

ECI to hold roundtable with State Election Commissioners on Feb 24



GYANESH KUMAR

Afghan Taliban warns Islamabad of 'appropriate response' after Pakistan bombs Afghan territory



WORLD NEWS

SOUTH AFRICA THRASH INDIA BY 76 RUNS IN SUPER



T20 WORLD CUP

IN BRIFS

Security forces neutralise 2 terrorists in J&K's Kishtwar, Operation underway

Jammu: Security forces neutralised two terrorists on Sunday in the Kishtwar district of Jammu and Kashmir. An Army spokesman said that pursuant to credible intelligence inputs collated from J&K Police and IB and own intelligence sources, a deliberate joint operation was launched in the Kishtwar region under Operation Trashi-I to track and neutralise terrorists operating in the area.

PM Modi to visit Israel on Feb 25, address the Knesset



Tel Aviv/New Delhi: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is due to arrive in Israel on Wednesday for a high-profile visit aimed at strengthening political, economic and security cooperation between the two countries, while advancing a broader regional alliance strategy.

CM Revanth vows to complete Devadula Protect Telangana's Godavari water rights



Hyderabad (TSIT): Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Sunday declared that his government is fully committed to completing all pending irrigation projects along the Godavari river, including the long-delayed Devadula Lift Irrigation Scheme, and vowed to protect the state's water rights.

projects within two years. He also clarified that all projects from Tummidihatti to Bhadrachalam would be taken up systematically. On Kaleshwaram and Opposition Responding to criticism regarding the previous government's flagship Kaleshwaram project, CM Revanth noted that Telangana has emerged as the top paddy producer even without lifting water from it for two years.

Jairam Ramesh alleges 'one-sided' India-US Trade deal, poses 3 questions to PM

New Delhi (TSIT): Senior Indian National Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Sunday sharply criticised the India-US trade agreement, calling it "one-sided" and "anti-farmer," and posed three pointed questions to Prime Minister Narendra Modi regarding the circumstances under which the deal was finalised.



straightforward and direct questions for the PM," Ramesh said. "President Trump clearly says that at the Prime Minister's request, the US is agreeing to this trade deal and implementing it immediately.

HIGHLIGHT POINT:

Jairam Ramesh terms the India-US trade deal "one-sided and anti-farmer," questioning PM Modi on alleged disproportionate concessions and lack of reciprocal benefits for India.

He alleged that India had made disproportionate concessions, including a commitment to significantly increase imports from the United States and halt oil purchases from Russia. "We are saying that we will triple our imports from the United States and that we will not buy oil from Russia. What have we gained from this?" he asked.

The Congress leader alleged that the Prime Minister acted in haste despite being aware that the US Supreme Court was due to deliver an order related to tariffs. "You knew that the US Supreme Court was going to deliver its decision, so why did you act in such haste?" he asked.

tax imposed on agriculture should either be removed or reduced," he said, posing his second question to the Prime Minister. Ramesh's third question related to India's oil imports from Russia. "President Trump repeatedly says that you have promised not to buy oil from Russia, while you say that we will buy it, so what is the truth? Why are you hiding it?" he asked.

Emphasising what he described as an imbalance in the agreement, Ramesh argued that a genuine deal must involve reciprocity. "A balanced deal means balanced — that is, give and take. In common language, a deal means give and take. But when you only give and take nothing, and give more while taking less — as has happened in this — then that cannot be called an agreement.

8 held over suspected links to Pak's ISI, Bangladesh: Delhi Police



New Delhi (TSIT): Eight suspected terrorists from Tamil Nadu were taken into custody by the Delhi Police Special Cell, after they thwarted a major terror conspiracy, an official said on Sunday. Among those arrested is a Bangladeshi national. The suspects were allegedly plotting a major attack in India under the direction of Pakistan's ISI and Bangladesh-based terror groups.

PM Modi bashes Cong over shirtless protest, thanks INDIA bloc allies for criticising the act

Meerut (TSIT): Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday came down heavily on Congress over its youth wing's recent shirtless protest at the India-AI Impact Summit 2026 and said that the demonstration showed that the "oldest party of the country has become ideologically bankrupt".



This came just days after the Youth Congress members carried out a protest inside New Delhi's Bharat Mandapam during the high-profile India-AI Impact Summit, raising slogans against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Central government over alleged "unemployment, inflation and the reported India-US trade deal".

cal parties in the country that are not able to digest the country's progress. Just a few days ago, India hosted the world's largest AI Summit... There hadn't been such a historic event in any developing country. I ask you, were you not proud of this AI Summit?"

global event into a platform for its dirty and naked politics. Congress leaders reached the venue naked in front of the foreign guests," he said.

"I ask the Congress leaders, the nation knows that you are already naked, so why did you feel the need to take off your clothes? This shows that the oldest party of the country has become ideologically bankrupt," the Prime Minister added.

He accused the Congress party of "defaming" the nation and said, "When someone gets married in a village, everyone helps the household so that the guests take along a good picture of the village. However, Congress is focused on defaming its own country. Recalling past incidents, PM Modi said, "Congress leaders hate Modi. These people want to dig my grave. They do not shy away from abusing my mother.

HARVARD KENNEDY SCHOOL INVITES REVANTH REDDY TO AI POLICY SYMPOSIUM

Hyderabad TSIT BUREAU: Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy has received a rare and prestigious invitation from the Harvard Kennedy School (HKS), USA, to participate in its first-ever AI Policy Symposium to be held on March 27 at the Harvard campus.

The Chief Minister has been invited to speak at a key panel discussion titled "AI as Infrastructure & Compute Power: Impact on Livability & Workforce." The session will focus on the growing importance of AI infrastructure, including data centres, energy systems, and compute corridors, and their impact on urban development and employment generation.

Significantly, CM Revanth Reddy is the only Chief Minister from India to receive an invitation to the symposium, underscoring Telangana's rising global profile in the Artificial Intelligence and digital innovation space. The organisers have



specifically requested the Chief Minister to present Telangana's policy framework for building a strong AI ecosystem, including initiatives related to AI City development, land allocation, reliable power supply, skill development, regulatory support, and investment partnerships.

The symposium aims to bring together leaders from government, industry, and academia to

deliberate on AI governance, geopolitics, knowledge economy, and enabling infrastructure. During his recent visit to the United States, the organisers met CM Revanth Reddy and discussed the objectives of the symposium in detail. The invitation is being viewed as international recognition of Telangana's strategic push to emerge as a global hub for AI-driven growth and innovation.

EU-India FTA opens doors to trade, AI, resilient supply chains: Austrian official

New Delhi (TSIT)EU-India FTA opens doors to trade, AI, resilient supply chains: Austrian official-Proll described the EU-India FTA as the 'mother of all deals' that stands to benefit nearly 200 crore people



The landmark EU-India Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is a transformative win-win pact that offers immense opportunities in trade, artificial intelligence (AI) and resilient supply chains, Austria's State Secretary in the Federal Chancellery Alexander Proll has said.

nearly 200 crore people and create one of the world's largest free trade zones. Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi visited Austria in 2024 because of 75 years of the

diplomatic relationship and now, we have the free-trade agreement. It is the mother of all deals. I think it is a win-win situation for the whole European Union and India," Proll said.

The FTA, finalised after years of negotiations re-launched in 2022, eliminates or reduces tariffs on 96.6 per cent of EU exports to India by value and 99.5 per cent of Indian exports to the EU by trade value. Proll highlighted AI as a key future area of collaboration, calling it "the next step after digitalisation".

BJP undermining Constitution, alleges Tejashwi

PATNA: (Feb 22) RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav on Sunday launched a sharp attack on the NDA government in Bihar, accusing it of undermining the Constitution. Addressing a function organised in Patna on the occasion of the 64th birth anniversary of Sant Shiromani Guru Ravidas, the leader of the opposition in the assembly alleged that BJP leaders were weakening the nation.



"BJP leaders are following the ideologies of Nathuram Godse and

Golwalkar, spreading hatred in society and weakening the nation. They are undermining the Constitution of the

country," Yadav alleged.

He also alleged that the RSS was "anti-Dalit and against res-

ervation" and claimed that people in the state were deprived of the 65 per cent reservation introduced by the previous Mahagathbandhan government due to the NDA.

"When we were in power in Bihar, we had increased the quota for deprived castes from 50 to 65 per cent in state government jobs and educational institutions. We had requested the Centre to place the legislation in the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution to protect

it from legal scrutiny, but the Centre did not do so," he said.

"This shows that NDA leaders are anti-reservation," he alleged. Yadav said the RJD has consistently worked for the political, social and economic upliftment of the Ravidas community and would continue to do so. He further claimed that the prohibition policy in Bihar has "completely failed", alleging that mafias were being protected by the government.

Bihar CM Nitish Kumar felicitates U-19 World Cup star Vaibhav Suryavanshi

Patna, Feb 22 : Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Sunday felicitated young cricketer Vaibhav Suryavanshi for his outstanding contribution to India's victorious campaign in the ICC Under-19 Cricket World Cup 2026 and awarded him a cash prize of Rs 50 lakh. At a felicitation ceremony held at Sankalp Sabhagar within the Chief Minister's official residence at 1 Anne Marg in Patna, Nitish Kumar honoured the cricketer with the cash award and presented him with a ceremonial shawl.

Congratulating Vaibhav Suryavanshi, the Chief Minister said the young cricketer had brought pride to Bihar and the country through his performance on the international stage.

"Vaibhav Suryavanshi has played a crucial role in India's victory at the Under-19 World Cup. Through his talent and hard work, he has emerged as a promising talent for Indian cricket. I wish him a bright future and hope he continues to set new records for the country," Nitish



Kumar said. Several senior leaders were present at the ceremony, including Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary, Sports Minister

Shreyasi Singh, and Minister Vijay Kumar Chaudhary. Speaking on the occasion, Vijay Kumar Chaudhary said Vaibhav's

achievement was a matter of immense pride for Bihar, noting that the young cricketer hails from Samastipur district. "It is a proud

moment that a son of Bihar has brought such honour to the state and the nation. We will continue to support and encourage him in his sporting journey," he said.

Sports Minister Shreyasi Singh also praised Vaibhav's achievement, describing it as a proud moment for Bihar and the country.

"His performance has been commendable, and we hope he continues to excel and represent India at the highest level," she said.

Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary also congratulated Vaibhav through a social media message, stating that Bihar takes pride in the young cricketer's success.

He said the felicitation reflects the state government's commitment to recognising and encouraging young sporting talent and inspiring future generations of athletes. Vaibhav Suryavanshi's performance in the Under-19 World Cup has brought recognition to Bihar and highlighted the growing contribution of the state to Indian cricket.

SC to hear Meta-WhatsApp privacy policy case on Monday

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court is slated to hear on Monday pleas of Meta and WhatsApp against a Competition Commission of India (CCI) order imposing a penalty of Rs 213.14 crore over their privacy policy.

A bench comprising Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi is likely to hear the matter.

On February 3, the bench had made strong observations against Meta Platforms Inc and WhatsApp, saying they could not "play with the right to privacy of citizens in the name of data sharing" and alleged that they were creating a monopoly in the market and committing theft of private information of customers.

Decrying WhatsApp's privacy policy, the bench referred to "silent customers" who were unorganised, digitally dependent and unaware of the implications of data-sharing policies, and asserted, "We will not allow the rights of any citizen of this country to be damaged." WhatsApp is owned by Meta Platforms Inc.

The top court was hearing the appeals of the two tech giants against a CCI order that imposed a penalty of Rs 213.14 crore on them over the privacy policy.

On November 4, 2025, the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) set aside a section of a CCI order that had banned WhatsApp from sharing data with Meta Platforms Inc for advertising purposes for five years, but retained the Rs 213-crore penalty.

Later, the NCLAT clarified that its order in the WhatsApp matter on privacy and consent safeguards also applies to user data collection and sharing for non-WhatsApp purposes, including non-advertising and advertising.

India Post holds Rs 22 lakh crore across 38 crore savings accounts: Union Minister Scindia

GUNTUR: India Post has about 38 crore savings accounts with a fund of Rs 22 lakh crore, while there are 3.8 crore Sukanya Samridhi Yojana accounts with deposits of Rs 2.27 lakh crore, Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said on Sunday.

Sukanya Samridhi Yojana is a government-backed savings scheme for parents of girl children to build a fund for their daughter's education.

Addressing the Gramin Dak Sevaks Sammelan, Scindia said India Post's mail network is being rapidly modernised with technologies such as conveyor systems, scientific sorting, Radio-frequency identification (RFID), barcodes, and QR codes to improve service delivery.

"Post Office Savings Bank accounts number nearly 38 crore. In a country with a population of 140 crore, this is significant. A corpus of Rs 22 lakh crore is being mobilised by Gramin Dak Sevaks (postal servants) across the country," the Minister of Communications and Development of North Eastern Region said.

In hilly regions such as Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand, and Himachal Pradesh, India Post will also use drones to improve the delivery of postal logistics.

Scindia said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given a clarion call to "Reform, Perform and Transform," and India Post will follow it in letter and spirit.

7-day Shivratri fair concludes in Himachal's Mandi

MANDI: Himachal Pradesh Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla on Sunday led a procession as part of the closing ceremony of the seven-day International Shivratri Fair.

The governor performed puja of Madhav Rai, the principal deity of Mandi Estate, and joined the procession, which started from the office of district commissioner and concluded at Paddle Ground.

