

OM NAMO VENKATESAYA



20-02-2026

Total pilgrims: 68,156

Tonsures: 28,295

Hundi kanakulu: 3.46 CR

Waiting Compartments..Outside line at Sila thoranam.

Approx. Darsan Time for Sarvadarshanam (with out SSD Tokens).. 18 hrs

TO BOOK YOUR ADS CALL

99484 80279, 73307 78889

Priyanka Gandhi targets Himanta Biswa Sarma, says Assam needs jobs not personal attacks



NATION NEWS

Trump announces hike in tariffs to 15 pc on all countries



WORLD NEWS

RAIN WASHES OUT PAKISTAN-NEW ZEALAND SUPER EIGHTS CLASH IN COLOMBO



T20 WORLD CUP

IN BRIFS

Indian-origin Asha Sharma named CEO of Microsoft Gaming

New York (TSIT): Technology giant Microsoft has named Indian-origin Asha Sharma as Executive Vice President and CEO of Microsoft Gaming, joining a long and growing list of Indian-descent leaders at the helm of global companies. In a message announcing the appointment, Microsoft Chairman and CEO Satya Nadella Friday said that Sharma has helped build and scale services that reach billions of people and support thriving consumer and developer ecosystems over the last two years in her role at Microsoft, and previously as Chief Operating Officer at Instacart and a Vice President at Meta. She brings “deep experience building and growing platforms, aligning business models to long-term value, and operating at global scale, which will be critical in leading our gaming business into its next era of growth,” Nadella said.

Assam Rifles seize meth tablets worth Rs 11.85 crore in Mizoram

Aizawl, Feb 21: The Assam Rifles has confiscated a large consignment of methamphetamine tablets valued at over Rs 11.85 crore and arrested four alleged drug traffickers, including three Myanmar nationals, in Mizoram, officials said on Saturday. According to a defence spokesperson, the operation was launched late Friday night based on specific intelligence inputs about the movement of banned narcotics. A Mobile Vehicle Check Post (MVCP) was set up at Kakichhuha village in Lawngtlai district. During the operation, security personnel intercepted four suspects who had reportedly entered India from Myanmar by boat via the Koladyne River. A detailed search led to the recovery of around 80,000 methamphetamine tablets weighing 3.952 kg. The seized contraband, commonly known as Yaba or “party tablets,” contains a mixture of methamphetamine and caffeine and is prohibited in India. The arrested individuals were identified as Lairamlaina (40), a resident of Lawngtlai district, along with three Myanmar nationals — Chaimoungthein (17), Thanlaing (17), and Thanlaigwon (15). The accused and the seized drugs have been handed over to Bughtlang Police Station in Lawngtlai district for further legal proceedings. Reaffirming its commitment to counter cross-border smuggling, Assam Rifles stated that it continues to intensify efforts to curb narcotics trafficking along the Indo-Myanmar border and maintain security in the region. Mizoram shares a 510-km-long unfenced border with Myanmar and a 318-km porous border with Bangladesh, making it vulnerable to illegal trade. Myanmar’s Chin state is widely regarded as a key transit hub for smuggling activities, including narcotics, wildlife products, foreign cigarettes, and areca nuts, routed through Mizoram’s border districts such as Champhai, Siaha, Lawngtlai, Hnahthial, Saitual and Serchhip.

CM Revanth Urges Unity, Merit-Based Leadership at DCC Presidents’ Meet

HYDERABAD TSIT BUREAU: Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Saturday called for unity and ideological commitment while addressing the inaugural session of the District Congress Committee (DCC) Presidents’ Training Programme. Describing the initiative of the All India Congress Committee (AICC) as timely, he said the Congress party, founded over 140 years ago, played a pivotal role in India’s Independence and the framing of the Constitution. He alleged that attempts are being made to weaken constitutional val-

HIGHLIGHT POINT:
■ A. Revanth Reddy emphasized unity, internal democracy, and public service, asserting that a strong Congress is essential for safeguarding constitutional values and strengthening both Telangana and the nation.

ues and asserted that the Congress believes the soul of India lies in its villages.

Paying tributes to Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, and Rajiv Gandhi, he highlighted their sacrifices for the nation. He also lauded Sonia Gandhi and

Rahul Gandhi for their dedication, mentioning Rahul Gandhi’s 4,000-km padyatra.

The Chief Minister recalled the welfare governance of Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy and appreciated Y. S. Sharmila for her outreach efforts. Advising DCC Presidents to encourage internal democracy, he stressed that unity helped Congress return to power in Telangana. He revealed that the party enrolled 42 lakh digital members across 119 constituencies and asserted that leadership opportunities are based solely on merit.

Highlighting rising public confidence, he said the Congress vote margin increased from 2 percent in Assembly polls to 12 percent in municipal elections. He also underscored the state’s caste census and SC categorization initiatives, noting significant representation of BC and OBC communities in local bodies.

Revanth Reddy urged leaders to prioritize public service over positions, emphasizing that the Congress must grow stronger in both Telangana and Andhra Pradesh as the party and the nation are inseparable.

Rahul slams Modi over US trade deal after SC strikes down Trump tariffs

NEW DELHI (TSIT): Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of being “compromised” after the Supreme Court of the United States struck down President Donald Trump’s global tariff measures. In a post on X, Gandhi alleged that the Prime Minister’s “betrayal” in the India-US inter-trade deal now stood exposed. “The PM is compromised. His betrayal now stands exposed. He can’t renegotiate. He will surrender again,” he said.

The remarks came a day after the US Supreme Court, in a 6-3 verdict, invalidated Trump’s sweeping global tariffs, ruling that he had exceeded his authority under emergency powers law. Congress general secretary (communications) Jaiaram Ramesh claimed that had the Prime Minister not been “desperate” to protect his “fragile image” and waited 18 more days, Indian farmers would have been spared distress and national sovereignty would have been safeguarded. Ramesh questioned what compelled Modi to ensure that Trump announced the India-US trade deal on the night of February 2, 2026. He alleged that the agree-

ment had turned into an “ordeal” for the country due to the Prime Minister’s “desperation and surrender”.

The Congress leader also referred to Trump’s recent remarks in which the US President reiterated that the India deal was “on” and described his relationship with Modi as “great”. Trump maintained that there was no change in the agreement despite the Supreme Court ruling and said India would pay tariffs while the US would not. Earlier this month, the US and India announced a framework for an interim trade agreement under which Washington would lower reciprocal tariffs on Indian goods from 25 per cent to 18 per cent. Trump also issued an executive order removing 25 per cent punitive tariffs imposed on India over its purchases of Russian oil, citing New Delhi’s commitment to reduce energy imports from Moscow and increase purchases of American energy products.

National Highways Authority of India plans to go fully digital at toll plazas from April 1

New Delhi, Feb 20: Cash transactions may no longer be accepted at national highway toll plazas under the jurisdiction of the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) starting April 1, 2026, as the Centre moves toward creating a fully digital tolling ecosystem. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) on Friday said NHAI is contemplating discontinuing cash payments across all National Highway fee plazas nationwide. Under the proposal, toll payments will be processed exclusively through digital modes such as FASTag and Unified Payments Interface (UPI).

According to the ministry, the transition aims to enhance commuter convenience by improving lane throughput, reducing congestion at toll plazas and ensuring greater consistency and transparency in toll transactions. “In order to

develop a fully digital National Highway tolling ecosystem, NHAI is contemplating to completely discontinue cash transactions at National Highway fee plazas across the country from 1st April 2026. Post implementation, all toll payments will be processed exclusively through digital modes using FASTag or UPI,” the ministry said in a statement.

Over the past few years, FASTag — a radio frequency identification (RFID)-based

system linked to prepaid or savings accounts — has achieved more than 98 per cent penetration, significantly transforming toll collection practices. The majority of toll transactions are now processed electronically through RFID-enabled FASTag affixed to vehicles, enabling seamless and contactless passage.

In addition, UPI facilities have been operational at toll plazas, offering instant and accessible digital payment

options for commuters across the country.

Officials said plaza-level assessments indicate that cash-based payments contribute to congestion, longer waiting times during peak hours and transaction-related disputes.

A complete shift to digital-only payments is expected to improve operational efficiency, traffic management and overall user experience at more than 1,150 fee plazas on highways and expressways.

Under National Highway fee rules, vehicles entering toll plazas without a valid FASTag are charged twice the applicable user fee if paying in cash. Those opting to pay via UPI are charged 1.25 times the applicable fee for their vehicle category. The proposed move is seen as a continuation of efforts to reduce reliance on cash transactions and further digitise India’s highway tolling framework.

SC orders deployment of judicial officers to assist EC in West Bengal electoral roll revision

New Delhi, Feb 20: In an extraordinary directive, the Supreme Court of India on Friday ordered the deployment of serving and former district judges to assist the Election Commission of India (EC) in the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in West Bengal.

Expressing concern over what it termed an “unfortunate blame game” between the poll panel and the TMC-led state government, a bench headed by Chief Justice Surya Kant, along with Justices Joydip Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi, issued a series of directions to ensure timely completion of the revision exercise.

The apex court ordered deputation of judicial officers to adjudicate claims and objections of voters placed under the “logical discrepancy list”. It directed the Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court to spare serving judicial officers and also identify former judges

to assist in the SIR process. The court took serious note of the state government’s failure to make available an adequate number of Grade ‘A’ officers for the exercise.

The bench permitted the Election Commission to publish the draft electoral roll by February 28 and allowed the issuance of supplementary lists thereafter, if required.

Amit Shah to launch Regional Rajbhasha Conference in Agartala

New Delhi, Feb 20: Union Home Minister Amit Shah is set to inaugurate the Joint Regional Official Language Conference (Rajbhasha Sammelan) covering the Eastern, North-Eastern and Northern regions in Agartala on Friday. According to Anshuli Arya, secretary of the Department of Official Language under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), the event will bring together more than 3,000 senior officials, representatives and subject experts from Central government offices, public sector undertakings and banks across the three regions. Representatives from nearly 20 states will participate, marking the first time such a conference is being hosted in Tripura.

Broad Regional Participation States attending from the Eastern region include West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar and Jharkhand.

From the North-East, delegates will arrive from Assam, Tripura, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim. Northern region participants will represent Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

Focus on Technology and Language Promotion

Arya highlighted that artificial intelligence and modern technologies are expected to play a transformative role in

addressing language-related challenges in governance. She noted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Amit Shah consistently use simple and accessible Hindi to communicate with citizens. She also emphasised that the Union government promotes not only Hindi but all 22 constitutionally recognised Indian languages, including regional and local languages, to preserve and strengthen India’s cultural heritage.

Clarifying concerns, Arya stated that there is no intent to impose Hindi on other Indian languages.

Awards and Publications During the conference, 80 Regional Official Language Awards for 2024-25 will be presented to Central government offices, banks and public sector undertakings for exemplary implementation of the Official Language Policy.

President Trump says he will raise global tariffs to 15pc after Supreme Court decision

Washington, Feb 21 (TSIT) US President Donald Trump on Saturday said he is going to raise global tariffs to 15%, up from 10% he imposed on Friday, after the Supreme Court struck down a set of sweeping global tariffs.

In a Truth Social post, President Trump said that he was making the decision “Based on a thorough, detailed, and complete review of the ridiculous, poorly written, and extraordinarily anti-American decision on Tariffs issued yesterday,” by the US Supreme Court. “Please let this statement serve to represent that I, as President of the United States of America, will be, effective immediately, raising the 10% Worldwide Tariff on Countries, many of which have been ‘ripping’ the U.S. off for decades, without retribution (until I came along), to the fully allowed, and legally test-

ed, 15% level,” he wrote.

On Friday, angry over the Supreme Court ruling, Trump signed a proclamation that enabled him to bypass Congress and impose a 10% tax on most imports to the United States. The law allows the president to impose a levy of up to 15% for 150 days, although it could face legal challenges, CBS news reported.

