sad moment" that requires "deep reflection".

The ICC on Saturday confirmed that Scotland has replaced Bangladesh in the T20 World Cup beginning February 7, saying the "difficult decision" was taken since it was not feasible to meet Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) request to shift their matches to Sri Lanka so close to the tournament.

"The withdrawal of Bangladesh from the T20 World Cup, and resulting absence of a valued cricketing nation from cricket's pinnacle international T20 event, is a sad moment for our sport, the Bangladesh players and fans, and one that requires deep reflection," WCA CEO Tom Moffat said in a statement.

The BCB refused to let its team travel to India citing security concerns in the wake of Mustafizur Rahman's ouster from

the IPL. The ICC, however, maintained that there was no verifiable security threat to the Bangladesh national team, officials or supporters in India and it was not appropriate to amend the published event schedule.

"Cricket is at its strongest when every team and every player is treated with respect, supported appropriately and consistently, and able to participate on fair terms. The game is at its best when all participants are genuine contributors to its success."

WCA is a global body for professional cricketers with membership of players from several countries. But, Indian cricketers are not members of the WCA.

"In recent times, the WCA has become increasingly concerned by broader trends in the sport, including agreements not being honoured, rights being eroded, and a lack of meaningful consultation with players and their representatives — all of this amounts to a careless

Aryna Sabalenka beats 19-year-old Mboko, faces 18-year-old Jovic in Australian Open quarterfinals

MELBOURNE: TikTok influencer and top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka is having to work her way through some rising teenager stars in her bid for a third Australian Open title in four years.

Sabalenka held off 19-year-old Vicky Mboko 6-1, 7-6 (1) at Rod Laver Arena on Sunday to advance to a quarterfinal match against 18-year-old Iva Jovic. The 29-seeded Jovic overwhelmed Yulia Putintseva 60, 6-1 in 53 minutes at John Cain Arena, the so-called People's Court, and she secured a spot in the last eight of a Grand Slam for the first time.

Coco Gauff, who was still a teenager when she won her first major title in 2023, is back in the quarterfinals in Australia for the third straight year after a 6-1, 3-6, 6-3 win over No. 19 Karolina Muchova. In a good omen for Gauff, her four previous wins over Muchova have been during runs to the title, including in the semifinals at the 2023 US Open. In the opening men's match Sunday, No. 1-ranked Carlos Alcaraz continued his bid for a career Grand Slam at age 22 with a 7-6 (6), 6-4, 7-5 win over No. 19-seeded Tommy Paul to reach the quarterfinals for the third consecutive year in Australia. He's never gone past the last eight at Melbourne Park, the only one of the four Grand Slam venues where he hasn't won the title. That's a statistic he's determined to rectify, to the point where he's reworking his serve to a look a little bit more in style like 10-time Australian Open champion Novak Djokovic.

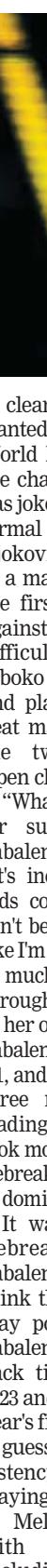
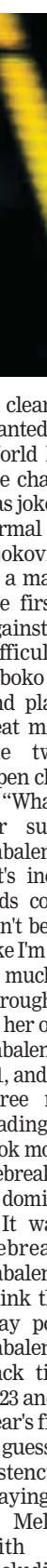
"What an incredible player for such a young age," Sabalenka said of Mboko. "It's incredible to see these kids coming up on Tour. I can't believe I say that. I feel like I'm a kid!" She pushed me so much, and I'm happy to be through," Sabalenka added in her on-court TV interview. Sabalenka led the second set 4-1, and then failed to convert three match points while leading 5-4. Mboko slowly took momentum and forced a tiebreaker only for Sabalenka to dominate.

It was the 20th straight tiebreak victory for Sabalenka. "I try to not to think this is a tiebreak and play point by point," said Sabalenka, who won back-to-back titles in Australia in 2023 and 2024 before losing last year's final to Madison Keys. "I guess that's the key to consistency." Sabalenka said playing the morning match at Melbourne Park came with some challenges. Jovic made

bright sun. "Don't get me wrong, I like to play the first match, but the tricky part, at some point the sun goes right into your serve point. It's kind of like tricky. You can break the serve," she said. "That's what actually happened. Two breaks that she got, it was on the side when I was facing the sun. Yeah, I didn't feel that good with the serve. She did an incredible job serving on that side." Jovic and Mboko were scheduled to play doubles together later Sunday on Kia Arena against fourth-seeded Elise Mertens and Zhang Shuai. After her singles win when she broke Putintseva's serve six times and led 6-0, 4-0 before she dropped serve herself Jovic said she'd just concentrate on her own game when she faced Sabalenka.

