

People reject Congress' negative politics; BJP emerges as first choice: PM Modi

Kaliabar, Jan 18 (UNI) Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday sounded the poll bugle in Assam, attacking the Congress party and asserting that the country has consistently rejected its "negative politics" due to its failure to present a clear development agenda.

Mentioning the BJP's recent electoral victories in Bihar and the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), Modi said that the BJP has become the first choice of the people of the country.

"The trust of the people on BJP has been on the rise continuously for the last one and a half years. In Bihar, people have given us a record mandate by giving a record number of seats. In the BMC election two days back, the people of Mumbai have expressed their trust in the BJP for the first time," PM Modi



said while addressing the gathering in Nagaon.

The Prime Minister was speaking at a large public gathering in Nagaon after laying the foundation stone of the Kaziranga elevated corridor project at Kaliabar in Assam

Modi said public trust in the BJP has been steadily increasing over the past year and a half. "In Bihar, people gave us a record mandate with a historic number of seats. Just two days ago, in the BMC elections, the people of

Mumbai expressed their trust in the BJP for the first time," he said.

He added that the party has also made significant inroads in Kerala. "For the first time, the BJP has a mayor in Kerala," Modi said, adding that recent election results reflect a clear public demand for good governance and development.

"There are other aspects to these election results. People have also continuously rejected the negative politics of the Congress. The Congress party has reduced to a mere fourth or fifth political party in Mumbai, where the party was born. The party is getting wiped out from Mumbai, where it has ruled for so many years," Modi said, adding that the Congress has lost the trust of the country because it does not have a development agenda.



The Union Minister for Defence, Shri Rajnath Singh in a group photograph during the inauguration of Medium Caliber Ammunition Manufacturing Facility at Solar Defence & Aerospace Limited in Nagpur.....

Union minister launches open-sea marine fish farming project in Andamans

Sri Vijaya Puram: Union minister Jitendra Singh on Sunday launched the country's first-ever open-sea marine fish farming project in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Singh travelled by boat for nearly an hour from here to reach North Bay and inaugurated the project around 10.30 am.

A senior official of the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT) said seabass and cobia are being reared in open-sea cages, along with experimental seaweed cultivation.

Seabass and cobia are both highly valued, firm, white-fleshed fish prized for their rich flavour. The minister described the project as one of the first major steps to boost India's blue economy. The project is being implemented through collaboration between the Ministry of Earth Sciences, NIOT and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands administration. The pilot initiative focuses on open-sea cultivation of marine finfish and seaweed in natural ocean conditions, integrating scientific innovation with livelihood generation.



Speaking on the occasion, Singh said India's oceans, much like its Himalayan and mainland resources, possess immense and diverse economic potential that has not received due attention for decades.

The minister stated that for nearly 70 years after Independence, ocean resources remained largely underexplored. He

underlined that since 2014, there has been a fundamental shift in national thinking, recognising that India's maritime domain holds equal wealth and opportunity for economic growth. Around 11 am, Singh, the Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology and Earth Sciences, and Minister of State for the

PMO, visited Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Island, formerly known as Ross Island, which is about a 20-30 minute boat journey from Sri Vijaya Puram. Ross Island, once the administrative base of the British penal colony, was renamed Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Island by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on December 30, 2018, as a

tribute to the freedom fighter. During his one-and-a-half-hour visit, Singh toured several historical sites, including the Japanese Bunker built during World War II and the Smritika Museum, established by the Indian Navy in 1993.

He also visited heritage structures such as the Farzand Ali Market, Power House, Bakery, Secretariat, Subordinate Club, Church, Chief Commissioner's Bungalow, Troops Barrack and the Gun Point area on the island.

A senior official of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation Limited (ANIIDCO) briefed him about the proposed development of a national memorial at Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Island.

According to officials, the proposed memorial will include a museum-cum-interpretation centre, a cable car ropeway, laser and sound show, a guided heritage trail through historic buildings, a theme-based children's amusement park, and food and resto-lounge facilities.

Intentions misunderstood: Rahman defends his music, vows to uplift

New Delhi, Jan 18 (UNI) Responding to the backlash over his recent remarks on the Hindi film industry, Oscar-winning composer A R Rahman on Sunday released a video message on Instagram, stressing that music has always been his way of connecting with, honouring, and celebrating India's diverse cultural heritage.

In the video, Rahman said India remains his inspiration, teacher, and home. "I understand that intentions can sometimes be misunderstood, but my purpose has always been to uplift, honour, and serve through music. I have never wished to cause pain, and I hope my sincerity is felt."

"I feel blessed to be Indian, which enables me to create a space that always allows freedom of expression and celebrates multicultural voices," he added.

The composer highlighted several of his recent projects, including nurturing Jala, presented at the Wave Summit before the Prime Minister, collaborating with young Naga musicians to form a string orchestra, mentoring the Sunshine Orchestra, building Secret Mountain, described as India's first multicultural virtual band, and scoring Ramayana alongside Hans Zimmer.

He said, "Each journey has strengthened my purpose. I remain grateful to



this nation and committed to music that honours the past, celebrates the present, and inspires the future. Jai Hind and Jai Bharat."

Rahman's video comes amid discussions triggered by his comments during a recent interaction with the BBC Asian Network, where he spoke about his relative absence from Hindi cinema in recent years. He had attributed it to a "power shift" in the industry, suggesting that decision-making had moved into the hands of people who were "not creative".

Rahman also said, "It might be a communal thing also, but it is not in my face. It comes to me as Chinese whispers that they booked you, but the music company went ahead and hired their five composers. I said, 'Oh, that's great, rest for me, I can chill out with my family.'" Following these remarks, actor and BJP

MP Kangana Ranaut posted a series of statements on Instagram criticising Rahman. Addressing the composer directly, she wrote, "Dear A R Rahman ji, I face so much prejudice and partiality in the film industry because I support a saffron party, yet I must say I have not come across a man more prejudiced and hateful than you."

Referring to his reported refusal to associate with her film Emergency, Ranaut added, "I was told you don't want to be a part of a propaganda film, you are blinded by your hate." In another post, Ranaut alleged discrimination by designers and industry colleagues, saying, "Leftists are blinded by their hate and prejudice and the young generation must be very cautious of them." She also claimed she felt "humiliated and degraded" over past professional experiences, accusing certain industry figures of hypocrisy.

3 soldiers injured in encounter with terrorists in J-K's Kishtwar



Jammu (TSIT) Three soldiers were injured in a gunfight with terrorists in a remote forested area in the upper reaches of Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar district on Sunday, officials said. Reinforcements have been deployed to neutralise the terrorists. The operation, which the Army's Jammu-based White Knight Corps has named 'Operation Trashi-I', began around noon, they said.

In a post on X, the White Knight Corps said the security forces came in

contact with the terrorists in the general area Sonnar, northeast of Chatroo, during a deliberate search operation conducted as part of ongoing joint counter-terror exercises with Jammu and Kashmir Police. "Operations remain under way with additional forces inducted to reinforce the cordon, supported by close coordination with civil administration and security agencies," the Army said, commending the troops for their exceptional professionalism and resolve while

responding to hostile fire under challenging terrain and conditions.

According to the officials, one of the search teams came across a group of two to three foreign terrorists allegedly belonging to Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad, who fired indiscriminately and also lobbed a few grenades in an attempt to break the cordon.

The troops retaliated and reinforcements from Army, Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and police were rushed to further tighten the cordon. There was intermittent firing between the two sides for some time, the officials said. Three soldiers suffered splinter injuries and were subsequently evacuated to the hospital. A massive search operation is on to track and neutralise the terrorists, they added.

Advanced surveillance equipment, including drones, and sniffer dogs have been deployed to speed up the operation.

Cold cases purge: After 5 decades, Mumbai court shuts Rs 7.65 theft case

Mumbai: Nearly 50 years after the theft of Rs 7.65, a Mumbai court has finally dropped the curtain on a 1977 cold case involving two unidentified accused and a complainant who remained untraceable despite decades of police searches.

The ruling is one of the many recent verdicts in decades-old cases that have remained in the cold storage, clogging the legal system. The Mazagaon court closed the 1977 case as part of its endeavour to dispose of old cases, where the accused have either died, remained unidentified or untraceable.

The 1977 theft case involved two unidentified men accused of stealing Rs 7.65, a significant sum five decades ago. However, the duo could not be traced despite non-bailable warrants, which put the matter into cold storage.

Judicial Magistrate First Class (Mazagaon court) Aarti Kulkarni, on January 14, closed the

case, noting that the matter was nearly 50 years old and had remained "pending unnecessarily without progress".

"More than sufficient time is taken. There is no point in keeping the matter pending," the court said in its order.

It discharged the two accused booked under Section 379 (theft) of the Indian Penal Code, and directed that the stolen sum of Rs 7.65 be returned to the complainant.

"If the informant isn't found, the amount will be deposited into the government account following the appeal period," the court stated in the order.

It held that since the stolen amount was under Rs 2,000, the case was classified to be tried summarily under Section 260 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), which allows for "summary trials" for minor offences, including thefts where the value of the property is small, to ensure swift justice.



The Union Minister of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), Shri Jitan Ram Manjhi and the Minister of State for Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises and Labour & Employment, Sushri Shobha Karandlaje at the inauguration of PM Vishwakarma Haat 2026 at Dilli Haat, INA, in New Delhi...

ADIGAS YATRA CELEBRATES 32 YEARS WITH GRAND LOGO LAUNCH, MARKS NEW ERA IN TRAVEL SERVICES



Bengaluru : Adigas Yatra, one of Karnataka's most trusted and respected travel and tourism brands, successfully celebrated its 32nd Anniversary with the grand unveiling of its new logo at a programme held at FKCCI Auditorium, K.G. Road, Bengaluru. The occasion marked a vibrant milestone in the journey of the organisation, reflecting three decades of dedication to excellence in tourism services.

The celebrations were graced by Sri Basavaraj Horatti, Hon'ble Chairperson, Karnataka Legislative Council, as the Chief Guest, lending prestige and prominence to the event. The programme also saw the distinguished presence of Panchamasali Jagadguru Sri

Vachananda Mahaswamiji of Harihar, Sri Vishweshwar Bhat, Editor, Pravasiaprancha Magazine, Sri K. Radhakrishna Holla, President, Karnataka State Tourism Organisation (KSTOA), Sri M. Srinivasan, Chairman, Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation (KSTDC), and renowned actress and classical dancer Kumari Aditi Prabhudeva, who added elegance and grace to the proceedings. Founded and led by Sri Nagaraj Adiga, Founder, Adigas Yatra has grown over the past three decades into a prominent name in organised tourism, pilgrimage tours, and customised travel services. The 32nd anniversary and new logo launch reflect the organisation's for-

ward-looking vision, modern outlook, and continued commitment to innovation, trust, service, and customer satisfaction.

The event featured the felicitation of dignitaries, the official unveiling of the new logo, and a special address by Sri Nagaraj Adiga, highlighting Adigas Yatra's remarkable 32-year journey, notable achievements, and roadmap for the future. Speaking on the occasion, Sri Nagaraj Adiga said

"Our 32-year journey is a reflection of ethical business practices, customer trust, and excellence in tourism services. The new logo marks the beginning of a fresh and vibrant chapter in Adigas Yatra's growth story." In addition to its extensive travel services, With a strong foundation of experience, trust, and innovation, Adigas Yatra continues to redefine travel experiences for thousands of satisfied customers across Karnataka and beyond, ushering in a new era of modern, reliable, and customer-centric travel services.

