

NORTH EAST ENTERS NEW ERA OF GROWTH: JITENDRA SINGH

Guwahati (TSIT): Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science & Technology, Jitendra Singh, on Monday underscored the intrinsic link between peace and progress, asserting that sustained development in the North East has been made possible by improved security and stability over the past decade.



PUTIN MUST BE STOPPED: ZELENSKY



WORLD NEWS

WEST INDIES THRASHES ZIMBABWE IN T20 WORLD CUP SUPER 8 MATCH



T20 WORLD CUP

IN BRIFS

India issues Advisory asking its citizens in Iran to leave the country

New Delhi (TSIT) India on Monday asked its citizens in Iran to leave the country, exercise caution and avoid areas of protests and demonstrations in view of the evolving situation there. The Indian Embassy in Tehran issued an Advisory saying Indian nationals currently in Iran, including students, pilgrims, business persons and tourists, are advised to leave Iran by available means of transport, including commercial flights. The Embassy, while reiterating the January 14 Advisory, said "all Indian citizens should exercise due caution, avoid areas of protests and demonstrations, stay in contact with the Indian embassy and monitor local media for any development." The Advisory said all Indian nationals should have their travel and immigration documents readily available and contact the Embassy on emergency helpline numbers 989128109115, 98912809109, 98912809102 and 989932179359 and email cons.tehran@mea.gov.in

Two Andhra police officers caught accepting Rs 3 lac bribe



Amaravati (TSIT): The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) of Andhra Pradesh on Monday caught two police officers red-handed while allegedly accepting a bribe of Rs 3 lakh at a police station in YSR Kadapa district. The ACB officials laid a trap at Simhadripuram Police Station and apprehended N.V. Ramana, Circle Inspector of Pulivendula Rural Circle, and Dasari Anil Kumar, Sub-Inspector at Simhadripuram Police Station, while they were accepting the bribe amount. According to ACB officials, the two officers had allegedly demanded a bribe from an accused involved in chain-snatching cases. The accused had reportedly purchased a motorcycle from one Brahmam, who was allegedly part of a gang involved in selling stolen two-wheelers sourced from Kashmir after altering their registration number plates. The accused was allegedly using the motorcycle for committing chain-snatching offences and was suspected to be involved in snatching gold chains worth approximately Rs 15 lakh.

Telangana Cabinet Clears Rs.1.2 Cr Insurance, Cashless Health Scheme; Approves Metro Takeover and Major Infra Push

Hyderabad (TSIT Bureau):

In a series of landmark decisions under the chairmanship of Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, the Telangana State Cabinet on Monday approved sweeping welfare, healthcare, and infrastructure reforms aimed at strengthening employee security, improving public health systems, and accelerating urban development across the state.

Rs.1.2 Crore Accident Insurance for Employees

In a historic step towards employee welfare, the Cabinet approved a comprehensive Accident Insurance Scheme for all serving government employees and pensioners without collecting any premium from them. Under the scheme, Rs.1.2 crore compensation will be provided in case of accidental death, while Rs.10 lakh term insurance will be applicable in case of natural death up to 60 years of age. The scheme will benefit 5.19 lakh regular employees and 2.38 lakh pensioners, covering a total of 7.57 lakh beneficiaries.

The insurance will be implemented through banking institutions, ensuring no financial burden either on employees or the state exchequer. The model, earlier implemented successfully in Singareni and Transco, is now being extended to all eligible government personnel across Telangana.

Cashless Employee Health Scheme

Fulfilling a long-pending demand, the Cabinet also approved a comprehensive Cashless Employee Health Scheme (EHS). The scheme



will cover 3.56 lakh regular employees, 2.88 lakh pensioners, and their dependent family members—benefiting a total of 17.07 lakh people.

Treatment will be completely cashless in all government hospitals and 652 empanelled private hospitals. The coverage includes 1,998 medical procedures. Each employee will be issued a Digital Health Employee Card for seamless access to services.

The scheme will be implemented through the Rajiv Aarogyasri Health Care Trust. Employees will contribute 1.5% of their basic pay, with the government matching the contribution. The total annual outlay of the scheme is estimated at Rs.1,056 crore.

Health Administration Reforms

In a significant administrative reform, the Cabinet approved the conversion of the Telangana Vaidya Vidhana Parishad into the Directorate of Secondary Health Care (DSH), granting it full departmental status. The move is expected to streamline procurement of medicines and surgical supplies, ensure better fund allocation, and facilitate timely salary payments.

A special committee headed by Health Minister Damodar Raja Narasimha will further examine

reforms in hospital administration to enhance efficiency and accountability.

Hyderabad Metro Takeover and Expansion

In a major infrastructure decision, the Cabinet approved the takeover of the 69-km Hyderabad Metro Phase-1 from L&T. The estimated takeover cost, including liabilities, stands at Rs.15,000 crore, while the current asset valuation is estimated between Rs.19,000 crore and Rs.22,000 crore.

The decision is expected to accelerate the implementation of Phase-II expansion. Proposals for more than 160 km of metro expansion have already been submitted to the Centre, paving the way for a significant upgrade in urban mobility.

Urban Infrastructure Boost

The Cabinet approved several urban development projects, including:

- Inclusion of four villages in Vikarabad district under HMDA limits.
- CRMP Phase-2 covering 300 km of additional roads in Greater Hyderabad at a cost of Rs.3,145 crore.
- Modernization of the Manjeera Water Supply Scheme at Rs.722 crore.

■ Rs.282 crore upgrade of Osman Sagar water pipelines to prevent nearly 30% water loss.

■ These initiatives aim to strengthen road connectivity, improve drinking water supply, and expand planned urban growth.

Land Allocation for Key Projects
The Cabinet cleared multiple land allocations to promote industrial, educational, and social infrastructure development:

- 223 acres in Koheda for a Multi-Modal Logistics Park and Food Processing Park.
- 239 acres for a world-class fruit market.
- Land allocation for engineering colleges and 21 Young India Integrated Residential Schools across districts.

■ 5 acres for a Greenfield Mini Stadium in Bhadrachalam.

■ 20 acres in Khammam for temple construction under TTD.

■ Equal value land allocation to the Defence Department in exchange for land used for elevated corridors.

Housing, Renewable Energy and Census Preparations

The Cabinet also approved the auction of shops constructed near double bedroom housing units and initiated a special drive to accelerate Indiramma housing construction.

Renewable energy distribution licenses were cleared for 300 MW data centers, reinforcing the state's push toward sustainable energy.

Additionally, preparations for Census 2027 were reviewed. The house listing phase will be conducted from May 11 to June 9, with 89,000 enumerators deployed across the state.



19 Killed as tourist Bus plunges into Trishuli river in Nepal

Trishuli (TSIT) At least 19 people were killed after a tourist bus lost control and plunged nearly 200 metres onto the bank of the Trishuli River in Nepal's central Dhading district in the early hours of Monday.

According to Nepalese police, the bus was travelling from Pokhara to the capital, Kathmandu, when the tragic accident occurred. There were 44 people onboard, including the driver. While 17 passengers died at the scene, two more succumbed to their injuries during treatment, officials said.

Among the deceased was a 24-year-old British man, identified by Nepalese authorities as Stewart Dominic Ethan. The UK Foreign Office confirmed it is assisting the family of a British national who died in Nepal but has not officially confirmed the name. A 40-year-old Chinese woman and a 32-year-old man from India were also among those killed.

Police said all 19 bodies have been identified. At least 25 passengers sustained injuries, including a Chinese national

and a New Zealander. All injured victims have been shifted to hospitals in Kathmandu for treatment. Children were also among those onboard at the time of the accident.

Multiple rescue teams, including police personnel, the Nepalese Army, and divers, were deployed to the crash site for search and rescue operations. Authorities stated that the bus fell onto the riverbank after losing control on a mountainous stretch of road.

Nepal's Home Ministry has constituted a five-member task force to investigate the cause of the accident.

Road accidents are relatively common in Nepal due to poor road conditions, difficult terrain, and narrow mountainous routes. In 2024, at least 14 people died when a bus travelling from Pokhara to Kathmandu fell into the Marsyangdi River in Tanahun district.

Nepal remains a major destination for international tourists, particularly mountaineers visiting the Himalayan region, which includes Mount Everest.

INDIA'S FIRST BULLET TRAIN TO USE JAPANESE J-SLAB TRACK TECH; TO CUT MUMBAI-AHMEDABAD TRAVEL TO JUST OVER TWO HOURS

Ahmedabad (TSIT) India's first Bullet Train project will deploy the advanced J-Slab ballastless track system based on Japanese Shinkansen technology along the 508-km Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail (MAHSR) corridor, officials said. The high-speed rail project, spanning Maharashtra and Gujarat in western India, will provide rapid connectivity between the two states with stops at 10 cities — Thane, Virar, Boisar, Vapi, Bilimora, Surat, Bharuch, Vadodara, Anand and Ahmedabad, before terminating at Sabarmati.

"This is for the first time, the J-slab ballastless track system is being used in India," Principal Chief Project Manager Rajesh Aggarwal told a group of media persons from Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab during a week-long tour to Gujarat facilitated by the Press Information Bureau



(PIB) Jammu, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India.

Aggarwal said the entire track installation process is mechanised using cutting-edge machinery specially designed and manufactured as per Japanese specifications.

"The fleet of machines such as Rail Feeder Car, Track Slab Laying Car, CAM Laying Car and Flash Butt Welding Machine, will be used for track construction work," he said.

Trump warns of doing 'terrible things' against foreign countries, imposing much higher Tariffs.

New Delhi (TSIT) US President Donald Trump on Monday warned that he can do "absolutely terrible things to foreign countries," and ridiculed the country's Supreme Court for its February 20 ruling striking down the unilateral Tariffs. He said that any country that wants to "play games" with the ridiculous Supreme Court decision, especially those that have "Ripped Off" the U.S.A. for years, and even decades, will be met with a "much higher Tariff," and worse, than that which they just recently agreed to.

"BUYER BEWARE!!!!", he warned.

"The supreme court (will be using lower case letters for a while based on a complete lack of respect!) of the United States accidentally and unwittingly gave me, as President of the United



States, far more powers and strength than I had prior to their ridiculous, dumb, and very internationally divisive ruling," Trump said on his social media platform.

He said he can use Licenses to do absolutely "terrible"

things to foreign countries, especially those countries that have been "ripping off" the US for many decades, but cannot charge them a License fee.

Trump said the Court has also approved all other Tariffs, of which many can be used in a much more "powerful and obnoxious way, with legal certainty, than the Tariffs as initially used."

He said the "incompetent" Supreme Court "did a great job for the wrong people, and for that they should be 'ashamed of themselves.'" "The next thing they will rule in favour of China and others...this Supreme Court will find a way to come to the wrong conclusion, one that again will make China, and various other Nations, happy and rich," he said.

Assembly contest not one of equal strength: Stalin



CHENNAI (TSIT): Chief Minister and DMK president M. K. Stalin on Monday asserted that the forthcoming Assembly election would not be a contest of equal strength when compared to the DMK-led alliance. Responding to questions at a conclave organised by a media house in Chennai on Monday, Stalin dismissed suggestions that a multi-cornered contest would pose a serious challenge to his party. "Even if it is a multi-cornered contest, it is not an equitable one," he said, expressing confidence in the DMK's organisational strength and support base.

When asked about the increasing visits of national leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to Tamil Nadu ahead of the polls, Stalin said their presence would only benefit the DMK. "I have said this repeatedly. The Prime Minister and the Union Home Minister should visit frequently.

Governor R. N. Ravi should continue in office. These are the biggest campaigns for us," he remarked. On a question regarding demands from certain quarters that he take on a lead role in leading the INDIA bloc at the national level, Stalin responded with a reference to late Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi. "I know my heights," he said.

Teamwork Made Police Sports Meet a Success: CP Ramesh Reddy



Meet-2026 held under the Cyberabad Police Commissionerate. At a felicitation event in Gachibowli, he congratulated medal winners and appreciated officers for smooth conduct of the meet from February 18-21. The Commissioner encouraged police personnel to focus

on fitness, professional excellence, and financial discipline, assuring support for talented sportspersons to compete at national level.