Trump went on to say that his administration would “determine and issue the new and legally permissible Tariffs, which will continue our extraordinary successful process of Making America Great Again.”

Most of the president’s previous levies hinged on a law called the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, or IEEPA, which the Supreme Court ruled Friday cannot be used to impose tariffs. Friday’s tariffs were issued under a different law: Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974. That legal provision lets the President impose duties of up to 15% for 150 days to deal with “large and serious” balance-of-payment issues. They are scheduled to take effect starting February 24. It was not immediately clear when President Trump would sign an updated order.

SHORT TAKES

Prime Minister's meeting with President of Sri Lanka

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi met President of Sri Lanka H.E. Anura Kumara Disanayaka, who is visiting India to participate in the India-AI Impact Summit in New Delhi today. This is President Disanayaka's second visit to India after his State Visit in December 2024 soon after assuming Presidency. The two leaders reviewed progress in the bilateral initiatives flowing from recent high-level visits, including the State Visit of Prime Minister to Sri Lanka in April 2025. The leaders underscored the shared commitment to further accelerate cooperation across the key pillars of physical, digital and energy connectivity.

Topless, brainless, shameless: BJP slams Congress over protest at AI summit

New Delhi: The BJP slammed the Congress on Friday, February 20, for a protest staged by the party's youth wing at the ongoing India AI Impact Summit here, alleging that a "ruckus" was created at the venue of the event on opposition leader Rahul Gandhi's directions to sabotage the country's image before the world. A group of India Youth Congress (IYC) workers on Friday staged a brief protest at an exhibition hall of Bharat Mandapam, the venue of the AI summit, raising slogans against Prime Minister Narendra Modi, before being whisked away by security personnel. A senior police officer said around 10 people were detained when they were protesting at the venue of the summit.

Huge victory for the people: TMC hails SC order on judicial officers in SIR

Kolkata: The political war over the ongoing SIR of electoral rolls escalated on Friday, February 20, with the ruling TMC hailing the Supreme Court's decision to deploy judicial officers in the exercise as a "huge victory for the people", while the BJP accused the state government of creating confusion at the ground level. The Supreme Court, flagging a "trust deficit" between the Election Commission and the "democratically elected" TMC government, issued what it termed an "extraordinary" direction to deploy serving and former district judges to assist the poll panel in the controversy-ridden SIR process in the state. Reacting to the order, the TMC claimed it vindicated its allegations of irregularities in the revision drive.

Pro-Palestine protest held in Secunderabad against Ambani's ties with Israel

AGENCY Hyderabad: Indian People in Solidarity with Palestine (IPSP) held a demonstration outside the Reliance Trends outlet in Secunderabad on Saturday, February 21. A part of a wider action involving Mumbai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Visakhapatnam (Vizag), Vijayawada, and Pune, the protests aimed at exposing the long-standing ties between Mukesh Ambani's Reliance and Israel, as well as the "genocide waged by Israel against the Palestinian people with the help of the United States and other complicit governments." Previously, similar protests were held at companies like McDonald's, Pizza Hut, Burger King, Starbucks, Tata, and Mahindra. "Reliance's complicity dates back two



decades and involves deep investments in the apartheid state through the fuel storage and telecom sectors," the IPSP said, adding that Reliance's 2024 joint venture with Israeli company Delta Galil "bolstered the Israeli economy." The IPSP alleged that Ambani's company has "funded at least 117 Israeli startups through partnerships with Jerusalem

Innovation Incubator (IJI), Israeli Innovation Authority (IIA), OurCrowd, and Yissum." Reliance also normalises "Zionist narratives" through think-tanks like the Observer Research Foundation (ORF), the organisation said. "These acts of deep complicity have helped the company rake in enormous profits at the cost

of the Palestinian masses," said IPSP in a release. Highlighting the gravity of Israel's military action in Palestine, IPSP member Ibrahim said over 71,000 Palestinian people have been killed in two years as a result. "One-third of these victims are under the age of 18. Despite a nominal ceasefire, 520 more Palestinians have been killed," he said.

KTR SLAMS YOUTH CONGRESS FOR PROTEST AT AI SUMMIT



AGENCY Hyderabad: Hitting out at the Youth Congress for its protest at the AI Summit in Delhi, Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) Working President KT Rama Rao on Saturday said using such global platforms for agitations would project the country in a poor light internationally. It is ironic that the Youth Congress

workers staged the protest "precisely" when Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy was addressing the same AI Summit, he said. "It is absolutely deplorable that members of the Youth Congress chose the AI Impact Summit 2026 as a venue for petty political theatrics," he said in a post on 'X'. While differences of

opinion are natural in a democracy, understanding where and how to protest is very important, he said. There is a time and place for political dissent, and an international summit is certainly not one of them, he added. There is a time and place for political dissent, and an international summit is certainly not one of them, he said.

Owaisi flags rising communal violence in Telangana after Banswada clash



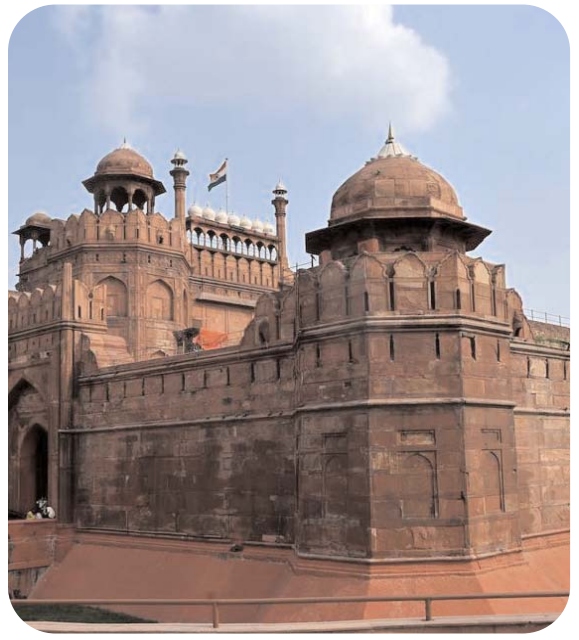
Hyderabad: All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimin (AIMIM) president and Hyderabad M P

Asaduddin Owaisi on Friday, February 21, expressed concern over the increasing incidents of communal violence in Telangana. The AIMIM chief demanded that the state government compensate people whose properties were damaged in the clashes. On Thursday night, February 20, two groups clashed after a Muslim man objected to devotional songs being played by a saleswoman at a mall in Banswada in Kamareddy district. The police registered cases in this regard. "I spoke to the SP [Superintendent of

Police], Kamareddy, and demanded that an FIR be lodged and a proper investigation conducted into the Banswada violence. How is it possible that such a large crowd was mobilised within a few hours? There are enough videos showing the right-wing crowd's criminal activities," Owaisi posted on X. He said the mob specifically targeted small shops and street vendors of minority community members. "One of the accused, who was in police custody at the time, is being beaten up by local Sangh Parivar goons," he claimed. The AIMIM chief

said he was in touch with local party leader in Kamareddy district. "I have instructed him to provide a detailed report of all the damage suffered as a result of mob violence, especially to Muslim-owned shops. I demand that the state government compensate those whose properties were damaged. AIMIM will also help the victims in every possible way and provide relief at the earliest," he said. The AIMIM chief demanded that the state government compensate people whose properties were damaged in the clashes.

Security tightened at religious, heritage sites in Delhi over terror threat



Vice-President of the Republic of Seychelles, H.E. Sebastien Pillay, Calls on Vice-President of India Shri C. P. Radhakrishnan

AGENCY New Delhi: The Vice-President of the Republic of Seychelles, H.E. Sebastien Pillay, called on the Hon'ble Vice-President of India, Shri C. P. Radhakrishnan, at Uprashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi today. During the meeting, the two leaders held wide-ranging discussions on further strengthening bilateral cooperation across priority sectors. They underscored the importance of enhancing collaboration in maritime security and safety, exploring transshipment opportunities, and improving market access between the two countries. The leaders also discussed expanding solar and renewable energy initiatives across Seychelles by leveraging India's extensive



experience and expertise in the renewable energy sector. Both sides emphasized the need to deepen cooperation in the health and housing sectors, with a focus on people-centric and sustainable development initiatives that directly benefit citizens. Noting that India and Seychelles are commemorating 50 years of diplomatic rela-

tions this year, the two leaders expressed satisfaction at the steady progress in bilateral ties. They appreciated the long-standing diaspora linkages and the strong cultural and people-to-people connections between the two nations, and reaffirmed their commitment to advancing the partnership to its full potential in the years ahead.

Strict action should be taken against those who play with the dignity of the country: CM Nayab Singh Saini

AGENCY Chandigarh , February 20 – Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini today launched a scathing attack on the Congress party, saying that embarrassing the country at various places and tarnishing India's image has become part of the DNA of some people. He said that the Congress party is continuously undermining democratic values by insulting the country's constitutional institutions. The Chief Minister described the Congress party's method of protest during the summit held at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi as deeply regrettable. He said that intellectuals , policy-makers, and representatives from across the world had come to participate in the summit. The unbecoming conduct at such an interna-



tional forum was not only inappropriate but also damaging to the country's reputation. He clearly said that strict action should be taken against people who do such acts, so that in future no one can dare to hurt the dignity of the nation. The Chief Minister said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India is steadily progressing

and progressing. Today, India's credibility on the global stage has strengthened, and the country is scaling new heights on the world stage. At such a time, this kind of behavior by the opposition is unfortunate and irresponsible. He stated that the budget session of the Haryana Legislative Assembly began with the Governor's address. In his

address, the Governor conveyed the government's achievements to the people of the state through the House. The Chief Minister said that the state government has worked to bring positive and concrete changes in the lives of the common people. The Chief Minister said that the government has provided pucca houses to the poor, provided employment to the youth in a transparent manner , provided fair price to the farmers for their crops and has worked to provide health security cover to every needy person through Ayushman Yojana. He said that the state government is moving forward with the resolve of public welfare and development and living up to the expectations of the people is the top priority of the government.

Universities should aim to nurture constitutional and civic consciousness among youth and prepare a generation imbued with the spirit of 'Nation First': Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla

AGENCY New Delhi: At a programme held at Dr. Ambedkar International Centre, New Delhi, to mark the inauguration of three major academic programmes initiated by O.P. Jindal Global University, Lok Sabha Speaker Shri Om Birla addressed the participants as the Chief Guest. In his address, Lok Sabha Speaker stated that universities are not merely institutions that confer degrees, but are foundational pillars of nation-building. He emphasised that the objective of universities should be to foster constitutional and democratic values, and civic awareness among the youth, and to prepare a conscious



and responsible generation imbued with the spirit of 'Nation First'. He further observed that the new academic courses introduced by the O. P. Jindal University are aligned with contemporary needs and represent a significant and visionary step towards strengthening democratic institutions and systems. These programmes, he hoped, will not

only impart theoretical knowledge but also equip students with practical understanding and leadership skills. The Speaker remarked that democracy becomes truly strong only when every citizen is aware, remains conscious of both rights and duties, and upholds constitutional values. Referring to subjects such as Political

Communication, Election Management, and Legislative Drafting, he described them as essential in the present context, as they directly influence the quality and effectiveness of democratic processes. He added that students trained under these programmes would play an important role in ensuring greater public participation in elections. He also highlighted that India's electoral process is widely appreciated across the world for its transparency and credibility. He stressed the need for the country's youth to undertake in-depth study and research on India's electoral system and contribute towards making it even more robust and effective.

