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IN BRIEFS

RBI to inject over Rs 2 lakh crore in banking system to ease liquidity

Mumbai (TSIT): The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday announced a series of liquidity-enhancing measures that will pump in more than Rs 2 lakh crore into the banking system to ease liquidity pressure. The RBI said it will use a combination of open market bond purchases, a foreign exchange swap, and a variable rate repo operation to ease liquidity conditions in the financial system. The steps are being undertaken following a review of current liquidity and financial conditions. As part of the measures, the central bank will conduct a 90-day variable rate repo (VRR) operation for an amount of Rs 25,000 crore on January 30, allowing banks to borrow funds at market-determined rates against collateral assets to be provided by them. A VRR is a tool where banks borrow short-term funds through an auction, with the interest rate determined by market bids, not fixed in advance.

20 flights cancelled, 2 diverted at Chandigarh airport due to bad weather, operational issues

Mohali (TSIT): Twenty flights were cancelled, and two others were diverted at the Chandigarh airport on Friday due to bad weather and operational issues. Most of the cancellations occurred during the afternoon and evening hours, while several flights had been running behind schedule since morning. As strong winds and rain lashed the Tricity from Thursday night, nine arrivals and 11 departures were cancelled. A Hyderabad–Chandigarh flight scheduled to arrive at 12.05 pm was diverted to Delhi, while the Srinagar flight (6E262), due at 12.55 pm, was cancelled because of bad weather. No flights from Srinagar landed in Chandigarh during the day. Similarly, a Chennai–Chandigarh flight (6E6005) scheduled for 2 pm was diverted to Jaipur. An international flight from Abu Dhabi arrived with a slight delay, while the departure to Dubai was delayed by nearly an hour and took off at 5.31 pm. Among arrivals, nine flights — Srinagar (6E262), Jaipur (6E7717), Delhi (6E2196 and 6E759), Mumbai (6E6752), Bengaluru (6E851 and 6E6385), Srinagar (6E6041), and Jaipur (6E7414) — were cancelled due to various reasons.

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM DAVOS

Telangana Govt, Blaize Sign MoU at Davos to Launch AI Innovation Hub

Hyderabad (TSIT): The Government of Telangana has signed a non-binding Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with US-based technology firm Blaize Inc. at the World Economic Forum in Davos, marking a significant step toward establishing the Telangana AI Innovation Hub (TAIH) and strengthening the State's applied artificial intelligence ecosystem.

As per the MoU, Blaize intends to set up a Research and Development (R&D) Center in Telangana focused on advanced AI computing. The proposed facility will support applied AI initiatives, government-led projects, and deployment-oriented solutions aligned with the State's strategic priorities.

The collaboration outlines a framework for working with relevant line departments and ministries of the Telangana Government to identify potential AI use cases. These initiatives may progress into pilot programmes, deployments, or full-scale implementation projects, subject to necessary approvals and project-specific agreements in accordance with applicable policies and regulations. The Telangana AI Innovation Hub is envisioned as a key platform to accelerate applied AI innovation across public sector services, infrastructure modernization, sustainability initiatives, and economic development. By combining advanced AI computing capabilities with domain-specific applications, the State aims to deliver real-world, impact-driven AI solutions. Through TAIH, the Telangana Government plans to work closely with Blaize to structure and advance AI initiatives while facilitating approvals under existing State policies, reinforcing Telangana's ambition to emerge as a global hub for applied artificial intelligence.

CM Naidu reviews arrangements for Godavari Pushkaralu

Amaravati (TSIT): Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu on Friday reviewed arrangements for Godavari Pushkaralu, scheduled to be held next year.

At a high-level meeting at the Secretariat, the Chief Minister discussed the arrangements for the 12-day event, to be held from June 26, 2027 to July 7, 2027.

Arrangements are being made for the conduct of the Pushkaralu in six districts through which the Godavari flows - Polavaram, Eluru, East Godavari, West Godavari, Ambedkar Konaseema, and Kakinada. Before the review meeting, the Chief Minister received blessings from priests.

The Chief Minister stated it is his good fortune to be conducting the Godavari Pushkaralu for the third time during his tenure as Chief Minister. The government plans to construct 139 new ghats in addition to the existing 234 ghats. A plan has been formulated to develop a total of 373 ghats along the riverbank in different areas, spanning a length of 9,918 metres.

It is estimated that approximately 10 crore devotees from India and abroad will come to the state to take a holy dip in the Godavari during the Pushkaralu. The Chief Minister directed that the Polavaram project works be completed before the Godavari Pushkaralu.

KTR questioned by SIT for seven hours in phone tapping case

Hyderabad (TSIT): The Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the telephone-tapping case on Friday questioned Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) working president and former Telangana minister K. T. Rama Rao for over seven hours.

Rama Rao returned to BRS headquarters, Telangana Bhavan, after he was examined by SIT officials at Jubilee Hills Police Station.

Hyderabad Police Commissioner V. C. Sajjanar, who is supervising the SIT, said that Rama Rao was examined in detail. "Relevant aspects of the case were elicited and are being analysed with the evidence on record. He was instructed not to contact or influence any witnesses and informed that he may be summoned again, if required," Sajjanar said in a statement. He clarified that Friday's examination of Rama Rao was conducted solely in connection with a case registered in 2024 relating to allegations of widespread unauthorised and illegal phone surveillance and interception involving thousands of citizens from all walks of life, including politicians, businesspersons, journalists, judiciary and eminent personalities.

"It has been noticed that misleading and baseless information is being circulated by certain sections of the media and individuals, claiming that phone interception was done on security grounds and that no illegality was involved. The Investigating Agency is not concerned with such false narratives.

The investigation is being conducted strictly in accordance with the law, fairly and professionally," the Police Commissioner added. Meanwhile, addressing BRS leaders and cadres after returning to Telangana Bhavan, Rama Rao described the entire proceeding as a "calculated diversionary tactic." KTR asserted that the Congress-led government is utilising investigative agencies to create "entertainment" for the public, aiming to distract them from the state's mounting administrative failures and unfulfilled electoral promises. The BRS leader stated that he fully cooperated with the investigation, answering every query posed by officials over the seven-and-a-half-hour session.

Congress discusses poll strategy for Kerala, Tharoor skips meeting

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge claimed the people of Kerala are yearning for change, and the UDF will ensure progressive and development-oriented governance in the state.

New Delhi: Ahead of the assembly elections in Kerala, the Congress' top leadership held a strategy meeting with leaders from the state, even as Shashi Tharoor skipped the key brainstorming session amid reports that he is "upset" at Rahul Gandhi ignoring him at a recent event.

The Congress, however, denied that anyone was upset. It claimed that Tharoor had already discussed his inability to attend the meeting with the leaders.

Discussing poll preparedness, campaign strategy and seat-sharing within the UDF alliance in Kerala, the party's top leadership stressed the importance of maintaining unity among the state unit ranks to ensure victory in the upcoming polls expected to take place in April.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge claimed the people of Kerala are yearning for change, and the UDF will ensure progressive and development-oriented governance in the state.

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, attended the meeting held at Kharge's residence, where all senior Kerala Congress leaders were present.

AICC general secretary, organisation, K C Venugopal, the party's in-charge for Kerala affairs, Deepa Dasmunshi, senior observers for Kerala polls, Sachin Pilot and K J George, senior leaders Ramesh Chennithala, CLP leader V D Satheesan and Kerala unit chief Sunny Joseph were also present at the key strategy meet. In a post on X after the meeting, Kharge said that 3.6 crore people of Kerala are yearning for change. "The Congress party, along with our partners in the UDF, is determined to ensure progressive, development-oriented, welfare-based governance in the state. An important preparatory meeting with Kerala Congress leaders was held for the forthcoming Assembly elections," he said.

Venugopal said they had a very fruitful meeting on Bihar and Kerala.

"In the Kerala meeting, election preparations were discussed, campaign mood and electioneering of the Kerala elections were also discussed. There was a very smooth discussion. "Kharge ji and Rahul ji listened to the views of Kerala leaders, and we are unitedly going for elections. We are very much sure that we are going to cross 100 seats in this election," Venugopal told reporters after the meeting.

Chennithala said, "We also discussed the seat-sharing arrangement within the UDF alliance. The Congress and UDF had a big victory in the panchayat elections, and we are fully confident that the Congress party will form the government in the state with a majority in the next election."Asked why Tharoor was absent at the meeting and whether he was upset over being sidelined, Chennithala said, "No one is upset, and there is no 'narazgi'. He had a programme in Calicut, and that is why he could not come. He had spoken with us earlier. There is no question of anyone being upset."

On Tharoor giving priority to a literary festival over the key strategy meeting, he said, "Because he was invited earlier (at the literary festival) and he had talked to us that he has to go there. There is no one getting upset." On whether the Congress will announce a chief ministerial candidate, the senior leader said, "No face will be announced, and a decision on this will be taken after the election."

Hasina accuses Yunus regime of 'bartering' Bangladesh to foreign interests, calls for overthrow

New Delhi (TSIT) Ousted Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina, said on Wednesday that her nation faces the threat of its territory and resources being 'bartered' away to foreign interests and called upon her countrymen to unite and 'overthrow' the interim regime led by Mohammad Yunus. In a possible reference to the US, China, and especially Pakistan, gaining wider acceptance in the Yunus-led regime, Hasina said, "Dangerously, there is a treacherous plot to barter away the territory and resources of Bangladesh to foreign interests." Hasina's recorded audio message in English was played at an event, 'Save Democracy in Bangladesh', in New Delhi on Wednesday evening. She exhorted her countrymen, reminding them about the 'liberation war' of 1971, and added, "Overthrow the foreign-serving puppet regime of Yunus."Hasina, who was ousted following public protests in August 2024, accused her successor and head of the interim government, Mohammad Yunus, of being a "murderous fascist, a money launderer, a plunderer, and a corrupt, power-hungry traitor who has bled our nation dry with his all-consuming paradigms".

India crush New Zealand by 7 wickets in 2nd T20I

Raipur (TSIT): Skipper Suryakumar Yadav smashed an unbeaten 82 off 37 balls as India thrashed New Zealand by seven wickets in the second T20 International to take a 2-0 lead in the five-match series on Friday. Chasing 209, India recovered from an early setback of 6/2 to finish the chase with 28 balls to spare.

Ishan Kishan starred with a blistering 76 off 32 balls, while Shivam Dube added a quick 36. Earlier, New Zealand posted 208/6, led by Rachin Ravindra's rapid 44 off 26 balls.

Pune Porsche car crash: SC seeks govt's reply on bail plea of accused

New Delhi: The Supreme Court has sought a response from the Maharashtra government on pleas filed by an accused seeking bail in the Pune Porsche car accident case that claimed two lives in May 2024. On May 19, 2024, a Porsche car, allegedly driven by a 17-year-old boy under the influence of alcohol, fatally knocked down two IT professionals in Pune's Kalyani Nagar area.

A bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan issued notice to the state government and tagged the plea filed by accused Amar Santish Gaikwad against the Bombay High Court's December 16 order with other similar matters related to the case. Gaikwad, represented by advocate Sana Raees Khan, submitted that the high court erred in its finding and denied him bail.

Khan submitted before the bench on Thursday that the sole allegation against the petitioner was that he acted as a middleman for the monetary transaction, which was made for tampering with the medical evidence or swapping of the blood sample of the juvenile at Sassoon Hospital by receiving the cash amount from the driver and handing it over to the doctor's assistant.

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RBI to inject over Rs 2 lakh crore in banking system to ease liquidity

Mumbai, Jan 23: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday announced a series of liquidity-enhancing measures that will pump in more than Rs 2 lakh crore into the banking system to ease liquidity pressure. The RBI said it will use a combination of open market bond purchases, a foreign exchange swap, and a variable rate repo operation to ease liquidity conditions in the financial system. The steps are being undertaken following a review of current liquidity and financial conditions. As part of the measures, the central bank will conduct a 90-day variable rate repo (VRR) operation for an amount of Rs 25,000 crore on January 30, allowing banks to borrow funds at market-determined rates against collateral assets to be provided by them. A VRR is a tool where banks borrow short-term funds through an auction, with the interest rate determined by market bids, not fixed in advance. The central bank will also carry out a dollar-rupee buy/sell swap auction of $10 billion for a tenor of three years on February 4. Under this programme, the banks will sell dollars to the RBI for rupees and simultaneously agree to buy those dollars back later at a fixed forward rate. This effectively means the RBI borrows rupees for a period while managing exchange rate risk and boosting market liquidity without permanently altering forex reserves.

Vehicle-to-vehicle communication on the way to reduce road accidents: Nitin Gadkari

New Delhi, Jan 23: In a bid to reduce road accidents and fatalities, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Friday informed that 30 GHz radio frequency has been allocated by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) for the development of vehicle-to-vehicle communication systems. He urged members of the consultative committee of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways to convey to state authorities the importance of conducting regular Members of Parliament Road Safety Committee (MPRSC) meetings in their respective districts with participation from the district collector, police, PWD and other concerned agencies. The meeting focused on 'Measures for Reduction in Road Accidents and Fatalities', emphasising a multi-pronged and coordinated approach to curb road accidents and save lives. Gadkari stated that road safety considerations are being duly incorporated while finalising Detailed Project Reports (DPRs). He directed the Regional Officers and Project Directors of MoRTH/NHAI to attend MPRSC meetings regularly and ensure suitable road safety interventions in ongoing projects.

