

OM NAMO VENKATESAYA



27-01-2026
Total pilgrims: 77,049
Tonsures: 21,469
Hundi kanukalu: 3,73CR
Waiting Compartments: 18

Approx. Darsan Time for Sarvadarshanam (with out SSD Tokens): 8 H

TO BOOK YOUR ADS CALL

99484 80279, 73307 78889



Mamata seeks apex court probe after fatal plane crash claims Ajit Pawar's life



Nobody is safe: China's Xi targets close ally in purge

Novak Djokovic advances to the Australian Open semifinals after Musetti retires with injury

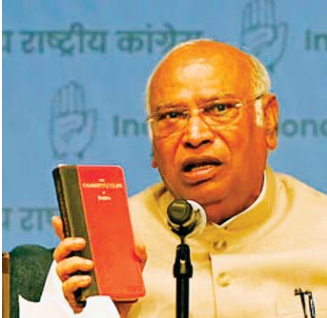


IN BRIFS

SC to hear challenge against UGC equity regulations on January 29

New Delhi (TSIT): The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear a set of petitions on Thursday questioning the validity of the University Grants Commission (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2026. According to the cause list released by the apex court, the matter will be taken up on January 29 by a bench comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi. Earlier in the day, the Chief Justice agreed to urgently list the case after a petition challenging the regulations was mentioned before him. Assuring the petitioner's counsel, CJI Surya Kant said the matter would be heard once procedural defects in the petition are rectified. "We are aware of the issue. Ensure the defects are cured, and we will list it," the Chief Justice remarked. The petition raises concerns that the UGC's Equity Regulations could lead to discrimination against individuals from the general category by denying them access to effective grievance redressal mechanisms.

Opposition leaders to take strong stand on MGNREGA repeal during budget session



New Delhi (TSIT): Floor leaders of several opposition parties under the INDIA bloc met at Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge's chamber in the Parliament House complex on Wednesday, resolving to strongly raise the issues of MGNREGA repeal and Special Infrastructure Regions (SIR) during the ongoing Budget session. The meeting saw participation from key leaders, including Rahul Gandhi, AICC general secretaries Jairam Ramesh and K C Venugopal, DMK's T R Baalu, Shiv Sena (UBT)'s Arvind Sawant, Samajwadi Party's Javed Ali Khan, RJD's Premchand Gupta, CPI(M)'s John Brittas, and RSP's N K Premchandran, among others.

Ajit Pawar, PSO, attendant & 2 crew members killed in plane crash

Baramati (TSIT): Five people, including Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, died in the Baramati plane crash on Wednesday morning, according to the flight details.

Apart from Deputy CM Pawar, the people onboard the plane, Learjet 45 aircraft (registration VT-SSK) operated by VSR, included a personal security officer (PSO), an attendant, and two crew members -- a Pilot-in-Command (PIC) and a Second-in-Command (SIC).

The deceased have been identified as Vidip Jadhav (male), Pinky Mali (female). Additionally, the crew members were PIC Sumit Kapur and SIC Shambhavi Pathak, according to the passenger list.

Amid ongoing elections to the Zilla Parishads and Panchayat Samitis, Dy CM Ajit Pawar was travelling from Mumbai to Baramati to attend a public meeting.

Emergency services and senior security officials have reached the site in Baramati. Rescue teams were deployed immediately after the aircraft lost control during the landing phase. Three bodies were rushed to the Baramati Medical College. The identification of the bodies is underway, as per the Pune Superintendent of Police (SP).

A team of DGCA officials has arrived at the plane crash site. More details were awaited about the plane crash. According to the reports, locals had rushed to the spot on seeing the plane crashing. This



incident comes after several aviation-related scares for the leader. In October 2024, a heli-

copter intended to pick up his party colleague Sunil Tatkare crashed in Pune, and there

have been previous instances of emergency landings in the region due to bad weather.

AJIT PAWAR PLANE CRASH: NCP CHIEF'S FUNERAL ON THURSDAY; MODI, SHAH LIKELY TO ATTEND

Baramati (TSIT): The last rites of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, killed in a plane crash, will be held with full state honours on Thursday in Baramati, Pune district. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah are expected to attend the funeral, which will be held at Vidya Pratishthan ground at



11 am. Leaders cutting across the political spectrum will be

present, the Nationalist Congress Party said. The plane crash occurred in the morning shortly after Ajit Pawar and four other persons took off from Mumbai. Besides Pawar, his Personal Security Officer, an attendant, and two crew members (pilot in command and the first officer) were also killed.

CM Revanth , CM Naidu express shock over Ajit Pawar's demise

HYDERABAD (TSIT): Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy and his Andhra Pradesh counterpart N. Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday expressed deep shock over the death of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar in a plane crash. Revanth Reddy, who is currently on a visit to the United States, expressed deep shock and profound grief over the

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar in a plane crash this morning. I extend my heartfelt condolences to his family, friends, and followers. Om Shanti," posted CM Naidu.

Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan said he was deeply shocked by the tragic news of the passing of the Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister, President



tragic demise of Ajit Pawar. According to a statement from the Chief Minister's Office, he said Ajit Pawar's sudden passing is an irreparable loss to public life and extended heartfelt condolences to his family, the Government of Maharashtra, and the people of the state. CM Revanth Reddy prayed for strength to the bereaved family in this moment of immense sorrow. Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, too, mourned the death of Ajit Pawar in the plane crash. "Shocked and deeply saddened by the sudden passing of

of Maharashtra NCP and an NDA alliance leader Ajit Dada Pawar in a devastating plane crash. "His dedicated public service and immense contributions towards the welfare and development of the people of Maharashtra will always be remembered, and his enduring commitment to the people will continue to be held with respect. I express my profound condolences on his passing and extend my deepest sympathies to his family members, admirers, and party cadre during this moment of immense grief," said the Jana Sena leader.

Pawan Kalyan meets HM Amit Shah, discusses 'ongoing issues' in Andhra Pradesh



Amaravati (TSIT) : Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan on Wednesday met Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi and discussed 'ongoing issues' in the state. The Jana Sena leader posted on social media that he had a meaningful meeting with Amit Shah at his residence.

"We held detailed discussions on the ongoing issues in Andhra Pradesh, and several other important matters of public and administrative importance," he said.

The Deputy Chief Minister thanked Amit Shah for providing an opportunity to the Kakinada district administration to present the proposal on the Uppada sea protection wall before the Technical Advisory Committee of the National

Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). Pawan Kalyan also met Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw with a focus on improving rail infrastructure in Andhra Pradesh.

The Jana Sena leader said they discussed the development of Pithapuram Railway Station, construction of a Road Over Bridge, and key railway projects in the state. "I requested that Pithapuram,

an important spiritual centre visited by devotees from across the country, be developed as a model station under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme, and that the Road Over Bridge be taken up under the PM Gati Shakti programme," he said. Pawan Kalyan said he was received very cordially by Ashwini Vaishnaw, and the discussions were held in a positive and constructive atmosphere.

Mamata govt to move motion in Bengal Assembly session to condemn ED, CBI



Kolkata (TSIT): The Mamata Banerjee government will move a motion in the West Bengal Assembly to condemn the role of Central probe agencies like the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in the state during the Budget Session starting next week.

Sources in the Trinamool Congress's legislative party in the state Assembly said that during the session, the Treasury Bench will also move another motion condemning the manner in which the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) is being conducted in the state. The Budget Session will start on February 3 and will end on February 9. The West Bengal minister of state for finance (independent charge)

will be presenting the "vote on accounts" for the financial year 2006-27 on February 5.

The full budget will be presented by the new state cabinet after the Assembly elections are over. Insiders from Trinamool Congress' legislative party said that both special motions will be moved during the forthcoming Budget Session by the state Agriculture

and Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Sovande Chattopadhyay.

The motion condemning the role of CBI and ED is extremely significant in the backdrop of the recent controversies over ED's simultaneous raid and search operations at the Indian Political Action Committee's Salt Lake office and the residence of IPAC's co-founder, Pratik Jain, at Loudon Street in central Kolkata.

While the simultaneous raid and search operations were being conducted at the two places, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, accompanied by top bureaucrats and police officials, stormed into both places one after another, taking away several files and electronic documents.

India emerging as aviation gateway between Global South and the world: PM Modi

New Delhi (TSIT): Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Wednesday that India is emerging as a major aviation gateway between the Global South and the world, with major opportunities for investors and manufacturers connected with the aviation industry. Addressing the Wings India 2026 programme at Hyderabad via video conferencing, the Prime Minister welcomed industry leaders, investors and experts, noting that the next era of the aviation industry is full of aspirations and India is emerging as a major player.

He highlighted the vast opportunities India presents in aircraft manufacturing, advanced air mobility, aircraft leasing and pilot training.

PM Modi said that over the past decade, India's aviation sector has undergone a historic transformation, evolving from an exclusive club to become the world's third-largest domestic aviation market. He pointed out that passenger traffic has grown rapidly and Indian airlines are expanding their fleets, with more than 1,500 aircraft ordered in recent years.

The Prime Minister underlined that this growth has been possible due to the government's long-term vision, making air travel inclusive rather than exclusive, with the mission of enabling every citizen to travel easily by air. He emphasised that Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities have been connected with airports, noting that in



He highlighted the vast opportunities India presents in aircraft manufacturing, advanced air mobility, aircraft leasing and pilot training.

2014 India had 70 airports, while today the number has risen to more than 160, meaning the country has built over twice as many airports in just a decade.

Over 100 aerodromes have

been activated and, alongside this, the government launched the UDAN scheme to provide affordable fares, he said, noting that as a result of UDAN, 15 million passengers -- around one and a half crore -- have

travelled on routes, many of which did not even exist earlier. Prime Minister Modi remarked that as India advances towards the goal of becoming a developed nation, the expansion of air connectivity is certain to multiply many times

over, creating greater opportunities for investment.

He highlighted that by 2047, India is expected to have more than 400 airports, creating a vast network. He noted that the government is working on the next phase of the UDAN scheme, which will further strengthen regional and affordable air connectivity, alongside the expansion of seaplane operations, with the aim of improving connectivity across every corner of the country. Tourist destinations are being upgraded nationwide, and air travel is becoming the preferred choice for an increasing number of people, he added.

The Prime Minister further stated that India is placing strong emphasis on aircraft design, manufacturing, and the

aircraft MRO ecosystem. The country is already a major manufacturer and supplier of aircraft parts and has begun producing military and transport aircraft domestically. It is now moving forward in civil aircraft manufacturing as well, he added.

He emphasised that India's aviation vision is equally focused on air cargo, and the government is working on all necessary regulatory reforms to make cargo movement faster and more efficient. Underlining that India is also set to emerge as a major and competitive transshipment hub, PM Modi urged investors to explore opportunities in warehousing, freight forwarding, express logistics, and e-commerce sectors.