Krishna Janmabhoomi-Shahi Idgah mosque dispute: HC fixes Mar 12 for next hearing

AGENCY Prayagraj: The Allahabad High Court on Friday fixed March 12 as the date of the next hearing on the amendment application moved by the Muslim side in the Krishna Janmabhoomi and Shahi Idgah mosque dispute in Mathura. At the centre of the controversy is the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb-era Shahi Idgah mosque, which a section of Hindus has claimed had been built after demolishing a temple at the birth-place of Lord Krishna. On Friday, when the case was taken up, Tasneem Ahmadi, a lawyer of the Muslim side, told the court that an amendment



application earlier moved by her in a written statement has been allowed, but the court did not find on record any such order allowing the amendment application, following which she sought time. Next hearing on March 12 Justice Avnish Saxena then fixed March 12 as the date of the next hearing. The contention

involves 18 suits filed by the Hindu side for possession of the land after the removal of the Shahi Idgah Masjid as well as for restoration of the temple. On August 1, 2024, the high court rejected applications of the Muslim side that challenged the maintainability of suits of Hindu worshippers.

K. J. George Inspects Proposed Banaswadi Underpass, Reviews Civic Works in Sarvagnanagar

Bengaluru: Energy Minister and Sarvagnanagar MLA K. J. George on his second consecutive day of visit to the constituency inspected the proposed site for a new underpass near the existing Banaswadi railway underpass constructed by K-RIDE. The proposed underpass aims to ease traffic congestion and improve connectivity in the area.

Emphasizing smooth traffic management, the Minister directed officials to remove hurdles and expedite necessary measures for seamless vehicle movement. He reviewed several ongoing development works across Sarvagnanagar, including roads, parks, water supply connections, drainage systems, and underpasses,



instructing authorities to maintain quality standards and adhere to timelines. George toured Banaswadi, Kammanahalli, Kalyanagar, Kacharakana Halli, Lingarajapura, and M.S.

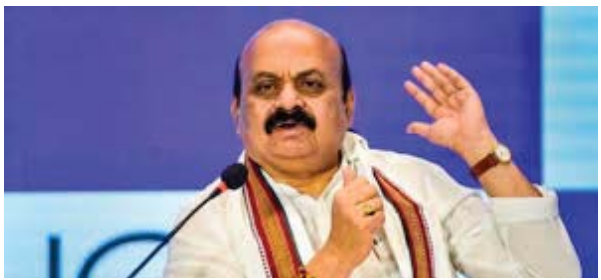
Nagar, interacting with residents and addressing their grievances. He expressed concern over delays in certain projects and directed officials to accelerate progress. The Minister also inspected

water supply and sewage network works undertaken by Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) near Kalamma Road in Kammanahalli and reviewed drainage works in multiple layouts. He further examined the UFW project in Dr. S. Kumar Layout, instructing officials to curb water leakage and streamline billing systems. Inspecting development works at Dr. Rajkumar Park in Kammanahalli, he directed authorities to complete the park soon with walking tracks, open gym facilities, toilets, and landscaping to enhance civic amenities. Local Congress leaders and officials from BWSSB, K-RIDE, BESCOM, and KPTCL were present during the inspection.

“Whatever Our Elders Did Has Meaning Behind It

Haveri: The village deity fair is a grand celebration, and whatever their elders did always carries a deeper meaning, said former Chief Minister and Member of Parliament Basavaraj Bommai.

He was speaking after visiting the temple as part of the Sri Gramadevi and Sri Durgadevi Jatra Mahotsava at Kerimattihalli village in Haveri taluk of Haveri district. He offered prayers, received blessings, and accepted a felicitation before addressing the gathering. The MP said that it is heartening to see everyone



organizing the fair together with devotion and faith. He prayed that the village deity and Goddess Durgadevi bless all the villagers. By establishing the village deity temple in the center of the village, our elders intended to protect the community from diseases and

misfortunes. No matter how large the temple structure may be, the sanctum sanctorum (garbhagudi) is always kept small. The reason behind this, he explained, is to remind people that no matter how powerful, wealthy, or high-ranking one may be, every-

one must bow their head in humility before God and offer respect.

The former CM further noted that a large temple chariot is built so that the entire village can come together to pull it. The intention of the elders was to foster unity and collective participation. Whatever our elders practiced has meaning and purpose, and it is our responsibility to carry forward those traditions. Bommai expressed happiness that the people of the village are continuing their customs and culture with devotion and dedication.

"PadmaShri Dr. C.N. Manjunath and His Team Successfully Perform Life-Saving Coronary Angioplasty for Poor Auto Rickshaw Driver-Free of Cost"

Bengaluru: Mr. Ramesh, a 45-year-old resident of Ramanagara district and an auto driver by profession, was admitted to an outside hospital two months ago with severe chest pain. He was diagnosed with an acute heart attack and underwent a Coronary Angiogram (CAG), which revealed significant blockages in his coronary arteries. He was advised to undergo open heart (bypass) surgery.

However, due to his poor financial condition and responsibilities of supporting his family, including two small children, he was unable to afford the recommended surgery.

Through the support of his relatives and friends, Mr. Ramesh approached PadmaShri Dr. C.N. Manjunath, renowned Cardiologist and Hon'ble Member of Parliament, Bangalore Rural, at Bangalore Hospital, South End Circle, Jayanagar.

After a detailed review of his medical reports and CAG CD, Dr. C.N. Manjunath Sir provided moral support and reassurance to the patient and his family. Instead of open heart surgery, he advised PTCA (Percutaneous Transluminal Coronary



Angioplasty) with stent placement to clear the blockages in the coronary arteries.

Dr. Manjunath also informed the family about the "Have a Heart Foundation," which supports economically weaker patients by providing financial assistance for life-saving cardiac procedures. The entire treatment was provided completely free of cost to the

patient under this noble initiative.

On 18/02/2025 (Wednesday), the PTCA with stent procedure was successfully performed by Dr. C.N. Manjunath, Dr. Nischal Hegde, Cath Lab Technician Mr. Mohan, and the entire Cath Lab team. The procedure was successful, and the patient his discharged in stable condition. The Management of Bangalore

Hospital, Dr. Abhishek and Dr. Lahari Madam, extended the support from hospital side. Mr. Ramesh responded well to the treatment and was later discharged in good condition. Mr. Ramesh and his family have conveyed their heartfelt gratitude to Dr. C.N. Manjunath and his team, as well as to the donor, Have Heart Foundation, and the hospital management.

Kumaraswamy Inaugurates EVready Expo 2026, Highlights PM Modi's Net Zero Vision

Bengaluru : Union Minister for Heavy Industries and Steel H.D. Kumaraswamy on Saturday inaugurated the EVready Expo 2026, Karnataka's largest electric vehicle exposition, in Bengaluru, emphasising that India's electric mobility transition is gathering unprecedented momentum under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The expo, organised by News First, brought together policymakers, industry leaders, technology providers and startups on a single platform, reflecting the growing depth and maturity of India's EV ecosystem. The Minister inaugurated the expo and later undertook an extensive tour of the exhibition stalls, interacting with innovators and exhibitors.

Addressing the gathering, Kumaraswamy underscored the strategic importance of electric mobility in India's economic and environmental roadmap.

"Electric mobility stands at the very heart of India's transformation. EVs are not merely about cleaner transport; they are about energy security, technological leadership and new economic opportunities for our youth," he said. Highlighting the policy momentum created under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Minister noted that India has set an ambitious national objective of achieving Net Zero emis-



sions by 2070, with Make in India and Atmanirbhar Bharat serving as key pillars driving domestic capability in sunrise sectors. Union Minister Kumaraswamy pointed to strong market indicators, stating that India's EV market has recorded a compound annual growth rate exceeding 60 percent over the past six years, with registrations nearing two million units in FY 2024-25. Two-wheelers continue to lead mass adoption, while electric passenger vehicles, buses and commercial fleets are witnessing steady expansion. Detailing the Centre's policy interventions, he highlighted the impact of the FAME-II scheme. "With an outlay of Rs.11,500 crore, FAME-II has supported more than 16.71 lakh electric vehicles and sanctioned over 9,000 public charging stations across the country," he noted. He further emphasised that the PM E-DRIVE

scheme, backed by Rs.10,900 crore, is accelerating adoption through demand incentives and charging infrastructure expansion, with more than 20 lakh EVs supported so far. The government has additionally earmarked Rs.2,000 crore under the scheme to establish over 70,000 charging stations nationwide.

In a forward-looking policy signal, Kumaraswamy also referenced the recently approved REPM scheme with an outlay of Rs.7,280 crore to promote indigenous manufacturing of sintered rare-earth permanent magnets which are critical components for electric vehicles and advanced electronics.

He stressed that the next phase of mobility will be deeply integrated with digital innovation. "The future of mobility will be shaped by connected vehicles, intelligent transport systems and data-driven

mobility solutions. India's digital public infrastructure and vibrant startup ecosystem give us a unique advantage to lead globally," he said.

Union Minister Kumaraswamy also singled out Karnataka's growing prominence in the sector, noting that Bengaluru's strong base in electronics, automotive engineering and startups positions the state to emerge as a global centre for electric mobility innovation and manufacturing. Dr Hanif Qureshi, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Heavy Industries, who was present at the event as highlighted the rapid pace of progress in the automobile sector and elaborated on the government's sustained push to scale up electric mobility nationwide.

The expo witnessed participation from leading industry stakeholders including K. N. Radhakrishnan, Suman Mishra and S. Ravikumar, reflecting strong industry-government alignment in advancing clean mobility.

Reiterating the Centre's commitment, Kumaraswamy assured industry players of a stable and forward-looking policy environment.

"The Government of India remains fully committed to providing a predictable and supportive ecosystem for investors, manufacturers and innovators driving the EV transition," he affirmed.

Ecofluence 3.0 International conference on Economics & Public policy and Research Championshipat IBA

Bengaluru : Ecofluence 3.0 (where 'Eco' stands for economics), an International conference jointly organised by Indus Business Academy in association with the Indian Economic Association (IEA), Association of Indian Management Schools (AIMS) and supported by AMDISA, commenced its first day on February 20, 2026, at IBA.

The conference was inaugurated with a welcome speech by Dr. Easwar Krishna Iyer, Director of Indus Business Academy, and an address by Dr. Subhash Sharma, Chief Mentor and Chairman Governing Council, IBA. Conference Co-Chairs Prof. Prashant Kulkarni and Dr. Mansi Bansal provided the formal introduction to Ecofluence.

The inaugural address was delivered by the Chief Guest, Dr. S. Mahendra Dev, Chairman of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council (PME-EAC). Dr. Charan Singh, Founder and CEO of the EGROW Foundation and former IIMB Professor, addressed the gathering as the Guest of Honour.

Dr. R.S. Deshpande, Chair Advisory Committee, and Dr. Ravindra Brahme, General Secretary of the Indian Economics Association, also addressed the gathering during the inauguration. Another highlight of the morning was the release of the book titled "Micro-Motives and Macro-Behaviour of Modinomics" by authors



Prof. Prashant Kulkarni and Dr. Mansi Bansal.

The day's agenda progressed with special talks, including "The Digital and the Regenerative" by Dr. Shishir Jha and "Decoding Government Policies" by Dr. Pravakar Sahoo. A prominent Panel Discussion focusing on "Karnataka, India and the Digital Economy" was held in the afternoon, featuring expert panelists Dr. Neelakanta NT, Dr. Mahesha M, Dr. Shivsubramanian, B. B. M. Nasir Khan, and Dr. K S Rajshekara.

The other notable dignitaries present for extensive sessions on Development Economics and Sustainability included Dr. MH Suryanarayana, Dr. Ashok Dalwai, Dr. Lallan Prasad, Dr. Vinayak Deshpande, Dr. Elumalai Kannan, Dr. N Sivakumar, Dr. Navitha Thimmaiah, and Dr. Pushkarni Panchamukhi, alongside preliminary rounds for the Debate and Research Championships.

The inaugural ceremony concluded with a vote of thanks and concluding comments, paving the way for the remainder of the day's academic discourse.

Basavaraj Bommai: If Hindus Prosper, India Will Prosper

Hubballi: Former Chief Minister and MP Basavaraj Bommai asserted that India's growth is closely linked to the prosperity of Hindus, stating that strengthening the Hindu economy, particularly in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities, is essential for the nation's rise. "No force on earth can stop India from becoming the world's number one nation," he declared.