Shukla, who was the chief guest, presided over the closing ceremony.

Mandi town had been wearing a festive look in the last seven days.

The hill gods and goddesses -- dressed in attractive costumes, ornaments and metal masks made mostly of gold and silver, and carried on their traditionally decorated palanquins, accompanied by a contingent of hill orchestra -- were greeted by the public waiting on both sides of the road.

On Sunday, all the deities were placed at Chhota Bazar in the heart of Mandi town, a ritual traditionally known as Chhota ki Jatar.

As thousands of devotees gathered to pray to these deities, the area was jam-packed, rendering it impossible to move about.

Army personnel, dismissed cop among six arrested for links to Pak-backed drug cartel

CHANDIGARH: An Army man, a dismissed Punjab Police personnel and two women were among six people arrested on Sunday as the state police unearthed a well-organised heroin trafficking network.

The accused were involved in multiple drug trafficking cases, Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav said.

In an X post, he said, "In a major breakthrough, Faridkot Police, after a two-month-long jail-based interception, busts a well-organised heroin trafficking network, apprehends six accused, including one Army personnel and one dismissed police personnel, and recovers 4.8 kilograms of heroin, one weapon, and a Thar and an XUV."

The DGP said an FIR has been registered and further investigation is underway to establish forward and backward linkages.

In a later statement, he said the breakthrough was the result of a meticulously planned, intelligence-led operation and a two-month-long jail-based interception that exposed the cartel's deep-rooted linkages.

Preliminary investigation suggests that the accused were in direct contact with Pakistan-based smugglers, who used drones to push heroin consignments into the Indian territory, Yadav said.

According to a statement from the Punjab Police, those arrested have been identified as Jarnail Singh alias Goldy, a Ludhiana resident currently serving in the Indian Army; Amardeep Singh alias Boxer, a Punjab Armed Police cadre employee who was dismissed in 2021; Dimple Rani of Ferozepur; and Ramandeep Kaur, Sarabjit Singh alias Sabba and Amritpal Singh alias Abhijot, all residents of Moga.

'Shirtless' protest: Not legitimate dissent, blatant assault on public order, says Delhi court

NEW DELHI: The conduct of the Indian Youth Congress (IYC) workers arrested for protesting at the AI Impact Summit venue was not legitimate dissent, rather a "blatant assault on public order" that also hurt the country's "diplomatic image", a Delhi court said.

Judicial Magistrate Ravi made the observation on Saturday when the four IYC workers who were held for the "shirtless" protest at the Bharat Mandapam here were produced before his court. The court allowed five days of custody to the police to question them.

Summarising the reasons for allowing the Delhi Police's plea seeking custodial interrogation, the magistrate said that the accused hailed



from remote parts of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Telangana, posing a high risk of their absconding.

This was "further heightened by early investigation findings suggesting external conspiracy links, the court said.

A portion of the order passed by judicial magistrate

Ravi, accessed by PTI, said that the protest imperilled or jeopardised not only the event's sanctity, but also the country's diplomatic image.

"...the accused persons are alleged to have orchestrated a premeditated intrusion into the high-security precincts of Bharat Mandapam during the AI Summit 2026, a premier international conclave hosting global delegates and dignitaries," the court's order said.

It said the protestors allegedly "donned provocative T-shirts bearing offensive slogans such as 'India US Trade Deal Compromised', vociferously raised incendiary chants, obstructed public servants in the execution of their duties, and perpetrated physical assaults causing grievous injuries to police personnel, as substantiated by the medico-legal cases (MLCs) on record."

The magistrate said, "Such conduct palpably transcends the ambit of legitimate dissent, metamorphosing into a blatant assault on public order.

It imperils not merely the event's sanctity but also the Republic's diplomatic image before foreign stakeholders, rendering it wholly unprotected by constitutional safeguards."

The magistrate said the probe reveals that multiple associates could be absconding, which could tamper digital footprints, financial trails, and co-accused disclosures. Citing a 1980 Supreme Court verdict, the magistrate said, "Bail discretion must safeguard investigation integrity, particularly pre-chargesheet."

He also underlined that the alleged offences "warranted stringent scrutiny" as they posed a grave threat to public order and state security at an international forum and attracted punish-

ment exceeding three years of imprisonment under BNS Sections 121 (voluntarily causing hurt to deter a public servant from his duty) and 61 (2) (criminal conspiracy).

"In view of the above, the application, for police custody remand of all four accused persons is allowed for five days with effect from today, i.e., till February 25," the magistrate court said.

India hosted the world's largest artificial intelligence conclave, the AI Impact Summit-2026. The summit that began February 16 has seen packed halls and long queues, as tech moguls, industry leaders, policymakers, founders, and technologists thronged the Bharat Mandapam here.

Thane businessman gets Rs 10 cr extortion threat; caller says he is from 'Bishnoi group'

THANE: Unidentified persons were booked for trying to extort Rs 10 crore from a prominent Thane builder after claiming to be part of the "Bishnoi group", a police official said on Sunday.

As per the complaint filed by the 60-year-old businessman at Naupada police station, he received a series of WhatsApp calls on February 11 while he was visiting Madhya Pradesh for a religious ceremony, and on answering them he was told to cough up Rs 10 crore, failing which he should be "prepared to die".

The caller, who claimed he was part of the "Bishnoi group", also told the builder that he was free to record the call and submit it to the police.

"The harassment continued on February 20, when the builder received four WhatsApp calls from an international number while he was in his office here. After he did not answer the calls, the suspect sent an audio clip on his mobile phone at 12:29 pm, which contained further death threats," the official said.

An FIR was registered on February 20 under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita for extortion and other offences on the basis of the businessman's complaint, WhatsApp calls and audio clips, Naupada police station senior inspector Abhay Chandranath Mahajan said.

No arrests have been made in the case, he added.

Corruption, misgovernance intensified in UP during BJP rule: Akhilesh Yadav

LUCKNOW: Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav alleged on Sunday that corruption and misgovernance have intensified in Uttar Pradesh, while asserting that "as sufferings increase, the PDA will grow stronger".

PDA is an acronym used by SP leaders to refer to backward (pichhde), Dalit and minority (alpsankhyak) communities.

Addressing a press conference at the party headquarters here, Yadav questioned the BJP government's development claims, saying, "We are unable to find development. Where is it? The pipelines being laid are pipelines of corruption."

He alleged irregularities in infrastructure projects, claiming that water tanks are bursting due to poor-quality work and that corruption is visible on the ground.

Made in the past to incite communal tension for electoral gains.

He further alleged that the security covers of opposition leaders are being withdrawn as part of a political strategy to "demoralise and insult" them.

On religious matters, Yadav criticised the state government over a recent FIR against Shankaracharya Avimukteshwaranand Saraswati. He alleged that Saraswati was prevented from taking a holy dip during the Magh Mela and added that such actions are unprecedented in the country's spiritual traditions.

The FIR against Saraswati and his disciple, Mukundanand Brahmachari, has been lodged in Prayagraj over allegations of sexual abuse of a minor and another person over the last one year, including during the Magh Mela.

The action was taken on Saturday after an order passed earlier in the day by the special judge of a POCSO court directed that a case be registered on an application moved by Ashutosh Brahmachari Maharaj and others.

Speaking on technology and artificial intelligence (AI), Yadav said innovations and startups should focus on solving people's real problems rather than serving as slogans. He accused the Uttar Pradesh government of re-branding industrial policies initiated during the previous SP regime in the state, particularly in Noida, and claimed that fresh investments are not visible on the ground.

Alleging environmental neglect, the former chief minister said rivers, such as the Gomti, are deteriorating due to industrial waste and sewage discharge.

Former Assam Cong chief Bhupen Borah joins BJP; Himanta welcomes him

GUWAHATI: Former Assam Congress chief Bhupen Kumar Borah on Sunday joined the ruling BJP in the presence of its state unit president Dilip Saikia here.

Hours after joining the BJP, the ruling party inducted Borah into the State Executive Committee. Borah became a BJP member at a function held at the Assam BJP headquarters 'Vajpayee Bhawan'.

Along with him, former Congress leaders Sanju Bora, Rajesh Kumar Joshi, Kangkan Das, Gagan Chandra Bora and more than a dozen other workers from the opposition party also joined the BJP.

Borah had resigned on February 16, with the Congress high command not accepting it and senior leaders rushing to his residence, while Rahul Gandhi also spoke to him.

He had asked for time to



reconsider his decision, but the next day, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma went to his residence and announced that he would join the BJP on February 22.

The 126-member Assam assembly is expected to go to polls in March-April.

Borah, after joining the saffron party, said: "I didn't resign from the Congress, thinking that I would join the BJP. I resigned, think-

2 new rapid rail corridors originating from Sarai Kale Khan expected soon: Khattar

NEW DELHI: Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Manohar Lal Khattar said on Sunday that the proposal for two new rapid rail corridors starting from Sarai Kale Khan is expected to be approved soon, emphasising that this expansion will enhance the high-speed transit network in the National Capital Region.

Speaking at the inauguration of the Sarai Kale Khan station on the Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut Rapid Rail Transit System (RRTS), Khattar said the proposed corridors would significantly enhance regional connectivity and reduce travel time between Delhi and neighbouring states.

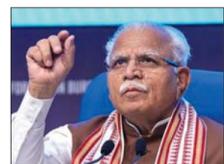
"One corridor is planned from Sarai Kale Khan to Karnal in Haryana, covering a distance of around 125-130 km, which can be completed in about one-and-a-half hours," the minister

said.

Another route is proposed to connect Sarai Kale Khan with Babarpur in Haryana and Neemrana in Rajasthan, he added.

The Sarai Kale Khan station, inaugurated virtually by Prime Minister Narendra Modi from Meerut, will serve as a major interchange for the Delhi-Meerut RRTS and future rapid rail corridors.

Khattar described the station as a key hub that would anchor the next phase of NCR transport planning. The minister said the expansion of rapid rail and metro networks was es-



sential as Delhi grows into a major economic centre, placing heavy pressure on its roads and public transport systems.

He underlined the need for transit-oriented development, with housing and commercial spaces planned around metro and rapid rail stations to reduce dependence on road travel.

Khattar also stressed the importance of last-mile connectivity to ensure smooth movement between stations, homes, offices and markets. "Improving transport and housing together is the only way to ease congestion in Delhi," he said.

Referring to the broader NCR plan, the minister said fast rail links would help distribute population and economic activity across districts in Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, easing the burden on the capital.

Shooting League of Karnataka unveils franchise-based format

Bengaluru, Feb 22: The Shooting League of Karnataka is set to make its competitive debut with a franchise-based format aimed at providing exposure and competitive opportunities to shooters across the state. With 136 shooters registering for the event, the league marks a significant step in strengthening Karnataka's shooting ecosystem. Taking place under the aegis of the Shooting League of India (SLI), the league calendar began with the Team Owners' Auction on 12th February, followed by a Players' Auction on 17th February. Qualification rounds for the League are scheduled for 28th February, with the Semi-Finals and Finals to be held on 1st March. The participating franchises include Caliber Capitals, Trigger Action, Bangalore Brigade, Redrum, Mangalore Raptors, Top Guns, Sniper Squad and Hubballi Shooting Star. Featuring the eight teams in a mixed-team format, each side will have 11 players across events. A key participation rule mandates that every team member must compete in at least one qualification match, ensuring broader involvement. Like the SLI, the Shooting League of Karnataka will showcase events across multiple disciplines, including 10m Air Pistol (Men & Women), 10m Air Rifle (Men & Women), 25m Pistol, 50m Rifle, Trap and Skeet. The League will follow an SLI format, which will be shorter and tighter than the regular ISSF Rules.

Dalit CM pitch rekindles Cong leadership buzz in Karnataka

Bengaluru, Feb 22 (UNI) The renewed push for a Dalit Chief Minister has emerged as the central flashpoint in the simmering leadership debate within the Karnataka Congress, turning what was seen as routine speculation into a socially and politically charged contest. At the heart of the viral narrative is Social Welfare Minister HC Mahadevappa openly urging the party high command to consider appointing a Dalit leader to the top post. His remarks come at a time when discussions over a possible leadership change have resurfaced

within the ruling party. Mahadevappa said that given the significant Dalit population in the State and its longstanding support to the Congress, the time had come to take a decision in favour of a Dalit Chief Minister. While acknowledging that Siddaramaiah currently holds the post, he maintained that the issue had naturally come up amid leadership discussions. The comments have added a new dimension to the internal churn, which had earlier revolved largely around the perceived rivalry between supporters of Siddaramaiah

and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar. Legislators from both camps have made statements in recent weeks, keeping speculation alive. Fuelling further intrigue, Public Works Minister Satish Jarkiholi claimed that Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge had conveyed that the party high command had arrived at a conclusion on the leadership question and that it would be implemented at an appropriate time. Though he refrained from elaborating, the assertion has intensified curiosity within political circles. Meanwhile, Shivakumar

appealed to his supporters to refrain from making public statements on leadership change, stating that silence would serve him better. He also downplayed speculation over Ministers travelling to Delhi, suggesting that such visits could be linked to official work. With the Dalit CM demand gaining traction and the high command's reported "decision" shrouded in suspense, the Congress in Karnataka finds itself navigating not just a leadership question, but a broader debate over social representation and political balance.