Mamata seeks apex court probe after fatal plane crash claims Ajit Pawar's life

Kolkata, Jan 28: West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday raised serious doubts over the circumstances surrounding the death of Maharashtra deputy chief minister and NCP leader Ajit Pawar, calling for an investigation monitored directly by the Supreme Court into the tragic plane crash.

Deeply shaken by the incident, Banerjee postponed her scheduled visit to Delhi later in the day. Speaking to reporters while en route to Singur in Hooghly district for a government programme, she suggested that the crash could be linked to a larger political conspiracy.

The chief minister claimed that Ajit Pawar was reportedly considering a break from the BJP-led NDA and was in talks



to rejoin the Opposition's INDIA bloc. Referring to recent statements circulating on social media, she said there had been indications of political realignment shortly before the crash.

Expressing a lack of confidence in central investigative agencies, Banerjee asserted that only a probe overseen by the country's highest court could ensure fairness and transparency. "We have faith only in the

Supreme Court. Other agencies cannot be trusted anymore," she remarked, alleging that institutions had lost their independence. Reacting emotionally to the news, Banerjee said the incident highlighted serious concerns about the safety of citizens, including political leaders. "It is shocking and painful. If leaders are not safe, one can only imagine the fate of the Opposition," she added, calling Pawar's death a major loss to the nation.

Ajit Pawar, who served as Maharashtra's deputy chief minister and was also the NCP chief, died earlier in the day when a small aircraft carrying him crashed near Baramati airport. Four others, including the pilots and his security personnel, also lost their lives.

Prez Murmu highlights social justice, development achievements as budget session begins

New Delhi, Jan 28 (TSIT): President Droupadi Murmu on Wednesday addressed the joint sitting of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, marking the commencement of the Budget Session of Parliament, and reaffirmed the government's commitment to "true social justice."

In her address, Murmu highlighted several key achievements of the government, including social welfare measures benefiting women, Dalit and Adivasi communities, and rapid progress in science, technology, and infrastructure. She emphasised that social security benefits now reach nearly 95 crore citizens, and claimed that 25 crore Indians have been lifted out of poverty over the past decade.



Paying tribute, she condoled the tragic death of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar in a plane crash, calling it an "irreparable loss" and acknowledging his contributions to the cooperative sector in the state.

DEVELOPMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE MILESTONES
President Murmu lauded the country's infrastructural progress, citing achievements in Indian

ies, noting that the government has strengthened India's foundation across sectors over the past decade.

NATIONAL SECURITY & DEFENCE
Murmu reaffirmed India's stance on national security, citing Operation Sindoor, decisive actions against Maoist insurgency, and the suspension of the Indus Water Treaty as part of counter-terrorism efforts. She noted that fear and distrust have been reduced from 126 districts to just eight, with nearly 2,000 Maoists surrendering in the past year, demonstrating the success of anti-Naxal campaigns.

She also referred to Mission Sudarshan Chakra, aimed at further strengthening national security and enhancing

trust in India's defence platforms.

HONOURING HERITAGE & INSPIRING FUTURE GENERATIONS

The President celebrated India's rich cultural and historical heritage, recalling the 350th martyrdom day of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the 150th birth anniversary of tribal leader Birsa Munda, and the contributions of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in fostering national unity. She said commemorating these figures inspires the younger generation and accelerates India's journey towards a Viksit Bharat (Developed India). The Economic Survey will be tabled in Parliament by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday, with the Union Budget presentation scheduled for Sunday.

Supreme Court to hear plea against UGC's new caste-based equity regulation

New Delhi, Jan 28: The Supreme Court on Wednesday agreed to list a plea challenging the recently notified University Grants Commission (UGC) regulation on caste-based discrimination, after concerns were raised over its exclusionary definition.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi took note of submissions seeking an urgent hearing of the matter. A lawyer representing the petitioners highlighted the potential for discrimination against the general category, citing the case



"Rahul Dewan and Ors vs Union." "There is a possibility of discrimination against the general class," the lawyer said. The Chief Justice responded, "We know what is happening. Make sure defects are cured. We will list it." The UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education

Institutions) Regulations, 2026, notified on January 13, mandate that all higher education institutions form equity committees to address discrimination complaints and promote equity. These committees must include members of Other Backward Classes (OBC), Scheduled

Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), persons with disabilities, and women.

The new regulations replace the largely advisory UGC 2012 Equity Guidelines, but the plea contends that by strictly defining caste-based discrimination as affecting only SCs, STs, and OBCs, the UGC has denied protection and grievance redressal to general category students who may also face harassment based on caste identity. The regulations have sparked protests across several states, with student groups and organisations demanding their immediate rollback.

Imphal, Jan 27: Fresh tension gripped Manipur's Kangpokpi district after multiple houses and temporary structures were set on fire, forcing security forces to launch operations in the affected area, officials said on Tuesday.

The incident occurred at K. Songlung Part II village, about 23 km from Kangchup police station, in the tribal-dominated Kangpokpi district. Police said investigations are underway to ascertain responsibility for the arson. According to residents, three houses and

four makeshift huts were gutted in the blaze on Monday. A Gypsy vehicle was completely destroyed, while a Jeep and several other vehicles suffered partial damage. Stored paddy, food grains, gas cylinders and household items were also reduced to ashes.

Pro-Meitei organisations have alleged that suspected cadres of the Zeliangrong United Front (ZUF-Kamson) were behind the incident.

The arson drew sharp condemnation from the Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM)

and the United Naga Council (UNC), which jointly denounced the burning of homes in broad daylight. The bodies said the incident spread fear among villagers and caused significant loss of property. They urged all communities to maintain calm, avoid inter-community violence, and refrain from circulating rumours or misleading information on social media.

Expressing solidarity with the affected families, the two organisations called on authorities to ensure immediate relief

and justice. The Kuki-Zo Council (KZC) also strongly condemned the incident, noting that it took place on the day the country marked its 77th Republic Day. In a statement, the KZC described the arson as another grim reminder of ongoing violence and insecurity faced by the Kuki-Zo community, alleging that since May 3, 2023, over 7,000 houses have been burned and more than 150 lives lost. The council further claimed that despite the imposition of President's Rule in Manipur.

Armed suspect arrested at Patna Civil Court, security breach sparks alarm

Patna, Jan 28: Panic erupted at the Patna Civil Court on Wednesday morning when police apprehended an armed criminal during a routine security check near Gate Number 1. The incident falls under the jurisdiction of Pirbahren police.

Police said two individuals had entered the court premises with alleged criminal intent, but their plans were thwarted thanks to vigilant security personnel. During frisking, one suspect was caught attempting to bring a pistol into the court complex. The arrest caused immediate chaos among lawyers, litigants, and court staff. Several advocates voiced strong con-



cerns over the breach, urging stricter surveillance and enhanced security measures at all entry points. Town DSP-1 arrived at the scene to begin questioning the arrested individual, whose past criminal record is currently being verified. Meanwhile, the second suspect managed to escape, prompting a large-scale search operation. CCTV footage is being examined to track

the movements of both suspects. Security has been heightened across the Civil Court campus in the wake of the incident. Court authorities urged staff and lawyers to remain calm and cooperate with law enforcement.

Preliminary investigations indicate the suspects intended to create fear and disruption within the court. Police are analyzing their communications and planning to determine if a wider criminal network is involved. Authorities have assured the public that the identities of the arrested individual and his accomplice will be revealed soon, and that all responsible parties will face strict legal action.

CBI arrests two Northern Railway officials for bribery in pension claim case

Lucknow, Jan 28: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Wednesday arrested two officials of Northern Railway, Lucknow, for allegedly accepting a bribe during the processing of a pension claim. The accused, Akash Tyagi, an Accountant in the Office of Divisional Railway Manager (DRM), and Akshay Srivastava, Assistant Divisional Finance Manager (ADFM), were caught red-handed while taking a bribe of Rs 70,000 from a complainant on Tuesday, the agency confirmed. The case was registered based on a complaint alleging that the officials demanded Rs 1 lakh



for generating the Pension Payment Order (PPO) and an additional Rs 2.5 lakh upon settlement of the pension claim. Acting swiftly, the CBI laid a trap and intercepted the officials during the partial payment. Both Tyagi and Srivastava have been taken into custody and will be produced before a competent court in Lucknow. The investigation is ongoing to identify any additional individuals involved in the bribery scheme.

PM Modi highlights Ayurveda's global legacy at Arya Vaidya Sala centenary

Thiruvananthapuram, Jan 28: Prime Minister Narendra Modi praised India's ancient healing tradition of Ayurveda on Wednesday, calling it a timeless system that has guided humanity across regions and eras. He was speaking via video message during the centenary celebrations of Kerala's Arya Vaidya Sala Charitable Hospital, marking 125 years of service.

"Ayurveda has always shown us how to live in balance and harmony with nature," the Prime Minister said. He emphasized the need to modernize Ayurveda by integrating technology and artificial intelligence while preserving its preventive health focus, a goal reflected in initiatives like the National AYUSH Mission and the network of over 12,000 AYUSH wellness centres across India.

PM Modi lauded the contributions of the hospital's founder, Vaidyaratnam PS Varier, and described Arya Vaidya Sala as a "living symbol of India's traditional medicine," producing over 600 Ayurvedic medicines and treating patients from more than 60 countries. He credited its century-long charitable service for establishing trust in the institution.

Highlighting India's holistic approach to traditional medicine, the Prime Minister noted that the creation of the Ministry of AYUSH has unified Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy under one framework. This, he said, has enabled greater access to medi-



cines, preventive care, and community health services nationwide. PM Modi also drew attention to the growing global impact of Indian wellness practices.

He mentioned the Ayush Export Promotion Council, which has helped raise exports of Ayurvedic and herbal products from Rs 3,000 crore in 2014 to ?6,500 crore today, benefiting farmers and practitioners alike. India is also emerging as a hub for Ayush-based medical value travel, supported by initiatives like the Ayush Visa, and has presented traditional medicine on global platforms such as the BRICS and G20 summits.

Several modern developments were highlighted, including the WHO's Global Traditional Medicine Centre in Jamnagar, the establishment of a Centre of Excellence for cancer research, and the promotion of medic-

inal plant farming along the Ganga river. PM Modi also praised the recent EU trade agreement, which enables qualified Indian AYUSH practitioners to offer services in Europe and expand wellness centres abroad. The Prime Minister commended Arya Vaidya Sala for blending tradition with science through collaborations with institutions such as CSIR and IIT, focusing on drug research, clinical studies, and cancer care. He urged further integration of AI and technology to advance disease prediction and innovative treatment methods.

