

OM NAMO VENKATESAYA



04-02-2026

Total pilgrims: 68,586

Tonsures: 24,764

Hundi kanakalu: 3.71 CR

Waiting Compartments: .09

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Eight Indian sailors released, will be returning home: MEA

NEW DELHI (TSIT): India on Thursday announced that eight of the 16 Indian sailors held in Iran have been released and will return home, with consular teams closely engaged with Iranian authorities over the remaining sailors.Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said, “We’ve had consular access to the 16 sailors in Iran. Our officials in Bandar Abbas have met them. Of those 16, eight people, according to the Iranian authorities, have been released and will be returning home. With regard to the remaining eight sailors, we are in touch with the Iranian authorities. We will see how best to support them.”

Families of Indian sailors detained in Iran last December have received some relief after the crew were granted consular access and were able to speak to their loved ones for the first time in over a month.

The sailors were held after the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps seized the oil tanker MT Valiant Roar near Dibba, UAE. The crew includes 16 Indians and one each from Sri Lankan, and Bangladeshi. Of them, 10 were shifted to Bandar Abbas prison, while eight remain confined on the vessel, awaiting further formalities.

Iran has alleged that the tanker was involved in smuggling nearly 6,000 tonnes of fuel, while relatives of the crew maintain that it was carrying low-sulphur fuel oil.

ECI tells SC West Bengal SIR marred by violence, political interference

Hyderabad (TSIT): Allying a secret understanding between BRS and BJP for the municipal elections, Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Thursday alleged that the BJP is taking ‘protection money’ to shield BRS leaders in various scams.

He challenged the BJP government at the Centre to arrest former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao (KCR) and his son K. T. Rama Rao (KTR) in the Kaleshwaram and Formula E race cases, respectively.Addressing a public meeting as part of the Congress party’s campaign for municipal elections, the Chief Minister questioned the BJP leadership why it has not arrested KCR and Harish Rao for the alleged irregularities

WORLD | NEWS US Must Be Prudent When Supplying Arms To Taiwan, Xi Tells Trump



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BJP taking ‘protection money’ to shield BRS leaders: CM Revanth



in the Kaleshwaram project and KTR for the Formula E race scam.“If BJP does not have any secret deal with the BRS, it should arrest the BRS leaders before municipal elections,” he said. The Chief Minister took a dig at Prime Minister Narendra Modi for not accepting the state’s.

‘Illegal’ coal mine blast in Meghalaya leaves 18 dead, several injured

SHILLONG (TSIT): At least 18 labourers were killed, and several others feared trapped following an explosion at an “illegal” coal mine in Meghalaya’s East Jaintia Hills district on Thursday, February 5, officials said.Rescue teams have been engaged in search operations, Director General of Police I Nongrang said, adding that the incident occurred in the Thangsku area in the morning.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that an ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh would be provided to the next of kin of each deceased, while the injured would be given Rs 50,000. “Pained by the mishap in East Jaintia Hills, Meghalaya. Condolences to those who lost their loved ones. May the injured recover at the earliest,” the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) quoted Modi as saying in a post on X. Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma expressed grief over the incident and announced a probe.During rescue operations,a total of 18 bodies were recovered from the site, East Jaintia Hills Superintendent of Police Vikash Kumar said.One person who sustained injuries in the blast was initially taken to Sutnga Primary Health Centre before being referred to a Shillong hospital for better treatment.“The exact number of labourers present inside the mine at the time of the explosion is yet to be ascertained. More people are feared trapped,” the DGP said.The explosion is suspected to have occurred during coal mining activities at the site, which is believed to be an illegal operation. Asked whether the mine was operating illegally, Kumar said, “Yes, it seems like that.”In a statement, the chief minister said, “Profoundly saddened by the tragic coal mine incident in East Jaintia Hills. My deepest sympathies are with the families who have lost their loved ones in this unfortunate tragedy.”

More on Nation Page

IAF to showcase its might in one of largest exercises near Pakistan border



New Delhi, Feb 5 : The Indian Air Force (IAF) is all set to showcase its military might and strategic preparedness this month in one of the first and largest exercises near the Pakistan border in Rajasthan.

The air exercise named Vayu Shakti 2026, to be held in Jaisalmer on February 27, has been modelled after Operation Sindoor – the military operation that flattened terror bases across the border and brought Pakistan to its knees, and will see a wide range of fighter jets displaying the strength and precision of the force.

As the IAF fighter jets roar near the Pakistan border, this will again bring the spotlight on India’s growing air firepower. Almost all fighter aircraft and air defence systems that participated in Operation Sindoor will take part in the Vayu Shakti exercise.According to defence officials, Rafale, Sukhoi-30, Tejas, MiG-29, Jaguar, Mirage-2000, and Hawk aircraft will be seen hitting their targets with precision. In addition, the Prachand attack helicopter will also be seen firing rockets.

The MiG-21 aircraft, having retired from the IAF, will not be seen in an air military exercise for the first time. According to defence officials, airbases and assets from the Air Force’s Western and South Western

Commands will be participating in this exercise. All units have been fully activated. More than 100 aircraft are expected to participate in this exercise.

According to information shared by officials, the exercise will be conducted by creating a simulated war environment and the whole event will be monitored and controlled through the Air Force’s Integrated Air Command and Control System (IACCS).

Notably, it was the IACCS that kept track of every Pakistani jet, missile, and drone during Operation Sindoor.

Apart from the IAF jets, the C-130J and C-295 fixed-wing transport aircraft, Prachand, Chinook, Mi-17, and ALH helicopters from the helicopter unit, drones, and loitering munitions used in Operation Sindoor will also feature in the exercise. For the first time, the C-295 will perform a night assault landing drill during the Vayu Shakti exercise. Additionally, the C-130J Super Hercules will be seen landing on short runways, dropping off Garud commandos in the war zone, and taking off again in a short time. Two attack helicopters will provide security for the entire operational area during this time. According to defence officials, Pakistan has been informed about this exercise, and a NOTAM (Notice to Airmen) has been issued.

The IACCS will monitor the entire airspace for both offensive and defensive purposes. Multiple layers of air defence have been established, including anti-aircraft guns, anti-drone systems, and operational readiness platforms. This will include the Akash missile system as well as the Army’s L-70 guns. Several VIPs have also been invited to the Vayu Shakti exercise. Around 40 officials from friendly countries’ embassies in Delhi are also expected to be present at the Vayu Shakti 2026 event, said officials with information about the upcoming exercise.

Himachal bans mobile phones by students in all schools from March 1



Shimla, Feb 5 : In a significant move to enhance the academic environment, Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Sukhu on Thursday announced a ban on the use of mobile phones by students in all government and private schools in the state from March 1

If a student is found in possession of a mobile phone, he/she will face a fine of Rs 500 and the confiscation of the device.

It will be mandatory for parents to attend school counselling sessions, the CM added.

The announcement of the ban came at the closing ceremony of the 69th National School Games Under-19 Girls Handball Tournament held in Ghumarwin in Bilaspur district. Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister emphasised that the government is committed to providing world-class education that would enable local students to compete on a global stage.

Under the new regulations, students will no longer be permitted to bring mobile devices onto the school premises.

The Chief Minister detailed strict enforcement measures, stating that any student found in possession of a phone would face a fine of Rs 500 and the confiscation of the device.

To ensure long-term compliance with attending the mandatory counselling sessions by the parents, the Education Department has been tasked to draft a standard operating procedure (SOP) to address repeat violations.

“It has been observed that mobile phone usage during lunch breaks and school hours distracts students from their studies and interpersonal growth,” the Chief Minister remarked. Drawing on his own background as a product of a government school, he reaffirmed his dedication to prioritising the quality of education.

‘They have refused... our flight is booked’: SKY reflects on Pakistan boycotting T20 WC match

Mumbai, Feb 5 (TSIT): Skipper Suryakumar Yadav broke silence on Pakistan boycotting the ICC Men’s T20 World Cup match against India and stated that his team is ready to fly to Colombo on February 15 for the game at the R. Premadasa Stadium. Pakistan will not play India in their scheduled Men’s T20 World Cup match in Colombo on February 15, after their government approved the Men in Green’s participation in the World Cup on the condition that they will not play the match against India.

India and Pakistan are in Group A alongside Namibia,



Netherlands and the United States of America (USA). All of Pakistan’s matches are sched-

uled in Sri Lanka, which is co-hosting the tournament with India. India will open the campaign against the USA on February 7, the tournament’s first day; at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai. Meanwhile, Pakistan will kick-start their campaign against the Netherlands on the same day.

“We haven’t refused to play against Pakistan. They have refused. I think mindset is pretty clear. We have not said no to playing the match. It came from the other side. ICC has given the official fixtures. BCCI and the government have decided on a neutral venue along with ICC.

India remains open to exploring merits of any crude supply options: MEA

New Delhi: India on Thursday said it remains consistent with its energy security approach and is open to exploring the commercial merits of any crude supply options, following US claims that it has stopped buying Russian oil and may increase imports from the United States and Venezuela.

Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal emphasised India’s long-standing energy partnerships and reiterated that securing the energy needs of 1.4 billion Indians remains the government’s top priority.

He pointed out that diversifying energy sourcing in line with objective market conditions and evolving international dynamics is at the core of India’s strategy.

“All of India’s decisions are taken and will continue to be taken with this objective in mind,” he said.

Responding to a question on buying oil from Venezuela, Jaiswal said, “As far as Venezuela is concerned, it has been a long-standing partner for us in the area of energy, both on the trade side and as also on the investment side. We were importing energy or crude oil from Venezuela till 2019-20 and thereafter, we had to stop. Again, we started buying oil from Venezuela in 2023-2024, but had to stop which were halted because of the reimposition of sanctions.”

Earlier, Indian public sector undertakings (PSUs) have partnered with Venezuela’s national oil company PDVSA and have maintained a presence in the country since 2008.

Akhilesh Yadav alleges conspiracy to cut PDA votes, urges Supreme Court’s immediate intervention

New Delhi, Feb 5 (UNI) Samajwadi Party (SP) chief and former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav on Thursday accused the Bharatiya Janata Party and its allies of conspiring to disenfranchise voters from the PDA (Pichhda, Dali, Alpsankhyak) communities, particularly minorities, by misusing electoral procedures in Uttar Pradesh. He called upon the Supreme Court to take immediate cognisance of the matter, saying no other institution was left that could be trusted to protect voters’ constitutional rights.

In a series of messages posted on his WhatsApp channel, Yadav alleged that Booth Level

Officers (BLOs) were being harassed, threatened and pressured to facilitate the deletion of voters’ names using forged documents. “Maananiya Sarvachch Nyayalaya tatkaal sangyaan le, kyunki aur kisi se ummed nahi bachi hai,” Yadav said, appealing directly to the apex court.

The SP chief claimed that Form 7, which is used for objections and deletion of names from the electoral roll under the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process, was being systematically misused to target voters from PDA communities. “BJP aur unke sahyogi, apradhiyon ki tarah pesh aa rahe hain. Woh UP ke BLO ko prata-



dit karke, dabav banakar, dhankakar PDA samaaj, khas taur se alpsankhya samuday ka vote farzi dastavezon ke aadhar par kaatne ki saazish kar rahe hain,” he alleged.

Yadav demanded an immediate ban on the use of Form 7 until what he described as a “valid and transparent mechanism” was put in place. He also

sought the cancellation of all Form 7 applications submitted so far and an immediate halt to claim-and-objection activities.

“SIR mein Form 7 ke durupyog ko turant roka jaye aur har voter ke mat dene ke samvaidhanik adhikar ki raksha ki jaye,” he said. He further demanded that FIRs be registered against those allegedly forcing BLOs and that such cases be heard on a fast-track basis. Escalating his attack, the SP president sought a judicial inquiry into what he termed “anti-national forces” working behind the alleged conspiracy to delete voters’ names. “Desh ki janta ke vote kaatne ke shadyantra ke

peeche kaun si desh-virodhi taaqatein sakriya hain, iski nyayik jaanch ho,” Yadav said.

Yadav also appealed to what he called “honest journalists and officials” to come forward and support the fight against these alleged forces. Appealing to party workers, he urged “PDA praharis” to remain vigilant and actively work to protect every legitimate vote.

“BJP ki dhandhli ko unki hone wali haar ki hatasha samjhein aur unke ghotalon ke saboot ikattha karke unke khilaf FIR ki taiyari karein,” he said. Yadav further asserted that the growing support base of the PDA alliance had unsettled the ruling party.

