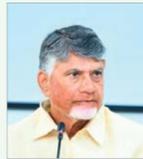


CM Chandra Babu Prioritizes Welfare, Development in Andhra Governance Push



Amaravati: Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu directed officials to prioritize welfare, development, and good governance through coordinated efforts across departments. Chairing a meeting with ministers, Chief Secretary K. Vijayanand, and department secretaries from the Amaravati Secretariat on Monday, Naidu addressed district collectors via video conference. He emphasized seamless inter-departmental coordination to achieve state objectives.



Russia will actively support BRICS agenda presented by Indian chair: Lavrov

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ICC Turns Down Pak's 3 Key Demands Amid T20 World Cup Boycott U-Turn Negotiation: One Was Bilateral With India



SPORTS | NEWS

INBRIFS

53 migrants dead or missing after boat capsizes off Libya: IOM



Tripoli, Feb 9: Fifty-three migrants, including two infants, were dead or missing after their rubber boat capsized off the coast of Libya, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) said Monday. The vessel, which was carrying 55 people, overturned on Friday north of the city of Zuwara, northwestern Libya. Only two survivors, both Nigerian women, were rescued by Libyan authorities, Xinhua news agency reported. One survivor reported losing her husband in the wreck; the other lost her two children, the IOM said. The boat departed from the western city of Al-Zawiya late on February 5. Survivors told the UN migration agency the craft began taking on water and capsized about six hours into the journey. The IOM said its teams provided emergency medical aid to the women. The Central Mediterranean remains one of the world's deadliest migration routes, with the latest tragedy bringing the 2026 death toll to at least 484.

Delhi Police bust high-profile cyber fraud module with international links

New Delhi, Feb 8: The Crime Branch of Delhi Police has busted a high-profile cyber fraud module with international linkages and arrested three accused involved in an organised cyber-financial racket. The breakthrough was achieved by the Northern Range-1 (NR-1) team during its ongoing 'Cy-Hawk' operations, officials said on Sunday. According to an official press release issued by the Crime Branch, an E-FIR No. 53/2025 (60001651/2025) dated December 17, 2025, was registered under Sections 308/318(4)/319/340 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) at Police Station Crime Branch, Delhi. The case was filed on a complaint of Ranjan (56), a resident of Uttam Nagar, who alleged that he was cheated of approximately Rs 42.5 lakh in a stock market-related cyber fraud.

CM Revanth Reddy alleges Centre's discrimination against Telangana...

Hyderabad TSIT BUREAU: Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Monday accused the BJP-led Union Government of discriminating against Telangana in project approvals and fund devolution, while alleging clandestine ties between BJP and BRS for political gain.

Addressing a press conference, Reddy stated that no major state project received central approval since Telangana's formation. He highlighted pending clearances for Palamuru Rangareddy national project status, Pranahita-Chevella irrigation cooperation, Metro Phase-2, Musi rejuvenation, Warangal airport, and semiconductor proposals. The CM claimed Telangana receives minimal tax share returns, calling the devolution pattern unjust to southern states.

He targeted Union Ministers Bandi Sanjay and G. Kishan Reddy, accusing them of failing to secure state interests or fulfill GHMC poll promises, including Hyderabad flood compensation. Reddy alleged BJP promotes religious polarization in local elections instead of addressing civic issues, and claimed BRS leaders escape

Targets BJP and BRS....



HIGHLIGHT POINTS:

■ CM Revanth Reddy accused the BJP-led Centre of discriminating against Telangana by denying approvals and funds for key projects, while alleging a tacit understanding between BJP and BRS for political benefit.

■ He urged voters to reject both BJP and BRS, highlighting Congress government's welfare initiatives and commitment to social justice and long-term development ahead of municipal polls.

scrutiny due to the purported BJP-BRS understanding. The Chief Minister urged voters to evaluate BRS's decade-

long rule and BJP's central governance since 2014 ahead of municipal polls.

He highlighted his government's welfare measures: enhanced AarogyaSri coverage up to Rs.10 lakh, free RTC bus travel for women, new ration cards, farm loan waivers, Rythu Bharosa support, Indiramma housing, mass government recruitment, and new skill and sports universities. Reddy emphasized commitment to social justice and long-term development, positioning Congress as the alternative to both regional and national opposition parties.