She saved two break points in the opening game of the match against Putintseva and was dominant throughout. She had her 31-year-old rival chastising herself during the changeovers and practicing shots trying to work out ways to get back into the match. When Jovic hit a crosscourt forehand winner in the second set, Sabalenka led the second set 4-1, and then failed to convert three match points while leading 5-4. Mboko slowly took momentum and forced a tiebreaker only for Sabalenka to dominate.

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West Bengal to confer Governor's Award of Excellence on legendary Telugu actor Mohan Babu

In a moment of historic significance for Telugu cinema and the Telugu-speaking community across the globe, legendary actor Shri Mohan Babu will be conferred with the Governor's Award of Excellence by the Government of West Bengal. The award will be presented at a ceremonial function at Lok Bhavan, Kolkata, on Republic Day, January 26, 2026, in the august presence of the Hon'ble Governor of West Bengal and other distinguished guests.

The ceremony will be followed by the traditional At Home reception. This recognition marks a historic first, as it is the first time the state of West Bengal has conferred an Award of Excellence on a Telugu actor, reflecting the growing national appreciation of Telugu cinema's cultural and artistic contributions to Indian cinema. The honour coincides with a significant milestone in Shri Mohan Babu's illustrious career—50 years of exceptional contribution to Indian cinema. From humble beginnings to becoming one of the most respected figures in the film industry, his journey is widely regarded as a testament to discipline, perseverance and artistic integrity.

Over five decades, Shri Mohan Babu has made an indelible mark through a diverse body of work spanning multiple genres and languages. Apart from his achievements as an actor and producer, his role as an educationist and his contributions to social upliftment have earned him admiration beyond the world of cinema.

The award is seen not only as a personal honour for Shri Mohan Babu but also as a moment of pride for Telugu

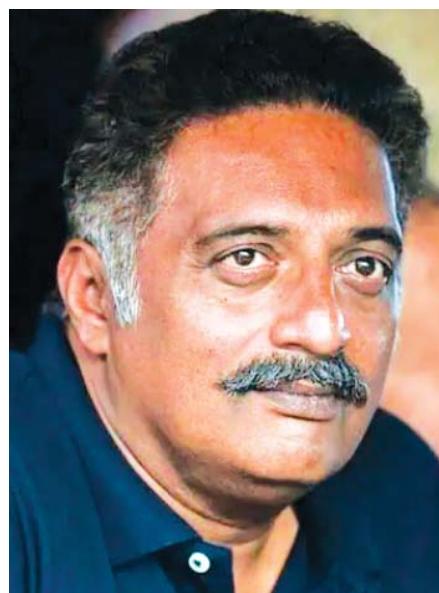


people everywhere, reaffirming the national stature of Telugu cinema and its rich cultural legacy.

The conferment by West Bengal, a state renowned for its own artistic and cinematic heritage, symbolises India's unity in diversity and the idea that artistic excellence transcends language and regional boundaries.

As the nation celebrates Republic Day, this recognition stands as a powerful reminder that contributions to art and culture belong to the country as a whole, enriching India's shared cinematic and cultural heritage.

Hindi films have lost their roots, are fake and money-driven: Prakash Raj



Unlike Malayalam and Tamil cinema, which he hailed for their strong, content-driven storytelling, actor Prakash Raj said mainstream Hindi cinema has lost its roots, becoming increasingly "fake" and "money-oriented". Speaking at the ongoing ninth edition of the Kerala Literature Festival (KLF) on Saturday, January 24, the award-winning actor criticised Hindi films for their artificiality, saying they have become like a "Madame Tussauds museum" where everything seems beautiful with no substance. "In the present context, I feel Malayalam and Tamil cinema are making very strong films... Hindi cinema, on the other hand, has lost its roots. Everything looks beautiful, wonderful, like plastic, as you see in the Madame Tussauds museum. "We (the South) still have stories to