Kerala governor Rajendra V. Arlekar and other dignitaries attended the centenary event. PM Modi concluded by congratulating the hospital staff, doctors, and vaidyas, wishing the institution continued success in improving lives through dedication and service.

Nitish Kumar launches and inaugurates development projects eorth Rs 136 crore in Darbhanga

Patna, Jan 28: Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Wednesday laid the foundation stone for 50 new development projects valued at Rs 103 crore and inaugurated 40 completed works worth Rs 33 crore in Darbhanga district, as part of the ongoing Samriddhi Yatra.

During his visit, the Chief Minister reviewed model exhibition stalls set up by various government departments, highlighting key development initiatives being implemented across the district. He also chaired a review meeting to assess the progress of district-level schemes before addressing a large public gathering. At an interaction programme held at Nagendra Jha Stadium, Nitish Kumar engaged with members of Jeevika self-help groups and local residents. He outlined the achievements of the state government, shared the roadmap for Bihar's future growth, and reiterated his administration's focus on inclusive and balanced development. The event was attended by several senior leaders and officials,



including Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary, JD(U) National Working President and Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Jha, Cabinet Ministers Vijay Kumar Choudhary and Madan Sahani, Darbhanga City MLA and BJP State President Sanjay Saraogi, along with district officials and other dignitaries.

As part of the tour, the chief minister reviewed the construction of

the Inter-State Bus Terminal at Delhi Mod, a project announced during the earlier Pragati Yatra. The terminal, being built at a cost of Rs 88.78 crore, began construction on December 15, 2025, and is slated for completion by December 14, 2027. Officials informed him that procurement of machinery and materials is currently underway.

Nitish Kumar also visited the

model exhibition at the bus stand complex, where replicas of 11 major schemes launched under the Pragati Yatra are on display to raise public awareness.

In addition, he inspected the under-construction terminal building at Darbhanga Airport, being developed at a cost of Rs 112 crore. Officials said around 50 per cent of the work has been completed, with the main structure expected to be finished within the next six months. The chief minister further reviewed progress on Bihar's first expressway—the Amas-Darbhanga Expressway—at its camp office. Once completed, the expressway will connect Darbhanga to NH-27, significantly boosting regional connectivity. Officials also informed him that the state cabinet, in its January 13 meeting, approved the allocation of 50 acres of land for a proposed logistics park in the district. Nitish Kumar inspected the site and directed the district administration to begin the land acquisition process at the earliest.

Editorial

THURSDAY, JANUARY 29, 2026

An AI pioneer warns the tech ‘herd’ is marching into a dead end

Throughout his 40-year career as a computer scientist, Yann LeCun has earned a reputation as one of the world’s leading experts on artificial intelligence and a man with a penchant for throwing verbal grenades. He was one of three pioneering researchers who received the Turing Award, often called “the Nobel Prize of computing,” for their work on the technology that is now the foundation for modern AI. For more than a decade, he also served as chief AI scientist at Meta, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram. But after leaving Meta in November, LeCun has become increasingly vocal in his criticism of Silicon Valley’s single-minded approach to building intelligent machines. He argues that the technology industry will eventually hit a dead end in its AI development — after years of work and hundreds of billions of dollars spent.

The reason, he said, goes back to what he has argued for years: Large language models, the AI technology at the heart of popular products like ChatGPT, can get only so powerful. And companies are throwing everything they have at projects that won’t get them to their goal to make computers as smart as or even smarter than humans. More creative Chinese companies, he added, could get there first. “There is this herd effect where everyone in Silicon Valley has to work on the same thing. It does not leave much room for other approaches that may be much more promising in the long term,” he said.

That critique is the latest shot in a debate that has roiled the tech industry since OpenAI sparked the AI boom in 2022 with the release of ChatGPT: Is it possible to create so-called artificial general intelligence or even more powerful superintelligence? And can companies get there using their current technology and concepts? Few scientists have as much history with the topic as the 65-year-old. Much of what the tech industry is trying to do now has its roots in an idea that he has nurtured since the 1970s. As a young engineering student in Paris, he embraced a concept called neural networks, even though most researchers thought the idea was hopeless.

Neural networks are mathematical systems that learn skills by analysing data. At the time, they had no practical use. But a decade later, when he was a researcher at Bell Labs, LeCun and his colleagues showed that these systems could learn to read handwriting scribbled on envelopes or personal checks.

By the early 2010s, researchers had begun to show that neural networks could power a wide range of technologies, including face recognition systems, digital assistants and self-driving cars. As Google, Microsoft and other tech giants placed big bets on the idea, Facebook hired LeCun to build an AI research lab. Not long after ChatGPT was released, the two researchers who received the 2018 Turing Award with LeCun warned that AI was growing too powerful. Those scientists even warned that the technology could threaten the future of humanity. LeCun argued that was absurd.

“There was a lot of noise around the idea that AI systems were intrinsically dangerous and that putting them in the hands of everyone was a mistake,” he said. “But I have never believed in this.” LeCun also helped push Meta and its rivals to freely share their research through academic-style papers and so-called open source technologies.

All-night concerts bring fleeting normalcy in a war-ravaged

The performer stood in front of an audience of 800, right before dawn on a recent Sunday. It was the tail end of his eight-hour extravaganza featuring pop, hip-hop and Burmese folk music. He was upbeat, relishing his recent return to the stage. “Regardless of any difficulties you face, one day, summer will come,” Than Zaw Htwe, 30, told his audience, many of whom were sitting cross-legged on a silver tarp in an open field on the outskirts of Yangon, Myanmar’s biggest city.

Life in Myanmar was upended five years ago, when the military seized power in a coup. Now the junta is trying to project a veneer of legitimacy and normalcy, even as it is fighting a grinding civil war with pro-democracy rebels and other groups. It has held elections, which have been widely derided as a sham. It has organized a massive hot-air balloon festival. And it has allowed some traditional music artists to return to the stage.

Than Zaw Htwe is one of them, leading a new 70-member troupe that was founded in October. He performs zat pwe (pronounced zat-PWAY), or “story show,” an opera-like art form that dates back to the 1800s. Today, it is a kaleidoscope of Burmese pop, synchronized dance, slapstick comedy and the retelling of legends.

His shows — which go from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. — are booked out until April. Known by his stage name San Yay Moe, his videos have flooded Burmese TikTok accounts. “People are feeling mentally suffocated,” he said in an interview. “They need happiness.”

Another performer had a similar message for his audience at one of his recent shows. “Live in the present,” said Chit Myo Htike, perhaps the most prominent zat pwe performer and whose stage name is Phoe Chit.

Many urbanites in the country are doing just that. In Yangon, nightclubs are heaving. Domestic tourism is booming in parts of the country where there is no fighting. Night bazaars are now held regularly. Many of these events are sanctioned by the junta, which controls the nation’s cities but not its hinterlands. On a recent Sunday, I stood in line with hundreds of people to watch a performance. It was the last night of a three-day run in Hmawbi township, on Yangon’s outskirts. The tickets ranged from 30,000 to 60,000 kyats, or about \$14 to \$28, which is relatively pricey, given that the average monthly wage is about \$75. (I shelled out roughly \$10 more for a chair.)

With temperatures dipping in to the low 60s Fahrenheit, many in the audience settled in with blankets and beanies. “For three days a week, this is their happy hour,” Aung Kyaw



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Tun, the founder of the San Yay Moe troupe, said in English. He said he once experimented with shorter shows that ended at midnight, but the audience was not satisfied and clamored to stay until the morning. It was clear that San Yay Moe was the biggest draw.

“I LOVE YOU, I LOVE YOU, I LOVE YOU!” a woman behind me screamed in English toward the stage.

“I love you, too!” San Yay Moe responded, also in English.

In keeping with tradition, audience members showed their appreciation by heading to the stage and pinning cash on the performers’ outfits. At one point, San Yay Moe had so much money pinned on his sleeves that the bills looked like feathers on wings.

Around midnight, I went backstage, where wages were being distributed. Aung Kyaw Tun said he made about 100 million kyats, or \$25,000, for the three nights. San Yay Moe gets to take home the money that is given to him by fans, this time roughly 70 million kyats, or \$17,500. At 1.30 am, it was time for San Yan Moe to perform a medley of songs. He strode out in a purple suit with a strip of silver sequins running down his trousers and top. A group of back-up dancers gyrated behind him.

Next up was one of his hypersonic costume changes. Off came his purple top and on came a white vest. The audience waved their hands in the air. Near the stage, a group of men moshed around.

At 3.30 am, the show moved into

an adaptation of the Ramayana, the Hindu epic. By this time, I was fading; but not San Yay Moe, who was in character, writhing onstage.

Two weeks later, I returned to Yangon to see Phoe Chit perform. His show felt almost like a spiritual experience. The audience knew the words to all his songs, and took out handkerchiefs and cellphones to wave along to the music. One was a ballad titled “To A Friend,” in which the singer urges a jilted friend to move on.

Then, Phoe Chit moved to a play in multiple acts that touched on filial themes and had a climax in which the lead character was forced to marry his brother’s pregnant girlfriend.

This month, Phoe Chit, 43, was among a list of celebrities who received distinguished artist awards from Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, the military commander who led the coup in 2021.

In 2022, Phoe Chit was detained for a brief period on suspicion that he was helping fund armed resistance to the junta, according to some reports.

Phoe Chit declined to comment but said that his troupe started performing in February after a hiatus of six years because he got the approval from the authorities.

At the night bazaars and the San Yay Moe show, many used the phrase “political situation” to refer to what their country was going through. I asked people whether they were happy.

“We want a new normal,” said Shoon Lae Po, 25, who runs a currency exchange service and was strolling around at a night bazaar, which sold snacks like “husband and wife” pastries, and offered “ceramic astrology,” palm-reading and Burmese pythons for stroking.

Her partner, Thiri Zaw Zaw, 23, chimed in. “It’s been five years, we cannot stay like this,” he said.

In Yangon, two residents told me that they had stopped going to the movies and traveling after the coup. They wept as they spoke of their guilt, thinking about friends who had gone into the jungles and taken up arms against the junta. But one of them said that she was planning a holiday trip for the sake of her mental health.

Thazin Oo, 26, a student, said people turned up to the shows to “relieve their stress” and because “there’s nothing to entertain us at the moment.”

“People are not happy anymore,” she said. But when I asked what stress she felt, her friend chimed: “Just say work stress!”

Soon, the sun was rising. A comedian intoned into the microphone: “Go home please, we want to sleep!” The audience chuckled. It was past 6 a.m. A white strobe light turned on. It was the cue to leave. San Yay Moe walked around taking selfies. Others packed up their blankets and baskets and filed out of the field. Outside, trucks with workers huddled in their beds streamed past, ready to start a new day.