India Announces \$175 Million Economic Package for Seychelles, Modi Calls Ties "Beyond Diplomacy"

New Delhi (TSIT) India on Monday announced a Special Economic Package of USD 175 million for Seychelles, underscoring a deepening strategic and developmental partnership between the two Indian Ocean nations, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi said bilateral ties go "far beyond mere diplomatic engagement".

Addressing a joint press meet with Seychelles President Patrick Herminie, Prime Minister Modi said the relationship between the two countries was rooted in centuries of shared history, trade and people-to-people contact shaped by the Indian Ocean. "For centuries, the waves of the Indian Ocean have connected our peoples. Along its shores, trade flourished, cultures intertwined, and traditions of trust grew stronger," Modi said, adding that India and Seychelles were connected "not just by geography, but by history, trust and a shared vision for the future".

Announcing the USD 175 million Special Economic Package, the Prime Minister said development cooperation had been the cornerstone of India-Seychelles relations. "Development partnership has been a



"FOR CENTURIES, THE WAVES OF THE INDIAN OCEAN HAVE CONNECTED OUR PEOPLES. ALONG ITS SHORES, TRADE FLOURISHED, CULTURES INTERTWINED, AND TRADITIONS OF TRUST GREW STRONGER."
-NARENDRA MODI, PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA

strong foundation of India-Seychelles relations. All our efforts have been guided by Seychelles' priorities and needs," he said.

According to Modi, the newly announced package will support "concrete projects" across key sectors, including social housing, e-mobility, vocational training, health, defence, and maritime security, reflecting India's focus on capacity-

building and sustainable development in the Indian Ocean region.

The announcement comes against the backdrop of India's broader engagement with island nations in the Indian Ocean, where New Delhi has sought to position itself as a reliable development partner while enhancing maritime cooperation and regional security.

Highlighting the human dimension of bilateral ties, Modi said people-to-people relations formed the strongest pillar of India-Seychelles friendship. "The greatest strength of India-Seychelles relations lies in our people-to-people ties," he said. He also acknowledged the role of the Indian diaspora in Seychelles, noting that the community had made "a notable contribution to the country's social and economic life" while strengthening bilateral bonds across generations.

The visit and the announcements made during the joint press meet signal India's continued emphasis on strengthening partnerships with key Indian Ocean neighbours through development assistance, cultural links and strategic cooperation.

Kerala CM calls for united resistance against communalism



Kasaragod (TSIT) Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Sunday called for a united resistance against communalism and a collective fight against the ideology of a theocratic state, while addressing the valedictory function of the centenary conference of Samastha Kerala Jemiyathul Ulama at Kuniya in the district. Vijayan said Samastha has consistently worked for secu-

larism and has effectively countered communalism, making its role highly relevant in the current social environment.

He observed that the country is facing a political crisis, with sustained attempts to undermine its multi-religious character and diverse cultural heritage.

He emphasised that communalism cannot be countered with another form of communalism and urged all secular forces to join hands to thwart the communal agenda. At the conclave, Samastha adopted several resolutions, including a demand that the government declare three days of official holidays for Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Adha celebrations. Other resolutions sought the fixing of school examination schedules without obstructing Friday prayers.

10 days of 'severe' air quality in Delhi during winter season: Govt tells LS

NEW DELHI (TSIT): Delhi saw 10 days of 'severe' air quality during the winter season (October-January) in 2025-26 as against 31 days in 2016-17, Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav said on Monday. He shared the information in response to a written question by Congress MP Manish Tewari in the Lok Sabha.

"The total number of days with Severe AQI levels (AQI>401) in Delhi during the winter season (October-January) in 2025-26 were 10 days as compared to 31 days in 2016-17," Yadav said. He said focused actions by 130 cities under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) have shown positive results, with 103 cities showing a reduction in PM10 concentration



in 2024-25 as compared to 2017-18. Of these, 64 cities have shown a reduction in PM10 levels by more than 20 per cent and 25 of these cities have achieved a reduction of more than 40 per cent. "A total of 22 cities have met National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) and have PM10 concentrations less than 60 µg/m3. With coordinated actions, the average AQI of Delhi has shown improvement at AQI of 201 in 2025 as against 225 in 2018.