Had concrete info that Cong MPs could carry out unexpected act, asked PM not to come to LS: Birla

NEW DELHI: Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Thursday said he had concrete information that many Congress MPs could carry out an “unexpected act” by reaching the spot where Prime Minister Narendra Modi sits and therefore he asked him not to come to the House to deliver his address. If this incident had taken place, then this would have left the democratic traditions of the country in shreds, Birla said as the House reassembled at 3 PM. In a sharp response to Birla’s remarks in the House, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra alleged that Prime Minister Modi is “hiding behind” the Speaker and termed as “absolute lie” the claim that there was any plan to hurt Modi. Lashing out at opposition



members, the Speaker said the conduct of some of them in his office on Wednesday was not appropriate and in fact was “like a black spot”. “With sadness I have to inform that some members displayed such behaviour in the House on Wednesday that had never been witnessed in its history,” he

said. The Lok Sabha on Wednesday witnessed dramatic scenes as women opposition MPs charged towards the prime minister’s seat holding banners ahead of his scheduled speech, leading to adjournment of proceedings for the day. Modi was not present in the

House, and BJP member P P Chaudhary was making his remarks on the Motion of Thanks on the President’s Address when the opposition members trooped into the Well of the House. Birla said the dignity of the chair has been established in the Constitution. “Never in history have political differences been dragged to the House. The conduct of the opposition members in the office of the Speaker was not appropriate and in fact it was like a black spot,” he said. “When the Leader of the House was to reply (to the debate on the motion of thanks on the President’s address), I had concrete information that many members of the Congress party could carry out an unexpected act by reaching the spot where

the prime minister sits,” he said. “If this incident had taken place, this would have left the democratic traditions of the country in shreds. To avoid this, I requested the PM to not come to the House and as the Speaker it was my responsibility to uphold the dignity of the House,” Birla said. The Speaker thanked Modi for acceding to his request and avoiding unpleasant scenes in the Lok Sabha by not coming to the House on Wednesday. He warned opposition members that if they bring posters and pamphlets, House will not function. It will not function today and tomorrow also”. Birla later adjourned the House for the day as opposition members raised slogans

Lok Sabha passes Motion of Thanks on President's address without PM's speech

NEW DELHI: In an unprecedented development, the Lok Sabha on Thursday passed the Motion of Thanks on the President’s address without the customary speech by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, amid vociferous protests by the opposition. The prime minister was not present in the House when Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla put the amendments moved by the opposition to the Motion of Thanks to vote, which were rejected. The Speaker then read out the Motion of Thanks to the President for her address to both Houses of Parliament on January 28, which was passed by a voice vote, amid sloganeering by the opposition members. As the protests continued,

the Speaker adjourned the proceedings till 2:00 PM. Congress members stormed the Well, carrying posters with PM Modi’s picture and ‘Narendra-Surrender’ slogan written at the top. Samajwadi Party members too were in the Well, carrying three banners and pamphlets raising the issue of demolitions at the Manikarnika ghat on the river Ganga in Varanasi. The SP banners carried pictures of Rani Ahilyabai Holkar, who had developed the ghats nearly 300 years ago. Trinamool Congress members were also in the Well joining the protest, while other members of the INDIA bloc, including the DMK and the Left, stood at their seats and in the aisle in solidarity.

Top Naxalite Udham Singh killed in encounter in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur; carried Rs 8 lakh bounty

BIJAPUR: A senior Naxalite carrying a reward of Rs 8 lakh on his head was gunned down on Thursday by security forces in an encounter in Chhattisgarh’s Bijapur district, police said. He was identified as Udham Singh, a ‘divisional committee’ member of the south Bastar division of the outlawed Communist Party of India (Maoist). Singh was in charge of platoon number 13 of the south Bastar division, the official added. Acting on specific intelligence inputs about the presence of Singh and other armed cadres in the forest and hilly areas under Tarrem police station limits, security personnel launched an operation, Bijapur Superintendent of Police Jitendra Kumar Yadav said. Personnel belonging to District Reserve Guard (DRG)

and CRPF’s elite CoBRA (Commando Battalion for Resolute Action) commandos were involved in the operation, he said. “The exchange of fire took place between security forces and the Maoists at around 7.30 am. After the gunfight stopped, the body of Udham Singh was recovered. An AK-47 rifle, two magazines with 28 rounds, cordex wire, a wireless set, a mobile phone, pouch, backpack, tiffin bag and other Maoist items were seized from the encounter site,” the SP said. A native of Kottaguda village in Basaguda police station area of Bijapur district, Singh had joined the Maoist outfit as a party member in 2002-03 and had remained active along the Chhattisgarh-Telangana border. He was associated with the Pamed area committee for

the past three years, the official said. “Nine cases related to Naxalite incidents were registered against him at various police stations of the district. He was allegedly involved in the 2023 attack on a police party in Gundam forest area under Tarrem police station area, the 2024 police-Maoist encounter in Putkel-Chipur-bhatti forest under Basaguda police station area, and the attack on Jidpalli camp in 2024,” the SP informed. As many as 163 Maoists were killed in separate encounters in Bijapur district in 2025, while 11 Maoists have been neutralised so far in 2026, Yadav informed. Bastar Range Inspector General of Police Sundararaj Pattingam said security forces have been working with vigilance, restraint and determination to maintain

peace and public safety in the Bastar region. While strict legal action will continue against those who choose the path of violence, the government remains committed to rehabilitating those willing to return to the mainstream and lead a constructive life under its rehabilitation policy, Sundararaj said. With this action, 23 Maoists have been killed in separate encounters in the state so far this year. On January 3, a total of 14 Maoists were gunned down in two encounters in the Bastar region, which comprises seven districts, including Bijapur. Last year, 285 Maoists were killed in encounters with security forces in Chhattisgarh. The Centre has set a deadline of March 31 this year to eradicate Left-Wing Extremism.

Amit Shah launches ‘Bharat Taxi’, first cooperative-led ride-hailing platform

NEW DELHI: Union Cooperation Minister Amit Shah on Thursday launched ‘Bharat Taxi’, India’s first cooperative-led ride-hailing platform, after a successful two-month pilot operation. The service has been initially launched in Delhi-NCR and Gujarat, and will be expanded across all states and Union Territories within two years. “In three years, Bharat Taxi will be rolled out across the country, from Kashmir to Kanniyakumari and Dwaraka to Kamakhya,” Shah said after launching the platform. He said the profits will be shared with drivers associated with Bharat Taxi. Customers can hail cars, three-wheelers and two-wheelers through the platform. The ride-hailing service



market in the country is currently dominated by a handful of players, like Uber, Ola and Rapido. Registered under the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002, and established on June 6, 2025, Bharat Taxi operates on a zero-commission and surge-

free pricing model with direct profit distribution among drivers. This positions the platform as an indigenous alternative to foreign investment-based ride-hailing platforms. Backed by eight top cooperative organisations, the platform

began pilot operations on December 2 in Delhi-NCR and Gujarat. According to the cooperation ministry, Bharat Taxi has emerged as the world’s first and largest cooperative-based ride-hailing platform, and the world’s largest driver-owned mobility platform. Since its pilot launch, over 3 lakh drivers have joined the platform, more than 1 lakh users have registered, and over 10,000 rides have been completed daily in Delhi-NCR and Gujarat. Around Rs 10 crore has been distributed directly to drivers so far. The platform prioritises social security for drivers — called ‘Sarathis’— through health insurance, accident insurance, retirement savings and a dedicated support system. Support centres operate at seven locations in Delhi.

Firing at Rohit Shetty’s residence: Police make 5th arrest; `accused acting on Lonkar’s instructions’

MUMBAI: Police on Thursday arrested another person in connection with the firing at filmmaker Rohit Shetty’s residence in Mumbai, and claimed that the accused were acting on the instructions of Shubham Lonkar, an absconding member of Lawrence Bishnoi gang. Asaram Fasale, a resident of Pune, is the fifth person arrested by Mumbai Police in the case. A court remanded him in police custody till February 11, and extended the custody of the other four accused till the same date. Fasale is suspected to have provided the weapon used in the crime, officials said. At least five rounds were fired at the first floor of Shetty’s nine-storey build-



ing in Juhu area at 12.45 am on Sunday. One bullet struck the glass of a gym inside the building. The shooter in the case is yet to be arrested. All the accused persons were in contact with Shub-

ham Lonkar, who has been shown as a wanted accused in the case, police said. Lonkar is also wanted in the cases related to the murder of NCP leader Baba Siddique and a firing outside actor Salman Khan’s

Bandra residence. Police produced Fasale before the court along with four others whose initial police remand ended on Thursday. Aditya Gayaki (19), Sidharth Yenpure (20), Samarth Pomaji (18) and Swapnil Sakat (23) were arrested on Sunday. A pistol, three magazines and an air gun were seized from one of the accused. All the accused were acting on Lonkar’s instructions, police told the magistrate’s court, seeking their maximum custody. Advocate Archana Mane, appearing for Swapnil Sakat, said he was accused of being in touch with Lonkar through Signal app, but his custody was not required as the police had

already seized his phone. Advocate Ajinkya Mirdul, who represented Gayaki, Yenpure and Pomaji, contended that they had only sold a motorbike, and had no idea how it was going to be used. Additional chief judicial magistrate V R Patil, after hearing all the submissions, said the offence appeared to be serious in nature. There was a criminal conspiracy and the case diary showed progress in the investigation, the judge said, adding that further probe was needed. Also, as Fasale was arrested only on Thursday, joint interrogation was necessary, the judge said. The court granted police the custody of the accused till February 11.

Al Falah varsity used ‘expired’ accreditation to draw students, chairman in judicial custody: Police

NEW DELHI: The accreditation of Faridabad-based Al Falah University lapsed in 2018 but it continued to invite students by not removing the expired UGC recognition from its official platforms, a police official said on Thursday. The information surfaced during the ongoing probe against the university’s chairman, Jawad Ahmed Siddiqui, who was arrested by the Delhi Police’s Crime Branch on January 27 in connection with the two FIRs registered against him accusing him of fraud and related offences based on a complaint by University Grants Commission (UGC). On January 31, a court sent him to 14 days of judicial custody, they said. The university came un-

der the scanner of security agencies after three doctors associated with the university’s medical institute were named as suspects in the blast near the Red Fort on November 10. The suspects were alleged to be part of a terror module involved in the blast and included Umar Nabi who was allegedly driving the car that exploded near the Red Fort. According to police sources, despite the accreditation period ending in 2018, the university continued to present itself as UGC-recognised on the university’s website and other materials, allegedly to lure admissions. Police said Siddiqui was earlier taken into four-day police custody from January 27 for questioning

regarding accreditation claims and courses offered by the university, including the B Ed and engineering programmes. The action by the Crime Branch followed earlier proceedings by the Enforcement Directorate (ED), which had arrested Siddiqui in November last year in a money laundering case linked to the institution. The ED had earlier told a Delhi court that the university generated alleged proceeds of crime worth Rs 45 crore by dishonestly inducing students to enroll “using false claims”. In January, the agency attached immovable properties worth Rs 139.97 crore linked to the university while filing a chargesheet in the case.

Over 22 lakh public grievances received during 2024-25: Centre in Rajya Sabha

NEW DELHI: Over 22 lakh public grievances were received during 2024-25 through a dedicated CPGRAMS portal, the Rajya Sabha was informed on Thursday. The Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) allows raising of grievances against government departments online. A total of 22,23,186 grievances were registered against central ministries/departments and state/Union territories governments in 2024-25, Minister of State for Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Jitendra Singh, said in a written reply. Of these, 23,02,236 (including the carried forward ones) were disposed of, he said. Out of a total of 23,16,710 grievances registered during 2023-24, 25,28,603 (including the carried forward from the previous year) were disposed of, the minister said. “In the years 2023-24 and 2024-25, average disposal time of public grievances on CPGRAMS was 16 days and 15 days for central ministries/departments and 119 days and 64 days for state/UT governments respectively,” Singh said. All central ministries/departments

and state/territories governments have role-based access to CPGRAMS for processing of public grievances related to their subjects, the minister said. There are 11 indicators which are used to assess grievance redressal performance of central ministries/departments in Grievance Redressal Assessment and Index (GRAI), he said. These include: percentage of grievances resolved within timeline (within 21 days), percentage of appeals redressed, percentage of resolution of grievances under corruption category, average resolution time and percentage of Pendency with Grievance Redressal Officer (GROs) (beyond 21 days) among others. In a separate reply, Singh said that average disposal time of grievances on CPGRAMS was 64 days for state/UT governments during the year 2025. “The government has undertaken a comprehensive set of measures to reduce grievance pendency and improve the efficiency of the grievance redressal process through the implementation of the 10-Step Reforms under CPGRAMS,” the minister said.

18 dead, several others feared trapped after ‘illegal’ coal mine blast in Meghalaya, probe ordered

SHILLONG: At least 18 labourers were killed, and several others feared trapped following an explosion at an “illegal” coal mine in Meghalaya’s East Jaintia Hills district on Thursday, officials said. Rescue teams have been engaged in search operations, Director General of Police I Nongrang said, adding that the incident occurred in the Thangsku area in the morning. Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that an ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh would be provided to the next of kin of each deceased, while the injured would be given Rs 50,000. “Pained by the mishap in East Jaintia Hills, Meghalaya. Condolences to those who lost their loved ones. May the injured recover at the earliest,” the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) quoted Modi as saying in a post on X. Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma expressed grief over the incident and

announced a probe. During rescue operations, a total of 18 bodies were recovered from the site, East Jaintia Hills Superintendent of Police Vikash Kumar said. One person who sustained injuries in the blast was initially taken to Sutnga Primary Health Centre before being referred to a Shillong hospital for better treatment. “The exact number of labourers present inside the mine at the time of the explosion is yet to be ascertained. More people are feared trapped,” the DGP said. The explosion is suspected to have occurred during coal mining activities at the site, which is believed to be an illegal operation. Asked whether the mine was operating illegally, Kumar said, “Yes, it seems like that.” In a statement, the chief minister said, “Profoundly saddened by the tragic coal mine incident in East Jaintia Hills. My deepest sympathies are with the families who have lost their loved ones in this



unfortunate tragedy.” Sangma said that the state government has ordered a comprehensive inquiry into

the incident. “Accountability will be fixed, and those responsible will face strict legal action. There will be no compromise when it comes to the safety of lives. In this moment of sorrow, the state stands in solidarity with all those affected,” he added. The National Green Tribunal (NGT) had imposed a ban on rat-hole coal mining and other unscientific mining practices in Meghalaya in 2014, citing environmental damage and safety risks, while also restricting illegal transportation of coal extracted through such methods. Rat-hole mining involves digging of narrow tunnels, usually 3-4 feet high, for workers to enter and extract coal. The horizontal tunnels are often termed “rat-holes”, as each just about fits one person. The Supreme Court later upheld the ban and allowed mining only under scientific and regulated procedures with environmental safeguards.