It's a matter of concern if Bengalis feel unsafe in Bengal: JP Nadda

Jabalpur, Jan 23 (GNS) Former Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president and Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda, addressing an event in Madhya Pradesh's Jabalpur on Friday, said that the people from the "Bengali community are feeling unsafe in West Bengal." The BJP leader stated that Bengal has made great contributions to the freedom of India and guided the nation with its culture and knowledge. He alleged that Bengal was divided due to the then Congress leadership. During his address, Nadda mentioned the names of renowned personalities from West Bengal, including Subhash Chandra Bose, Rabindranath Tagore, Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, and many others, and their contributions to building a strong and united country. "It is said that what Bengal thinks today, India thinks tomorrow," the Union Minister said while addressing a large gathering of people from the Bengali community during an event organised by City Bengali Club in Jabalpur, the city also known as Sanskardhani (cultural capital) of Madhya Pradesh.

Tension in MP's Tarana amid clash between two groups; buses set afire, stone-pelting reported

Ujjain, Jan 23: Tension erupted once again in Tarana town of Ujjain district in Madhya Pradesh on Friday after 'namaz', with the mob allegedly setting buses on fire, vandalising shops and pelting stones at several places, prompting heavy deployment of police forces to bring the situation under control. The unrest began with a minor dispute on January 22 night over giving way to a bus. What started as an argument quickly escalated into tension between two communities, leading to incidents of stone-pelting, vandalism and arson.

On Friday, the situation deteriorated further as unidentified rioters allegedly torched two buses and spread panic through vandalism and stone-pelting. Police reached the scene promptly and managed to bring the situation under control, officials said.

Superintendent of Police (SP) Pradeep Sharma told the media that a case of attempted murder has been registered against six individuals and appealed to the public to maintain peace, assuring that strict action is being taken against those responsible.

According to SP Sharma, the incident stemmed from an attack on one Sohel Thakur, who was assaulted from behind by a group of youths. He sustained serious head injuries and was referred to Ujjain for further treatment.

Based on his complaint, police registered a case of attempted murder against six accused -- Sappan Mirza, Ishaan Mirza, Shadab alias Idli, Salman Mirza, Rizwan Mirza and Naved. Five of them have already been arrested, while four others are in custody for questioning.

The SP confirmed that the injured person's condition is stable.

PM Modi flags off three new Amrit Bharat Express trains from Thiruvananthapuram

Thiruvananthapuram, Jan 23: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday flagged off the newly-allotted three new Amrit Bharat Express trains and a passenger train service for Kerala from Thiruvananthapuram.

In a major step towards modernising rail travel for citizens and improving inter-state and regional connectivity, the PM flagged off the Amrit Bharat Expresses on the Nagercoil-Mangaluru, the Thiruvananthapuram-Tambaram, and the Thiruvananthapuram-Charlapalli routes.

He also flagged off a new passenger train service between Thrissur and Guruvayur.

The Thiruvananthapuram-Tambaram Amrit Bharat Express and the Nagercoil-Mangaluru Amrit Bharat Express (both from the Thiruvananthapuram Central station), the Thiruvananthapuram-Charlappalli Amrit Bharat Express (from the Thiruvananthapuram North station) and the Thrissur-Guruvayur Passenger Train (from Thrissur station) departed for their destinations from their stations soon after the ceremony.

All four trains will be operated and maintained by the Southern Railway.

The Thiruvananthapuram Central-Tambaram Amrit Bharat Express will connect Kerala's capital with key industrial, educational and medical hubs in Tamil Nadu, passing through major stations such as Tirunelveli, Madurai and Tiruchchirappalli, while the Thiruvananthapuram-Charlapalli Amrit Bharat Express will provide a vital rail link across Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, serving several important cities en route.

Meanwhile, the Nagercoil-Mangaluru Junction Amrit Bharat Express will connect Tamil Nadu with coastal Karnataka through Kerala, benefiting passengers travelling along the western coastal belt. The Guruvayur-Thrissur passenger train will offer direct and affordable connectivity between the major pilgrimage centre and Thrissur, catering to daily commuters, students and devotees.

Talking to IANS, a passenger said: "Amrit Bharat Express is a non-AC train providing both general and sleeper services for short and long distances.

Global Election chiefs adopt 'Delhi Declaration 2026' to strengthen democracies further

New Delhi, Jan 23 : The India International Conference on Democracy and Election Management (IICDEM) 2026 concluded successfully in New Delhi on Friday (January 23), with unanimous adoption of the Delhi Declaration.

The Delhi Declaration 2026 stands as a testament to collaborative resolve, aiming to operationalise these commitments through innovation, measurable actions, and sustained global partnership to fortify democracy for an inclusive, peaceful, resilient, and sustainable future. In a ceremonial reading, Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar outlined the declaration's five core pillars: Purity of Electoral Rolls, Conduct of Elections, Research and Publications, Use of Technology, and Training and Capacity Building.

These pillars serve as a shared framework for Election Management Bodies (EMBs) worldwide to enhance the integrity, inclusivity, and efficiency of democratic processes, marking the event a significant milestone in global electoral cooperation.

Hosted by the Election Commission of India (ECI) at the Bharat Mandapam over three days from January 21 to 23, the landmark event brought together heads of 42 Election Management Bodies (EMBs) from around the world, experts from more than 70 national institutions, senior ECI officers, and 36 Chief Electoral Officers from Indian states and union territories. Under the first pillar, participants committed to maintaining pure electoral rolls by ensuring all eligible voters are included as per legal provisions and providing photo identity cards for transparent voting. The second pillar emphasised participatory, inclusive, and stakeholder-driven elections conducted in strict accordance with constitutional and legal mandates to guarantee transparency, efficiency, and fairness.

For research and publications, the declaration resolved to produce an Encyclopaedia of Democracies of the World, including an atlas of global electoral systems verified by respective EMBs, alongside comprehensive reports on seven themes led by International IDEA and 36 themes coordinated by the India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM).

Technology adoption formed the fourth pillar, with EMBs pledging to integrate modern tools while safeguarding electoral integrity, countering misinformation, and supporting voters.

India offered to share its experience with ECINET, the one-stop digital platform launched during the conference on its second day, enabling co-development of similar systems tailored to other countries' laws and languages.

The fifth pillar focused on training and capacity building, with India extending IIIDEM's facilities-having trained over 10,000 Indian staff and personnel from more than 100 countries in the past 15 years-to global EMBs for professionalising election conduct and roll preparation.

In his keynote address, CEC Kumar highlighted how the conference ignited vital conversations on model international electoral standards and how over 40 bilateral meetings expanded mutual cooperation and collective priorities.

Bhojshala row: Basant Panchami prayers, Friday namaz held peacefully in MP's Dhar

Dhar (Madhya Pradesh), Jan 23 : The celebration of the Basant Panchami festival by Hindus and Friday namaz by Muslims at the disputed Bhojshala Temple-Kamal Maula Mosque complex in Madhya Pradesh's Dhar district concluded peacefully, an official said on Friday.

Dhar District Collector Priyank Mishra said people from both communities offered their prayers at the site peacefully amid high security, without any disruption of law and order in the area. He, however, appealed to people to maintain peace and public order to avoid any untoward incident.

"As per the order of the Supreme Court, the programme of the Hindu community on Basant Panchami and the Muslim community's Friday namaz at the designated place was conducted peacefully. People are appealed to maintain peace and law and order," the district Collector said in a statement.

Following the Supreme Court's direction, people from the Hindu community offered prayers to Bagichi Devi (Goddess Saraswati) at the Bhojshala temple premises, while Muslims also performed Friday namaz during the permitted window. The Basant Panchami prayers involved traditional Saraswati Puja rituals. A large number of devotees visited the site, necessitating significant police deployment.

PM Modi receives call from Brazilian President Lula; AI Summit, UN reform discussed

Washington, Jan 23 : Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said during a telephone call with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday that he intends to attend the AI Impact Summit in New Delhi next month. The two leaders aligned on Global South priorities and pressed for United Nations Security Council reform ahead of their bilateral summit scheduled for February in India.

The call lasted about 45 minutes and focused on preparations for President Lula's State Visit to India from February 19 to 21, according to an official readout issued by the Brazilian presidency. During the call, Lula conveyed his interest in participating in the Artificial Intelligence Summit, scheduled to be held in New Delhi from February 16 to 20. PM Modi and President Lula reviewed the agenda for the visit and agreed to push cooperation across key sectors. These include defense, trade, health, science and technology, energy, biofuels, critical minerals, and rare earths. Both sides said these areas would be given priority as India and Brazil seek to expand strategic and economic ties.

"President Lula indicated his intention to participate in the Artificial Intelligence Summit. On the bilateral agenda, the two leaders agreed to prioritize cooperation in the areas of defense, trade, health, science and technology, energy, biofuels, critical minerals, and rare earths," the readout said.

The leaders also underlined the importance of the Brazil-India Business Forum, scheduled for February 21 during Lula's visit, and welcomed participation by private sector representatives from both countries.

"Both leaders highlighted the importance of the Brazil-India Business Forum, to be held on the 21st, and welcomed the engagement of the private sector from both countries in the visit," the readout said.

Bank 'fraud' by Anil Ambani-led RCOM: SC seeks sealed-cover reports from CBI, ED; issues fresh notice

New Delhi, Jan 23 : The Supreme Court on Friday sought sealed-cover status reports from the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on their ongoing probes into alleged large-scale bank frauds linked to Reliance Communications Ltd (RCOM), its group companies, and promoter Anil Ambani.

A Bench of Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi directed the two Central agencies to apprise the top court of the progress made in the investigations.

The reports are to be submitted in a sealed envelope. Appearing for the petitioner, advocate Prashant Bhushan submitted that more than Rs 1.50 lakh crore of debt of the RCOM and its group companies has been written off and alleged that funds were siphoned off through multiple shell companies. He described the case as the "largest bank loan fraud in the country."

Bhushan added that neither Anil Ambani nor RCOM had entered an appearance before the Supreme Court despite notices being issued earlier. "This was highly reported in the media. It is not that they do not know. They are watching the proceedings," he submitted. However, "in the interest of justice," the CJI Kant-led Bench granted them a last opportunity and issued fresh notices, directing the Registrar General of the Bombay High Court to ensure service upon them.

Delhi Police book Gurpatwant Singh Pannun over Republic Day threats

New Delhi, Jan 23 The Delhi Police on Friday registered an FIR against Sikh for Justice (SFJ) leader Gurpatwant Singh Pannun over alleged threats to create unrest in the national capital ahead of Republic Day celebrations on January 26.

According to officials, the FIR has been lodged by the Special Cell of Delhi Police under Sections 196, 197, 152 and 61 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). These provisions relate to criminal conspiracy, acts endangering the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India, and other offences posing a threat to national security.

Police sources said the action was initiated following a video circulated on social media, in which Pannun allegedly issued threats targeting Delhi around Republic Day. In the video, he claimed that pro-Khalistan posters had been pasted in areas such as Rohini and Dabri through so-called sleeper cells.

However, after verification and searches at the locations mentioned, the Special Cell stated that no such posters have been found so far. Investigations are continuing to ascertain the origin of the video and the intent behind the claims made by the SFJ leader.

Meanwhile, in a separate incident, on Thursday, India strongly condemned the trespassing of the Indian Embassy in Croatia and the vandalisation of the national flag by Khalistani activists. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said the perpetrators of the incident should be identified and held accountable.

This incident marked the latest in a series of actions by Khalistani elements targeting Indian diplomatic missions abroad. While most such cases have previously been reported from Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States, the incident in Croatia has raised fresh concerns. The Indian Embassy in Zagreb was targeted just days ahead of the India-European Union Summit scheduled to be held in New Delhi on January 27.

A video shared online by Pannun showed a Khalistani activist allegedly entering the embassy premises in Zagreb, removing the Indian national flag and replacing it with a Khalistani flag. The video suggested that the incident took place on January 22.

"We condemn the incident of trespassing and vandalism at our embassy in Zagreb, Croatia, by anti-India elements," the external affairs ministry said in a statement that did not refer to Khalistani activists or Pannun.

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Bengaluru ranks second in global traffic congestion

Bengaluru, Jan 23: Widely recognised on the global stage for its IT sector and other achievements, Bengaluru has now drawn worldwide attention for a less favourable reason — traffic congestion. According to the TomTom Traffic Index report, Bengaluru has secured the second position among the most traffic-congested cities in the world, with Mexico city ranking first. Bengaluru recorded an average congestion level of 74.4 per cent. Compared to 2024, congestion increased by 1.7 per cent in 2025. Drivers in the city were able to cover only an average distance of 4.2 km in 15 minutes. Travelling 10 km

took an average of 36 minutes and nine seconds. During peak congestion, average vehicle speed dropped to 13.9 km per hour, the report stated. The travel experience in the city was identified as particularly poor on May 17, 2025, when congestion levels touched 101 per cent. On that day, congestion rose sharply to 183 per cent at around 6 pm, with commuters taking 15 minutes to travel just 2.5 km. In 2024, covering 10 km took 34 minutes and 10 seconds, indicating an increase of 1.59 minutes within a year. In 2025, Bengaluru's overall average vehicle speed was recorded at 16.6 km per hour, while during peak hours it

dropped to 14.6 km per hour in the morning and 13.2 km per hour in the evening. City residents are estimated to spend nearly 168 hours, or about seven days, stuck in traffic during 2025. Chennai and Hyderabad ranked much lower on the list, with statistics indicating comparatively healthier traffic conditions. Chennai, placed 32nd globally, recorded a congestion level of 58.6 per cent. Apart from Bengaluru, six other Indian cities featured among the top 35 most congested cities globally. Pune ranked fifth with a congestion level of 71.1 per cent. Mumbai stood at 18th place with 63.2 per cent congestion.