Rahul Gandhi accuses govt of stifling debate, row erupts over army chief's memoir



New Delhi (TSIT): The heated exchanges inside the Lok Sabha spilled beyond Parliament on Monday, with Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi launching a sharp attack on the Union government, accusing it of fearing open debate and resorting to what he termed "ill-founded and untenable" conspiracy claims to silence the Opposition.

Speaking to reporters after the House was adjourned, Rahul Gandhi levelled a series of allegations against the Narendra Modi government and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, claiming that different standards were being applied to ruling party and Opposition lawmakers with the intent of muzzling dissent.

At the centre of the controversy was Rahul Gandhi's reference to the memoirs of former Army Chief General M.M. Naravane. He claimed the book had already been published and alleged that the government was preventing him from citing "uncomfortable facts" from it in Parliament — an assertion strongly denied by the Centre. "The defence minister lied about the book. It has been published and is in the public domain. Yet when we tried to raise it, the Leader of the Opposition was stopped from quoting it," Rahul Gandhi said. Reacting to insinuations made

Rahul Gandhi accused the Union government and the Lok Sabha Speaker of silencing the Opposition and fearing open debate, amid a sharp standoff over his attempt to cite former Army Chief General M.M. Naravane's memoirs in Parliament.

by the Speaker about a "planned attack" on Prime Minister Narendra Modi by Opposition MPs, Rahul Gandhi dismissed the claim as baseless and a diversion from substantive issues. "If there is any truth to this, an FIR should be filed immediately and those involved must face the law," he demanded.

The Congress leader also pointed to the passage of the Motion of Thanks to the President's address on February 5 without a reply from the Prime Minister, alleging that Modi's response was dropped at the last moment following what he described as the Speaker's advice.

Expressing disappointment over parliamentary conduct, Rahul Gandhi alleged that BJP members were allowed to make "vile and disparaging" remarks against former Congress Prime Ministers, while Opposition MPs were blocked, curtailed, or suspended for voicing protest. During the debate on the Motion of Thanks, at least eight Opposition MPs were suspended after tearing papers and throwing them toward the Chair.

SC warns against obstructing bengal SIR exercise

NEW DELHI (TSIT): The Supreme Court on Monday declared it will not permit anyone to create impediments in the ongoing Special Investigation Report (SIR) exercise in West Bengal, issuing a stern warning against obstruction.

The apex court's observation came during hearings concerning the SIR process, which involves examination of critical matters requiring judicial oversight. The bench emphasized that any attempt to hinder the investigation would face serious consequences, reinforcing judicial authority over the procedure.

While specific case details remain under proceedings, the court's intervention signals heightened scrutiny of potential interference in investiga-

THE SUPREME COURT FIRMLY WARNED THAT NO ONE WILL BE ALLOWED TO OBSTRUCT THE ONGOING SIR INVESTIGATION IN WEST BENGAL, ASSERTING ITS AUTHORITY TO ENSURE THE PROBE PROCEEDS WITHOUT INTERFERENCE AND WARNING OF SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES FOR ANY ATTEMPT TO HINDER IT.



tive processes. The SIR exercise typically encompasses fact-finding missions into matters of public importance, often involving sensitive administrative or law enforcement issues.

Legal experts note that the Supreme Court's proactive stance reflects concerns about maintaining institutional integrity and ensuring unhindered fact-finding operations. The warning applies broadly to

all parties involved, including state authorities, private entities, and individual actors.

The development carries significant implications for governance in West Bengal, where the SIR exercise has

reportedly faced operational challenges. By asserting its authority, the apex court aims to secure compliance and prevent disruption of judicially mandated investigations.

The bench did not specify particular obstruction incidents but indicated awareness of attempts to delay or derail the process. Observers interpret the statement as preemptive deterrence against anticipated resistance. The court's intervention underscores the judiciary's role in safeguarding administrative accountability, particularly in cases involving state-level investigations. Further directions regarding the SIR exercise are expected as proceedings continue.

Tej Pratap Yadav calls relationship claims 'Baseless', warns of legal action

Patna, Feb 9: Janshakti Janta Dal president Tej Pratap Yadav on Sunday strongly objected to his name being linked with his former woman 'partner' Anushka Yadav, dismissing the claims circulating on social media as "baseless and misleading".