Visiting Delhi is normal practice, says Shivakumar



Bengaluru: Defending his frequent travel to the national capital, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Sunday stated that visiting Delhi is a "normal practice" and that he goes whenever the party high command calls. "Who else will go to Delhi? We have to go when called. It is a normal practice," Shivakumar told reporters at his Sadashivanagar residence. When asked about his recent meeting with Priyanka Gandhi in Assam, he refrained from commenting on political discussions, asserting that such matters are not for public consumption.

Development Shivakumar outlined his upcoming schedule, which includes inaugurating a medical university in Karwar with the CM and attending an MGNREGA convention in Chikkaballapura with AICC General Secretary Surjewala. He also provided an update on infrastructure projects, stating that works worth Rs 5,065 crore are underway in the Bengaluru region and officials have been instructed to complete them by month-end. He added that the government plans to purchase 100 acres of land near hillocks within a 40 km radius of the city.

On Kumaraswamy Meetings Dismissing any political significance behind the meeting between Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy and Minister MB Patil, Shivakumar said it was likely a discussion regarding setting up industries in Patil's constituency. When asked about Kumaraswamy's criticism of the Youth Congress protest at the AI summit, he remarked, "It is their political path, I don't know who instructed them to do so."

Free dialysis and free and very low-cost lab for kidney patients inaugurated

Bengaluru: MLA S. Suresh Kumar inaugurated Nephrolux Free Dialysis Center, Bharat Jan Seva Lab Full Body Examination Center at discounted rates and free dental and eye checkup center in collaboration with Lions Club at Dayanandnagar Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Medical Day Care Center in Rajajinagar assembly constituency.



has an increased population of economically backward people. Since dialysis costs Rs. 1800 per person for those suffering from kidney problems, it is being done completely free of cost here. He said that free dental and eye check-ups will be provided to the visually impaired

and free glasses will be provided to the visually impaired. Bharat Jan Seva Labs will conduct 71 tests at the lowest cost. Deputy Mayor Ranganna, BJP leaders Raghavendra Rao, Girish Gowda, Kamadhenu Suresh, local leaders and the public participated.

CRI and Communication Commission organize training for religious on smart digital citizenship



Mangaluru, Feb 22: To empower religious communities with the tools for a secure and ethical online presence, a specialized capacity-building session on Cyber safety and digital integrity was held at the

and the Canara Communication Centre (CCC). The training sessions were led by a specialized resource team from the Commission for Social Communication, comprising experts in the field of media and communication. Fr Anil Ivan Fernandes, director of CCC and secretary of the Commission, headed the team. The primary trainers included Sr Grace Bennis Bethany (Vamanjoor), joint secretary of the Commission; Leo Victor (Modankap), cyber security expert; Ashwin D'Souza, (Urwa), IT expert; and Wilson Pereira, (Belvai), assistant professor at St Aloysius (Deemed to be University).

6 km of Continuous, Clean and Safe Footpath in Kodigehalli — Project Walkaluru 10th Footpath Walk

Bengaluru: The 10th Footpath Walk organized under Project Walkaluru was held in the Kodigehalli area. Responding to the open invitation from the Bengaluru North City Corporation, more than 120 citizens participated and assessed the quality of the footpaths. This was the 6th walk within the Bengaluru North City Corporation limits, and so far 40 km of footpaths have been covered in this city corporation. At the city level, a total of 78 km has been covered.



forming a continuous 6 km stretch of footpath. Participants were instructed to walk along the designated route and identify major obstacles that forced pedestrians off the footpath onto the road. They were also asked to document and photograph such obstacles. Overall, only about 6-8 minor obstacles were observed across the 6 km stretch, with no major issues such as garbage accumulation, open urination, or broken footpaths. Participants expressed appreciation that the footpaths were clean, green, and comfortable for walking.

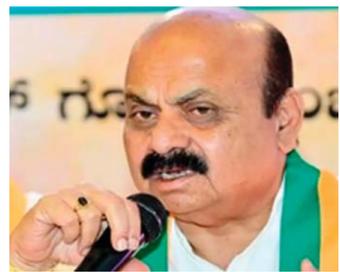
Background of Project Walkaluru: Launched on November 1, 2025, this initiative has already covered four out of the five city corporations. Walks have been conducted at Shivajinagar Rajyotsava 11K (Central City Corporation), Koramangala 5K on November 8, Jayanagar 5K on November 16 (South City Corporation), Banaswadi 5K on November 22, Thanisandra 8K on November 29 (North City Corporation), Yelahanka 10K on December 13, Bengaluru 26 km Walk on January 1, and Kammanahalli, among other areas.

walkable footpaths in the coming months. Project Walkaluru is a joint initiative of GBA and citizens aimed at identifying and promoting walkable footpaths across Bengaluru. Vision: "Let's Make Bengaluru a Walkaluru." Project Walkaluru Coordinator Arun Pai stated that when city corporation officials invite citizens to evaluate footpaths, it reflects their confidence in infrastructure and willingness to collaborate with the public to improve civic services. He added that the programme has helped bring the corporation and citizens closer, and the success of the first ten walks has encouraged similar initiatives across more parts of the city.

A few minor improvement suggestions were noted by the Commissioner and officials. Milestone Achievement:

MP Basavaraja Bommai urges state government to adopt Tamil Nadu Model of Teacher Recruitment in the State: MP Basavaraj Bommai

Haveri: Former Chief Minister and MP Basavaraj Bommai said that Karnataka should adopt the Tamil Nadu model of teacher recruitment, wherein a new teacher is appointed a year before an existing teacher retires. Such a system would help prevent vacancies in teaching posts. He was speaking after inaugurating the 21st Annual Day celebrations, Saraswati Pooja, farewell function for 7th standard students, and a science exhibition at Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan Higher Primary School in Katenahalli village of Haveri taluk.



Bommai said that students spend the entire year learning lessons and playing together, and such events provide them an opportunity to showcase their talents in culture and education. Parents gather to witness their children's abilities, making it a true confluence of learning and celebration. Children are regarded as divine, and everyone works for their welfare. Mother is the first teacher, and later school teachers impart education. The mother gives values, teachers provide knowledge, and society gives life lessons. They must learn from all these.

ing develops reasoning and logical thinking. When students take exams, it is not just a test for them but also for teachers. Hence, teachers must teach sincerely and touch the hearts of children.

The MP noted disparities between rural and urban education and said rural children often struggle to compete with urban students who learn English from early classes. Kannada should be taught up to fifth standard, followed by English, but rural students must be given equal opportunities to compete in higher education such as engineering and medicine.

Emphasizing lifelong learning, the former CM said once a person becomes a student, they remain a student throughout life. In school, lessons are followed by exams, but in life, tests come first and lessons later. Thus, learning and testing is a continuous process. Students must open the dimensions of knowledge by sharpening their senses, mind, intellect, and listening ability. Teachers should encourage students to ask questions such as why, what, where, and how much, as question-

He stressed strengthening government schools and ensuring adequate infrastructure and teacher appointments. During his tenure as Chief Minister, 30,000 school buildings were sanctioned, with 9,000 completed in the first year. Orders were also issued to recruit 15,000 teachers. Need of the hour is adopting the Tamil Nadu model that would ensure continuity in teaching and benefit both government and private schools, enabling Kannada students to succeed globally.

Visionary Group CEO Dr. Sujit Paul Launches Powerful Leadership Memoir in Bengaluru



Bengaluru :Acclaimed Author, Mentor, Life Coach and Group CEO of Zota Healthcare Ltd., Dr. Sujit Paul, unveiled his latest book, A Life of Building People, Brands and Belief, at Sapna Book House, Koramangala, drawing industry leaders, professionals, and media to a compelling evening of leadership insights.

In this deeply personal and strategic narrative, Dr. Paul chronicles his journey from humble beginnings and early failures to leading large, complex organizations across healthcare and retail. The book goes beyond a traditional memoir, offering a blueprint for building institutions rooted in purpose, culture, and belief. "Real leadership is not about position or power—it is about purpose, empathy, and doing right by people, even when it is hard," said Dr. Paul at the launch. "This book is my journey of building people first, brands next, and belief always."

With over 25 years of distinguished leadership, Dr. Paul has steered iconic brands including Reliance Pharma Retail, Asian Paints, Bata, Kodak, Apollo Pharmacy, Trust Pharmacy, and Columbia Asia Hospital. A globally recognized thought leader, he has been honored among Asia One's 100 Top Global Leaders, CEO Insights' Top 10 CEOs in Healthcare, and Times Now's India's Impactful CEO. A Life of Building People, Brands and Belief is positioned as an inspiring call to action for entrepreneurs, corporate leaders, and changemakers seeking to create lasting impact through value-driven leadership.

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."

Permanent Solution for City Cleanliness: Strict Directions for Waste Segregation at Source – Pommala Sunil Kumar

New Target to Avoid Dependence on Landfills and Achieve a Black Spot-Free City

Bengaluru: To ensure a clean city and to avoid dependence on landfill sites, the Commissioner of Bengaluru North City Corporation, Shri Pommala Sunil Kumar, has issued strict instructions to Solid Waste Management officials to make waste segregation at the household level mandatory. Segregation and Processing at Source: This measure has been initiated in view of the challenges faced in waste disposal due to protests by local residents near landfill sites in recent times. Wet Waste: Wet waste collected from households shall be sent to processing units for compost preparation. Dry Waste:

Dry waste shall be transported to recycling units and waste-to-energy plants, as directed by the Commissioner. Important Target for March 2026: All Assistant General Managers (AGMs) and Deputy General Managers (DGMs) of the Corporation have been instructed to take necessary action to achieve a target of collecting 65-70% segregated waste by the end of March 2026. Health Inspectors, Link Workers, Marshals, and Pourakarmikas have been directed to work diligently toward achieving this goal. Swachh Survekshan 2025-26: Warning to Officials Officials and staff must actively cooperate in the Swachh

Survekshan assessment, said Pommala Sunil Kumar. First Phase Cleanliness Programme: As part of Swachh Survekshan 2025-26, the first phase of special cleanliness drives has been scheduled from March 1 to March 8. Public Participation: Officials have been instructed to ensure large-scale participation of citizens, associations, organizations, and public representatives in the cleanliness campaign. Awareness Programmes: Officials have been directed to organize more awareness programmes to educate the public about environmental cleanliness, the importance of waste

segregation, and the prohibition on plastic usage. Making the Corporation Black Spot-Free: To preserve the city's aesthetics and earn appreciation from citizens, officials have been advised to ensure that no black spots (garbage vulnerable points) remain anywhere within the Corporation limits. Quick Response Mechanism: Health Inspectors and Marshals must respond immediately to solid waste management complaints received through phone-in programmes and take prompt action. AGMs have been instructed to ensure that such complaints do not recur.

EDITORIAL

Why TVK Must Be Protesting For Jananayagan - But Isn't

The political landscape of Tamil Nadu is rarely quiet, but the silence from the Tamizhaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) on the censorship blockade for its leader's "final film", Jananayagan, is deafening. The film has been stalled by the Central board for Film Certification (CBFC), and a week after the producers abandoned a legal fight by withdrawing a case against the body, there is still no clarity on when the film, which was supposed to hit the screens in January, will get a certificate. While the party's leadership argues it maintains a strategic distance between the actor's cinematic ventures and his political avatar, this calculated restraint might be costing them a crucial opportunity to demonstrate street power; it also raises questions about the party as a political organisation to defend itself.

MORE THAN JUST A MOVIE

At the heart of the Jananayagan controversy is a fundamental democratic principle: the freedom of expression. This isn't merely about a superstar's film being stuck in the censors; it is about the muzzling of a voice that threatens to dismantle a state's political machinery and reality. If the TVK cannot - or will not - protest the systemic targeting of its own leader's work, a vital question arises: how will it champion the complex issues of the common man? To be a political force in Tamil Nadu, one must be seen fighting. Political legitimacy in the Dravidian heartland has historically been forged in the fires of agitation. By staying on the sidelines, the TVK is appearing passive when it should be defiant. The "Second Rung" Litmus Test One of the most persistent critiques of celebrity-led parties is that they are "one-man shows". The TVK needs to demonstrate that its cadres don't assemble just for a glimpse of Thalpathy or a selfie - holding protests without Vijay's physical presence would prove that the TVK has a functional, motivated political machinery. It would prove to be an attempt to transition the fan-base from a demographic that consumes entertainment to a cadre base that drives a movement. It is also essential to demonstrate that a "second-rung" leadership can find their voice and establish that the party can breathe even when the star is not on screen.

THE SHADOW OF THE CENTRE

There is a growing whisper in political circles: is the TVK scared of the Centre? Has it decided to tacitly comply with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) after the questioning of Vijay in the Karur case and the alleged threats of the "agencies" probing funding for the actor? Vijay's own political narrative positions himself as a "saviour" against "evil forces". While the DMK is his primary local adversary, a leader claiming the mantle of Tamil pride cannot be seen as being soft on the Union government. The perception that one is fearful of taking on central agencies or the Censor Board (CBFC) is not good for the party, and that perception is building. If it's true, then it means that all that on-screen machismo, will remain just that - on-screen entertainment. Questions will be raised that if a leader cannot protect his own creative output from central muzzling, how will he convince the electorate that he can protect the state's rights?

CAN YOU TRUST A 'SILENT WAVE'?