He was addressing the National Chapters Meet 2026 organized by the Hindu Economics Forum at Denissons Hotel in Hubballi. Bommai said human life is blessed with intellect and emotion, and individuals must shape their own destiny. Emphasizing civilization's roots in Sanatana Dharma, he spoke about the four Purusharthas—Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha—as guiding principles of life. Quoting Basavanna's "Kayakave Kailasa," he underlined the importance of hard work and equitable circulation of wealth.

Highlighting the shift of global power from land to money and now to knowledge, he urged youth to embrace Artificial Intelligence and prepare for emerging challenges. He stressed that Hindus must move from being a large consumer base to becoming a production-oriented society focused on quality, research, and strong customer relations.

Praising Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Bommai said India is on track to become a superpower by 2047. He also cited entrepreneurs like Vijay Sankeshwar, Aravind Melligeri, and Murugesh Nirani as examples of innovation-driven success. Concluding, he called for balanced economic and spiritual growth, urging society to give back and expand development beyond metropolitan cities to smaller towns.

KHARGE'S ASSURANCE TO SATISH JARKIHOLO ON RESOLVING LEADERSHIP ISSUE: DCM DK SHIVAKUMAR SAYS 'HAPPY ABOUT IT'

I DON'T HAVE ANY INFORMATION ON CM'S TWEETS

Bengaluru : Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar today said he was happy about AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge's assurance to Satish Jarkiholi on resolving leadership issue in Karnataka. The DCM was speaking to reporters at Karnataka State Higher Education Council here. Asked about CM's article and series of tweets, he said, "I don't have any information on that." Replying to a question on Bagalkote violence, he said, "I returned to Bengaluru from Assam last night and I was very tired. I don't have any information on that yet, will seek details of it." Asked if the government would give compensation to the victims in Bagalkote in view of the Congress delegation's visit, he said a decision would be taken after officials give a report. Asked about BJP MLA Dheeraj Muniraju saying he had not demanded any funds for allowing garbage dumping in his constituency, he said, "We will talk about it later."

Government and private sectors to work together to eradicate tuberculosis (TB) in India at the earliest: Dr. C. N. Manjunath.

Bengaluru: The Annual Scientific Meeting of the Karnataka Pulmonologists Association (PULMOKARN 2026) was inaugurated on 21 February 2026 at the U.R. Rao Auditorium, Jawaharlal Nehru Planetarium Campus, Bengaluru. Padma Shri Dr. C. N. Manjunath, Member of Parliament and eminent cardiologist, graced the occasion as the Chief Guest and delivered an insightful address highlighting the growing burden of respiratory diseases in India.

Dr. Manjunath observed that respiratory illnesses are emerging as a major public health challenge due to the country's large population and increasing air pollution. He emphasized that strong clinical



evaluation must always be correlated with appropriate investigations such as CT and MRI to ensure accurate diagnosis and timely treatment. He also stressed the need to make healthcare more affordable and accessible, along with ensuring clean air, clean water, and safe food for the public.

Recalling the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Manjunath lauded the extraordinary service rendered by pulmonologists and frontline doctors. During the COVID pandemic, pulmonologists did a wonderful job for the nation. When the entire world was struggling, our doctors stood on the front line with courage, commitment, and compassion. Their selfless service will always be remembered in the history of Indian healthcare, he said.

He further stated: The Union Health Ministry has provided the necessary infrastructure, diagnostic services, and free drugs for all TB patients. What is now required

is greater awareness among patients and strict adherence to the full course of treatment.

Dr. Manjunath called for coordinated action, noting that the government and private sectors must work together to eradicate tuberculosis (TB) in India at the earliest and achieve the national goal of TB elimination by 2030.

He also highlighted the importance of preventive care: Special focus is needed for elderly people above 65 years, especially those with diabetes and kidney disease, so that the incidence of pneumonia can be brought down significantly. Air pollution is also a very important risk factor for respiratory diseases and must be addressed on priority.

EDITORIAL

RISEING SYNERGY

The jogging by Emmanuel Macron, the President of France in the streets of Mumbai is not only a story of routine physical exercise, it is also a sign of the fast-growing friendship between two countries. The bilateralism between France and India is deepening by leaps and bounds. The elevation of the ties into a Special Global Strategic Partnership indicates how the relationship is becoming comprehensive and multi-dimensional. The partnership has stood the test of time. French President Emmanuel Macron is currently on a three-day visit to India, which began on February 17, 2026. His visit aimed at strengthening bilateral ties focusing on areas like trade, defence, innovation and technology. The highlights of the visit include the launching of India-France year of innovation, the elevation of partnership, AI Impact Summit, and defence cooperation, mainly the procurement of 114 Rafale fighter jets and joint production of helicopters. The visit reflected the growing strategic convergence between India and France with shared interests in the Indo-Pacific and global stability. The main driver for this growing partnership is the adherence to strategic autonomy in the foreign policies of both countries. Let us recall that during the Cold War, as the West overlooked India for its Non-Aligned approach, France was more accommodative to India than its fellow-member countries in NATO. This was because France did not succumb to American pressure and refused to completely toe its line. In 1998, when India carried out the nuclear test, France was the only western power that did not impose economic sanctions on New Delhi. France has been the first country in the world that recognizes India as an independent power centre, a credible democracy, offering economic opportunities for the world. There has been a consensus in French politics that if European Union has to carve out an independent political identity apart from alignment with America or China, it must embrace India. This perspective was amply manifested in Macron's latest visit to India. Macron asserted that both countries oppose domination of any kind from India-Pacific to any field of technology in any part of the world. He likened friendship with India to a sovereign alliance. Prime Minister Modi in his response said, "Both countries believe in a multipolar world and are working diligently to make it happen". The ties between France and India in defence sector are growing stronger day-by-day. It is evident from the facts that France is next only to Russia in exporting defence equipment to India. It will be no surprise if France overtakes Russia in near future if one takes into account the increasing number of agreements on the sale of fighter jets, submarines, and the joint production of defence material. To counter China and consolidate power in Asia, France is set to co-manufacture Rafale aircrafts, H-125 helicopters, HAMMER missiles, scorpene submarines and the fifth generation of jet engines. Notably, France does not sale any deadly weapons to China or Pakistan whereas Russia has been supplying sophisticated weaponry to China, and America to Pakistan. The collaboration between France and India is not limited to export of arms. Keeping the importance of emerging technologies in strategic thinking, France and India have constituted a Joint Advanced Technology Group which will co-develop emerging technologies, secure military supply chains, and maintain the competitive strategic advantage. This Group also included critical minerals, collaboration on AI, digital technology, aerospace and innovation. This initiative falls under the broader framework of 2026 India-France Year of Innovation. The partnership is evolving innovatively. Prime Minister and President Macron jointly inaugurated the India-France Innovation Forum in Mumbai on 17 February, calling it a reflection of the deepening strategic partnership, shared democratic values, and expanding collaboration in innovation and technology. This will open up scope for work for scientists, researchers, traders, and entrepreneurs from both countries. France and India are becoming active in the fields of AI, space, and aviation. The AI World Conference, currently in progress in India was initiated jointly by France and India. Both countries are working for democratization of AI which should be used for common good.

The 'Quiet Panic' That Led To Trump

Blinking On Anti-India Tariffs

In recent years, India has concluded several bilateral trade agreements, including with the UK, Oman, and the EU. Another notable development is the announcement of an interim trade agreement between India and the United States. Although early discussions centred on a comprehensive, multi-sector agreement focused on market access and reducing trade barriers, the decision to settle for an interim deal appears influenced by broader factors. Rising inflation in the US, particularly following tariffs in sectors such as household durable goods, food and beverages and textiles, may have prompted a recalibration of trade relations. US Inflation Was Rising India has become an increasingly important supplier within the United States' import structure. In 2024-25, Indian exports to the US totalled approximately USD 86.51 billion, representing around 2.6% of total US imports. This role is particularly evident in several sectors, with India supplying approximately 9.2% of US textile and apparel imports, roughly 3.2% of housing-related consumer durables, and nearly 5% of food and beverage imports during that period. These figures indicate India's growing integration into key segments of the US consumption market. At the same time, the United States has implemented a series of tariff increases affecting a broad range of Indian exports. Inflation within the sectors under consideration, as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), remained positive throughout this period. Specifically, for January 2025-26, CPI inflation was approximately 2.9% for food and beverages, 1.7% for textiles and apparel, and 3.9% for housing-related consumer durables. Notably, larger movements in inflation were observed following the tariff notifications issued in August 2025. While multiple factors likely contributed, the timing suggests that recent trade measures may have played a role alongside other domestic and global influences in shaping observed price trends. Americans Felt The Pinch Recent inflation forecasts highlight concerns regarding tariff pass-through for domestic policymakers. According to RBC Economics, core goods inflation in



the United States is expected to increase this year, peaking at approximately 3%. These figures are comparable to levels observed during the 2008 financial crisis in the United States. Empirical research increasingly supports the link between tariffs and price pressures. Research from Federal Reserve organisations, including the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, has provided evidence that the recent increase in tariffs indeed contributed significantly to the growth in consumer prices. This observed link between tariffs and inflation has prompted the US to deploy compensatory measures. One example has been the expansion of federal support packages for American farmers as agricultural producers were among the most visible casualties of retaliatory tariffs, prompting administrations to authorise significant amounts in relief and subsidy programmes. These transfers acknowledge that trade restrictions can generate domestic economic stress requiring fiscal mitigation. Federal Reserve data indicate that overall consumer

goods production increased modestly in 2025, with output rising by approximately 0.7% in December 2025 compared to earlier months. Food and beverage manufacturing, a non-durable good, recorded mild gains consistent with short-term adjustments in domestic supply. Production of household durable goods, including appliances and furniture, also edged upward, reaching an industrial production index of approximately 81.9 in December 2025, slightly higher than levels earlier in the year. In contrast, textiles and apparel production remained subdued, with available data indicating stagnation or decline through 2024-25, reflecting longer-term structural constraints within the sector. Overall, the data suggest that while certain industries experienced short-run increases in domestic production, these gains were modest and uneven, and do not indicate a broad-based or sustained expansion in US manufacturing capacity. There's More To The Tariff Rollback Than Diplomacy Against this backdrop, the newly

announced US-India trade adjustments assume increased economic significance. The reduction of tariffs on exports from India - including textiles, engineering goods, and industrial components - should not be understood solely in the context of Indo-US bilateral relations. Rather, this adjustment aligns closely with established anti-inflationary economic principles, aiming to eliminate artificial cost escalations that contribute to underlying price increases. This reading does not eliminate the geopolitical or strategic aspects of the Indo-American relationship. Indeed, the diversification of supply chains, Indo-Pacific alliances, and technological partnerships continue to drive significant forces. Nevertheless, the economic environment within which this tariff rollback occurs should not be overlooked. Policy shifts in trading relations seldom occur in economic isolation, especially with inflation dominating the economic policy debate. After all, trade agreements are intended to increase consumer choice and reduce inflation.