Gali Janardhan Reddy should immediately apologize, otherwise, appropriate action will be taken: S Manohar

Bengaluru: MEI President and KPCC Secretary S. Manohar has warned that, Former minister Gali Janardhan Reddy, who insulted KPCC President and Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, should immediately apologize publicly. Otherwise, the Congress party will not hesitate to take appropriate action and legal action within the legal framework,". Speaking at a protest in front of the residence of former minister Gali Janardhan Reddy on Race Course Road in Bengaluru, he said that the words used against DK Shivakumar are unconstitutional and against democratic values.He alleged that the language used by the former minister at a conference held at APMC Ground in Ballari on Saturday was completely against the etiquette of public life and legal responsibility, and that it was not only a personal defamation but also a serious crime of disrespecting the people's representatives.Using such vulgar and abusive language against leaders holding constitutional posts like Deputy Chief Ministers is legally punishable. If former minister Gali Janardhan Reddy is truly courageous,he should debate with loyal Congress workers within the ambit of the Constitution and the law. "The Congress party will never tolerate any attempt to gain political advantage by using derogatory language," he said.Congress party media spokespersons Anand Kumar M.S., M.A. Salim, Hemraju, Umesh, Puttaraju, Youth Congress President Samuel, Naveen, Kishore Arun and Congress party workers participated in this protest.



Anil Shetty makes lead actor debut with AI social thriller Lambodhara 2.0

Bengaluru: Actor Anil Shetty is set to make his debut as a lead actor with the upcoming AI-based social thriller Lambodhara 2.0, to be directed by acclaimed filmmaker Simple Suni. Bollywood actress Saachi Bindra has been signed as the female lead in the film, which is being produced under the MASS Production banner.

Lambodhara 2.0 explores contemporary themes revolving around artificial intelligence, youth, and the rapidly evolving digital ecosystem. The makers describe the film as a socially relevant, high-concept thriller that reflects the realities of today's digitally connected generation.

The film's muhurta ceremony was recently held at the ISKCON Temple in the presence of the cast and crew. Principal photography is scheduled to begin later this month, while director Simple Suni is currently engaged in pre-production.

Speaking about the project, Simple Suni said the story is inspired by the lives of present-day youth



in the digital age. He explained that the film follows the journey of a young man from Bengaluru and gradually unfolds the conflict between the real world and the digital world.

Sharing her excitement, Saachi Bindra said the film's emotional depth and relevance to modern digital life attracted her to the project. She added that working with Simple Suni and sharing screen space with Anil Shetty made the experience special.The makers also revealed that

discussions are underway with a prominent Bollywood actor for a key role. Popular influencer Mac Macha has joined the cast in a comedian's role.

The technical team includes music director Veer Samarth, cinematographer Santosh Rai Pathaje, and production designer Ullas Hydoor. Written by Anil Shetty and Abhijit Mahesh, Lambodhara 2.0 aims to deliver a thought-provoking cinematic experience rooted in current social realities.

Religious extremism threatens global peace: MP Basavaraj Bommai

Gadag (Mundaragi): Former Chief Minister and Member of Parliament Basavaraj Bommai on Saturday expressed deep concern over the rise of extremism in the name of religion, warning that such ideologies pose a serious threat to global peace.

Addressing the centenary celebrations of Sri Jagadguru Annadaneshwara Vidya Samiti in Mundaragi town of Gadag district, Bommai questioned the logic behind glorifying violence through faith. "If people are told that fighting in the name of God will take them to heaven, then where will peace come from?" he asked, adding that terrorism carried out in the name of God and religion is deeply alarming and often goes beyond anyone's control once unleashed.

Bommai said faith is essential to human life, but blind faith can be dangerous. He stressed the need to balance belief with reason, stating that faith guided by rational thinking becomes spiri-



tuality, while logical questioning leads to knowledge. Human intellect, he said, is meant to distinguish truth from falsehood.

Referring to miracles, Bommai urged people to recognise the wonders of everyday life. He cited examples such as a single seed yielding hundreds of grains, a drop of rain turning into a river, and the birth and growth of a child, describing them as real miracles that reflect the greatness of creation and human life.

Emphasising the importance of knowledge and conscience, Bommai said science, technology, and arti-

cial intelligence originate from knowledge, but warned that ethics, justice, and conscience are being increasingly ignored. He noted that education without moral values is meaningless and cautioned against ideologies that glorify violence in the name of religion.

Praising the Mundaragi Math for completing 100 years of service, Bommai called it a "kalpavriksha" for the region and highlighted the importance of the guru-shishya tradition. True education, he said, lies in learning humanity, adding that success has value only when it benefits society.

Psychological-thriller 'Vikalpa' trailer released
DIRECTOR JAYATEERTHA BACKS NEWCOMER'S FILM



Bengaluru : The trailer of 'Vikalpa', which has already caught the attention and attention of some moviegoers in Chandanavan with its title, teaser and songs, has been released. This is a psychological-thriller film based on the theme of 'Post Traumatic Stress Disorder' (PTSD), and 'Vikalpa' is being produced by Mrs. Indira Shivaswamy for the first time under the banner of 'Suroos Talkies'. Young talent Prithviraj Patil has written the story, screenplay and directed the film 'Vikalpa' and has also appeared in the lead role on screen. Nagashri Hebbar, Harini Srikanth, Sandhya Vinayak, Ganapathi Vaddinagadde, Swaroop Bach, Pooja Bach, Jayant David, Dr. Prakriti, Master Ayush Santosh, Girish Hegde etc. have appeared in other important roles in the film.

Mass cleanliness drive conducted on 15 major roads across six constituencies: Rajendra Cholan

Bengaluru: Commissioner of the Bengaluru Central City Corporation, Rajendra Cholan, on Saturday said that a large-scale cleanliness drive was carried out on 15 major roads across six Assembly constituencies under the Central City Corporation limits.

In the C.V. Raman Nagar constituency, within the limits of Wards 114 and 80, sanitation works were undertaken on Channasandra Main Road, Indiranagar 6th Main Road, 80 Feet Road, 12th Main Road, and Kasturinagar 2nd Main Road. In the Chickpet constituency, cleanliness activities were carried out on N.R. Road, Motinagar, and surrounding areas within Ward 119.

Similarly, in the Shantinagar constituency, cleaning works were conducted on Mother Teresa Road, M.G. Road, and nearby roads under Ward 111. In the Gandhinagar constituency, sanitation works were taken up from Shanthala Silk Signal to Cottonpet via Police Road in Cottonpet Ward 120. In Chamrajpet constituency, Chalavadi Palya Main Road and the Balekai Mandi premises were cleaned, while in Shivajinagar constituency, Church Road, M.M.



Road, and surrounding roads were covered.In view of the upcoming state-level Republic Day celebrations on January 26, the Manekshaw Parade Ground was also inspected by Chief Engineer Suguna and other officials. Preparatory works including ground leveling, water sprinkling to prevent dust, and cleaning are being carried out.During the drive, unauthorized flex boards and banners were removed, and dry branches and twigs at various locations, including Krishna Rao Park,

were cleared by the Forest Department. JCBs, lorries, tractors, and auto tippers were deployed to remove roadside waste, drain silt, encroachments, plastic waste, scrap materials, unusable furniture, dried branches, and unauthorized cable wires.Executive Engineers, DGMs, AGMs, Assistant Executive Engineers, officials from the Forest and Horticulture Departments, supervisors, gangmen, pourakarmikas, and auto tipper drivers actively participated in the cleanliness drive.

R. Ashok alleges Rs.2,500 crore bribery scam in Excise Department, seeks minister's resignation

Bengaluru : A bribery transaction worth Rs.2,500 crore has taken place in the Excise Department, and this money is being used for elections. Therefore, Minister R.B. Thimmapur should resign, demanded Opposition Leader R. Ashok.

Speaking at a press conference, he said that the government sets revenue collection targets for departments. However, in the Excise Department, licenses are being auctioned off. Excise Deputy Commissioner Jagadish Nayak was caught by Lokayukta police while accepting a bribe of Rs.25 lakh. CM Siddaramaiah is directly responsible for this. Congress leaders are using Mahatma Gandhi to oppose the VB G Ram Ji scheme and are holding sessions for it. The same government has drowned the entire state in addiction and destroyed Gandhi's ideals. In the backdrop of the Excise Department



scandal, if Minister R.B. Thimmapur does not resign, the Chief Minister himself must be considered responsible, he said.

A bribe of Rs.1.25 crore is fixed for CL-7. That means for 750 licenses, Rs.1,225 crore in bribes are being collected. For CL-2, Rs.1.5 crore is fixed, and for 650 licenses, Rs.925 crore in bribes are being collected. For CL-9, a total of Rs.92 crore in bribes are being collected. For

mini-brewery licenses, it amounts to Rs.2.5 crore. All together, it adds up to Rs.2,500 crore in bribes. This is being sent for the Assam elections. An audio related to this has also surfaced, in which it is mentioned that money should be given to the minister or his son. This is their love for Gandhi. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also said that the Excise Department's money is being used for the Maharashtra elec-

tions, he added.

In the Gruha Lakshmi scheme, Rs.5,000 crore, funds from Valmiki Corporation, and 600 crore worth of land at Kogilu Cross—BJP has exposed all these irregularities and saved the money. Now, we will take the fight against corruption in the Excise Department to its logical conclusion, he said.

Drug Mafia
When I spoke about the drug mafia in the session, Home Minister Dr. G. Parameshwara had replied that appropriate action has been taken. Yesterday, when CM Siddaramaiah held a meeting, he exposed the failures of the Police Department. Since Maharashtra police have come here, what are you doing? the CM questioned. There are 180 people involved in the drug mafia. Drug mafia operations are even happening in jails, and police are also involved. Because police stations have become Congress offices. Only if money is

paid, preferred postings are given, he said.

Congress leader Rajeev Gowda from Shidlaghatta has not been arrested yet. Even though I demanded action from the government on this, the police have not taken any steps. Now, in the Chief Minister's constituency Varuna, a female official in the village has been threatened with death. Similarly, there are problems in all districts. Congress MLAs and goons are threatening officials. The government needs to provide protection to officials. The Chief Minister has lost grip on administration. This government is in a paralyzed state, he said. Minister Zameer has said that they would even accept Beedi Dasayya as CM. Ministers themselves speak lowly about the post where greats like Kengal Hanumanthaiah sat. That means there is no value for MLAs elected by the people, he said.

Karnataka to Showcase Execution Readiness at WEF Davos: M.B. Patil

Bengaluru: A delegation led by Minister for Large and Medium Industries M.B. Patil has departed for Davos to participate in the World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting 2026, to be held at Davos-Klostern from January 19 to 23.Ahead of the visit, Patil said the State's engagement at WEF Davos will be guided by an "execution-first" approach, with a strong emphasis on converting investment intent into on-ground implementation. During the four-day programme, the delegation will take part in over 45 high-level engagements, including bilateral meetings, roundtables and ecosystem interactions, aimed at accelerating investor decision-making and project grounding in Karnataka.

The delegation is scheduled to meet several global majors, including Amazon Web Services, Lenovo, Vast Space, Coca-Cola, Philip Morris, Imperial College London and the Singapore Economic Development Board, apart from multiple other international investors across manufacturing, renew-



able energy, electronics and ESDM, data centres and Global Capability Centres (GCCs).

Patil said discussions at Davos will focus on presenting Karnataka's strong value proposition and its preparedness to translate investments into reality. Key areas of engagement will include land readiness, statutory approvals, availability of utilities, sector-specific infrastructure, supply chain linkages, skilled talent, incentive frameworks and time-bound facilitation through the State's investor support mechanisms. "The State is prioritising real investments and their conversion. Our effort is to move investment intent swiftly

towards filings, approvals, land allotments and actual execution on the ground," the Minister said.As part of the Davos programme, the Karnataka delegation will also host a focused session titled 'Karnataka's Emerging Industry Advantage', highlighting investible opportunities across key sectors and the State's ability to support faster project commissioning, Patil added. The delegation includes Tushar Girinath, ACS, Urban Development department, S.Selvakumar, Principal Secretary, Industries Department, Manivannan, Commissioner, BDA, Gunjan Krishna, Commissioner, Industries Department, among other officials.