The party leadership offers a different perspective. They argue that Vijay is categorical about keeping his film career and his political journey separate. They believe the public is watching the "targeting" of their leader and will deliver a silent, crushing mandate on polling day.

Contaminated Water – Causing Deaths: Whose Failure?



Hardly any quarter of time goes when no news of death caused by contaminated water gets the highlight in the media, but who cares? Even after eight decades of India's independence, why are our own rulers failing to provide sufficient and potable water? Why is the water quality being compromised? Should this be ignored as the fate of the deceased? Media reports reveal that contaminated tap water has been making urban India sick across metros, state capitals and smaller cities alike. Reports divulge that between January 2025 and January 7, 2026, across 22 states and Union territories at least 5,500 people fell ill in 26 cities, including 16 state capitals after consuming sewage-contaminated piped drinking water and at least 34 people reportedly lost their lives. These figures are only of the reported and major incidents, the rural areas, if added, may give the figures a jump. But here we are mentioning only two recent incidents that occurred in Indore and Palwal district of Haryana. In December 2025, Madhya Pradesh's Indore witnessed a major water contamination crisis which reportedly led to the death of 20 people with hundreds of people falling ill. According to the media reports, the contamination in the city occurred due to a leakage in a pipeline which caused sewage to enter the drinking water line. Indore is not the only city facing such a crisis. In the latest happening in the series, as per media reports, reportedly 15 deaths within just 15 days, including six innocent children, are said to have occurred in village Chayansa in Haryana's Palwal district, which sparked concerns about water contamination. Hindustan Times quoted on February 16, 2026 that the health



officials said that the deaths between late January and mid-February were linked to severe liver-related complications. Preliminary findings pointed to viral hepatitis and possible water contamination. Showing concern, the former union minister and an MP from Haryana, Kumari Selja alleges that the Chhainsa (Palwal) tragedy exposes the government's failure to provide clean drinking water. She adds the Contaminated water has caused havoc-hepatitis in some places, cancer in others-public health is being compromised. In a statement dated 18th February to the media, Kumari Selja said that the deaths and outbreak of disease caused by contaminated water in Chhainsa village of Palwal district have shaken the entire state. She stated that this is not merely a tragedy of one village but a grim reflection of the crumbling drinking water system across the state. Kumari Selja said that 15 deaths within just 15 days, including six innocent children, represent the height of administrative negligence. She said that water was supplied to households without proper chlorination or purification, leading to life-threatening illnesses. Out of 107 water samples tested, 23 failed quality checks, and the presence of coliform bacteria in several samples clearly indicates that contaminated water was supplied to residents. Kumari Selja said that even after screening more than 1,500 people, con-

ducting over 800 OPD examinations and collecting hundreds of blood samples, the government failed to act with urgency. Villagers continued to suffer from fever, jaundice, vomiting and stomach pain while the responsible departments remained passive spectators. Kumari Selja said the issue is not limited to Palwal alone. From Sirsa to Palwal, several parts of Haryana are facing an acute shortage of clean drinking water and serious quality concerns. In some places hepatitis is spreading, while in others cancer cases are rising. This is nothing short of playing with the health of the people," she said. Kumari Selja questioned how the government can claim progress in the so-called "Amrit Kaal" when even the clean water is not reaching people's taps. If water itself turns into poison, how can the life of a common citizen be secure?" She further questioned whether the lives of poor and farming communities are being treated as expendable. Kumari Selja demanded a high-level and time-bound investigation into the Chhainsa incident, strict action against those found guilty, adequate compensation for affected families, and a statewide special drive to test drinking water quality to ensure that such a tragedy is not repeated in the future. Key Causes of Water Contamination Water contamination stems from diverse human and natural activities, with untreated sewage,

industrial waste, and agricultural runoff being the primary contributors. These sources introduce pathogens, heavy metals, toxic chemicals, and nutrients into water bodies, severely impacting ecosystems and human health. Household sewage and blackwater from improperly managed septic systems release bacteria, viruses, and parasites into water, causing diseases like cholera and jaundice. Factories discharge heavy metals, toxic chemicals, and non-biodegradable substances into water, which can create oxygen-depleted "dead zones". Agricultural Runoff: Pesticides, herbicides, and chemical fertilizers from farming wash into rivers and lakes, creating nutrient pollution (nitrates and phosphates). Improper disposal of trash, including plastics and electronic waste, often leads to contamination in oceans and rivers. Issue Raised in Lok Sabha Terming Ghaggar as the most contamination spreading river, Kumari Selja, in a press release of 21st February, raises the issue demanding all sewage and dirty drains flowing into the Ghaggar must be stopped immediately, states that villages located along the Ghaggar are facing serious livelihood challenges, agriculture is being adversely affected, and fears of cancer and other serious diseases are growing among residents. In several areas, people are still deprived of safe drinking water.

10 Days After Bangladesh Polls, Lingering Questions About Pak, Hasina, US

The turmoil in Bangladesh leading to the ouster of Sheikh Hasina, the internal and external forces behind it, the installation of Yunus as the Interim leader, the recent election bringing the BNP to power, all have changed the landscape of India-Bangladesh relations. India has to map the contours of this new landscape and navigate accordingly. The Yunus phase of our relations was taut with tensions. Yunus was catapulted into his role as the Chief Advisor with US support. The Islamist student leaders in his immediate entourage were inimical towards India. Yunus played down Indian concerns about the security of the Hindu minority. The resurgence of Jamaat-e-Islami caused serious concern in India. The interim government was diplomatically belligerent towards India. The moves to erase the legacy and the symbols of the country's liberation struggle diminished India's key role in it. This inevitably meant opening the political doors to restoring ties with Pakistan, including military and intelligence. The dubious trial of Sheikh Hasina in absentia, sentencing her to death and seeking her extradition from India, added to the strains in ties. The interim government had announced that Bangladesh would hold elections in February 2026. That time table has been met, which is credit-worthy. Fears that elections would be marred by violence have been belied. India, wanting to see the interim government with transitory stakes in relationship with India replaced by a properly elected government with longer term perspectives, has favoured early elections. What Awami League's Absence Means For Bangladesh The decision by the interim government to ban the participation of the Awami League (AL) from the elections, which meant the disenfranchisement of a sizeable portion of the country's electorate, prompted India to call for inclusive elections. Eventually, the Awami League was excluded from participation, which unfortunately portends unstable domestic politics. This can well have a potential fall-out on India-Bangladesh relations because of the Awami League's perceived affiliation with



India and Sheikh Hasina's presence in New Delhi. The absence of the Awami League from the electoral fray meant only two contenders contesting, and, therefore, the division of votes and seats between two instead of three parties. This no doubt helped both parties to improve their respective electoral score. Some Awami League supporters would have conceivably voted for the BNP in order to keep the Jamaat at bay, which would have helped improve the former's tally. The Jamaat has won a record number of seats, almost four times their previous performance. This makes it the principal opposition party. In the past, the Jamaat has been a coalition partner of the BNP in the government, which means the two have experience of a working relationship. With the absence of the Awami League's voice in the parliament and the party now bereft of leadership, and this coupled with pressures from the Jamaat to make Bangladesh more Islamic, the political complexion of Bangladesh's polity could well become less "secular". Looking Ahead India has ignored its own earlier call for inclusive elections and welcomed the success of the BNP, with PM Modi warmly congratulating Tarique Rahman as the incoming Prime Minister. We sealed our support for the election results with the decision to send Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to attend Tarique Rahman's Oath Ceremony in Dhaka, and even more so

by PM Modi formally inviting the new Bangladeshi PM to India along with his family. For India, this is a pragmatic decision. We have lived with and done business with military dictatorships and Islamic regimes in our region, we do not suffer from a democracy fetish, and, therefore, a readiness to deal with the BNP government in Bangladesh in our larger national interest is to be expected. However, in the case of the US, in particular, which encouraged a regime change in Bangladesh because Sheikh Hasina was not sufficiently democratic, the silence of its ruling class and the media on the undemocratic barring of a party that governed Bangladesh for 15 years under Sheikh Hasina shows how much the West's "democracy backsliding" narrative for non-western countries is inherently politically fraudulent. India's relations with the BNP have been difficult in the past. Tarique Rahman has a chequered past. The damning cable from the US embassy in Dhaka on Wikileaks speaks of his "flagrant" and "audaciously corrupt activities", his "history of embezzlement, extortion, and interference in the judicial process", "bribe solicitation", and his "flagrant disregard of the rule of law (that) has provided potent ground for terrorists to gain a foothold in Bangladesh". His past links with the ISI are talked about. He was in self-exile in London for 17 years where anti-Indian elements were active.

Meet The Man Who Got Sunil Gavaskar's Cricket Bat In 1981, And Never Looked Back

On the evening of February 15, as India comprehensively outclassed Pakistan in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup in Colombo, the surprise wasn't the outcome. It was that the match happened at all. If anything, the lead-up to the encounter had way more drama than the match itself. Just days earlier, Pakistan's cricket board had threatened a boycott, owing to political tensions. The ICC stepped in to break the impasse, and the game proceeded. But not before reopening wounds from last year's Asia Cup handshake controversy. As 22 players with shared history and competing loyalties walked onto the ground, an 83-year-old watched with a mixture of sadness and hope. Steel baron, cricket philanthropist, and curator of one of the world's finest private cricket museums, Shyam Bhatia had seen this movie before. But he wasn't impressed with how the script was being re-written. Before the game, Bhatia had told Khaleej Times, "I am fine with whoever wins, but I hope they will shake hands at the end of the match because the game should move forward, not backwards." In an era where cricket has become a multi-billion-dollar industry, intertwined with nationalism, geopolitics, and corporate interests, Bhatia represents an era in which cricket's greatest value lay not in television ratings or sponsorship deals, but in upholding the spirit of the game. For the past six decades, Bhatia has been one of game's biggest champions, pouring not just money, but his heart into it. He could have easily utilised cricket's soft power



for brand-building like Lalit Modi or Vijay Mallya. Instead, he chose to spectate. Feeding Chappell, Getting Gavaskar's Bat, And More Born in Mirpur Khas, Sindh, in 1942, Bhatia's family migrated to Ajmer during the upheaval of 1947, where he excelled in his school cricket team. From there, he went on to represent Rajasthan and Saurashtra in first-class cricket. A marketing job brought him to Dubai in 1965. Fifteen years later, he founded Alam Steel, which would go on to become one of the Middle East's largest steel companies. But entrepreneurship was merely the prequel for what Bhatia calls his "second innings". When international cricket came to Sharjah in the early 1980s, Bhatia opened his home to players, umpires, media, and officials. His house guests included legends like Clive Lloyd, Ian Chappell, and Michael Holding, as well as journalists like Kishore Bhimani. They enjoyed the

food from his kitchen so much that they would often leave behind a souvenir of gratitude. Having cemented his name among all-time Test greats, Sunil Gavaskar was in Sharjah in 1981 for an exhibition match against Pakistan. It was here that he crossed paths with Bhatia, commencing a lifelong friendship. Gavaskar was so touched by Bhatia's commitment to promote grassroots cricket in the UAE that he presented him with one of his cricket bats. This gift sparked the thought that culminated into the Shyam Bhatia Cricket Museum. A two-storey structure within Bhatia's private residence, it was inaugurated in the presence of all ICC directors in 2010, as a shrine to cricket. The walls chronicle cricket history from 1887 to the present, with dedicated pillars for all Test-playing nations and separate areas for the 10,000-plus Test run-getters. It has over 2,000 cricket books and magazines dating

back to 1900. Gavaskar's bat has been joined by those of Sir Don Bradman and Virat Kohli. Bhatia's collection also holds Sir Viv Richards' blazer and Graeme Smith's boots from his 100th Test. The variety of rare trinkets in the museum has everyone in awe, from Sachin Tendulkar to Kiran More, with the latter even remarking that Bhatia had done more for cricket than the ICC. This statement is exemplified by Bhatia's Cricket for Care Foundation, which he founded in 2007 to provide cricket equipment, facilities, and coaching to underprivileged children. The foundation has donated over a million dollars to more than 20 countries, including non-cricket-playing nations like Thailand, Indonesia, and Japan. Through this foundation, Bhatia has tried to ensure that no child's dream of holding a cricket bat remains unfulfilled, from war-torn Afghanistan to conflict-riddled Ukraine.