Mobile ban in Karnataka schools under discussion, parents also exerting pressure: Deputy CM Shivakumar

Bengaluru (TSIT): Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar on Monday said that the issue of banning mobile phones in schools is under discussion and that there is pressure from parents as well.

"Many countries have implemented such measures. The issue is also being discussed at the international level," he said in response to questions from the media near his residence here.

Asked about restricting mobile phone usage by children in schools, he said: "It is not appropriate to publicly disclose how mobile phones are being misused. That is



why discussions are being held on this issue."

On the issue of banning mobile phones, Home Minister G. Parameshwara stated there has been discussion on imposing a mobile ban in schools and colleges.

Giving mobile phones to children below 16 years of age is affecting their education in different ways, he said. "Many countries have conducted studies and imposed bans on mobile phones. The Chief Minister has also deliberated on this issue. A decision will be taken after studying its pros and cons," he added.

Asked about Minister Mahadevappa raising the issue of a Dalit Chief Minister, Shivakumar said: "He is our national leader. I offer him my greetings from here."

Responding to a question about a report by the National Water Quality Standards

Authority stating that Bengaluru's lake water is not fit for drinking, he said:

"The government has never said that lake water in Bengaluru should be used for drinking or bathing. These lakes exist to recharge groundwater. Water from the Thippagondanahalli reservoir is treated by the BWSSB. Bengaluru's lake water is not meant for drinking or bathing." On the issue of protest by Congress against Viksit Bharat—Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajevika Mission (Gramin) Act, he said the Central government has not issued any clarification or directive.

532 Maoists neutralised, over 2,700 surrendered in Chhattisgarh in two years: Guv Deka

RAIPUR: Chhattisgarh Governor Ramen Deka on Monday declared that the state is on the verge of eliminating Left Wing Extremism, citing a massive crackdown against the menace with 532 Maoists neutralised and more than 2,700 surrendering in the last two years. In his address on the opening day of the Chhattisgarh assembly's budget session, the governor said the state's attractive surrender and rehabilitation policy has encouraged misguided youth to return to the mainstream. He noted that 532 Maoists were neutralised, 2,704 ultras surrendered, and 2,004 were arrested in the state in the last two years. "When the shadow of terror recedes, the light of develop-

ment spreads automatically, and people's lives are illuminated," he said, adding that the government has achieved major success in its campaign to eliminate Maoist extremism. Deka pointed out that in remote areas freed from Maoist influence, basic amenities are being provided through the 'Niyad Nella Nar Yojana', which involves 17 departments and extends benefits of 25 welfare schemes and 18 community facilities to residents. Highlighting infrastructure development in Bastar, he said the government has approved Rs 1,109 crore for 146 road and bridge projects, many of which have been completed, while others are in progress.

As many as 728 mobile towers have been made operational in Maoist-affected regions, and 449 towers upgraded to 4G services. Villages are now connected through DTH services and illuminated with high-mast lamps, he said. The governor also noted improvements in education and healthcare in areas that were once worst-affected by Naxalism. As many as 31 new primary schools and 19 sub-health centres have been sanctioned, while more than 11,000 children and women have been vaccinated under the Niyad Nella Nar Yojana, he said. Deka said Chhattisgarh will host the country's first Khelo India Tribal Games to show-



case its rich tribal culture. "The world will now see the grand Chitrakote waterfall in Bastar instead of smoke from gunpowder," he remarked, adding that after the successful Bastar Olympics, the government is organising the Surjuja Olympics.

of paddy were procured from 25.24 lakh farmers at the minimum support price (MSP) this year, with payments of Rs 33,431 crore. Under the 'Krishak Unnati Yojana', an additional Rs 10,292 crore will be disbursed to these farmers before the Holi festival against the paddy procurement, he said, adding that 24.72 lakh cultivators have been benefiting from the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme. The governor further pointed out that a centre of excellence is being set up at Indira Gandhi Krishi Vishwavidyalaya in Raipur with assistance from Bhabha Atomic Research Centre at a cost of Rs 6 crore to enhance the shelf life of foodgrains.

Under the 'Mahtari Vandan Yojana', about 69 lakh women have been receiving Rs 1,000 per month directly in their bank accounts, with Rs 15,596 crore disbursed in 24 instalments so far, he said. The governor pointed out that Chhattisgarh ranks first in the country in issuing forest rights titles, with more than 4.83 lakh individual and 48,251 community forest rights pattas distributed. He also highlighted the state's new industrial policy, which has attracted investment proposals worth Rs 7.83 lakh crore, including in the semiconductor, information technology, pharma and artificial intelligence sectors. A 300-bed super-specialty hospital will be built in Nava Raipur in collaboration with

Bombay Hospital at a cost of Rs 680 crore, he said. Referring to infrastructure expansion, Deka said that two new expressways — Raipur-Visakhapatnam and Raipur-Dhanbad — are under construction. The Mukhyamantri Gramin Bus Seva Yojana has connected 330 remote villages to bus services for the first time, he said. Deka also noted that the forest and tree cover in the state has increased by 683 sq km, the highest in the country, as per the Indian State of Forest Report. The governor said Chhattisgarh has prepared the 'Anjor Vision Document' to achieve the goal of becoming a developed state by 2047, and has been progressing steadily towards realising this vision.

Shirtless protest at AI Summit: Delhi Police nabs Youth Congress worker in Gwalior, total arrests 5

NEW DELHI: Delhi Police has made the fifth arrest in connection with the shirtless protest by the Indian Youth Congress workers at the AI Impact Summit here last week, an official said on Monday. The accused, identified as Jitendra Yadav, was apprehended from Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh, taking the total number of arrests in the case to five, police said. On Friday, a group of Indian Youth Congress (IYC) workers staged a dramatic shirtless protest at an exhibition hall during the Bharat Mandapam, walking around holding T-shirts with slogans against the government and the India-US trade deal printed on them, before being whisked away by security personnel present at the venue. Delhi Police arrested four IYC workers on Friday of the protest, with officials



saying a wider conspiracy angle in the matter was under investigation. The issue triggered a political slugfest with the BJP calling it a "shameful act to tarnish India's image on the global stage", and the IYC defending it as a "peaceful" demonstration aimed at safeguarding national interests. According to police, the IYC workers on Friday entered the lobby area of

Hall No. 5 and raised slogans after removing the T-shirts worn under their shirts. According to police sources, the protesters allegedly registered online to obtain QR codes to enter the venue. The accused had initially planned to paste printed stickers on black umbrellas and sneak them into the Bharat Mandapam. However, they later felt that the black umbrellas

might draw the attention of the security personnel manning the gates, so they changed their plan and got the printed stickers placed on T-shirts and wore them under their shirts, a source said. Once inside, they raised slogans after removing the shirts worn over slogan-printed T-shirts, which read "PM is compromised", "India-US Trade Deal" and "Epstein Files". The sources claimed the protesters also manhandled some police officers on duty, and the entire matter is under investigation. The investigators are also probing the financial trail behind the protest, including who funded printing slogans on the T-shirts. IYC president Uday Bhanu Chib was earlier questioned in connection with the case, and more names have surfaced during interrogation of the accused, the sources said.

Air pollution: SC seeks replies of Centre on proposal to shift coal-based industries out of NCR

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Monday sought responses of the union ministries on a proposal for shifting all coal-based industries out of Delhi-NCR to ensure better air quality. In a bid to deal with the persistent air quality crisis in the National Capital Region (NCR), a bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and justices Joydip Bagchi Vipul M Pancholi said it will examine the issue of vehicular air pollution on March 12 based on the suggestions made by the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM). It also sought responses of all the stakeholders on the measures suggested by the CAQM to deal with dust due to construction and demolition activities. The top court sought responses of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), MoPNG (Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas) and the Ministry of Power on the suggestions that no new coal-based thermal power plant be set up within 300 km of Delhi. The court directed Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and Rajasthan to issue public notices inviting suggestions and objections from stakeholders, including the coal-based industries in the NCR. These notices will be deemed as served



by the court, and the states must submit an "Action Taken Plan" detailing the feedback received. It asked the MoEFCC, the MoPNG and Ministry of Power to submit a joint proposal aimed at phasing out coal-based industries within the NCR. "The proposal shall firstly identify the industries and determine what alternative fuel sources can be provided for them," the bench ordered. The bench directed the Government of NCT of Delhi (GNCTD) to submit a

specific action plan to implement these CAQM-recommended long-term solutions. "The Commission has identified the concerned agencies expected to take action. We consequently direct the Delhi government to submit a proposed action plan to give effect to these measures," the bench stated. The bench has now directed all stakeholders to file their respective status reports and proposals before the next hearing on March 12.

Former railway minister Mukul Roy dies at 71

KOLKATA: Former railway minister Mukul Roy, once regarded as West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's most trusted lieutenant and the TMC's principal strategist, died of cardiac arrest at a private hospital here early on Monday. He was 71, and is survived by his son, Subhranshu Roy. He breathed his last around 1.30 am at the hospital in Salt Lake, Subhranshu Roy said. He had been suffering from multiple ailments and was in and out of the hospital over the past two years. Family members said he had also been diagnosed with dementia and had recently gone into a coma. His body will be taken to his residence before the last rites are performed later in the day, they said. A former Union minister and two-time Rajya Sabha member from West Bengal, Roy's four-decade-long political journey saw his stints



in the Congress, TMC and the BJP. His political career began with the Youth Congress, before he joined hands with Banerjee when she broke away from the grand old party to form the Trinamool Congress in 1998. As a founding member, he quickly emerged as one of the key organisational pillars of the fledgling party and went on to serve as its general secretary. He was elected to the Rajya Sabha in 2006 and became the party's leader in the Upper House in 2009, turning into TMC's principal trou-

bling the new regime's political base. However, his career was not without controversy. His name had surfaced in the Saradha chit fund case and the Narada sting operation. By 2017, relations between Roy and the TMC leadership had deteriorated. In November that year, he joined the BJP in a move that altered the state's political equations. Tasked with strengthening the BJP's organisation in West Bengal, Roy was credited by party leaders with helping engineer defections from the TMC and expanding the saffron party's base ahead of the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, in which the BJP won 18 of the state's 42 seats. He was elected as a BJP MLA from the Krishnanagar Uttar constituency in the 2021 West Bengal assembly elections. Within months, however, he returned to the TMC, triggering legal and political wrangling. Subsequently, a

court disqualified him as an MLA under the anti-defection law for switching parties after being elected on a BJP ticket. Though he rejoined the TMC, Roy never regained the political centrality he once enjoyed. As his health declined, he gradually withdrew from active politics. Often described as the 'Chanakya' of West Bengal politics during his prime, Roy remained a pivotal figure in the state's turbulent political landscape -- a strategist who operated as comfortably in Delhi's power corridors as in the backrooms of Kolkata's party offices. Leader of the opposition in the state assembly, Suvendu Adhikari, condoled Roy's death. In an X post, he wrote, "Deeply disheartened to learn about the sad demise of senior politician, Shri Mukul Roy. My sincere condolences to his family. Praying that his soul attains eternal peace. Om Shanti."

Sale of dates skyrocket by 80 per cent in Delhi during Ramzan

NEW DELHI: With the holy month of Ramzan underway, Muslims across the country are observing the tradition of breaking their fast with dates, a practice rooted in the teachings of Prophet Muhammad, driving a significant surge in sales of the fruit in city markets. The price of the fruit ranges from Rs 80 to a whopping Rs 2,200 per kg. Mufti Mukarram Ahmed, the shahi imam of the Fatehpuri Masjid, told PTI that Prophet Muhammad consumed dates during 'Iftar'. According to the Mufti, the Prophet said that breaking the fast with dates, water, or milk brings great merit. He added that dates were among the Prophet's favourite fruits, and all Muslims strived to break their fast with dates. Along with religious beliefs, nutritionists also say that the natural sugars and essential nutrients in dates help provide instant energy after fasting.