ART OF DELAY

It's telling that Punjab is still kicking the can down the road on appointing a regular Director General of Police, even after the Supreme Court flagged the "acting DGP" culture as a serious institutional flaw. For over three years now, Gaurav Yadav, technically an "acting" DGP, has been calling the shots in Punjab Police. That's longer than most bureaucrats stay at a single desk in New Delhi. And yes, that very arrangement drew the apex court's ire, precisely because it goes against the spirit (if not the letter) of the Prakash Singh judgment, which sought to insulate police leadership from political expediency. The state government's official line seems to be that it's waiting on the UPSC to communicate next steps, an argument that feels more like a stall tactic than a strategy. After all, the court's directive clearly empowers the UPSC to push for compliance, not to act as a go-between. What's striking is how this delay feeds into a deeper problem: the public perception, and sometimes reality, that police leadership can be held in suspended animation for years, with all the institutional uncertainty that invites. Police forces thrive on stable command, continuity of strategy, and clarity of authority. The longer a state dithers on "acting" arrangements, the more it undermines that very foundation. It can be argued that Punjab isn't alone. Several states have flirted with acting chiefs rather than regular appointments. But that doesn't absolve any of them, particularly when the Supreme Court has signalled that this shouldn't be normal administrative practice. If Punjab wants to credibly claim it takes rule-based governance seriously, it should walk the talk: forward a proper panel of candidates, let the UPSC do its job, and install a full-time DGP. Anything less is just bureaucratic inertia dressed up as prudence. 63 lateral entries and 3,000 empty chairs For years now, we've been told that India's bureaucracy is being "reimagined." More agile. More specialised. More fit for a complex, 21st-century economy. The numbers tell a different story. As informed in the Rajya Sabha, nearly 3,000 posts across the IAS, IPS



and IFS are vacant. The IAS alone is short by over 1,300 officers. The IFS, the face of India abroad, is functioning with a deficit that would make any corporate HR head break into a cold sweat. This isn't a minor staffing glitch. It's structural. Now enter lateral entry. This reform was supposed to disrupt the cosy generalist club. Since its launch in 2018, just 63 appointments have been made across ministries. Seven years, 63 people. That's not disruption; that's a rounding error. Which raises a fair question: was lateral entry meant to fix a talent deficit or merely signal reform? Because if the goal was to infuse domain expertise into policymaking, the scale simply doesn't match the rhetoric. If the goal was to compensate for a shrinking intake through the UPSC pipeline, it clearly hasn't. Meanwhile, governance doesn't pause for recruitment bottlenecks. Trade negotiations, climate diplomacy, cyber security, and financial regulation don't wait for files to be filled. An understaffed babudom doesn't just stretch officers thin; it stretches institutional capacity. The larger worry isn't vacancies per se. Governments can and do recalibrate cadre strength. The concern is drift, a gap between ambition and execution. A small circular, a big signal Delhi's babu grapevine has delivered a small but delicious irony. The Centre has apparently told senior officials to "promptly dispose" of letters from Members of

Parliament. So far, so routine. But here's the kicker: they are to do so without leaning on that sacred relic, known as the pre-printed, copy-paste reply. Yes, that one where the template begins with "I am directed to refer to your letter..." and ends with something so non-committal it could run for office! A fresh note now solemnly reminds officials that elected representatives "occupy a very important place in our democratic set-up." One imagines this line was typed with the straightest of faces. After all, MPs are not exactly pen pals looking for polite acknowledgements; they are supposed to represent millions of citizens. Their letters are not spam. Or at least, not all of them. What triggered this bureaucratic awakening? No one is saying. But it doesn't take Sherlock Holmes to suspect that some MPs may have grown tired of receiving replies that felt... recyclable. Change the name, tweak a line, press send. Governance, by template. To be fair, standardisation has its uses. It keeps files moving and language uniform. But when every response reads as a mildly bored algorithm assembled it, it signals something deeper: disengagement. A mechanical state talking back to a human mandate. The real test, of course, is not whether the templates disappear. It's whether the replies begin to show signs of thought, specificity, care, accountability, or even a timeline.

Tim Cook Seems Determined

To Keep Bruising Apple

For America's brands, the second Trump administration has been a field of rakes lying in wait to give them black eyes. But unlike most rakes, these have big red flags telling you where they are. Which makes it even more surprising and disappointing that the purveyor of one of America's shiniest and strongest brands keeps stepping on them. Apple Inc. is one of this country's flagship businesses. For the past 19 years, it has been the world's most admired company, according to surveys of executives, directors and analysts by Fortune Magazine and the consulting firm Korn Ferry. For 13 years running, the iPhone maker has been the world's most valuable brand as measured by the consulting firm Interbrand. It's routinely considered one of the world's best employers. For most of those 19 years as the Gallant to so many corporate Goofuses, Apple has been led by Chief Executive Officer Tim Cook, who took over from founder Steve Jobs in 2011. Succeeding such a legend would seem to be a poisoned chalice, but Cook's low-key leadership was apparently just what the company needed to carry on in the style to which it had grown accustomed under the hard-charging Jobs, if not better. Cook, who raised money for Hillary Clinton during the 2016 election, navigated Trump 1.0 with aplomb and even a touch of bravery. At a Bloomberg Global Business forum in 2017, he criticized the administration's immigration policies, saying: "This is unac-



ceptable. This is not who we are as a country." The worst President Donald Trump could ever do in return was call him "Tim Apple." Trump 2.0 has been a much different story. Where once he managed to stay on Trump's good side without embarrassing himself, this time Cook has bent fully to the political winds. It hasn't been a good look. He donated \$1 million of his own money to Trump's inaugural committee and attended the inauguration with a bevy of other tech CEOs. In August, he presented the award-hungry Trump with a bespoke glass-and-gold plaque and glazed the president as "one of the great and most esteemed business leaders and geniuses and innovators anywhere in the world." Most infamously, Cook attended a private White House screening of Melania - a \$40 million favor from a less-beloved brand, Amazon.com Inc., to Trump and the first lady - just hours

after federal agents shot and killed Alex Pretti in Minneapolis. It took days of furious criticism for Cook to finally release a milquetoast statement calling for "deescalation." More stealthily, Apple last year killed incentives for Cook and other executives to consider the environmental impact of their decisions, Bloomberg News reported. In doing so, Apple joined a recent trend of companies backing away from climate commitments, encouraged by a US government whose official policy is that climate change is a myth. Such commitments aren't just important for woke virtue signaling. An increasingly chaotic climate makes it harder to do business, especially for a company with global reach and supply chains such as Apple. Nor have Cook's MAGA flirtations been nearly enough to remove Apple from the American Conservative Values ETF's list of 37 overly

woke companies in which it refuses to invest. The ETF's managers say they want to "exclude companies perceived to be most hostile to conservative values without sacrificing performance." The ETF consistently lagged the S&P 500 for most of last year. Apple's stock price has shown no obvious reaction to Cook's political stumbles, rising consistently during the Melania debacle. When other corporate leaders have celebrated Trump 2.0 by gesturing their brands into decline, Apple's perch still seems relatively safe. But Apple's brand value did drop about 4% last year. And among American consumers, Apple's reputation is just middling. In YouGov rankings, Apple places 209th. Among tech brands, it's seventh, between Dell and Windows. With a little more spine and forethought, Cook can avoid further black eyes. There's no value in finding out how many more it can take.

Reciprocal tariffs are gone, but several other U.S. tariffs are still hitting Indian exporters

While the U.S. Supreme Court has struck down the reciprocal tariffs imposed by U.S. President Donald Trump on various countries, including India, several other tariffs remain in place that still have an impact on various sectors, trade analysts and export data show. India will now face a lower reciprocal tariff of 10 per cent, down from 25 per cent, after US President Donald Trump announced a new global levy on items imported into America in the wake of the Supreme Court verdict against his sweeping duties on several nations. According to Trump's proclamation, the temporary import surcharge of 10 per cent is for a period of 150 days from February 24. A proclamation, dated February 20, was issued by the White House. With the US Supreme Court striking down President Donald Trump's global tariffs and Washington issuing a new order imposing a temporary 10 per cent import surcharge, Indian goods will now face only a 10 per cent reciprocal levy from February 24, 2026. For instance, if a product faces a 5 per cent MFN duty in America, an additional 10 per cent will be imposed now, taking the effective duty to 15 per cent. Earlier, this was 5 plus 25 per cent. Trump's procla-



mation, dated February 20, said: "I impose, for a period of 150 days, a temporary import surcharge of 10 per cent ad valorem on articles imported into the United States, effective February 24, 2026" at 12:01 a.m. Eastern Standard Time. "Instead of different RTs on different countries, it is 10 per cent now on everyone for the goods which were covered under RTs," a source said. From February 7 to February 24, 2026, the Russia-oil penalty was removed, reducing the additional duty to 25 per cent. The February 6 joint statement proposed lowering this reciprocal tariff to 18 per cent, but the change has not yet been implemented. Beginning February 24,

2026, a temporary across-the-board 10 per cent tariff will apply for 150 days in addition to MFN duties, replacing the earlier reciprocal tariff structure. After 150 Days There is no clarity yet about what the reciprocal tariff imposed by the US will be on countries, such as India, after the 150-day period. India-US Trade Pact To finalise the legal text for the first phase of the bilateral trade agreement, the Indian team is scheduled to meet its counterparts in Washington from February 23, 2026. Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, on February 20, said that India and the US are expected to sign the deal next month, and it may be opera-

tionalised in April. Expert's Take Think tank GTRI said that, as the RT on Indian goods has come down to 10 per cent from 25 per cent, India should re-evaluate the trade pact with the US. India agreed to reduce tariffs for the US based on Washington's decision to cut RT on India to 18 per cent, but now the US has reduced the RT for all nations to 10 per cent. "Deals are not charity. Both sides must gain. Now, India's gains need fresh evaluation," GTRI founder Ajay Srivastava said. Trump On Deal With India Trump said nothing changes in the trade deal with India in the wake of the Supreme Court verdict against his sweeping tariffs, as he

responded to the ruling by announcing an additional 10 per cent global levies on items imported into the US. Goods Under Exempted Category A fact sheet issued by the White House noted that some goods will not be subject to the temporary import duty because of the needs of the US economy or in order to ensure the duty more effectively addresses the fundamental international payments problems facing the United States. The goods include certain critical minerals, metals used in currency and bullion, energy, and energy products; natural resources and fertilisers that cannot be grown, mined, or otherwise produced in the United States or grown, mined, or otherwise produced in sufficient quantities to meet domestic demand; certain agricultural products, including beef, tomatoes, and oranges; pharmaceuticals and pharmaceutical ingredients. Other items are certain electronics goods; passenger vehicles, certain light trucks, certain medium and heavy-duty vehicles, buses and certain aerospace products. Sectoral Tariffs On India The sectoral tariffs (steel, aluminium, copper at 50 per cent, and a few auto components attracting 25 per cent) will continue. Why is the US imposing Tariffs .

Evvah – Weavers Hub exhibition showcases over 1,000 handloom sarees in Nanakramguda



Hyderabad: Handlooms & Textiles Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao inaugurated the Evvah – Weavers Hub exhibition at Firewater Neo Bar & Kitchen, Financial District, Nanakramguda on Saturday. The exhibition is being organised by socialite Alekhya Reddy. Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said handloom and silk hold a unique and prestigious place in Indian culture and urged everyone to wear handloom garments more frequently and called for greater encouragement and support for

Highlights

■ HANDLOOMS & TEXTILES

MINISTER TUMMALA NAGESWARA RAO INAUGURATED THE EVVAH – WEAVERS HUB EXHIBITION AT FIREWATER NEO BAR & KITCHEN, FINANCIAL DISTRICT, NANAKRAMGUDA ON SATURDAY.

handloom weavers. Alekhya Reddy said the exhibition will continue until February 22 and the exposition features an exclusive collection of traditional and handcrafted textiles, with more than a thousand varieties of handloom sarees on display.

The exhibition includes renowned weaves such as Varanasi, Banarasi, Kanchipuram Kanjeevaram, Gadwal, Pochampally and Mangalagiri sarees, representing the rich diversity of India's handloom heritage.