Davos: Appeal made to the Liechtenstein Prime Minister to invest in the State

Discussions held with Amazon Web Services to attract global cloud companies to Karnataka

Volvo expresses satisfaction with the State's industry-friendly environment

Bengaluru: The State Government has appealed to the Prime Minister of Liechtenstein to invest a major share of the investment commitments under the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) agreement in Karnataka.

Industries Minister M.B. Patil, who is participating in the World Economic Forum in Davos, said he met Liechtenstein Prime Minister Brigitte Haas and held fruitful discussions on strengthening bilateral ties by leveraging the country's industrial expertise and Karnataka's manufacturing and innovation ecosystem. He added that an invitation was also extended to the Prime Minister to visit the State to further strengthen trade relations.

The Minister said detailed discussions were held with Michael Punke, Vice-President of Amazon Web Services (AWS), one of the world's leading cloud computing and digital infrastructure companies, on attracting a large number of global cloud and infrastructure firms to Karnataka.

Michael Punke expressed deep appreciation for the State's abundant pool of skilled professionals, start-ups and digital infrastructure. The State Government has assured that it would meet all the requirements of global cloud and data centre operators, Patil said.

Information was also shared on the incentives available in the State for the cloud computing sector, power availability, and infrastructure that is ready for immediate deployment.

Automobile manufacturer Volvo has expressed satisfaction with the industry-friendly environment in Karnataka. The company has been invited to expand its vehicle manufacturing activities in the State by leveraging Karnataka's strengths in manufacturing, technology and skilled manpower.

Hubballi has always carried a distinct charm

Bengaluru: A unique blend of culture, character, humour, and mystery. Drawing from this very essence comes "Hubballi Hunters", an upcoming horror-comedy produced by Santosh Kumar KC, producer of the 2019 Kannada blockbuster Bell Bottom, under the Golden Horse banner, in collaboration with Samarth Kadkol, the filmmaker behind Edagaiye Apaghatakke Karana.

After a seven-year gap, Golden Horse announces Hubballi Hunters, setting the stage for a fresh cinematic journey rooted in North Karnataka, yet crafted to connect with audiences across India. What makes

Hubballi Hunters truly special is its power-packed ensemble cast of popular content creators from across India, coming together for the first time in a feature film and bringing fresh energy, relatability, and plenty of surprises. The film is written and directed by Samarth Kadkol, known for his quirky and rooted storytelling. Dialogues are penned by Samarth Kadkol along with Rahul V. Parvatikar, Amit Karvkar, and Chetan Marambeed, adding sharp humour and contemporary flavour to the narrative. Abhimanyu Sadanandan serves as the Director of Photography, while Prasanna Keshava heads the music department, shaping the film's visual and sonic identity.

Nokia keen on setting up a Global Capability Centre (GCC): M.B. Patil

Bengaluru: Nokia Corporation, one of the world's leading players in the telecommunications technology sector, has expressed its interest in establishing a Global Capability Centre (GCC) and research centres in Karnataka.

Nokia, which has enjoyed a long-standing association with the State for over 25 years and operates its largest global research centre in Bengaluru, has held discussions on expanding its operations across Karnataka, including in Tier-2 cities. During meetings with senior Nokia officials at the ongoing World Economic Forum summit in Davos, the State Government assured full support for the company's future expansion plans, Industries Minister M.B. Patil said. The Minister also reiterated the State Government's commitment to supporting the World Economic Forum's

'Yes–BLR UpLink' initiative, which seeks to develop the 'Yes Bengaluru' programme on sustainable urban development into a globally recognised platform for government–industry collaboration.

He said the matter was discussed in detail during a meeting with John Dutton, Head of UpLink at the World Economic Forum. The initiative provides financial assistance, mentorship and pilot opportunities to start-ups working on real-world, city-centric challenges and contributing to urban development. The WEF UpLink delega-

tion has appreciated the Karnataka Government's continued support for the initiative, he added. Discussions were also held with global cyber security major Cloudflare on joining the 'KWIN City' project and on future expansion opportunities. The State Government assured the necessary support for the company's expansion plans. Cloudflare's Global Strategy Head, Stephanie Cohen, described Karnataka as one of the world's best destinations for attracting advanced technologies, the Minister said.

Mercedes-Benz strengthens its presence in Karnataka; inaugurates Bengaluru's latest luxury facility and a Maybach Lounge- Viva Star

Bengaluru: Mercedes-Benz India launches the ultra-luxury Mercedes-Maybach GLS 600 SUV in Bengaluru priced at INR 2.75 crores all-India ex-showroom. This luxurious SUV for the first time will be 'Made in India', outside the USA

Santosh Iyer, Managing Director & CEO, Mercedes-Benz India, said, The innovation capital of India, Bengaluru remains a key market for Mercedes-Benz buoyed by growing demand for topend luxury vehicles from young aspirational customers. Inaugurating India's most exquisite ultra-luxurious 'Maybach Lounge' in Bengaluru, underscores the rising demand for ultra-luxury vehicles like Mercedes-Maybach. Bengaluru has emerged as one of the top 3 cities for billionaires in India and the luxury consumption is growing strongly. Mercedes-Benz aims to tap this burgeoning potential of Bengaluru, with

elevated customer experience and world-class retail infrastructure curated by Viva Star. With this luxury facility we strengthen our footprint in the city and confident of curating the most desirable luxury experience for our discerning customers.

Prasad Deshpande, Managing Director, Viva Star, commented, "Viva Star is proud to commence our much-coveted journey with Mercedes-Benz, the global automotive icon that is the cornerstone for luxury, prestige and desirability. We are thrilled with the inauguration of Bengaluru's latest luxury destination, promising to create new standards in luxury sales and service facility. This facility has been designed to deliver a premium customer experience through curated consultation spaces, a dedicated handover experience and a modern service set-up focused on quality, efficiency and personalized care.

Karnataka Launches Automated Land Conversion for Renewable Energy projects

Bengaluru : The Government of Karnataka has introduced an auto-conversion system for land required for Renewable Energy (RE) projects. This major reform accelerates renewable energy projects and improves the ease of doing business. It simplifies procedures and eliminates long-standing delays.

The Revenue Department developed this software to facilitate automatic land conversion after the 30-day deadline under the deemed land conversion provision and to exempt renewable energy projects from the prior land conversion requirement. Revenue

Minister Krishna Byre Gowda inaugurated the software at Vikas Soudha on today. The Revenue Department developed this software in line with changes to Section 95 of the Karnataka Land Revenue Act, 1964, and Rules 106(e) and 106(f) of the Karnataka Land Revenue Rules, 1996. The software enables automated land conversion for renewable energy projects. It was first launched on a pilot basis in the Chikkaballapur district. After its successful pilot, it has now been extended statewide.

Speaking after launching the software, Revenue Minister Krishna

Byre Gowda said Karnataka remains committed to supporting the country's goal of achieving 500 gigawatts of renewable energy capacity by 2030. While ensuring energy security, he said, environmental protection is equally critical, underscoring the need to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and promote renewable energy. The software, he added, has been developed to make it easier for renewable energy developers to secure land from landowners.

He further said Karnataka continues to lead in attracting global investments. At the Global Investors Meet 2025, the state signed investment agreements worth over Rs.4 lakh crore in the renewable energy sector alone, accounting for nearly 40% of the total investments received. During the meeting, the government had assured simplification of land conversion rules to promote ease of doing business, and that commitment has now been fulfilled through the launch of this software. He added that, in addition to simplifying land conversion laws, the process has been moved online to ensure greater transparency.

Title poster and teaser of the film 'Indira' released

INDIRA, A 'GEN Z' MOVIE OF TODAY'S GENERATION!

Bengaluru: Now is the time for the youth of the 'Gen-Z' generation. Although everyone has smartphones in their hands and everyone has internet access, there is no doubt that today's 'Gen-Z' generation is using it excessively. Now, how is this same 'Gen-Z' generation using technology? A film team is going to bring a story to the screen through a movie.By the way, the film is named 'Indira', and the title of the film has the tagline 'Gen-Z'. Young director Ved, who had earlier directed the film 'Raven', is writing and directing the film 'Indira', which is being produced by Kiran Kumar M. under the banner 'Kiran Films'.

16th National Voters' Day – 2026: Inauguration by Hon'ble Governor

Bengaluru : The Election Commission of India was established on 25th January 1950. Since 2011, National Voters' Day has been celebrated across the country every year on 25th January.

The Election Commission of India will celebrate the 16th National Voters' Day (NVD) on 25th January 2026. On this occasion, Hon'ble Governor of Karnataka, Shri Thawar Chand Gehlot, will participate as the Chief Guest at the state-level event organized at Sir Puttanna Chetty Town Hall, Bengaluru.

Heads and representatives of election management bodies, students, and many other distinguished guests will participate in this programme. The theme of National Voters' Day 2026 is: "My India, My

Vote – Citizen at the Heart of Indian Democracy."

National Voters' Day, dedicated to the voters of the country, is celebrated to encourage eligible citizens to enroll in the electoral roll. On this occasion, new voters will be felicitated and Electoral Photo Identity Cards will be distributed. As part of this, EPIC cards will be symbolically distributed to youth, persons with disabilities, women, transgender persons, and particularly voters belonging to vulnerable tribal communities. All participants in the programme will be administered the Voters' Pledge.

On this occasion, the Hon'ble Governor will also present awards to officers and staff who performed excellently in various election-related processes dur-

ing the year 2025 and in the preparatory work for the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls. The awardees include 5 District Election Officers (DEOs), 5 Additional District Election Officers (ADEOs), 5 Electoral Registration Officers (EROs), 5 Assistant Electoral Registration Officers (AEROs), 1 Research Assistant from the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Karnataka, 10 BLO Supervisors, 34 Booth Level Officers (BLOs), 9 students who won prizes in the state-level Kannada essay competition. The main objective of celebrating National Voters' Day is to create awareness among citizens about elections and to encourage them to actively participate in the electoral process.

OPPO India elevates travel photography with the all-new Reno15 Series featuring AI Portrait Camera, PureTone Technology and Popout OPPO

Bengaluru : OPPO India launches its premium Reno15 Series, featuring three variants—Reno15 Pro, Reno15 Pro Mini, and Reno15. Crafted for young travellers and photography enthusiasts, the series blends advanced camera system, intelligent AI and precision-engineered design. Featuring colour finishes inspired by natural elements and first-of-its-kind HoloFusion Technology, the Reno15 Series pairs a compact, ergonomic form factor with rugged build quality. The Reno15 Pro and Reno15 Pro Mini take photography further with a 200MP camera delivering stunning clarity, complemented by a 50MP 3.5x optical zoom lens, up to 120x digital zoom, supported by PureTone Imaging Technology and AI editing

tools.Commenting on the launch of the Reno15 Series, Goldee Patnaik, Head of Communications, OPPO India, said, "With over 100 million OPPO users in India, we have closely witnessed how consumer expectations have evolved towards premium experiences, especially with cameras systems, intuitive AI, distinctive design language and user experience. The consistent

growth of the Reno Series our commitment to this trend as consumers look for devices that deliver real-world value rather than incremental upgrades. With the Reno15 Series, we are building on that trust, offering significantly-advanced imaging system, deeper AI capabilities and stronger all-round performance, designed around how young Indians travel, create and capture

their moments."

Industry First HoloFusion Technology
OPPO introduces its HoloFusion Technology, redefining smartphone aesthetics with a three-dimensional layered visual effect being applied to a one-piece sculpted glass design, delivering enhanced depth, tactile texture and fluid light interaction. Complementing this is

OPPO's Dynamic Stellar Ring Design—an elegantly integrated camera layout that catches the light with a soft halo glow, giving the back a clean, seamless finish.

The Reno15 Pro comes in Sunset Gold inspired by the golden hues of sunset beaches that turn the ocean into a sheet of liquid gold, and Cocoa Brown, rooted in the warmth of tea and coffee. The Reno15 Pro Mini retains Cocoa Brown while adding a playful Glacier White that features a three-dimensional ribbon pattern achieved through HoloFusion Technology and a Crystal Pink variant. Reno15 completes the lineup with Glacier White, Twilight Blue and Aurora Blue, drawing inspiration from night skies and aurora-like phenomena.

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Edit

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THE SOUTH INDIA TIMES

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Politics of hate speech

As hate speeches continued unabated with impunity, as authorities were not initiating action, a number of concerned citizens began to approach the Supreme Court. The apex court had, in the past, given an important judgment regarding the prevention of hate crimes and registering cases against offenders. But recently, a division bench of the court, though it had reserved orders, indicated that it would close most of the petitions relating to hate speech pending before it since 2021, and added that the petitioners could pursue remedies as per the existing legal provisions. It may be noted that the Centre and a couple of state governments asserted substantial compliance with the court orders. In the last few years, there has been a spate of hate speeches delivered by several prominent political and religious leaders belonging to the Sangh Parivar. They either had the blessings of the ruling party or at least its tacit approval, due to which authorities would not act against them. The Supreme Court had to intervene and ordered prompt registration of cases, and threatened them with contempt of court in case they failed to do so. Even after the court's orders, legal battles had to be waged to make authorities take action. Two things were clear – one, judicial action at the highest level was needed, and two, there is only so much the courts could do.