Lingayat legislators’ meet not show of strength: Minister MB Patil



Bengaluru: Karnataka Minister MB Patil on Thursday, February 5, said the recent meeting of the Lingayat Congress legislators was not a show of strength, but it was for the welfare of the community. According to him, the Aland MLA BR Patil had mooted the proposal, which Ramdurg

MLA Ashok Pattan endorsed and convened a meeting of the Lingayat legislators a few days ago. MB Patil said there were no discussions on matters that create confusion, such as who should become minister and who should be the chief minister. “A meeting of Lingayat MLAs

from the Congress was held four days ago. It was not a power display. Ashok Patil and BR Patil convened the meeting, and discussions were held only on community welfare,” the Commerce and Industries Minister told reporters here. He said such meetings were routine and held by legislators from various communities. “But projecting our meeting as a Lingayat power show is not correct,” Patil said. “We are the biggest chunk. Our striking rate is the highest,” he pointed out. Highlighting the comLingayat legislators’ meet not show of strength: Minister M B Patil munity’s political contribution, he said, “In 1989, with Lingayat support, the Congress won 178 seats and created history. Our party (Congress) gave ticket to 56 Lingayat leaders in the 2023 Assembly election, out of which 36 had won.” “Seeking adequate representation in the government is not wrong, but we will not take away another community’s share,” he added. Lingayats are a dominant community in Karnataka, largely concentrated in the northern part of the state.

Online trading, credit card frauds cost victims over Rs 25 lac; cases registered in M'luru & Udupi

Mangaluru/Udupi, Feb 5: Two separate cases of online financial fraud, involving online trading and credit card misuse, have been registered at police stations in Mangaluru and Udupi, with victims losing more than Rs 25 lac collectively. In the first case, registered at the Mangaluru North police station, a man has alleged that he was cheated of Rs 23.10 lac on the pretext of earning high profits through online trading. According to police, the complainant came into contact with a person named Mohan Patil on Facebook on December 11, 2025. “On Facebook, he introduced himself as Mohan Patil and claimed that he had 15 years of experience in online trading in the United States and that he had authored a book titled ‘Stock Market Winner’. Based on his advice, I joined a WhatsApp group, where he provided guidance on earning profits through online trading,” the complainant stated in his complaint, police said. As per the accused’s instructions, the complainant transferred money in instalments to different bank accounts between January 12 and January 31, 2026, amounting to



approximately Rs 23.10 lac. The trading app later showed that the balance in the complainant’s account had increased to Rs 47 lac. “When I attempted to withdraw the amount, the account was blocked. I was then told that I had to pay another Rs 18 lac to unblock the account. It was at this point that I realised I had been cheated,” the complainant stated. Based on the complaint, police have registered a case and initiated an investigation. In a separate incident, a case has been registered at the Udupi city police station regarding a Rs 2 lac fraud car-

ried out using a credit card one-time password (OTP). The complainant, Satish (41), a resident of Udupi, had received a credit card on November 10, 2025, but had not used it. On December 20, when he visited the bank, he discovered that Rs 2 lac had already been utilised from his credit card account. Despite not using the card and not generating a PIN, the accused allegedly obtained the credit card OTP through online means without his knowledge and carried out the fraudulent transaction. Police have registered cases in both incidents and are investigating.

Sullia: Case registered over assault, threat and gold jewellery dispute in Sampaje

Sullia, Feb 5: A case has been registered at the Sullia police station following a complaint regarding an alleged assault, threats, and a dispute involving gold jewellery at Sampaje village in Sullia taluk. According to the press release, the incident occurred on February 2, at around 7.30 pm in Sampaje village. Nithyananda Rai (64), a resident of Sampaje village, was on his way to Sullia for work at the time. During this, his grandson Gian Rai insisted on accompanying the complainant. It is alleged that the complainant’s daughter-in-law, Sahitya Rai, forcibly attempted to pull the grandson away. When the complainant held on to the child firmly and attempted to leave, the daughter-in-law allegedly obstructed him, bit his left thumb, and caused injuries by scratching his face and neck with her fingernails. The complainant has further alleged that while taking away 55 pavan of gold jewellery that was given at the time of marriage.

Udupi to install six traffic signals, over 250 CCTV cameras across district

Udupi, Feb 5: Following the successful implementation of traffic signal systems at Kalsanka and Manipal Syndicate Circle, the Udupi police department has decided to expand the traffic management project to other parts of Udupi city and the district. As part of the initiative, work will shortly begin at the Balayipade and Ambagilu junctions, with four more junctions to be taken up in the next phase. Earlier, during 2020-21, there was a proposal to install traffic signals at 12 locations within the Udupi city limits. However, considering the city’s narrow roads and the potential for traffic congestion, the plan was initially restricted to only two junctions. With positive results now evident, the department has decided to proceed with expanding the project. In the first phase, traffic signal lights have already been installed at the Balayipade and Ambagilu junctions, though the installation of a few remaining poles is still pending. At Balayipade, the police department has directed the Highways Department to complete road



crossing line markings to ensure smooth traffic movement. The police department has also written to the Udupi City Municipal Council seeking the removal of old, large-sized traffic signal poles installed earlier. Under the new plan, traffic signals will be installed at six major junctions: Balayipade Junction, Ambagilu Junction, Padubidri Junction, Brahmavar Akashavani Junction, Kota Murkai Junction, and Sangam in Kundapura. Speaking to Daijiworld, Udupi Superintendent of Police Hariram Shankar said, “At present, the traffic signal system along with the free-left arrangement at Kalsanka has been successfully completed

and inaugurated by MLA Yashpal Suvarna. Traffic signals have also been installed at the Syndicate Circle in Manipal, where only minor finishing works are pending.” He further stated, “Balayipade and Ambagilu junctions are very important points, as vehicles enter and exit the city through national highways at these locations. Due to heavy traffic movement, several road accidents have occurred here in the past. Keeping public safety in mind, traffic signal installation work has been taken up, and nearly 60 per cent of the work has already been completed. Within the next two to three weeks, both these junctions will be fully operational with traffic signals. All these

works are being carried out through the Udupi City Municipal Council.” On CCTV surveillance across the district, SP Hariram Shankar said that “funds received from the central government, state government, Udupi Chambers of Commerce and Entrepreneurs, along with municipal funds, are being utilised. We are identifying key locations and will be installing around 250 to 300 CCTV cameras covering important junctions, crowded areas, and tourist places. Tenders have already been called, and as per the given timeline, Udupi district will be fully covered under CCTV surveillance within the next three to four months.” He added, “The live camera visuals will be displayed directly at the Superintendent of Police office. Old traffic signal poles will be reused for installing cameras to avoid wastage. As per tender conditions, the cameras are expected to function for four to five years, with annual maintenance, and immediate repair work will be carried out in case of any technical issues.”

KSRTC withdraws toll fee charged to passengers on Mangaluru-Kasargod route

Mangaluru, Feb 5: The Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) has withdrawn the toll fee that was being charged to passengers travelling in its buses on the Mangaluru-Kasargod route along National Highway 66, following issues related to the Kumble Arikkady toll plaza. The decision comes in the wake of the Central government withdrawing, on February 4, its order to deduct toll charges via FASTag from vehicles passing through Arikkady on the national highway. Subsequently, KSRTC has stopped collecting the addi-



tional toll amount along with the ticket fare from passengers. It may be recalled that toll charges were being deducted through FASTag from vehicles passing through Arikkady from January 13 this year. With the withdrawal of the toll fee, bus fares will now be charged as earlier. KSRTC Mangaluru division senior divisional controller has stated in a press release.

MB Patil welcomes move on Bengaluru-Pune high-speed rail corridor

Bengaluru: Infrastructure Development Minister M.B. Patil on Thursday welcomed the initiative taken by Union Ministers Prahlad Joshi and H.D. Kumaraswamy to pursue the proposal for a high-speed rail corridor connecting Bengaluru and Pune. Speaking to the media, Patil said he had highlighted the need for a high-speed rail link connecting Bengaluru, Pune and Mumbai immediately after the presentation of the Union Budget. He thanked the Union

Ministers for taking up the issue with Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw and stressed that the initiative should move beyond discussions and be taken to its logical conclusion. The Minister said an efficient and world-class connectivity system between Bengaluru, the country’s technology capital, and Mumbai, the financial capital, was essential. He noted that such a corridor would significantly benefit regions of central and north Karnataka, as well as western Maharashtra,

Opposition exposes corruption of Siddaramaiah government during Assembly session: Ashok

The zero-achievement government's job is to mislead; That's why they are scapegoating the Center, says in outrage

Bengaluru: R. Ashok, the Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Assembly, said that they have been successful in unmasking the corruption of the Congress government led by Siddaramaiah during the session. From the day it came to power, the government has been entangled in a web of scams. The corruption and looting worth more than six thousand crores in the Excise Department is a new addition to the list of scandals, he alleged in a press statement released on Thursday.



Mahatma Gandhi’s vision. But since their looting opportunities are lost and they have to pay 40 percent share, they are making baseless allegations in distress, he accused. In the last two and a half years, scams are the only achievements of this government. That’s why they are picking fights with the Governor, conspiring to mislead the people of the state under the pretext of presenting resolutions against the Center. However, without giving any opportunity to such plots, the BJP’s struggle inside the House has been successful in convincing the people of the real facts, he said.

EXCISE SCAM TO PEOPLE’S COURT

The scam worth more than six thousand crores in the Excise Department has been exposed thread by thread in the session. We demanded the resignation of Minister Thimmapur and an inquiry by a sitting judge. But since everyone from the High Command to the CM has joined in the looting, the entire Cabinet stood in support of the tainted minister. This has never happened before in the history of the state. It is clear that the looted money is being used for elections in neighboring states, he said.

Minister Thimmapur had said he would resign if even one piece of evidence is provided for the allegation. Not one, not two, more than five pieces of evidence were given. Serious evidence was provided to convince, such as three audio conversations involving senior officials in bribe acceptance, two Lokayukta complaints, one complaint given to the Governor, and a voluntary statement by a person named Ningappa who was caught by the Lokayukta. But this insensitive government did not budge to anything, he mocked.

The fight started in the session will not stop. Discussions have already been held for statewide protests on behalf of the party. Ultimately, the scam will be taken to the ‘people’s court.’ Thoughts are also on conducting a legal battle. There are indications of getting some more key evidence related to the scam. With those, the colors of this government will be exposed before the public, he warned.

UNPARLIAMENTARY BEHAVIOR

When our party MLAs were protesting, Congress MLA Shivalingegowda behaved in an unparliamentary manner. We condemned it in the House itself. The Speaker, who should have conducted the proceedings properly, performed duties in favor of the Congress party. When Shivalingegowda was making personal allegations, he was smiling and sitting. This is not just a matter of great disappointment, but we are dissatisfied that it has tar-

nished the dignity of that chair. Resistance was expressed about it inside the House, he said. Overall, in

CHANGE OF NAME

I HAVE CHANGED MY NAME FROM

SANTHANA SINHA TO

SANTHANA KUMARI

AS PER DOCUMENTS.

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE is hereby given that the Certificates for 240 Equity Shares of Face Value of Rs.10/- each bearing Equity Share Certificates Nos 336375, 336376 & 904343 and Distinctive Nos. 39618964-39619013, 39619014 -39619023 & 934044465-934044644 under the Folio No R0001296 of ABN INDIA LTD, standing in the name of Late Rati Mahiar Dubash, Late Mahiar Danjishaw Dubash, and Late Amavaz Bomil Ayrton, have been lost or mislaid and the undersigned have applied to the Company to issue duplicate Certificates for the said shares. Any person who has any claim in respect of the said shares should write to our Registrar, KFin Technologies Limited, Selenium Tower B, Plot 31-32, Gachibowli, Financial District, Hyderabad-500032 within one month from this date else the company will proceed to issue duplicate Certificates.

Place: Bangalore Name of Claimant: BOMI SORABJI AYRTON

Date: 06.02.2026

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE is hereby given that the Certificates for 240 Equity Shares of Face Value of Rs.2/- each bearing Equity Share certificates Nos. 158760 and Distinctive Nos. 42360205-42360444 under the folio No AP50158760 of HITACHI ENERGY INDIA LTD, standing in the name of Late Rati Mahiar Dubash, Late Mahiar Danjishaw Dubash, and Late Amavaz Bomil Ayrton, have been lost or mislaid and the undersigned have applied to the Company to issue duplicate Certificates for the said shares. Any person who has any claim in respect of the said shares should write to our Registrar, KFin Technologies Limited, Selenium Tower B, Plot 31-32, Gachibowli, Financial District, Hyderabad-500032 within one month from this date else the company will proceed to issue duplicate Certificates.