'Hard to keep lights on' - Business owners cautiously welcome tariff ruling

As soon as she heard the US Supreme Court had struck down President Donald Trump's authority to impose sweeping global tariffs, Jenelle Peterson's mind raced to the possibilities for her toy business. She might import more toys to the US and invest in designing new ones - things she had put on hold as Trump's levies on China, where her Canadian firm Wild Life Outdoor Adventures makes its products, took a 25% bite out of her profits last year. Still, uncertainty about refunds and other tariff authorities that the Trump administration might leverage is keeping her on edge. "I have a bit of reservation in too much celebration," she said. "But for us, every percentage point matters." Many business owners greeted the Supreme Court's ruling with cautious optimism. Their rejoicing was tempered by questions about a potentially complex process to obtain refunds for tariff fees they've



already paid. Trump said on Friday he expected the issue to be tied up in court for years. And the Trump administration could still leverage other tariff authorities that were not implicated in the ruling. The Supreme Court case only covers duties that the Trump administration imposed using a 1977 law, the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA). On Friday, Trump said he planned to sign an executive order to impose a 10% global tariff, under a separate statute that allows the president to put

import taxes of up to 15% in place for 150 days. "We have other ways - numerous other ways," Trump told a White House briefing. Learning Resources, a family-owned educational toy maker, was among the businesses that challenged Trump's tariff policy - and received a ruling in its favour on Friday. Rick Woldenberg, the firm's chief executive, told the BBC that he was unimpressed with the president's proposed alternatives to IEEPA tariffs. "If the government is bound and determined to

try to harm us through excessive taxes, I'm sure they'll find a way," Woldenberg said. But he called the Supreme Court's ruling a "major victory". Even with the IEEPA tariffs struck down, consumers and businesses will face an average effective tariff rate of 9.1% - the highest since 1946 excluding 2025, according to the Budget Lab at Yale University. That means tariff-related pain continues to looms over business decisions. "Although bringing an end to most tariffs will undoubtedly benefit Main Street, we know that tariffs have already caused significant and irreparable harm to many small businesses," John Arensmeyer, chief executive of the Small Business Majority, an advocacy group, said in a statement. "We hope that today's decision is a step forward for small businesses that need more certainty as well as relief from high prices in order to continue operating.

From 'buy America' to 'bye America', Wall Street exodus gathers pace

London, Feb 20: US investors are pulling money out of their own stock market at the fastest pace in at least 16 years as Big Tech returns fade and better-performing overseas markets look more attractive. In the last six months, US-domiciled investors have pulled some \$75 billion from US equity products, with \$52 billion flowing out since the start of 2026 alone, the most in the first eight weeks of the year since at least 2010, according to LSEG/Lipper data. The shift comes despite a weakening of the dollar against other currencies, which makes buying overseas assets more expensive for US investors. It's a compelling sign that the diversification away from US assets by some international investors in the past year is gaining traction among US investors. Since the global financial crisis ended in 2009, the "buy America" trade has rewarded investors at home and abroad thanks to a strong economy and earnings growth and dominance in the tech sector leading to outsized gains in US stocks.



More recently, the AI boom pushed the S&P 500 index record highs last year, a strong buffer from US President Donald Trump's unpredictable approach to trade policy and diplomacy, as well as his attempts to undermine Federal Reserve independence. **LOOKING FURTHER AFIELD** But as concerns have grown about the possible risks from AI, as well as the costs involved, the lure of Wall Street stocks has ebbed. The surge in value in the US megacap tech stocks that have led gains until now are

making investors pickier and many are spotting more attractive opportunities elsewhere. Bank of America's February fund manager survey showed investors switched from US equities to emerging market equities at the fastest rate in five years. "I've had lots of conversations with our wealth business in the US this year," said UBS's head of European equity strategy and global derivatives strategy Gerry Fowler. "They're all talking about investing more offshore because at the end of the year, they looked at the performance of foreign mar-

kets in dollars and they're like, wow, I'm missing out." US investors have poured some \$26 billion into emerging-market equities so far this year, with South Korea the largest single country destination, with an inflow of \$2.8 billion, followed by Brazil, with \$1.2 billion, LSEG/Lipper data shows. One of the clear results of Trump's policies has been the 10% decline in the dollar against a basket of currencies since last January. While that is a disadvantage for US investors hunting for opportunities abroad, dividends in dollar terms from better performing overseas markets will also be pumped up. In the last 12 months, the S&P 500 has risen around 14%. In dollar terms, Tokyo's Nikkei is up 43%, Europe's STOXX 600 has surged 26%, Shanghai's CSI 300 has returned 23% and Seoul's KOSPI has doubled in value. European banking stocks, one example of cyclical stocks that typically benefit when economic growth picks up, surged 67% last year and are up a further 4% so far in 2026.

IIT Madras launches BSc in management and data science

Hyderabad: IIT Madras has launched a new Bachelor of Science in Management and Data Science, an interdisciplinary undergraduate programme, designed to equip learners with expertise in business decision-making, quantitative thinking and data-driven problem solving. Geographic Reference The graduates of the programme will receive a Bachelor of Science degree from IIT Madras, carrying the same academic recognition as any other degree offered by the Institute Admissions, platform, placement and career support will be facilitated through IIT Madras' Centre for Outreach and Digital Education. The Institute is also engaging with industry partners to offer internships and project-based learning opportunities to enhance graduates' industry readiness. The first batch of this programme will commence in June 2026. The last date for applying to the programme is May 31. Details of the programme and admis-



sions can be accessed . The graduates of the programme will receive a Bachelor of Science degree from IIT Madras, carrying the same academic recognition as any other degree offered by the Institute. Admissions, platform, placement, and career support will be facilitated through IIT Madras' Centre for Outreach and Digital Education (CODE). The Institute is also engaging with industry partners to offer internships and project-based learning opportunities to enhance graduates' industry readiness. The first batch of this program will com-

mence from June 2026. The last date for applying to the programme is 31st May 2026. IIT Madras, launched the program in the campus today (21st Feb 2026) in the presence of Chief Guest Ms. Gangapriya Chakraverti, India Site Head and Managing Director, Ford Motor Company, Guest of Honour Mr. Rajiv C. Lochan, Managing Director and CEO, Sundaram Finance Limited, Prof. Saji Mathew, Head, DoMS, IIT Madras, Prof. Andrew Thangaraj, Chair, CODE, IIT Madras, Prof. Prathap Haridoss, Dean, Academic Courses.

TRUMP EYES VENEZUELA VISIT – BUT OBSTACLES TO HIS OIL PLAN REMAIN

After US President Donald Trump oversaw the seizure of his Venezuelan counterpart Nicolás Maduro last month, he vowed to tap the country's oil reserves – the world's largest. Trump now says that he plans to visit the South American country, although no date has been set. His comments, made last Friday, came after US Energy Secretary Chris Wright completed a two-day trip to Venezuela to see how the nation is starting to reopen its oil sector to US companies. Wright's visit came shortly after Venezuela's National Assembly passed a law to allow both private and foreign investment in its oil industry, following two decades of tight state control. In Trump's eyes it is a big business opportunity for the US oil sector. "We're going to be extracting numbers in terms of oil like few people have seen," he said at a news conference in mid-January, after a meeting with energy bosses at the White House. But for the US oil firms that Trump wants to invest heavily in Venezuela, the question is a simple one - do the numbers add up? William Jackson, chief emerging markets economist at Capital Economics, says the US president's



aim is to "revive Venezuela's oil sector and use that energy to increase supply and reduce costs to the consumer, possibly providing a source of revenue for a more friendly Venezuelan government to rebuild the economy after years of mismanagement". For US energy companies, however, there are huge practical difficulties to be overcome. Venezuela's state-owned oil company, PDVSA, is a shadow of its former self. The governments of Maduro and his predecessor, Hugo Chávez milked the firm for all it was worth, and used the money to finance social spending on housing, healthcare

and transport. But they failed to invest in maintaining oil production levels, which have plummeted in recent years – partly, but not solely, because of US sanctions, which could now be revised. "In Venezuela, you're dealing with equipment that's been degraded by many years of neglect," says Jackson. "Ten to 15 years ago, Venezuela was producing 1.5 million barrels a day more than it does today." Monica de Bolle, senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, agrees that PDVSA is in a parlous state. "A lot of things have to be scrapped completely and rebuilt from the

ground up," she tells the BBC. "In fact, if political constraints did not matter, the best thing to do would be to scrap PDVSA, but that isn't going to happen." It's a big nationalist symbol, it's attached to sovereignty. Would the Venezuelans be willing to do whatever the US says and roll over? I don't think so." Trump has asked US oil firms to spend at least \$100bn (£75bn) on restoring Venezuela's battered infrastructure – an absolute necessity before his plan to ramp up sales can be realised. Officially, Venezuela has 300 billion barrels of oil reserves – yet in 2023, it exported just 211.6 million barrels of oil, worth about \$4bn. Compare that to second-placed Saudi Arabia, which has 267 billion barrels of reserves, but had exports worth \$181bn in the same time period. So on paper at least, there is room for improvement. However, Jackson says there are doubts over the true size of Venezuela's oil reserves. During the Chávez presidency, Venezuela reclassified its reserves. Previously, there were thought to be just 80 billion barrels of extractable oil, but by 2011, its reported figure had nearly quadrupled.

Trump brings in new 10% tariff as Supreme Court rejects his global import taxes

US President Donald Trump has imposed a new 10% global tariff to replace ones struck down by the Supreme Court, calling the ruling "terrible" and lambasting the justices who rejected his trade policy as "fools". The president unveiled the plan shortly after the justices outlawed most of the global tariffs the White House announced last year. In a 6-3 decision, the court held that the president had overstepped his powers. The decision was a major victory for businesses and US states that had challenged the duties, opening the door to potentially billions of dollars in tariff refunds, while also injecting new uncertainty into the global trade landscape. Speaking from the White House on Friday, Trump indicated that refunds would not come without a legal battle, saying he expected the matter to be tied up in court for years. He also said he would turn to

other laws to press ahead with his tariffs, which he has argued encourage investment and manufacturing in the US. "We have alternatives - great alternatives and we'll be a lot stronger for it," he said. The court battle was focused on import taxes that Trump unveiled last year on goods from nearly every country in the world. The tariffs initially targeted Mexico, Canada and China, before expanding dramatically to dozens of trade partners on what the president billed as "Liberation Day" last April. The White House had cited a 1977 law, the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), which gives the president power to "regulate" trade in response to an emergency. But the measures sparked outcry at home and abroad from firms facing an abrupt rise in taxes on shipments entering the US, and fuelled worries that the levies would lead to high-



er prices. Arguing before the court last year, lawyers for the challenging states and small businesses said that the law used by the president to impose the levies made no mention of the word "tariffs". They said that Congress did not intend to hand off its power to tax or give the president an "open-ended power to junk" other existing trade deals and tariff rules. In his opinion,

Chief Justice John Roberts, a conservative, sided with that view. "When Congress has delegated its tariff powers, it has done so in explicit terms and subject to strict limits," he wrote. "Had Congress intended to convey the distinct and extraordinary power to impose tariffs, it would have done so expressly, as it consistently has in other tariff statutes." The decision to strike down

the tariffs was joined by the court's three liberal justices, as well as two justices nominated by Trump: Amy Coney Barrett and Neil Gorsuch. Three conservative justices, Clarence Thomas, Brett Kavanaugh and Samuel Alito, dissented. At the White House, Trump said he was "absolutely ashamed" of the Republican appointees on the court who voted against his trade policy. He said they were "just being fools and lap dogs" and were "very unpatriotic and disloyal to our Constitution". Shares on Wall Street rose after the announcement, with the S&P 500 closing up about 0.7%, as businesses across the US cautiously welcomed the ruling. "I feel... like a thousand-pound weight has been lifted off my chest," said Beth Benike, the owner of Busy Baby products in Minnesota, which manufactures products in China. Nik Holm, chief executive of Terry Precision

Cycling, one of the small businesses involved in the case, called the ruling a "relief". "Though it will be many months before our supply chain is back up and running as normal, we look forward to the government's refund of these improperly-collected duties," he said. California's Democratic Governor Gavin Newsom said Americans deserved refunds from what he called the "illegal cash grab". "Time to pay the piper, Donald," he wrote on X. "Every dollar your administration unlawfully took needs to be immediately refunded - with interest." His counterpart in Illinois, JB Pritzker, separately sent Trump an invoice demanding nearly \$9bn (£6.6bn) in tariff refunds, equivalent to \$1,700 per family in the state. "Compensation is owed to the people of Illinois, and if you do not comply we will pursue further action," he wrote.