The limitations of the judiciary and other constitutional authorities have to be seen in the context of the problem being more political than a law-and-order one. The BJP and its affiliates thrive on using religion for political ends, and hate speeches are a part of its playbook. When the state machinery realizes that the party in power is an avowed follower of divisive religious ideology, it would be extremely reluctant to initiate action.

In the run-up to elections, the BJP would openly use religious rhetoric in electioneering to queer the pitch for the opposition parties.

The propaganda would range from dog whistles by top leaders to brazen Islamophobic speeches by middle-rung leaders of the BJP and the Sangh Parivar, against which even the Election Commission would not take stern, deterrent action. Authorities use every available loophole in the rule book to let the offenders off the hook. Hate speeches have serious consequences, as they permeate the rank and file and often create vigilante forces who resort to harassment, attacks and mob lynching of minorities. According to a research group, there has been an increase in hate speech in online and offline spaces over the years, and they spike during elections. Obviously, most of the speeches target the Muslim population.Hate speech is more rampant in BJP-ruled states due to the inherent permissiveness, which emboldens political and religious leaders to unleash virulent hate speeches. The BJP either refutes all allegations or argues that they are not due to religious strife, or some rare instance is often blown out of proportion by vested interests. When India expressed concern about attacks on Hindu minorities in Bangladesh, the Yunus government's defence seemed like it had taken a leaf out of the BJP's book. Hate speeches and crimes will continue as long as they yield political benefits, which puts the ball in the people's court.

Record Billionaire Wealth and Escalating Global Inequality

RAMESH PAKA

In a startling revelation, the latest Oxfam Global Inequality Report shows that the combined wealth of the world's billionaires reached a record $18.3 trillion in 2025, growing three times faster than recent years. This marked an 81% increase since 2020, even as hundreds of millions worldwide struggle with basic survival. Despite this historic boom at the top, nearly half the world's population still lives in poverty, and one in four people regularly lacks sufficient food, a stark contrast to the soaring fortunes of the ultra wealthy.

Economic Growth or Skewed Prosperity? Contrasting Realities

While wealth creation among the billionaire class might appear as a symbol of economic dynamism, the broader economic reality tells a different story:

Growth largely bypasses the majority: The wealth surge among the richest underscores how capital intensive sectors and asset price inflation (especially in tech and finance) benefit wealthy investors far more than wage-dependent workers, whose incomes lag or even decline in real terms.

Stagnation for the poor: Millions remain trapped in low income brackets, with poverty rates stubbornly persistent and basic needs such as food, healthcare, and education, still out of reach for vast swathes of the global population.

Political inequality deepens: Billionaires are now reported to be 4,000 times more likely to hold political office than ordinary citizens,

ties to protect and expand their interests. Erosion of democratic norms: This "rule of the rich" threatens democratic egalitarianism, where political voice and policy influence should be rooted in citizenship, not bank balance.

Social unrest: Across continents, from Africa to Asia and Latin America, grassroots protests are rising against widening inequality, austerity, and lack of opportunities, illustrating that economic divides can fuel broader instability.

Link to Poverty Reduction - Lost Opportunity

The report and related analyses emphasize a stark moral and economic paradox: the wealth accumulated by the billionaire class, if redistributed could eradicate extreme poverty many times over. Estimates suggest that the recent $2.5 trillion annual increase in billionaire wealth

potentially skewing public policy in favor of elite interests over public welfare. From an economic growth perspective, unequal wealth distribution limits overall demand, weakens human capital investment, shrinks consumer markets, and thus constrains sustainable, long-term development.

Societal and Political Impacts Beyond Numbers

The Oxfam report highlights that extreme wealth concentration isn't just an economic issue, it's a societal and democratic challenge:

Political power consolidation: With disproportionate influence over media, policymaking, and governance, the wealthy can shape regulations, tax codes, and public priori-

alone could lift millions out of extreme poverty repeatedly.

Yet, that potential remains unrealized, largely because economic systems prioritize capital returns over redistributive mechanisms such as progressive taxation, public investment in social services, and protection of labor rights.

Policy Pathways for Inclusive Growth

To harness economic growth for broad-based prosperity, several strategic responses arise from the Oxfam report and expert voices globally:

Fairer Taxation: Implementing wealth, inheritance, and capital gains taxes on the ultra rich can help fund public services and social safety nets. Public Investment: Redirecting resources toward health, education, rural development, and social protection strengthens human capital and reduces vulnerability.

Corporate Accountability:

Reforming monopoly practices, closing tax loopholes, and enforcing labor standards can redistribute economic gains more equitably. Global Cooperation: International frameworks similar in ambition to climate governance could monitor and address inequality systematically.

Eventually, inequality as a Barrier to Shared Prosperity

The Oxfam report lays bare a central truth: contemporary economic growth can generate enormous wealth, but without fairness and inclusion, prosperity remains narrow and fragile. While billionaire wealth hits record highs, almost half of humanity struggles to meet basic needs, a global imbalance that undermines economic resilience, social cohesion, and the moral foundations of development.If societies aim for sustainable progress and poverty reduction, wealth creation must be matched with equitable distribution, strong public institutions, and policies that empower the many, not just the few.

RAMESH PAKA
GENERAL SECRETARY,
TELANGANA TAHSILDAR'S ASSN. & OSD
TO HEALTH MINISTER .

Trump is obsessed with oil, but Chinese batteries will soon run the world

President Trump has an unconcealed hunger for natural resources from abroad and the power they could grant him. He declared that the United States intervened in Venezuela to "take the oil," betting that investors would put up at least $100 billion to revive a decrepit industry. His gamble is that countries will still want to buy oil from America to power their cars, trucks, ships and planes for decades to come.

Though China is the world's largest oil importer, its leader, Xi Jinping, is less brash about coveting foreign resources. The country's leadership is pushing intensively at substituting electricity for oil.

Chinese technology companies are paving the way for a world that will be powered by electric motors rather than gas-guzzling engines. It is a decisively 21st-century approach not just to solve its own energy problems, but also to sell batteries and other electric products to everyone else. Canada is its newest buyer of EVs; in a rebuke of Trump, its prime minister, Mark Carney, lowered tariffs on the cars as part of a new trade deal. Though Americans have been slow to embrace electric vehicles, Chinese households have learned to love them. In 2025, 54 per cent of new cars sold in China were either battery-powered or plug-in hybrids.

That is a big reason that the country's oil consumption is on track to peak in 2027, according to forecasts from the International Energy Agency. And Chinese E.V. makers are setting records — whether it's BYD's sales (besting Tesla by battery-powered vehicles sold for the first time last year) or Xiaomi's speed (its cars are setting records at major racetracks like Nürburgring in Germany).

These vehicles are powered not by oil but by domestically generated electrical power that comes from coal, nuclear, hydropower, solar and wind. In 2000, China produced only one-third of the amount of electrical power that the United States did; by 2024, it produced nearly two and a half times US levels. China's surging energy investments went substantially into building new plants for burning coal, which the country possesses in abundance. But over the past decade, it has also moved fast on building cleaner energy sources, especially wind and solar.

China now generates more electricity each year than the United States and the European Union combined. It has close to 40 new nuclear power reactors under construction, compared with zero in America. Last year, Beijing announced work on a new hydropower dam in Tibet that will have triple the capacity of China's Three Gorges Dam, currently the world's largest power station.

Honey Trap: An Organized Web of Fear, Infamy, and Crime
(In reference to the case reported in Bhilwara district)

DR. SATYAVAN SAURABH

The exposure of an organized gang in Rajasthan's Bhilwara district that honey-trapped and blackmailed civilians not only exposes a criminal network but also raises serious questions about the deepening fear, silence, and stigmatization of society. This case demonstrates how certain gangs are systematically exploiting human vulnerabilities, social inhibitions, and legal fears to destroy people financially, mentally, and socially.

Police investigations have revealed that some of the women involved in this gang systematically approached ordinary citizens, cultivated friendships and emotional intimacy with them, then trapped them in compromising situations and threatened to falsely implicate them in rape, kidnapping, assault, or other serious criminal cases. This was not a random crime, but an organized crime conducted under a well-planned strategy. According to investigating agencies, the gang's modus operandi was highly planned and phased. In the first stage, the accused women

befriended potential victims through social media, phone calls, or personal contact. Gradually, they developed emotional or personal intimacy, ensuring that the victims felt no danger. In the second stage, the victim was lured into a situation where compromising material or circumstances could be created against them. Then, in the third and most dangerous stage, the fear game began—blackmailing through threats of false cases, police action, social stigma, and damage to the family's reputation.
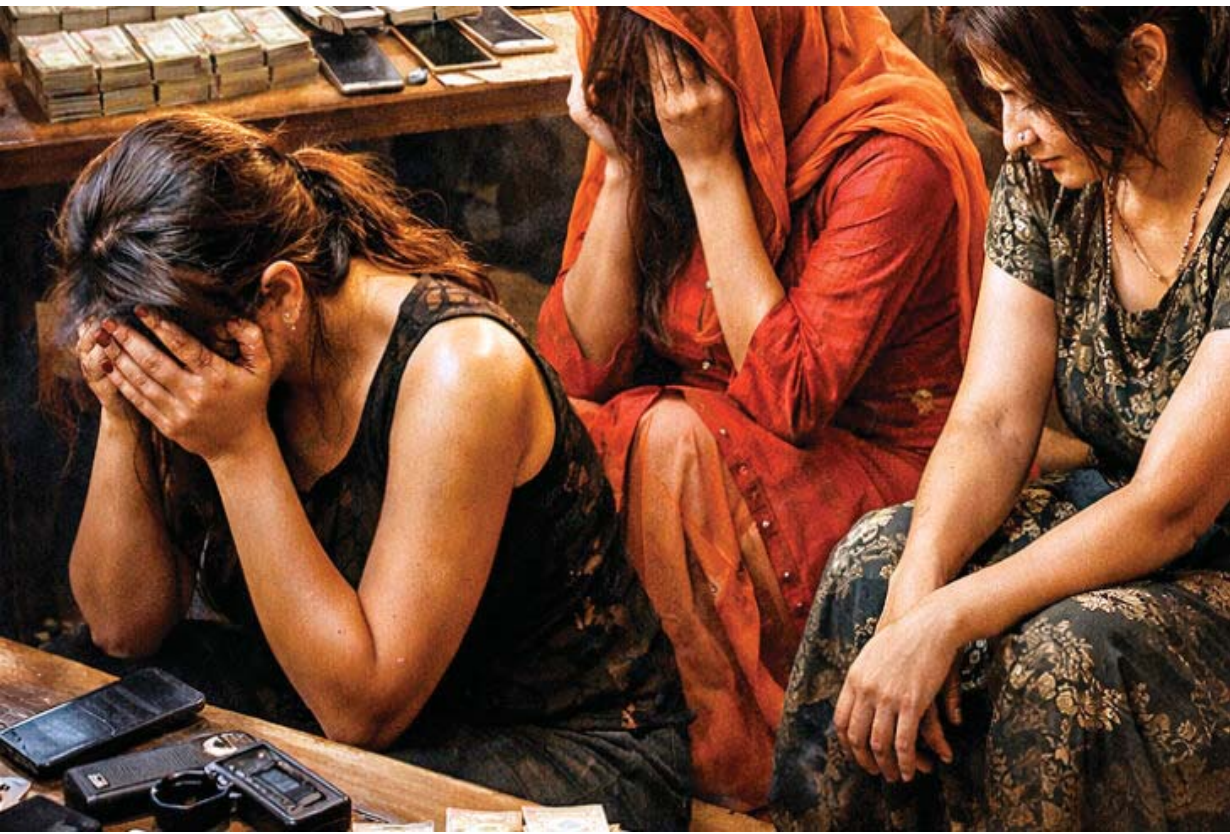
In many cases, it has also emerged that the accused women were not alone. Their husbands, boyfriends, or other male associates played an active role in the conspiracy—sometimes as intimidators, sometimes as false witnesses, and sometimes as facilitators of the alleged kidnapping or assault.

According to the police, these cases have been registered under serious sections such as blackmailing, illegal confinement, kidnapping, assault, robbery, and criminal conspiracy. This makes it clear that this crime is not limited to the moral or social realm, but is a direct challenge to the

law and order.

The investigation also revealed that some of the accused women have previously been jailed for honey trapping, while others are currently under investigation in other criminal cases. This suggests that this crime is not the result of a single incident, but rather part of a long-standing network that repeatedly sought new victims.

The police clearly state that silence in such cases empowers the perpetrators. The longer a victim remains silent out of fear, the more they become controlled by the perpetrator. This is why Bhilwara District Superintendent of Police Dharmendra Singh has appealed to the public not to be afraid in any such case and to contact the police immediately.

The police have also assured that the victim's identity will be kept strictly confidential and that her safety and dignity will be respected throughout the investigation. No accused, whether male or female, will be left unpunished.This case raises another sensitive question— the misuse of the law. Laws

designed to protect women are essential to society, but when these same laws are used for false accusations and blackmail, the real victims suffer the most.

It's important to clarify that exposing cases like honey traps isn't an act against women, but rather an act against the misuse of the law. The justice system can only maintain its credibility if it approaches every case impartially—whether the accused is a woman or a man.Organized crimes like honey traps cannot be completely eradicated through police action alone. This requires a shift in society's mindset. Victim-blaming, character-criticism, and the fear of slander—these are the criminals' greatest weapons.

It is the responsibility of the administration to take swift, fair and transparent action in such cases, while it is the responsibility of the society to stand with the victim and not put him in the dock.