India now faces 10 pc tariffs in US for 150 days, govt studying implications

Washington/ New Delhi: India will face a reduced tariff of 10 per cent from February 24 for 150 days, after US President Donald Trump announced a new global levy on imports into America following a Supreme Court verdict against his earlier sweeping tariffs. The Indian government is studying these and their implications, the Commerce Ministry said on Saturday, February 21. In a proclamation titled 'Imposing a Temporary Import Surcharge to Address Fundamental International Payments Problems' dated February 20, Trump said he is imposing, for a period of 150 days, a "temporary import surcharge of 10 per cent ad valorem" on articles imported into the US, effective February 24. The new tariff rate of 10 per cent is applicable to countries worldwide, including India. In a major setback to Trump's pivotal economic agenda in his second term, the US Supreme Court ruled that the tariffs imposed by Trump on nations around the world were illegal and that the president had exceeded his authority when he imposed the sweeping levies. Further, a fact sheet issued by the White House said Trump is invoking his authority under



Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974, which empowers the President to address certain fundamental international payment problems through surcharges and other special import restrictions. The fact sheet noted that some goods will not be subject to the temporary import duty because of the needs of the US economy. 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 US; certain agricultural products, including beef, tomatoes, and oranges; pharmaceuticals; certain electronics;

passenger vehicles, some light trucks, certain medium and heavy-duty vehicles, buses, and certain aerospace products. Trump lashed out at the Supreme Court justices who ruled against him, calling them "fools and lapdogs". "The Supreme Court's ruling on tariffs is deeply disappointing, and I'm ashamed of certain members of the Court, absolutely ashamed for not having the courage to do what's right for our country," he told reporters at the White House on Friday, just hours after the verdict came in. The US President also said that "nothing" changes in the trade deal with India in the wake of this verdict, as he

responded to the ruling by announcing an additional 10 per cent global levies on items imported into America. "Nothing changes. They'll (India) be paying tariffs, and we will not be paying tariffs. So deal with India is they pay tariffs. This is a reversal for what it used to be... So we made a deal with India. It's a fair deal now, and we are not paying tariffs to them, and they are paying tariffs. We did a little flip," Trump said. The Indian commerce ministry in a statement said the government is studying the developments on the US tariffs and their implications. "We have noted the US Supreme Court judgement on tariffs yesterday (Friday). US President Donald Trump has also addressed a press conference in this regard. Some steps have been announced by the US administration. We are studying all these developments for their implications," it said. The US had imposed a reciprocal tariff of 25 per cent on India in August. Later, an additional 25 per cent was imposed for buying Russian crude oil, taking the total tariffs on India to 50 per cent. Meanwhile, earlier this month, both countries agreed to finalise an interim trade deal, under which Washington agreed to cut down the tariffs to 18 per cent. So far, the punitive 25 per cent has been removed. The remaining 25 per cent exists. After the proclamation, the tariffs on Indian goods will now be 10 per cent from the existing 25 per cent. The 10 per cent levy is over and above the existing MFN or import duties in the US. For instance, if a product faces a 5 per cent MFN duty, an additional 10 per cent will be imposed, taking the effective duty to 15 per cent. Earlier, this was 5 plus 25 per cent. There is no clarity, however, about what the tariff imposed by the US will be on countries, such as India, after the 150-day period.

OIL IMPORT SHIFT SIGNALS ENERGY SECURITY PIVOT



New Delhi, Feb 22: India's recalibration of crude oil imports marks a structural shift from opportunistic discount buying to disciplined geopolitical risk management, according to analytics firm GlobalData. With oil accounting for roughly a quarter of India's primary energy consumption and import dependence at about 87 per cent, the country is prioritising compliance resilience, supply diversification and stronger US energy linkages as part of a more strategic energy security doctrine, the firm said. India, the world's third-largest oil consumer, is projected by the International Energy Agency to see demand rise from 5.5 million barrels per day (mbpd) in 2024 to 8 mbpd by

2035. Import dependence could increase to 92 per cent by 2035 despite ongoing domestic exploration, widening exposure to external supply shocks. Arnab Nath, Associate Project Manager of Economic Research at GlobalData, said the growing gap between demand and domestic output is driving efforts to broaden the supplier base and reduce reliance on concentrated or politically constrained supply corridors. India's crude sourcing has shifted significantly since 2022. Russia's share of India's oil imports rose from 2.7 per cent before the Ukraine conflict to 25.9 per cent in 2024 on the back of discounted cargoes. However, imports from Russia fell more than 40 per cent year-

on in January 2026 amid tightening trade and sanctions dynamics. At the same time, the United States and Venezuela have reemerged in India's crude mix. While Venezuelan volumes are expected to remain limited due to heavy grades and production constraints, they are seen as a tactical alternative as India seeks to rebalance geopolitical risks, GlobalData said, adding the shift is also influenced by US tariff threats linked to Iran-related trade. According to Nath, the recalibration could ease near-term friction between New Delhi and Washington and open space for deeper cooperation in liquefied natural gas (LNG), critical minerals and clean-technology supply chains.

Investors stung by AI could turn to India, lured by domestic demand

Mumbai, Feb 22: India's story of growth, insulated from AI exposure, could propel its markets to the front of investors' minds and draw back foreign cash, as a shakeout in bets on artificial intelligence gathers pace elsewhere. Left behind and sold by foreigners through a years-long rally in everything tied to computing and AI infrastructure, India's "anti-AI" equity market is starting to catch up, as the South Asian nation's growth prospects and currency strength improve. That could turn around last year's departure from the market of a net \$21 billion in foreign cash. "Once that AI theme plays out and you are again looking at the market for sustained long-period growth, there is no such story like India," said Prateek Agrawal, chief executive of Motilal Oswal Asset Management Company in Mumbai. "Long-period growth will come from newer emerging spaces ... which will



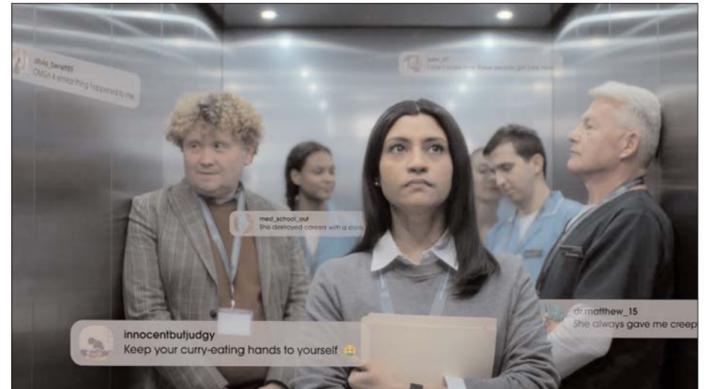
be the big businesses of tomorrow." Some of that is yet to be reflected in market indexes, he said. But the shifting mood is captured in this month's flow of about \$1.5 billion in net foreign purchases of stock. At the same time,

the rupee currency is off record lows after India struck a long-awaited trade agreement with the Trump administration. India's Nifty 50 has fallen less than 1% over the period from October 29, when the Nasdaq, owned for its

high-growth, tech-heavy potential, hit a peak before losing more than 5%. The optimism is fuelled by India's near \$4-trillion-dollar economy, projected to grow 7.4% in the fiscal year that ends in March 2026, according to the latest annual economic survey, and at 6.7% next year and 7% the year after, according to S&P. That may have made sense when the economy was rebuilding, but growth is running hot, and credit stress is increasing. The driver of that growth is consumption, which could be all the more attractive as it is insulated from AI and not really dependent on foreign trade, or the global economy, either. Price is another perennial stumbling block. The Nifty 50 trades at roughly 22 times its 12-month forward earnings, slightly above a long-term average of 20.8 times, against a forward P/E ratio of 13.6 for the MSCI emerging markets index.

Netflix Unveils the Trailer of 'Accused', A Psychological Drama on Power, Perception and Public Judgment

Mumbai, 22nd February 2026: Directed by Anubhuti Kashyap and produced by Dharma Production, the haunting new drama unpacks power, bias and emotional fracture as a celebrated doctor's life unravels under public scrutiny: Netflix has unveiled the gripping trailer of Accused, a layered psychological drama thriller directed by Anubhuti Kashyap and produced by Dharma Productions. Starring Konkona Sensharma and Pratibha Rannta, the film, releasing on February 27, explores what happens when certainty collapses and perception begins to reshape reality. The trailer offers a haunting glimpse into the life of Dr. Geetika Sen, a celebrated and respected surgeon and gynaecologist whose world begins to unravel after allegations of sexual misconduct surface at her workplace. As scrutiny intensifies and public judgment grows louder, the fracture seeps into her most intimate space: her marriage to Dr. Meera. Set against an atmosphere of quiet tension and emotional



restraint, Accused resists sensationalism, instead choosing to sit with ambiguity. The film does not rush toward answers; it lingers in discomfort, asking the audience to confront their own biases and question the fragility of truth itself. Speaking about the trailer, director Anubhuti Kashyap said, "With Accused, I wanted to explore what happens when we are denied clarity. The trailer reflects the emotional stillness and unease that runs through the film. I'm grateful to

Netflix for backing a story that resists easy answers and allows ambiguity to breathe." Talking about the trailer, Konkona Sensharma, who plays Dr. Geetika Sen, shared, "Geetika is a woman used to control, of her work, her credibility, her space. What moved me was her internal collapse under scrutiny. I'm glad Netflix is bringing a story like this to audiences, one that trusts performance and silence over spectacle." Pratibha Rannta, who essays the role of Dr. Meera, said,

"Playing Meera meant living in that messy space where you want to trust, but your heart isn't sure. I'm so glad Netflix tells these kinds of real, complicated stories about women." Accused challenges conventional narratives by telling the story from the accused's perspective, a lens rarely explored in Indian cinema. With restrained performances and a measured directorial voice, the film navigates themes of power, vulnerability, bias, and emotional survival.

India to counter Trump's IPEF pullback with FTAs, currency diversification

Mumbai, Feb 22: India is pursuing currency diversification alongside efforts to strengthen supply chains and expand exports through free trade agreements to counter US administration's pullback from Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF), a new report has said. The report from Think China said, "currency diversification is a key determinant for national economic security at a time when reducing external dependence and increasing self-reliance are non-negotiable goals." India's sovereign digital currency, the e-rupee, "is being used in retail transactions and is picking up traction among customers," the report said. It noted that greater acceptability of e-rupee and interoperability between digital currencies of the BRICS could lead to its greater use in trade. This could happen between countries piloting their own sovereign digital currencies, including China, Russia, Brazil, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Indonesia and the UAE, most of which are members of BRICS, it suggest-



ed. "Apart from safeguarding supply chains and entering multiple FTAs, India's efforts to reduce economic dependence has motivated it to settle more trade in its local currency," it said. Apart from the economic benefits India is pursuing FTAs for geopolitical gains due to "political confidence-building mechanisms between countries." FTAs help enlarging strategic influence by cultivating a bigger group of global allies, "at a time when the global order is fragmenting fast," the report said. The US President Trump's second term in office was marked by a noticeable lack of interest in the IPEF and as a result the China plus

one diversification strategy has lost some momentum, it noted. The report said that unilateral trade restrictive measures from the US in 2025 made India and other major economies realise the importance of diversifying away from the US. India has accelerated FTA negotiations to diversify markets and concluded deals with the UK, New Zealand, Oman and the EU. In recent years the country signed trade agreements with Australia, the UAE and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) group, while FTAs with Israel, Chile and the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) countries are under negotiation.

Is £70 becoming harder to justify? The rise of cheaper blockbuster games

What can you tell about a video game from its price tag? In the UK, £70 may not guarantee quality, but it tends to mean you are getting a blockbuster or "AAA" - a big-budget game made by a large team, built around cutting-edge graphics, sprawling worlds and dozens of hours of gameplay. In 2025 Nintendo set a new benchmark for game prices when it listed major Switch titles such as Mario Kart World at £74.99 (launching in the US at \$79.99). Meanwhile speculation grew from a 2025 report by gaming industry advisory company Epyllion that the next Grand Theft Auto will be the first game to be priced at \$100, paving the way for others to either follow suit or at least contemplate a price hike. But a handful of recent games lauded for their AAA-feel by critics and gamers alike - such as ARC Raiders, Split Fiction, Clair Obscur: Expedition 33 - asked for more modest prices of £30-£40. No title has won more game of the year awards (a whopping 436) than Clair Obscur, but Alexis Garavaryan, boss of publisher Kepler Interactive, told the BBC the decision to launch it below the blockbuster norm was, in fact,



deliberate. "Ultimately we've seen a number of larger companies increase prices quite regularly. And we've kind of taken the opposite action," he told BBC News. "We try to think, 'What do we think the price should be?' And then we price it lower." Garavaryan believes we are seeing a shift in player taste away from the kinds of things that big AAA studios are expected to provide, including high-fidelity graphics and "the number of hours you get out of the content". Instead, he claimed, players are now more interested in how "exceptional" or "novel"

the experience is. And if spectacle is no longer the decisive factor, then is a blockbuster price tag becoming harder to justify? A recent consumer study found most gamers are spending less on new games - with only 4% of US video game players buying a new one more often than once per month, and a third of players not buying any games at all. Neither Take Two Interactive nor Rockstar, GTA 6's publisher and developer, have confirmed where they plan to price the long-awaited sixth game in the franchise. But for a game with thousands of people working under

it that has already been delayed twice, many expect to see its price tag at least push higher than the current benchmark. And if increasing costs for gamers were a concern in 2025, they are even more so in 2026, with the price of RAM - the computer components that power much of our tech - more than doubling since October 2025. Garavaryan said Kepler's strategy to price away from the blockbuster model was designed to make players feel like they were getting "a bargain". "We want them to feel like we are respectful of their money, respectful of their time, and that fundamentally every time they buy a game from us, they're getting a great deal," he said. "And we're excited for players to be able to play five, six different experiences with the same amount of money than a traditional AAA game would bring them." Human-crafted products Kepler Interactive itself is not exactly a small indie production, but a collective made up of several independent studios. Rebekah Valentine, senior reporter at IGN, told the BBC Clair Obscur's success may not mean a "shift away from AAA expectations" entirely.