EDITORIAL

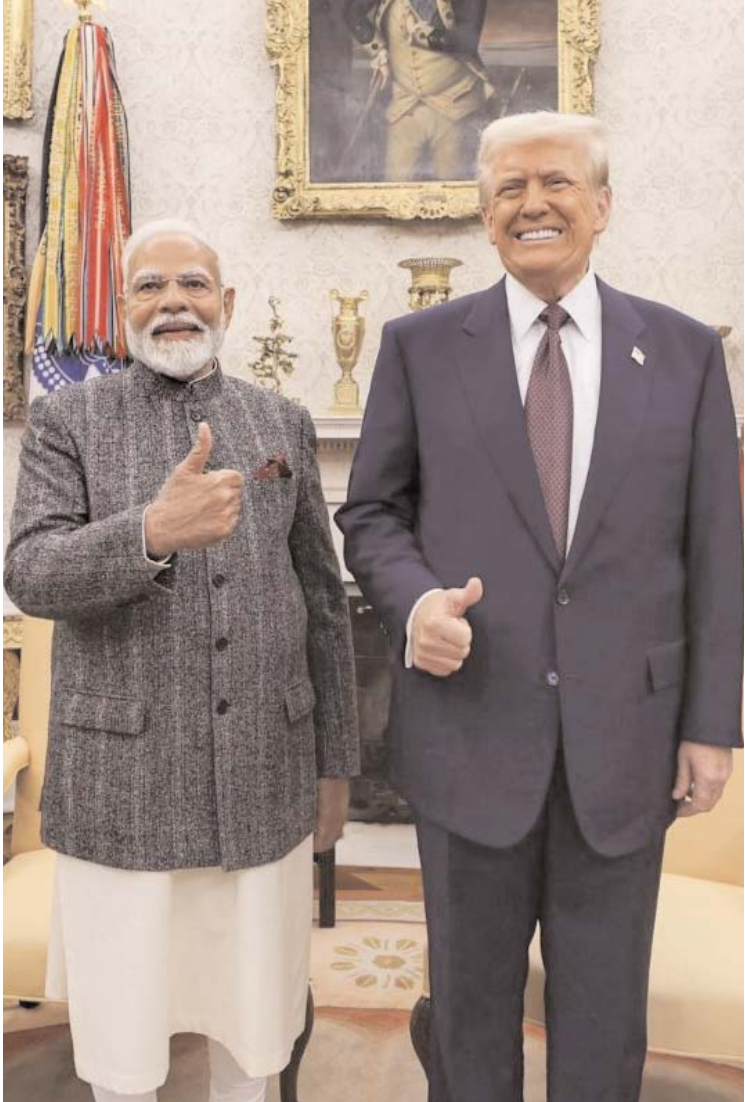
Elites Face a Legitimacy Challenge

As the World Economic Forum's (WEF) 56th Annual Meeting convenes in Davos from 19-23 January 2026 under the theme "A Spirit of Dialogue", a profound legitimacy crisis confronts the gathering itself. Nearly 3,000 leaders – predominantly from the ranks of the ultra-wealthy, corporate titans, heads of state and financial heavyweights – assemble in luxury to discuss escalating global perils. Yet the very structure of the forum, with its exorbitant membership fees and elite composition, widens the chasm between these "Davos Men" and the world's peoples. Critics have long denounced this as corporate capture of global governance, where the powerful network in the Alps while ordinary citizens grapple with the consequences of the systems they sustain. The WEF's own Global Risks Report 2026, informed by over 1,300 experts, starkly illustrates the fallout. It describes an emerging "Age of Competition" marked by fragmentation, where "societal polarisation" ranks fourth among immediate risks for 2026, selected by 7% of respondents, fuelled by deepening disillusionment with traditional governance. The report highlights "streets versus elites" narratives reflecting widespread exclusion from decision-making, eroding public trust and intensifying pressures on democratic systems. Inequality, interconnected with other risks and ranked seventh over two and ten years, exacerbates these divides as social mobility falters amid economic shocks and technological disruption. Half of respondents foresee a "turbulent" or "stormy" world over the next two years, a sharp rise, with longer-term fears centring on environmental collapse and further societal fragmentation. This legitimacy gap is widening globally through surging popular discontent. From youth-led uprisings in Bangladesh, Kenya, Madagascar, Nepal and Indonesia to sustained protests in Serbia, Georgia, France (farmers' actions) and nationwide demonstrations in Iran since late December 2025 against economic crisis and elite priorities, anti-establishment waves challenge entrenched power. Populist sentiments, framing divides between "ordinary citizens" and "political or economic elites", resonate across continents, amplified by social media, job displacement fears from AI and protectionism and unresolved crises. As trust in institutions plummets, systems built on elite consensus face declining faith, threatening democratic resilience and fuelling the very polarisation the report warns of. Donald Trump's first year in his second term has dramatically amplified this crisis. Since January 2025, his aggressive "America First" agenda – sweeping tariffs on China and allies, including threats against Canada, Mexico, the United Kingdom and Denmark over Greenland, deep cuts to foreign aid, with Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) estimates of 9-17% declines, retreats from UN climate commitments and transactional demands on North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) – has disrupted supply chains, downgraded International Monetary Fund (IMF) growth forecasts, nearly 1% lower in 2025-2026, and eroded global confidence in US leadership. Pew surveys show low trust in Trump's handling of world affairs in many nations. These unilateral moves hasten the unravelling of the post-1945 liberal order, leaving conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East unresolved while rivals such as China and Russia advance sovereignty-focused platforms via BRICS+. Trump's in-person return to Davos, leading the largest-ever US delegation, including Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, guarantees his disruptive policies dominate discussions, even as the Forum promotes dialogue to bridge divides. The irony is inescapable. Goeconomic confrontation tops the 2026 risks at 18% of respondents, followed by state-based armed conflict, extreme weather, polarisation and misinformation. Yet the gathering, dominated by beneficiaries of globalisation, tax structures and economic interdependence, has become a tragic annual ritual.

Edit

The Unintended Blessings of President Donald Trump

The Honourable Sergio Gor landed this week in India with the aplomb and cockiness befitting a Political Agent of yore. True to form, Modi establishment managers have felt constrained to fawn over a 39-year-old consigliere in the hope that he will restore some kind of warmth to a relationship that has gone cold. It is a different matter that the young man took his own time to assume his ambassadorial duties in New Delhi. The new envoy is no John Kenneth Galbraith nor is he a Chester Bowles or Daniel Patrick Moynihan. He is neither fascinated nor infatuated with a 'democratic India.' He is an unsentimental operative for a brutally unsentimental boss in the Oval Office. He knows that the warmth and the personal chemistry that we in India have attributed to the Trump-Modi 'huggy' relationship was a unilateral invention on our part; an invention conjured out of thin air, after spending colossal amounts of Indian taxpayer money, only to sustain the Modi personality cult at home. Our 'strategic community' – largely comprising retired and serving diplomats, television anchors and diplomatic correspondents – allowed themselves to be mesmerised by the razzle dazzle of those carefully planned spectacles on foreign soil. The Americans, on their part, remained unimpressed. The American who remains most unimpressed with Modi's image making jiu jitsu is none other than the President himself. Without perhaps wanting to do so, Trump has disrupted some of the key elements of the entire Narendra Modi project. In the process, quite a bit of unintended goodness has accrued to the Indian polity. Let us enumerate a few of the Trump-inflicted blessings. First, for many years now in India we have not been allowed to criticise – leave alone mock or ridicule – Narendra Modi. Anyone foolish enough to do so ran the risk of inviting a disproportionately coercive response from the authorities; and, the law, as understood and interpreted by the magistrate, invariably, rules against the citizen and in favour of the king. It has therefore been a bit of an incongruity to see Trump regularly chipping away at Modi's aura. The US president periodically mimics and mocks or otherwise mauls the dignity and stature of the Indian prime minister;



and, even the establishment-oriented media is forced to report the American president's verbal assault against Modi. He has reduced the prime minister to a Third World leader whose sensitivities and dilemmas are of no concern to Washington. Rather, Trump thinks he has been kind to the Indian PM because he does not want to destroy him politically. Never before has a foreign leader spoken, at least in public, so dismissively and so disparagingly about India's prime minister. Second, the recent downturn in US-India ties has brutally exposed the limits and usefulness of the Indian diaspora. The Modi prime ministerial project has been predicated on the presumed heft and clout of

the Indian diaspora, willingly and cheerfully available to advance his quest for global stature. It should be clear to one and all that the Indian diaspora has no interest nor inclination to risk their own status by intervening on behalf of a Naya Bharat. These successful American-Indians, especially the richest, have sorted out their divided loyalties conundrum. They are Americans citizens and they work for the welfare and prosperity of the country they have chosen to become citizens of. They have no reason to take sides in a Modi-Trump ego clash. They have no reason to undermine American foreign policy as defined by an incumbent president. The presence of these high profile

Indians and their periodic photo-ops sessions with the prime minister had been used to project a kind of global acceptability for our own strongman, as if they owed their success and achievements to Mr. Modi's inspirational persona. Now all that carefully staged sleight of hand stands exposed. For domestic constituencies, particularly the middle classes, Trump's attitude has weakened the carefully cultivated perception that Modi – as a globally accepted and respected powerful leader – will protect Indians, individually and collectively, from inimical forces inside and outside India. This projected global image had given a sense of comfort and protection to some very dodgy and dubious props of the Modi regime. But not anymore. More than anything else, President Trump has vastly undermined one great source of comfort – our sense of superiority over Pakistan. We Indians have been made feel that under Modi we are more than a match to Pakistan and that we have the determination and capacity and the leadership to punish that country at will. All that tall talk mocks us after Operation Sindoor. Trump's extraordinary hospitality for a Pakistani general has punctured more than one such myth. India today stands totally and fully isolated in the region and the US president can take vicarious pleasure in singlehandedly diminishing Modi's aura among South Asia's elites. Of course, it would be foolish and unrealistic on the part of Indian opposition parties to take comfort from the souring of the Modi-Trump relationship. The American president has no interest whatsoever in renewing the health and vitality of Indian democracy or in reducing the democratic deficits we feel. He has no interest in the preservation of civil liberties and human rights. He has no interest in ensuring that the minorities in India are treated fairly. He is not enamoured of being the saviour of Indian democracy. He is a transactional man and a businessman who happens to be in the White House. Therefore, it will be shortsighted on the part of the opposition parties to look to Washington for any comfort or assurance as they try to slow down Modi's totalitarian journey. It is a battle that must be fought on Indian terms by Indian themselves, alone.

IS VIJAY'S TVK REACTING LIKE A FAN CLUB OR A POLITICAL PARTY?