Nidhi Sahay, head of the diabetes department at Medanta Hospital in Noida, told PTI that after fasting all day, the body needs some energy immediately, and when fasting, people eat dates; it is an easy way to restore the necessary energy. She said, "Dates are an excellent source of nutrients like fibre, potassium, magnesium, iron, small amounts of calcium, and phosphorus. Additionally, dates contain vitamin B6 and antioxidant properties that can promote heart health, aid digestion, and be beneficial for immunity." Sahay said that fasting people should eat one to three dates at 'Iftar' time to maintain energy. With the onset of the Islamic holy month, date sales in the market have increased by approximately 80 per cent. Abdul Gaffar, a date trader at Azadpur Mandi, told PTI that date sales increase by 70-80 per cent during Ramzan, and all types of dates are sold.

Raja, a date retailer in East Delhi, also reported an 80 per cent rise in sales of this fruit during this month, saying that dates are available in the market at prices ranging from Rs 100 to Rs 2,200 per kg. He said that people generally buy dates at prices ranging from Rs 300 to Rs 500 per kg, which include Tunisian dates, 'Bam', 'Maryam', and 'Kaloof'. Raja explained that the Medina's 'Kalmi' species of the fruit is also highly sought after, selling for Rs 500-700 per kg. Regarding expensive date varieties, he explained that these include dates like Amber, Ajwa, Berni, and Medjoul, which cost between Rs 1000 and Rs 2200 per kg, typically from Medina. Raja stated that the most expensive date is the 'Medjoul', which sells for Rs 2000-2200 per kg. 'Medjoul' from Medina sells for Rs 2,200 per kg, and that from Jordan for Rs 1,600.

NHRC takes cognisance of Indian workers held 'captive' in Thailand, seeks comments from MEA

NEW DELHI: The NHRC on Monday said it has taken cognisance of reports that at least six Indian workers were allegedly held captive by their employer near Bangkok for the last six months, and sought comments from the MEA. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) said it has sought comments from the Ministry of External Affairs within a week on "whether it could render any assistance to the families of the victims". In a statement, the rights panel said it has taken suo motu cognisance of a media report that "at least six persons from Kendrapara district of Odisha have been held captive by their employer for the last six months in an area near Bangkok in Thailand". The incident came to light on February 17 when the victims

recorded a video describing their plight, it said. "They are being confined inside the factory and being subjected to physical as well as mental torture by their employer," the rights panel said, quoting the reports. The Commission has observed that the content of the news report, if true, raise a serious issue of human rights violation of the workers. Therefore, it has sought the comments of the MEA on whether they could render any assistance to the families of the victims. The response is expected within a week, the statement said. According to the media report, carried on February 19, the workers had gone to Thailand in August last year through a labour contractor, who had promised them a good job with a handsome salary.

Discrimination against women prevalent, female foeticide crude manifestation of such social malady: SC

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Monday said discrimination against women, more particularly against the girl child, is widely prevalent across several parts of the country and female foeticide is a crude manifestation of this social malady. A bench of Justices Manoj Misra and Ujjal Bhuyan refused to quash a case lodged against a Gurugram-based radiologist for offences under the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) (PCPNDT) Act, 1994, and said it cannot nip the trial against him in the bud. "Discrimination against the girl child and by extension women is still prevalent in several parts of the country. Crude and ugly manifestation of such social malady is in the form of female foeticide. The first step towards the commission of such an offence is in

the sex determination of the foetus," the bench said. It added that Parliament has stepped in to not only outlaw sex determination and selection but also to prohibit all related pre-conception and pre-natal techniques and procedures, making it mandatory to maintain the relevant record in the prescribed format. "Non-maintenance of the record in the prescribed form would be an offence under the PCPNDT Act and Rules. In so far as the present case is concerned, prima facie, it has come on record that the appellant had conducted ultrasonography on the pregnant woman. "Whether or not he has maintained the record as required under the law, in addition to non-disclosure of the sex of the foetus, is a matter for trial. Therefore, it is not a case where the trial should be nipped in the bud," the bench



said. Refusing to interfere with an order of the Punjab and Haryana High Court, it said the case pending before the Gurugram judicial magistrate cannot be quashed. "Therefore, no interference is called for in the impugned judgment and order of the high court. However, we make it clear that we have not expressed any opinion on the merit of the allegations and all contentions qua reliability

and admissibility of evidence are kept open," the apex court said. It, however, found fault with the procedure adopted in the raid conducted against the radiologist and said the civil surgeon is the chairperson of the District Appropriate Authority under the PCPNDT Act but the communication issued by him does not indicate any decision being taken collectively by the authority to conduct a raid on the prem-

ises of appellant Naresh Kumar Garg. "Nothing has been placed on record by the respondents to show that there was any meeting of mind of the members of the District Appropriate Authority on the basis of which the chairperson had issued the communication/order dated September 17, 2015. "If that be the position, then the ratio in Ravindra Kumar (an earlier verdict) would be applicable to this case as well, on the basis of which the search carried out by the District Appropriate Authority, Gurugram, at Vatika Medicare i.e. the premises where the appellant worked, would be illegal..." the bench said. It said the PCPNDT Act of 1994 was enacted to prohibit sex selection, leading to female foeticide, and aims to arrest the declining sex ratio in the country. "The objectives of the PCPNDT Act declare that the

said Act provides for prohibition of sex selection, before or after conception, and for regulation of pre-natal diagnostic techniques to prevent their misuse for sex determination, leading to female foeticide, and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto," it said. Elaborating on the objective of the law, the bench said a skewed sex ratio is likely to lead to greater incidences of violence against women and an increase in practices of trafficking, bride-buying etc. "It is an effort to save the girl child. The focus of the PCPNDT Act is to protect the right to life of the girl child under Article 21 of the Constitution of India," the bench said, adding that with a view to prevent such a crime and align with the global perspective for a discrimination-free world that the law was enacted.

EDITORIAL

WANTED, DESPERATELY: A 'FIXER' FOR RAHUL GANDHI

Optics are important in politics. And the optics have been damaging for the Congress in recent days as assembly polls near in five states, of which the party has high stakes in at least three: Kerala, Assam and Tamil Nadu. There was barely time to bask in the satisfaction of having resolved its Shashi Tharoor problem in Kerala with a peace meeting between the disgruntled Thiruvananthapuram MP and Rahul Gandhi when the Congress found itself fire-fighting again, this time on all sides. In Assam, its former state chief, Bhupen Borah, quit to join the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). He left despite Rahul Gandhi's personal intervention to persuade him otherwise, and as he quit, he fired a parting shot intended to hurt by raking up BJP allegations against his successor Gaurav Gogoi's "Pakistani links".

Firefighting Everywhere

In Tamil Nadu, the Congress's staunchest ally, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), served notice to dump the Congress unless it agreed to the following: one, take action against two leaders considered part of Rahul Gandhi's durbar, Praveen Chakravarty and Manik Tagore, for their sustained campaign to launch a separate Congress-led front with film actor Vijay's fledgling Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK); two, come to the table without further ado for seat-sharing negotiations on the DMK's terms.

The unkindest cut came from Kerala, where long-time Gandhi family loyalist, Mani Shankar Aiyar, took pot shots at two other Rahul durbaris, KC Venugopal and Pawan Khara, and predicted a third successive win for the Left Front. "I am a Rajivian, not a Rahulian," he declared in typical Mani style. Almost simultaneously, another family friend and INDIA bloc ally, Farooq Abdullah of the National Conference, also forecast a Left Front victory in the state. Aiyar and Abdullah may not count for anything in Kerala, but when friends and allies use the Congress as target practice, it makes for embarrassing headlines in a state where the party fancies its chances at forming the next government.

What Ahmed Patel Did For Sonia

Could the Congress have done damage control and saved itself from poor optics on the eve of crucial state elections? Perhaps. But for that, Rahul Gandhi would need to take a leaf out of his mother Sonia Gandhi's playbook and find himself an effective political aide, as she had in the late Ahmed Patel. Whatever his faults and shortcomings were, Patel earned his stripes in his long innings as Sonia Gandhi's chief factotum, serving as troubleshooter, party handler, backroom strategist and communication channel with allies during the UPA years. He was the first port of call for anyone who wanted a word with Sonia Gandhi and readily worked the phone lines or held lengthy in-person meetings late into the night to crack the whip, hammer out compromises and strike deals. Sonia Gandhi stepped in after Patel had prepared the ground for her. Although there were times when he was accused of making tactical errors and playing favourites, there is little doubt that he was largely instrumental in helping Sonia Gandhi to steer the UPA ship through two successive terms in power. A Crucial Difference Congress watchers see many similarities between Rahul Gandhi and his mother. Both are uncomfortable with messy situations - inevitable in the rough and tumble of politics - instinctively shy away from taking hard decisions, and rarely engage with knotty organisational issues.

Flashy advertising, flashy packaging and misleading claims

- Dr. Satyavan Saurabh

(Right to Informed Choice in the Changing Nutrition Landscape)

India's nutrition landscape is undergoing rapid change. For a long time, public policy focused on hunger, malnutrition, and food availability, but today the country faces a dual nutrition crisis. While undernutrition, anemia, and stunting persist among children and women, non-communicable diseases such as obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease are rapidly increasing, the situation is not just a health issue, but also a social, economic, and human development issue. A significant driver of this shift is the changing food consumption habits. Traditional home-cooked meals have been replaced by canned, packaged, and highly processed foods. These products are often high in sugar, salt, and saturated fat. Attractive advertising, flashy packaging, and misleading claims lead consumers to believe these products are safe or healthy. As a result, consumers make decisions without understanding the actual nutritional value. In such an environment, the need for clear and simple labeling on the front of the package emerges. Traditional nutrition labels are often provided in small print on the back of the package, making it difficult for the average consumer to understand. In contrast, large, clear signs on the front of the package—such as "high sugar," "high salt," or "high fat"—can immediately alert the consumer. This system removes complexity from information and makes it available at a practical level. The right to informed choice is fundamental to consumer protection. However, in the context of food, this right is not merely market-related, but also intertwined with the right to life and health. Article 21 of the Indian Constitution guarantees life and personal liberty, which judicial interpretation has included the right to health. The right to life remains incomplete if citizens do not have access to information about whether a food product is harmful to their health. Therefore, clear labeling can be a means of realizing the constitutional right to health. An information imbalance between producer and



consumer is common in market systems. Producers have complete knowledge of their product's composition, ingredients, and potential effects, while consumers make decisions based on limited information. Front-package labeling attempts to mitigate this imbalance. When information is simple, direct, and warning-like, consumers make more informed choices. International experience demonstrates the effectiveness of this approach. For example, Chile saw a decrease in the consumption of high-sugar and high-fat products after implementing clear warning labels. This demonstrates that positive changes in consumer behavior are possible if information is accessible and clear. This system is also crucial for preventive health. The cost of treating non-communicable diseases is significant for both families and governments. Controlling dietary risk factors early can reduce disease burden in the long run. Simple labeling allows consumers to prioritize health in small daily decisions. This reinforces public health policy's emphasis on prevention rather than treatment. Clear and explanatory labeling systems have also been recognized as effective globally. The World Health Organization has noted

that simple, warning-based signs, especially in developing countries, increase consumer understanding and help change dietary behaviors. This motivates not only consumers but also product manufacturers to improve the composition of their products. Some in the industry argue that strict labeling could reduce sales and impact smaller producers. However, experience shows that when clear standards are set, the industry adapts through innovation and restructuring. If consumers begin to avoid products high in sugar or salt, producers naturally try to reduce their levels. Thus, labeling promotes healthy competition. In the Indian context, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India is responsible for food regulation. Furthermore, the Supreme Court of India has emphasized transparency and accountability in matters of public health. This clearly indicates that food labeling is not merely an administrative formality but a matter of broad public interest. However, there are several challenges to implementing this system. The first is resistance from industry, which views it as economically detrimental. The second is disagreement over the format of labeling—whether to adopt a warn-

ing-based model or some sort of grading system. The third challenge is enforcement and monitoring, as millions of food products are available in the country. The fourth challenge is consumer literacy, especially in rural and low-income groups, where nutrition awareness is limited. These challenges can be addressed through a balanced and phased policy approach. Widespread public awareness campaigns, the use of simple symbols, and strict enforcement mechanisms can help in this direction. Strengthening nutrition education at the school and community levels is also essential to ensure effective understanding of labeling messages. Ultimately, front-of-package labeling is an important tool to empower the right to informed choice in the changing nutritional landscape. It transforms consumers from passive buyers to active and informed citizens. Based on the principles of transparency, accountability, and preventive health, this system can move India from a treatment-focused approach to a health-oriented food system. If implemented with strong political will, scientific foundation, and social participation, it can prove to be a decisive step towards a healthy, capable, and aware India.