NATO must be ready for key summit in pivotal year

The World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, last week highlighted an ongoing rift between the worldview of the US and that of its transatlantic partners in Europe. This time, the dispute centered on Greenland — specifically, America’s desire for greater access to and control over the territory. While tensions were high at times, it was NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte who ultimately helped calm the situation and get transatlantic relations back on track.

Looking ahead, 2026 will be a pivotal year for NATO, with a major summit scheduled to take place less than six months from now in Ankara, Türkiye. To ensure the summit’s success, policymakers must begin shaping the agenda immediately. While the meeting may seem far off, in terms of statecraft and diplomacy, six months is very little time at all. Aligning the US and its European partners more closely will require early preparation, sustained engagement and political will on both sides of the Atlantic.

Getting the transatlantic relationship right carries significant economic implications — not only for North America and Europe, but for the global economy as well. Together, the two account for nearly half of the world’s gross domestic product. Europe and the US are each other’s largest export markets and each is responsible for trillions of dollars of investment in the other’s economy, supporting millions of jobs. When rifts emerge across the Atlantic,

the consequences are felt well beyond security policy, with ripple effects across trade, investment and global growth.

As the alliance heads toward the July summit, four major issues are likely to dominate discussions. Policymakers would be wise to begin laying the groundwork now to ensure the meeting delivers tangible results rather than political friction. Aligning the US and its European partners more closely will require early preparation, sustained engagement and political will.

The first issue, unsurprisingly given the recent focus on Greenland, is Arctic security. Just as Donald Trump has done more than any other US president to push NATO members to increase their defense spending, he has also done more than any predecessor to force the alliance to take the Arctic seriously. Until recently, NATO avoided even mentioning the region in its official documents, largely due to internal disagreements among Arctic allies over what role the alliance should play there.

With growing competition in the High North and with Trump’s renewed emphasis on Greenland’s strategic importance, Arctic security has been pushed near the top of NATO’s agenda for the first time. For this summer’s summit to proceed smoothly, allies should expect concrete deliverables related to NATO’s posture, presence and coordination in the Arctic.

The second issue likely to be raised concerns NATO’s relationship with the broader region — a



matter of particular importance to the host country, Türkiye. While Türkiye has been an integral part of transatlantic security since join-

Notably, it was a Turkish initiative at the 2004 NATO Summit in Istanbul that led to the creation of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, which formalized NATO’s engagement with several Gulf states. Since then, the framework has provided a useful platform for high-level dialogue, though it has produced relatively few tangible outcomes in terms of shared security. With the political momentum that comes from hosting the summit, NATO should seize the opportunity to revamp, or at least reenergize, the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative and strengthen its relationships with key Gulf partners. Despite occasional tensions in the relationship, it is essential that both sides of the Atlantic continue to work together.

The third issue, and one that will no doubt be a top priority for Trump, will be the health of the alliance’s defense spending. Dating back to his first term in the White House, Trump has been among the most vocal US presidents in urging European allies to spend more on defense. At last year’s summit in The Hague, NATO took a historic step by agreeing to aim for defense spending of 5 percent of gross domestic product. This is three percentage points higher than the long-standing 2 percent benchmark. While this goal is not expected to be met until the early 2030s, there is little doubt that Trump will be closely monitoring progress in the meantime. At present, only a handful of allies, primarily the Baltic states and Poland, come even close to meeting the 5 percent target. If

Trump succeeds in working with Congress to pass his proposed \$1.5 trillion defense budget, the US itself would reach that threshold. The faster European allies demonstrate meaningful progress toward this goal, the smoother alliance management is likely to be between the White House and European capitals. The final issue, though unlikely to receive much public attention, will be discussed intensively behind closed doors: the war in Ukraine. Trump has made slow but steady progress in pushing Russia and Ukraine toward negotiations and NATO’s posture at the summit will depend heavily on how far diplomatic efforts have advanced by then.

Trump has been clear that Ukrainian membership of NATO is off the table, meaning the alliance will need to find creative ways to remain engaged with Kyiv — strengthening cooperation and support without crossing political red lines set by Washington. Despite occasional tensions in the transatlantic relationship, it is essential that both sides of the Atlantic continue to work together. Without a stable and secure Europe, the US economy would suffer, with knock-on effects for the global economy as well. As the Ankara summit approaches, NATO’s leaders have little time to waste. Managing differences across the Atlantic while delivering progress on security, spending and diplomacy will determine whether the alliance emerges stronger — or more divided — at a moment of growing geopolitical uncertainty.



Sensex jumps 646 points in early trade on optimism over India-EU FTA

MUMBAI: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty surged in early trade on Wednesday, extending their previous day's rally, on optimism over India-EU FTA.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 646.49 points to 82,503.97 during initial trade. The 50-share NSE Nifty surged 196.7 points to 25,372.10. From the 30-Sensex firms, Axis Bank, Reliance Industries, NTPC, Bharat Electronics, ICICI Bank



and Bajaj Finance were among the major gainers. However, Asian Paints dropped nearly 6 per cent after the firm reported a decline of 4.83 per cent in consolidated net profit at Rs 1,073.92 crore in the December quarter of FY26 on a year-on-year basis on account of exceptional items as implementation of the new labour code and impairment of loss in a subsidiary.

Maruti, HCL Tech, Kotak Mahindra Bank and State Bank

of India were among the other laggards.

India and the European Union on Tuesday sealed a landmark free trade agreement- billed as the "mother of all deals" - to create a market of two billion people with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the top EU leadership unveiling a transformative five-year agenda to largely leverage trade and defence in protecting the rules-based world order.

Renault dusts off compact SUV dreams, reignites Duster after 14 years

CHENNAI: For Tamil Nadu's automotive ecosystem, anchored by the Chennai manufacturing belt, the relaunch of Renault's Duster after 14 years, is more than a product comeback. It signals the French car-maker's attempt to reboot its India strategy after years of lull, using its Oragadam plant, deep localisation and exports as the fulcrum of revival. It is also looking at improving its market share to over 3 per cent from the current 1 per cent garnered from sale of less than 40,000 units across its three products such as Kwid, Kiger and Triber. The automaker's market share has slipped below 1 per cent in the over 43 lakh strong passenger vehicle segment.

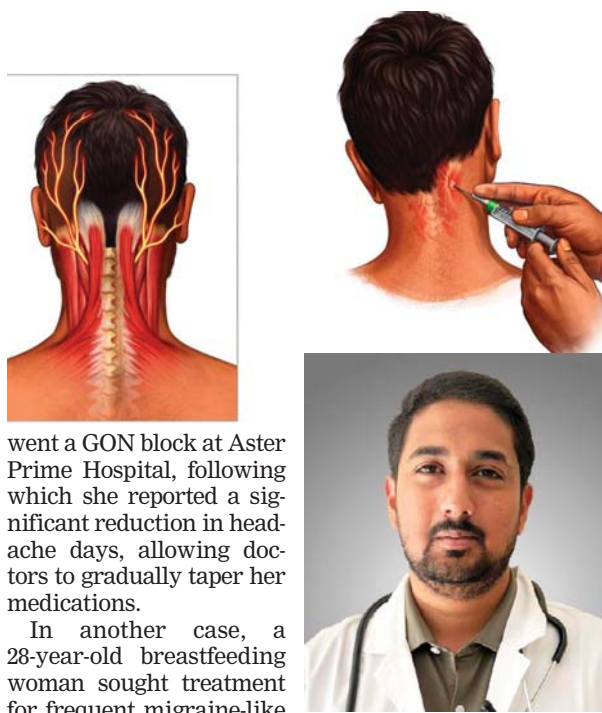
At a media roundtable here on Tuesday, Venkatram Mamillapalle, MD, Renault

India, said the new Duster has been rebuilt from the ground up, even as it retains the "DNA" that once made it a best-seller. "The car is new. We've only kept the DNA," he said, underlining that the SUV comes with upgraded ride and handling, a powerful petrol engine, 212 mm ground clearance and a long feature list, including Google automotive system and a panoramic sunroof. TN plays a central role in this reset. Renault's Chennai plant (now fully owned by the company) comes with an installed capacity of 4.8 lakh units, though utilisation has dropped to around 48 per cent following weak volumes over the past three years. "Why would we buy a plant with more than 50 per cent idle capacity if we were not here to stay and grow in India?" Mamillapalle asked.

Advanced migraine therapies offer relief to chronic sufferers at Aster Prime Hospital

Hyderabad (TSIT) Advanced interventional therapies are bringing meaningful relief to patients suffering from chronic migraine who have not responded to conventional treatments, according to neurologists at Aster Prime Hospital, Ameerpet. Doctors at the hospital on Wednesday shared recent success stories highlighting the effectiveness of procedures such as Greater Occipital Nerve (GON) blocks in managing refractory migraine cases.

One such case involved a 36-year-old homemaker from Khammam who had been experiencing daily migraine-like headaches for nearly seven years. Despite multiple medications, her condition continued to severely affect her quality of life. In November 2025, she under-



went a GON block at Aster Prime Hospital, following which she reported a significant reduction in headache days, allowing doctors to gradually taper her medications.

In another case, a 28-year-old breastfeeding woman sought treatment for frequent migraine-like headaches. With limited medication options due to breastfeeding, she was

offered a GON block. Within two months of the procedure, she experi-

enced nearly a 70 per cent reduction in headache severity and improved daily functioning.

"These cases demonstrate the growing role of interventional therapies in migraine care, especially for patients who do not respond adequately to oral medications or where drug use is restricted," said Dr. Vivek Potluri, Consultant Neurologist at Aster Prime Hospital.

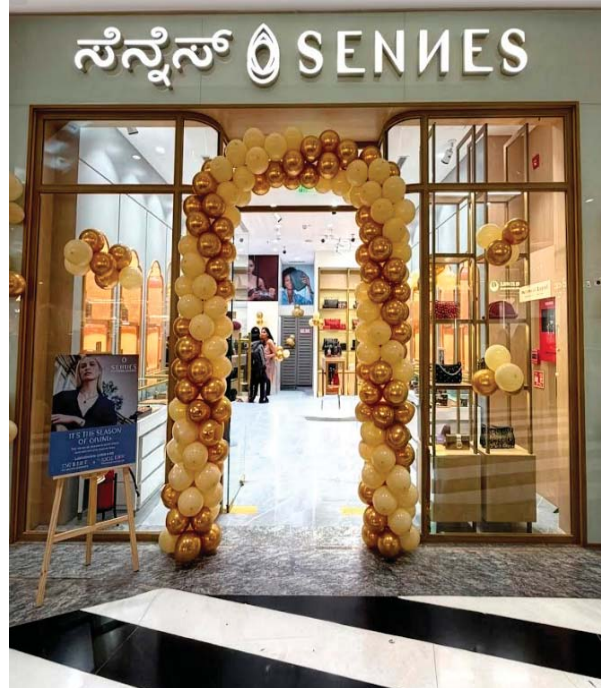
Migraine is among the most common neurological disorders worldwide, affecting nearly 18 per cent of women and 6 per cent of men, while chronic migraine impacts about 2 per cent of the population. Often dismissed as a routine headache, migraine is a complex condition associated with severe pain, nausea, visual disturbances, and sensitivity to light and sound.