Iran students stage first large anti-government protests since DEADLY CRACKDOWN

Students at several universities in Iran have staged anti-government protests - the first such rallies on this scale since last month's deadly crackdown by the authorities. The BBC has verified footage of demonstrators marching on the campus of the Sharif University of Technology in the capital Tehran on Saturday. Scuffles were later seen breaking out between them and government supporters. A sit-in was held at another Tehran university, and a rally reported in the north-east. Students were honouring thousands of those killed in mass protests in January. The US has been building up its military presence near Iran, and President Donald Trump has said he is considering a limited military strike. The US and its European allies suspect that Iran is moving towards the development of a nuclear weapon, something Iran has always denied. US and Iranian officials met in



Switzerland on Tuesday and said progress had been made in talks aimed at curbing Iran's nuclear programme. But despite the reported progress, Trump said afterwards that the world would find out "over the next, probably, 10 days" whether a deal would be reached with Iran or the US would take military action. The US leader has supported protesters in the past - at one stage appearing

to encourage them with a promise that "help is on its way". Footage verified by the BBC shows hundreds of protesters peacefully marching on the campus of the Sharif University of Technology at the start of a new semester on Saturday. The crowds chanted "death to the dictator" - a reference to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei - and other anti-government slogans. A separate crowd of

supporters of a rival pro-government rally - many with national Iranian flags - are seen nearby at the beginning of the video. Scuffles are later seen breaking out between the two camps. Verified photos have also emerged showing a peaceful sit-in protest at the capital's Shahid Beheshti University. The BBC has also verified footage from another Tehran university, Amir Kabir University of

Technology, showing chanting against the government. In Mashhad, Iran's second-largest city in the north-east, local students reportedly chanted: "Freedom, freedom" and "Students, shout, shout for your rights". It is not immediately clear whether any demonstrators have been arrested. There have been reports of protests continuing on Sunday. Last month's protests began over economic grievances and soon spread to become the largest since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency (Hrana) said it had confirmed the killing of at least 7,015 people during that wave, including 6,508 protesters, 226 children and 214 people affiliated with the government. The latest figures were updated on 15 February. Hrana also said it was investigating 11,744 more reported deaths. Iranian authorities said late last month that more than 3,100 people had been killed - but

that the majority were security personnel or bystanders attacked by "rioters". Saturday's protests come as the Iranian authorities are preparing for a possible war with the US. US envoy Steve Witkoff said on Saturday that Trump was questioning why Iran had not "capitulated" in the face of Washington's military build-up. Witkoff told Fox News the president was "curious" about Iran's position after he had warned them of severe consequences in the event they failed to strike a deal. "I don't want to use the word 'frustrated,' because he understands he has plenty of alternatives, but he's curious as to why they haven't... I don't want to use the word 'capitulated,' but why they haven't capitulated," he said. The exiled opposition is adamantly calling on President Trump to make good on his threats and strike, hoping for a quick downfall of the current hard-line government.

Willie Colón, trombonist who pioneered salsa music, dies aged 75



Salsa music pioneer Willie Colón, the trombonist and orchestra leader behind songs like El Malo, Oh, Qué Será, Talento de Televisión and Gitana, has died aged 75, US media reports. The Grammy nominated singer-songwriter "passed away peacefully" on Saturday morning "surrounded by his loving family", his family said on social media. No cause of death was provided. "While we grieve his absence, we also rejoice in the timeless gift of his music and the cherished memories he created that will love on forever," they said. The Puerto Rican musician, who sang in Spanish and whose career

spanned nearly 60 years, had been named among the most influential Latino artists of all time by Billboard magazine. US media attributed Colón's death on Saturday to a statement posted by his family on Facebook and a tribute posted by his long-time manager, Pietro Carlos. The BBC has contacted representatives for Colón. Colón - who was also an arranger and producer - explored "the competing associations that Puerto Ricans have with their home and with the United States," according to a biography posted on the LA Philharmonic website. "He uses his songs to depict and investigate the problems of living in the U.S. as a Puerto Rican and also to imply the cultural contributions that Puerto Ricans have to offer." He grew up in New York in an environment marked by Latin migration, street life and Caribbean music as the salsa sound emerged in the US state in the 1960s, the BBC's Mundo said, mixing jazz, mambo, jibara music and chachachá.

Final missing Lake Tahoe skier found dead 5 days after avalanche



The ninth and final missing skier has been found dead in California's Lake Tahoe backcountry, five days after a powerful avalanche struck several guides and a tight-knit group of friends on a trip. Nevada County Sheriff Shannan Moon said on Saturday during a news conference that all nine bodies have now been recovered from the Castle Peak area in the Sierra Nevada mountains. She also released the names of all nine victims, which included close friends, a pair of sisters and three guides. Two people who were part of the group escaped the "football-field sized" avalanche - the deadliest in modern California history - and authorities said they might help piece together what happened. Sheriff Moon and others during the news conference described the harsh weather rescue crews were met with after the avalanche, and that white-out conditions stalled days of searching. Authorities said there was an ongoing avalanche risk after the Tuesday disaster and high winds prevented them from being able to utilize helicopters

for days. When winds calmed on Friday, helicopters were used to pour water over the area - a tactic meant to mitigate an avalanche risk - authorities said. Crews were then sent to search for the ninth missing skier. The victims were confirmed on Saturday as: Carrie Atkin, 46, of Soda Springs, California; Elizabeth Clabaugh, 52, of Boise, Idaho; Danielle Keatley, 44, of Soda Springs and Larkspur, California; Kate Morse, 45, of Soda Springs and Tiburon, California; Caroline Sekar, 45, of Soda Springs and San Francisco, California; and Katherine Vitt, 43, of Greenbrae, California. The three Blackbird Mountain guides who died were identified as Andrew Alissandratos, 34, of Verdi, Nevada; Nicole Choo, 42, of South Lake Tahoe, California, and Michael Henry, 30, from Soda Springs. Earlier this week, a family spokesperson identified several of the skiers to the BBC's US media partner, CBS News. "While we wish we could have saved them all, we are grateful that we can bring them home," Moon said at the news conference.

GIANT TORTOISES RETURN TO GALÁPAGOS ISLAND AFTER NEARLY 200 YEARS



Giant tortoises are roaming the Galápagos island of Floreana for the first time in more than 180 years, in what conservationists have called a "hugely significant milestone". The release of 158 captive-bred juvenile tortoises onto the island is part of the Floreana Ecological Restoration Project led by the Galápagos National Park Directorate. The reintroduction follows a "back-

breeding" programme launched in 2017 after scientists discovered tortoises carrying ancestry of the Floreana giant tortoise on nearby Isabela island. Floreana's native species, *Chelonoidis niger niger*, was driven to extinction in the 1840s by sailors who took thousands from the island for sustenance during long voyages. "The restoration of Floreana has reached a hugely significant milestone, with 158 captive-bred giant tortoises released into the wild this week," the Galápagos Conservation Trust (GCT) said in a statement on Friday. "This long-anticipated moment gives hope, not just for the future of Floreana, but for the future restoration of islands around the world," it added.

More than 1,500 Venezuelan political prisoners apply for amnesty

A total of 1,557 Venezuelan political prisoners have applied for amnesty under a new law introduced on Thursday, the country's National Assembly President has said. Jorge Rodríguez, brother of Venezuelan interim President Delcy Rodríguez and an ally of former President Nicolás Maduro, also said "hundreds" of prisoners had already been released. Among them is politician Juan Pablo Guanipa, one of several opposition voices to have criticised the law for excluding certain prisoners. The US has urged Venezuela to speed up its release of political prisoners since US forces seized Maduro in a raid on 3 January. Venezuela's socialist gov-



ernment has always denied holding political prisoners. At a news conference on Saturday Jorge Rodríguez said 1,557 release requests were being addressed "immediately" and ultimately the legislation would extend to 11,000 prisoners. The government first announced days after Maduro's capture, on 8 January, that "a significant

number" of prisoners would be freed as a goodwill gesture. Opposition and human rights groups have said the government under Maduro used detentions of political prisoners to stamp out dissent and silence critics for years. These groups have also criticised the new law. One frequently cited criticism is that it would not extend amnesty to those

who called for foreign armed intervention in Venezuela, BBC Latin America specialist Luis Fajardo says. He noted that law professor Juan Carlos Apitz, of the Central University of Venezuela, told CNN Español that that part of the amnesty law "has a name and surname". "That paragraph is the Maria Corina Machado paragraph." It is not clear if the amnesty would actually cover Machado, who won last year's Nobel Peace Prize, Fajardo said. He added that other controversial aspects of the law include the apparent exclusion from amnesty benefits of dozens of military officers involved in rebellions against the Maduro administration over the years.

EXPLOSIONS KILL POLICE OFFICER AND INJURE 25 IN WESTERN UKRAINE

A 23-year-old police officer has been killed and 25 people injured in what Ukrainian officials have called a terror attack in the western city of Lviv. Two homemade explosive devices detonated after police crews responded to a reported break-in shortly after midnight on Sunday, the National Police of Ukraine said. The devices were planted in waste bins, it added. Eleven people were admitted to hospital, six of whom were law enforcement officers in a serious condition, police said. President Volodymyr Zelensky confirmed "an individual suspected of carrying out the terrorist



attack" had been detained. Lviv Mayor Andriy Sadoviy said she was a Ukrainian woman. The victim of the attack was named as Viktoria Shpylka. "She was only 23 years old and had begun her service at the start of the full-scale inva-

sion of the Kherson region," the national police wrote on Telegram on Sunday morning. Police said the first blast occurred after a police car arrived at the scene of the reported break-in at a shop in the city centre. "Later, when a second crew arrived,

another explosion went off," it added. Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko said police and the Security Service of Ukraine had detained the suspect, who was described by police as a 33-year-old resident of the north-western Rivne region. "We are identifying other persons involved in committing this crime," he wrote on Telegram. Meanwhile, the regional prosecutor's office said it had started an investigation into the "act of terrorism that led to grave consequences". Elsewhere, Ukraine faced another night of overnight Russian strikes ahead of the fourth anniversary of Moscow's full-scale invasion on Tuesday.

US ambassador's Israel comments condemned by Arab and Muslim nations



Arab and Muslim governments have condemned remarks made by the US Ambassador to Israel, Mike Huckabee, who suggested Israel would be justified in taking over a vast stretch of the Middle East on Biblical grounds. In an interview with conservative US commentator Tucker Carlson, Huckabee was asked whether Israel had a right to an area which the host said was, according to the Bible, "essentially the entire Middle East". The ambassador said "it would be fine if it took it all". But he added Israel was not seeking to do so, rather it is "asking to at least take the land that they now occupy" and protect its people. In a joint statement, more than a dozen governments including Jordan, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates called the comments "dangerous and inflammatory", and a threat to efforts to end the war in Gaza. In the interview, released on Friday, Carlson pressed the ambassador on his interpretation of a Bible verse which the host claimed suggested Israel had a right to the land between the River Nile in Egypt and the Euphrates in Syria and Iraq. Huckabee

said "it would be a big piece of land" but stressed that "I don't think that's what we're talking about here today". He later added: "They're not asking to go back to take all of that, but they are asking to at least take the land that they now occupy, they now live in, they now own legitimately, and it is a safe haven for them." He also said his earlier remark that Israel could take it "all" had been somewhat "hyperbolic". Following the interview's release, the UAE's foreign ministry released the statement on behalf of various governments and other actors expressing "strong condemnation and profound concern" regarding the comments. The statement said Huckabee had "indicated that it would be acceptable for Israel to exercise control over territories belonging to Arab states, including the occupied West Bank". It said the remarks violated international law and directly contradicted US President Donald Trump's plan to end the war in Gaza, including efforts to create "a political horizon for a comprehensive settlement that ensures the Palestinian people have their own independent state".

Pakistan launches deadly strikes on Afghanistan

Pakistan has carried out multiple overnight air strikes on Afghanistan, which the Taliban has said killed at least 18 people, including women and children. Islamabad said the attacks targeted seven alleged militant camps and hideouts near the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and that they had been launched after recent suicide bombings in Pakistan. Afghanistan condemned the attacks, saying they targeted multiple civilian homes and a religious school. The fresh strikes come after the two countries agreed to a fragile ceasefire in October following deadly cross-border clashes, though subsequent fighting has taken place. The Taliban's defence ministry said the strikes targeted civilian areas of Nangarhar and Pakitka provinces and had killed



dozens of people. In Girdi Kas village, in the Bihud district of Nangarhar, a man named Shahabuddin told reporters while pointing at his destroyed house that of 23 members of his family, only five had survived the attack. Local Taliban spokesman

Sayed Taib Hamd said that 18 members of the family had been killed. The BBC had earlier been told about 20 people were thought to have died. No deaths have been reported so far in the other areas hit. A guesthouse and a religious school were targeted in the

Bermal and Urgan districts of Pakitka province, but they were empty at the time of the attacks, local officials and locals told the BBC. Pakistan's Ministry of Information and Broadcasting said it had carried out "intelligence based selective targeting of seven

terrorist camps and hideouts". In a statement on X, it said the targets included members of the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan, which the government refers to as "Fitna al Khawarij," along with their affiliates and the Islamic State-Khorasan Province. The ministry described the strikes as "a retributive response" to recent suicide bombings in Pakistan by terror groups it said were sheltered by Kabul. The recent attacks in Pakistan included one on a Shia mosque in the capital Islamabad earlier this month, as well as others that took place since the holy month of Ramadan began this week in the north-western Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Pakistan accused the Afghan Taliban of failing to take action against the mil-

itants, adding that it had "conclusive evidence" that the attacks were carried out by militants on the instructions of their leadership in Afghanistan. The Taliban's defence ministry later posted on X condemning the attacks as a "blatant violation of Afghanistan's territorial integrity", adding that they were a "clear breach of international law". It warned that "an appropriate and measured response will be taken at a suitable time", adding that "attacks on civilian targets and religious institutions indicate the failure of Pakistan's army in intelligence and security." The strikes come days after Saudi Arabia mediated the release of three Pakistani soldiers earlier this week, who were captured in Kabul during border clashes last October.