India Shouldn't Sign A Deal With A Court-Defeated Trump

The United States Supreme Court has removed the legal foundation on which Washington's sweeping reciprocal tariffs were constructed. In *Learning Resources, Inc. v. Trump*, Chief Justice John Roberts wrote that the President claimed the power to impose tariffs "on imports from any country, of any product, at any rate, for any amount of time". The Court held that such authority does not exist under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act. Congress alone retains the taxing power. Emergency tariffism, as practised over the past year, is unconstitutional. Against this background, India should pause. It has rightly postponed its meeting on the proposed interim trade pact. Figures That Keep Changing The interim trade framework finalised by India and the US in early February was negotiated under the shadow of a 50% tariff regime, including a 25% penalty linked to Russian oil purchases. The deal reduced India's exposure to 18% under a reciprocal tariff structure. Within days of the Court's ruling, that 18% fell to 10% under Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974, a temporary surcharge capped at 150 days. The legal and economic baseline has shifted materially. To sign a binding agreement while the tariff instrument set of the United States is in flux would be strategically imprudent. That interim framework included significant Indian concessions, with India agreeing to either completely eliminate or reduce tariffs on all US industrial goods and a wide range of agricultural products. The deal commits to addressing long-standing non-tariff barriers, including in medical devices and ICT (information and communication technology) goods, and to determine within six months whether US or international standards are acceptable in identified sectors. It signals intent to purchase \$500 billion of US energy, aircraft, technology products, and other goods over five years, and also accepts monitoring and reimposition clauses linked to Russian oil imports. In return, the United States applies an 18% reciprocal tariff rate and promises conditional removals under annexed procedures. That rate was already substantially above the pre-

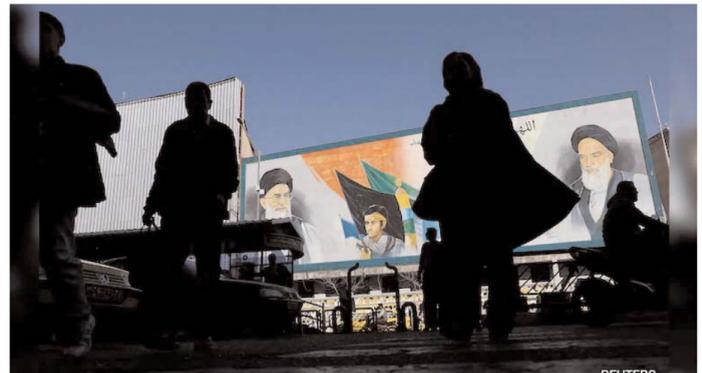


2025 average US tariff of roughly 2.5% on Indian goods. Trump had announced that temporarily, this would be 10% for all countries. Within a day, he said it would be 15% globally. The asymmetry has narrowed, but the structure remains unsettled. There are Three Technical Reasons to Wait First, authority risk. The Supreme Court has made clear that sweeping tariff action requires clear congressional authorisation. The administration has pivoted to Section 122 for temporary surcharges and signalled reliance on Section 301 and Section 232 investigations for sector-specific action. These are slower, procedurally constrained and litigable. The United States still retains leverage, but the mode of leverage has changed. Any agreement signed today prices in a tariff authority that no longer exists in the form previously exercised. Second, durability risk. The interim agreement includes a clause allowing either party to modify commitments if tariffs change. If the US reconfigures its tariffs through statutory pathways after the 150-day window, India may find itself in serial renegotiations. Waiting until the US settles into a post-ruling tariff framework would allow India to negotiate against a clearer, steady state rather than a transitional regime. Third, strategic conditionality. The framework links trade concessions to energy sourcing, defence cooperation and broader economic security alignment. Trade is not

being negotiated in isolation. The US President has publicly framed tariffs as instruments of geopolitical leverage. Even if some of this rhetoric is political theatre, the structure of the agreement embeds monitoring and reimposition mechanisms. Signing under temporary tariff relief may lock India into durable external oversight in domains that extend beyond trade. Testing The Waters The counterargument is serious. The trade agreement was good for us because tariffs on India were better than those on its competitors. Now that the flat rate of 15% applies across the board, committing ourselves to something that might end up being higher than our competitors doesn't make any sense. Further, if Section 122 expires without congressional extension, the tariff structure will change again. If Section 301 investigations are launched, sectoral tariffs could rise in politically sensitive areas. If Congress asserts itself more strongly post the Supreme Court ruling, the trade landscape could shift toward legislated constraints. Signing a deal now would convert provisional leverage into irreversible concessions. Waiting does not mean walking away. It means sequencing. India can maintain the interim framework, continue negotiations toward the broader Bilateral Trade Agreement, and insist that final commitments be aligned with the post-litigation US tariff architecture.

The Unsettling Iranian 'War Logic' Trump May Be Ignoring

Post-World War II, the US has repeatedly failed to translate its military superiority into lasting political victories in the "nation-building" wars it has so far waged. Relatively smaller operations like Kosovo or, more recently, Venezuela aside, most of its other 'interventions' have failed. The Korean War was a stalemate, and Vietnam a humiliating retreat. The prevailing situation in the Gulf reminds one of the premature claims of victory after the First Gulf War. Saddam Hussein may have been ousted from power, but the current dispensation in Baghdad is equally sectarian (read pro-Iran). Libya post-Gaddafi is hardly a nation-state, much like the chaos in Yemen or Somalia. The ouster of Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad has led to a former al-Qaeda leader, Ahmed al-Sharaa, taking the reins. The longest American war, which went on for over two decades and was also the most expensive one (\$2 trillion), resulted in a hasty abandonment, only to hand Afghanistan back to the Taliban. Can Iran Be Subdued? This is hardly a reassuring list as Donald Trump lines up American firepower yet again, this time in the Persian Gulf. US forces led by the aircraft carrier strike groups USS Abraham Lincoln and USS Gerald Ford are assuming offensive postures against Iran in a tense battle of who blinks first. Trump's threat of "really bad things" happening is not entirely unfathomable, given that



the US and Israeli forces did jointly hit three Iranian nuclear facilities in Isfahan, Natanz and Fordow in June 2025. So, to that extent, there is a psychological precedent to an attack on Iran, in recent times. While the June 2025 strikes had the relative safety of distance, the current sabre-rattling entails the threat of a full-blown "war". But is it even plausible? Can Iran be coerced into kowtowing to Trump's diktats? Can it be defeated and subjected to a regime change? Can Iran end any differently from the outcomes in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya or Syria? Indeed, Iran will be different from all previous US endeavours. And it's a far more complex and difficult undertaking. The reasons are twofold. Iran Is The 'Nucleus' Of The Islamic World Firstly, attacking Iran will lead to repercussions way beyond Iran itself. Secondly, its history and culture are proof that there is a unique, faith-based behavioural aspect that may

lead to a response that goes way beyond the ordinary. Iran is, above all, a sectarian and theological "idea", which transcends the limited definitions of a nation-state. While Shia theology is not exclusive to one country, with early communities centred around Medina, Kufa, Baghdad and later in Najaf, Karbala et al, post the 1979 Iranian Revolution, Iran became the emotional, spiritual, and political sanctum sanctorum for the 300-million-plus Shias spread across the world, including 25 million in India. The Constitutional foundation and the 'imagined purpose' of Iran is predicated on Wilayat al-Faqih, meaning the "Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist". Under the 'Twelver Shi'ism' framework, which adheres to the belief in twelve divinely ordained leaders known as Imams, the Supreme Leader of Iran, currently Ali Khamenei, becomes the 'Wali al-Faqih', affording him an outsized relevance across the world. The

Theory of Umm al-Qura ("Mother of Cities"), developed by Iranian thinker Mohammad Javad Larjani, also makes Iran central to the Islamic World. This has led to Iran inspiring what is often called the "Axis of Resistance", which manifests in powerful militias such as Hezbollah (Lebanon), Houthis (Yemen), Popular Mobilization Forces (Iraq), Liwa Abu al-Fadhal al-Abbas (Syria), Fatemiyoun Brigade (Afghanistan), and even the Pakistani Zainabiyyoun Brigade. Thus, any American attack on Iran's sovereignty could wound sensibilities way beyond the territorial borders of Iran and elicit global reactions. The 'Appeal' Of Martyrdom Then there is a far more deadly behavioural guarantee in attacking Iran, as it tends to readily invoke the Shi' concept of martyrdom (Shahada), which is considered a deeply theological and spiritual duty that is to be upheld against any perceived enemy.

APPLE'S FIRST EVENT OF 2026 IS UNLIKE ANYTHING IT HAS DONE IN YEARS



Apple has announced its first major event of 2026 on March 4 – and it is shaping up to be a departure from the company's usual play-book. Rather than the familiar gathering at its Cupertino headquarters, the March 4 event will take place simultaneously across three cities: New York, London and Shanghai. The invite itself may be dropping hints about what's coming. It features a 3D Apple logo rendered in yellow, green, and blue, which is a far cry from the company's signature silver and grey aesthetic. Bloomberg's

Mark Gurman has pointed out that these are the same shades Apple has reportedly been testing for its upcoming low-cost MacBook, which has only added to the speculation. What can we expect? The centerpiece is likely to be the affordable MacBook. It is said to be powered by the A18 chip, the same one found in the iPhone 16 Pro, and could feature a 12.9-inch LCD display. If the pricing rumours hold, it may come in under Rs 60,000 in India, which would make it Apple's most accessible laptop in some time. Alongside the

MacBook, Apple is also expected to unveil the iPhone 17e. The device is rumoured to pack the A19 chipset from the iPhone 17 series, with MagSafe charging and slimmer bezels reportedly in the mix, though the rear camera and notch design are said to remain largely unchanged. There's also an updated iPad Air, tipped to get the M4 chip for improved multi-tasking and graphics. Apple may also refresh its base iPad line with the A18 chipset, bringing it up to speed with its more premium siblings.

RBI watching development around IDFC First Bank fraud: Guv Malhotra



Highlights

■ THE RBI IS WATCHING THE DEVELOPMENT AROUND THE RS 590 CRORE FRAUD AT IDFC FIRST BANK AND THERE IS NO SYSTEMIC ISSUE, GOVERNOR SANJAY MALHOTRA SAID ON MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23.

New Delhi: The RBI is watching the development around the Rs 590 crore fraud at IDFC First Bank and there is no systemic issue, Governor Sanjay Malhotra said on

Monday, February 23. IDFC First Bank had on Sunday disclosed a Rs 590-crore fraud committed by certain employees and others at a particular branch in Chandigarh in a specific set of Haryana state government accounts. "We are watching the development, there is no systemic issue," Malhotra told reporters at a press briefing after the customary post budget address by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to the Central Board of Directors of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). IDFC First Bank had said that the fraud is "confined to a specific group of government-linked accounts within Haryana government" operated through the said branch in Chandigarh and stressed that it does not extend to other customers of the Chandigarh branch. IDFC First Bank had on Sunday disclosed a Rs 590-crore fraud committed by certain employees and others at a particular branch in Chandigarh in a specific set of Haryana state government accounts.