Killing of nationalist student leaves French far left in deep trouble as elections loom

Is the far left about to replace the far right as the pariah of French politics? The question is inescapable following the killing in Lyon of nationalist student Quentin Deranque by suspected far-left militants. Deranque was killed on 12 February after a small university protest by far-right feminists, who he was supposed to be protecting. Mobile phone footage shows him being repeatedly kicked and punched on the ground by masked and hooded young men. He died of head injuries. Since then a torrent of condemnation has come down on the main party on the radical left, La France Insoumise, and on its leader, veteran firebrand Jean-Luc Mélenchon. LFI - or France Unbowled - has a bloc of some 70 MPs in the 577-member National Assembly. The seven suspects now charged in connection with the killing were all members of, or close to, an organisation called La Jeune Garde (The Young Guard) which used to



provide security for LFI before it was banned last year. One of the suspects - Jacques-Elie Favrot - was the salaried parliamentary assistant of an LFI deputy, Raphaël Arnault, who set up The Young Guard in 2018. Favrot has been charged with "complicity to murder by instigation", not with delivering the blows that killed Deranque. But Adrian Besseyre - who according to his lawyer also worked in Arnault's team at the National Assembly - is one of those charged with murder. All the suspects deny any intention to kill, according to the investigating magistrate.

Katseye's Manon to take 'temporary hiatus' to focus on health



Katseye member Manon Bannerman is taking a temporary break to focus on her health and wellbeing, the group has announced. The 23-year-old Swiss singer told fans she was "healthy" and "taking care of myself," adding: "Sometimes things unfold in ways we don't fully control, but I'm trusting the bigger picture." The six-member girl group, formed in 2023, said the decision had been made following "open and thoughtful conversations together". The announcement comes weeks after Katseye performed at the Grammy Awards in Los Angeles, where they were nominated for best new artist and best pop duo/group performance for their song, Gabriela. "Thank you for standing by me," Bannerman wrote on Katseye's WeVerse fandom page on Friday. "I love you endlessly and can't wait to see you again." In a statement on WeVerse shared by their label, HYBE and Geffen

Records, the group said: "We fully support this decision. Katseye remains committed to showing up for one another and for the fans who mean everything to us." Katseye confirmed they would continue scheduled performances during Bannerman's absence and "look forward to being together again when the time is right". No timeline has been given for her return. The group - which also includes Daniela Avanzini, Lara Raj, Megan Skiendiel, Sophia Laforza and Yoonchae Jeung - was formed during the 2023 reality competition series The Debut: Dream Academy. They released their first single in June 2024 with the song Debut and have since released two EPs, SIS (Soft is Strong) and Beautiful Chaos, alongside a string of singles. The group has previously spoken about the pressures of their rapid global rise to fame and the online scrutiny that has accompanied it.

ITALIAN TODDLER DIES AFTER TRANSPLANT WITH HEART 'BURNED BY FROSTBITE'



A toddler in Italy who received a damaged donor heart has died, the family's lawyer has said. Two-year-old Domenico died shortly before 09:30 local time (08:30 GMT) on Saturday, Francesco Petrucci told reporters. Monaldi Hospital, where he was being treated, said he had suffered a "sudden and irreversible worsening of his clinical condition". The heart given to Domenico during a transplant in late December was reportedly

transported to the hospital in direct contact with dry ice, causing severe tissue damage. Prosecutors have opened an investigation into the incident and six medics have been placed under formal investigation in a case which has sparked outrage in Italy. Petrucci has said the organ arrived "burned by frostbite" after being transported over 800km (490 miles) from Bolzano to Naples in an unsuitable container alongside the ice.

Palestinian Authority in dire straits as Israel's hold on West Bank deepens

With Israeli settler violence surging in the occupied West Bank, al-Mughayyir, north-east of Ramallah, has found itself on the frontline. It faces regular incursions by the Israeli army and has seen farmland seized by settlers who have built new outposts. Marzoq Abu Naim from the village council says the settlers aim to force out Palestinians. "They're doing it silently, not openly, it's true. But this is annexation. We can't reach our lands." Sitting among green rolling hills, studded with olive groves, most homes in al-Mughayyir are in an area where Israel's military controls security, but the internationally backed Palestinian Authority (PA) should provide



basic services. Increasingly though, it cannot - it is mired in a deep economic crisis. "When I go to them, they can't give me the support I need," Abu Naim says. "The Authority has no money!" After the deadly 7 October Hamas-led attacks on Israel, some 100,000 Palestinians lost permits to work in Israel. On top of that, Israel is

withholding tax transfers that it collects for the PA because of an ongoing dispute about Palestinian school texts and stipends to the families of those jailed or killed by Israel, including attackers. The PA says it is now owed more than \$4bn (£3bn; 3.4bn euros). It has been paying most public sector workers - including doctors, police officers

and teachers - just 60% of their salaries. Its schools - where more than 600,000 children study - open just three days a week. "It's truly hard," a mother-of-eight in al-Mughayyir tells me, explaining that the schools there also close when settlers or soldiers are nearby because of fears for the children. "There is so much disruption that some children have reached fourth grade and still can't read. We put them in private lessons with a teacher in the village. She starts with the alphabet so that they can learn to read from scratch." Driving away from al-Mughayyir, there are Israeli military gates used to close off Palestinian villages from each other and restrict movement.

FAMILY OF PALESTINIAN-AMERICAN MAN KILLED IN WEST BANK DEMAND ACCOUNTABILITY

The family of a 19-year-old Palestinian-American man who they say was shot dead by an Israeli settler in the occupied West Bank have called for accountability over his killing. Nasrallah Abu Siyam was shot near the city of Ramallah in the occupied West Bank on Wednesday, becoming at least the sixth American citizen killed by Israeli settlers or soldiers in the territory in the last two years. The Trump administration said it stood ready to provide consular assistance, but did not respond to claims its policies had failed to stem a surge in settler violence. The Israeli embassy in Washington said the inci-



dent was under review and an "operational inquiry... must be completed as soon as possible". Abu Siyam was a US citizen born in Philadelphia. His family said he was among approximately 30 residents of the village of Mukhmas who

were trying to stop armed settlers from stealing their goats on Wednesday. As both residents and settlers threw stones, said one witness, settlers shot at least three of the villagers, including Abu Siyam, who was struck fatally.

Abdulhamid Siyam, cousin to Abu Siyam, told the BBC that the 19-year-old's death was a "big loss" and the actions of settlers in the West Bank had gone unchecked. "A young man of 19 shot and killed in this cold blood and no responsibility, impunity completely," he said. The Trump administration has faced criticism from rights groups for lifting Biden-era sanctions on violent settlers, who have rarely faced criminal punishments from Israeli authorities. The US State Department said it was aware of the death of a US citizen and was "carefully monitoring the situation".

Anna Murdoch-Mann, writer and former News Corp director, dies aged 81



Anna Murdoch-Mann, writer and ex-wife of media baron Rupert Murdoch, has died aged 81, his media outlets have announced. Married to the media mogul for 31 years, she played an influential role on the board of his publishing giant, News Corp. She was mother to three of Murdoch's children, Elisabeth, James, and Lachlan Murdoch - who is now chairman of Fox and News Corp - and stepmother to his daughter, Prudence. Murdoch-Mann, who was also a philanthropist, died on 17 February "surrounded by family" at her home in Palm Beach, Florida. Born Anna Torv in Glasgow and raised as a Catholic, she moved to Australia aged nine. After her parents' divorce, she is said to have brought up her own siblings. She became a reporter for the Sydney Daily Telegraph and the Sydney Daily Mirror, where she met Rupert Murdoch and went on to serve on the board of his company. "He never made a major business decision without her input", The Australian, another title in his media stable, writes. She penned several novels during their marriage, including the 1988 Family Business about a multi-gen-

erational media dynasty. The couple moved to London, where in 1969 a woman was abducted and held to ransom in Hertfordshire - mistaken for Murdoch-Mann. Muriel McKay was killed by her kidnappers and there have been renewed efforts to find her body in recent years. The then-Murdochs divorced in 1999 in one of the most expensive separations in history - Murdoch-Mann received a \$1.7bn (£1bn) settlement. Murdoch married his third wife, Wendi Deng, 17 days later. In an exclusive interview after her separation, Murdoch-Mann told Australian Women's Weekly, "I think there's going to be a lot of heart-break and hardship" over the succession for Murdoch's media empire. "There's been such a lot of pressure that they needn't have had at their age," she added. These tensions inspired the television series Succession and played out in courts in real life too. A years-long court battle ended with Murdoch's eldest son, Lachlan, being set to control the news group late last year. Murdoch-Mann went on to remarry, first to financier William Mann, who died in 2017.

Israeli strikes kill at least 10 in Lebanon

Israeli air strikes have killed at least 10 people in eastern Lebanon, Lebanese officials say, despite a ceasefire. Israel's military said it targeted sites belonging to Hezbollah, a Shia Muslim militia and political party, in the Bekaa Valley, an area where the group has a strong presence. Hezbollah confirmed that at least six of its members had been killed, including a senior field commander. The strikes are among the deadliest in Lebanon since a ceasefire ended the war between Israel and Hezbollah in November 2024. Despite the deal, which followed 13 months of conflict, Israel has carried out near-daily strikes on Lebanon. Images posted online from one of the locations hit on Friday night



showed heavy damage in what appeared to be a residential neighbourhood. In a statement, the Israeli military said it had struck "Hezbollah command centres" and that Hezbollah "systematically embeds its assets

within the civilian population". It said the group's activities were "a violation of the understandings between Israel and Lebanon". Hezbollah, considered a terrorist organisation by countries including the UK and

the US, says the ceasefire deal only applies to southern Lebanon, in the area between the Litani river and the Blue Line, the unofficial border between Lebanon and Israel. There, the Lebanese army has dismantled infrastruc-

ture used by the group, in the first stage of a plan to disarm Hezbollah after its devastating 13-month war with Israel. The group, however, has so far rejected calls from Lebanese authorities to discuss the future of its weapons elsewhere in the country, including in the Bekaa Valley, where part of its arsenal is believed to be located. This week, Hezbollah dismissed a decision by the government to advance the second phase of the disarmament plan in areas between north of the Litani and the Awali river, in the port city of Sidon. Lebanon's government said Israel's ongoing actions were a violation of the ceasefire deal and urged the international community to put pressure on Israel to stop its attacks. The

Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam recently said the situation had become a "one-sided war of attrition". Hours before the attacks in the east, an Israeli strike hit the densely populated Palestinian refugee camp of Ain al-Helweh, on the outskirts of Sidon, in the country's south. The Israeli military said it had struck a "command centre" that had been used by Hamas, which said two members had been killed. The strikes come amid heightened tensions in the region, with the United States threatening to attack Iran if negotiations between the two countries fail to reach a deal. There are concerns in Lebanon that Iran might force Hezbollah to join its response to an attack if Israel becomes involved.

Shikhar Dhawan Marries Long-Time Girlfriend Sophie Shine

Former Indian cricket team batter Shikhar Dhawan got married to his long-time girlfriend Sophie Shine in a private wedding ceremony in Delhi NCR on Saturday. The couple dated for a few years before making their relationship public in 2025. Dhawan's former teammate Yuzvendra Chahal shared pictures from their wedding on Saturday. Dhawan and Shine were first spotted together during a Champions Trophy 2025 match in Dubai. Earlier, Dhawan posted photos from his Sangeet night with fiancée Sophie Shine on Thursday. "Sangeet night. Almost the Dhawans," Dhawan wrote on Instagram. Dhawan and Shine announced their engagement on social media in January. "From shared smiles to shared dreams. Grateful for the love, the blessings, and every good wish for our engagement as



we choose togetherness forever - Shikhar & Sophie," he wrote on Instagram. Reports suggest that Sophie worked as a product consultant and

holds a degree in Marketing and Management from the Limerick Institute of Technology. While cricketing celebrities are often

linked with personalities from the world of social media and entertainment, Sophie's case is quite different. The Ireland-born profes-

sional has an impressive academic background from Castleroy College, along with credentials that can impress anyone. She currently serves as Second Vice President at Northern Trust Corporation, based in Abu Dhabi. Sophie completed her entire education in Ireland. She now heads the Shikhar Dhawan Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Da One Sports. Sophie has close to 367,000 followers on Instagram and has been posting pictures and videos with Shikhar for a while now. She has been spotted with Dhawan on multiple occasions, watching cricket matches with the former India opening batter. However, the news about their relationship status was only confirmed after the southpaw made it public. Dhawan was earlier married to Ayesha Mukherjee, with whom he has a son, 11-year-old Zoravar Dhawan.