How sister's success paved way for Atkin's Olympic bronze

In 2018, as a 15-year-old, Zoe Atkin watched her big sister Izzy win Winter Olympic bronze for Team GB - and a spark was lit. She wanted her moment on the podium. She wanted to do the same. That fire burned for eight years until Sunday, when she did. In winning halfpipe bronze in Livigno, Atkin became only the second British athlete to win an Olympic medal on skis. Keeping the honour in the family, the first was her sister in the Pyeongchang slopestyle. "She's always been my biggest inspiration, she pushed me into the sport, she was always bullying me to jump off things on the mountain," said 23-year-old Atkin. "After watching her [win the medal] it's always been a huge goal for me. It's a real full-circle moment because she was here supporting me, and I was there when she won her bronze medal, so it's really



special. "Obviously I wanted to one-up her a bit but it's really special that we both have the bronze. My mum is claiming that she's the first parent to have two Olympic medallists for GB in the family." Atkin had already secured a medal when she dropped into the

pipe for her final run and, with the pressure off, improved her score to 92.50 - just half a point shy of the silver medal position. China's global superstar Eileen Gu won gold, her first of these Games after two silvers, with 94.75, while compatriot Li Fanghui took silver.

Atkin's medal was the fifth for Great Britain at the Milan-Cortina Games, after three golds and a silver, equalling the team's record-best haul from 2014 and 2018. But this was the team's most successful Winter Olympics the moment Charlotte Bankes and Huw

Nightingale secured the second of those golds in the mixed team snowboard cross exactly a week ago. Never before had Great Britain won more than one gold at a single Winter Games. Atkin came into her second Olympics fresh from winning X Games gold and as the reigning world champion, eager to improve on the ninth-place finish she achieved on her debut in Beijing four years ago. She had qualified top of the standings for the final, which was postponed to Sunday morning after heavy snowfall in Livigno the previous day. There she remained after the first run, with a score of 90.50, after Gu - the defending champion - had fallen on her opening trick. On the second run, the roles reversed. Gu vastly improved with a 94.00, as did Li with 91.50, only for Atkin to fall on her effort.

England bowlers secure crucial win over Sri Lanka

A superb bowling performance breathed life into England's T20 World Cup campaign as Harry Brook's side beat co-hosts Sri Lanka by 51 runs in their opening match of the Super 8s phase. England remained unconvincing with the bat in posting 146-9 but their bowlers took full advantage of a tricky surface to knock over their hosts for 95. Jofra Archer dismissed key batter Pathum Nissanka and fellow opener Kamil Mishara but even more impressive were the three wickets for all-rounder Will Jacks inside the powerplay. Jacks, who has struggled with the ball at times in this tournament, removed Kusal Mendis and Pavan Rathnayake in consecutive deliveries and added the scalp of Dumith Wellalage as Sri Lanka crumbled to 34-5 under the pressure of a chase. After Kamindu Mendis chipped back a catch to Liam Dawson and Dushan Hemantha hit his own wicket, Jacks combined with Tom Banton to complete a fine



relay catch on the boundary to dismiss Dasun Shanaka, Sri Lanka's captain and the last recognised batter, for 30. That England's batting remains far from perfect is pushed to another day. Jos Buttler made a tortured seven from 14 balls, Jacob Bethell fell to a wild slog and Tom Banton ran himself out. Phil Salt's 62 and 21 from Jacks, who was the next highest scorer in a fine all-round display, were crucial. England play Pakistan on Tuesday and New Zealand on Friday in their remaining Super 8s matches. Two wins would guarantee a semi-final

place. One may be enough. Salt and Jacks dragged England to a score but Sri Lanka still appeared favourites at halfway. Though England defended 128 on this ground in a series before the World Cup, Sri Lanka chased 182 with two overs to spare to beat Australia here in the group stage. This surface was stickier than that one. Its sticky nature and decent turn offered assistance to the spinners and Jacks capitalised. After conceding four from an accurate first over, Jacks got one to grip to take the leading edge of Mendis.

Minnesota Vikings receiver Moore dies aged 25

The Minnesota Vikings have paid tribute to wide receiver Rondale Moore after the 25-year-old was found dead at his home on Sunday. Police in Moore's hometown of New Albany, Indiana were called to a property on Saturday night, when Moore was found in a garage. The American was transferred to a nearby hospital, where he was pronounced dead. A post-mortem examination will take place on Sunday. "We are deeply saddened by the passing of Rondale Moore," the Vikings said in a statement. "While we are working to understand the facts, we have spoken with Rondale's family to offer our condolences and the full support of the Minnesota Vikings. We have also been in communication with our



players, coaches, and staff, and will make counselling and emotional support resources available to anyone in need. Our thoughts are with Rondale's family and friends during this devastating time." Moore spent three years with the Arizona Cardinals after being drawn as a second-round pick in the 2021 draft. He joined the Atlanta Falcons in 2024 but a knee injury saw him miss

the entire campaign, before joining the Vikings in 2025. "While Rondale had been a member of the Vikings for a short time, he was someone we came to know well and care about deeply," said Vikings coach Kevin O'Connell. "He was a humble, soft-spoken and respectful young man who was proud of his Indiana roots. We are all heartbroken by the fact he won't continue to

live out his NFL dream and we won't all have a chance to watch him flourish." The NFL said they were "deeply saddened" by the "tragic passing" of Moore. After making his NFL debut in 2021, Moore went on to make 135 catches for 1,201 yards for the Cardinals over three seasons in Arizona. "We are devastated and heartbroken by today's news," the Cardinals said in a statement. "Our thoughts and deepest condolences are with his family, friends, team-mates, and everyone who loved him and had the privilege of knowing such a special person." Former Cardinals team-mate JJ Watt said: "Can't even begin to fathom or process this. There's just no way. Way too soon. Way too special. So much left to give."

"They Abuse Pakistan": Mohammad Amir Responds To India Legends' Criticism

A war of words has emerged between Mohammad Amir and retired Indian players over some of the comments that the former Pakistan pacer made about Team India's campaign so far in the T20 World Cup 2026. While Amir has been critical of the Pakistan team, he specifically chose to target India's Abhishek Sharma, calling him a "slogger". Amir later also said that India would not qualify for the T20 World Cup 2026 semifinals. His comments left many former Indian players fuming. When asked about the criticism he has been getting from across the border over his comments, Amir justified the remarks, saying he



only shared his opinion, but didn't use any bad language. "I have just given my opinion. We have always praised India when they perform well. I have also said this earlier, one should respect one's opinion. If I talk about the kinds of things some former Indian players say, they

use such bad language. They abuse Pakistan. We have never done so, just tell me one time if I ever used bad language against India," said Amir on the 'Haarna Mana Hai' show. "When it comes to Abhishek, I just said that he doesn't have a defensive game. A player who cannot

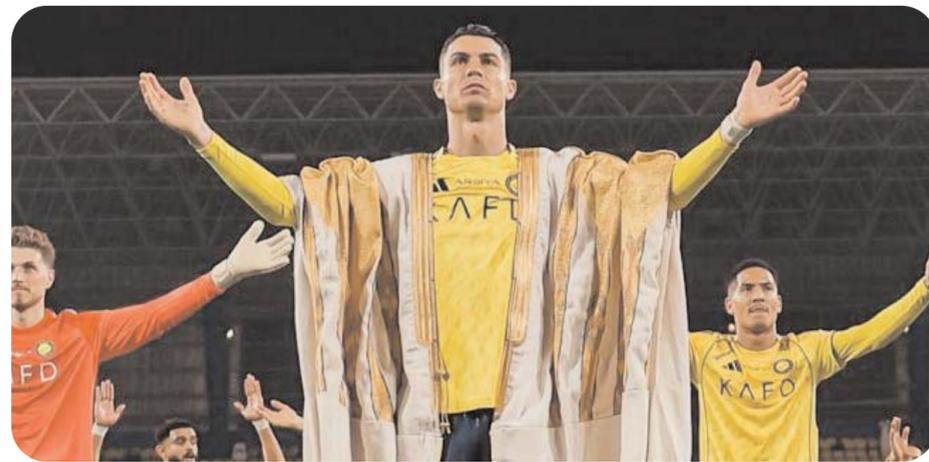
stop the ball, what else do I call him? Just tell me what to call him if he can't come into the line and defend the ball," he added. Amir further explained the comments he made about India potentially not qualifying for the semifinals, suggesting he only spoke from the perspective of a pundit who has closely seen South Africa and West Indies' performances. "Learn to respect someone's opinion. There are 100 people in the world; not everyone can have the same opinion. We have played the sport, so we know how it works. Looking at how India and South Africa have been playing cricket, I think South Africa are better," said Amir.

DEAL WITH 'NOISE' OR JOIN ANOTHER CLUB - ARTETA



Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta says his players should "be part of a different club" if they cannot deal with the "noise" as his team bid to end their 22-year wait for a league title. The Gunners are two points clear at the top of the league as they try to win their first title since Arsene Wenger's 'Invincibles' did so in 2003-04. But they have just two wins from their last seven Premier League games and Manchester City closed the gap at the top from five to two points ahead of Arsenal's game away to 16th-placed Tottenham on Sunday (16:30 GMT). They have come in for criticism after squandering a 2-0 lead against bottom side Wolves on Wednesday, conceding a 94th-minute equaliser. It led to accusa-

tions of Arsenal being 'bottlers', a word Arteta says is "not part of my vocabulary". His side have finished second in the last three campaigns, twice to City and last season to Liverpool. Ahead of the North London derby, when asked how to stop the external noise overwhelming his side, Arteta said: "You ask them the question: do you want to be part of the noise? Or not? If not, go and do something else, be part of a different club. "And everybody has been demanding for 10 years, 15 years that we need to go back there [fighting for the title] and now we are there. And now what? You don't want noise? Noise is part of it and the bullets are part of that and we try to deal with it in the right way and achieve what we are looking for."



'I belong to Saudi Arabia' - Ronaldo committed to Al-Nassr

Hardik Pandya's Rs 4 Crore Gift For Ex-Wife Natasa Stankovic, Son Agastya Stumps Fans

Hardik Pandya and Natasa Stankovic may have separated, but the way they are co-parenting their son Agastya is truly a lesson in parenting. The latest buzz surrounding the former couple suggests a grand gesture of reconciliation or support: a luxury SUV, the Land Rover Defender, valued at approximately Rs 4 crore. Social media activity has highlighted a stunning new addition to the family's garage, leaving fans amazed by Hardik's decision. Natasa was recently seen posing with a sleek black Land Rover Defender, with son Agastya beside her. The vehicle, a symbol of rugged luxury, is estimated to cost between Rs 3 crore and Rs 4 crore, depending on customisation and variant. The pictures from the occasion were shared on social media by the vehicle maker itself. The captions read: "Mr.



Hardik Pandya once again chooses Navnit Motors to purchase his Defender. A decision anchored in excellence. Delivered in Mumbai - the Land Rover Defender. Presented to Agastya Pandya and Ms. Stankovic. Crafted for command. Engineered for those who lead from the front." The development

comes at a time when the duo has been praised for their mature approach to co-parenting following their official separation in July 2024. Hardik-Natasa's Co-Parenting Wins Hearts Since their divorce two years ago, Hardik and Natasa have remained committed in their responsibilities towards Agastya. Despite Hardik

moving on, recently making headlines for his relationship with Mahieka Sharma, he has consistently shown that his son remains his top priority. The news of the luxury car arrives amidst a flurry of updates regarding Hardik's personal life. The cricketer recently shared a romantic video for Mahieka Sharma's 25th birthday, confirming their relationship. Meanwhile, Natasa has been focusing on her fitness and making a return to the limelight, recently stating in interviews that she is "open to love again" and grateful for the challenges that have made her stronger. Whether a gift of appreciation or a self-earned reward, the new wheels have certainly added a splash of glamour to the Mumbai suburbs, proving that for this former power couple, the journey forward is being travelled in style.

'England need players able to change tactics during games'



Remember two years ago when England were going to get beaten at home by 40 points against Ireland? The narrative in this tournament rarely plays out as expected. Teams overperform and sides crack under pressure. That is the beauty of the Six Nations. That predicted thumping in 2024 never happened. Instead, England stunned Grand Slam-chasing Ireland with the last play of the game to win 23-22. Roll on two years, when expectations were much lower, and Ireland delivered that record away win. Andy Farrell's side arrived with the mentality to deliver a historic victory, bringing the tactics and accuracy needed to win. The 21-point difference at Allianz Stadium came down to tactics and decision-making. England made a load of mistakes, and some of that came down to trying to play the match like a game

of chess. The issue with that is that they could not change on the hoof how they wanted to play. The tactical battle between coaches Andy Farrell and Steve Borthwick was won by Farrell, but England need players on the field who are able to change tactics as they go. They have struggled with sticking to the script instructed to them by Borthwick, with any changes then being delivered at half-time. Given the talent and winning run, I was expecting England to adapt better. Why do teams play with a high tempo against them? Because England are good. It looked like they thought another team could not replicate Scotland's attacking play from last week. It was very unlike England, but that is what happens when you get stressed. They lacked the senior Lions mentality to get out of sticky situations.