The honey trap ring uncovered in Bhilwara district serves as a warning—both for ordinary citizens and for the system. This case demonstrates that crime is now committed not only with weapons, but also through psychological pressure, fear, and social vulnerability.In times like these, what's most important is awareness, courage, and trust in the law. Only when victims break their silence will this network of criminals weaken. Police appeals and action will only be successful when society supports truth rather than fear. Honey traps are not just a personal tragedy, but a social and legal challenge. Its solution lies in collective courage, sensitive thinking, and impartial justice.

The most worrying aspect of this entire matter is that most victims did not come forward for a long time due to fear of social stigma. Indian society still has deep sensitivity regarding personal relationships, morality, and honor. These gangs exploit this mentality and force people to remain silent. Victims fear that contacting the police will damage their reputation in society, family, or at work. Using this fear, the accused repeatedly extort money. In many cases, victims have been extorted for lakhs of rupees, yet the threats persist.

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Business

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Sensex, Nifty close sharply lower amid sustained FII outflows

Mumbai, Jan 23 : The Indian equity markets posted strong losses on Friday, flipping early gains amid continued selling by foreign institutional investors. At the closing bell, the Sensex lost 769 points, or 0.94 per cent to settle at 81,537. The Nifty declined 241 points, or 0.95 per cent, to close at 25,048.

The broader markets posted stronger losses than the benchmark indices as Nifty Midcap 100 index lost 1.95 per cent, while the NSE Smallcap 100 declined 2.06 per cent.

Nifty 50 and Sensex began the final day of the trading week slightly up, tracking global cues as geopolitical tensions over Greenland eased.

But the indices dipped sharply due to strong foreign selling and mixed earnings reports leading to investors maintaining a cautious outlook.

On the sectoral front, all indices were in the red. Nifty Realty fell the most down 3.42 per cent. Nifty Media dropped 2.79 per cent while Nifty PSU Bank declined 2.43 per cent. Nifty Auto eased 1.25 per cent while Nifty Oil and Gas slipped 1.30 per cent. Analysts said that Indian equity markets went on a sell-off mode despite an opti-

mistic global market and supportive domestic PMI data. The sentiment was weighed down by an uptick in crude oil prices, a sharp depreciation of the rupee, FIIs selling and earnings delivery falling marginally short of expectations amid premium India valuations.

Looking ahead, market sentiment will likely remain cau-

tious as investors keenly wait for the upcoming Union Budget and the US Fed's interest rate decision, they added.Market watchers predicted that if better-than-expected results for Q3 FY26 are reported for some companies, they could trigger only a stock-specific reaction because foreign institutional selling is expected to continue

in the near term.The rupee slumped 41 paise to touch 91.99 against the US dollar in intraday trade on Friday, amid persistent foreign fund outflows. Analysts said that intervention from the central bank has kept the volatility in check to some extent, but could not reverse the overall negative trend for the domestic currency.

India tops passengers traffic at Singapore Changi airport

CHENNAI: India was among the top five passenger traffic and cargo volume generating markets for Singapore's Changi Airport which added Vijayawada among new destinations for airlines to fly to last year, the airport operator said on Thursday.

Changi Airport, from which about 100 airlines operate, recorded an all-time high of 69.98 million passenger movements in 2025, an improvement of 3.4 per cent compared to 2024's passenger traffic, the Changi Airport Group (CAG) said.

The airport's top five passenger markets for 2025 were China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Australia and India, it added. Changi Airport added 13 city links to its global footprint in 2025 - a record year for network growth, CAG said. The new destinations are: Changchun, Harbin, Lanzhou, Yichang and Zhangjiajie in China, Labuan Bajo, Padang and Semarang in Indonesia, Vienna (Austria), Vijayawada (India), Kota Bharu (Malaysia), Ulaanbaatar (Mongolia) and Nha Trang (Vietnam). As of January 2026, about 100 airlines operate more than 7,300 weekly scheduled flights at Changi Airport, connecting Singapore to more than 170 cities in 50 countries and territories worldwide, according to CAG.

Healthcare Emergencies Drive Personal Loan Demand in Urban India Paisabazaar Study

Hyderabad: Healthcare emergencies have emerged as one of the top reasons for availing personal loans in urban India, according to a consumer research study by Paisabazaar. The report, "The Personal Loan Story", reveals that 11% of borrowers across the country took personal loans to meet emergency medical expenses. The proportion is higher in Tier-1 cities at 14%, compared to 10% in Tier-2 and 8% in Tier-3 cities.

The study indicates that rising healthcare costs and low penetration of health insurance are pushing households to depend on personal loans during medical emergencies.

Based on in-depth interviews with 2,889 personal loan borrowers across 23 cities and towns, the report analyses key borrowing triggers, preferences, and awareness levels across regions and age groups.

Besides medical needs, borrowers reported using personal loans for essential household expenses, urgent home repairs, and weddings or celebratory events.

Key findings show that 48% of borrowers took loans for essential needs, 36% for aspirational spending, and 16% for business investments. Tier-3 borrowers

paisabazaar

were found to be 2.4 times more likely to borrow for daily needs than those in Tier-1 cities. Borrowers earning Rs.7.5–10 lakh annually accounted for the highest lifestyle-driven borrowing at 40%.The report also highlights that while digital lending is growing, only 32% of borrowers availed personal loans through online channels. Impulse borrowing is increasing, with 25% of borrowers skipping evaluation of alternative credit options, a trend most pronounced among Gen Z borrowers at 31%.Santosh Agarwal, CEO of Paisabazaar, said that borrowing decisions today are increasingly shaped by life events, aspirations, and urgency, underscoring the need for responsible and transparent credit delivery.

The study further notes high customer satisfaction levels, with 91% of borrowers rating their loan experience as good or very good, driven largely by speed, simplified processes, and minimal paperwork. Despite high awareness of credit scores, only 7% of borrowers fully understood their impact on loan approval and pricing, pointing to gaps in

Royaloak Furniture launches its Flag ship store in Guduvancheri, with the finest International collection

Opens 31st New Store in Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu, Guduvancheri, 23 January 2026: Royaloak Furniture, India's No. 1 furniture brand, launched its Flagship store in Guduvancheri, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, with the inauguration of its finest Country Store collection. The grand opening ceremony was honored by the esteemed presence of Shri. Vijai Subramaniam, Chairman, Royaloak Incorporation Pvt. Ltd & Shri. Mathan Subramaniam, Managing Director, Royaloak Incorporation Pvt. Ltd.

This expansion emphasizes Royaloak's commitment to providing quality furniture solutions to the people of Guduvancheri. The grand launch event also witnessed guests from the Royaloak team, including Mr. Kiran Chhabaria, Franchise Head; Mr. Thammaiah Kotera, Head – Visual Merchandising & New Store Opening; Mr. Ranjith Kappatu, Regional Head – Tamil Nadu & Kerala, CA. P. Rajasekaran, Chartered Accountant, M/S. P. Rajasekaran & Co and Franchisee Partner Mr. Karthik K, Devaki Traders, Guduvancheri. The successful business expansion has ensured vast employment opportunities created by the brand over the years in the state and opened doors for future business expansion with multiple vendors and partners.

Covering an impressive 13,000 square feet, this store boasts an extensive array of furniture for every part of the home, including living rooms, bedrooms, dining areas, study & office, outdoor, home decor, mattresses and more. Guduvancheri's residents can now discover a wide variety of both stylish, smart and

functional furnishings in an affordable cost all conveniently located in their neighborhood.

Speaking at the launch event, Mr. Vijai Subramaniam, Chairman, Royaloak Furniture said, "We are proud to open our Flag ship store in Guduvancheri, Chennai where we already have 200+ stores in PAN India & UAE. The new opening reflects our commitment to serving our customers better and our belief in the growing potential of this market. We look

forward to continuing to provide quality products and exceptional service to our valued customers here. We are of the opinion that the people of Guduvancheri would be keen to furnish their place with international products available at an affordable range. I extend my best wishes to the Franchise Partners as we eagerly anticipate serving customers and assisting them in finding, the ideal pieces to complete their dream homes."
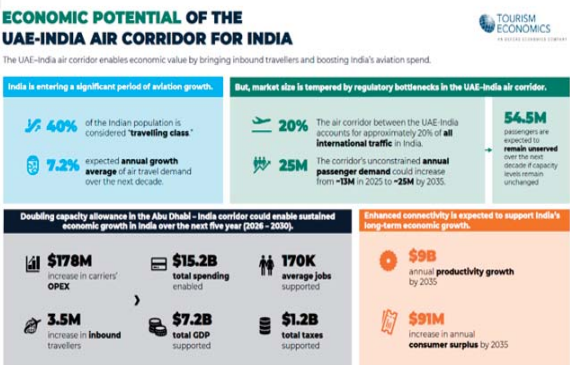
RUPEE HITS ALL-TIME LOW OF 92/USD, RECOVERS MARGINALLY TO SETTLE AT 91.88 AGAINST US DOLLAR

MUMBAI: The rupee hit an all-time low of 92 on Friday and recovered marginally to settle at 91.88 (provisional) against the American currency, amid selling pressure from foreign funds and risk-off sentiment in global markets.

Forex traders said the Indian rupee gave up early gains and hit a record low of 91.99 per US dollar in intraday trade due to weak domestic markets and persistent foreign fund outflows. Moreover,

gains in crude oil prices and a surge in US treasury yields weighed on the rupee.At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 91.45 and then gained ground to touch an intraday high of 91.41 against the greenback. It touched an all-time intraday low of 92.00 before settling for the day at a record closing low of 91.88 (provisional), down 30 paise from its previous closing level.

Study finds 27% of India–UAE air travel demand could go unmet over the next decade

ECONOMIC POTENTIAL OF THE UAE-INDIA AIR CORRIDOR FOR INDIA

Hyderabad: 23 January, 2026:- A new study finds that existing limits on flight and seat capacity between India and the United Arab Emirates may not keep pace with rising travel demand, potentially reducing the economic benefits that stronger air connectivity can support.

The analysis shows that 27% of forecast passenger demand between India and the UAE could remain unserved by 2035 if capacity remains at current levels. This equates to a cumulative shortfall of approximately 54.5 million passenger journeys between 2026 and 2035, with 13.2

million unserved passengers on the Abu Dhabi–India corridor alone. This indicates particularly acute capacity constraints on the Abu Dhabi–India corridor.

The report highlights strong structural growth in India's aviation market. India's travelling class—households with sufficient income to travel by air—has grown from 24% of the population in 2010 to 40% in 2024, representing an increase of nearly 300 million people. As a result, air travel demand is projected to grow by 7.2% per year through 2035, adding nearly 22 million additional passenger

journeys per year over the next decade.

Matthew Dass, Director of Consulting, from Tourism Economics, said: "India–UAE air travel demand is growing rapidly, underpinned by rising incomes, expanding international trade, and increasing outbound and inbound tourism. Load factors exceed 80% on major routes in the study period, indicating limited spare capacity under current schedules. In our baseline outlook, the gap between forecast demand and available seats widens over time and available capacity is expected to be exhausted by 2026. "

The study also quantifies the economic activity enabled by the UAE–India air corridor, focusing on inbound travellers' tourism spending and airlines' operational expenditure along the corridor. Under continued capacity constraints, the corridor's GDP contribution is projected to grow at a 3% CAGR over the next five years; easing constraints under alternative scenarios could lift growth to 5.5%–7%.

Optimist raises USD 12 million in seed funding led by Accel and Arkam Ventures to build future-ready air conditioning solutions

Accel and Arkam Ventures have led the round with participation from angel investors

Capital to be deployed to scale manufacturing, R&D, and go-to-market operations

Hyderabad 2026: Optimist, a technology-led cooling solutions startup, focused on building future-ready air-conditioners has raised USD 12 million. The seed and pre-Series A round is led by Accel and Arkam Ventures along with prominent angel investors.

Founded in 2024 by Ashish Goel, (ex-CEO & co-founder of Urban Ladder), and Pranav Chopra, Optimist is a technology innovator that aims to transform customer's lives. With deep customer research and understanding of their lifestyle, it is designing and manufacturing cooling solutions specifically for India's changing needs. The products are built to operate reliably under extreme heat and power constraints.

Ashish Goel, Co-Founder & CEO, Optimist, said: "India has a population of over 1.4 billion people, but less than 130 million have access to real cooling today. That gap is the real problem we are trying to solve. Cooling in India can-

not be addressed with products designed for other markets and adapted here. It needs solutions that are designed in India, for India, built for our heat, our homes, our power conditions, and our realities."

Over the last year, Optimist has invested in innovation and reimagining cooling solutions through its R&D efforts and multiple product testing cycles in real-world environment. The R&D efforts are anchored at Nalanda, its in-house innovation lab in Gurugram. With in-house R&D and manufacturing, the company is able to shorten development

cycles, build a product that reduces electricity bills, while easing pressure on electricity grids. This supports the government's Make in India objective of strengthening domestic manufacturing and technology capabilities.

Prashanth Prakash, Partner at Accel, said: "As cooling demand rises alongside climate pressures, efficient and reliable air conditioning will become critical infrastructure. Optimist is an example of a deep tech consumer start-up which is a combination of in house engineering and manufacturing, along with its focus on real operating conditions, positions it well to

build a scalable and differentiated cooling platform for India."

The company plans to sell its products through a mix of direct-to-consumer channels and exclusive Optimist brand stores, initially targeting residential and small commercial customers. Optimist air conditioners will be available in February'26 in Delhi NCR, Rajasthan, Telangana and Bangalore, followed by expansion in other cities.