Place: Bangalore Name of Claimant: BOMI SORABJI AYRTON

Date: 06.02.2026

MB Patil welcomes push for Bengaluru-Pune high-speed rail

Bengaluru: Soon after the Union Budget was presented, I had highlighted the need for a high-speed rail corridor connecting Bengaluru, Pune and Mumbai. I thank Union Ministers Prahlad Joshi and H.D. Kumaraswamy for taking up the issue with Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw. There is no politics involved in this. The initiative should not remain limited to discussions alone, but must be taken to its logical conclusion, said Infrastructure Development Minister M.B. Patil on Thursday. Replying to questions from media persons, he said there must be an efficient and world-class connectivity system between Bengaluru, the country’s technology capital, and Mumbai, the financial capital. Such a project would bring significant benefits to parts of central and north Karnataka, as well as western Maharashtra, he added. The Union Budget has announced seven high-speed rail corridors, including Bengaluru-Hyderabad and Bengaluru-Chennai. While this is welcome, these two



corridors will not bring substantial benefits to the State. If a Bengaluru-Pune-Mumbai corridor is implemented, it would benefit regions such as Tumakuru, Davanagere, Hubballi, Belagavi, Sangli and Kolhapur, paving the way for economic and industrial growth. I had stated this on the day of the Budget itself. Now, the fact that both Union Ministers are working in this direction is a welcome development, he said. It is encouraging that Kumaraswamy and Joshi have paid attention to this issue. We should not politicise such matters. Letters have already been written to

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw and V. Somanna regarding this project, he said. Meeting of Lingayat MLAs Responding to another question, Patil said the meeting of Lingayat MLAs belonging to the Congress party, held four days ago, was not a show of strength. The meeting was convened by Ashok Patil and B.R. Patil, and discussions were limited to issues concerning the welfare of the community. We hold such meetings from time to time. MLAs

from other communities also meet similarly. However, portraying only our meeting as a display of Lingayat strength is not appropriate, Patil asserted. With the support of the Lingayat community, the Congress won 178 seats in 1989, achieving a historic victory. Even today, the Congress has 34 Lingayat MLAs. In the 2023 Assembly elections, our community voted for the Congress. Therefore, there is nothing wrong in seeking greater representation for MLAs from the community in the government. However, we will not encroach upon the share of any other community, he clarified. MGNREGA The MGNREGA scheme, introduced by the earlier UPA government, was praised even by BJP leaders such as L.K. Advani, Nitin Gadkari and Nirmala Sitharaman. However, the Modi government has weakened the scheme and renamed it as V.B.-G RamG. BJP MPs themselves should raise their voice on this issue and safeguard their credibility, the Minister urged.

EDITORIAL

Why Foreign Investors Are Growing Worried About Their 'Minerals' Bets In Pakistan

Pakistan's geoeconomic ambitions find themselves in an anticipated predicament amid the resurgence of violence in the restive province of Balochistan. The Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) on January 31 launched the second phase of its 'Operation Herof', targeting over ten districts across the province. While conflicting casualty reports have emerged, local reports state the involvement of suicide bombers, including female fighters in the operation. In retaliation, the Pakistani security forces launched a counter-militancy operation and reported the killing of over 150 BLA-linked militants in the aftermath of the violence. During the operation, the authorities reportedly suspended mobile services in several districts, including the provincial capital of Quetta, and Mastung, Kalat, Khuzdar, Nushki, Dalbandin, and Kharan. Military measures have often accompanied communication blackouts as part of the state's response to security challenges in Balochistan. However, the Pakistani state framed the insurgency as externally driven, designating BLA militants as 'Fitna-al-Hindustan' to allege Indian involvement. Within hours of the incident, Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi in a statement said, "These were not normal terrorists. India is behind these attacks. I can tell you for sure that India planned these attacks along with these terrorists." The Pakistani authorities have previously also accused Afghanistan and Iran's role in the Baloch militancy theater. While Baloch militants are known to operate out of southern Afghanistan and southeastern Iran, Pakistan's accusations of state involvement continue to lack credibility or independently verifiable evidence.

The Nushki Gateway
During the operation, the BLA held control over Nushki, therefore highlighting the district as a critical flashpoint between the militants and Pakistani security forces. Strategic control over the territory of Nushki enables militants to sever the land link between the provincial capital, Quetta, and the western part of the province. More significantly, Nushki serves as the entry point to Chagai district, known to be the heart of Pakistan's mineral capital. Home to the Reko Diq gold and copper mines as well as the Saindak copper-gold project, Nushki holds considerable significance for Pakistan's currently expanding geoeconomic calculus. By maintaining a presence in the region, BLA has gestured with intention and capacity to disrupt the logistics of upcoming mining projects, which they have historically portrayed as 'colonial extraction' by the federal government. The focus on Nushki reflects the insurgents' strategy to exploit geographic bottlenecks and paralyse state-led economic corridors and extractive projects. Foreign investors must be closely monitoring the existing security faultlines in Pakistan's restive provinces. Weeks after Pakistan's Army Chief, Field Marshal Asim Munir, showcased a briefcase of mineral samples in the presence of Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif at the White House in September 2025, Washington signalled interest in Pakistan's purportedly untapped mineral resources. Billions Invested In December 2025, the US Export-Import Bank approved USD 1.25 billion in financing for the Reko Diq copper-gold mining project, with US President Donald Trump publicly expressing business interest in Pakistan. In the following days, the 7th China-Pakistan foreign ministers' Strategic Dialogue's joint statement announced the prioritisation of the mining sector on January 4. Meanwhile, Pakistan's Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik held a meeting on January 28 with the Australian High Commissioner to discuss bilateral cooperation in the mining and rare earth sectors. While analysts have been tempted to frame the narrative around Pakistan's mineral wealth as a US-China competition, the domestic security challenges warrant foremost attention. For foreign investors, it is expected to remain an irritant, also considering that Pakistan's internal security resources already remain stretched thin. Alongside separatist violence in Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa remains a conflict zone with the continued operations of Islamist factions, most prominently the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). In the Balochistan insurgency, the reported involvement of female fighters in active combat operations underscores the current character of the insurgency.

Caste, Justice, and Democracy: An Uncomfortable Truth



India's democracy is not merely a system of governance, but a moral commitment—one of equality, justice, and fraternity. The Preamble of the Constitution proclaims this commitment. But as we look around us today, the uncomfortable question arises: are we doing justice to that commitment? Or is this very structure of democracy itself cracked from within, with law, order, and power all under the grip of caste, class, and identity? Today, laws are enacted, amended, and new provisions are added, but it's natural to question the intent behind them. Are these laws for the citizen, or for a particular group, class, or vote bank? When social identity begins to replace logic and justice as the basis of legislation, the balance of democracy is bound to be disrupted. The law's function is to unite society, but if it becomes a means of dividing society into categories, this situation is not only worrying but also dangerous. The role of the judicial system is considered the most sacred in any democracy. The court is the place where the last hope rests. But when the perception begins to develop that a person's caste, status, and political patronage are considered before reaching the threshold of justice, the foundation of trust begins to shake. Justice is not just a decision; it is trust. And when this trust is broken, it affects not just one person but the entire society. Today, the number of pending cases in the courts, the delay in decisions, and the apparent or implicit bias in some cases—all these pose serious questions about the health of democracy. The erosion of truth in the name of democracy is a slow but continuous process. It doesn't happen overnight. First, inconvenient questions are labeled "anti-



national," then criticism is branded a "conspiracy," and finally, those who speak the truth are marginalized. When debates in Parliament become more noise than solutions, when a large part of the media becomes an extension of power, and when social discourse is reduced to the incitement of emotions—then it should be understood that democracy is only formally alive; its soul is in crisis. Talks of harmony are uttered from every platform, but the reality on the ground reveals the opposite. Divisions in society are deepening—in the name of religion, caste, language, and region. Instead of bridging these divides, power often exploits them as a tool. "Divide and rule" is no longer a colonial policy relegated to history books, but has

become an effective strategy in contemporary politics. When the public is entangled within itself, the power to question power weakens. It's ironic that while there's talk of eradicating casteism, every political calculus is based on caste-based equations. From election tickets to policy decisions, caste remains a crucial factor. In such a context, the preaching of "rising above caste" seems hollow. If caste were truly irrelevant, why would it be so prominently mentioned in every policy, every debate, and every election? The growing despair in this country of hope isn't solely due to economic factors. Unemployment, inflation, and resource inequality are factors, but an even greater cause is a breakdown in trust. The people entrusted

power to those in whose hands they expected to work for the benefit of all. But when that very power, in order to preserve its own existence, begins to divide society, fear criticism, and suppress dissent, the moral foundation of democracy weakens. The government's turning away from the truth is not a good sign for any society. When the government becomes preoccupied with cultivating its own image and ignores real problems, lies create a parallel reality. In this reality, statistics are dazzling, speeches are lofty, but the lives of ordinary people become increasingly difficult. Propaganda is used to conceal the truth, and gradually the public is taught that asking questions is uncivilized. Talk of social justice is often heard in legislative assemblies and Parliament, but on the ground, the same injustice manifests itself in new forms. In the name of policy reform, provisions are introduced that are either incomplete or give rise to new controversies. This situation is further exacerbated when affected groups lack genuine participation in policymaking, and decisions are imposed from above. The true test of democracy comes in times of crisis. Does it stand with the weakest citizen, or with the most powerful? Today, this question is more relevant than ever. When injustice is committed against the "other," a large segment of society remains silent. But this very silence leads to the erosion of our own rights tomorrow. Selective morality—where we only see injustice in our own interests—erodes democracy from within. This editorial is not an indictment against any one government, party, or leader. It is a call for collective introspection. Democracy is not just the responsibility of rulers; it is equally the responsibility of citizens. Asking questions, expressing dissent, and standing up for the truth—this is the true power of democracy. If we choose to remain silent for the sake of convenience, then we cannot escape responsibility for the collapse of the system. Today, justice needs to be restored to its original meaning—impartial, fearless, and equal. The purpose of law should not be to secure power, but to protect the rights of citizens. The religion of politics should be reconciliation, not polarization.

Easy tips to get glowing skin on Valentine's Day: Shahnaz Husain

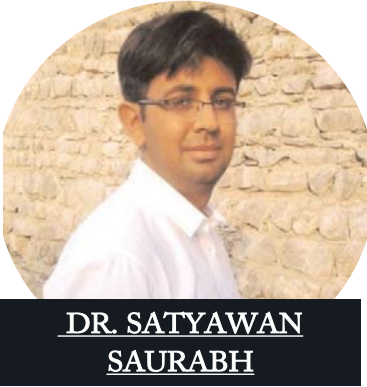


Looking to go glam on Feb. 14? For couples in love and hopeful singles, February is the Paris of all months. Valentine's day is the most awaited time of the year , whether you've been together three months or three decades. Valentine day is the perfect opportunity for you to bond and reconnect with your partner, girlfriend, boyfriend, husband, or wife. It doesn't matter if you are going on a special date for a romantic night out, looking for one or just a walk with friends and family , It brings the biggest date night of the year and the restlessness that comes along to look one's best on the special day. If you can't be with your sweetie in person this year, then you might as well send them something sweet through online store/e-commerce websites. There are a lot of valentine gift packs in the market containing chocolate truffle flavours: milk chocolate, milk chocolate caramel, and dark chocolate strawberry. You may choose desi Ladoo /mithai depending on the taste of your sweetie. Especially impressive if you live apart, a surprise gift might be the perfect way to share the love this year. Not sure what to buy? Keep it classic – paintings, art objects and flowers like roses will always be well-received and create a sense of occasion. Twinned with a scented candle, Valentine's Day will be truly wrapped up. Take advantage of sweater weather

and escape into the wilderness, where you can relax by the fire and enjoy some hot chocolate. Take a scenic hike together and enjoy all the beautiful sights and the fresh air — it's a great way to bond while getting some much-needed time to unplug, too. If you've got a new boyfriend, a hot date, or a tried-and-true love, Valentine day gives you the perfect excuse to pamper yourself to look romantic,sweet presentable, attractive with flawless looking radiant skin with youthful glow . Water based moisture is key for glowing skin. Moisturizers provide a good base before applying any makeup. Moisturizers which are formulated with shea butter , dime-thicone, ceramides,hyaluronic acid and aloe vera water help provide long-lasting hydration. Hydrate and nourish your skin every night before sleeping. If your skin is clear, leave out foundation during the day. Use baby powder, or compact power. Pay more attention to the oily areas of the face, like nose, forehead and chin. Press the powder all over the face and neck, with a slightly damp sponge. This helps it to set and last longer. If you want to use foundation at night, choose a water-based one. Add a drop of water for a lighter coverage. Before applying foundation, apply astringent lotion if your skin is oily, or moisturizing lotion for dry skin. Wait for a few minutes to allow the skin to absorb it. Next, use concealer to cover up pimples and scars, if any. Or, use two shades of foundation. One shade should be as close to your skin colour as possible. The other should be a shade lighter if the blemishes are dark. Take a little light coloured foundation and apply it directly on the pimple or pimple scar. Avoid rubbing or smearing. Pat it into the skin. Then apply your normal foundation on the face and using a moist sponge, spread it evenly, going outwards. Remember the neck too. Blending is important to achieve a smooth finish then apply tinted loose powder on top to “set” the foundation. Or, use compact powder. Blusher comes next, or you can apply it at the end. Use powder blusher. Pink or peach blusher

would suit most skin tones. Apply on the cheekbones and slightly below it. Use your finger tips to dot the area with blusher. Then, blend with the brush, outwards and slightly upwards. Apply highlighter on the cheekbones. Highlighters should not be white. Choose from ivory or pale pink. Blend well. For the eyes, use a brown eye shadow on the eyelids. Use the same brown shadow under the lower lashes, instead of eyeliner or kaajal. Take a darker brown eye shadow and apply it on the upper lid, close to the upper lashes. The entire effect will be natural. If you want to line the eyes, use an eye pencil. Give your eyes a light touch of mascara. Make sure the lashes do not stick together. Brush them with an eyelash comb. Wear a sun block for outdoor events during the day, this acts as a shield and also works as a good under base for your foundation accelerating its performance. Take proper sleep for at least eight hours during night . Lack of sleep will show on your face no matter how well you fashion your appearance. . Put a drop or two of lavender oil on your pillowcase and try to relax. Sandalwood and Clary Sage are other good options. For the night and for a more dramatic effect, use a dark brown, or dark grey eye shadow on the eyelids close to the lashes and stroke it upwards and outwards. For the smoky eyed look, line the eyes with eyeliner close to the lashes and then smudge the eyeliner slightly with a sponge tipped applicator. It should not be a harsh line. Who ever heard of a Valentine's Day date ending without a goodnight kiss? Go with a soft pink or berry hue that are no more than two shades darker than your natural lip color is a good way to keep your lips colored without going overboard. Exfoliate your lips the night before date night with a gentle lip scrub to remove dead skin cells to soften your pucker and improve the look and application of your date night lipstick. For the buttery soft and smooth lips, plain gloss can be enough for the day, or add a touch of gloss over light pink or mauve lipstick. Coloured gloss is also available.