The conspicuous silence of Tamilaga Vetttri Kazhagam (TVK) over the Jana Nayagan controversy has triggered uneasy questions in Tamil Nadu's political circles. Is Vijay's party behaving like an extension of his fan club rather than a serious political outfit? Or is this silence a calculated move to keep its options open with the powers that be in Delhi? These questions have gained urgency as actor Vijay faces a second round of questioning by the CBI and his much-hyped film Jana Nayagan remains stuck between the courts and the CBFC. The coincidence of these developments has only sharpened scrutiny of TVK's response or the lack of it. There has been no strong statement questioning the delay in the film's release. No sharp attack on the CBFC. No protest over the non-release of what is projected to be Vijay's final film. Not a single TVK spokesperson has participated in television debates on the Jana Nayagan issue. The party's official stance has been one of studied restraint, explained away with a familiar refrain: "We trust the judicial process." Beyond routine attacks on the DMK and broad denunciations of communal politics, largely echoing Vijay's speeches, TVK has avoided press conferences, major political interventions, or demonstrations of strategic depth. Even in the immediate aftermath of the tragic Karur stampede, the party retreated into a cocoon. While the DMK set the initial



narrative, squarely blaming Vijay and TVK for the tragedy that claimed 41 lives, no party spokesperson stepped forward to counter it. Eventually, TVK regrouped, pushed back legally, and went to the Supreme Court, forcing the DMK to respond. But in a political climate defined by power asymmetries, this recourse to Delhi also exposed TVK to the perception of vulnerability to the Centre and the BJP. This marks a shift. While Vijay's early rallies attacked the BJP's communal politics as forcefully as the DMK's dynasty and corruption, post-stampede his primary adversary appears to be the DMK. Though he continues to oppose the BJP ideologi-

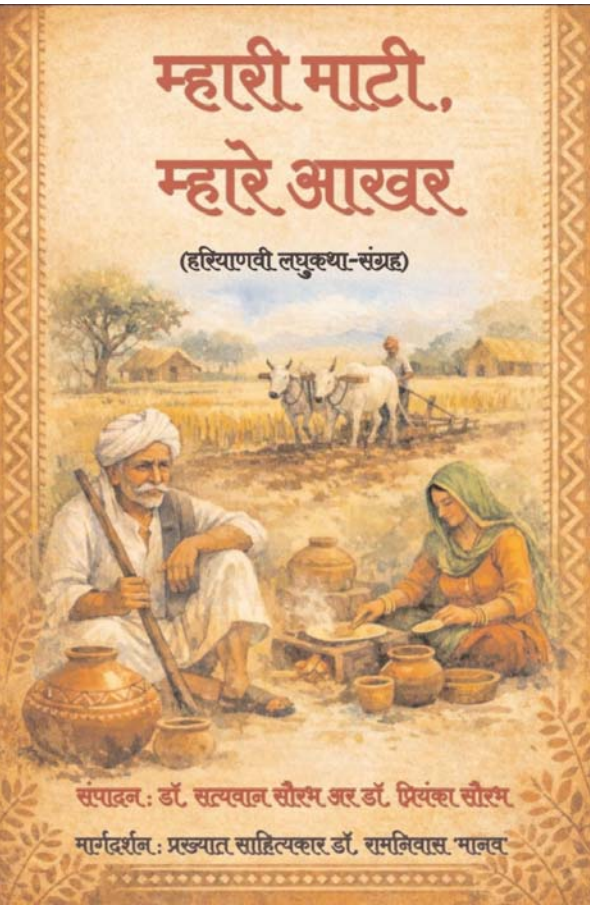
cally, his tone towards the ruling party at the centre has softened perceptibly. Ironically, the DMK's ferocious response after the stampede may have backfired. Its relentless attacks on Vijay exposed its nervousness about his political potential and may have nudged him closer to Delhi's power corridors. Since then, subtle signals of support have emerged from both the Congress and the BJP, an unusual convergence that has not gone unnoticed. TVK has undeniably evolved in some respects. Senior leaders such as Sengottayan have joined from the AIADMK. Electoral strategy committees have been formed. Journalists have been brought in as

spokespersons. Yet, when confronted with crises like Karur or Jana Nayagan, the party's instinct remains the same: political silence outside the courtroom. A narrative of Vijay being targeted by the Centre through the CBFC is steadily building, but it is the Congress that is articulating this argument, not TVK itself. For a party aspiring to power, this is a strange abdication of political space. Politics is about demonstrating power at the right moment. For a fledgling party in a state dominated by deeply entrenched Dravidian organisations, this is not optional, it is essential. Vijay has repeatedly demonstrated fan power. What his party has yet to demonstrate is political

power: grassroots mobilisation, issue-based agitation, and consistent public engagement. This gap raises an uncomfortable question: does TVK lack a genuine grassroots structure? The difference between a fan base and an ideologically committed cadre is fundamental. A fan reacts to the star. A political worker reacts to issues, mobilises sentiment, and converts it into votes. Cadres understand local problems and work the ground. Fans do not. History offers clear lessons. MGR succeeded because he understood and embedded himself in Dravidian political ideology and organisation. Jayalalithaa strengthened that structure. NT Rama Rao rode on an anti-Congress

wave and fan fervour to power in 1984, but the Telugu Desam Party learnt and built political structures after its defeat in 1989 and Chandrababu Naidu later built a durable organisation. In Tamil Nadu, Vijayakanth's DMDK proved to be a third political force with an 8 per cent vote share in its first election in 2006 because it had a strong organisational base, something other actors, including Kamal Hassan, could not achieve. On issues ranging from Thiruparankundram to broader governance debates, TVK has rarely taken categorical, aggressive positions. Its headquarters has yet to emerge as a fountainhead of ideas, strategy, or political direction. The party still revolves overwhelmingly around Vijay's star power, an unhealthy dependence on electoral politics. Even a respectable vote share may not translate into real impact without committed cadres on the ground. TVK has also been ambiguous on alliances. Smaller parties may join for a boost from Vijay's fan base, but that may strengthen the allies more than TVK itself. The party urgently needs to demonstrate grassroots mettle and political mobilisation, and it needs to do so soon. Otherwise, the question will linger: is Vijay's political project still a fan club struggling to evolve into a party? Whether TVK can make that transition before the elections may well determine not just its future politics, but the course Dravidian politics will take.

'OUR SOIL, OUR LETTERS'



Invitation to send a short story in Haryanvi dialect. Writers are requested to submit three short stories each for a collection of short stories based on the Haryanvi dialect and the folk life of Haryana. A total of 51 short story writers will be included in this book. **Terms and Conditions:** 1. The short story should be in pure Haryanvi dialect. 2. The word limit of the short story to be sent is 150 words. 3. The author must send his brief introduction in 100 words. 4. Selected authors will be given a 30% discount on the

printed price of the book. 5. It is not necessary for the author to buy the book. This upcoming collection of short stories is an attempt to present a true picture of Haryanvi dialect, culture, and society. Interested writers are encouraged to submit their short stories in accordance with the rules.



DR. SATYAWAN SAURABH

2025 IndiGo crisis: DGCA penalises airline Rs 22 crore

Mumbai: Airlines regulator Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Saturday, January 17, slapped penalties totalling Rs 22.20 crore for the massive flight disruptions in December, and warned CEO Pieter Elbers and two other senior executives for non-compliance. It also directed the airline to furnish Rs 50 crore bank guarantee to ensure long-term systemic corrections.

Between December 3 and 5, the DGCA said, 2,507 flights were cancelled, and 1,852 flights were delayed, impacting over 3 lakh passengers at airports across the country. Announcing the enforcement actions after the detailed probe, DGCA cited over-optimisation of operations, inadequate regulatory preparedness, along with deficiencies in system software support as among the primary reasons for the disruptions. Shortcomings in management structure and operational control at IndiGo were also blamed. The penalties are one of the biggest imposed by the regulator on any airline for flight disruptions, while other regulatory



actions are also unprecedented. IndiGo, in a statement, said it is “in receipt of the orders of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation of India” on the flight disruptions. “.. the Board and the Management of IndiGo are committed to taking full cognisance of the orders and will, in a thoughtful and timely manner, take appropriate measures,” the airline said in the statement.

Additionally, it said, an “in-depth review” of the robustness and resilience of the internal processes at IndiGo has been underway since the disruptions to ensure that the

airline emerges stronger out of these events.” In early December, IndiGo cancelled hundreds of flights across the country as the airline was not adequately prepared to implement the new flight duty norms for pilots. Last month, the airline was provided relaxation till February 10 to comply with the new Flight Duty Time Limitation (FDTL) norms. The DGCA has imposed a total penalty of Rs 20.40 crore for the non-compliance for 68 days from December 5, 2025, to February 10, 2026. The amount translates to a Rs 30 lakh fine for each day during

the period. “In addition to individual enforcement actions, a one-time financial penalty (on six counts) is imposed on M/s Indigo Airlines for non-compliance with directions issued under Rule 133A of the Aircraft Rules, 1937,” the DGCA said in a statement.

While the regulator imposed a financial penalty of Rs 30 lakh for the airline’s “failure to establish and effectively implement a scheme for compliance with limits of Flight Time, Flight Duty Period, Duty Period and Rest Periods; inadequate buffer margins in roster planning”, another Rs

30-lakh financial penalty has been slapped for “failure of accountable management to ensure overall functioning, financing, and conduct of operations to DGCA standards, as per the statement. Similarly, Rs 30-lakh financial penalty has been imposed for “improper delegation and exercise of operational control responsibilities contrary to approved methods” while a financial penalty of Rs 30 lakh has been imposed for “failure of accountable management to ensure overall functioning, financing, and conduct of operations to DGCA standards”. IndiGo Chief Operating Officer Isidre Porqueras is the Accountable Manager at the airline. According to the statement, IndiGo has been ordered to pledge a bank guarantee of Rs 50 crore in favour of DGCA, to ensure compliance with the directives and long-term systemic correction. “The bank guarantee-linked reform framework of Rs 50 crore titled the IndiGo Systemic Reform Assurance Scheme (ISRAS) for IndiGo, under which phased release of the bank guarantee is strictly tied to DGCA-verified implementation of reforms,” it said.

Mcap of 3 of top-10 most valued firms jumps by Rs 75,855 cr



New Delhi: The combined market valuation of three of the top-10 most valued firms jumped Rs 75,855.43 crore in a holiday-shortened last week, with State Bank of India and Infosys emerging as the biggest gainers, in an otherwise sluggish trend in equities. Last week, the BSE benchmark Sensex dipped 5.89 points, and the NSE Nifty went up by 11.05 points. While ICICI Bank, State Bank of India and Infosys were the gainers, Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Bharti Airtel, Bajaj Finance, Hindustan Unilever and Larsen & Toubro faced a combined erosion of Rs 75,549.89 crore from their valua-

tion. The combined erosion of these seven firms was less than the total mcap addition of Rs 75,855.43 crore of the three companies – ICICI Bank, State Bank of India and Infosys. SBI’s market valuation jumped Rs 39,045.51 crore to Rs 9,62,107.27 crore, becoming the biggest gainer. The market capitalisation (mcap) of Infosys surged Rs 31,014.59 crore to Rs 7,01,889.59 crore. ICICI Bank added Rs 5,795.33 crore taking its valuation to Rs 10,09,470.28 crore. However, the mcap of Reliance Industries tumbled Rs 23,952.48 crore to Rs 19,72,493.21 crore. The market valuation of Larsen & Toubro dropped by Rs 23,501.8 crore to Rs

5,30,410.23 crore. HDFC Bank’s valuation eroded by Rs 11,615.35 crore to Rs 14,32,534.91 crore and that of Bharti Airtel tanked Rs 6,443.38 crore to Rs 11,49,544.43 crore. The mcap of Bajaj Finance declined by Rs 6,253.59 crore to Rs 5,91,447.16 crore and that of Hindustan Unilever diminished by Rs 3,312.93 crore to Rs 5,54,421.30 crore. The valuation of TCS dipped by Rs 470.36 crore to Rs 11,60,212.12 crore. Reliance Industries remained the most valued domestic firm followed by HDFC Bank, TCS, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, Infosys, Bajaj Finance, Hindustan Unilever and Larsen & Toubro.