tell, the new young directors of Tamil are talking about Dalit issues. And that gives so much of hope," said Raj, renowned for his work across Tamil, Telugu, Hindi, Kannada, and Malayalam cinema, in a session titled "The Artist I Became". The 60-year-old filmmaker-actor further analysed what ails Hindi cinema, tracing its decline to the post-multiplex era, when it began catering primarily to urban audiences. Raj, known for his performances in hit films such as "Singham" and "Wanted", argued that the industry's focus on glamour and surface-level aesthetics has weakened its emotional connection with viewers. "After multiplexes, the Bombay film industry started making films only for multiplexes. Very cute films and things like that. Because they were running well. They went into that Page 3 culture, and with that lost the touch with rural Rajasthan and Bihar," he explained. This shift, he argued, also led to the decline of the nation-building narratives that once defined post-independence Hindi cinema. To buttress his point, Raj cited the 1977 blockbuster "Amar Akbar Anthony", and its famous scene of three men from different religions donating blood to save one person, reflecting shared values, social harmony and collective aspirations. "Now, it's not like that anymore. Today, it's all about money and appearances—reels, page 3 coverage, and loud self-promotion. In the process, I feel the industry has lost its connection with the audience," he concluded.

The four-day literary extravaganza is hosting over 400 speakers, including Nobel Laureates Abdulrazak Gurnah and Abhijit Banerjee, astronaut Sunita Williams, author Kiran Desai, essayist Pico Iyer, Jnanpith winner Pratibha Ray, sports icons Rohan Bopanna and Ben Johnson, and Wikipedia founder Jimmy Wales. KLF 2026, now in its ninth edition, will come to a close on January 25.

THE FEEL-GOOD ROMANTIC ENTERTAINER SKY TRAILER OUT NOW; Gearing up for a grand theatrical release on Feb 6

The upcoming film Sky stars Murali Krishnam raju, Shruti Shetty, and Anand in the lead roles. The film is produced under the banner of Valour Entertainment Studios by Nagireddy Guntaka, Srilakshmi Guntaka, Murali Krishnam raju, and Pridhvi Pericherla. The movie is directed by Prudhvi Pericherla. With this film, a new music director, Shiva Prasad, is being introduced to the industry. Sky is all set for a grand theatrical release on February 6. The trailer of Sky was released today. It opens with fun and lively moments shared between friends. The



journey of friendship turning into love between the hero and heroine is beautifully portrayed, with emotions that feel natural and engaging. The trailer clearly shows that the heroine's character has been designed with strength and depth. The hero's personal life flashback is touching and emotional. Due to certain misunderstandings, conflicts arise in the love story between the lead pair. How the couple reunites, and what tragic incident from the hero's past involving his father shaped his life, can only be experienced on the big screen.

GOVINDA'S SON YASHVARDHAN AHUJA TO MAKE BOLLYWOOD DEBUT: REPORT

Filmmaker Sajid Khan has returned to direction after a long break. He has started shooting for his upcoming horror film titled Hundred. According to reports, the film went on floors on January 23 at Mumbai's Film City. The makers chose Basant Panchmi as the special day to begin filming. This project marks Sajid Khan's comeback to filmmaking and also signals a major shift from his usual comedy genre to horror. Hundred will introduce Yashvardhan Ahuja to Bollywood. He is the son of veteran actor Govinda and Sunita Ahuja. The film also stars Nitanshi Goel, who recently gained popularity for her role in Laapata Ladies (2024). The film is being produced by



Amar Butala's Guilty By Association Media along with Balaji Telefilms, headed by Ekta Kapoor and Shobha Kapoor. Producer Amar Butala has worked on several successful films in the past. He produced Mission Majnu (2023) and co-produced hit films such as Mission Mangal, Kesari, Total Dhamaal, Tubelight, and Bajrangi Bhaijaan.

Nayanthara's character poster from Mammootty, Mohanlal-starrer 'Patriot' released

The makers of director Mahesh Narayanan's eagerly-awaited thriller 'Patriot', featuring both superstars of Malayalam cinema – Mammootty and Mohanlal in the lead, on Sunday released the character poster of actress Nayanthara in the film, much to the delight of fans and film buffs. The makers, through the film's official Instagram handle, shared the poster and wrote, "Presenting #Nayanthara in #Patriot. Dissent is patriotic. In a world full of traitors, be a Patriot!"

Interestingly, the film poster released by the unit had a bit of Morse code on it. Fans were quick to decipher the Morse code and claimed that it read "April 23rd release". It may be recalled that IANS had reported earlier that sources had hinted at the possibility of the film releasing on April 23 this year.