Bala Srinivasa, Managing Director at Arkam Ventures said, "Air Conditioner penetration in India is less than 10%. The Optimist team is reimagining how cost effective and efficient cooling can address heat stress impacting hundreds of millions of Indians. Our conviction is based on this team's ability to solve hard engineering problems, while obsessing over customer delight, product design and on-the-ground execution needed to build a category-defining consumer durables company for India."As extreme heat becomes a structural challenge, Optimist aims to support India's cooling needs with energy-efficient solutions that will benefit the larger population, for whom air conditioning solutions is still a distant dream.

Viasat Partners with Wings India 2026 to Drive In-Flight Connectivity in India

Hyderabad: Viasat, Inc. (NASDAQ: VSAT), a global leader in satellite communications, has partnered with WINGS INDIA 2026, Asia's premier civil aviation event, to support the next phase of growth in India's aviation sector with a focus on advanced in-flight connectivity (IFC). As the Corporate Partner for Wings India 2026, to be held from January 28 to 31 at Begumpet Airport in Hyderabad, Viasat will take part in key industry platforms including the Global CEOs Forum on the opening day and a strategic roundtable on Advanced Air Mobility. The company will engage with airline operators,

original equipment manufacturers (OEMs), and policymakers to discuss how next-generation IFC can enhance passenger experience and strengthen the global competitiveness of Indian carriers.

Emphasising the role of connectivity, Viasat said seamless, high-perfor-

mance in-flight Wi-Fi is becoming a critical differentiator as passenger expectations continue to rise. The company aims to help airlines transform air travel into a more productive and connected experience. Gautam Sharma, Managing Director, Viasat India, said the partnership reflects Viasat's strong commitment to India's aviation ecosystem. He noted that there is a significant potential for in-flight connectivity in the country and that Viasat is working closely with industry stakeholders to deploy advanced IFC capabilities that support India's aviation ambitions and improve passenger satisfaction.

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Putin meets Trump's envoys as Kremlin says Ukraine settlement hinges on territory

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin discussed the settlement in Ukraine with US President Donald Trump's envoys during marathon overnight talks, and the Kremlin insisted that the territorial issue needs to be resolved to reach a peace deal.The Kremlin meeting, which lasted past 3 a.m. Friday, came hours after Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy sharply criticized his European allies Thursday for what he cast as their slow and fragmented response to Russia's nearly four-year full-scale invasion that he said has left Ukraine at the mercy of Putin amid an ongoing U.S. push for a peace settlement.

Kremlin foreign affairs adviser Yuri Ushakov, who participated in Putin's meeting with Trump's envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, said "it was reaffirmed that reaching a long-term settlement can't be expected without solving the

THE KREMLIN MEETING, WHICH LASTED PAST 3 A.M. FRIDAY, CAME HOURS AFTER UKRAINE'S PRESIDENT VOLODYMYR ZELENSKYY SHARPLY CRITICIZED HIS EUROPEAN ALLIES THURSDAY FOR WHAT HE CAST AS THEIR SLOW AND FRAGMENTED RESPONSE TO RUSSIA'S NEARLY FOUR-YEAR FULL-SCALE INVASION THAT HE SAID HAS LEFT UKRAINE AT THE MERCY OF PUTIN AMID AN ONGOING U.S. PUSH FOR A PEACE SETTLEMENT.

territorial issue," a reference to Moscow's demand that Kyiv withdraws its troops from the areas in the east that Russia illegally annexed but never fully captured. Zelenskyy said after meeting Thursday with Trump in Davos, Switzerland, that the future status of land in eastern Ukraine currently occupied by Russia is unresolved but that peace proposals are "nearly ready." On a positive note, Ushakov told reporters that it was agreed that

Russian, Ukrainian and U.S. officials will hold talks on security issues related to a prospective peace deal in the United Arab Emirates on Friday.

Ushakov noted that Trump's envoys informed Putin about Trump's meeting with Zelenskyy, as well as earlier discussions they had with Ukrainian and European officials. The Kremlin talks that he described as "frank, constructive" and "fruitful" began when it was just before midnight in Moscow and lasted nearly four hours.

Witkoff and Kushner were joined by Josh Gruenbaum, the head of the Federal Acquisition Service who serves as a senior adviser on Trump's Board of Peace that Russia has been invited to join. While Russia is considering the invitation but the future status of land in eastern Ukraine currently occupied by Russia is unresolved but that peace proposals are "nearly ready." On a positive note, Putin reaffirmed his offer to send $1 billion to the board from Russian assets frozen in the U.S. to help fund rebuilding Gaza.

Bangladeshi politicians hold rallies as campaigning begins for first post-Hasina election

DHAKA: Bangladeshi politicians held election rallies across the country on Friday, as campaigning began for the hugely anticipated polls in February, the first since the 2024 uprising that ousted longtime Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Bangladesh will hold general elections on Feb. 12, and the two main parties contesting it, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, kicked off campaigning with tens of thousands of supporters on Thursday in the northern city of Sylhet and the capital Dhaka, respectively.

Nearly 128 million of Bangladesh's 170 million population are eligible to vote in polls that will decide on proposed political reforms and bring in new leadership after prolonged political turmoil that followed Hasina's ouster, reshaping domestic and regional dynamics. "We want to build a Bangladesh that is free from corruption, terrorism and extortion. Our dream is to build a Bangladesh where the grassroot-level working class people also can live with their rights, the women can move freely,

(and) the youths will get enough employment opportunities," Jamaat's spokesperson Ahsanul Mahboob Zubair told Arab News on Friday.

"We are expecting a beautiful and safe Bangladesh following the election next month. We want a free and fair election environment where people would be able to exercise their voting rights without any fear."

After it was crushed during Hasina's 15 years in power, Jamaat-e-Islami is leading a 10-party alliance that includes the National Citizen Party, formed by student leaders who spearheaded the uprising.NCP's

Nahid Islam launched their campaign urging voters to "carry forward the progress of reform." Tarique Rahman, BNP chairman and son of the late former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, is widely seen as a leading contender for prime minister. He has vowed to create jobs for "millions of unemployed youth" and support women's economic independence. More than 1,800 candidates are contesting for around 300 seats in the Bangladeshi parliament in the upcoming polls, which the country's interim leader Muhammad Yunus said will be a benchmark for future votes.

7 Indian fishermen arrested by Sri Lanka Navy for alleged poaching

COLOMBO: The Sri Lanka Navy has arrested seven Indian fishermen for allegedly fishing in the island nation's territorial waters. The fishermen were arrested and and their two trawlers seized on Tuesday off Kovilan, in the northern Jaffna peninsula, the Navy said in a statement.Those arrested will be handed over to the Fisheries Inspector of Myliddy, Jaffna, for legal proceedings, it said. Fishermen from both countries are arrested frequently for inadvertently trespassing into each other's waters. The fishermen issue is a contentious one in the ties between India and Sri Lanka, with Lankan Navy personnel even firing at Indian fishermen in the Palk Strait and seizing their boats in several alleged incidents of illegally entering Sri Lankan territorial waters. The Palk Strait, a narrow strip of water separating Tamil Nadu from Sri Lanka, is a rich fishing ground for fishermen from both countries.In 2025, the Sri Lankan Navy apprehended 346 Indian fishermen for alleged poaching and seized 44 trawlers, according to the statement.

Death toll in Iran protest crackdown is reportedly at 5,002 as Trump says US 'armada' approaching

DUBAI: The death toll from Iran's bloody crackdown on nationwide protests reached at least 5,002 people killed Friday, activists said, warning many more still were feared dead as the most-comprehensive internet blackout in the country's history crossed the two-week mark.

The challenge in getting information out of Iran persists due to authorities cutting off access to the world through the internet on Jan. 8, even as tensions rise between the United States and Iran as an American aircraft carrier group

moves closer to the Middle East — a force US President Donald Trump likened to an "armada" in comments to journalists late Thursday.

The US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency offered the

death toll, saying 4,716 were demonstrators, 203 were government-affiliated, 43 were children and 40 were civilians not taking part in the protests. It added that more than 26,800 people had been detained in a widening arrest campaign by authorities.

The agency's figures have been accurate in previous rounds of unrest in Iran and rely on a network of activists in Iran to verify deaths. That death toll exceeds that of any other round of protest or unrest in Iran in decades, and recalls the chaos surrounding

Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Iran's government offered its first death toll Wednesday, saying 3,117 people were killed. It added that 2,427 of the dead in the demonstrations that began Dec. 28 were civilians and security forces, with the rest being "terrorists." Iran's theocracy in the past has undercounted or not reported fatalities from unrest.The Associated Press has been unable to independently assess the death toll, in part due to authorities cutting access to the internet and blocking international calls into the country.

Embracing realistic unity in a fractured world

In the snow-capped Swiss town of Davos, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney on Tuesday delivered a speech that cut through the polite veneer of global forums. Urging leaders to abandon the "rules-based order" as mere theater, he invoked Vaclav Havel's essay "The Power of the Powerless" to critique performative gestures like shopkeepers in Soviet-era Czechoslovakia who displayed unity slogans without conviction. Carney's message was stark: we are not in a smooth transition to a better world but amid a profound rupture, where economic integration has morphed into a tool of rivalry through tariffs and disrupted supply chains. For middle powers like Canada — and, by extension, nations across the Arab world — he said this demands "value-based realism," a blend of principled action and pragmatic adaptation.

Carney's words resonate deeply in our region, as great-power competitions echo from the Arctic to the Arabian Gulf. As the world shifts toward multipolarity, outdated Western models of aid and influence give way to self-reliant progress. Yet, amid this flux, fear often dominates the discourse, breeding disastrous outcomes.

The terminology leaders used to frame our global predicament, be it "transition," "crisis" or "rivalry," reveals the tangled legacy of industrialization, colonialism and now artificial intelligence's grip on labor markets. Global warming, exacerbated by unchecked technology-driven consumption, underscores the urgency. Commercial law, once a unifier, now navigates this practical multipolarity, where AI and manufacturing promise innovation but demand equitable policies.

Carney's Davos address was no abstract lament. He outlined a Canadian strategy that middle powers everywhere could adapt Dr. Turki Faisal Al-Rasheed This article explores these tensions through the lens of 20th-century German philosopher Carl Schmitt, whose ideas on power dynamics challenge us to confront reality without illu-

sions. Drawing on Carney's realism and Schmitt's stark friend-enemy distinction, we examine how Arab nations can move beyond division to address true threats: poverty, inequality and injustice.

While Schmitt's framework illuminates the raw edges of politics, it must not fuel fragmentation. Instead, it calls for redirecting energy toward sustainable development's four pillars — economic growth, social justice, environmental stewardship and human capital — to build resilient societies. Carney's Davos address was no abstract lament. He outlined a Canadian strategy that middle powers everywhere could adapt: tax incentives to spur $1 trillion in investments across energy, AI and critical minerals; a doubling of defense spending; and fresh partnerships with the EU, China and Qatar. On Ukraine, Canada pushes coalitions for principled support; in the Arctic, it champions Greenland's autonomy against coercive pressures; and in trade, it forges blocs that prioritize shared resilience over isolationist fortresses.

Nostalgia for a unipolar past is no strategy, Carney warned. Integration, once a bridge, now weaponizes dependencies — think US tariffs on allies or China's supply-chain leverage. Middle powers must name this reality, act with consistency and diversify alliances to stand firm. For Arab states, squeezed between US-China frictions and regional flashpoints, this means leveraging resources like oil and renewables not for confrontation but for mutual gain. Qatar's gas diplomacy or Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 investments in AI exemplify this shift, turning vulnerabilities into strengths.

Yet, as Antonio Gramsci observed, crises are not endpoints but "morbid symptoms" where old structures crumble, birthing new possibilities. In this interregnum, fear-mongering — labeling every setback an "external plot" — only deepens divides. Collective awareness and political will are essential to steer toward prosperity. Prioritizing human needs over security obsessions, we can

redistribute wealth equitably, ensuring no one is left behind in the rush for innovation.

Schmitt's enduring influence lies in stripping politics to its core: the distinction between friend and enemy. In his 1932 masterpiece "The Concept of the Political," Schmitt argued that every domain has its opposition — morality pits good against evil, economics profit against loss — but politics alone hinges on existential stakes. The enemy is not a mere rival or disliked neighbor but a public foe, another threatening a group's survival, potentially through lethal conflict.

This is not about morality; the enemy may even share values, yet their presence endangers one's way of life. A border skir-

mish, for instance, transforms neighbors into adversaries — one sees defense, the other invasion. Leadership, Schmitt contended, demands sovereign decisions unbound by law or ethics, echoing the views of Thomas Hobbes and Niccolo Machiavelli on humanity's volatile nature. Politics becomes the art of managing chaos: by naming the enemy, leaders forge unity, channeling passion into resolve. War, in this view, is politics intensified — a trial of collective will.

Schmitt forged these ideas in Weimar Germany's turmoil, later tainted by his Nazi ties. Yet, abstracted from that shadow, his theory cuts through liberal optimism. He lambasted liberalism for "depoliticizing"

society, recasting enemies as market competitors or forum debaters. Wars become "humanitarian" operations, rivals become trading partners. This neutralizes threats but saps vitality, assuming trade and talk can tame primal instincts. Schmitt tied this to theology: politics mirrors sacred battles of the faithful against infidels, demanding reckoning with human frailty — like original sin — before renewal. In our hyperconnected era, Schmitt's warning rings true. Social media amplifies rifts, while liberal inclusivity risks blinding us to real dangers. Digital echo chambers turn debates into tribal wars, eroding the shared ground needed for progress.