ICICI Prudential Life introduces ICICI Pru Wealth Forever – A product for simplified legacy planning

- OFFERS INCREASING LIFE COVER TILL AGE 99
- LEGACY PLANNING – PROVIDES Hassle-free AND TAX-free WEALTH TRANSFER TO NOMINEES
- OFFERS COMPLIMENTARY HEALTH CHECK-UPS AFTER 3 POLICY YEARS



ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has launched ICICI Pru Wealth Forever, a product providing a simple and tax-efficient legacy planning solution. This product is designed for customers wanting to provide financial security to their loved ones. The life cover amount continues to rise monthly till the customer reaches the age of 99 years. In the event of the unfortunate demise of the customer the entire life cover amount, which is tax-free, is paid out to the beneficiaries. ICICI Pru Wealth Forever has been specifically curated to offer customers an easy and efficient legacy planning solution. If the customer survives through the tenure of the policy all pre-

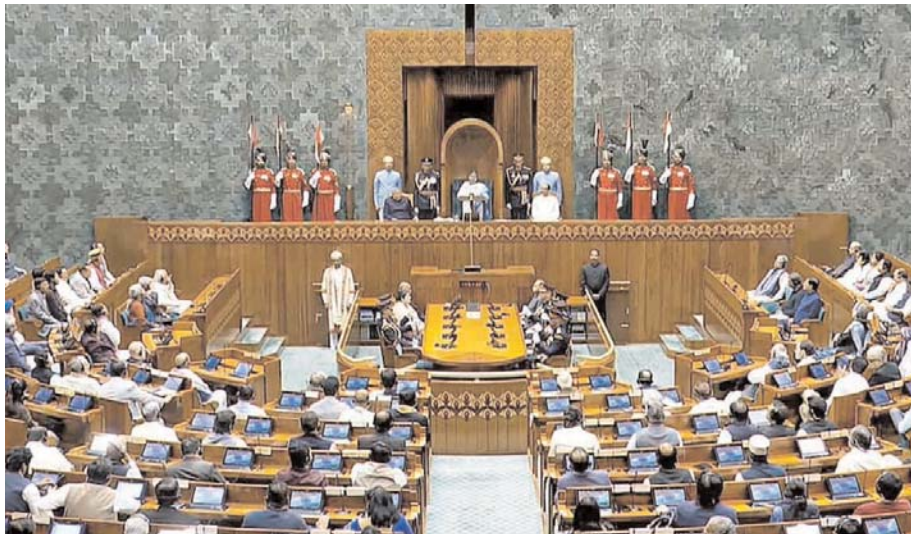
miums paid are returned. For instance, a 55-year-old business owner investing ₹30 lakh annually for seven years in this product can get a life cover that starts at ₹1.5 crore which keeps growing. In the unfortunate event of the policyholder’s demise at age 85, the nominee(s) would receive ₹10 crore as a tax-free benefit, helping preserve the business owner’s legacy while providing financial continuity to the family. Announcing the launch, Mr. Vikas Gupta, Chief Product Officer, ICICI Prudential Life Insurance Company Limited, said

“With increasing income and life expectancy in the country, individuals have begun to appreciate the importance of legacy planning. We are delighted to offer ICICI Pru Wealth Forever which has been specifically designed to aid customers in simplifying their legacy planning process. The life cover provided by this product continues to increase till the age of 99 years and the life cover amount is paid out as a tax-free benefit in case of the unfortunate demise of the customer. This effectively facilitates a seamless trans-

fer of wealth to the next generation providing them with financial security. Additionally, the built in feature of complimentary health check-ups enable customers to actively monitor and manage their health. Our commitment to deliver our promises to customers is reflected in our industry-leading claim settlement ratio of 99.3% in H1-FY2026, with an average turnaround time of 1.1 days for non-investigated claims, supported by streamlined processes that enable quick and hassle-free claim payouts when it matters most.”

Market participants seek equity tax relief ahead of Budget

New Delhi: Market participants have urged the government to ease capital market taxation, including a higher exemption limit on long-term capital gains, ahead of the Union Budget for 2026-27. They also suggested that the government avoid further increases in transaction taxes. The Union Budget will be presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on February 1. Market stakeholders also demanded enhancement of the tax-free exemption limit on long-term capital gains (LTCG) from equity investments to provide greater relief to retail and long-term investors. In its budget wishlist, JM Financial Services recommended that the government should raise the tax-free exemption limit for equity LTCG from Rs 1.25 lakh to Rs 2 lakh. The firm also sought to standardise the definition of “long term” to 12 months across all asset classes, including equity, debt, gold and real estate, to reduce complexity and improve



tax clarity. Additionally, it called for allowing capital losses to be set off against income under other heads. Market participants have also cautioned against any further increase in transaction-related taxes. Dhiraj Relli, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of HDFC Securities, said stakeholders have proposed keeping the Securities Transaction Tax (STT) on cash equity trades lower than that on deriva-

tives to encourage long-term investing over speculative trading. He also suggested taxing only the profit component of share buy-backs and aligning dividend tax rates for domestic investors with those applicable to non-resident Indians (NRIs). Tejas Khoday, Chief Executive Officer of FYERS, said the government should refrain from raising STT any further. He added that reducing both long-term and

short-term capital gains tax to 10 per cent would significantly boost retail investor participation. Khoday also expressed hope that import duties on gold and silver are not increased further, as these assets remain important hedging instruments against equity market volatility and rupee depreciation. Meanwhile, the NSE and BSE will conduct live trading on Sunday, February 1, when the Union Budget is presented.

Brazil, Nigeria emerge key export markets for Indian Pharma

New Delhi: Brazil and Nigeria are emerging as key export destinations for Indian pharmaceutical firms amid global economic uncertainties, according to the commerce ministry data. Nigeria emerged as one of the fastest growing destinations, adding USD 179 million in exports and contributing over 14 per cent to the total export growth during the first eight months of this fiscal year. During April-November FY26, Brazil also recorded an increase of nearly USD 100 million exports, the data showed. “These markets reflect rising healthcare access, expanding public procurement, and growing reliance on Indian generics, reinforcing India’s role as a preferred supplier to high growth demand intensive regions,” an official said. The country’s pharmaceutical exports rose by 6.5 per cent to USD 20.48 billion during April-November 2025-26. The data also showed that the US continues to be the single largest destination, accounting for over 31 per cent of exports in April-November 2025, while the overall growth profile highlights a broadening of demand across multiple geographies, strengthening the stability of India’s pharma export basket, the official added. Alongside the US, countries such as France, the Netherlands, Canada, Germany, and South Africa registered steady increase, collectively contribut-



ing to export expansion while maintaining stable shares. Notably, the Netherlands added over USD 58 million in exports, reflecting India’s strengthening integration into European pharmaceutical distribution networks. “This combination of scale markets and diversified secondary destinations highlights a balanced export architecture, where growth is supported by both mature healthcare systems and fast expanding emerging economies,” the commerce ministry official said.

Layers Clinics Launches ‘Layers Privé’, Its 20th Milestone Clinic in Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad

Hyderabad, January 18, 2026: Layers Clinics, a leading skin, hair, and aesthetic clinic brand, marked a significant milestone with the grand launch of Layers Privé, its 20th clinic, located in the prestigious Jubilee Hills neighbourhood. The launch was graced by Indian cricket legend Mithali Raj, who inaugurated the state-of-the-art centre alongside Mr. K. Sudheer Reddy, Founder & CEO of Layers Clinics, and senior members of the medical leadership team. Founded in 2020 in Hyderabad, Layers Clinics has rapidly emerged as a trusted name in advanced, ethical, and results-driven aesthetic care. With a growing footprint across Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Gujarat, the brand has successfully treated over 60,000 patients, earning recognition for its clinical excellence, consistency of outcomes, and patient-centric approach. Layers Clinics is renowned for its expertise in advanced dermatology, precision-led hair restoration, and comprehensive anti-ageing solutions. Its wide-ranging services include medical-grade facials, dermatology-led skin rejuvenation, pigmentation correction, acne and scar treatments, skin brightening therapies, and holistic



anti-ageing protocols. All treatments are delivered using US-FDA approved technologies and are supervised by experienced dermatologists and highly trained medical professionals. Layers Privé, the brand’s newest and most premium offering, represents the pinnacle of the Layers experience. Designed as an exclusive aesthetic sanctuary, the Jubilee Hills clinic combines cutting-edge technology with bespoke

treatments, offering clients an elevated experience defined by elegance, discretion, and personalised care. Speaking at the launch, Mithali Raj said, “What stood out to me about Layers Privé is its strong emphasis on ethics, science, and consistency. True excellence, whether in sport or healthcare, comes from discipline, integrity, and long-term commitment. Layers’ approach to aesthetic care strongly reflects these

values, and I am delighted to be associated with this milestone.” Mr. K. Sudheer Reddy, Founder & CEO, Layers Clinics, added, “Layers Privé marks a defining chapter in our journey. As our 20th clinic, it embodies everything Layers stands for—advanced technology, ethical dermatology, and personalised patient care. Our vision has always been to make world-class aesthetic treatments accessible while maintaining uncompromising clinical standards, and Layers Privé is a reflection of that promise.” Dr. Swathi, Chief Dermatologist & Anti-Ageing Expert at Layers Clinics, said, “At Layers Privé, every treatment begins with a deep clinical understanding of the patient’s skin and hair health. This clinic allows us to offer highly customised, dermatologist-led solutions using the most advanced technologies available globally, while ensuring safety, transparency, and natural-looking results.” Currently operating 20 clinics, Layers Clinics continues to expand steadily, with plans to strengthen its presence across India. The brand remains committed to delivering ethical, affordable, and science-backed aesthetic care while maintaining consistent quality and patient trust across all locations.

Trump tariff threat over Greenland 'unacceptable', European leaders say

A threat by US President Donald Trump to impose fresh tariffs on eight allies opposed to his proposed takeover of Greenland has drawn condemnation from European leaders. UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer said the move was "completely wrong", while French President Emmanuel Macron called it "unacceptable". The comments came after Trump announced a 10% tariff on goods from Denmark, Norway, Sweden, France, Germany, the UK, the Netherlands and Finland would come into force on 1 February, but could later rise to 25% - and would last until a deal was reached. Trump insists the autonomous Danish territory is critical for US security and has not ruled out taking it by force. Following Trump's threats, the European Union called an emergency meeting for 17:00

in Brussels (16:00 GMT) on Sunday. The meeting will involve ambassadors from the EU's 27 countries, according to the Reuters news agency. Meanwhile, thousands of people took to the streets in Greenland and Denmark on Saturday in protest at the proposed US takeover. Greenland is sparsely populated but resource-rich and its location between North America and the Arctic makes it well placed for early warning systems in the event of missile attacks and for monitoring vessels in the region. Trump has previously said Washington would get the territory "the easy way" or "the hard way". European countries have rallied to Denmark's support. They have argued that the security of the Arctic region should be a joint Nato responsibility. France, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Finland, the



Netherlands and the UK have dispatched a small number of troops to Greenland in a so-called reconnaissance mission. Announcing the new tariffs in a post on his Truth Social platform on Saturday, Trump said those countries were playing "a very dangerous game". At stake, he said, was the "Safety, Security, and Survival of

our Planet". He said the proposed 10% levy to be introduced next month on goods exported to the US would rise to 25% in June and remain "payable until such time as a Deal is reached for the Complete and Total purchase of Greenland". In his response, Starmer said: "Applying tariffs on allies for pursuing the collective security of Nato allies is

completely wrong. We will of course be pursuing this directly with the US administration." UK opposition leaders also criticised Trump's announcement. Conservative Party leader Kemi Badenoch said the tariffs were a "terrible idea", while Reform UK leader and Trump ally Nigel Farage said they "will hurt us". Liberal Democrat leader Ed Davey called Trump's behaviour "unhinged" but said how the UK responds "matters a lot". Green MP Ellie Chown said the US president "treats the international stage like a school-yard playground, attempting to bully and brute force other countries into compliance with his imperialist agenda". France's Emmanuel Macron said: "Tariff threats are unacceptable in this context... We will not be swayed by any intimidation." Swedish PM Ulf Kristersson said: "We

won't let ourselves be blackmailed." Sweden is currently having intensive discussions with other EU countries, Norway and the United Kingdom to find a joint response," he added. In a post on X, European Commission (EC) President Ursula von der Leyen, said: "Territorial integrity and sovereignty are fundamental principles of international law." "Tariffs would undermine transatlantic relations and risk a dangerous downward spiral," she added. Trump will face von der Leyen and other European leaders such as Macron at the annual World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland this week. EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said "China and Russia must be having a field day" following Trump's announcement. "They are the ones who benefit from divisions among Allies", she wrote on X.