US insurance major The Hartford opens Global Tech Centre in Hyderabad



Hyderabad: Telangana Information Technology (IT) and Industries Minister D Sridhar Babu on Monday, February 23, inaugurated the Global Technology Centre of US insurance major The Hartford in Hyderabad, marking the company's first-ever foray into India. The 160,000 sq ft. facility is located in the Financial District in the city's IT hub. The centre is expected to scale to a headcount of nearly 1,200 over the next few years as it expands advanced digital, engineering, and AI-led capabilities for the organisation globally, a state government release said. The facility will support the company's enterprise-wide technology transformation journey, with a strong focus on artificial intelligence (AI), digital innovation and engineering excellence, it

said. Operating in a start-up like environment, the centre is designed for "rapid prototyping and seamless cross-time-zone collaboration with the company's technology hubs in Hartford, Charlotte, Chicago, and Columbus (in the US)", it said. The Hartford's decision to begin its India journey in Hyderabad follows a "familiar pattern", Sridhar Babu said. When Microsoft expanded beyond the United States, their first major development centre outside Mountain View (in the US), Sridhar Babu said. In recent years, global leaders like McDonald's, Vanguard, Dai-ichi Life and Marriott

International have also made Hyderabad their "landing point" in India, building Global Capability Centres (GCCs) that drive advanced digital engineering, AI-led operations and global capability building, he said. "In Hyderabad, we measure our success by the impact we help global institutions create, and we welcome The Hartford as a partner in building the next chapter of digital innovation," he said. "The true strength of The Hartford has always been its people. By building on our world-class workforce with this technology center in Hyderabad, we are not only creating new digital and AI capabilities but also shaping the future of insurance technology," Shekar Pannala, Chief Information Officer of The Hartford, said.

Will comply with NCLAT privacy guidelines: WhatsApp to SC

New Delhi: Global tech giants Meta Platforms Inc. and WhatsApp told the Supreme Court on Monday, February 23, that they will comply with the NCLAT's directions for extending the Competition Commission of India's (CCI) privacy and consent guidelines to advertising-related data. A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi was hearing appeals filed by the tech giants against the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal's (NCLAT) directions of December last year. The court is also seized of a cross-appeal filed by the CCI, assailing the NCLAT ruling to the extent that it allowed WhatsApp and Meta to continue sharing users' data for advertising purposes. "These applications essentially seek a direction for a stay of the impugned judgment of the NCLAT to the extent it approves the direction issued by the CCI direct-



ing Meta to comply with the impugned directions contained in the NCLAT order dated December 15, 2025, containing certain directions issued to Meta," the CJ said. Taking note of the submissions made by senior counsel Kapil Sibal on behalf of WhatsApp that the appellants (the two tech giants) have decided to implement the tribunal's directions by March 16, the CJ dismissed the applications seeking a stay. He, however, clarified that the pleas are being dismissed, without prejudice to the issues in the main appeal. The

CJI also sought a compliance report from the companies. "Meanwhile, the appellants' affidavit regarding the privacy policy may be examined by the CCI and a response be placed on record," he said. WhatsApp is owned by Meta Platforms Inc. The apex court is hearing the appeals of the tech giants against a CCI order that imposed a penalty of Rs 213.14 crore on them over WhatsApp's privacy policy. On February 3, in a stinging rebuke, the court told both the firms that they cannot "play with the right to privacy of citizens in the name of data shar-

ing," and accused them of creating a monopoly in the market and committing theft of customers' private information. Decrying WhatsApp's privacy policy, the court referred to "silent customers", who are unorganised, digitally dependent and unaware of the implications of data-sharing policies, and said, "We will not allow the rights of any citizen of this country to be damaged." On November 4, 2025, the NCLAT set aside a section of a CCI order that had banned the instant-messaging app from sharing data with Meta Platforms for advertising purposes for five years, but retained a Rs 213-crore penalty on the social-media platform. Later, the tribunal clarified that its order in the WhatsApp matter on privacy and consent safeguards also applies to user-data collection and sharing for non-WhatsApp purposes, including non-advertising and advertising.

Hyderabad airport contributes Rs 68,000 crore to Telangana economy: Study

Hyderabad: The Rajiv Gandhi International Airport (RGIA) in Hyderabad has emerged as a major driver of Telangana's economy, contributing nearly Rs 68,000 crore in gross value added (GVA) and supporting about 3.5 lakh jobs, according to a study by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER). The economic impact assessment, carried out by NCAER in October 2025, estimates that the airport accounts for about 4.6 per cent of the state's GVA. The study examined the airport's direct operations as well as the ripple effects generated through supply chains and household spending. RGIA, which began operations in 2008, has grown into a key economic asset for the state. Beyond passenger traffic, it supports trade, cargo movement and investment flows linked to Hyderabad's expanding business base. The study used an input-output framework to assess the airport's direct, indirect and induced impact on out-



put, GVA and employment. Direct impact includes on-site airport operations and related income. Indirect effects arise from procurement and linkages with suppliers, while induced impact reflects spending by employees and others whose livelihoods are connected to airport activity. According to the study, the Hyderabad airport's economic footprint extends well beyond its core aviation services. The integrated cityside development,

including GMR Aerocity, has added commercial offices, hospitality facilities, logistics parks and industrial capacity around the airport, strengthening its contribution to the economy. Cargo operations help connect to global markets. The report also highlighted the importance of cargo operations, particularly in pharmaceuticals and perishables, which have helped connect Hyderabad to global markets. Planned expansion of cargo terminals is

expected to further boost export-linked activity. The study noted that ongoing and proposed capital expenditure at the airport would generate construction employment in the short term and address long-term operational needs across airside, terminal and digital infrastructure. On governance and sustainability, the airport operates under a public-private partnership model, with a focus on service standards and stakeholder accountability.

Olectra secures Letter of Intent from TGSRTC for 1,085 electric buses

Hyderabad: Olectra Greentech Ltd on Monday, February 23, said it has secured a Letter of Intent from the Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TGSRTC) through Evey Trans Pvt Ltd for 1,085 electric buses under the PM E-DRIVE initiative. The Olectra electric buses will be deployed in Hyderabad, further strengthening the city's clean, efficient, and sustainable public transport ecosystem, a release said. Olectra Greentech Ltd Managing Director Mahesh Babu said: "Our continued commitment to the Make in India vision and to building world-class electric buses has received strong reinforcement through this prestigious order under the PM E-DRIVE programme". The company looks forward to working closely with TGSRTC to deliver efficient, comfortable, and sustainable public transportation that meets



the evolving expectations of citizens while contributing meaningfully to India's clean energy and net-zero ambitions, he said. For the order, Olectra buses will feature 12-metre low-floor configurations in both air-conditioned (AC) and non-AC variants, indigenously designed and engineered to suit Indian road conditions and high-frequency urban operations, the release said. Each bus will be equipped with advanced front and rear air suspension systems to enhance ride comfort and passenger safety.

Powered by high-capacity Lithium-ion battery packs offering a range of over 250 kilometres per charge, the buses will support opportunity charging in approximately 45 minutes to ensure operational efficiency, it said. Dedicated wheelchair accommodation will also be integrated, reinforcing Olectra's commitment to accessibility and inclusive mobility, the release added. Olectra buses will feature 12-metre low-floor configurations in both air-conditioned (AC) and non-AC variants.

Landmark Legal Victory for PURE Energy: Court Awards Rs. 50 Lakh in Damages Against Defamatory Social Media Influencer Mr. Aditya Prabhakar (known as "EV TraxelXP")

Hyderabad, February 2026: On January 29, 2026, the Court of the III Additional District and Sessions Judge at Sangareddy delivered a significant judgment in the case of PUR Energy Private Limited vs. M. Prabhakar Aditya (O.S. No. 78 of 2024). The court decreed a recovery of Rs. 50,00,000 (INR 50 Lakhs) in damages in favor of PURE Energy, marking a decisive victory for emerging startup brands against the rising tide of digital extortion and malicious misinformation campaigns orchestrated by social media influencers. **Judicial Findings:** Protecting the Right to Reputation Presiding Judge Smt. G. Sunitha Ravindra Reddy emphasized that the right to reputation is a fundamental right protected under the Constitution of India. The court found that the defendant's, Mr. Aditya Prabhakar (known as "EV TraxelXP"), resident of Ongole, Andhra Pradesh, actions caused "immense loss of reputation" and "irreparable loss which cannot be compensated." The court observed that the defendant, preying on the assumption that the legal system is slow, remained ex-parte (absent) during the proceedings, failing to contest

Landmark Legal Victory: PURE EV vs. YouTube Defamation

THE DISPUTE: MALICIOUS CONTENT & IP INFRINGEMENT

Malicious Content & IP Infringement

The defendant used the plaintiff's trademarked logo to falsely depict vehicles as defective.

Extortionate Motive

Malicious videos were posted after the plaintiff refused legal demands for additional remuneration.

Irreparable Reputational Damage

The court found the videos caused significant loss of goodwill among dealers and customers.

THE VERDICT: COURT DECREE & PENALTIES

Rs. 50,00,000

Awarded in Damages

The court awarded this substantial payment for loss of reputation and business.

Financial Liabilities Imposed

Damages for Defamation: Rs. 20,00,000

Total Legal Costs Awarded: Rs. 73,813

Court Fee Paid on Plaintiff: Rs. 54,256

Mandatory Injunction for Public Apology

The defendant must issue a public apology in newspapers and social media.

Permanent Restraining Order

A permanent injunction prohibits the defendant from using the trademark of plaintiff for defamation.

the evidence provided by PURE Energy. This evidence included snapshots of defamatory comments, copies of emails, and the deceptive videos themselves. The Verdict: Financial and Legal Redress The court ruled entirely in favor of PURE Energy, granting the following reliefs: Beyond the financial penalty, the court issued a mandatory injunction requiring: The immediate take-down of all scandalous and derogatory content. A public apology in both national newspapers and across the defendant's social media platforms. A permanent restraint on the misuse or

dilution of the PURE EV trademark and designs. The Calculated Defamation Campaign The court's findings highlighted a deliberate attempt to tarnish PURE Energy's reputation through a YouTube video titled "One Company Destroyed the EV Industry | Poor EV | Real Face." The defendant's tactics included: Trademark Infringement: Shrewdly replacing the registered trademark "PURE EV" with "POOR EV" to escape liability while ensuring the audience identified the target. Malicious Fabrication: Using mor-

phed images and pasting PURE Energy's logo onto competitor vehicles that had caught fire to falsely represent the plaintiff's products as unsafe and defective. Baseless Allegations: Claiming "Poor Build Quality" despite PURE Energy's vehicles conforming to the best standards, solely to extort money from the brand. Contradictory Conduct: The influencer initially enjoyed a positive engagement to his youtube channel due to the brand. The court noted the defendant had previously praised the vehicles' comfort and mileage during his 30 days Kashmir to Kanyakumari journey on a PURE EV, yet later claimed 30 out of 100 vehicles were defective without having any evidence, a statement found to be made with "mal-intent to demean and devalue the goodwill" of the brand. Significance for the Startup Ecosystem This judgment serves as a landmark precedent for the Indian startup ecosystem. It sends a clear message to influencers and digital content creators that the freedom of expression does not grant a license for trademark infringement, extortion, or the dissemination of false narratives.