Addressing a press conference, Yadav refuted rumours that he had a child, alleging that the narrative was fabricated to tarnish his image. "A conspiracy is being hatched against me. Some 'Jaichands' are continuously trying to defame me," he said.

The leader further alleged that former RJD MLA from Mahua, Mukesh Roshan, was plotting to kill him. He also named Sanjay Yadav, Shakti Singh and Sunil Singh, accusing them of acting against him and attempting to damage his reputa-

tion due to his growing popularity. Clarifying his stand, Yadav said he had no connection with the woman in question and warned that he would initiate legal proceedings against those spreading what he termed false information. "I will approach the

court against the misinformation being spread about me," he said.

Expressing concern over his safety, Yadav said he had sought security from Bihar Home Minister Samrat Choudhary and would meet Prime Minister

Narendra Modi if necessary. He claimed sustained defamation and pressure were attempts to push him into depression.

Tej Pratap Yadav, the elder son of Rashtriya Janata Dal chief Lalu Prasad Yadav, had last year shared a Facebook post declaring a long-standing relationship with Anushka Yadav. The post claimed the two had been in a relationship for 12 years. However, he later asserted that his social media account had been hacked and the photographs edited to defame him and his family. Following the controversy, Tej Pratap was expelled from the RJD and disowned by his father. A day after his expulsion, his estranged wife Aishwarya Rai termed Lalu Prasad Yadav's action an eyewash aimed at misleading the people of Bihar.



President Murmu pays tribute to Dr Zakir Husain on birth anniversary

New Delhi, Feb 8: President Droupadi Murmu on Sunday offered floral tributes to former President Dr Zakir Husain on the occasion of his birth anniversary at Rashtrapati Bhavan, officials said.

Dr Zakir Husain, who served as the third President of India, held office from May 13, 1967, until his death on May 3, 1969. He holds the distinction of being the first Muslim to occupy the highest constitutional post in the country and also the first President to pass away while in office. Born on February 8, 1897, in Hyderabad, Dr Husain was a towering figure in Indian public life—renowned not only as a statesman but also as an eminent educationist and thinker

whose ideas left a lasting imprint on the nation. He received his early education in Hyderabad before pursuing higher studies at Aligarh Muslim University, where he earned a doctorate in Economics. Driven by a deep passion for education, he co-founded the National Muslim University in Aligarh, which later moved to Delhi and came to be known as Jamia Millia Islamia.

Dr Husain's life's work was rooted in the belief that education was central to nation-building. He served as Vice-Chancellor of both Aligarh Muslim University and Jamia Millia Islamia, playing a pivotal role in shaping these institutions through progressive, inclusive and forward-looking academ-

ic policies. Beyond academia, Dr Husain was actively involved in India's freedom movement. In independent India, he went on to hold several key positions, including Governor of Bihar from 1957 to 1962 and Vice President of India from 1962 until his election as President. Elected President on May 13, 1967, Dr Zakir Husain's tenure was marked by intellectual depth, moral authority and a steadfast commitment to democratic ideals. His faith in education as a transformative force remained central to his vision for the country. Dr Husain passed away on May 3, 1969, leaving behind a legacy that continues to inspire generations.

Assam CM flags SIT findings, alleges sensitive report shared with Pakistan-based individual

Guwahati, Feb 8: Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday alleged that Elizabeth Gogoi, wife of Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi, had forwarded a confidential report to Pakistan-based Ali Tauqeer Sheikh, an individual whose activities are under scrutiny for being anti-India. The Chief Minister described the matter as a serious national security concern.



CM Sarma said the allegations stem from findings of a Special Investigation Team (SIT), which has examined documents and financial links connected to Elizabeth Gogoi's professional engagements.

According to the Chief Minister, the SIT has identified a document dated August 5, 2014, which allegedly shows that a 50-page report marked "confidential" was transmitted by Elizabeth Gogoi to Sheikh in Pakistan. Sarma claimed that since the report was shared with a "country of concern", it effectively amounted to a classified intelligence-related communication.

He further alleged that the contents of the report referred to Intelligence Bureau communications,

proposed "low risk, low visibility" strategic operations within India, and suggested ways to bypass Central government oversight by working through sub-national channels.