Six killed in Pakistan shopping mall fire



A fire at a shopping centre in the Pakistan city of Karachi has killed six people as firefighters continue to battle the blaze. Parts of the Gul Plaza, containing 1,200 stores and spanning 8,000 sq m (86,111 sq ft), have collapsed which officers said was hampering rescue efforts. One firefighter is among the dead, more than 20 people have been injured and there are fears some are still trapped inside the multi-storey mall. Local emergency services said that when helpers arrived at

the site on Saturday "the fire from the ground floor had spread to the upper floors, and almost the entire building was already engulfed in flames". A senior police official told the BBC that the authorities had been unable to search the building for bodies as the fire has continued to burn. More than 30 people have been reported missing by their families, who have gathered outside what remains of the centre, waiting anxiously for news of their loved ones.

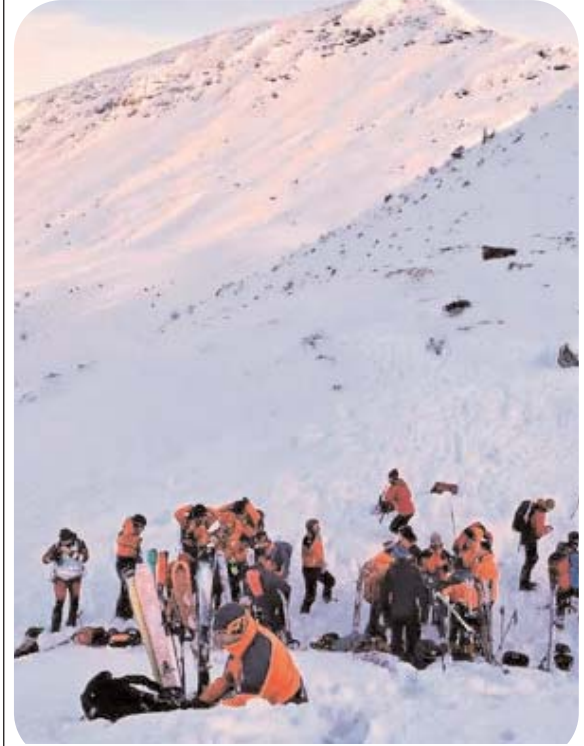
Nasa's mega Moon rocket arrives at launch pad for Artemis II mission



Nasa's mega rocket has been moved to the launch pad in Cape Canaveral, Florida, as the final preparations get underway for the first crewed mission to the Moon in more than 50 years. Over almost 12 hours, the 98m-tall Space Launch System was carried vertically from the Vehicle Assembly Building on the 4-mile (6.5km) journey to the pad. Now it is in position, the final tests, checks - and a dress rehearsal - will take place, before the go-ahead is given for the 10-day Artemis II mission that will see four astronauts travel around the Moon. Nasa says the earliest the rocket can blast off is 6 February, but there are also more launch windows later that month, as well as in March and April. The rocket began moving at 07:04 local time (12:04 GMT) and arrived at Launch Pad 39B at the Kennedy Space Center at 18:41 local time (23:42 GMT). The rocket was carried by a huge machine called a crawler-transporter, travelling at a top speed of 0.82 mph (1.3

km/h) as it trundled along. Live coverage captured the slow-moving spectacle. Nasa said the rocket will be prepared over the next few days for what it calls a "wet dress rehearsal" - a test for fuel operations and count-down procedures. The Artemis II crew - Nasa's Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover and Christina Koch and Canadian astronaut Jeremy Hansen - were at the Kennedy Space Center watching the rocket as it was moved. In just a few weeks, the four astronauts will be strapped into a spacecraft, perched on the top of the rocket, ready to blast off to the Moon. It will be the first crewed mission to the Moon since Apollo 17 landed on its surface in December 1972. Nasa said the mission could take its astronauts further into space that anyone has been before. Artemis II is not scheduled to land on the Moon, but will instead lay the groundwork for a future lunar landing led by the Artemis III mission.

Avalanches kill eight skiers in Austrian Alps



Avalanches kill eight skiers in Austrian Alps

Soldiers are on standby for possible deployment to Minneapolis, a US defence official has told CBS News, the BBC's US partner. The official said the 1,500 soldiers, currently in Alaska, are an option for US president Donald Trump if he decided to use active duty military personnel, as anti-Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) demonstrations continued in the city on Saturday. No decision has yet been made on whether to deploy the soldiers from Alaska, the official said. Minnesota officials have urged protesters to stay orderly and peaceful

Syrian army seizes country's largest oil field from Kurdish forces

Syrian troops fighting Kurdish forces in north-eastern Syria have seized the country's largest oil field. The Omar facility and nearby gas fields are under army control after the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) pulled back, officials and monitors say. Earlier the army captured the strategic Tabqa dam on the Euphrates river. The push came after the SDF announced it would redeploy east of the Euphrates, following deadly clashes last week. That withdrawal followed talks with US officials. Ongoing fighting in the area stems from the breakdown of an agreement between SDF and the government of President



Ahmed al-Sharaa, who is seeking to integrate Kurdish bodies into Syrian institutions. On Friday, in an apparent good-will gesture, al-Sharaa said he would make Kurdish a national language and make the Kurdish new year an official holiday. The decree is the first formal recognition of Kurdish

national rights since Syria's independence in 1946. The US-backed SDF then announced its pullout east of the Euphrates river. Kurdish forces have been controlling swathes of Syria's oil-rich north and north-east, much of it gained during the fight against the Islamic State group over the past decade.

Over the weekend, Syrian troops continued their eastward push. They entered the town of Tabqa on the south-western bank of the Euphrates and nearby dam on Saturday. On Sunday, Syrian officials announced they had seized Omar, Syria's largest oil field, on the eastern side of the river. The facility has been a major source of revenue for the SDF. This claim was supported by the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a UK-based monitoring group. It said the SDF had withdrawn from "entire villages and towns of the eastern countryside of Deir Ezzor [province]" as well as the Omar and Tanak oil fields early on Sunday.

Iran's internet shutdown could lead to 'extreme digital isolation'

Iran is 10 days into one of the most extreme internet shutdowns in history, with 92 million citizens cut off from all internet services and even disruption to phone and text messaging. The Iranian government cut off services on 8 January, apparently to stifle dissent and prevent international scrutiny of a government crack down on protesters. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said the internet was cut off in response to what he described as externally directed "terrorist operations". The government has not said when internet services will return, but new reports suggest that, behind the scenes, the authorities may be making plans to restrict it permanently. On 15 January, the news website IranWire reported that

government spokesperson Fatemeh Mohajerani told journalists that international web access will not be available until at least the Iranian New Year in late March. Internet freedom observers at FilterWatch believe the government is hastily implementing new systems and rules to cut Iran off from the international internet. "There should be no expectation of reopening international internet access, and even afterwards, users' access to international internet will never return to its previous form," FilterWatch said, citing unnamed government sources. While the BBC cannot independently verify this report or the timing of its implementation, journalists who spoke to BBC Persian also said they were told that internet access



would not be restored anytime soon. From temporary outage to "communication black hole" Iran has maintained a tight grip over the internet for many years, with most western social media apps and platforms blocked, as well as external news websites like BBC News. However many people have managed to access popular apps such as Instagram using Virtual Private Networks (VPNs).

Internet freedom campaigners at Access Now say Iran has consistently used shutdowns as a way to mask mass violence and brutal crackdowns on protesters, as seen during the nationwide internet shutdowns during the November 2019 and September 2022 protests. A shutdown was also imposed during the Iran-Israel conflict in June 2025. However, the current blackout has lasted longer than

any previous shutdown. In a public statement, the charity Access Now said that full restoration of internet access is imperative. "Restricting access to these essential services not only endanger lives but embolden authorities to conceal and evade accountability for human rights abuses," it said. Already there are reports that livelihoods in Iran are being badly impacted by the shutdown with e-commerce particularly affected. As of 18 January, the Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA) estimates that more than 3,300 confirmed protester deaths have been recorded, with more than 4,380 cases under review. It also reports that the number of arrests has reached 24,266 across 187 cities. The real number of people killed and detained is

believed to be significantly higher, but the lack of access means the figures cannot be independently verified. Internet monitoring project, FilterWatch, says that the latest shutdown spells the start of a more extreme "digital isolation" and increased surveillance on what is said, sent and viewed online. Amir Rashidi, director of cyber security and digital rights at the Miaan Group, which runs FilterWatch, told the BBC he believes the authorities are moving towards a tiered system in which access to the global internet would no longer be automatic but subject to approval. Access would be granted through a registration and vetting process, he expects, adding that the technical infrastructure for such a system has been in place for years.

Gangland killing at a funeral shocks idyllic French island



The mourners had gathered in the small village of Vero, a half-hour drive from Ajaccio, the capital of the picture-postcard Mediterranean island of Corsica. In their midst was former nationalist leader Alain Orsoni, 71, who had flown in from exile in Nicaragua to bury his mother. Suddenly, with the ceremony under way, a single shot was fired from nearby scrubland, killing Orsoni instantly. Thirty-five people have been fatally shot on this island of 350,000 people in the past three years alone, giving it one of France's highest murder rates. Corsicans have become wearily familiar with vendettas and tit-for-tat underworld shootings, but even here, the way Orsoni was killed has stunned islanders. Yesterday, Alain Orsoni was cremated after a funeral service in Ajaccio. There was a large police presence. Close friend Jo Peraldi finds it hard to believe that a day of high emotion surrounding the funeral of Orsoni's mother could have been defiled in such a way. "A cemetery is sacred in Corsica, just like a church. Never have I witnessed seeing someone murdered while accompanying

their mother to their final resting place," he told Corsican radio. Peraldi had seen his friend on the morning of the funeral. Like Orsoni, he had been an active figure in Corsican nationalism, spending 15 years in jail for organising bomb attacks against symbols of the French state. Over the years, victims of Corsica's violence have included farmers, elected officials, a lawyer, local business owners and even the president of the chamber of commerce. But for a cousin of the victim, Christian Leca, Orsoni's killing was "a tipping point in the horror". "People don't kill in cemeteries, it's intolerable," he told Le Monde newspaper. The nature of the violence has changed in recent times, says Thierry Dominici, an expert of Corsican nationalism at the University of Bordeaux who grew up on the island. "Once armed groups gave up their violent campaign for autonomy or independence, they kept their weapons and turned to organised crime instead," he told the BBC. "The French state was so focused on tackling the separatists that it turned a blind eye to their lucrative criminal activities."