'Near impossible' travel conditions in New York as 22 inches of snow falls on US east coast

Power outages are affecting thousands of households and businesses across north-east US. Below are the latest outage figures in key states, according to blackout tracker PowerOutage.us:

- Massachusetts - 224,617
- New Jersey - 137,608
- New York - 17,440
- Delaware - 75,210
- Maryland - 29,553
- Rhode Island - 42,204

Ahead of the storm, Massachusetts governor Maura Healey warned residents to "prepare for the possibility of power outages by charging your devices and making sure you have a flashlight and batteries on hand". As a major winter storm hits parts of the north-east, local authorities and transport providers are urging people to avoid making journeys where possible. Here's a breakdown of the disruption: NJ Transit, which operates in New Jersey, parts of New York state and Pennsylvania,



says all train, bus, light rail and access link services are suspended until further notice. In New York City, some express subway trains are running on the local tracks, but the Metropolitan Transport Authority is warning of severe delays and advising customers to avoid travel. There are longer waits for local buses and articulated buses aren't running. In Connecticut, CT Transit has

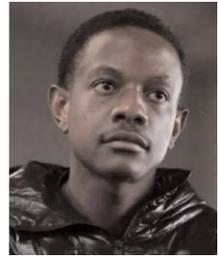
suspended all its bus services for the day, and says it hopes to restart them on Tuesday. Subway, bus and Commuter Rail services are operating on a reduced schedule in Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority says. Ferry services are cancelled. The transport provider in Delaware, DART First State, has suspended all services statewide across Monday

And in Pennsylvania, all bus services are suspended until further notices, according to the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA). Regional rail has also been temporarily suspended. The Philadelphia metro is partially running, but with possible delays and cancellations. Over 5,400 flights to, from or within the US have been cancelled

today, according to tracking website FlightAware. New Yorkers have woken up to between 8 and 15 inches of snow and blizzard conditions are still continuing. It's unusually quiet on the streets as a travel ban stays in effect. More figures are coming through showing how much snowfall landed overnight in the US. "Blizzard conditions and crippling impacts will continue through much of today for the region," says the National Weather Service's prediction centre. The NWS shares the level of snowfall in more key cities as of 07:00 EST (12:00 GMT): Atlantic City Airport, New Jersey: 14.5" (37 cm) Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: 13.7" (35 cm) Wilmington, North Carolina: 8.3" (21 cm) Allentown, Pennsylvania: 5.2" (13 cm) Trenton, New Jersey: 15.6" (40 cm) Reading, Pennsylvania: 2.8" (7 cm)

Mount Holly, New Jersey: 19.2" (49 cm) I've been watching a neighbour trying to clear a path to their front door all morning. So far the blizzard is winning. Another neighbour tells me they've spent an hour trying to shovel out their car. The sleet shifted to heavy snow here in New York about 18:00 on Sunday, and it hasn't let up since. It's still dumping down, and sometimes comes at you sideways with the blustery winds. As we reported earlier, more than 5,000 flights heading in and out of the US have been cancelled today. One of the most impacted airports is LaGuardia in New York, where 1,025 flights are cancelled. We're now seeing photos come through of LaGuardia, which is covered in snow. Mari Scheiffele is snowed in at home in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She says the weather has worsened over the last couple of hours.

Robert Mugabe's son charged with attempted murder in South Africa



The youngest son of Zimbabwe's late former President Robert Mugabe has been formally charged with attempted murder at a brief appearance in a South African court. Bellarmine Mugabe, 26, was arrested last week after a 23-year-old man was shot and injured at a property in an upmarket suburb of Johannesburg last Thursday. He was then taken into custody alongside his bodyguard - neither man has commented on the charges. Appearing in court, dressed in black, Mugabe looked calm during the proceedings. Bellarmine is the youngest son of Robert and his second wife Grace Mugabe. Robert

Mugabe, who died in 2019, led Zimbabwe for 37 years before being forced out of power at the age of 93 in 2017. Searching the property in Hyde Park where the shooting happened, police have found bullet cartridges but no firearm so far. Mugabe and Tobias Tamirepi Matonhodze, 33, also face additional charges, including defeating the ends of justice, which relates to the missing firearm, prosecutors say. The victim is in hospital and in a critical condition. Speaking outside court, Mugabe's lawyer Sinenhlanhla Mnguni provided an update on his well-being, telling reporters his client was "fine" as he remains in custody. Describing the circumstances of the shooting, prosecutors allege that "an altercation occurred between the victim and the accused inside Mugabe's home". While attempting to flee the victim was then allegedly "shot in the back and collapsed outside the gate" and the gate was then closed, according to a statement from the National Prosecuting Authority.

Armed man killed after entering secure perimeter of Trump's residence, Secret Service says



An armed man has been shot dead after entering the secure perimeter of US President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago residence in Florida, the Secret Service has said. The man was carrying a shotgun and fuel can when he was stopped and shot by Secret Service agents and a Sheriff's deputy, authorities said. The incident happened around 01:30 ET (06:30 GMT) on Sunday morning, when the president was in Washington DC. The suspect has been named as 21-year-old Austin T Martin of Cameron, North Carolina, according to the BBC's US partner CBS. His family in North Carolina had reported him missing in the early hours of Sunday morning, the Moore County Sheriff's Office said in a statement to the BBC. The missing persons information has since been turned over to federal authorities, the sheriff's office said. They added that the department had no record of prior history concerning Martin and that it was not involved in the Florida investigation. Officials are

looking into whether he bought the gun along the driving route he took from North Carolina to Florida, according to CBS. US Secret Service agents fired at him after they saw him "unlawfully entering the secure perimeter at Mar-a-Lago early this morning", agency spokesman Anthony Guglielmi posted on X on Sunday. The suspect "was observed by the north gate of the Mar-a-Lago property carrying what appeared to be a shotgun and a fuel can", the agency said in a statement. The man was then shot after refusing orders, Palm Beach County Sheriff Ric Bradshaw said. "The only words that we said to him was 'drop the items', which means the gas can and the shotgun," Bradshaw told a news conference. "At which time he put down the gas can, raised the shotgun to a shooting position," he said. At that point, agents fired their weapons to "neutralise the threat", Bradshaw added. The officers were wearing body cameras and no law enforcement officers were injured, he said.

BONES OF ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI GO ON PUBLIC DISPLAY IN ITALY



The remains of Italy's patron saint, St Francis of Assisi, have gone on public display to mark 800 years since his death. Italian officials say about 400,000 people from around the world have reserved a place to see his bones in the central Italian town of Assisi. The 13th Century skeleton is being displayed from Sunday at the lower church of the famous Basilica of St Francis of Assisi. His

remains have only been seen in public once before - for a single day in 1978 to a very limited group of people. St Francis is one of the most venerated figures in Christianity and was born in the Italian city of Assisi in 1181 or 1182. He renounced his wealth and devoted his life to the poor, founding the order of the Franciscans. He is also the patron saint of animals and the environment.

Four years into its full-scale war in Ukraine, Russia is feeling the effects

At first glance, Yelets in winter looks like something from a Russian fairy tale. From the embankment I spy the golden domes of Orthodox churches and, down below, ice fishermen dotted along the frozen river. But in this town, 350km (217 miles) south of Moscow, the fairy tale feeling is transient. On the riverbank I spot an army recruitment billboard. It promises a one-off sum equivalent to £15,000 to anyone who'll sign up to fight in Ukraine. Close by there's a poster of a Russian soldier taking aim with a Kalashnikov. "We're there where we need to be," the accompanying slogan declares. The Kremlin launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24



February 2022. Outside Russia it was widely seen as an attempt to force Kyiv back into Moscow's orbit and to overturn the entire post-Cold War security architecture in Europe. The Russian leadership envisaged a short and successful military operation. It didn't go to plan. Four years later, Russia's war on Ukraine grinds on. It has lasted

longer than Nazi Germany's brutal war on the Soviet Union, known here as the Great Patriotic War. And, in this town, you can see some of the consequences. A giant mural fills one side of a nine-storey Yelets apartment block. Depicted here are the faces of five Russian soldiers, local men killed fighting in Ukraine. "Glory to the heroes of Russia!" has

been painted at the top. The Russian authorities do not release casualty figures for the so-called "special military operation". But Russia is known to have suffered huge battlefield losses. So many of the towns and villages I've visited in the last two years have had museums and monuments dedicated to soldiers killed in Ukraine, as well as separate sections for recent war dead at local cemeteries. "My friend's husband was killed fighting there. The son of my cousin, too. And grandson," says Irina, who has stopped to chat to me opposite the mural. "Lots of people have been killed. I feel sorry for these lads." Irina is a ticket collector at the bus station. She struggles to make ends meet.

CARTEL HENCHMEN UNLEASH VIOLENCE AFTER TOP DRUG LORD KILLED IN MEXICO

Members of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG), one of the most powerful and feared criminal organisations in Mexico, have unleashed a wave of violence across 20 Mexican states. They torched businesses and erected burning blockades in retaliation to the killing of their leader, Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes, better known as "El Mencho", who died in custody on Sunday shortly after being captured by Mexican special forces. El Mencho, Mexico's most wanted man, was seriously injured in a firefight between his bodyguards and the military commandos deployed to capture him. He died while the military was transport-



ing him from the town of Tapalpa, in Jalisco state, to the capital, Mexico City. At least six of El Mencho's security guards were also killed in the operation, while three members of the Mexican military were injured, the defence ministry said. As news of El Mencho's death

spread, members of his cartel launched attacks in many towns and cities where the CJNG is active. In some towns, they blocked roads by throwing spikes and nails on to the tarmac - in others, they commandeered buses and other vehicles they then torched in the middle of the

road. Cartel members also set alight dozens of banks and local businesses such as pharmacies. Footage recorded by locals showed plumes of smoke rising above several towns and cities, including the beach resort of Puerto Vallarta, which is popular with tourists. In Guadalajara - one of the host cities of the forthcoming Fifa World Cup - travellers at the airport could be seen running and crouching on the floor in panic. News site Milenio reported that the panic spread when a group came running into the airport to seek shelter after they had heard gunshots ring out from the nearby highway.

ROB JETTEN BECOMES NETHERLANDS' YOUNGEST EVER PM



Rob Jetten has become the youngest and first openly gay prime minister of the Netherlands after his minority government was sworn in. The 38-year-old claimed victory in October's election with his Democrats 66 party (D66) narrowly beating anti-Islam populist Geert Wilders in a nail-biting election. Jetten formed a centre-right minority government with the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) and the Christian Democratic Alliance (CDA). It is a minority cabinet, meaning every major reform in the coalition deal - from an extra 19bn (£16.6bn) for defence to painful cuts in healthcare and benefits - will have to be negotiated vote by vote in the Netherlands' two parliamentary houses. The coalition also wants fewer asylum seekers, with refugees having to apply for asylum outside Europe, not after they arrive. Asylum migration has been a particularly sensitive issue in Dutch pol-

itics, contributing to the downfall of the country's last two coalition governments. Jetten succeeds Dick Schoof as prime minister who oversaw one of the shortest-lived governments in Dutch history. D66 will provide seven ministers, VVD will provide six, and CDA five, with three state secretaries each - junior members of cabinet. Jetten was formally sworn in by King Willem-Alexander at the Huis ten Bosch Palace in The Hague on Monday. Posting a selfie ahead of his swearing-in ceremony, Jetten wrote on X: "Proud to be doing this together. In a new phase, with great responsibility and, above all, a shared promise to work for everyone in the Netherlands." "By not dwelling on what's wrong, but by building on what can be improved. That requires courage and collaboration." "Let's get to work! Slick, smiling and patient, Jetten has spent years shaking off the nickname "Robot Jetten", earned for his stiff.

PUTIN MUST BE STOPPED: ZELENSKY

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky continues to send out a firm message of defiance. When we met this weekend in the government headquarters in Kyiv, he said that far from losing, Ukraine would end the war victorious. He was firmly against paying the price for a ceasefire deal demanded by President Vladimir Putin, which is withdrawing from strategic ground that Russia has failed to capture despite sacrificing tens of thousands of soldiers. Putin, Zelensky told me, has already started World War Three, and the only answer was intense military and economic pressure to force him to step back. "I believe that Putin has already started it. The question is how much territory he will be able to seize and how to stop him..."