From a limited world to a limitless imagination: The crisis of children's reading culture



There was a time when I had no idea children's magazines existed. Forget about it, I didn't even realize that anything was written and read specifically for children beyond the school curriculum. For us, reading was merely a school-related obligation—limited to homework, exams, and grades. A major reason for this was that neither newspapers nor magazines arrived regularly at our home. Reading was not a part of our culture, but a compulsion. Yet, if a love of reading was born deep within me, it's not textbooks that I owe it to, but comics. As a child, I voraciously read comics. Their colorful illustrations, short dialogues, and fast-paced events transported me to a world where imagination knew no bounds. While curriculum stories and poems often cluttered with moralizing, comics offered effortless joy. They taught me that reading could be a celebration, not a burden. Comics sowed the first seeds of reading within me. At the time, I didn't understand this as a literary journey, but looking back now, it's clear that they were the first doors to a reading habit. This experience isn't unique. For countless children, comics, puzzles, and picture stories have been their first entry into the world of reading. I still vividly remember that incident at Hisar railway station. My eyes were drawn to a large book stall on the platform. The beautiful, bright, and attractive books displayed there—especially for children—were a gateway to an unknown world for me. It was the first



time I had seen books with such variety and grandeur. At that time, I could only look at them, not buy them, but the scene was permanently imprinted on my mind. That moment marked a silent turning point in my life. My hands were empty that day, but a question had already arisen in my mind—are books limited to school? Can't the world of reading be much broader than that? Perhaps that day, a reader was born within me, one who had yet to find her own language, her own direction, and her own platform. This is where the journey from "a limited world to an unlimited imagination" begins. As children, our world is often limited to the stories and poems found in textbooks. These lessons are necessary, but not sufficient. They impart knowledge but do little to inspire imagination. Children's magazines, children's literature, and creative reading fill this gap. They guide children toward becoming not just good students but also sensitive human beings. Unfortunately, today, children's reading culture is steadily being marginalized. Children's magazines, which once

imparted language, empathy, and social consciousness to generations, have either closed or become limited in scope. A major reason for this is changing lifestyles and the increasing dominance of digital media. Mobile phones, tablets, and social media have snatched books from children's hands. It's easy to say that technology has destroyed the habit of reading, but the truth is that we ourselves have gradually removed books from children's lives. Parents today find it easy to give their children mobile phones, but getting them books is extra effort. In the rush to complete the school curriculum, creative reading has been deemed unnecessary. As a result, children's imaginations are either confined within the confines of the curriculum or lost in the digital noise. A children's reading culture is the intellectual and moral foundation of any society. Children's magazines don't just entertain; they shape language, foster the habit of questioning, and introduce children to social reality. A good children's story can teach a child how to view the world, understand the suffering of others, and express their own opinions.

Škoda Kylaq marks one year landmark by celebrating 50,000 sales milestone

Mumbai, February 05, 2026: Škoda Auto India, after registering its most successful year of sales in 2025 and introducing the new Kushaq, continues to keep its foot on the pedal with its growing product portfolio. The brand has furthered its strategy to democratise European technology on Indian roads by expanding the variant mix of its best-selling car, the Kylaq, and offering customers more variants, more choice and more value.

The Kylaq has emerged as a strong pillar of Škoda Auto's growth story in India. With over 50,000 units sold since its launch, the Kylaq has been a major contributor to Škoda Auto India's best-ever sales performance, in the brand's 25th year in the country. The Kylaq's combination of safety, driving dynamics, technology, and value has resonated strongly with customers, establishing it as a key contender in the sub-4m SUV segment.

Commenting on the Kylaq's first anniversary, Ashish Gupta, Brand Director, Škoda Auto India, said, "The Kylaq is a strong testament to our long-term commitment to India and saw us enter the market's most competitive segment. Crossing the 50,000 sales milestone is



truly humbling and reflects the growing trust in the Škoda brand. To build on this momentum, we are expanding the Kylaq line-up with customer-led enhancements, while also making the Kylaq the most accessible vehicle with a real automatic transmission in its segment. These upgrades also democratise features that matter most to today's customers, across variants. With a wider and more structured range, and more exciting additions planned later this year, the Kylaq continues to reflect our commitment to offering European technology, strong value and great driving cars for Indian roads."

The variant variety

The Kylaq, from a lineup of four variants and seven price points, expands to six variants and 11 price points in 2026. The brand has introduced the Classic+, positioned between the entry-level Classic and the Signature trims. The Kylaq also gets a Prestige+ variant that now occupies the absolute top in the Kylaq lineup. With this expansion and additions, Škoda Auto India has ensured a heightened choice at varied price points for customers.

Democratising from the start

With this update, the Kylaq furthers Škoda Auto India's strategy of enhanced accessi-

bility to European technology for customers. Positioned above the base Classic variant is now the Kylaq Classic+. This variant offers features like an electric sunroof, Auto IRVM, cruise control, rain-sensing wipers, LED headlights and tail-lights, LED daytime running lights, and a multi-function steering wheel. Above all, the Kylaq Classic+ raises the bar with automatic transmissions by being the most accessible car in its segment with a full-fledged automatic torque converter.

Democratisation of the line-up

Popular demand also sees trims like the Signature and Signature+ get additions like

an electric sunroof, paddle-shifters for the automatic, rain-sensing wipers, rear wiper and washer and LED Reading Lamps, among others. In addition, Škoda Auto India has also bifurcated the top-of-the-line Prestige line with the Prestige and Prestige+. This allows buyers more choice and value when it comes to making a choice among the fully-equipped variants.

Maximum safety. Maximum peace of mind

The Škoda Kylaq continues to be the safest ICE car in its segment with the highest safety ratings in the Bharat NCAP crash tests. Besides, every variant comes standard with six airbags and over 25 safety features as standard. The higher variants get over 40 standard safety features. The Kylaq also offers a best-in-segment 4 years of standard warranty. Also, standard is 4 years of roadside assistance and 4 labour-free services. This includes Periodic Maintenance Services at 15,000 km and 30,000 km, along with the newly introduced Škoda Check-in services at 1,000 km and 7,500 km. These facilities and packages focus on increasing transparency and enhancing the ownership experience.

UBER APPOINTS BALAJI KRISHNAMURTHY AS ITS CFO



New Delhi: Ride-hailing platform Uber on Wednesday said it has appointed Indian-origin Balaji Krishnamurthy as its chief financial officer. Krishnamurthy has been with Uber for more than six years and will assume his new role from February 16, following the resignation of the present chief financial officer Prashanth Mahendra-Rajah.

"Prashanth Mahendra-Rajah, Chief Financial Officer, will step down from his role on February 16, 2026. Balaji Krishnamurthy, currently Vice President, Strategic Finance, will assume the role of Chief Financial Officer on that date," the company said in a regulatory filing. Mahendra-Rajah will serve the company as a senior finance advisor reporting to

CEO Dara Khosrowshahi through July 1, 2026. "For those who don't know Balaji, he is trusted by investors, knows Uber's business inside and out, and is a brilliant, decisive strategist. He has worked closely with me and our management team for years, and I am thrilled for him to step up as CFO as we kick off another big year for Uber," Khosrowshahi said. Krishnamurthy, age 41, joined Uber in 2019 and has served in a range of leadership roles at the company, including as vice president for strategic finance since 2023. He was head of investor relations from 2020 to 2023. "It is an honour to step into this important role at such an important time for Uber. As the undisputed global mobility and delivery leader, and

with significant cash flows, we have the opportunity to further solidify our place as a generational technology company," Krishnamurthy said. He will be entitled to an annual base salary of USD 600 thousand, or about Rs 5.42 crore. He will be eligible to participate in the company's executive bonus plan. Besides, Krishnamurthy will receive restricted stock unit awards of USD 9.37 million (about Rs 85 crore), subject to time-based and performance-based vesting conditions, an option to purchase USD 3.12 million (about Rs 28.21 crore) of the Uber's common stock, subject to a time-based vesting condition and an additional one-time restricted stock unit award of USD 5 million or about Rs 45 crore, according to the filing.

50 YEARS. ONE NATION. COUNTLESS MAGGI 'MOMENTS OF TOGETHERNESS' – NOW OFFICIALLY STAMPED

Hyderabad, February 05 2026: Nestlé India is thrilled to mark a special milestone with the launch of a commemorative postal stamp celebrating 50 years of MAGGI in India. The stamp was unveiled by Mr. Manish Tiwary, Chairman and Managing Director, Nestlé India, alongside Mr. Chirag Paswan, Minister of Food Processing Industries, Government of India. The stamp is a tribute to MAGGI's evolution, staying ahead of the curve and becoming synonymous to a much-loved category – all while continuing to bring people together, one shared moment at a time, across generations. Over the past five decades, MAGGI has found its way into Indian homes in many delicious forms – from noodles and masalas to sauces, soups and ready-to-cook favourites. From quick solo fixes to meals that bring the family together, and from hostel kitchens to big get-togethers, MAGGI has been part of countless food moments



across the country. The "50 Years of Togetherness" stamp is a tribute to these shared experiences, capturing the warmth, comfort and connections that MAGGI continues to bring to tables across India. Mr. Chirag Paswan, Minister of Food Processing Industries, Government of India said, "India's processed food sector has come a long way in

earning the trust of households over decades. Pioneering brands have shaped new categories and strengthened our food ecosystem. I congratulate MAGGI on completing 50 years as part of this remarkable journey." Announcing the launch of the stamp, Mr. Manish Tiwary, Chairman and Managing Director, Nestlé India said, "It is a

truly special milestone for MAGGI in India. Completing five decades in a country as vibrant and diverse as ours reflects the trust, affection and everyday love that millions have showered on the brand. It celebrates a journey shaped by shared moments, evolving tastes and a bond that has grown stronger – year after year, generation after generation."

NMDC POWERS VIKSIT BHARAT THROUGH SKILL DEVELOPMENT, CELEBRATES 100% PLACEMENT FOR BASTAR YOUTH

Hyderabad, 5th February 2026: India's largest iron ore producer, NMDC Limited, hosted the first batch of 80 youth from the Bastar division, who have successfully completed job-oriented skill training and secured 100% placement, marking a significant milestone in making the youth of Chhattisgarh Atmanirbhar and reinforcing NMDC's commitment to skill development, inclusive growth, and nation building. The programme was conducted under NMDC's Skill Development initiative, implemented as part of its CSR efforts, in association with the Central Institute of Petrochemicals Engineering Technology (CIPET). The initiative aims to empower unemployed and less privileged tribal youth of Bastar by equipping them with industry-relevant skills and enabling sustainable livelihoods. The felicitation and interaction session was held in the presence of NMDC's senior leadership, including Shri Amitava Mukherjee, Chairman Managing Director, Shri Vinay Kumar,



Director (Technical) and Director (Commercial, Additional Charge), Shri Joydeep Dasgupta, Director (Production) and Director (Personnel, Additional Charge), Shri P Shyam, GM (CSR) and Shri B. Ravi, Principal Director, CIPET, along with senior officials and employees of NMDC and CIPET Coming from different districts and modest families across Chhattisgarh (includ-

ing Dantewada, Bastar, Sukma, Narayanpur, Kondagaon, and Bijapur) the students spoke of lives where opportunities were limited and choices few. The skill training programme, they said, offered not just employment, but the confidence to leave their hometowns and begin earning on their own terms. Sukham, a Class 12 pass youth from Bastar, spoke of a childhood shaped by early

loss and limited means. Securing a job, he said, will change the course of his family's life. "I never knew how I would leave my hometown. Today, I am going to work and earn," he said. Speaking on the occasion, Shri Amitava Mukherjee, Chairman, NMDC, said that watching young people from Bastar step into formal employment was a reminder of what opportunity can do.

Dezerv: Southern states are expected to average GDP growth of 6.8% per year between 2026-30

February 2026: Southern states are expected to average GDP growth of 6.8% per year between 2026-30, with Karnataka and Telangana at the very top achieving 7.4% and 7.2% respectively. This outpaces the national forecast, as Oxford Economics projects India's real GDP to grow on average by 6.3% per year between 2026 and 2030, with total GDP reaching ?268 trillion in real terms just over \$5 trillion by 2030. According to Dezerv's latest Create Wealth newsletter, something profound is happening across India's southern states, a structural shift that will reshape wealth creation for the next decade. The economic centre of gravity is moving, and the implications for investors are significant. India's professional and technological service sectors, particularly IT, will drive strong economic growth, with real gross value added (GVA) in

Highlights

■ Southern states are expected to average GDP growth of 6.8% per year between 2026-30, with Karnataka and Telangana at the very top achieving 7.4% and 7.2% respectively.

these sectors expected to expand by nearly 9.5% per year. In Telangana, the IT sector accounts for nearly 13% of the state's economy, compared to just over 8% nationally, and is expected to grow by almost 12% on average between 2026-30. In Karnataka, information & communications makes up almost 22% of the economy, the highest among all Indian states and is forecast to grow at almost 11% per year. Global investment flows further underline this shift. Microsoft is building AI/cloud hyperscale data centres in Hyderabad, a

\$17.5 billion commitment (?1.46 lakh crore) spanning 2025-2029. Google is investing ?51,000 crore (~\$6 billion) in Asia's largest data centre in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. Tamil Nadu increased its GSDP from ?26.88 lakh crore in 2023-24 to ?31.19 lakh crore in 2024-25, recording 16% growth – the fastest among major states. The newsletter concludes that India's economic story is no longer monolithic. Karnataka, Telangana and Tamil Nadu are emerging as the core engines of the country's next phase of growth.