Sennes from House of Senco opens first store in Bengaluru

Bengaluru: Sennes, a contemporary luxury lifestyle brand from the House of Senco, has opened its first store in Bengaluru at Phoenix Mall. With this launch, Sennes has expanded its pan-India presence to 10 stores, strengthening its footprint across major cities including Kolkata, New Delhi, Hyderabad, Bhubaneswar, Chandigarh and Patna.

Rooted in Senco's legacy of trust and fine craftsmanship spanning over eight decades, Sennes represents modern luxury tailored for contemporary lifestyles. The brand combines global aesthetics, sustainability and refined craftsmanship, appealing to a new generation that values individuality, responsibility and understated elegance.

Spread across 780 sq. ft., the Bengaluru store fea-



tures a curated collection of lab-grown diamond jewellery, Italian-designed leather bags and fine fra-

grances. Each product reflects modern design sensibilities and conscious craftsmanship, offering

versatile luxury suitable for everyday living.

Speaking on the occasion, Suvankar Sen, Managing Director & CEO of Senco Gold Ltd., said Bengaluru is a dynamic and design-forward market with a strong appreciation for modern luxury, making it an ideal destination for Sennes, especially among Gen Z and millennial consumers. Joita Sen, Director and Head of Design & Marketing at Senco Gold and Diamonds, said Sennes is designed as a complete sensory experience, bringing together the brilliance of lab-grown diamonds, fine leather craftsmanship and sophisticated fragrances under one roof. The new store is located at Sennes, Phoenix Marketcity, Whitefield Main Road, Mahadevpura, Bengaluru.

GITAM congratulates Dr. S.D. Bhavani on successful completion of Ph.D. in chemistry

Hyderabad (TSIT) GITAM Deemed to be University, Hyderabad, congratulates Dr. S. D. Bhavani on the successful completion of her Ph.D. in Chemistry. Her research, titled "Effect of Calcination Temperature and Composition on Properties of Gadolinium-Doped Nickel Ferrite Nanoparticles," contributes significantly to the field of advanced functional nanomaterials.

Under the guidance of Dr. B. Purna Chandra Rao, Assistant Professor, Department of Chemistry, the study explored the synthesis



and characterization of Gd-doped nickel ferrite nanoparticles using the sol-gel auto-combustion method and examined the impact of calcination temperature on their structural and functional properties. The findings highlight

the potential of these nanomaterials for applications in high-frequency electronics, magnetic devices, EMI shielding, and microwave technologies.

The GITAM community—including Prof. D. S. Rao (Pro Vice-Chancellor), D. V. V. S. R. Varma (Resident Director), Dr. M. Reza (Principal, School of Science), Dr. Gousia Begum (Head, Department of Chemistry), along with faculty, researchers, and students—extends its heartfelt congratulations to Dr. Bhavani on this outstanding academic accomplishment.

Rupee rises 11 paise to 91.57 against the US dollar in early trade

MUMBAI: The rupee gained 11 paise to 91.57 against the US dollar in early trade on Wednesday, supported by a retreating dollar index and the landmark India-EU trade deal.

Forex traders said the rupee opened higher as the US dollar index softened and a long-awaited trade breakthrough with Europe offered quiet reassurance.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 91.60 against the US dollar, then gained some ground to 91.57, registering a gain of 11 paise over its previous close. On Tuesday, the rupee rebounded from its all-time low levels and gained 22 paise to close at 91.68 (provisional) against



the US dollar. In the initial trade, it also touched 91.66 against the American currency. "The 92.00 level remains the key near-term pivot for USD/INR. A sustained move above this zone could open the way toward the 92.20-92.50 range," CR Forex Advisors MD Amit Pabari said.

Pabari further added that continued RBI presence in the market, combined with a softer dollar backdrop, may help stabilise the pair and gradually pull it back toward the

90.80-91.00 zone in the near term. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.13 per cent lower at 96.09.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading 0.53 per cent higher at USD 67.93 per barrel in futures trade. On the domestic equity market front, the 30-share benchmark index Sensex jumped 646.49 points to 82,503.97 in early trade, while the Nifty surged 196.7 points to 25,372.10. Foreign Institutional Investors offloaded equities worth Rs 3,068.49 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data.

Ultra-rapid ECMO saves 14-year-old girl at KIMS Cuddles, Kondapur



Hyderabad, 28 January, 2026: Doctors at KIMS Cuddles, Kondapur, achieved a major clinical success by saving the life of a 14-year-old girl using ultra-rapid veno-venous extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (VV-ECMO). The child was admitted in a critical condition with severe pneumococcal pneumonia, empyema, profound hypoxaemia and septic shock.

Disclosing the details, Dr. Parag Dekate, Clinical Director (Paediatrics) and Head of the Paediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU), said the girl, a resident of Mulugu village in Medak district, was unresponsive to treatment and on mechanical ventilation when she was referred to the hospital. With her condition deteriorating rapidly, the PICU team initiated an emergency "scoop-and-run" ECMO retrieval strategy, with parallel planning for ECMO support even before her arrival. Despite maximal conventional support after admission, the child's oxygen levels continued to fall. Demonstrating speed and precision, the multidisciplinary PICU team completed VV-ECMO cannulation within 50 minutes of arrival and placed her on ECMO support in less than an hour. "The ultra-rapid decision-making and execution were crucial in saving her life," Dr. Parag said.

The patient was supported on VV-ECMO for eight days. ECMO is an advanced life-support modality used when the lungs fail to func-

tion adequately. Gradually, her respiratory parameters and oxygenation improved, following which she was successfully decannulated and weaned off the ventilator.

The child was initially admitted to a Hospital in Kompally under the care of Dr. Mahipal, where she was treated for Advanced Ventilation support later on, she was shifted to Cuddles Kondapur for Ultra-rapid ECMO treatment. During recovery, the child developed a rare complication small bowel obstruction caused by an intestinal blood bezoar, an uncommon ECMO-related event. The condition was promptly identified and successfully managed through paediatric surgical intervention. After 35 days of intensive care and multidisciplinary monitoring, the girl was discharged in a stable condition with complete neurological recovery.

Dr. Parag emphasised that timely ultra-rapid ECMO initiation, coordinated retrieval protocols and the availability of a strong multispecialty team under one roof played a decisive role in the outcome. The treating team included Dr. Parag, Dr. Avinash Reddy P., Dr. Kalyan K., Dr. L. Sri vidya and Dr. Vinod P., along with dedicated nursing, perfusion and transport teams. The paediatric surgery team comprising Dr. Yoganagendra, Dr. Manisha Reddy and Dr. Ashish Kodali also played a key role in the child's recovery.

'Global voices one vision' – International Health Dialogue 2026 by Apollo Hospitals to be held in Hyderabad

Hyderabad: Apollo Hospitals will host the 13th edition of International Health Dialogue (IHD), one of the world's leading platforms advancing patient safety, healthcare innovation, and system transformation, on January 30-31, 2026, in Hyderabad, India. The theme for IHD 2026, 'Global Voices. One Vision', reflects a shared commitment to align ideas, innovations, and leadership toward a common goal – building resilient, patient-centric, and technology-enabled healthcare systems. The program this year will focus on three defining dimensions: leadership-driven safety models, human-centered design, digital transformation, and system-wide excellence in hospital operations, patient experience and clinical outcomes.

Dr. Sangita Reddy, Joint Managing Director, Apollo Hospitals Group said:

"Over the years, the International Health Dialogue has evolved into a dynamic global platform where clinicians, innovators, policymakers, and evangelists converge to shape the next era of healthcare. The Hyderabad edition builds on this vision, bringing together the power of AI, data, and digital ecosystems with the timeless values of empathy and collaboration. At its heart, IHD represents a shared global commitment to make healthcare more predictive, sustainable, and inclusive, where every innovation serves humanity and every partnership drives progress toward a healthier planet."

International Health Dialogue 2026 integrates four defining conferences and learning streams under a single umbrella:

- IPSC – International Patient Safety Conference discusses how proactive



practices and healthcare systems can improve patient safety.

HOPE – Healthcare Operations & Patient Experience Conference focuses on operational excellence by integrating efficiency, empathy, and innovation to enhance every touchpoint of the patient journey.

THIT – Transforming Healthcare with IT Conference brings together healthcare and IT leaders from around the world to share insights, best

practices, and the latest advancements in the industry.

CLINOVATE will spotlight the expanding role of diagnostics as a cornerstone of patient safety and clinical decision-making, under the theme "The Future-Ready Laboratory." The sessions will explore how laboratories are evolving into critical enablers of healthcare transformation, driven by artificial intelligence, automation, and advanced analytics.

The International Health Dialogue will bring together global health leaders and policymakers, including Hon. Col. Maj. Garba Hakimi, Minister of Public Health, Republic of Niger; Hon. Mr. Elias Kapavore, Minister of Health and HIV/AIDS, Papua New Guinea; and Hon. Prof. Jean Rosaire Ibara, Minister of Health and Population, Republic of Congo.

Joining them will be leading voices in international healthcare quality, patient safety, and innovation, including Dr. Jonathan Perlin, President and CEO, The Joint Commission Enterprise; Dr. Carsten Engel, CEO, ISQua; Dr. Dean Ho, Head, Department of Biomedical Engineering, National University of Singapore; Dr. Atul Mohan Kochhar, CEO, NABH; Dr. Neelam Dhingra, Vice President and Chief Patient Safety Officer, Joint Commission International; and Dr. Eyal Zimlichman, Chief Innovation, Transformation and AI Officer, Sheba Medical Center and Founding Director of ARC, Israel, along with global experts in digital health and healthcare transformation.

This year's conference will feature Safe-A-Thon – a collaborative, solution-building challenge

designed to spark innovation in patient safety to tackle real-world safety problems with smart, scalable, and cost-effective solutions. The conference will also witness the launch of THNX (Technology & Healthcare Network eXchange) – India's first digital health startup community that will feature pitch days, funding opportunities, and investor interactions.