Russia wants to impose on the world a different way of life and change the lives people have chosen for themselves." What about Russia's demand for Ukraine to hand over the 20% of the eastern region of Donetsk that it still holds - a line of towns Ukraine calls "fortress cities" - as well as more land in the southern regions of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia? Isn't that, I asked, a reasonable request if it produces a ceasefire? "I see this differently. I don't look at it simply as land. I see it as abandonment - weakening our positions, abandoning hundreds of thousands of our people who live there. That is how I see it. And I am sure that this 'withdrawal' would divide our society." But isn't it a good price to pay if that satisfies Putin? Do you think it would satisfy him? "It



would probably satisfy him for a while... he needs a pause... but once he recovers, our European partners say it could take three to five years. In my opinion, he could recover in no more than a couple of years. Where would he go next? We do not know, but that he would want to

continue [the war] is a fact." I met Zelensky in a conference room inside the heavily guarded government enclave in a well-to-do corner of central Kyiv. In the interview he spoke mostly in Ukrainian. You get a sense of the weight of leadership carried by Zelensky from the diligence

of his security guards. Visiting any head of state requires rigorous checks. But entering the presidential buildings in Kyiv takes the process to a level I have rarely experienced before. It is not surprising in a country at war, with a president who has already been targeted by Russia. Despite all that, the man who started as an entertainer, who won the Ukrainian version of Strictly Come Dancing in 2006, and played the role of an unexpected president of Ukraine in a TV comedy, before becoming the real-life president of Ukraine, seems to be remarkably resilient. US President Donald Trump said on the eve of the most recent ceasefire talks in Geneva that "Ukraine better come to the table fast". He continues to default to put-

ting more pressure on Ukraine than on Russia. Western diplomats have indicated since last summer that Trump agrees with Putin that territorial concessions from Ukraine to Russia are the key to the ceasefire. Trump wants, ideally before this coming summer. Plenty of analysts outside the White House also judge that Ukraine cannot win the war and, without making concessions to Moscow, will lose it. I asked Zelensky whether Trump and the others had a point. "Where are you now?" Zelensky asked in return. "Today you are in Kyiv, you are in the capital of our homeland, you are in Ukraine. I am very grateful for this. Will we lose? Of course not, because we are fighting for Ukraine's independence."

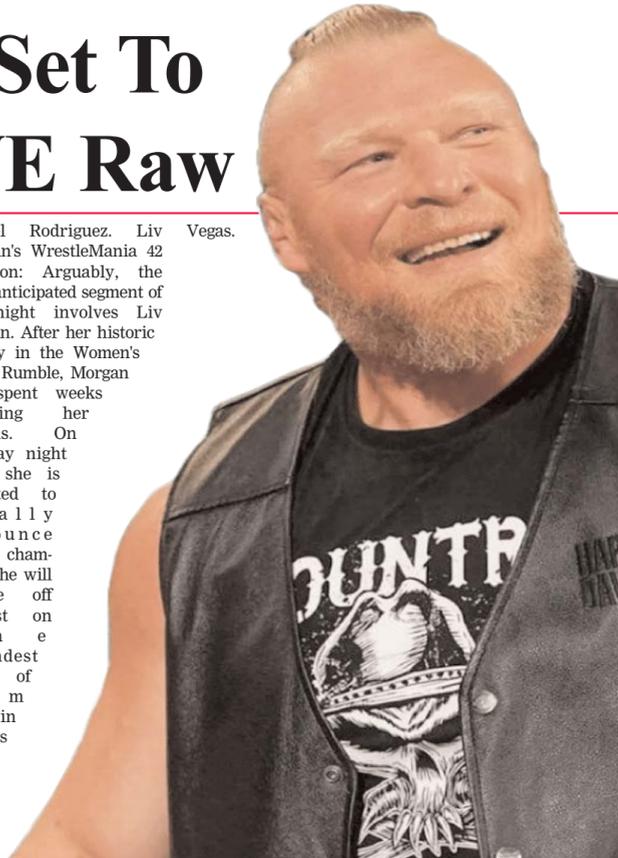


Brock Lesnar Set To Return At WWE Raw

The countdown to WrestleMania 42 has begun, with storylines intensifying and match-ups being finalised. Monday's episode of WWE Raw is set to give a glimpse into what to expect, especially with the Elimination Chamber premium live event looming. From the return of the legendary Brock Lesnar to career-defining decisions, there's a lot to look forward to for fans at State Farm Arena in Atlanta. "The Beast" Brock Lesnar Returns: After an explosive showing at the Royal Rumble in Riyadh, where The Beast Incarnate held his own against new powerhouses like Oba Femi, Monday's episode of Raw is officially set to make Lesnar's true presence felt on the red brand. While WWE officials have kept tight-lipped regarding the specific purpose of his appearance, the timing is

impossible to ignore. With WrestleMania season in full swing, Lesnar's return likely signals the beginning of a high-stakes storyline. Whether he's looking to settle a score with those who eliminated him from the Rumble or has new targets in sight, we'll soon find out. Final Men's Elimination Chamber Qualifying Match: A massive Triple Threat Match will determine who joins the likes of Cody Rhodes and Randy Orton inside the Chamber. Fans simply can't afford to miss the battle between Bronson Reed, Jey Uso, and "The Original" El Grande Americano. Final Women's Elimination Chamber Qualifying Match: The women's division will also see its final spot filled tonight in what promises to be a technical masterclass. The match will see an enthralling battle between IYO SKY, Kairi Sane and

Raquel Rodriguez. Liv Morgan's WrestleMania 42 Decision: Arguably, the most anticipated segment of the night involves Liv Morgan. After her historic victory in the Women's Royal Rumble, Morgan has spent weeks weighing her options. On Monday night Raw, she is expected to finally announce which champion she will square off against on the "Grandest Stage of Them All" in Las Vegas.



Benfica's Prestianni gets provisional one-match ban

Benfica's Gianluca Prestianni has received a provisional one-match suspension after Real Madrid's Vinicius Jr reported alleged racist abuse during last week's Champions League meeting. Vinicius told referee Francois Letexier that he had been racially abused by the Argentina winger during the first leg of their Champions League knock-out phase play-off tie in Lisbon last Tuesday. Uefa announced the provisional ban on Monday following the appointment of an ethics and disciplinary inspector to investigate the incident. The European governing body said further punishment could be handed out once the investigation is completed. Prestianni has denied racially abusing the Brazilian. Real Madrid and Benfica meet for the second leg in the Spanish capital on Wednesday (20:00 GMT). Last week's first leg was halted for 10 minutes after



Vinicius alerted on-field official Letexier to the second-half incident, before he and his team-mates temporarily left the pitch. It came after Vinicius, 25, scored a stunning goal and then received a yellow card for his celebrations in front of the Benfica supporters. Benfica manager Jose Mourinho, who is suspended for the second leg follow-

ing his sending off later in the match, was criticised for his post-match comments after saying he believed that Vinicius had celebrated disrespectfully. Because of his ban, Mourinho will not speak to the media before the match - but Benfica have the option of making the assistant coach available instead.

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

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



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

have never done so, just tell me one time if I ever used bad language against India," said Amir on the 'Haarna Mana Hai' show. "When it comes to Abhishek, I just said that he doesn't have a defensive game. A player who cannot stop the ball, what else do I call him? Just tell me what

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

Indian Golf Premier League Secures 100 Million Dollars in Franchise Commitments Across 10 Cities

The Indian Golf Premier League (IGPL) on Monday announced a landmark \$100 million capital commitment from ten franchise partners across India, marking the largest private investment in Indian golf history. Each franchise has committed approximately \$10 million over ten years, signalling a long-term strategic bet on professionalizing and democratizing golf across India and beyond. The franchise rights have been awarded to leading business entities across Hyderabad (Phoenix), Mumbai (Atri), Kolkata (Flyingman Academy), Delhi (RVR Infra), Chennai (Vimtra Ventures), Visakhapatnam (Green Fuels), Goa (Auro Realty), Bengaluru (GolfKonnekt), Punjab (Krishna Auto) and



Gurugram (Honer Homes Consortium). The ten-city format ensures pan-India representation and brings professional golf to key metropolitan and emerging markets. Beyond the league operations, franchise partners have committed to a collective \$250 million infrastructure investment to build accessible golf facilities, including compact 8-10-acre courses in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities and villages, fundamentally expanding the sport's

reach beyond traditional elite circles. The IGPL will launch with an aggressive global expansion strategy, establishing a presence across three continents India, Africa, and the Middle East in its inaugural year, with plans to operate in five countries within three to four years. Commenting on the announcement, Uttam Singh Mundy, CEO, IGPL stated, "This is not a traditional sports investment it's a strategic platform for business

amplification and nation-building through sports. Our franchise partners come from Pharma, Infrastructure, Real Estate, and Venture Capital, and they see IGPL as a multi-decade opportunity to build a sports culture while leveraging the platform for their core businesses. The \$100 million commitment reflects their conviction in our vision." "We're not just creating a league we're building an ecosystem. From village courses to global tournaments, IGPL will make golf accessible, competitive, and commercially viable. Our three-continent launch strategy and infrastructure mandate position us as a transformative force in global golf, not just Indian golf," Mr. Mundy added.

O'SULLIVAN SIGNS UP FOR WORLD SENIORS CHAMPIONSHIP



Ronnie O'Sullivan is set to make his debut in the World Seniors Snooker Championship at Sheffield's Crucible Theatre in May. The tournament begins on 6 May - two days after the completion of the main World Championship where the 50-year-old will be aiming for a record-breaking eighth win. Changes to seniors tournament rules mean players aged 45 or over who are ranked in the world's top 64 are now eligible to take part. Despite skipping several

tournaments this season, O'Sullivan - who won his most recent world title in 2022 - is currently 11th in the rankings. Four-time seniors champion Jimmy White - the most successful player in the event's history - is also set to take part this year. Other names in the draw include 1997 world champion Ken Doherty, 2015 winner Stuart Bingham, 12-time women's world champion Reanne Evans and current British Seniors Open champion Joe Perry.



United States' Madison Chock and Evan Bates perform in the ice dance routine at Milano Ice Skating Arena.

"Who Said We Should Play Washington?" Ajinkya Rahane's Unfiltered Dig As Gautam Gambhir Faces Heat

In a scathing assessment of India's recent selection policy, veteran batter Ajinkya Rahane has launched a stinging critique against the national team management after the defeat against South Africa in the T20 World Cup Super 8 match in Ahmedabad on Sunday. Rahane did not pull any punches when discussing the decision to sideline all-rounder Axar Patel in favour of Washington Sundar during the series against South Africa, suggesting that the team's leadership has fallen into a trap of overthinking their tactical choices. Rahane expressed surprise at the decision-making process, questioning why a proven performer was left out. "I'm really surprised Axar Patel is not playing the match. I don't understand what is happening. Axar has been doing so well for India in different situations. Sometimes when you become



too smart, I feel selection-wise that can hamper you," he said during a panel discussion on Cricbuzz. The crux of Rahane's argument lies in the danger of over-analysing "match-ups" at the expense of proven quality. "You took Washington Sundar because there are too many left-handers in the South Africa team, but he only bowled two overs. And there is no guar-

antee that an off-spinner is going to bowl really well against left-handers. We saw what Keshav Maharaj did today against all the top left-handed batters." Too Many Brains In The Backroom Rahane, who has led the Indian team in Tests, took aim at the modern reliance on data analysts and backroom staff, suggesting they are over-complicating a sim-

ple game. "In this era of the game, there are so many in the backroom, there are so many analysts, there are so many scientists, too many brains, and sometimes the brains over-complicate life. When you get so many around the table, and you've been winning, I want to know the person who was around that board meeting and went, 'I think we should play Washington Sundar.'" Addressing the possibility of an injury, Rahane noted that captain Suryakumar Yadav's comments at the toss suggested a tactical choice rather than a medical one. Gautam Gambhir Faces Heat India head coach Gautam Gambhir is the first man to come under the line of fire after India's defeat. Gambhir's love for Sundar isn't hidden from anyone. Many believe that Gambhir is likely to have played a role in Sundar's selection over Axar.