Contemporary thinkers like

French strategist Pierre Conesa extend Schmitt's ideas, showing how enmities are manufactured for control. In "Manufacturing the Enemy," Conesa outlines six enemy types, each a strategic fiction with stark parallels in the Arab world. First, the neighboring enemy thrives on proximity: Iran's shadow over Iraq and Saudi-Yemeni border frictions mirror India and Pakistan's Kashmir grudge. Second, the global enemy pits superpowers — US-Russia over Ukraine spills into our energy routes, much like Cold War proxies.

The intimate enemy wounds deepest in civil wars: Syria's sectarian fractures since 2011 evoke Rwanda's horrors, where kin become killers. The barbarian enemy revives colonial tropes — Western media once painted Algerian fighters as savages; today, Arab Spring protesters face similar smears as "chaos agents."

Then comes the hidden enemy, fueled by conspiracies: accusations of Zionist or Western meddling in Arab uprisings deflect from homegrown woes. Finally, the media enemy weaponizes narratives — Daesh videos demonize the West; state outlets brand critics "foreign puppets."

These archetypes politicize life but pervert Schmitt's intent. Enmity rallies crowds, justifies crackdowns and shifts blame from leaders to phantoms. In resource-rich Arab states, economic dips trigger "infiltration" cries, masking corruption or inequality.

In this interregnum, fear-mongering — labeling every setback an 'external plot' — only deepens divides Herein lies the peril: fabricated enemies distract from real ones embedded in daily struggles. Authoritarians summon foes to inflate patriotism, authorize repression and bury failures like graft. Post-Arab Spring, dissidents were "fifth columnists," protests were "adversary plots." This evades the UN Sustainable Development Goals, our clearest diagnostic.

Consider Goal 1 (No Poverty): More than 100 million Arabs live

below the poverty line, as per World Bank data. Goal 2 (Zero Hunger) falters in Yemen and Sudan, where one in five faces famine. Goal 3 (Health) exposed COVID-19 gaps, with maternal mortality double the global average in spots. Goal 4 (Education) sees 20 percent female illiteracy, stifling innovation. Goal 5 (Gender Equality) battles inheritance biases and job barriers. Goal 8 (Decent Work) grapples with 25 percent youth unemployment in North Africa, spurring migration. Goal 16 (Peace and Institutions) suffers from corruption, eroding trust.

These are not fate but choices prioritizing arms over schools, elites over equity. Schmitt's realism demands naming them: poverty as the ultimate existential threat, inequality as the hidden saboteur. By fixating on externals, we postpone Gramsci's transformation, where crises yield justice. Schmitt's paradigm pierces illusions, but in the Arab world — scarred by colonialism, hooked on resources and mired in intrigues — it risks entrenching chaos, from Libya's militias to Lebanon's sects. The antidote? Redirect enmity inward: declare systemic neglect our collective foe. Invest in SDGs as statecraft — fund education for youth empowerment, green tech for climate resilience, fair economies for shared prosperity.

Environmental pressures and AI upheavals demand this pivot. AI and manufacturing can innovate, but only if policies honor diverse needs, ditching Western aid traps for self-driven growth. Leaders must embody Carney's value-based realism: pragmatic deals with foes-turned-partners, like EU pacts or Chinese infrastructure, while upholding justice. As Gramsci urged, let's seize this interregnum for renewal. Collective will builds sustainable pillars, reducing inequalities and humanizing progress. In unity over division, the Arab world transcends fragmentation. Let politics build, not break, declaring poverty the enemy we slay together. This forges something bigger, juster: a horizon of flourishment for all.

Carney's Davos address was no abstract lament. He outlined a Canadian strategy that middle powers everywhere could adapt

I'm following Rohit Sharma''s footsteps as Gambhir and Suryakumar want it from me: Abhishek Sharma

NEW DELHI (TSIT):
Swashbuckling India opener Abhishek Sharma said he has been following the aggressive template set by former skipper Rohit Sharma in T20I powerplays after being encouraged to do so by head coach Gautam Gambhir and captain Suryakumar Yadav.

Having made his T20I debut in July 2024, Abhishek's minute-a-mile batting approach has helped him take the No. 1 spot in the ICC rankings for batters in that format.

In 34 matches so far, he has cracked two tons and seven fifties to score 1199 runs at a strike rate of 190.92. "Rohit bhai has done a lot for the country. There is always pressure because of the starts he used to give in the powerplay," Abhishek told JioHotstar when asked about Rohit's influence on him."When I came into the team, the coach and captain wanted the same from me. I felt it suited my style too because I love to attack from the first few balls. I have been following in Rohit bhai's footsteps and I am really happy to play in this manner and do well for India," he added.

Abhishek said while there is room for improvement in his game, he has complete role clarity.

"I wouldn't say I am fully matured yet, because there is always room to improve. But I feel my job is to play aggressive cricket in the first six overs. "I have been practicing a lot for that. I know if I give a good start or show good intent early, the team can follow that momentum (and) that is what I always think about," he said.

With the T20 World Cup a fortnight away, Abhishek said he has been practicing against specific kind of bowlers he would come across in the competition.

"If I want to play aggressive cricket and show intent, I have to practice a certain way. That is what I always do before matches. When I get a week or 10 days, I keep in mind the bowlers I will face in the next series or matches. It all comes down to how I execute those plans.

"For the upcoming T20 World Cup, I have been practicing for that too. I know we will play all over India in different conditions against different teams, so preparation is key," he added.The 25-year-old said he tries to replicate match situations at nets to the extent that he prefers facing bowlers with similar style that he would face from the opposition camp.

"I try to get similar bowlers to bowl at me in the nets. For every bowler in the other team, I find someone similar to practice against," he said.

"I ask them to bowl out-swingers, in-swingers, and use the new ball. I also ask them to take certain fielders out for me."In his bid to remain ahead of the competition, the left-hander has also worked on the scenarios of bowlers taking pace off the ball against him."I know (that) especially going into the World Cup and any match, they won't give me a lot of pace. I realised that in the last few matches, so I have been working on it," he said.

Abhishek said working on his back lift also helped him generate smooth flow of the bat."I have always had a high grip holding position on the bat. The only thing I worked on was my back lift. I used to keep it a bit low, but now I keep it above my waist so I can get a smooth flow," he said. "When it was low, I was getting late on some balls so I practiced that. But the back lift and the grip are both natural for me," Abhishek added.

Sindhu, Lakshya enter quarterfinals of Indonesia Masters

> This was Sindhu's fifth win over the Dane in their six clashes so far.

JAKARTA: Top Indian shuttlers PV Sindhu and Lakshya Sen entered the quarterfinals of USD 500,000 Indonesia Masters badminton tournament after securing straight-game wins in their respective round-of-16 matches here on Thursday.

Lakshya, a 2021 world championships bronze medallist, prevailed over Hong Kong China's Jason Gunawan 21-10, 21-11 in a contest that lasted a little over half an hour.

The 24-year-old from Almora, who won the Australian Open last year, will meet Thailand's rising talent Panitchaphon Teeraratsakul, who knocked out Paris bronze medallist Lee Zii Jia of Malaysia. Sindhu, a two-time Olympic-medallist, notched up a 21-19, 21-18 triumph over familiar foe Line Hojmark Kjaerfeldt of Denmark in her pre-quarterfinal that took 43 minutes to wind up.

This was Sindhu's fifth win over the Dane in their six clashes so far.

Sindhu will next be up against tournament top seed and world number four Chen Yu Fei of China in the Super 500 event.

Sindhu and Fei have faced each other 13 times so far and the latter holds a slight 7-6 edge overall.

The Indian's last win over Fei came back in 2019 and she would be eager to improve that record.

Later in the day, former world No. 1 Kidambi Srikanth, a 2021 world championships silver medallist, was too erratic to pose any challenge, going down 11-21, 10-21 to Chinese Taipei's Chou Tien Chen in a lop-sided pre-quarterfinals. In women's singles, Anmol Kharb showed a lot of heart to challenge former world champion Nozomi Okuhara before going down 21-16, 14-21, 11-21 in 56 minutes. Men's doubles pair of Hariharan Amsakarunan and MR Arjun, who secured several titles, including the Al Ain Masters and Turkiye International Challenge in 2025, produced a gallant fight before losing 17-21, 21-9, 16-21 to third seeded and world number 6 Malaysians Man Wei Chong and Kai Wun Tee in 54 minutes.

NEW DELHI (TSIT):
India coach Gautam Gambhir has rejected the widely held assumption that he holds "unlimited authority" in team selection and expressed his amusement at being "pitted against his own" after Congress MP Shashi Tharoor described his role as "hardest job after the Prime Minister's".

Tharoor, an avid cricket fan himself, shared a selfie with Gambhir ahead of the first T20I against New Zealand in Nagpur and

expressed his admiration for the manner in which the former India opener is performing in his current job despite the relentless scrutiny."In Nagpur, enjoyed a good & frank discussion with my old friend @GautamGambhir, the man with the hardest job in India after the PM's! He is being second-guessed by millions daily but stays calm & walks on undaunted. A word of appreciation for his quiet determination and able leadership. Wishing him all success - starting today!" Tharoor tweeted. Gambhir responded late last night and fleetingly touched upon some of the chatter that has dominated his tenure. "Thanks a lot Dr @ShashiTharoor! When the dust settles, truth & logic about a coach's supposedly "unlimited authority" will become clear.

Varun Chakravarthy is a magician with the ball: Sunil Gavaskar

NAGPUR: Batting legend Sunil Gavaskar has described Varun Chakravarthy as a "magician with the ball", as the mystery spinner continues to flummox batters with his deception and unique variations.

Chakravarthy picked up two big wickets at crucial junctures in India's victory over New Zealand in the first T20I here on Wednesday."Varun looked a little rusty, but that's understandable. He picked up two wickets and the economy rate, when the batters are going hell-bent for leather, was pretty decent as well. The important thing is that his body language was good.

"Often, you know, his body language, sometimes when he's taken for a few runs, can be a little bit down. That didn't happen," Gavaskar said on JioHotstar. The former India captain added, "He (Varun) was walking back to the mark, upright, wasn't looking fazed by the fact that he'd been hit for a couple of sixes, and that's always a very good sign.

We won't play in India but still hopeful of justice from ICC: Bangladesh refuse to budge on T20WC

DHAKA (TSIT): A defiant Bangladesh on Thursday refused to send its national cricket team for next month's T20 World Cup in India after the ICC rejected its demand for a change of venue, effectively paving the way for Scotland to take the country's place.

Bangladesh had been served an ultimatum by the world body on Wednesday to either agree to travel to India or risk being replaced as there was no credible threat to the safety of their players, officials or fans there.The country was given time till Thursday to make its decision. Scotland is next in line based on team rankings for the tournament starting February 7.

However, taking a hard-line position Bangladesh's sports advisor Asif Nazrul, after a meeting with national team players, announced that the ICC's assessment was not acceptable to them. "While our cricketers have worked hard to qualify for the World Cup, the security risk regarding playing in India remains unchanged. This concern is not based on abstract analysis...," Nazrul said in a press conference while declaring that the country won't play in India.

"...we are not convinced that they can ensure the safety of our entire team, journalists, and spectators. "We are not giving up hope yet; our team is ready. We expect the ICC to provide justice by considering our genuine security risks and allowing us to play in Sri Lanka," he added.

Bangladesh are due to play four games in India (three in Kolkata and one in Mumbai). The country raised security concerns after pacer Mustafizur Rahman was ousted from the IPL on BCCI's instructions for unspecified "developments all around."

"It is crucial to weigh the loss of not playing against the potential catastrophe of pushing players, fans, and journalists into a risky regional political situation. This is a government decision, as the state is responsible for determining whether its citizens face security risks abroad," Nazrul asserted.

The ICC on Wednesday refused to accept its security concerns, saying that the Bangladesh Cricket Board was repeatedly linking its participation in the tournament to a "single, isolated and unrelated development concerning one of its player's involvement in a domestic league." "In the absence of any independent security findings that materially compromise the safety of the Bangladesh team, the ICC is unable to relocate fixtures," the ICC had stated.

Australian Open: Djokovic one away from 400 Grand Slam match wins

Novak Djokovic....

MELBOURNE (TSIT):
Novak Djokovic and Stan Wawrinka made it a day for the ages at the Australian Open.

Djokovic improved to 399 wins in Grand Slam matches with a 6-3, 6-2, 6-2 victory over Francesco Maestrelli on Thursday, making the 38-year-old, 24-time major winner just one shy of becoming the first player ever to 400.

He's aiming to win an unprecedented 25th Grand Slam title. And if he does, he'll beat Ken Rosewall's record (aged 37 in 1972) as the oldest man in the Open era to win a major singles championship.

The Rosewall name was prominent on Day 5 at Melbourne Park, where he was among the invited VIPs. Wawrinka, at 40 years, 310 days, became the first man over 40 to reach the third round of a major since Rosewall in 1978. It took a 4 1/2-hour 4-6, 6-3, 6-7, 7-6 (3) comeback victory over 21-year-old qualifier Arthur Gea. That's the longest match of the 2026 tournament so far. Wawrinka, who is retiring at the end of the year, will next face No. 9 Taylor Fritz. His was one

> *Iga Swiatek beat Marie Bouzkova 6-2, 6-3 and later said she's been trying to take lessons from Djokovic's attitude to sustained success and longevity.*

of three high-profile matches that finished around the same time, with Jannik Sinner continuing his bid for an Australian Open three-peat after beating James Duckworth 6-1, 6-4, 6-2 on Rod Laver Arena.