Over the years, the International Health Dialogue has created a vibrant exchange between public health leaders, technology innovators, clinicians, and patient advocates. The 2026 edition in Hyderabad will continue this legacy through plenary discussions, innovation showcases, technology demonstrations, and global networking forums, offering participants an immersive experience in thought leadership and practical innovation.

Nobody is safe: China's Xi targets close ally in purge

Beijing/Washington, Jan 28: China's investigation into its top general is taking President Xi Jinping's years-long corruption purge into his innermost circle, underlining that even close personal ties do not offer protection when it comes to loyalty to the party leadership.

China experts said Xi's move against his long-term ally and Politburo member Gen. Zhang Youxia also concentrates even more power in the president's hands, makes the already secretive command of China's military more opaque, and suggests that a near-term attack on Taiwan is less likely.

"Zhang's removal means that truly nobody in the leadership is safe now," said Jonathan Czin of the Washington-based Brookings Institution, who called the investigation "astounding".

Czin, who spent years as a top China analyst for the Central Intelligence Agency and, in 2021-2023, served as the director for China at the United States National Security Council, added that the probe marked a "profound shift" in Chinese politics. The change is remarkable as past purges targeted people who may have had some overlap with Xi but lacked strong personal ties. This time around, the purge has crossed into what Czin has described as the "asteroid belt" of Xi's political solar system.

Both Xi and Zhang are princelings, children of former senior officers. The 75-year-old general was initially expected to retire in 2022, but Xi kept him on the Central Military Commission (CMC), the Chinese military's top leadership body, for a third term, underscoring



their closeness.

The defence ministry announced a probe Saturday into Zhang - second-in-command under Xi as senior vice-chairman of the CMC - "for suspected serious violations of discipline and law". The military was one of the main targets of a broad corruption crackdown ordered by Xi after coming to power in 2012. The purges reached its elite Rocket Force, which oversees nuclear weapons as well as conventional missiles, in 2023. Two former defence ministers were also purged from the ruling Communist Party in recent years for corruption.

"I think corruption concerns are probably real, though those are typically more a pretext to remove someone in Chinese politics," said Czin, citing how deeply entrenched graft was before Xi's campaign.

Another senior member, Liu Zhenli, chief of staff of the CMC's Joint Staff Department, was also placed under investigation, effectively shrinking the seven-member body into two, with Xi at the top.

"Xi has eviscerated the People's Liberation Army (PLA) top brass like no leader before

him," said Neil Thomas, a fellow at the Asia Society.

ELIMINATING THREATS

In a front-page editorial Sunday, the PLA Daily described the probe as a major achievement, adding that the two generals had "seriously undermined and violated" the Chairman Responsibility System.

Under the system, Xi, as the CMC chairman, is vested with the "supreme military decision-making." It also serves as the "institutional arrangement for practising the party's absolute leadership over the army," according to China's government.

"To invoke violating the Chairman Responsibility System suggests Zhang had too much power outside of Xi himself," said Lyle Morris, a senior fellow at the Asia Society Policy Institute's Center for China Analysis.

DEPLETED LEADERSHIP

But leaving the army leadership depleted and without replacements raises questions about how the world's largest military is run.

"It is honestly not clear how the chain of command should be functioning - especially since so many of the officers who would otherwise be eligible to replace the disposed members of the CMC have themselves been ousted," Brookings' Czin said.

Other analysts said they expect higher-level initiatives like expanding joint training to slow down until Xi can rebuild the commission.

"That could look like adding additional members, or it could involve building some sort of new apparatus around Xi as the central decision maker," said Eric Hundman, director of research at BluePath Labs, a Washington-based security consultancy.

Meta, TikTok, YT face landmark trial over youth addiction claims

Washington, Jan 28: Three of the world's biggest tech companies face a landmark trial in Los Angeles starting this week over claims that their platforms - Meta's Instagram, ByteDance's TikTok and Google's YouTube - deliberately addict and harm children.

Jury selection starts this week in the Los Angeles County Superior Court. It's the first time the companies will argue their case before a jury, and the outcome could have profound effects on their businesses and how they will handle children using their platforms.

The selection process is expected to take at least a few days, with 75 potential jurors questioned each day through at least Thursday. A fourth company named in the lawsuit, Snapchat parent company Snap Inc, settled the case last week for an undisclosed sum.

At the core of the case is a 19-year-old identified only by the initials "KGM", whose case could determine how thousands of other, similar lawsuits against social media companies will play out.

She and two other plaintiffs have been selected for bellwether trials - essentially test cases for both sides to see how their arguments play out before a jury and what damages, if any, may be awarded, said Clay Calvert, a nonresident senior fellow of technology policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute.

KGM claims that her use of social media from an early age addicted her to the technology and exacerbated depression and suicidal thoughts. Importantly, the lawsuit claims that this was done through deliberate design choices made by companies that sought to make their platforms more addictive to children to boost profits.

US judge warns ICE chief with contempt



Washington, Jan 28: The chief judge of Minnesota's federal court ordered the acting chief of US Immigration and Customs Enforcement to appear in court Friday to personally explain why that agency has not complied with dozens of court orders in recent weeks.

In a filing late Monday, Chief Judge Patrick Schiltz said acting ICE director Todd Lyons must explain why he should not be held in contempt after his agency missed a deadline to provide a detainee with a bond hearing.

"This court has been extremely patient with respondents, even though respondents decided to send thousands of agents to Minnesota to detain aliens without making any provision for dealing with the hundreds of habeas petitions and other lawsuits that were sure to result," Schiltz wrote. "The court's patience is at an end."

The Department of Homeland Security, which includes ICE, was not immediately available for comment Tuesday. Schiltz said he will cancel Friday's hearing if the detainee is released. The judge, who sits in Minneapolis, was appointed to the bench by Republican President George W. Bush.

Schiltz's order came as protesters complain about ICE's tactics to advance President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown.

ICE agents shot and killed two US citizens, Renee Good

US ICE agents to support security at Winter Olympics in Italy

Rome: US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) personnel will help protect US delegations at the Winter Olympics in Italy, a US embassy source said Tuesday, confirming local media reports and prompting anger among some Italian politicians. ICE and Border Patrol agents have come under heavy criticism in the United States over their enforcement of President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown after two US citizens were shot dead in separate incidents this month in the state of Minnesota. The embassy source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said ICE's Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) division would back up the US State Department's security service at the February 6-22 Milano Cortina Winter Olympics. The HSI agents will not carry out any immigration enforcement activity while in Italy but will rather aim to "mitigate risks from transnational criminal organizations", the source said, without elaborating. "All security operations remain under Italian authority," the source added. However, some Italian politicians, including the leader of one of the parties in the right-wing coalition of Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, an ally of Trump, have criticised the involvement of ICE in next month's Games. "It seems sheer idiocy to me," Maurizio Lupi, leader of the Noi Moderati party in Meloni's governing coalition, told la Repubblica daily, while recognising that Italian law enforcement bodies may need to coordinate with foreign counterparts.

and Alex Pretti, in separate enforcement actions in Minneapolis this month.

Starmer heads to China



London, Jan 28: Prime Minister Keir Starmer will fly to China Tuesday on the first visit by a British leader in eight years, in a bid to mend ties with the world's second-largest economy and reduce its dependence on an increasingly unpredictable United States.

Starmer is the latest western leader to visit China, and his trip comes amid tensions between Britain and its long-standing closest ally - the United States - over President Donald Trump's threats to take control of Greenland.

On a three-day visit accompanied by dozens of business executives and two ministers, Starmer will meet with Chinese leaders in Beijing and then travel to Shanghai, before a brief visit to Japan.

At the forefront of the visit "will be what both sides make of the current behaviour and posture of the US and Trump," said Kerry Brown, professor of Chinese studies at King's Col-

lege London. "One of the great anomalies of the current situation is that London is probably closer to Beijing than Washington" on some global issues like AI, public health and the environment.

Since being elected in 2024, Starmer has made it one of his priorities to reset ties with China following a deterioration in relations under previous governments because of rows over Beijing's crackdown on pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong, a former British colony, and multiple allegations of espionage and cyberattacks.

NK launches ballistic missiles into sea

The launches were the first time North Korea fired weapons since testing what it called hypersonic missiles in early January



Seoul, Jan 28: North Korea launched short-range ballistic missiles toward its eastern waters Tuesday, according to its neighbours, as the North heightens animosities with rival South Korea ahead of a major political meeting.

South Korea's military said it detected liftoffs of several ballistic missiles from an area northeast of the North Korean capital, Pyongyang, before the missiles each flew about 350 kilometres (217 miles).

Japan's Defence Ministry said two ballistic missiles launched from North Korea landed off the eastern coast of the Korean Peninsula. The min-

istry condemned the launches as a threat to the peace of Japan, the region and the international community.

South Korea's military said it maintains a firm readiness to repel any provocations by North Korea.

The launches were the first time North Korea fired weapons since testing what it called hypersonic missiles in early January. In December, the country test-fired what it called long-range, strategic cruise missiles and new anti-air missiles

and released photos showing the apparent construction of its first nuclear-powered submarine.

North Korea has engaged in a run of weapons launches to enlarge its nuclear and missile arsenals since talks with the US and South Korea stalled in 2019. Experts say the North's leader, Kim Jong Un, believes a bigger weapons arsenal would give him greater leverage to win concessions from the US.

North Korea's recent displays were likely meant to demonstrate or review its weap-

ons development achievements ahead of the upcoming ruling Workers' Party congress, analysts said.

The congress, expected to start in February, would be the first of its kind in five years and is one of North Korea's biggest propaganda spectacles used to set up new political and economic priorities.

North Korea recently threatened retaliation over what it called South Korean surveillance drone flights across the border, one earlier in January and another in September. The South Korean government denied operating any drones during the times specified by North Korea and began probing whether civilians sent them.

The accusations likely were driven by the North's efforts to dial up anti-South Korea sentiments ahead of the congress, when Kim's previous declaration of a hostile "two-state" system on the Korean Peninsula could be added to the party constitution, analysts said.

INSIDE STARBUCKS' SUPPLY STRUGGLES

AI glitches, scattered suppliers, sandwich shortages

New York, Jan 28: Four Starbucks CEOs over five years have blamed lost sales on its struggle to keep its thousands of US stores reliably stocked with coffeehouse essentials like milk, pastries, and cup lids.

Current CEO Brian Niccol has made fixing the shortages a main measure of his turn-around campaign.

But shortages at Starbucks are a more deeply rooted problem than has been publicly reported. And Niccol's ongoing efforts to keep shelves stocked have so far met with limited success as he encounters out-dated technology and a splin-

tered network of suppliers, according to Reuters interviews with 10 current and former Starbucks corporate employees, including senior managers.