Gill Slammed For His Captaincy During 3rd New Zealand ODI: "Got To Be Part Of Action"

Former New Zealand wicket-keeper batter Ian Smith was not happy with Shubman Gill's captaincy during the third ODI encounter between India and New Zealand in Indore on Sunday. Following two early wickets for Arshdeep Singh and Harshit Rana, New Zealand looked in a spot of bother. However, the hosts were unable to maintain the momentum as the duo of Daryl Mitchell and Glenn Phillips stitched together a brilliant partnership to take the visitors to a brilliant position. It seemed like Gill was out of ideas as the India bowlers failed to break the partnership and during the death overs, KL Rahul was seen moving the fielders around from behind the stumps. Smith said that Gill needs to more active when it comes to his captaincy and added that it is his responsibility to motivate the team in pressure situations. "I know that Shubman Gill is just learning the art of captaincy. But there's a lot, even now KL Rahul is chatting to Arshdeep down there as if to say, these are jobs that vice captains do," he said on commentary. "Shubman Gill is now coming down to long off, which basically takes him out of the play. You've got to be part of the action as the captain, particular-



ly when your team is under pressure," he added. Smith was also quick to point out that for a young skipper like Gill, it can be difficult to lead a side which has veterans like Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma and KL Rahul. "I appreciate this as a young player. This is a hard team to captain because of the people around you within the group who have been former captains, most of them as well," said Smith. "You've got Rahul, you've got Virat Kohli, of course, you've got Rohit Sharma. You've got Shreyas Iyer, you've got senior players

around you. And it's not always easy to take charge effectively," he added. Coming to the match, riding on scintillating centuries from Daryl Mitchell and Glenn Phillips, New Zealand recovered from a shaky start to post 337/8 in the ODI series decider against India. Indian cricket team ODI captain Shubman Gill's decision to travel with a personal water purifier did not have any connection to the recent water contamination incident in Indore, according to a report by Cricbuzz. As India cricketers made their way to Indore ahead of

the third ODI match against New Zealand, media reports emerged that Gill was travelling with a water purifier worth around Rs 3 lakh in order to combat the city's ongoing health crisis. However, the Cricbuzz report claimed that the decision was not specific for Indore and it was a part of Gill's regular travel routine. "Such purifiers are used by top sportspersons across disciplines, not just cricketers. However, there is no information of other cricketers carrying similar machines to Indore, where the third and final ODI against New Zealand will be played on Sunday," the report said. The report added that it was a part of Gill's recovery from dengue and the India star batter has put special emphasis on maintaining "strict hydration standards as part of his fitness routine". Coming to the match, Shubman Gill won the toss and opted to field against New Zealand in the third and final ODI in Indore on Sunday. The third ODI between India and New Zealand will be the series decider as the visitors denied the Men in Blue the opportunity to gain an unassailable lead in the second match of the three-match series at Rajkot.

Steve Smith Drops Rare Catch, But Babar Azam Wins Hearts With Touching Gesture

There has been a lot of chatter across the internet surrounding Sydney Sixers stars Steve Smith and Babar Azam during the ongoing Big Bash League (BBL) 2025-26 season, particularly following Babar's angry reaction to getting out after Smith had denied him strike for the 'Power Surge'. However, Australia stalwart Smith and Pakistan star Babar appeared to be on better terms during the Sixers' virtual knockout clash against Brisbane Heat on Sunday, with Babar even making a heartwarming gesture towards Smith after the latter dropped a catch. In the fifth over of the Heat innings, Smith failed to hold on to a tough chance while fielding at backward point, as Nathan McSweeney was handed a lifeline. However, Babar - fielding at cover - quickly ran up to Smith to give him a high-five and a pat on the back to appreciate his effort and console him



for the dropped catch. Babar has struggled for form during the BBL 2025-26 season, scoring just 202 runs in 10 matches at a poor strike-rate of 104. On the other hand, Smith has lit up the scene in his four matches since joining the Sixers following the Ashes Test series. In the short period, Smith has already smashed a century and a fifty. On Friday, Smith denied Babar the strike ahead of the first over of

the BBL's 'Power Surge', which is a two-over mini-powerplay that the batting team can take after the 10th over, where only two fielders are allowed outside the circle. Babar was seemingly unhappy at Smith's decision, but the latter justified it by smashing four sixes in the following over. However, Babar Azam departed right after that, and proceeded to hit his bat on the ground angrily as he walked off.

"I Used To Cry In Front Of My Father Every Day": Harshit Rana's Stunning Revelation

India all-rounder Harshit Rana is now a regular for the national side in white-ball cricket, having particularly impressed in the ODI format. However, Harshit's initial selection had come with significant criticism from experts and fans alike, something that he has steadily reduced with consistent performances with ball and bat. The 24-year-old recently revealed that handling failure comes easier to him now, given the struggles he had to face during the formative years of his career. Harshit revealed how he would often even cry in front of his father after failures during his youth. "I know how to handle failure now. I have seen those 10 years where I would not get select-



ed. I would go to trials, and my name would not come. I would come back and cry every day in front of my father," Harshit opened up, speaking on the Men's Locker Room podcast. "Now,

I feel that failure has gone. Whatever comes, I can handle it. I had given up," he added. "I had given up. But my dad literally kept pushing me," he further revealed. Harshit's rise to internation-

al cricket has been particularly impressive in the 50-over format. The fast bowler has taken 23 wickets in his first 13 ODIs, and even ended 2025 as India's highest wicket-taker in ODIs. However, the 24-year-old has not only impressed with the ball, but also with bat in hand, playing crucial cameos down the order in both ODI and T20I cricket in his short international career so far. Harshit has been included in India's 15-member squad for the T20 World Cup 2026 on home soil. It gives him the chance to win two ICC trophies in the space of a year, having also been part of India's squad that lifted the Champions Trophy 2025 title. He has taken seven wickets in six T20Is so far.

Virat Kohli Pushes New Zealand Batter Out Of The Ground In Hilarious Incident During 3rd ODI

Indian cricket team star batter Virat Kohli shared a hilarious moment with New Zealand star Daryl Mitchell during the 3rd ODI encounter in Indore on Sunday. Mitchell was in sensational form as he slammed 137 off 131 deliveries with the help of 15 fours and 3 sixes. He looked extremely comfortable against the Indian bowlers and was able to guide New Zealand to a massive total. Mitchell's innings finally came to an end during the 45th over when he was dismissed by Mohammed Siraj. As the New Zealand batter made his way back to the dressing room, Kohli was seen applauding near the boundary line. He had a small chat with Mitchell before jokingly pushing him out of the



ground in a moment that left both fans as well as the New Zealand batter in splits.

Coming to the match, Arshdeep Singh and Harshit Rana took three wickets

each but centuries from Daryl Mitchell and Glenn Phillips took New Zealand to 337 for eight against India. Mitchell struck his second consecutive century of the series to make 137 off 131 balls with 15 fours and three sixes, while Phillips hit nine fours and three sixes to score 106 off only 88 balls. The two revived New Zealand with a 219-run stand for the fourth wicket after the Kiwis had slumped to 58 for three, with Arshdeep taking two wickets upfront. While Arshdeep returned 3/63 from his full quota of overs, Rana was expensive, giving away 84 runs from his 10 overs for three wickets. Towards the end, skipper Michael Bracewell hit an 18-ball 28 not out with three sixes and a four.

SPURS CHIEFS CONSIDER SACKING FRANK AS FANS TURN

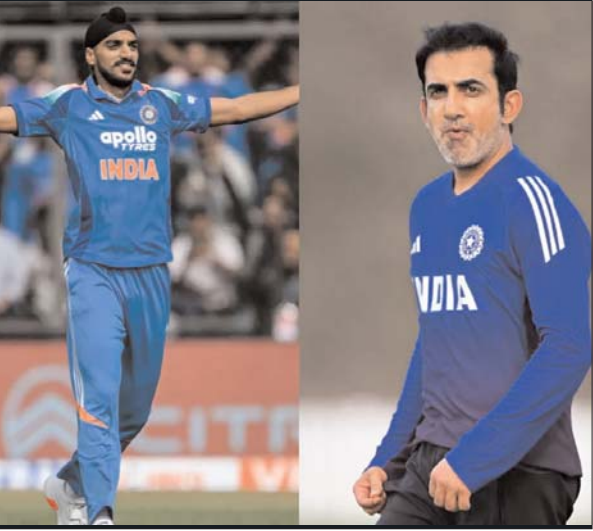


Tottenham head coach Thomas Frank is under significant internal scrutiny with the club considering calling time on his seven-month reign. The Dane has endured an underwhelming start to life at Tottenham since his appointment last summer. BBC Sport understands at least one member of the club's executive team has actively raised the option of ending Frank's reign in recent weeks. The club have so far backed Frank despite Spurs' struggles this season, but Saturday's home defeat by West Ham means his position is now under threat as the club's hierarchy weighs up whether they should move immediately or give Frank a chance to turn things round. The defeat

leaves Spurs 14th in the Premier League, having won just seven of their 22 games this season, and large sections of the supporters have already lost faith in the former Brentford boss. He was taunted by his own fans with chants of "you're getting sacked in the morning" during the closing stages of the loss to West Ham. Frank only joined the club in June following the dismissal of Ange Postecoglou. Spurs have won just once in their past eight matches and are out of both domestic cup competitions. They are currently 11th in the Champions League and face Borussia Dortmund this week in a game that is crucial to their hopes of qualifying for the knockout stages.

"This Is Shameful": Internet Slams Gautam Gambhir As Arshdeep Singh Strikes In 1st Over On Return

Arshdeep Singh made the perfect start after being brought back into India's ODI playing XI for the third ODI against New Zealand in Indore on Sunday. Bowling the first over of the New Zealand innings with the new ball, Arshdeep made an immediate impact, picking up the wicket of opener Henry Nicholls. Arshdeep's non-inclusion in the side for the first two ODIs had been a hotly-debated topic in the cricket world, and fans on social media reminded Gautam Gambhir exactly why he should've been picked earlier after the first-over strike. Taking the new ball, Arshdeep was initially struck for a boundary by Devon Conway on the second ball of the first over. However, the left-arm seam-



er responded brilliantly, uprooting Henry Nicholls' stumps after an inside edge. Arshdeep was brought in place of Prasidh Krishna for the series-deciding third

ODI, following India's defeat in the second match of the series. Earlier, legendary India spinner Ravichandran Ashwin had backed Arshdeep's selection in the

side. "The contest is between the bowlers. For South Africa, you need a hit-the-deck bowler. Prasidh Krishna and Harshit Rana both need match experience, so I can understand the thinking. But no one is thinking about Arshdeep Singh, who will stand in his shoes and think? This is not about how much he has played and how much he hasn't played," Ashwin had said on his YouTube channel. "What must he be thinking right now? He has done so much, yet he is still fighting for his spot. Whenever he plays next, he will be rusty. No matter what you say, this is a game of confidence. Why does this happen to the bowlers at all times? It never happens with the batters," he had further said.

SABALENKA BEATS WILDCARD IN FRONT OF FEDERER & LAVER

World number one Aryna Sabalenka overcame the "pressure" of being watched by tennis legends Roger Federer and Rod Laver to begin her Australian Open campaign with victory. An error-prone Sabalenka beat French wildcard Tiantsoa Rakotomanga Rajaonah 6-4 6-1 on Rod Laver Arena. Six-time men's champion Federer and three-time winner Laver had front row seats during the first-round match, with Sabalenka joking she tried not to look at them. Sabalenka, who has won the Melbourne title twice, later took a selfie with the pair. "I wanted to show great tennis so you guys enjoy watching me play. What a privilege - I really hope you guys enjoyed



it just a little bit," Belarus' Sabalenka said. "It was a lot of pressure. I was walking [around] thinking 'don't look there, don't look there.'" Sabalenka boasts an impressive record in Australia, dropping just one set en route to consecutive titles in 2023 and 2024, and has lost just one of her past 22 match-

es at the tournament - a surprise three-set defeat by American Madison Keys in last year's final. Her good form is not restricted to Melbourne's blue courts either - five of her 22 career singles titles have come on Australian soil, including tuning up for this year's major with victory at the

Brisbane International. However, Sabalenka did not have it all her own way against world number 118 Rakotomanga Rajaonah. In an uncharacteristically messy first set, Sabalenka had her serve broken in the opening game of the match and although she immediately broke back, saw 16 winners cancelled out by 13 unforced errors. After saving a break point for 4-4, the match became increasingly one-sided, with Sabalenka reeling off five games in a row to take control. "I didn't start my best. She showed up on fire and she was playing great," said Sabalenka, who is bidding to reach a fourth consecutive Australian Open final.