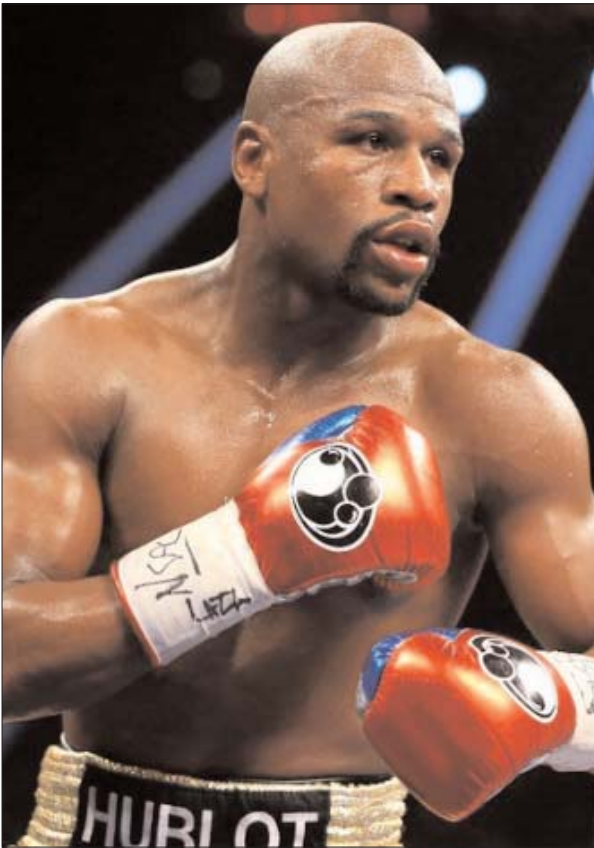
THE ROUTE TO GLORY OPEN TO ALL - COULD YOU BE A WINTER OLYMPIC ATHLETE?

You're at home. Lying on the couch. Packet of crisps almost finished. Mild lower back pain niggling away. Dishes in the sink still to do. And yet, as you watch athletes hurl themselves down a snow-covered mountain in the pursuit of glory at the Winter Olympics, you're thinking: "pfft, I could do that". Well, why not see if you really could? For almost two decades UK Sport has held in-person talent ID sessions for aspiring athletes, designed to test their physical performance and match them up with the sport that would suit them best. It is exactly how skeleton gold medallists Matt Weston and Tabitha Stoecker discovered they were well suited to sliding head first down an ice slope at 80mph. But here's the thing - anybody can apply online to attend a session. So how does it work, and could you really be Great Britain's next Olympic or Paralympic star? How are athletes matched with new sports? UK Sport's Talent ID



days are designed to take those with natural athleticism and sporting talent, figure out where their major strengths are, and match them up with a sport they may never have tried or even heard of before. The analysis at a Talent ID day includes a series of tests measuring power, stamina, speed, and agility. Anybody aged 17 or over can apply online, and athletes who drop out of one sport in the

early stages of their career are often invited along to see if something else may work for them. Examiners also assess each athlete's character, scoring their ability to regulate emotions, control their performance and under pressure, and understand and respond to feedback. Though applications are open to anybody, eventual selection for a sport still requires a high level of natural ability.



MAYWEATHER, 48, OUT OF RETIREMENT FOR FOURTH TIME

Former world champion Floyd Mayweather has announced he will come out of retirement for a fourth time later this year. The 48-year-old, whose most recent retirement was in 2017, is due to face former undisputed world heavyweight champion Mike Tyson in an exhibition bout this spring. But Mayweather has confirmed he will return to professional boxing for the first time in nine years after that fight. While an opponent has not yet been announced, it will be Mayweather's first professional fight since beating mixed martial arts fight Conor McGregor with a

10th-round technical knockout in 2017. Mayweather won titles across five weight classes during his career, and his victory over McGregor secured his 50th professional win to remain undefeated. "I still have what it takes to set more records in the sport of boxing," Mayweather said in a statement. No details of date or location for the fight have been released. He continued: "From my upcoming Mike Tyson event to my next professional fight afterwards - no one will generate a bigger gate, have a larger global broadcast audience and generate more money with each event - than my events."

RAHUL DRAVID REVEALS HIS 'DREAM' T20 WORLD CUP 2026 FINAL

Rahul Dravid has seen Indian cricket grow from strength to strength over the last two decades-first as a player, then as captain, and finally as head coach. His stint as India's coach ended with the T20 World Cup 2024 triumph in the West Indies. India's title defence has started on solid footing in the 2026 edition, with the Suryakumar Yadav-led side entering the Super 8 undefeated. Ahead of the T20 World Cup 2026 Super 8, Rahul Dravid spoke exclusively to NDTV about what, according to him, would be the "dream final." "India vs any team. They could get to the semi-final and then make it to the final. I would like to see one of the lesser teams along



with India," Dravid told NDTV in an exclusive interview. India have been clubbed with South Africa, West Indies and Zimbabwe. The final of the T20 World Cup 2026 will be played on March 1. Dravid was also asked about Imran Khan. Earlier,



expressing concern over Khan's reported health issues, former India captain Sourav Ganguly said he hopes the former Pakistan skipper-who led his country both as captain of the national cricket team and later as Prime Minister-receives proper medical care and the respect he

deserves. Reports regarding Imran Khan's health have been significant, including claims of partial vision loss. He is also reportedly undergoing treatment in extremely difficult conditions, with family visits repeatedly denied. "Like any fellow cricketer or captain, we would wish him really good health and hope that, irrespective of politics-I don't want to get into the politics of it-you would want anyone to be healthy and to get whatever medical care and attention they need and deserve. None better than Imran Khan, who has not only inspired Pakistan but also the whole world with his achievements and performances," Dravid said.

'Sacrifices' & celebrations - why Chelsea's Neto is misunderstood



Chelsea winger Pedro Neto could not resist putting his fingers in his ears after scoring against Hull City - a pointed celebration he has done numerous times this season but refused to explain. Asked if it was directed at anyone in particular, the winger told BBC Sport: "Yes. I will not tell it, but yes. I'll continue my work. I want to help my team-mates and all the fans. I'll keep working hard and move on to the next one." Those cryptic comments felt jarring in the wake of his first career hat-trick and a season in which he has scored 10 goals in all competitions and provided four assists - leaving him behind only Enzo Fernandez and Joao Pedro for goal involvements at Chelsea this term. Neto opened the scoring at Hull last Friday with a sensational swerving effort. His subsequent corner went straight in for the second, and he completed the 4-0 FA Cup rout with a strike from just outside the box. The Portuguese had a

slight dip in form - along with the rest of the team - during a poor winter run in which former manager Enzo Maresca departed on New Year's Day. But Maresca's replacement Liam Rosenior could not understand why anyone would have been critical of the winger, describing Neto as "world class" and praising the "sacrifices" he makes for the team. Rosenior's second point hints at why Neto may be misunderstood by some. "Never going to be Eden Hazard" After Maresca left Chelsea, they drew 1-1 at Manchester City, and Sky Sports pundit Gary Neville singled out Neto for criticism. "He frustrated me like you won't believe," Neville said. "He's a smidgen away from being an Eden Hazard, but he's never going to be an Eden Hazard because he hasn't got that killer instinct." Neto only scored 14 times in 135 games for Wolves before his £54m move in August 2024 - averaging one goal every 9.6 matches.



French Alps 2030 to hold speed skating in Italy or Netherlands

HEARN 'DEVASTATED' AS BENN JOINS RIVAL PROMOTER WHITE

Eddie Hearn says he is "devastated" after Conor Benn made the "very painful" decision to leave Matchroom Boxing to join Dana White's Zuffa Boxing promotional company. The 29-year-old had been with Matchroom since turning professional and beat long-time rival Chris Eubank Jr in a blockbuster rematch at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in November, having lost their first bout in April. Hearn, who learned of Benn's decision via email from the Briton's lawyer, said he made a "mistake" in trusting Benn because he "misjudged his character". "I'm not going to sit here and hang Conor Benn out to dry but me, personally, I'm pretty devastated," Hearn told iFLTV, external "I've had a few days to digest what might happen. Maybe this interview is different to what it could've been



a couple of days ago. "It's not often I get shocked. And I blame myself because I forgot it was boxing," Hearn said after reading the email he messaged Benn to say the pair should speak over the phone but Benn refused. "I just felt that the loyalty we've shown would never, ever put us in this position," continued Hearn. "I just felt that I never really needed to push Conor Benn to sign a new contract previously - and I



probably could've got him to sign a new contract previously. "I just felt... everything that we gave him, the loyalty that we gave him, the support we gave him would be enough to talk it through and get close to a number. But there wasn't really the interest. "Very surprising. Very painful. But just another moment in life that you live and learn from." Hearn was undecided when asked whether he could work with

Benn again in the future. "He text me just after the announcement and I replied," said Hearn. "We had a few back and forths." He also revealed he "had some very choice words" with Benn's manager, Keith Connolly. In a statement on Instagram, Benn said he was "filled with excitement and hunger for what's ahead with Zuffa Boxing" while paying tribute to his former promoters. "First and foremost I want to thank Eddie and the entire team at Matchroom for everything they have done for me over the past decade," wrote Benn, the son of former two-weight world champion Nigel. "From guiding me when I first turned pro, to headlining stadium shows. They were not only with me for those highlight moments but stood shoulder to shoulder with me during the tough times."

SVITOLINA BEATS GAUFF IN EPIC TO REACH DUBAI FINAL



Ukraine's Elina Svitolina upset world number four Coco Gauff to set up a final against Jessica Pegula at the Dubai Tennis Championships. American Pegula was the first to win her semi-final, fighting back from a disastrous opening set and early break of serve in the second set to defeat compatriot Amanda Anisimova 1-6 6-4 6-3. Gauff, 21, had a chance to make it an all-American final on Saturday, but Svitolina recorded a 6-4 6-7 (13-15) 6-4 in an epic encounter that lasted three hours and three minutes. The 31-year-old Svitolina had four match points in the second-set tie-break and could not take them, but still managed to win the decider. It means she is back in the final of the event for the first time since claiming back-to-back Dubai titles in 2017 and 2018. "I was playing like there is no tomorrow, just trying to put all the effort in," she said. In the men's Qatar Open, world number one Carlos

Alcaraz maintained his perfect start to 2026 with a 7-6 (7-3) 6-4 victory over Russia's Andrey Rublev to move into the final. The 22-year-old Spaniard has already won the Australian Open this year to become the youngest man to complete a career Grand Slam - and this was his 11th victory out of 11 in 2026. "I know what I am able to do every time I step on the court, what I am capable of doing," Alcaraz said. He will play France's Arthur Fils in the final, after he beat Jakub Mensik of the Czech Republic - who knocked out world number two Jannik Sinner on Thursday - 6-4, 7-6 (7-4). Meanwhile, seven-time Grand Slam champion Venus Williams has been awarded a wildcard entry into Indian Wells, the tournament announced on Friday. The 45-year-old American will compete in both the singles and doubles. "It's great to be heading back to Indian Wells and returning home to California," said Williams in a statement.