On the basis of these findings, CM Sarma asserted that the alleged act could attract provisions under Section 2 of the Official Secrets Act, 1923. He said the state government is treating the issue with utmost seriousness and will explore all legal options available once the SIT process is concluded. Briefing reporters, the chief minister said Elizabeth Gogoi had been closely associated with LEAD Pakistan, a climate-change non-profit organisation founded by Pakistani national Ali Tauqeer Sheikh, during her stay in Islamabad. She was reportedly involved in interna-

tional climate-related projects linked to both India and Pakistan, including work connected with the global Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN). The SIT probe, Sarma said, also pointed to what it described as a "shadow" employment arrangement. According to the findings, a Pakistani NGO initially employed Elizabeth Gogoi in Islamabad and later shifted her work base to India.

He further alleged that a Pakistan-based firm hired her and subsequently transferred her to India, with her salary allegedly being paid by Sheikh. The SIT has reportedly found that these foreign payments were routed through Indian bank accounts, raising the possibility of violations under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA).

Militants nabbed, explosives seized in major Manipur security sweep

Imphal, Feb 8: Security forces in Manipur intensified their crackdown on insurgency and illegal activities over the past 24 hours, arresting five hardened militants from different banned outfits and seizing a cache of explosives near the India-Myanmar border, officials said on Sunday.

According to police sources, several mortars and two Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) were recovered from the Yangoubung area along the international border under the jurisdiction of Moreh police station in Tengnoupal district. The recovered explosives were later safely neutralised by a specialised bomb disposal squad. Manipur's 398-km-long porous border with Myanmar has long been a vulnerable corridor for cross-border smuggling of narcotics—especially heroin and methamphetamine tablets—as well as arms, ammunition and other illegal goods. The five arrested militants were identified as members of the People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK), Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL) and the United National Liberation Front (UNLF). They were apprehended during coordinated operations in Imphal East, Imphal West and Kakching districts.

Delhi govt unveils Rs 10,000 cr projects as BJP completes one year

New Delhi, Feb 9: Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Sunday presented a detailed report card of the Vidhan Sabha, highlighting development works worth Rs 250 crore and major projects amounting to Rs 10,000 crore as the BJP-led government completed one year in office.

Inaugurating redevelopment works at a district park, the Chief Minister said renovation of fountains has begun not only at the park but across the Vidhan Sabha constituency and all Delhi Development Authority (DDA) parks. She said the redevelopment included a new gate, repaired footpaths, upgraded fountain premises, renovated toilets and refurbished boundary walls.

Addressing the public,



Gupta said the report card outlines works completed and initiated over the past year, along with development plans that have already been rolled out. She noted that the

redevelopment of the district park had been under consideration for several years and expressed satisfaction at seeing the project finally take shape.

Earlier in the day, the Chief Minister said Delhi would soon become the state with the highest number of electric buses. Speaking to reporters ahead of the launch of 500 electric buses in the national capital, Gupta thanked the people of Delhi for placing their trust in Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP.

She said the government was working round the year for citizens and reiterated that the expansion of electric mobility would place Delhi at the forefront of sustainable public transport. BJP National President Nitin Nabin is scheduled to launch 500 EV buses along with the Delhi-Panipat inter-state bus service at Ramlila Maidan in the presence of the Chief Minister.

Owaisi files complaint against Assam CM over 'violent' video

Hyderabad (GNS): All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) chief Asaduddin Owaisi on Monday, February 9, filed a complaint against Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma for posting a "violent" video targeting the Muslim community on social media.



The now-deleted video, initially shared on the X account of Assam Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), received widespread condemnation as it showed Sarma taking aim with a rifle and firing a shot at two Muslim people, with the caption, "point-blank shot." It gained massive traction, with several people calling it an open call for the genocide of Muslims in India. Citing a Supreme Court judgment in his complaint, the Hyderabad MP said that it is the constitutional duty of authorities to protect, preserve,

and safeguard the fundamental rights, constitutional values and the democratic nature of the country.

"The said post and video with the imagery used in it and statements like 'point blank shot' and 'no mercy', is a deliberate and malicious act intended to outrage the religious feelings of Muslims, promote hatred and ill-will

between religious communities and incite communal violence," he said.

He stated that Sarma actively engaged in "deliberate and malicious acts of outraging religious feelings of Muslims, promoting enmity between two religious communities, and making imputations which are prejudicial to national integration."