'HEIST' AT FOREST BOOSTS LIVERPOOL'S TOP-FOUR HOPES



Carnage would be an understatement to describe the closing moments of Liverpool's victory at the City Ground, but it would not be over the top to call the win a heist - one that puts Arne Slot's side firmly in the Champions League hunt. The fact that Nottingham Forest boss Vitor Pereira said he was "angry with football" summed it up. Forest did not deserve to lose. For large parts of the afternoon, the home fans chanted "In your head, Arne, Arne, Arne" to the tune of "Zombie" by The Cranberries as Pereira's side dominated the defending champions. Before today, Slot had failed to beat Forest in any of his previous three attempts as Liverpool boss. Yet as the Liverpool players made their way to the away end after snatching a remarkable victory through Alexis Mac Allister, the same chant came from the travelling support, who could

hardly believe their luck. Liverpool were dull for most parts but deserve praise for their resilience and the importance of Mac Allister's 97th-minute winner cannot be underestimated in the sense that it took Liverpool level on points with Chelsea and Manchester United, in fourth and fifth. "It's one of the biggest robberies I've seen in the Premier League this season," said Jamie Carragher on Sky Sports. For Slot, who has regularly insisted that Liverpool have been unfortunate on many an occasion this season, there was an acceptance that his side had finally got the rub of the green. "My emotions were emotions of happiness and relief because this is the first time I have to do a different post match press conference," said Slot. "We did not play a good game. We have been on the wrong side of the score after a good performance too many times.

D/O Prasad Rao Kanabadutaledhu is packed with gripping twists and will not disappoint anyone," said Rajeev Kanakala at the Grand Preview Event

The Telugu web series D/O Prasad Rao Kanabadutaledhu, starring Rajeev Kanakala, Udaya Bhanu, Vasanthika, and Sriram Venkat in prominent roles, is set to premiere on ZEE5 from February 27. Produced by K.V. Sriram under the South India Screens banner and directed by Krishna Poluru, the series had two episodes screened exclusively for the media ahead of its streaming debut, followed by a grand preview event attended by the cast and crew.

Speaking about his role, Rajeev Kanakala described it as one of the most significant characters in his career. "I've played many roles over the years, but this one stands out as a milestone. The emotional transitions, the modulation, and the dialogue delivery are completely different from what audiences have seen from me so far. Krishna presented me in a refreshing way," he said. He added that the narrative unfolds with consistent tension and unexpected turns. "It's layered, intense, and emotionally grounded. Viewers will stay engaged till the last moment."

Director Krishna Poluru shared that the story began as a simple idea and gradually evolved into a fully fleshed-out script



over nearly two years. "After Recce, I wanted to explore something emotionally powerful yet gripping as a thriller. It took time to shape the characters properly. I'm grateful to the team at ZEE5 for believing in the vision," he said. He emphasized that the series balances sensitivity with suspense, ensuring both emotional resonance and narrative momentum.

Udaya Bhanu expressed excitement about the

release and said she connected deeply with her character. "I was waiting for audiences to watch this. The shoot moved quickly, but we ensured the emotional core remained intact. As a mother, several moments in the story felt very personal," she said. She also mentioned that playing a police officer was a long-standing wish and that the role gave her the opportunity to portray both strength and vulnerabil-

ty. Producer K.V. Sriram stated that the series would strongly connect with fathers and families. "When I watched the final output, I saw only the character — not the actor. That level of immersion is rare," he said, referring to Rajeev's performance. He added that each episode carries high intensity. "Every episode feels like a climax in itself. The thrill is maintained throughout." He also thanked ZEE5

Telugu for their continued support. ZEE5 Telugu Senior Vice President Jayanth Raghavan said the series adds depth to their growing slate of Telugu originals. He shared that the father's character personally resonated with him and praised the team's collaborative effort. He highlighted the cinematography by Mahesh and dialogues by Shruti as strong pillars supporting the narrative.

Telangana Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka Unveils MAA Diary



The Movie Artists Association (MAA), under the dynamic leadership of Vishnu Manchu, continues to strengthen its presence with a series of impactful initiatives. As President, Vishnu Manchu has been actively introducing programs aimed at enhancing the welfare, health, and professional support of MAA members. His focus on sustained health-awareness activities, regular medical camps, and member engagement has earned widespread appreciation across the industry. Taking another step toward organi-

zational development, the newly compiled MAA Diary-featuring key annual updates, member information, and association plans, was formally unveiled by Telangana Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka. The release took place in the presence of Vishnu Manchu, who invited the Deputy CM to grace the occasion and launch the diary. The event saw enthusiastic participation from several MAA office bearers and committee members, including Vice President Madala Ravi, Treasurer Shiva Balaji, Executive members

Jayavani, Malakpet Shailaja, Shiva Narayana, Shashank, Haranath Babu, Manik, and popular actor Sampurnesh Babu, along with MRC Vadlapatla and others. After unveiling the diary, Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka appreciated Vishnu Manchu for his proactive leadership and the continuous efforts being made to uplift the association and its members. The launch further highlighted MAA's commitment to transparency, member welfare, and structured progress under its current administration.

Gauhar Khan gets emotional as she visits Medina in the holy month of Ramadan



Mumbai: Actress Gauhar Khan recently shared an emotional moment from her spiritual trip to Medina, Saudi Arabia, where she was seen offering prayers during the holy month of Ramadan. Taking to her social media account, Gauhar posted a video from Medina and

wrote: "alhamdulillah for this !!!! this feeling is ... Overwhelming in every way." In the video, Gauhar is seen wearing a modest outfit with a headscarf, and looked extremely overwhelmed and teary-eyed. The serene backdrop of Medina added more to the spiritual intensity of the moment.

"Arunachala Giri Pradakshina" First Glimpse Unveiled by Renowned Actor Tanikella Bharani



Renowned actor, writer, and director Tanikella Bharani, who beautifully explored the philosophy of Lord Shiva through "Aatagadara Shiva", has unveiled the first glimpse of the prestigious film "Arunachala Giri Pradakshina", set against the spiritually powerful backdrop of Arunachalam. Produced by noted filmmaker Tummala Rama Satyanarayana under the

Bhimavaram Talkies, the film is being directed by talented VFX expert Harsha M. The music for the film is composed by the duo Dr. A. J. Sandhyavarshini and Dr. V. R. A. Pradeep. A song from the film has lyrics penned by Chintala Srinivas, with vocals rendered by Madhu. Blending strong emotional elements with a touching sentiment,

"Arunachala Giri Pradakshina" is being crafted as a spiritually enriching and emotionally engaging film. On this occasion, Tanikella Bharani expressed his best wishes, hoping the film achieves great success. The makers have announced that the second schedule of shooting will commence shortly, and they are planning to release the film in April.

Realistic Violent Love Story Movie "Cockroach" Coming to Grand Theatrical Release on 6th March

Director P. has received awards and audience rewards with films like Sonta Ooru, Gangaputru, a romantic crime story, Gulf, Vaali. Sunil Kumar Reddy's latest film is "Cockroach". The film stars Abhilash Sunkara, Premasan, Naveen and Theertha in lead roles. The movie "Cockroach" is produced by B. Bapiraju and M u t h u k i Nagasatyanarayana under the banner of Sri Lakshmi Pictures. The film is going to have a grand theatrical release on March 6, which has completed all the programs. In this context, a movie press meet was arranged at Hyderabad Film Chamber. In this program Producer B. Bapiraju said - We made successful and good films in our combination with Sunil Kumar Reddy. This is another dif-



ferent movie we are doing together. We have made this film as a realistic form of the happenings in the society. We faced some challenges during the production of this film. We did risky shooting in natural locations. Censor has given A certificate to our movie.

We are bringing our movie to the audience on 6th March. Our director Sunil Kumar Reddy directed the movie even better than the script said. Our movie gives something new to the audience who are tired of watching routine movies. Said.

VISION CINEMA HOUSE COMPLETES FIRST SCHEDULE OF "HAIKU", EYES SEPTEMBER 2026 RELEASE



Highlights

■ Vision Cinema House has officially announced the successful completion of the first shooting schedule of its much-anticipated film Haiku.

Vision Cinema House has officially announced the successful completion of the first shooting schedule of its much-anticipated film Haiku. The opening schedule was completed smoothly and on time, setting a confident and positive tone for the film's production journey. The first phase of filming featured crucial sequences involving lead actors Aegan and Sridevi, along with strong performances by Adrichi Arun and Kalaivani Baskar. The cast delivered emotionally rich performances, adding depth and authenticity to the narrative during this initial schedule. Haiku is written and directed by Yuvaraj Chinnasamy, with additional screenplay contributed by Hariharan Ram. This creative collaboration has resulted in a screenplay that balances sensitivity, realism, and strong cinematic storytelling, raising expecta-

tions among film circles. The team is extremely pleased with the visuals captured so far, especially highlighting the work of cinematographer Priyesh Guruswamy, whose visual treatment has beautifully established the film's mood and emotional tone. The footage from the first schedule is said to have exceeded expectations. Produced by Dr. D. Arulanandhu and Mathewo Arulanandhu under the Vision Cinema House banner, the film is progressing as planned. The producers expressed their pride in the team's dedication and the quality of output achieved so far. The next shooting schedule will commence soon in Chennai, where important portions of the story will be filmed. With strong momentum and creative energy, Haiku is slated for a grand worldwide theatrical release in September 2026.

Committee Kurrollu' Triumphs at 70th Filmfare Awards South with Major Debut Wins as Yadhu Vamsi and Sandeep Saroj Take Home Top Honours

The journey of Committee Kurrollu has reached yet another defining milestone. At the prestigious 70th Filmfare Awards South, the film secured two major honours - Best Debut Male for Sandeep Saroj and Best Debut Director for Yadhu Vamsi, marking a powerful moment of recognition for the team and for Telugu Cinema. The Filmfare Awards South, one of the most respected platforms celebrating excellence across the southern film industries, place these wins in a league of national credibility and industry validation. For a debut feature to earn recognition in two key debut categories reflects not only the freshness of its talent but also the strength of its storytelling conviction. For Sandeep Saroj, winning

Best Debut Male is a significant breakthrough, affirming his nuanced and emotionally grounded performance that anchored the film's central conflicts. His portrayal brought vulnerability and authenticity to a character navigating friendship, ego, and moral awakening, a performance that resonated strongly with both audiences and critics. For Yadhu Vamsi, the Best Debut Director win further cements his arrival as a filmmaker with clarity of voice and thematic courage. His direction balances humour and social commentary with restraint, crafting a narrative that feels intimate yet socially aware. What began as a modest debut has now evolved into one of the most celebrated Telugu directorial launches in recent years. These



Filmfare wins add to the film's growing list of accolades. Committee Kurrollu previously won Best Feature Film on National Integration, Communal Harmony and Social Uplift of Depressed Classes and Best Debut Director at the

Gaddar Telangana Film Awards 2024. It also received international recognition at the Gulf Academy Movie Awards 2025 in Dubai, where Yadhu Vamsi won Best Debut Director and Niharika Konidela was honoured as

Best Debut Producer. At the SIIMA Awards 2025, the film earned Best Debutant Producer (Telugu) for Niharika Konidela and Best Debutant Actor (Telugu) for Sandeep Saroj. Produced by Padmaja Konidela and Jayalakshmi Adapaka under the banners Pink Elephant Pictures and Shree Radha Damodar Studios, and presented by Niharika Konidela, the film marked Niharika's first theatrical presentation. The project reflects a conscious effort to champion rooted, content-driven stories that foreground social realities without sacrificing entertainment. Shot by Edurolu Raju, who captured the earthy textures of the Godavari landscape with visual authenticity, and scored by Anudeep Dev, whose music underscores

the film's emotional shifts with subtlety, Committee Kurrollu blends sincerity with craft. The film's production operations were overseen by Manyam Ramesh. Released on August 9, 2024, Committee Kurrollu emerged as a blockbuster hit. Made on a budget of ₹9 Crores, the film went on to score big at the box office with a theatrical collection of ₹18.5 Crores and non-theatrical revenue of ₹6 Crores, taking its total earnings to ₹24.5 Crores. The commercial success further validated the film's strong word of mouth and audience acceptance. With her very first feature film as a producer, Niharika Konidela created a significant milestone in Tollywood, earning applause both as an actress and as a producer backing meaningful content.