ABD Maestro makes an exceptional Luxury debut with 'The Collective' Limited Edition 34-Year-Old Single Malt

Mumbai, 05th February 2026: Superstar Ranveer Singh, co-founder of ABD Maestro, is thrilled as the company debuts a rare and exclusive release of 60 hand-crafted, individually numbered bottles priced at 11 Lakhs each ABD Maestro Pvt. Ltd., the super-premium and luxury spirits brand company and a subsidiary of Allied Blenders & Distillers (ABD), has announced the landmark debut of its ultra-grand 'The Collective' Limited Editions in India. The first expression launched is the very rare 34-year-old Speyside Single Malt, Distilled at Macallan Distillery in 1991. 'The Collective' promises to present the world's most extraordinary spirits to the knowledgeable and discerning, starting with India. A 34-Year Single Malt Legacy, Distilled at Macallan Distillery in 1991. The Collective's Speyside Single Malt Scotch Whisky, matured for well over three decades, balances delicate florals, soft citrus, and malty notes with added depth and



sherry-led richness. A total of 60 hand-filled decanters only – each individually numbered, engraved and manually gold-lettered in Scotland, honours the spirit that it holds. Each wooden outer box is handmade with evidence of touch and individuality. With access strictly limited, this release offers a rare

opportunity to own one of the finest independently bottled Distilled at Macallan Distillery, expressions of the modern era with a personally signed letter from Ranveer Singh. Crafted to appeal to seasoned collectors and enthusiasts, sitting at the cusp of great taste, heritage, vision, and modern luxury.



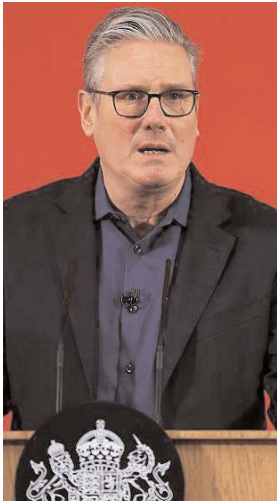
At a MRP of 11 Lakhs for 700ML in Maharashtra, the expression has been custom-made for ABD Maestro in collaboration with Speyside Capital, Glasgow, Scotland as brand and project partner. It will be available in Travel Retail and a few major cities in India. The Collective Limited Edition is available

for pre-orders now. Commenting on the launch, Bikram Basu, Managing Director, ABD Maestro, said: "ABD Maestro curates the very best in Luxury spirits. With the first expression of 'The Collective', we present rare, limited editions that are not sold, but acquired - exclusively on pre-order."

Starmer apologises to Epstein victims for appointing Mandelson and 'believing his lies'

The prime minister this afternoon said that while he knew that Peter Mandelson maintained a relationship with Jeffrey Epstein after he was convicted of soliciting sex with a minor, he had no idea of the "depth" of the relationship. Publicly available references to the depth of the relationship were available from 2023. In 2019 US banking giant JP Morgan conducted an internal investigation into the bank's relationship with Jeffrey Epstein. While the report was never publicly published, details and findings from the report were published in media reports and in court filings. In June 2023, a case in a New York court between the US Virgin Islands (where Epstein was a resident) and JP Morgan Chase included documents from the JP Morgan report. The extracts used in court included the following exhibit: "Jeffrey Epstein appears to maintain a particularly close relationship with Prince

Andrew the Duke of York and Lord Peter Mandelson, a senior member of the British government." JP Morgan Chase settled the case with the US Virgin Islands in September 2023 for \$75 million without admitting any liability. The prime minister is facing criticism from members of his own party who are angry over the Peter Mandelson scandal. On Wednesday, former deputy prime minister Angela Rayner demanded that the government change its plans on releasing information on Mandelson's appointment to US ambassador. Here's what we've heard from some other disgruntled Labour MPs: When asked if Starmer should resign, MP for Brent West Barry Gardiner said he thinks Starmer "needs to think very hard about what is in the country's best interest". Rachael Maskell, who represents York Central, said she thinks it's "inevitable that the prime minister is going to



have to step down". Meanwhile, Rebecca Long-Bailey, who challenged Starmer in the 2020 Labour leadership race, described how appointing Mandelson was a "catastrophic misjudgement" and that Starmer had "huge questions" to answer. Andrew Bailey was at the Bank of England during the financial crisis and he played a key role in helping to sta-

bilise the UK banking sector. He is asked for his reaction to emails allegedly sent by Peter Mandelson, then the business secretary, to Jeffrey Epstein during the crisis containing financial information. He is "shocked," he says but adds that in all of this the most important thing is the victims. He also asks "how is it that we live in a society that this happened and was allowed to happen"? Responding to the ongoing scandal surrounding the prime minister's appointment of Peter Mandelson, Liberal Democrat Leader Ed Davey said: "Keir Starmer should say 'put up or shut up'. 'Let's have a confidence vote now to see whether Labour MPs have any confidence in the prime minister, so the government can get past this one way or the other and start focusing on the change our country needs." Davey said the British people can't afford "this Labour soap opera" as they need the government to

focus on the cost-of-living crisis, the NHS and the economy. His comments follow those from Conservative Leader Kemi Badenoch, who has also called for Labour MPs to hold a vote of no confidence in the prime minister. A Labour MP is calling for the prime minister to step down over the Lord Mandelson scandal. Rachael Maskell, who represents York Central, says she could hear "the real shock of everybody across the chamber" at the fact that Starmer knew of the association between Mandelson and Jeffrey Epstein for "months". "We only need to read the country to realise that his position has now become untenable," she tells BBC Radio York. "I think we're all quite shocked and appalled at what has been unveiled yesterday but we need to now move forward as a party to ensure that we can gain that support back. "I don't believe we can with the prime minister in place, so I think that it is

inevitable that the Prime Minister is going to have to step down," says Maskell. The prime minister mentioned the Mandelson scandal just seconds into his speech in East Sussex. Here's a recap of what we heard: Starmer apologised for believing Mandelson's lies and for appointing him as US ambassador. He said when Mandelson was quizzed about his relationship with Epstein, the answers he gave were "intentionally intended to create the impression" that he "barely knew" him. Asked whether he would fight back if his party tried to remove him as leader, Starmer said he is focused on changing the country for the better. The PM said he wants to release the Mandelson files "as quickly as possible" BBC political correspondent Joe Pike asks Badenoch why she did not raise her concerns about Mandelson 14 months ago when he was appointed British ambassador to the US.

NAKED IMAGES REMAINED IN EPSTEIN FILES DESPITE OUTCRY



Unredacted images and videos showing nudity released in the Epstein files have been online for days despite US officials being warned about failures in redaction, which lawyers say has caused victims "irreparable" harm. The files seen by BBC Verify are among thousands of documents lawyers say they have discovered that contain identifying information about dozens of Epstein's victims. Victims groups first spoke out about the issue at the weekend when the New York Times reported nearly 40 separate images had been published as part of the Epstein files on Friday. On Tuesday, a

New York judge said the Department of Justice (DoJ) had agreed to quickly fix the issue after victims called for the website to be shut down until names and images could be properly redacted. The DoJ removed thousands of documents from its website, stating that the files had been uploaded due to "technical or human error". The department said it was continuing to examine new requests, as well as checking whether there were any other documents that might need further redaction. BBC Verify found independently that a number of images of identifiable people were still online on Wednesday, despite the US government stating it was tackling the issue of incomplete redactions the previous day. We have approached the DoJ for comment and supplied the names of unredacted files. "The damage done is irreparable," Brad Edwards, a lawyer representing the victims, said in a statement.

US launches plan to tackle China's critical minerals dominance



The US has launched an effort to form a trade zone for critical minerals that are key to making everything from smartphones to weapons as it tries to break China's dominance of the industry. On Wednesday, the State Department hosted the first Critical Minerals Ministerial event - which was attended by countries and organisations including the UK, European Union, Japan, India, South Korea, Australia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Delegates discussed the availability of and access to minerals crucial to the manufacture of things like computer chips and electric vehicle batteries. The mining and processing of such critical minerals, which include rare earths, is dominated by China. In remarks released by the US government, Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio did not mention China by name. Instead, Vance referred to the "foreign supply" of such minerals flooding global markets, making it difficult for other countries

with mineral deposits to secure the financing needed to produce them. "The US planned to use tariffs to stop critical mineral prices falling too low, which can deter investment, he said. David Copley, a special assistant to President Donald Trump, said the US intends to "deploy hundreds of billions of capital into the mining sector to get projects going". Investments have already been made in several companies, including rare earths magnets maker MP Materials and Lithium Americas, which produces material key to rechargeable batteries, he said. US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer also said that the US, Japan and the European Commission are developing "coordinated trade policies and mechanisms" in order to collectively avoid potential issues with access to important minerals. Ahead of the meeting, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said "countries need to follow the principles of market economy and international economic and trade rules.

SUSPECT IDENTIFIED IN DISAPPEARANCE OF FOUR-YEAR-OLD IN AUSTRALIAN OUTBACK



Police say a suspect has been identified over the disappearance of a four-year-old boy who went missing in the South Australian outback. Gus Lamont was last seen playing outside his home on a remote sheep station near Yunta, about 300km (186 miles) from Adelaide, on 27 September. His grandmother left him alone for about half an hour before checking on him, only to find the boy missing, prompting one of

the largest land and air searches in the state's history. Police said a person who lives on the property has been identified as a suspect but confirmed the boy's parents were not under investigation. In the days and weeks after the boy was reported missing, police conducted extensive searches, covering about 470 sq km - an area roughly twice the size of Edinburgh - around his home, the Oak Park station homestead. In late October, police wound down efforts and appointed a 12-member taskforce to continue the investigation. That taskforce sifted through previous statements given by family members which "identified a number of inconsistencies and discrepancies" of the timeline around the boy's disappearance.

US MUST BE PRUDENT WHEN SUPPLYING ARMS TO TAIWAN, XI TELLS TRUMP

China's leader Xi Jinping has called Taiwan "the most important issue" in China-US relations during a phone call with US President Donald Trump. Xi told Trump to be "prudent" when supplying weapons to the island, state media report, adding that he attached "great importance" to ties with Washington and hoped both sides would find ways to resolve their differences. Trump described Wednesday's call as "excellent" and "long and thorough". The call followed a flurry of visits by Western leaders, including the UK's Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer, to China in recent months, hoping to reset relations with the world's second-largest economy. Trump himself



is due to visit China in April, a trip he said he "very much" looked forward to. He added that Beijing was considering buying 20 million tonnes of US soybeans, up from the current 12 million tonnes. "The relationship with China, and my personal relationship with President Xi, is an extremely good one, and we both realize how

"must" safeguard [Taiwan's] sovereignty and territorial integrity". "The United States must handle the issue of arms sales to Taiwan with prudence," he warned. China has long vowed to "reunify" with Taiwan and has not ruled out the use of force to do so. The US has formal ties with Beijing rather than Taiwan, and has walked a tight diplomatic rope for decades. But it remains a powerful ally of Taiwan and is the island's biggest arms supplier. In December, the Trump administration announced a huge arms sale worth around \$11bn (£8.2bn) to Taiwan, which included advanced rocket launchers, self-propelled howitzers and a variety of missiles.

Fearing Russia will seize her town, war widow moves husband's grave to Kyiv



The quiet of a Kyiv cemetery is broken by a trumpet salute, then a burst of rifle fire. Soldiers stretch a Ukrainian flag over a shiny wooden coffin and stand silently alongside in the sparkling white snow. A woman cries, her face crumpling. Natalia is burying her husband for the second time. Vitaly was killed three years ago fighting in the eastern Donbas and his first grave was in their home town of Slovyansk. But Russian forces have advanced since then and the area is increasingly under attack. So Natalia had her husband's grave exhumed and Vitaly's remains moved hundreds



of miles to Ukraine's capital. "When we buried him in Slovyansk, land was being liberated and we thought the war would soon end," Natalia explains, after the reburial ceremony conducted with military honours. "But the frontline is constantly moving closer and I was scared Vitaly might

end up under occupation." Vitaly was a ceramics artist who volunteered to defend his country in the early days of Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022. "He didn't want to, but he had to do it. He was a patriot," Natalia explains, through her tears. She was pregnant when her husband was killed and he

never got to meet their daughter. The decision to move Vitaly's body from the land where he was born and fought was extremely painful. "It was very hard, emotionally. But it was the right decision," Natalia is sure. "It would have been far harder to leave him, to know that he had stayed." Ukrainians are facing unimaginable choices now as the US tries to broker a peace deal between Moscow and Kyiv, but Russia pushes on with its invasion. That includes massive aerial attacks against Ukraine's energy system, against all rules of war. Meanwhile, the most pressure for compromise is on Kyiv.

DOZENS OF MUSLIMS 'MASSACRED' IN NIGERIA FOR REFUSING TO JOIN JIHADISTS, SAYS GOVERNOR



Dozens of people have been killed in a ferocious shooting attack on two villages in Nigeria's western state of Kwara after they refused to "surrender to extremists who preached a strange doctrine", according to the state's governor. Governor AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq said on X that "75 local Muslims were massacred" in Tuesday's raid, while a state lawmaker told the BBC that 78 people had been buried so far and the death toll could rise to an estimated 170 as more corpses were being recovered. Blaming Islamist militant group Boko Haram for the killings, President Bola Tinubu deployed an army battalion to the affected area. The assault was one of several across Nigeria in the last few days. In addition to the killings in the villages of Woro and Nuku, 38 people were abducted while others fled and shops and homes were set alight, said Saidu Baba Ahmed, a member of the Kwara state house of assembly. He added that Boko Haram activity had been gradually increasing in the area, saying the attack was triggered by the community's rejection of a strict interpretation of Islam.