Reuters also reviewed online videos showing glitches in Starbucks' latest AI inventory technology, as well as previously unreported photographs provided by baristas of excessive shipments.

"We've been transparent about the opportunities in our supply chain, and our transformation plans. We're modernizing systems with AI-ready platforms, strengthening demand forecasting, and making our distribution network more agile so the right products reach



the right coffeehouses each day. This work is already improving reliability for our partners and customers," Starbucks said in a statement.

Supply chain experts say one of the most critical measures of a supply chain's reliability is how often delivery trucks arrive at the right time and

AI-powered tool miscounts inventory-workers

Outdated systems limit Starbucks' ability to manage inventory

CEO Niccol has blamed product shortages for lost sales

Starbucks said shortages are improving

with the full amount of products. The goal is 95% or more, said Douglas Kent, executive vice president of the nonprofit Association for Supply Chain Management, and rates less than that indicate dysfunction.

In early 2024, less than a third of truck deliveries to Starbucks' distribution centers - compa-

ny facilities that supply stores - were unloaded on time and included the full amount of the milks, pastries and other products, according to two former employees with direct knowledge of the company's supply chain. Employees involved in logistics blamed Starbucks' failure to coordinate its many suppliers. Issues continued into at least late 2025, said two former employees who left around that time.

Starbucks' share price is up about 5% since Niccol took over in September 2024, outperforming a 1% increase in Reuters' US Restaurant Index but underperforming a 26% gain in the S&P 500 Index.

ISSF “B” Coaches course concludes successfully with 55 coaches graduating



New Delhi, Jan 28 (TSIT) The five-day International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) “B” Coaches Course, conducted under the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) Education Program, concluded successfully here on Wednesday, marking another significant step in strengthening India’s coaching ecosystem in the sport of Shooting. A total of 55 coaches were awarded diplomas on the final day, having successfully completed the intensive certification programme. After a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the ISSF Academy, who have newly developed these courses, and the NRAI last year, it was the first time such a course was conducted in India and

indeed anywhere in the world at this scale. Led by Dr. Vesa Nissinen, Director, ISSF Academy and President of the Finnish Shooting Federation, the course brought together a diverse faculty of international and Indian experts, offering a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary learning experience. The program focused on advancing professional coaching practices, extending well beyond technical instruction to include athlete management, physical preparation, and long-term performance development. The instructional team featured two-time Olympian and former India international rifle shooter Sanjeev Rajput, who led sessions on rifle shooting techniques, while

Agathi Kassoumi and Vidhya Jadhav conducted modules on pistol shooting techniques. Davide Secondi of Italy, the current national coach of Saudi Arabia, delivered specialized instruction in shotgun shooting techniques. Sayali Manjrekar addressed the critical role of physiotherapy within a shooting team, and Vijendra Pal Singh conducted sessions on physical testing protocols for shooters in high-performance environments. Speaking at the graduation ceremony, NRAI Secretary General Pawan Kumar Singh highlighted the long-term significance of the program, stating, “The successful completion of this ISSF ‘B’ Coaches Course is a major milestone for Indian shooting. Our objective through the NRAI

Education Program is to build a strong, knowledgeable, and ethically grounded coaching base that can support athletes across all levels. With 55 newly certified coaches, we are adding quality and depth to the system, which will directly impact athlete development in the years to come.” ISSF Academy Director Dr. Vesa Nissinen expressed his satisfaction with the response and engagement from the participants, saying, “The level of commitment and curiosity shown by the coaches during this course has been outstanding. This program is designed to prepare coaches for a much broader professional role, creating structured training environments, understanding athlete psychology, physical preparation, and working effectively with support teams. India has immense potential, and programs like this lay a strong foundation for future international success.” The conclusion of the course further reinforces the NRAI’s vision of becoming a global hub for ISSF-certified coaches, officials, and technical experts, while aligning closely with the federation’s broader efforts to decentralize talent development and enhance coaching standards nationwide. The graduation ceremony brought the curtains down on a landmark initiative under the NRAI Education Program, setting the stage for future collaborations with the ISSF Academy and continued capacity-building within Indian shooting.

Novak Djokovic advances to the Australian Open semifinals after Musetti retires with injury



MELBOURNE: Novak Djokovic was the first to admit he’s lucky to be back in the Australian Open semifinals instead of Lorenzo Musetti. Despite being two sets down, slowed by a serious blister on his foot and already thinking about his flight home, the 24-time major winner won Wednesday’s quarterfinal when fifth-seeded Musetti retired with an injury. Musetti took the first two sets 6-4, 6-3 but needed a medical timeout for treatment on his upper right leg after being broken in the third game of the third. The 23-year-old Italian played on for almost two games but couldn’t continue. After serving a double-fault in the fifth game to give Djokovic another breakpoint

chance, Musetti wiped a hand across his face, walked toward the net and removed his headband before exchanging a handshake and quick hug. Djokovic, who was leading the third set 3-1, will continue his bid for an 11th Australian title and a record 25th major but acknowledged he was lucky this time. He also said, it happens in tennis. “It happened to me a few times. But being in the quarters of a Grand Slam, two sets to love up and being in full control I mean, so unfortunate,” for Musetti, Djokovic said in an on-court TV interview. “He should have been a winner today.” Musetti was also forced to retire from the French Open semifinals last year with an injured left leg

after taking a set from eventual champion Carlos Alcaraz. “I feel really sorry for him,” the 38-year-old Djokovic said. “He was a far better player I was on my way home tonight.” In the first set, Djokovic tried to go out hard. He took an early break and was just a point away from a 3-0 lead before Musetti responded and took control of the match. The situation appeared to get more dire for Djokovic when he needed a medical timeout after the second set for a serious blister on the ball of his right foot. “I tried my best yes. A blister here and there. I just wasn’t feeling the ball today due to his quality, and his variety in the game,” he said. “I’m extremely lucky.”

But in tennis, no player takes any victory for granted. Just a few days ago, Djokovic received a walkover into the quarterfinals when Jakub Mensik withdrew 24 hours ahead of their scheduled fourth-round match with an abdominal injury. Djokovic has seen it from the other side. None more dramatic than here last year when he had to quit the Australian Open semifinals with a torn leg muscle. He was booed off the court when he retired immediately after dropping the first set against Alexander Zverev. Djokovic will next face the winner of Wednesday’s later quarterfinal between No. 8 Ben Shelton and two-time defending Australian Open champion Jannik Sinner.

Merchants and Bankers Golf tournament set for tee off



CHENNAI (TSIT): The 19th edition of the prestigious Merchants and Bankers Golf Tournament is set to take place at the Cosmo TNGF Golf Course on Friday, January 30. To be played in the Stableford format, the tournament is a test of both skill and mental fortitude, adding to the appeal of the sport. Hosted by the Rotary Club of Madras (RCM), itself a couple of years shy of marking its hundred years pres-

ence in the city, the invitational tournament has attracted entries from over 25 top notch corporate entities, as well from business leaders, industrialists and others invested in the development of society on all fronts, said Sriya Chari, Golf Chair, RCM. Presented by one of the city’s leading multispecialty hospitals MIOT, the big ticket event has attracted various other sponsors, including the Murugappa group and MRF. BGR, Globelink, Taj Sky View, Apexon, Peruvemba, Polyhose, Anand Rath, Chola, Omega Health Care, Eume and To be played in the Stableford format, the tournament is a test of both skill and mental fortitude.

I don't see Varun struggling with dew during World Cup: Anil Kumble

NEW DELHI: The legendary Anil Kumble has backed leg-spinner Varun Chakravarthy to spearhead India’s spin attack during next month’s T20 World Cup as he believes he will have no issue dealing with the evening dew that could be more troublesome for a wrist spinner like Kuldeep Yadav. The T20 showpiece is scheduled to be held from February 7 to March 8 in venues across India and Sri Lanka. Speaking on JioHotstar, Kumble said dew is certainly going to play its part in the tournament. “...especially during the time of the World Cup in February



and March, with matches being played late in the evening. It’s not going to be easy. As spinners, you tend to get used to bowling with a wet ball; it’s nothing new.” However, one aspect that India can certainly take comfort from is that I don’t think it affects some-

one like Varun Chakravarthy because of the grip he has on the ball and the pace at which he bowls. “India’s spin trio of Varun, Kuldeep Yadav and Axar Patel have been consistently doing well in recent months, but Kumble identified the

Tamil Nadu man as the biggest plus among the tweakers. “I don’t think dew will bother him (Varun) that much. Yes, it’s not the same as bowling with a dry ball, of course, but with a wet ball, I don’t see Varun struggling too much. “Similarly, Axar Patel should also be fine. The one person who might find it a bit more difficult is Kuldeep Yadav with a wet ball because of his bowling style. Having said that, Kuldeep is also used to bowling in these conditions.” Due to their bowling style, wrist spinners are likely to find it more difficult to grip a wet ball.

Oram clueless about how to contain Indian batting

VISAKHAPATNAM: The sustained aggression of Abhishek Sharma, Ishan Kishan and Suryakumar Yadav has made it difficult for New Zealand bowlers to “remain calm” in the ongoing T20I series, but bowling coach Jacob Oram urged them to embrace the challenge and learn how to negate it. The three Indian top-order batters have put the New Zealand attack through the wringer, scoring consistently at a strike-rate of near 250 in the previous three T20Is. “It’s been a little bit of chaos out in the middle with the ball flying everywhere, to remain calm and controlled and remember those plans and then obviously execute them. But I say again, it’s all part of the learning,” said Oram during the pre-match press conference here. The clean-hitting of Indian batters reminded Oram of Sri Lankan great Sanath Jayasuriya, who batted in similar manner from the 90s to mid 2000s. “Jayasuriya from Sri

Lanka who kind of did the same thing at that time and I think that’s just a natural progression of the game. I think what you see is the tendency for bowlers to have to catch up and that’s our challenge now as the bowling coach and there are plenty of discussions happening.” But neutralising three batters in prime form has been a huge challenge for the Kiwi bowlers. “Abhishek at the moment ... outstanding form, hitting it clean, let’s just hope game two is reproduced in game four and we get him out early. We’re not glazing over these results. “But the thing is he’s (Abhishek) not the only one, Suryakumar has played well, Ishan Kishan in the second game. We know there are challenges up and down the (Indian batting) line-up,” said Oram. Oram’s words found a reflection in pacer Lockie Ferguson, who bowled extensively at nets here ahead of the fourth T20I on Wednesday.