RECHARGED ALCARAZ STARTS CAREER SLAM BID WITH WIN



A holiday in Miami, time at home surrounded by loved ones and plenty of board games - that is how Carlos Alcaraz mentally recharged during the off-season before starting another bid to make history at the Australian Open. Victory in Melbourne would complete the career Grand Slam for the Spaniard, who has already won each of the other three majors twice. Should he do so, the 22-year-old would become the youngest player - and only the ninth overall - to achieve the milestone in the men's singles, with six-time Australian Open champion Roger Federer among those backing him to do so. Despite taking a nine-week break from competitive tennis following a landmark 2025 season which saw him win eight titles, including the French Open and US Open, and finish as year-end number one, Alcaraz showed few signs of rust as he overcame Australia's Adam Walton 6-3 7-6 (7-2) 6-2. "It was a

really long season, a tough one - a lot of tough moments, a lot of good moments," Alcaraz said. "I had two weeks [on holiday]. One in Miami with a big group of friends - we had fun - and then a second week in Turks and Caicos to relax a little. "I stayed home, I recharged the batteries. Mentally, I am fresh to play in the first tournament of the year and I'm ready to play really good tennis in Melbourne." Detailing his daily pre-season routine, he added: "I used to practise the whole morning - start at 09:00 and finish at 14:00 or even 15:00. The whole morning is about working out physically and on the court." It's a better way to recharge the batteries, staying at home with the people you love." The Australian Open is the only Grand Slam at which Alcaraz is yet to reach the final, with the quarter-finals in 2024 and 2025 his best showings, but he advanced to round two in comfortable fashion against Walton.

Nandamuri Family, Film Fraternity and Fans Pay Grand Floral Tributes to Legendary NTR on His 30th Vardhanthi at Film Nagar

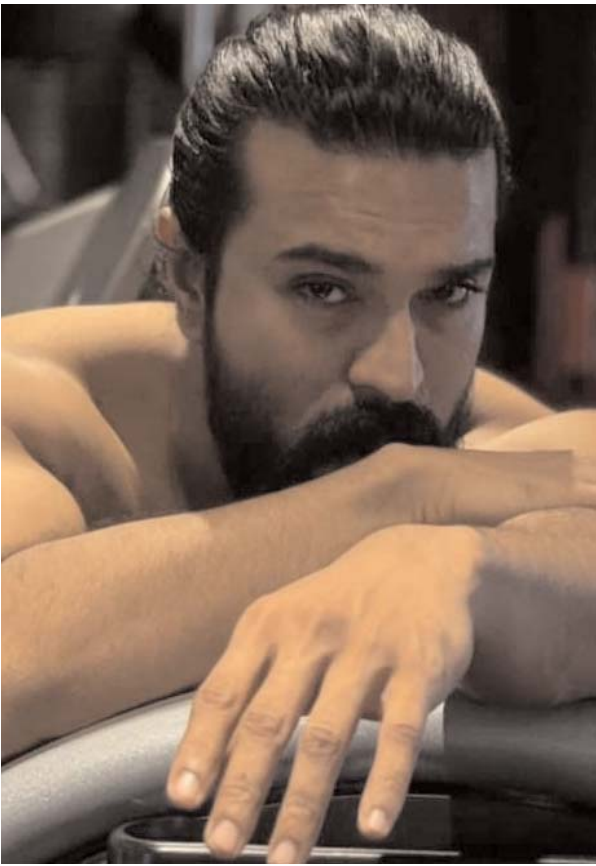


On the occasion of the 30th Vardhanthi of the legendary actor, statesman and cultural icon Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao (NTR), members of the Nandamuri family, film celebrities, political leaders and thousands of fans paid rich floral tributes at the NTR statue in Film Nagar. Remembering the “Viswa Vikhyatha” Nana Saravabhouma”, prominent personalities from various departments of the Telugu film industry gathered to honour the man who redefined Telugu cinema and Telugu self-respect. The statue of NTR was adorned with garlands as heartfelt tributes poured in from admirers across cinema and politics. Veteran film personality Kaja Surya Narayana said, “NTR garu is number one in the history of Telugu cinema. If he

had not founded the Telugu Desam Party on that historic day, many people would not have reached the positions they hold today. NTR and ANR are the two eyes of the Telugu film industry. My wish is that a statue of Akkineni Nageswara Rao garu should also be installed, and I request the elders of the industry to take this forward.” Social activist Madala Ravi said, “Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao is the great personality who took the pride of the Telugu race to the world. He brought recognition to Telugu people and Telugu cinema. He truly deserves the Bharat Ratna, and we all should work together to make that happen.” Writer Paruchuri Gopalakrishna said, “Just like the dialogue NTR delivered in the film Mana Desam, he climbed

step by step to the greatest heights. Even after 30 years of his passing, he feels alive among us. We never feel that Annagaru is no more.” Director Tammareddy Bharadwaja said, “NTR is the man who elevated the self-respect of Telugu people. He lived without selfishness. There is no experiment, no role, no story that he did not attempt in cinema. Remembering him only on his birth and death anniversaries is not enough. We must have the courage to follow his ideals in cinema and politics. Only then will his legacy truly live on.” Actor Prasanna Kumar said, “NTR is a training ground for every actor. Every actor and every political leader should take him as an inspiration. He is the one who showcased the valour and pride of Telugu people to the world.”

Mega Power Star Ram Charan's pan-India movie 'Peddhi' to start its big schedule soon - grand theatrical release on March 27th



Mega Power Star Ram Charan's most awaited sports drama Peddhi is being directed by Buchi Babu Sana and the shooting of this film is going on at a fast pace. The big schedule of this film is going to start soon. Ram Charan is preparing specially for this schedule. In the recently released still, Ram Charan is seen in beast mode. The rock solid muscles and intense look went viral in an instant. Peddhi's first single Chikiri Chikiri broke world records by garnering over 200 million views in five

languages. With AR Rahman's music and Ram Charan's viral dance, this song has become a global moment. Another song is going to be released soon. Produced by Venkata Satish Kilaru under the banner of Vriddhi Cinemas, the film proudly presented by Mythri Movie Makers in association with Sukumar Writings stars Janhvi Kapoor as the heroine. The makers have once again announced that Peddhi will have a grand pan-India theatrical release on March 27th.

IS 'KING' COMING SOON?



Sid Anand's tweet sets social media abuzz

Bollywood's King of Hearts, Shah Rukh Khan, hasn't even appeared on screen yet but the internet is already on fire. This afternoon, director

Siddharth Anand dropped a cryptic tweet with just two words: “the date.” No explanation. No follow-up. Yet, it was enough to send SRK fans into complete meltdown. Within minutes of the tweet going live, social media exploded with excitement. Fan pages began sharing screen-shots, decoding hidden meanings, and starting countdown guesses. The big

release date of Shah Rukh Khan's upcoming film King about to be announced? King is one of the most awaited films in Indian cinema. It marks Shah Rukh Khan's next major project after his blockbuster streak, and expectations are sky high. Directed by Siddharth Anand, known for delivering stylish action entertainers, the film promises a powerful role, grand visuals, and a mass appeal experience. But the makers have kept everything tightly under wraps no teaser, no poster, no official release window so far. That secrecy has only added to the excitement. So when Anand tweeted “the date” this afternoon, fans instantly assumed something big is coming. Some believe it hints at a release date reveal. Others think a teaser or first-look poster may drop soon. Fan clubs are trending hashtags, discussing theories, and marking calendars. The curiosity is massive, and the energy among SRK admirers is electric. After a historic comeback, every move Shah Rukh Khan makes becomes a headline. And with King, he seems ready to rule the box office once again. For now, the mystery continues. But one thing is clear when Siddharth Anand finally reveals “the date,” the countdown to King will officially begin. The throne is waiting. But the makers have kept everything tightly under wraps no teaser, no poster, no official release window so far, that secrecy has only added to the excitement.

KAJAL AGGARWAL SHARES THE MANTRA SHE LIVED BY IN 2016



Mumbai: Actress Kajal Aggarwal shared her mantra for the year 2016. The ‘Singham’ actress firmly believed in the saying “work hard, party harder” back in the day. Kajal revealed that ten years ago, her life was all about long days, late nights, chasing big dreams, and dancing like there was no tomorrow. She took to her official Insta handle and posted some throwback glimpses, which included shooting for her movies, “Sardar Gabbar Singh”, “Khaidi 150”, “Vivegam”, and “Do Lafzon ki Kahaani”, hanging out with her loved ones, staying on top of her workout game, and also walking the red carpet for the Filmfare. Turning back the clock, and reliving some fond memories, Kajal wrote the caption,

“#NostalgiaProMax 2016 was work harddd, party harder, hustle always. Long days, late nights, big dreams and even bigger laughs. I chased goals like a pro, danced like tomorrow didn't exist, and somehow made it all look effortless (sic).” “Back when sass was feral and savage was a lifestyle, not a phase. A year powered by ambition, caffeine and chaos- and honestly... I'd do it all over again”, she added. In the meantime, Kajal decided to enter 2026 with hope, excitement, and an ‘open heart’. Expressing her gratitude for all that 2025 had to offer, Kajal wrote on the photo-sharing app, “So much gratitude for a fabulous year gone by, and stepping into 2026 with hope, excitement, and an open heart.”.

AKSHAYE KHANNA STEPS INTO TOLLYWOOD WITH MYTHOLOGICAL FILM MAHAKALI



Tom Hiddleston wants SS Rajamouli as his dream director



Hollywood star Tom Hiddleston, best known

across the world as Marvel's mischievous Loki, has sent Indian cinema fans into excitement with his latest

confession. In a recent interaction, the British actor revealed that S.S. Rajamouli is one of the filmmakers he most wants to work with. Calling the RRR director “excellent,” Hiddleston said a collaboration with Rajamouli would be a dream come true. The statement instantly grabbed attention, proving once again how Indian cinema has broken global boundaries. Rajamouli, who redefined large-scale storytelling with Baahubali and later created worldwide magic with RRR, has become a name that even Hollywood stars admire. For Hiddleston to openly express his wish to work with him is not just a compliment it's recognition of Rajamouli's growing international influence. Since the release of RRR, Rajamouli has been celebrated across continents. The film's energetic storytelling, breathtaking action sequences and emotional drama won hearts globally. The viral success of Naatu Naatu, which even won an Oscar, further cemented

FANS CAN'T KEEP CALM

Rajamouli's position as a visionary director who speaks a universal cinematic language. Tom Hiddleston, on the other hand, is known for choosing unique and powerful roles. From Shakespearean theatre to global blockbusters, he has built a reputation for versatility and charm. The idea of him stepping into a Rajamouli-style epic filled with grand visuals, intense drama and larger-than-life characters has fans already imagining a historic crossover. Social media quickly buzzed with excitement after Hiddleston's comment, with many calling it a “Hollywood-meets-Tollywood moment waiting to happen.” While no official project has been announced, the mere possibility has sparked worldwide curiosity. If this dream collaboration ever

turns into reality, it could mark a new chapter in global filmmaking where storytelling truly has no borders. For now, fans on both sides of the world are watching closely, hoping this cinematic wish comes true.