The defining feature of Naomi Osaka's first two rounds quickly moved from fashion to friction when her 6-3, 4-6, 6-2 win over Sorana Cirstea ended in tension. "I think this was her last Australian Open so, OK, sorry she was mad about it," Osaka said. With Sinner facing an Australian wild card, he got the prime time night slot and bumped 10-time Australian Open winner Djokovic into the afternoon session.

That didn't bother Djokovic as much as the dropped service game in the third set - his first of the tournament. It stung Djokovic, who broke the Italian qualifier at love in the next game and finished on an eight-point roll. He said he took extra time out in the offseason and fine-tuned some skills as he chases his biggest goals. "When I have more time, then I obviously try to look at my game and different elements that I can really improve. Otherwise, what's the point?" he said.

"That's the kind of mentality I try to nurture. It's been allowing to me play at the highest level at this age." Iga Swiatek beat Marie Bouzkova 6-2, 6-3 and later said she's been trying to take lessons from Djokovic's attitude to sustained success and longevity. "It's good to look at people like that and find inspiration," the six-time major winner said. "For sure I've got to learn to appreciate every single match," she said.

Carlos Alcaraz wins third-round match but loses 'drop-shot battle' at Australian Open

MELBOURNE (TSIT):
Carlos Alcaraz acknowledged that while he won the third-round match, he lost the battle of the drop shots against Corentin Moutet.That could be a first for the 22-year-old Spaniard, who grew up relentlessly practicing his drop shots and is now at the Australian Open chasing a career Grand Slam. The left-handed Moutet mixed things up for Alcaraz in an almost festival Friday vibe on Rod Laver Arena. His blend of drop shots, slice, tweeners, half-volleys, angled volleys and even an underarm serve keeping the world's No. 1-ranked player on his toes.

The 6-2, 6-4, 6-1 win over the No. 32 seed appeared like a fairly convincing scoreline, but the match was anything but routine. "When you play someone like Corentin you don't know what's going to be next," Alcaraz said in his on-court TV interview. "I had so much fun on the court. As you could see, we both pulled off great shots. Great points." Alcaraz laughed when he reflected on his surprise near the end of the first set, when he was fed up with tracking down drop shots and told his support team "I'm not going to run to get those." "I was tired to go forward to the net," he said, adding that he'd looked at the stats and — with a mild exaggeration — thought "I've been to the net 55 times?" "I thought we were in a drop-shot competition, but he won!" There were moments of tension, like in the second set when Alcaraz surrendered a 3-0 lead when the 26-year-old Frenchman went on a four-game roll. Ever the showman himself, Alcaraz chimed in with some of his own tricks and tweeners. It helped him stay composed. In the first round, Moutet was booed by the crowd for his underarm serve on match point. There was much more love from the Aussie crowd this time.

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'Sri Chidambaram Garu' to Hit Theatres Worldwide on February 6

Presented by Mrs. Chinta Varalakshmi, under the banner of Sri Chakras Entertainment, the film 'Sri Chidambaram' is produced by Chinta Vinesh Reddy and Chinta Gopala Krishna Reddy, with Chinta Rajashekhar Reddy as co-producer. The film is directed by Vinay Ratnam.

Popular producer Vamsi Nandipati is releasing the film theatrically. Starring Vamsi Tummala and Sandhya Vashisht as the lead pair, the makers recently released the teaser, which received an unexpected and overwhelming response.

It is already known that a beautiful song titled "Velle Daarilo", sung by legendary music director M.M. Keeravani, was recently released. The song is composed by Chandu Ravi, with lyrics penned by Chandrashekhar. Both the tune and the lyrics have touched the hearts of listeners, and Keeravani garu's soulful voice has truly given life to the song.

Following the song's success celebrations, a press meet was held in Hyderabad on Friday to announce the film's release date. On this occasion, the makers officially announced that 'Sri Chidambaram Garu' will be released worldwide in theatres on February 6. Guests' and Team Members' Speeches:RP Patnaik, the chief guest, said:"This is a beautiful film made by a young team. It feels wonderful to see so many music directors on this stage today. Ravi and Chandu have done a great job convincing a legendary composer like Keeravani garu to sing for this film. This movie comes with a very mature and inspirational story that today's society truly needs. Many youngsters are taking extreme steps even for small problems. This film will be an inspiration to all of them. It conveys the message that your weakness should become your strength. Vamsi has acted brilliantly with his eyes alone. I wish the entire team all the best."

Music directors Chandu & Ravi said:"Thanks to Vamsi Nandipati garu for introducing us to the Sri Chidambaram Garu team and the director. This film conveys its message with a pure heart. Getting Keeravani garu to sing was a joyous experience. Watching him sing with so much passion, wearing glasses, was truly delightful for us."Producer Gopala Krishna Reddy said:"This is my fifth film, made with the intention of encouraging newcomers. I did not compromise on production values—it's on par with a big film. Vamsi Nandipati supported this project from the very beginning and is now distributing it across the Telugu states. This is a strong content-driven film and a project I made with great love."Heroine Sandhya Vashisht said:"I play a character named Leela. The teaser and songs have received a very good response. This feel-good story has a Malayalam cinema vibe. Chandu and Ravi's music has given life to the film, and Keeravani garu's rendition of 'Velle Daarilo' elevated the song beautifully.

'RAAKAASAA'
Glimpse Impresses with Sharp Humour; Sangeeth Shobhan Shines in Solo Debut

Produced under the banners of Pink Elephant Pictures and Zee Studios, the upcoming Telugu film Raakaasaa is being jointly produced by Niharika Konidela and Umesh Kumar Bansal. The recently released glimpse has generated strong buzz, especially for its sharp humour and the impressive screen presence of Sangeeth Shobhan.

After earning national recognition as a successful producer with Committee Kurrollu, Niharika Konidela continues her winning streak with Raakaasaa. Presented by Zee Studios, the film marks an important milestone for Sangeeth Shobhan, who makes his solo hero debut with this project after entertaining audiences with his performances in MAD and MAD Square. The film is written and directed by Manasa Sharma and is slated for a theatrical release on April 3.The title motion poster released earlier received an encouraging response, and the newly unveiled glimpse has further heightened expectations. It opens with a high-voltage narration that says, "Yuga yugaalugaa prati kathalo oka samasya… aa samasyanu chedinchadaaniki oka veerudu pudataadu… aa

veerudu evaro ani telise lopae nishabdamgaa pani mugistaadu… ee kathalo aa veerudu nene." This powerful elevation soon takes a humorous and satirical turn, instantly setting the tone of the film.

The glimpse clearly showcases Sangeeth Shobhan's strong comedy timing, assuring audiences that humour will be the film's biggest strength. At the same time, it hints at a fresh concept and a new-age narrative, suggesting that Raakaasaa will present the actor in a completely new dimension. The blend of comedy with an innovative point makes the film stand out among current trends. The film's music is composed by Anudeep Dev, while cinematography is handled by Raju Edurrola.

Sharwanand unveils the teaser of stylish crime comedy 'Baa Baaa Black Sheep'

Baa Baaa Black Sheep is a stylish crime comedy produced by Venu Donepudi under Chitralayam Studios banner. Directed by Guni Manchikanti, the movie was launched in October 2025, and Tharun Bhascker unveiled the motion poster. The film is tipped as a stylish crime comedy featuring Tinnu Anand, Upendra Limaye, George Marian, Akshay Lagusani, Vishnu Oi, Karthikeya, and Vismaya Sri. On the occasion of Vasantha Panchami on Friday, Sharwanand, who is basking in the blockbuster success of Nari Nari Naduma Murari, launched the teaser of Baa Baaa Black Sheep. Expressing his gladness over the teaser and the rich visuals, Sharwanand wished the entire team 'good luck.'The teaser hints at the story that is about guns, gold, and a city-wide funny hunt involving six individuals. The plot is centered on a flamboyant gangster, misfit friends, eccentric criminals, and a chaotic city-wide chase sparked by the discovery of Mahatma Gandhi's 'missing watch.' As the narrative progresses, the characters try to navigate through high-stakes battle unfolding it into a story of greed and crime. "The film has a story that blends crime plot with wit and comedy mishaps. The narrative focuses on the unfolding of secrets, hilarious twists, misunderstood crime and character dynamics.," said producer Venu, adding that witty dialogues and situational irony are the key to the film. Baa Baaa Black Sheep is the first film to be shot entirely in Meghalaya. The picturesque locations and dramatic landscapes are an integral part of the narrative as the story is set in the northeastern state. The production house partnered with Meghalaya government for a hassle-free shooting. Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma highlighted Baa Baaa Black Sheep as a landmark in bolstering the state's creative economy and tourism sector. The film is presently in post-production, and makers are looking at a summer release.

Massive 25-Day Climax Shoot Begins for T Gopichand's Historical Epic #Gopichand33

T Gopichand, Sankalp Reddy, Srinivasaa Chitturi, Srinivasaa Silver Screen, Presented By Pavan Kumar- Historical Film #Gopichand33 Massive & 25 Days Lengthy Climax Shoot Begins Macho Star T Gopichand is coming up with a grand historical action saga, #Gopichand33, helmed by visionary filmmaker Sankalp Reddy and produced on an ambitious scale by Srinivasaa Chitturi under Srinivasaa Silver Screen, with Pavan Kumar presenting. The film is being crafted as one of the most extravagant ventures in Gopichand's career. The team has started the shoot of a massive, lengthy and high-intensity climax sequence under the supervision of renowned action choreographer Venkat Master. A massive set is erected especially for this night-shot climax which is planned to be wrapped in an extensive 25-day schedule, underscoring its sheer scale and ambition.

Being mounted on a huge budget, this portion alone is going to be Tollywood's first-of-its-kind climax- something never attempted before in scope, and execution. The makers believe this grand episode will offer audiences a fresh, gripping, and unforgettable cinematic experience.

Gopichand was presented in a fierce warrior getup, with long hair, rugged beard, and an imposing aura, in the previously released birthday special poster and glimpse, which instantly sparked excitement. Sankalp Reddy, known for his inventive narratives and technical finesse, is bringing to screen a powerful yet lesser-explored chapter of Indian history. The film promises a visually immersive experience with deep emotional weight, while Gopichand steps into a role unlike anything he has attempted before, further demonstrating his range and commitment. The film boasts a strong technical lineup, with Soundar Rajan cranking the camera and Anudeep Dev composing music.

INDIAN-AMERICAN FILMMAKER GEETA GANDBHIR BAGS 2 OSCAR NOMINATIONS

Indian-American filmmaker Geeta Gandbhir on Thursday earned two Oscar nominations — for her short "The Devil Is Busy" in the best documentary short category and "The Perfect Neighbor" in the best documentary feature segment. The nominations for the 98th Academy Awards were announced by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in Los Angeles.

Gandbhir and Christalyn Hampton have co-directed "The Devil Is Busy", which will compete against "All the Empty Rooms", "Armed Only with a Camera: The Life and Death of Brent Renaud", "Children No More: Were and Are Gone" and "Perfectly a Strangeness" in the best documentary short segment. The 31-minute film follows Tracii, the head of security at a women's healthcare clinic in Atlanta, Georgia, over the course of a day as she works to ensure the safety of patients and staff amid tighter abortion restrictions and persistent protests.In the documentary feature film category, Gandbhir's "The Perfect Neighbor" is among the nominees, alongside "The Alabama Solution", "Come See Me in the Good Light", "Cutting through Rocks" and "Mr. Nobody against Putin".The Netflix documentary chronicles the shooting incident in June 2023 where a white female, Susan Louise Lorincz, fatally shot her black female neighbour Ajike Owens in Ocala, Florida.

Kannada Short Film 'Pankaja' Shines at Sundance; Director Anooya Swamy Honored by Adobe

The prestigious Sundance Film Festival, one of the world's most celebrated platforms for independent cinema, commenced in grand style in Park City, Utah, marking a proud moment for Kannada cinema. The Kannada short film Pankaja, directed by Anooya Swamy, has been officially selected and screened at the festival, bringing global recognition to a story rooted in the filmmaker's homeland.

Anooya Swamy, who is currently pursuing postgraduate studies in journalism and cinema in New York, made Pankaja with the vision of presenting an authentic Indian narrative to international audiences. The film was screened at the Library Park Theatre as part of the festival's inaugural block of short films. Notably, Pankaja was one of only six short films selected for this opening segment, chosen from nearly 11,480 submissions worldwide, underscoring the competitive nature of the selection. The screening received a warm and enthusiastic response from audiences. The film features Padmashree, a student of a government school in Agara,

Bengaluru, in the lead role, while Harshani portrays the mother, both earning appreciation for their natural performances.In another proud moment, Anooya Swamy was honored at a special event organized by Adobe and other prestigious institutions, where selected directors and actors were felicitated. Speaking emotionally on the occasion, Anooya said it was her great fortune to present her country's story on an international stage and expressed gratitude to her cast, producers, and entire team for their support.Pankaja will be screened across various theatres in the United States from January 22 to February 1. Most shows have already been sold out, reflecting strong interest among Non-Resident Indians and global cinema lovers.This year's Sundance Festival also carries emotional significance, as it marks the final edition to be held in Park City. From next year, the festival will move to Boulder, Colorado, making this edition a memorable farewell to the city that has hosted the dreams of countless filmmakers since 1985.