U-19 World Cup: India inflict 204-run defeat on Zimbabwe in Super Six

BULAWAYO: Young middle-order batter Vihaan Malhotra showed admirable composure to rediscover his touch and compile a fine century, while Abhigyan Kundu extended his sublime run of form as India stormed to a commanding 204-run victory over Zimbabwe in their opening Super Six match of the U-19 World Cup here on Tuesday. India, after an all-win group-stage campaign in which they emphatically defeated the USA, Bangladesh, and New Zealand, continued their aggressive brand of cricket to pile up a mammoth 352 for 8. The innings was anchored by Malhotra’s cautious yet confident unbeaten 109 (107 balls, 7x4) while Kundu chipped in with a fluent 61 (62 balls, 5x4, 1x6), as the hapless Zimbabwe bowlers were taken apart with alarming ease.

India’s pace-bowling duo didn’t let up, as RS Ambrish (2/19) and Henil Patel (1/25) bowled the first nine overs in tandem to completely overwhelm the Zimbabwean batters, reducing them to 24 for 3 by the ninth over. Zimbabwe were eventually bundled out for 148 in 37.4 overs, giving India a superb start to their Super Six campaign. India now have six points and are on top of Group 2 of the Super Six. India carried four points into the Super Six, having beaten New Zealand and Bangladesh, the other teams to have qualified. Since USA didn’t qualify, India’s points weren’t carried over. Skipper Ayush Mhatre (3/14) bowled his part-time off-breaks to run through the late-order, completing the annihilation, while left-arm seamer Udhav Mohan also chipped in with three wickets.



India’s dominance was evident as they brought up their first 100 in just 62 balls, with batting prodigy Vaibhav Suryavanshi leading the charge. He piled on the runs with remarkable ease at the top, smashing a 52 off 30 balls, an innings studded with four boundaries and an equal number of sixes.

India did hit a minor roadblock in the 11th over, losing Mhatre (21) and Suryavanshi in quick succession to slide to 101 for 3. The setback, though, barely dented the momentum, with Malhotra and wicket-keeper-batter Kundu batting with composure and resolve to steady the innings. Malhotra brought

up his century off 104 deliveries as India continued to plunder runs. Zimbabwe’s persistence with the profligate pacer Nigel Mazai proved costly, with the bowler conceding 86 runs from his eight overs, effectively giving the opposition a licence to score freely. Zimbabwe threw as many as eight bowlers at the

Indian batters, but to little effect, as left-handers Malhotra and Kundu rotated the strike efficiently to add a 113-run partnership for the fifth wicket. The stand lifted India from a modest 130 for 4 to a commanding 243 for 5 by the 36th over. Kundu’s consistency was once again on display as he brought up his second half-century in three innings. The left-hander had earlier smashed 80 against Bangladesh, while he was not required to bat in the last group match against New Zealand after the target was chased down before his turn. He had also remained unbeaten on 42 against the USA in the tournament opener. Malhotra’s return to form will be heartening for India, as it provides the team with a reliable middle-order batter – an area that proved to be a lacuna during the group stage.



Suhas’ entertainer Hey Bhagavan teaser unveiled, film to release on Feb 20

The teaser of hero Suhas’ upcoming film Hey Bhagavan, touted as an out-and-out entertainer, was released on Wednesday. The film is slated for a worldwide theatrical release on February 20. Presented by Bunny Vaas and Vamsi Nandipati under the banners of Nandipati Entertainments and Bunny Vaas Works, the film stars versatile actor Suhas in the lead role, with Little Hearts fame Shivani Nagaram as the heroine. Senior actor Naresh plays a key role, while anchor Sravanthi Chokkarapu will be seen in an important character. The film is directed by Gopi Acharya and produced by B. Narendra Reddy under the Trishul Visionary Studios banner. Speaking at the teaser launch event, Suhas said his character in Hey Bhagavan is completely different from his earlier films and promises pure entertainment. He expressed confidence

that the film would be one of the best in his career. Producer Narendra Reddy described the project as a crucial milestone, while Vamsi Nandipati said audiences would witness a new side of Suhas and strong entertainment value. Director Gopi Acharya thanked the team and expressed confidence in the film’s success. The teaser has received a positive response, building strong anticipation ahead of its February 20 release.

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Mithun created magic with his music. If you liked the Heartbeat of Shabara, please share it and support it so it reaches everyone.” Director Prem Chand Kilaru said, “HeartBeat of Shabara has received a good response. The shooting is not yet complete. We will come before the audience soon. My father is more than God to me. If I am making a film facing him then you can understand what kind of film I am making. Thanks to Dheekshithh for supporting me in this journey. Mithun has given excellent music. I will continue my journey with him from now on. Ajay Abraham George’s name will be

heard more in the future. The film itself will speak. Doing what you like is life.” Kriitika Singh said, “Without Prem Chand, Shabara would not have turned out this great. Thanks to him for trusting me and giving me such a good role. Heartbeat of Shabara is receiving a good response. This is just the beginning. We will come before the audience with much more content in the future.”



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Director Yadhu Vamsee announces open casting call for new Telugu film

Filmmaker Yadhu Vamsee, who made a strong impression with his debut film Committee Kurrullu, has announced an open casting call to discover a young female actor for his upcoming Telugu project. The initiative aims to identify fresh talent aged between 18 and 25 years, offering aspiring performers an opportunity to enter Telugu cinema through a merit-based and performance-driven process. Yadhu Vamsee’s Committee Kurrullu earned critical acclaim for its rooted storytelling, social relevance and emotional depth. The film received top honours at the Gaddar Telangana Film Awards, international recognition at the Gulf Academy Movie Awards (GAMA) in Dubai, and a nomination for Best Debut Director of Indian Feature Film at the 56th International Film

Festival of India (IFFI), establishing the director as a promising new voice in Telugu cinema. With the new casting call, the director is looking for an “ — a young woman who reflects cultural rootedness, confidence and expressive ability. The focus, he said, is on emotional depth and natural performance rather than glamour or prior industry exposure. Aspiring candidates can submit their audition videos via email at yadhuvamseeYV2@gmail.com or through WhatsApp at 8639164104. The casting process is currently open, and entries are being reviewed on an ongoing basis. Backed by Pink Elephant Pictures, the initiative reflects a commitment to nurturing new talent and strengthening content-driven Telugu cinema, offering a meaningful platform for fresh voices to begin their cinematic journey



Buchibabu Sana releases trailer of Shri Chidambaram Garu, film to hit screens on Feb 6

The trailer of the upcoming Telugu film Shri Chidambaram Garu was released by successful director Buchibabu Sana on Wednesday. The film is slated for a worldwide theatrical release on February 6. Directed by Vinay Ratnam, Shri Chidambaram Garu is produced by Chinta Vinisha Reddy and Chinta Gopala Krishna Reddy under the banner of Sri Chakras Entertainment and presented by Chinta

Varalakshmi. The film stars Vamsi Tummala and Sandhya Vasishtha in the lead roles. Earlier, the teaser of the film received an encouraging response, while the song Velledaarilo, sung by renowned music director MM Keeravani, also impressed audiences. Releasing the trailer, Buchibabu Sana, who is currently directing the pan-India film Peddi starring Mega Power Star Ram Charan, extended his best wishes to the film unit. The trailer suggests that Shri Chidambaram Garu is a feel-good emo-

tional love story with a meaningful social message, presented in a natural and relatable manner. Speaking on the occasion, the producer said the film has been made with a team of newcomers and carries a mature and inspirational message relevant to today’s society. Highlighting the issue of youth distress, he said the story aims to inspire people to turn their flaws into strengths and face life with confidence. He expressed hope that the film would both entertain and motivate audiences.

GOLLA RAMAVVA wins hearts of ETV Win audiences

Golla Ramavva, directed by Mullapudi Vara, is receiving an overwhelming response from audiences on ETV Win since its streaming began on January 25. The film, a powerful cinematic adaptation of the Telangana Armed Struggle written by former Prime Minister late P. V. Narasimha Rao, has been widely appreciated for its gripping narrative and emotional depth. The film is jointly produced by Ram Vishwas Hanurkar and Raghavendra Varma (Bujji) under the banners of Sucheta Dream Works Production and Varma Dream Creations. Azhar Shaikh served as Executive Producer and also contributed lyrics to the project. Notably, the same team earlier delivered Mouname Nee Bhasha for ETV Win, but Golla Ramavva has reportedly received nearly double the response, marking a significant achievement. Veteran actress Talluri Rameshwari, fondly known as “Telugu Sita Malakshmi,” has been praised for her powerful portrayal in the title role. The film also features Allu Geetha, Anvith and Mani Manthena in key roles. Expressing his happiness over the film’s success, director Mullapudi Vara thanked the producers and everyone who supported the project. He also extended special gratitude to P. V. Prabhakar Rao and Surabhi Vanidevi, son and daughter of late P. V. Narasimha Rao, for their encouragement. The technical team includes music by Sai Madhukar, cinematography by Gangamoni Shekhar, editing by Raghavendra Varma, adaptation by Bayyavarapu Ravi, and PRO services by Dheeraj-Appaji.



Shruti’s FL from Aakasamlo Oka Tara released

The makers of director Pavan Sadineni’s upcoming film ‘Aakasamlo Oka Tara’, featuring actors Dulquer Salmaan and Satvika Veeravalli in the lead, on Wednesday unveiled the look of actress Shruti Haasan in the film on the occasion of the actress’ birthday. Taking to its X timeline, well known production house Geetha Arts, which is presenting the film, shared the first look posters of the actress and wrote, “A trailblazer in every sense.... Team AakasamLoOkaTara wishes @shrutihaasan a very Happy Birthday. And Meet a character that stands her ground and owns her space.” Directed by Pavan Sadineni, who is known for his inventive storytelling and distinct visual style, the film is being presented by the prestigious Geetha Arts and Swapna Cinema. ‘Aakasamlo Oka Tara’ is being produced by Sandeep Gunnam and Ramya Gunnam. Newcomer Satvika Veeravalli plays the female lead opposite

Dulquer in this film in which Shruti Haasan will be playing a pivotal role. In the first look posters that were unveiled on Wednesday, Shruti sports an intense, unvarnished look, with glasses framing a steady, downward gaze that reflects quiet intensity. The cigarette in her lips and the drifting smoke add a gritty layer to her character, hinting at emotional depth. Sources say Shruti Haasan’s character is going to play a decisive role in the film’s narrative arc, with her entry steering the story into a new phase. Her mere appearance suggests her to be a force who brings sharp dimension and weight to the drama. The film boasts of a strong technical team with GV Prakash Kumar scoring its music, Sujith Sarang handling its cinematography and Shwetha Sabu Cyril overseeing production design. Currently in its final phase of production, ‘Aakasamlo Oka Tara’ is slated for a Pan-India release in Telugu, Tamil, Hindi, and Malayalam in the summer of 2026.