Although there has been no official announcement on the release date of the film, sources in the industry had said that the film was likely to hit screens on April 23 this year. It may be recalled that on January 4 this year, the makers of the

film had announced that the unit had wrapped up the film's shooting. They wrote, "That's a wrap. Blood, sweat, belief. #PATRIOT marches on. See you on the Big screen." They also shared a BTS video of all the stars on the sets on the occasion.

The film, which has triggered huge expectations ever since it was announced, also features acclaimed actors Fahadh Faasil, Kunchacko Boban, Nayanthara, and Revathy in addition to the two Malayalam superstars.

A teaser which the makers released last year went on to amplify the expectations of fans and film buffs.

The teaser begins with a voiceover which says, "I remember there was a time when this nation was controlled by the two

of them. Together. Over these years, what they earned wasn't just followers. Faith. Trust."

We then see a series of intriguing but intense scenes and hear Mammootty's voice say, "They are going to bring social score to people." We next hear Mohanlal, who appears to play an army general in the film, say, "There are three of us. Do you think you can stop us?"

The teaser then gives us an idea that there is a program called Periscope and that Kunchacko Boban plays a character called Daniel.

Nayanthara is heard asking, "This program which is part of the student laptop scheme. Is that similar to Periscope?" We also hear another voice, asking, "Is this program watching them secretly?" The teaser ends with Mammootty asking someone to complete the sentence, "Great Indian traitor... or Patriot."

"Overall, the teaser gives the impression that the film will revolve around a group of socially responsible individuals trying to thwart an illegal attempt by the government to monitor its citizens.

Nikhil, Bharat Krishnamachari, Pixel Studio's ambitious pan India project Swayambhu to have a grand release in theaters worldwide on April 10th

Nikhil, who received nationwide acclaim with the pan-India blockbuster Karthikeya 2, is now set to entertain the audience with his ambitious 20th film 'Swayambhu'. This historical action epic, produced on a grand scale, is directed by Bharat Krishnamachari. Samyukta and Nabha Natesh are the heroines. Produced by Bhuvan and Sreekar under the banner of Pixel Studios. Presented by Tagore Madhu. With top-class production values and a powerful pan-India vision, Swayambhu Nikhil stands out as one of the most ambitious ventures. Swayambhu is set to have a grand release in theaters worldwide on April 10th. This is the perfect date for a summer release.

The VFX is going to be amazing. Top VFX companies in India are working on this film. The makers are working with full commitment to deliver a world-class output, taking the necessary time to bring the visual wonder to the audience. Swayambhu is the highest budget film in Nikhil's career. After Karthikeya 2, it is the film that has huge buzz at the pan India level. Nikhil underwent a complete physical transformation and intense training for his role in this. The promotional content released so far has raised huge expectations for the film.



Rajinikanth gifts gold chain to Madurai fan who sells parottas at Rs 5 a piece

Superstar Rajinikanth, who recently met an ardent fan of his from Madurai who runs an eatery in which he sells parottas at an economical price of Rs five a piece for the sake of the poor, has now gifted the fan a gold chain in appreciation of his honourable efforts. Sources close to the actor shared pictures of the actor meeting his ardent fan, Rajini Sekar from Madurai along with his family members. They also shared a picture of the actor gifting the fan a gold chain. The pictures have now gone viral on the Internet.

On the work front, Rajinikanth is currently work-

On the work front, Rajinikanth is currently working on director Nelson's 'Jailer 2'. The actor had only recently confirmed that he would be



beginning work on director Cibi Chakravarthy's film in April this year. Rajinikanth, who met his fans outside his residence on the festival day of Pongal earlier this month, was asked about his eagerly-awaited upcoming film with director Cibi Chakravarthy, which is being produced by actor Kamal Haasan's production house Raaj Kamal Films International. Responding to the question, Rajinikanth had said, "Shooting is to begin in April this year. It will be a proper commercial entertainer." The film has triggered excitement ever since actor, producer and politician Kamal Haasan announced that his production house,

Raaj Kamal Films International (RKFI), would be producing the film, tentatively being referred to as #Thalaivar173. It may be recalled that one of Tamil cinema's most successful directors, Sundar C, was to originally direct this film, which Kamal Haasan had said would be a magnum opus. However, to everybody's surprise, director Sundar C later opted out of the project. Soon after Sundar C's exit, the makers, in the new year, announced that director Cibi Chakravarthy would be directing the film. Music for the film, which has the tag line 'Every family has a hero' is to be scored by Anirudh.