The much-awaited celebration track from Ustaad Bhagat "AURA OF USTAAD" is here

For years, millions have imitated the iconic mannerisms of Pawan Kalyan. Many tried to recreate that effortless swagger, that electrifying body language, that unmistakable attitude. But no one ever truly defined it — until now. With "AURA OF USTAAD," that definition is finally carved in stone. The explosive line — "Nenu Meda Muttukunte, Toda Kottinatte" — doesn't just sound powerful. It embodies the very spirit of the Power Star's aura. It captures the impact of a single gesture, the weight of a single movement, and the frenzy it creates among fans. Cult captain Harish Shankar delivers a celebration anthem that fans will cherish for years to come. This isn't just a tribute - it's a festival in musical form. Rockstar Devi Sri Prasad raises the bar yet again with a sensational, high-voltage composition that pulsates with mass energy. The powerful lyrics by Chandrabose perfectly capture the enigma, charisma, and larger-than-life presence of Pawan Kalyan. "AURA OF USTAAD" is not merely a song - it's a defining moment. A statement. A celebration of a legacy that continues to inspire generations. At the grand launch event of the song "Aura of Ustaad," the team shared heartfelt and powerful



insights about the track and the film.

DIRECTOR HARISH SHANKAR SAID: "I don't know at what auspicious moment we titled this song 'Aura of Ustaad,' but I can see that aura in every single person pres-

ent here. The dialogue 'If I touch my neck, it's as impactful as striking my thigh' appears in a key scene in the film. For over two decades, Pawan Kalyan garu has carried this unique mannerism. I felt it deserved to be expressed in words — that

thought gave birth to this line. We used it as the hook and shaped it into a powerful song. For such an aura, we needed an Oscar-worthy pen. We immediately approached Chandrabose garu, and remarkably, the song was completed within just eight hours. This is not a song written out of mere admiration for Pawan Kalyan garu — it is written out of deep understanding. Every line reminds you of him. The line 'You are not a tender sprout born in soft soil... you are a stubborn plant that breaks through solid rock' is my personal favorite. Devi Sri Prasad garu infused life into this composition. If Devi garu performed a musical coronation, Chandrabose garu performed a literary anointment. The film contains everything fans expect from Pawan Kalyan garu. There were days when he worked 18 hours straight for this project. Our producers stood by us, offering more than what we asked for and supporting us in every possible way."

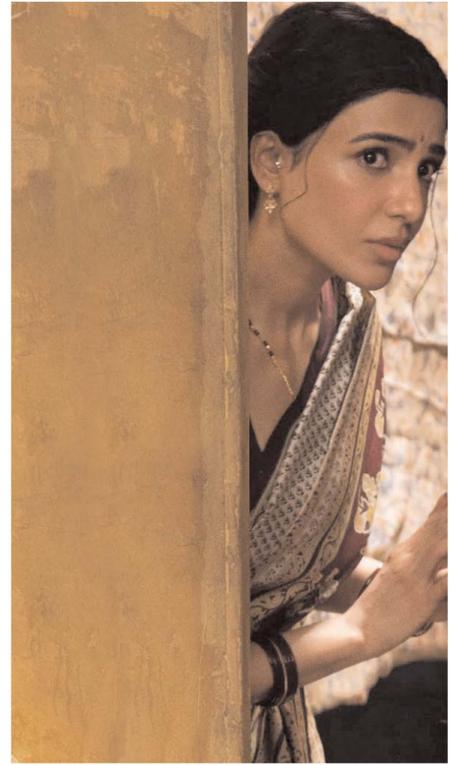
MUSIC COMPOSER DEVI SRI PRASAD SHARED: "What I admire most about Pawan Kalyan garu is the way he respects and remembers people. If he likes someone once, he remembers them for life. When I was learning mandolin as a child, he noticed me — and he still remembers it. That speaks vol-

umes about his greatness. After listening to this song, he personally called and appreciated me. 'Aura of Ustaad' is truly the 'Aura of Pawan Kalyan.' This song will remain timeless. The credit goes primarily to Harish Shankar garu for conceptualizing Pawan Kalyan garu's mannerism so brilliantly in words. Chandrabose garu's lyrics are extraordinary. The production house has immense passion for cinema. Ustaad Bhagat Singh has shaped up wonderful."

LYRICIST CHANDRABOSE ADDED: "I have been writing songs for Pawan Kalyan garu since his very first film. We've delivered many successful songs together. Once again, our collaboration has brought you this powerful track. This song reflects Pawan Kalyan garu's true nature, personality, principles, and the path he has chosen in life. This is not just a song — this is 'Pawanism.'" The event concluded on an emotional and celebratory note, with the team expressing confidence that both the song and the film will resonate deeply with fans and audiences alike. Ustaad Bhagat Singh is prestigiously being produced by Naveen Yerneni and Y.Ravi Shankar under Mythri Movie Makers and is slated for a grand release on March 26th.

Tralala Moving Pictures Announces May 15 Release for Samantha Starrer 'Maa Inti Bangaram'

HYDERABAD — Tralala Moving Pictures is pleased to announce that its second production, Maa Inti Bangaram, is scheduled for a worldwide theatrical release on May 15, 2026. The film features Samantha, Diganth, and Gulshan Devaiah in lead roles, supported by notable performances from Sree Mukhi, Gautami, Anand, Lakshmi, Srinivas Gavireddy and Manjusha. Created by Raj Nidimoru, this project marks a significant reunion between Samantha and director Nandini Reddy, following their previous collaboration on the successful film Oh! Baby. A Compelling Action Drama, currently progressing through its final stages of production, Maa Inti Bangaram is a well-crafted action drama designed to engage audiences across all age groups. Director Nandini Reddy has helmed this project as a family entertainer that balances emotional depth with high-stakes action. The production team has also unveiled a new poster featuring Samantha, offering a glimpse into the film's aesthetic. This follows a well-received teaser that highlighted Samantha's physical preparation for the film's action sequences, establishing



high expectations for her performance. The film is produced by Samantha, Raj Nidimoru, and Himank Duvvuru, featuring a technical crew of industry veterans:

- Music: Santosh Narayanan
- Cinematography: Om Prakash
- Story & Screenplay: Raj Nidimoru, Vasanth

Maringanti and Sita Menon

- Action: Lee Whittaker
- Production Design: Ullas Hydur
- Editing: Dharmendra Kakarala

With its strategic May release, Maa Inti Bangaram is positioned to be a highlight of the 2026 summer cinematic calendar.

BLACKPINK BECOMES FIRST ARTIST TO HIT 100M SUBSCRIBERS ON YOUTUBE



Killer Will Impress Every Audience as a Unique Sci-Fi Thriller with a Multi-Layered Screenplay

Killer, starring Jyoti Poorvaj and Poorvaj in lead roles, also features Manish Gilada, Chandrakant Kollu, Vishal Raj, Archana Ananth, and Gautham Chakradhar Koppishetty in important roles. The film is being produced by Poorvaj and Padmanabha Reddy A under the banners Think Cinema and AU & I Studios, with the blessings of Dhyanam Nannagaru, while Urvis Poorvaj presents the project. Directed by Poorvaj, the film is gearing up for a grand theatrical release soon. The teaser was officially launched today at an event held in Hyderabad. Speaking at the event, Line Producer Sitarama Rao said, "The entire team worked very hard on Killer and despite being a small film, Killer will achieve big success". Actor Manish Gilada,



support they showed for the teaser". Line Producer Dasarath Madhav said, "that the film carries strong content blended with an emotional brother-sister sentiment and said that despite being a small film, Killer will achieve big success". Actor Manish Gilada,

who plays the antagonist, thanked director Sukku Poorvaaj for presenting him as a powerful villain and said the team worked collectively to deliver a memorable film, expressing confidence that it would create a new milestone at the box office.

Why the Internet can't stop crying over baby monkey Punch's story



Hderabad: Punch, a baby Japanese macaque, became a global sensation after his story went viral. Born in July 2025 at Ichikawa City Zoo in Japan, Punch was abandoned by his mother shortly after birth. Left alone, Punch felt scared and sad. But zookeepers at the zoo stepped in to help. They gave him a special orangutan plush toy, which Punch quickly grew to love. He would carry it with him everywhere for comfort.

Punch, showing him kindness. The adult monkey even groomed Punch, which is a way monkeys build friendships and trust. Fans around the world were overjoyed to see Punch finding his place in the troop, and many shared their happiness online.

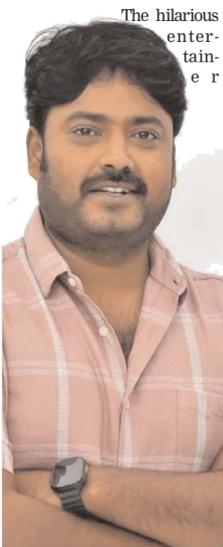
IKEA's Special Gift
As Punch's story became more famous, even Ikea joined in to help. The company donated several orangutan plush toys to the zoo so Punch would always have a friend. Fans started calling the plush toy "Oran-Mama," and it became a symbol of Punch's journey toward happiness. IKEA's kindness made people smile and showed that even big companies cared about Punch.

The World Loves Punch
Punch's story touched hearts everywhere. People all over the world shared their support on social media with the hashtag #HangInTherePunch. Punch's journey from loneliness to love reminded everyone of the importance of compassion and friendship. His story isn't just about a baby monkey and a toy; it's about how kindness can change lives.

Punch's Tough Start
When Punch was introduced to the other monkeys at the zoo, he didn't fit in. The other macaques ignored him or bullied him. Punch tried to make friends, but it wasn't easy. Feeling lonely and sad, he turned to his plush orangutan, which became his source of comfort. He would hug it when he felt scared or alone. Videos of Punch holding his plush toy went viral, and people from around the world started to feel for him.

A Heartwarming Change
Finally, in February 2026, things started to change for Punch. He was finally accepted by the other monkeys. In a touching video, an adult monkey named Onsing embraced

"Theatres are shaking with hilarious entertainment in 'Hey Balwant'": Comedian Sudarshan



The hilarious entertainer 'Hey Balwant', starring promising hero Suhans and Shivani Nagaram as the lead pair, is directed by Gopi Acharya and produced by B. Narendra Reddy under the Trishul Visionary Studios banner. The successful duo Bunny Vas and Vamsi Nandipati have presented the film under the Nandipati Entertainments and Bunny Vas Works banners. Released this Friday (20th of this month), the film is receiving appreciation from audiences and praise from critics, racing ahead with blockbuster talk as a full-fledged entertainer.

Comedian Sudarshan, who played a key role in the film and is entertaining audiences in theatres with his performance, spoke to the media on Sunday. Here are the highlights:

PEOPLE ARE CALLING IT "SUDARSHAN 2.0" IN 'HEY BALWANT'?
I've done a really good character in this film. The movie is getting a crazy response. Audiences are thoroughly enjoying the "Bunk" character I played and laughing wholeheartedly. The film is being appreciated as an entertaining ride from start to finish. The role I played has brought me a lot of recognition.

HOW DID YOUR ENTRY INTO FILMS HAPPEN?
I acted in a short film called Amerikaku Daredi. It unex-

pectedly received a great response. Through that short film, I got an opportunity in Run Raja Run. After that, films like Dochey, Kumari 21F, Pataas, Samajavaragamana, Naari Naari Naduma Murari, and now Hey Balwant have brought me closer to audiences.

COMPARED TO YOUR PREVIOUS FILMS, YOUR PUNCHLINES SEEM TO HAVE LANDED EVEN BETTER HERE?
Because my character has good importance in this film, it got well elevated. The drinking scene and the naturopathy center scenes with Vennela Kishore are making theatres erupt with laughter. Along with my punchlines, Vennela Kishore, Suhans, Naresh, and Suhani have all delivered hilarious performances.

WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE REASON BEHIND THE FILM'S ENTERTAINING IMPACT?
I share a good rapport with everyone who acted in the film. We were all in sync in every scene. The closeness and flow among us made the scenes come out really well.

WE HEARD YOU ARE GETTING OFFERS AS A HERO?
I'm not ready to become a lead hero on the big screen right now. My entry into the film industry happened unexpectedly. I'm just beginning to grow as a comedian, so I can't take that risk at this stage. I want to act alongside all heroes as a comedian. Once I settle as an actor, I can think about becoming a hero. If I ever do, it would be for small-concept OTT films.

EARLIER COMEDIANS ALSO BECAME HEROES, RIGHT?
They did so after establishing a strong identity as comedians. My career is just picking up momentum. I don't have such thoughts right now. If I ever become a hero, it would be for small, unique concepts that regular heroes usually don't do. I don't intend to do mainstream theatrical lead films.

DO YOU THINK BECOMING A HERO WOULD REDUCE OPPORTUNITIES AS A COMEDIAN?
There is some truth to that. After acting as a hero in one film, some people might hesitate to offer smaller roles in other films, thinking it wouldn't look good. Because of that, we might unknowingly miss opportunities in some good films.