Ahmed explained that the Islamist group had written to the community about their arrival, saying they wanted to preach, but residents resisted and deployed local security forces. Details about the exact number of people who died in the remote area are hard to confirm. A Red Cross official in Kwara, Babaomo Ayodeji, told AFP that "reports said that the death toll now stands at 162, as the search for more bodies continues". Amnesty International said in a statement that over 170 people had died, noting many were shot at close range and some burnt alive. The human rights group called for an investigation and said there was a "stunning absence of any form of security for the protection of lives". In recent months, jihadists - suspected to be from a Boko Haram splinter faction - have been active in Kwara, carrying out targeted killings, often riding in on motorcycles and attacking markets and vigilante groups set up to protect villagers. In a press release on Wednesday, the state governor said the attack on the two villages was a result of recent counter-terrorism operations in the region.

55,000 UKRAINIAN SOLDIERS KILLED IN WAR WITH RUSSIA, ZELENSKY SAYS

The number of Ukrainian soldiers killed on the battlefield in the four years of war with Russia is 55,000, President Volodymyr Zelensky has said. Zelensky announced the figure in an interview with France 2 TV on Wednesday. Additionally, a large number of people are considered officially missing, he said. While both Kyiv and Moscow have regularly published estimates of the other side's losses, they have been reluctant to detail their own. However, the BBC has confirmed the names of almost 160,000 people killed fighting on Russia's side in Ukraine. US President Donald Trump has been leading efforts to

end the war that began with Russia's full-scale invasion of its neighbour on 22 February 2022. Special US envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law, held talks with Russian and Ukrainian negotiators in the capital of the United Arab Emirates, Abu Dhabi, for a second day on Thursday in an effort to try and thrash out the details of the US-proposed peace deal. It was the second such trilateral meeting and the talks had been "detailed and productive", Steve Witkoff wrote on X, but "significant work remains". The most difficult issue is territory, with Russia demanding that Ukraine cedes the rest of



the eastern industrial region of Donbas that Moscow does not currently control. Zelensky said the talks had not been easy, and Ukraine would remain "as constructive as possible", but wanted "faster results". Trump often says thousands of Ukrainians and Russians die unnecessarily

every week. Western intelligence agencies also publish estimates, which are impossible to verify. The last time Zelensky gave an update on Ukraine's casualties was in December 2024, when he put deaths at 43,000. In his interview with French television, he said: "In Ukraine, officially the number of sol-

diers killed on the battlefield - either professionals or those conscripted - is 55,000." The official number of dead cited by Zelensky is considerably lower than Ukraine's total losses. As he said himself, "a large number of people" are registered as missing. As of six months ago, Ukraine's interior ministry had recorded more than 70,000 people as officially missing - both soldiers and civilians - but the breakdown is never given. The true figure may be higher - information about the number of dead is highly sensitive and affects morale. Across Ukraine, military graves are prominent in all cemeteries - marked with blue and yel-

low national flags. They often have an image of the soldier in uniform engraved on the headstones. We have also met mothers still searching for their sons, who never returned from battle. Often, they cling to hope that the men are prisoners of war, captured and held in Russia somewhere but not on any official lists. Access to Russian prisons for organisations like the Red Cross is highly restricted. The alternative is that the missing men have been killed and their bodies not recovered from territory now controlled by Russia, or that their remains have not yet been identified using DNA testing.

BCCI MAKES STANCE CLEAR AFTER PAKISTAN PM SHEHBAZ SHARIF'S T20 WORLD CUP 2026 'BOYCOTT' STATEMENT

On Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's statement reiterating his nation's stance of not playing the ICC T20 World Cup Group Stage clash against Pakistan, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) vice-president Rajeev Shukla said that the board will go with whatever the International Cricket Council (ICC) decides. Shukla said to ANI, "BCCI has nothing to say on this (on Shehbaz's statement). ICC has to decide on this, and whatever ICC says, we will go according to that decision." The Pakistan premier on Wednesday reiterated the country's decision to boycott its T20 World Cup match against India, saying the country has taken a "clear stand" for the February 15 match in Sri Lanka, reported Dawn. "We have taken a clear stand regarding the T20 World Cup that we will



not play the match against India," Pakistan PM said while addressing the federal cabinet in Islamabad. Sharif added that they have decided to boycott the India match after careful assessment and called for an appropriate

decision."There should be no politics in sports," he said. "We have taken this stand after deliberating on it carefully," he said, calling it an "appropriate decision". Earlier, Pakistan decided to boycott its group-stage match against

India in the T20 World Cup after the Pakistan government posted on X that the Pakistan Team "shall not take the field" in the match against India without providing any reason. Following the Pakistan Government's decision, the

International Cricket Council (ICC) issued a statement saying that "selective participation" is not fair to the "fundamental premise of a global sporting event" and that it expects the PCB to explore a mutually acceptable resolution that protects the interests of all stakeholders. ICC said in a release that it has noted the Government of Pakistan's statement regarding the decision to instruct its national team to selectively participate in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026. "While the ICC awaits official communication from the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), this position of selective participation is difficult to reconcile with the fundamental premise of a global sporting event where all qualified teams are expected to compete on equal terms per the event schedule," the release said.

Are Chelsea-Strasbourg transfer deals bad for football?

When Chelsea's David Datro Fofana completed a deadline-day loan move to Strasbourg on Monday, he became the 12th transfer between the clubs this season. The activity between the BlueCo partners has started to raise eyebrows. Rather than simple loan arrangements like that of Fofana, some players have moved back and forth for fees. Chelsea plucked head coach Liam Rosenior away as well, much to the annoyance of Strasbourg. There is no suggestion there is anything untoward, and the deals have all been carried out within the rules. But could such a high number of transfers between two teams within multi-club ownership (MCO) be a trigger for Fifa or Uefa? The game's governing bodies are keeping a close eye on the situation. So far action has been limited to clubs being removed from competitions where there might be a conflict of interest. Last year, Fifa disqualified Leon from the Club World Cup, and Uefa demoted Crystal



Palace from the Europa League. Chelsea's transfer business has been the catalyst for change in Fifa's transfer regulations once before. Could it be again? Chelsea and Strasbourg came together under Todd Boehly and Clearlake Capital's BlueCo group in 2023. Across the first two years Strasbourg got the best of the deal. Six players left Chelsea for the French club, five on loan and one permanently. Strasbourg were able to spend money they could only have dreamed about. In the three years before BlueCo, Strasbourg's total transfer fees paid per season were

£6.1m, £3.9m and £9.5m. In the following three seasons Strasbourg spent £52.6m, £53.6m and £96.5m. They were the biggest-spending club in France last summer, outgunning even Paris St-Germain (£89.2m). Those additional resources helped Strasbourg challenge for a place in the Champions League last season. But last summer the way the two clubs did business began to change. The pendulum would swing towards the dominant MCO partner in Chelsea. Take central defender Mamadou Sarr, who in June joined Chelsea from Strasbourg on a permanent deal.

FREE AGENT OXLADE-CHAMBERLAIN CLOSE TO CELTIC MOVE

Former Arsenal and Liverpool midfielder Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain is close to joining Scottish champions Celtic. The 32-year-old has been a free agent since leaving Turkish side Besiktas in August. He has been training with Arsenal - where he made 198 appearances in a six-year spell - but BBC Sport has been told a move to Celtic Park is now likely, although a deal is still to be finalised. Hoops boss Martin O'Neill confirmed his interest in Oxlade-Chamberlain this week and believes the interest is mutual. "I've spoken to him, but I'm sure he has plenty of options, maybe closer to London," said O'Neill. "I'd be very



interested in doing it. I'm surprised people haven't taken him up. "I think he was very excited about what we were saying. He knows all about the club, he's a big friend of Joe Hart and Joe has spoken to him

- not on our behalf. "It's something we're interested in but if it doesn't materialise, it doesn't materialise." Oxlade-Chamberlain started his career at Southampton and joined Arsenal in 2011,

where he won three FA Cups. He moved to Liverpool for £35m and helped them win the Champions League, Premier League, League Cup, Super Cup and Club World Cup. However, he also suffered several injury setbacks including knee ligament damage that kept him out for a year from April 2018. A hamstring injury during pre-season in July 2022 then led to a three-month lay-off, with Oxlade-Chamberlain making only nine Premier League appearances in his final campaign with the Merseysiders. The England international joined Besiktas in 2023 and made 46 appearances, scoring five goals.

Nasser Hussain's "Will ICC Knock Out India" Comment Draws Strong Reaction Amid Pakistan's T20 World Cup Boycott Drama

Amid the ongoing turmoil surrounding Pakistan, Bangladesh, and the T20 World Cup, former England captain Nasser Hussain made a strong remark on Sky Sports' cricket podcast. He questioned the ICC's handling of Bangladesh's T20 World Cup ouster and said that the world cricket body needs to be "consistent" with all teams. Hussain's reaction drew responses from a section of social media users, who recalled England's decision to boycott a match in Zimbabwe at the 2003 World Cup in protest against Robert Mugabe's regime and his controversial remarks about British politicians. The International Cricket Council replaced Bangladesh with Scotland in the T20 World Cup after Bangladesh refused to play its matches in



India, citing security concerns. "If India, a month before a tournament, said, 'Our government does not want us to play in a country for a World Cup,' would the ICC have been so firm and said, 'You know the rules, bad luck, we're knocking you out?'" Hussain asked on the Sky Sports Cricket Podcast. "The only thing all sides ask for is consistency.

Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India must be treated the same. Yes, India fans may say, 'Cry more, we have the money!' But with power comes responsibility," he added. Here are some of the responses to Hussain's comment. In 2003, England boycotted Zimbabwe in the World Cup citing political concerns and Nasser Hussain himself was

England's captain. He later said, "I am proud as England captain that we didn't go to Zimbabwe at that stage." Hypocrisy of Nasser Hussain 2003 - England boycott against Zimbabwe in World Cup due to political concerns - Nasser Hussain himself was the captain of the team. - He said: I am proud as England captain. I didn't go to Zimbabwe at that stage. Nasser Hussain is someone I have respect for. We have done some real good work as well. He is a respected voice in world cricket. However, when Pakistan has agreed to a hybrid model and are playing the U19 World Cup with India as well, why single out the men's T20? Nasser Hussain's comments make very little logical sense and can best be regarded as an emotional rant.

REES-ZAMMIT AT FULL-BACK FOR WALES AGAINST ENGLAND



Wales have named Louis Rees-Zammit at full-back for their Six Nations opener against England at Allianz Stadium in Twickenham on Saturday. Scarlets duo Josh Macleod and Eddie James return after missing the autumn campaign because of injury. Flanker Macleod, 29, will make his Six Nations debut, filling the role left by the injured Jac Morgan to pack down alongside Alex Mann and Aaron Wainwright in the back row. Centre James will line up alongside the recalled Ben Thomas in the Welsh midfield, while in-form wing Ellis Mee is named in the back three alongside Rees-Zammit and Josh Adams, with Blair Murray and Tom Rogers missing out. Hooker Dewi Lake will lead Wales again in Morgan's absence and is joined in the front row by props Nicky Smith and Archie Griffin. Head coach Steve Tandy has named six forwards on his replacements bench, with Tomas Francis in line to make his first Test appearance since

the 2023 World Cup. Wales last won a match in the Six Nations in 2023 and have secured only two victories in their past 23 Tests overall. Rees-Zammit, 25, will make his first Six Nations appearance in almost three years after returning from a stint in American football. After beginning his career as a wing, it will be the fourth time that Rees-Zammit has started at full-back for Wales after making three appearances there during the 2022-23 season. He began his return at Bristol on the wing but Bears' director of rugby Pat Lam has moved him to full-back during the season and Rees-Zammit says this is now his preferred position. Meanwhile, Scarlets captain Macleod has battled back from injuries to make his first appearance in the tournament. "Josh has had some rough luck with injuries, but the way he's come back, the way he leads and trains, his attention to detail and the intensity he brings to everything is excellent," said Tandy.

"Its An Incredible Honour To Play For A Club Of This Stature: Manchester City's Marc Guehi

Manchester City are pushing for Premier League glory after a mid-season stutter, strengthened by the arrivals of Antoine Semenyo and Marc Guehi. Speaking on JioHotstar, the new signings discussed the club's target player profile, their personal journeys, and how City's elite setup will elevate their game. Speaking on JioHotstar, Antoine Semenyo spoke on the profile of players the club is targeting: "City is looking for players who are powerful, quick, strong and clinical, and I believe this is the level I'm working towards. I still don't think I've reached my peak and there's a lot of learning ahead. Joining City is the best step for my development, with the best coaches and top players around me, I'm confident it will help take my game to



the next level." On the resilience behind his journey to Manchester City: "I've had to develop a really strong character, both emotionally and mentally. My family, friends and fiancée have always kept me lifted and pushed me forward. I've had

to drive myself through difficult moments and tough periods, and all of that has shaped who I am today; strong, fearless and ready to take on the world." Marc Guehi outlined the strengths he brings to Manchester City: "To be honest, I don't have any single

standout attribute, but I'd say I'm well-rounded and balanced across the board. What I can bring is calmness, a level head, and the qualities of a strong teammate." On his rapid improvement over the recent seasons: "I'm grateful to have good people around me who constantly push me. As they say, you're a product of your environment, and I'm the result of having those individuals who support and challenge me every day. I'm thankful they're in my life, helping me get better." On the club's prestige and how it aligns with his drive for self-improvement: "It's an incredible honour to play for a club of this stature. I've always been obsessed with getting better and constantly improving, and this feels like the perfect environment to do that.

"After So Long Without Silverware, This Arsenal Refuses To Give Up": Mikel Merino

Arsenal have enjoyed a strong run in the Premier League this season and are pegged as strong contenders for the title, with Manchester City and Aston Villa following closely behind. Speaking on JioHotstar's show 'Premier League Originals', midfielders Mikel Merino and Martin Zubimendi elaborated on the squad's resilient mentality under Mikel Arteta and the group's mentality to convert a strong season into a title-winning campaign. Arsenal midfielder Mikel Merino opened up on why he stayed neutral when Martin Zubimendi consulted him before signing for Arsenal: "I deliberately

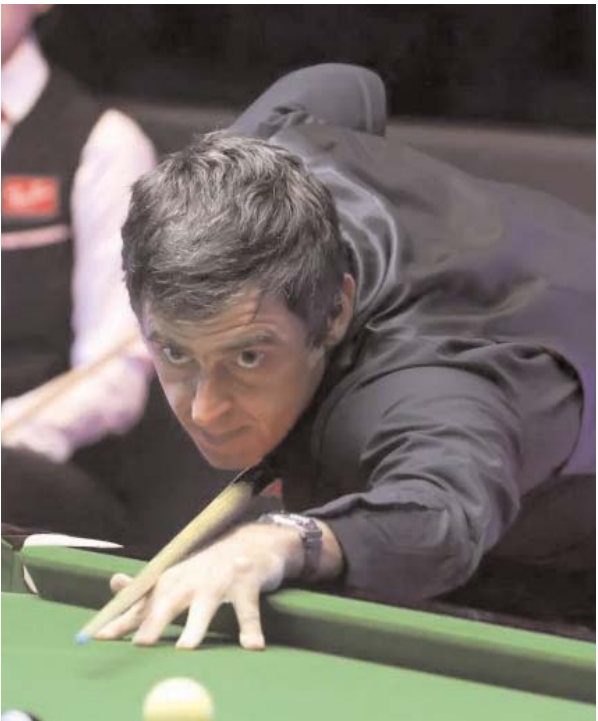


avoided getting too involved; it's a deeply personal career choice. Moments like switching clubs, especially to a club as meaningful as Arsenal for him, belong to the individual. Of course, selfishly, I'm thrilled he's with us now and I get to enjoy playing alongside him on and

off the pitch. But back then, it was his call to make, and he made it." On Arsenal's defence: "We put in tremendous effort across the board, not only set-pieces as many assume, but every aspect. You see it in our pressing, how everyone dives into blocks, covers shots, or intercepts passes.

Defence wins trophies, so I hope we keep this up." On Arsenal's unyielding belief after years of near-misses: "After so long without the silverware, this group refuses to give up, unlike others who might think the chance has passed after four straight years of falling short. The originals who've been here from day one, are more driven than ever, while us newcomers arrive starving to contribute and slot right into the rhythm. I hope it's our year, but plenty remains, and winning in the Premier League or Champions League is brutally tough. One thing's certain: desire and effort won't be lacking."

XIAO 'SORRY' FOR BEATING IDOL O'SULLIVAN IN HONG KONG



Xiao Guodong feels "sorry" for his idol Ronnie O'Sullivan after beating the seven-time world champion 5-3 in the second round of the World Grand Prix. O'Sullivan, who was searching for a record-extending 42nd ranking title, is the latest big name to suffer an early exit in Hong Kong, with defending champion Neil Robertson and world number one Judd Trump among those to fall in the first round. Guodong, who beat 2024 world champion Kyren Wilson on Tuesday, produced a tournament-leading 144-break in the opening frame before winning the second. O'Sullivan fought back to level the match and the pair exchanged frames before Xiao built

breaks of 58 and 66 to advance to the quarter-finals. "It's hard to say something. I'm happy I win the round and also, he is my idol. I want him going to the final, win the championship, and I want him doing well," Xiao told the World Snooker Tour. "But it's sport. When I play anyone, I don't want to lose. I feel sorry for Ronnie but we are still very good friends." Xiao will face Pang Junxu, who beat Si Jiahui 5-3, in the last eight. Barry Hawkins, the 2017 champion, was also defeated in the second round, losing 5-3 to Zhang Anda. Although Hawkins levelled at 3-3 after being 3-1 down, Zhang responded with breaks of 82 and 97 to complete the win.

The audience's money, time and wisdom are at stake.. Sensational Director Guna Shekhar at 'Euphoria' Grand Release Press Meet

The film 'Euphoria' starred Sara Arjun, Nassar, Rohit and Vignesh Gavireddy in the lead role of Bhumika. Presented by Ragini Guna and produced by Neelima Guna and Yukta Guna, this film directed by sensational director Guna Shekhar is going to release on February 6. In this order, a grand pre-release press meet was held on Thursday. In this media conference.. Sensational director Guna Shekhar said .. 'I entered the industry in 1992 with the film 'Lathi'. This is my 14th film in a career of many years. I feel the same way I felt about my first film. I have tried to tell a good story and a new story. I believe in audience gods. I value their time, money and wisdom. I made this movie 'Euphoria' which focuses on them. I will not waste the audience's money and time. I made this movie to give a big platform to the audience's knowledge. 'Euphoria' will be liked by all the audience. All those who saw the film said, 'Wow.. they have spent so much money.. It is not a common thing to do such a great story with such a huge budget and with new actors'. Many appreciated that it was taken as a family product. Sara Arjun is the soul of this story. I wanted to make the movie only if she agreed. The audience will understand that after watching the movie. Bhumika is the backbone of this movie. She is a



very strong person. But this is the first time she gets emotional like this. 'This is the first time I have seen her like this. She lived in the role of Vindhya Vemulapalli. Vignesh is like the brain of this movie. All those who have seen this movie have praised the fact that it reflects the current situation. Prithvi also acted brilliantly according to the role. Lakhita has done a great job in a role designed to show off the spoil kids. I made this film with the themes of adolescence, parenting and social impact. Instead of using my intelligence, I made this movie as a person who saw the society like a normal person. I am sorry for not giving Telugu title. After watching the movie, everyone says that the title of 'Euphoria' is set

correctly. I have woven this story based on some events that happened in the society. Praveen's camera work is very innovative. Kaala Bhairava BGM is moving. Kala Bhairava proves that he is a worthy son to his father. The entire team worked hard. All those who worked for 'Euphoria' will get a good name. We made this movie as a family. I hope everyone like youth and parents will watch this movie. Bhumika speaking .. To do a film like 'Euphoria' one must have a lot of courage. There is a lot of risk in such films. But Guna Shekhar and his family are taking risks together. I have already seen this movie. I could not sleep properly at night after watching the movie. This movie kept haunting me all night.

Prithvi, Likhita and Vignesh all acted brilliantly. Even after all these years of career, I believe that I still have a lot to learn. Everyone should watch this movie on February 6 and support it', he said. Producer Neelima Guna says .. Everyone thinks that 'Euphoria' is an informative film. But all those who have seen this movie till now have also appreciated that the new story has been taken in a new way by adding commercial elements. After watching the movie, I felt very connected to Bhumika's character. 'Euphoria' stands as the best film in her career. Sara is the soul of this movie. Likhita, Vignesh and Prithvi all acted brilliantly. With the support of cameraman Praveen, Kala Bhairava and editor Praveen Pudi, we have brought this

movie to this point. I think 'Euphoria' will touch everyone's hearts. I want the audience to watch this movie on February 6 and support it', he said. Actress Likhita said .. 'I did modeling while studying MBBS. I also won Femina Miss India title. But movies are not accepted at home. But I convinced him at home by telling him Guna Shekhar's name. Thanks to the director and producers for giving a wonderful role in a film like 'Euphoria'. It was a pleasure to act with Bhumika and Gautham Menon. I played the role of Amrita. There will be many surprises in it. I hope the audience will like this movie. Actor Vignesh said .. My maternal grandfather also saw the premiere of 'Euphoria'. My parents were very proud to see the movie. That is a big success for me. When I told that I was working with Guna Shekhar, I got a lot of respect from my friends and relatives. Watch this movie on February 6. Everyone will like this movie. Actor Prithviraj says .. The premiere of 'Euphoria' got an amazing response. I saw a new Guna Shekhar. I should be introduced to the screen sometime. But it is a pleasure to be launched in the hands of a director like Guna Shekhar. People like Neelima, Yukta and Ragini can produce this movie. I was also moved to tears by everyone's performance. This movie will impress everyone', he said.

“Mirzapuram Rani Krishnaveni” Book A Rare Scholarly Endeavour

Renowned senior journalist and author Bhageeratha was lauded for his exceptional research and literary contribution at the book introduction programme of “Mirzapuram Rani Krishnaveni”, held on Thursday at Film Nagar Cultural Centre. Presiding over the event as the chief guest, Paruchuri Gopala Krishna, President of the Telugu Film Writers Association, remarked that Bhagiratha deserves a Doctorate for his scholarly works such as Shaka purushudu, Tarakaramam, Nagaladevi, and Mirzapuram Rani Krishnaveni. He stated that if he were part of a university, he would have ensured a doctorate for Bhagiratha. Expressing deep reverence for Krishnaveni Garu, who introduced N.T. Rama Rao to Telugu cinema, he congratulated author Bhagiratha and producer Anuradha Devi for bringing out such a significant biography. Directors Association President Veera Shankar said that Bhageeratha is a seasoned writer whose books Shaka purushudu and Tarakaramam, released during NTR's centenary celebrations, stand as testimony to his talent. He added that Nagaladevi and Mirzapuram Rani Krishnaveni reveal Bhageeratha's depth as a serious researcher. Director B. Gopal described Bhageeratha as one of his



favourite journalists and writers, praising his distinctive writing style. He said the book vividly presents not only Krishnaveni's life but also the history of Telugu cinema, and wished Bhagiratha many more honours. Veteran actress Rojaramani expressed her admiration for Krishnaveni Garu, calling her an inspiration to generations of actresses, and congratulated Bhagiratha and Anuradha Devi for documenting her life story. Gummadi Gopalakrishna noted that the book was inaugurated last month by Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Sri Nara Chandrababu Naidu, and said he personally witnessed the Chief Minister's admiration for Bhagiratha. He stated

that the book is a priceless contribution to Telugu cinema and opined that a biopic on Krishnaveni could be made solely based on this work. Professor R. Devanna shared that after reading Nagaladevi, he became an admirer of Bhageeratha and that the book was introduced as a syllabus text for B.Sc. students at Sri Krishnadevaraya University, Ballari last year. He thanked Bhagiratha for giving him the opportunity to write the foreword for Mirzapuram Rani Krishnaveni. Author Bhageeratha, speaking on the occasion, credited Anuradha Devi as the driving force behind the book and said it would not have been possible without her support.

Sumathi Sathakam” Releasing on February 6 with Affordable Ticket Pricing – Grand Pre-Release Press Meet Held

“Sumathi Sathakam” set to reach audiences on February 6 through Mythri Movies with ticket prices fixed at ₹100 in single screens and ₹150 in multiplexes. Vision Movie Makers' clean family entertainer “Sumathi Sathakam” is gearing up for release. Produced by Sai Sudhakar Kommalapati and directed by M.M. Naidu, the film has already created a positive buzz in the industry. Starring Amardeep Chowdary and Shayli Chowdary as the lead pair, the movie is scheduled for a worldwide release on February 6. In the Telugu states, the film is being distributed by leading production and distribution house Mythri Movie Makers. The film's first look, teaser, trailer, and songs have already received a good response



from audiences. Amardeep's dance moves in the songs have been widely appreciated. Music director Subhash Anand has further elevated the film with impressive compositions. The movie team also received encouraging feedback during their promotional tour in the Rayalaseema region. As the

release date approaches, the team recently interacted with the media in a grand pre-release press meet, confirming that ticket prices are set at affordable rates for all sections of audiences. Hero Amardeep Chowdary Said: “I started from a very ordinary level and worked hard for years to reach this stage.

‘Sumathi Shatakam’ is a great opportunity for me. Please give me one chance — I will prove myself. I hope this film gives me a good name. I am thankful to my director and producers for giving me this opportunity. I also thank everyone who supported me — technicians, co-actors, and music team.

I hope ‘Sri Chidambaram Garu’, made with the energy of a young team, becomes a blockbuster” – Legendary Music Director M.M. Keeravani



Presented by Smt. Chinta Varalakshmi under the Sri Chakras Entertainment banner, Sri Chidambaram is produced by Chinta Vineesh Reddy and Chinta Gopala Krishna Reddy, with Chinta Rajasekhar Reddy as co-producer. Vamsi Tummala and Sandhya Vashishta play the lead pair in this film, which marks the directorial debut

of Vinay Ratnam. The movie is set to release on February 6. The pre-release event of the film was held grandly. Legendary music director M.M. Keeravani, hero Anand Deverakonda, and producer-actress Niharika Konidela attended the event. Speaking on the occasion, M.M. Keeravani said, “This is a film made with great enthusiasm by

young blood. I wish this film becomes a success. Not everyone is born a celebrity. Everyone goes through struggles. I came into the industry to become a playback singer, but soon realized it was difficult and looked for a new livelihood as a music director. After all these years, music direction became my bread and butter, while singing became

my hobby. In Sri Chidambaram, the song I sang was listened to by my sister every day like a morning prayer. I even made her call the director to congratulate him. I am happy to have sung in this film. I wish this film brings success to everyone involved.” Anand Deverakonda said, “I know how important a first film is.