SC questions delay in reviewing Sonam Wangchuk's NSA detention

New Delhi, Feb 9: The Supreme Court on Monday expressed concern over the health of Ladakh-based social activist Sonam Wangchuk, even as the union Government informed the Court that no progress has been made in reviewing his detention under the National Security Act, 1980, and that his health condition is "perfectly good."

A Bench comprising Justice Aravind Kumar and Justice P.B. Varale was hearing a habeas corpus petition filed by Dr Gitanjali Angmo, seeking to declare the detention of her husband, Sonam Wangchuk, as illegal. During the hearing, Additional Solicitor General K.M. Nataraj, appearing for the union Government, said Wangchuk was in a stable condition and was receiving the best possible medical treatment at AIIMS Jodhpur, which, according to the Union, would not have been available had he remained in Ladakh. When the Bench sought an update on whether the union government had reviewed Wangchuk's continued detention in light of concerns over his health, Justice Kumar asked, "What happened? Any progress? Has it been done?" The ASG candidly replied, "No, nothing has been done."

The Court appeared dissatisfied with the response. Justice Varale recalled that



on an earlier occasion, the Bench had suggested that the union reconsider Wangchuk's detention, particularly since he had already spent nearly five months in custody. On February 4, the Bench had specifi-

cally asked the ASG to seek instructions on a possible review of the detention.

Senior Advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for the petitioner, had earlier moved an application seeking examination of Wangchuk by a specialist doctor, citing

frequent complaints of stomach pain, possibly caused by contaminated water. Pursuant to the Court's directions, Wangchuk was examined at AIIMS Jodhpur, and a medical report was submitted to the Court. Referring to the report, ASG Nataraj reiterated that Wangchuk's health was "perfectly good" and that he was receiving appropriate treatment.

However, Justice Varale orally observed that the existence of health issues was not in dispute and that treatment was being administered only after the Court's intervention. When the ASG submitted that treatment facilities in Rajasthan were superior to those available in Ladakh, Justice Varale responded that such an argument could not be made in the context of a habeas corpus petition.

Justice Kumar also reminded the union that habeas corpus matters require urgency and sensitivity, noting that earlier adjournments had already been granted at the Government's request. Although the ASG sought further time, the Court agreed to list the matter on Wednesdays, making it clear that no further adjournments would be granted. The petition challenging Wangchuk's detention under the NSA remains pending before the Supreme Court.

'State, Not Centre, Halted Metro Hike': Shivakumar

Bengaluru: Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar asserted that the Karnataka government alone decided to withhold Bengaluru Metro's proposed fare hike, dismissing Centre's involvement as legally weightless.



Addressing a press conference at Vidhana Soudha, Shivakumar, who heads the Bengaluru Development portfolio, challenged Union ministers to cite legal provisions empowering them to block fare revisions. "The Centre's letter carries no weight. I've instructed officials to rework the numbers," he stated, emphasizing that only a newly formed Fare Fixation Committee possesses statutory authority to determine fares.

The DCM revealed the state has contributed Rs.5,066 crore to metro operations, including Rs.1,064 crore for cash loss

repayment and Rs.4,002 crore toward central loan obligations. He contrasted Bengaluru's financial burden with Delhi Metro, where the Centre handles security costs.

Shivakumar dismissed BJP claims of credit for the hike suspension, declaring his fight was "for the people, not credit." He questioned why opposi-

tion leaders remained silent when the 5% increase was approved a year ago, and accused them of manufacturing political theater around a postponed Delhi meeting that lacked decision-making authority. The Minister outlined five parameters for fare calculations: OMR expenses, CPI, staff salaries, unit costs, and energy

costs. While refusing to commit on potential fare reductions or timelines, he confirmed officials must reassess cost-revenue structures before any implementation.

On opposition leader R. Ashoka's challenge to formally exclude Centre's role, Shivakumar retorted that private conversations would yield responses, not media statements. He deflected questions about demanding a new Fare Fixation Committee, stating Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and he would "do what is possible currently" to protect commuter interests.

Shivakumar criticized selective politicization of Bengaluru Metro compared to Delhi and Hyderabad systems, noting that neither state nor central governments possess direct fare-fixing powers under current legal frameworks.

Shivakumar to Meet Party Leaders in Delhi, Cites KPCC Role

Bengaluru: Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar confirmed his upcoming Delhi visit to meet Congress party leaders, while maintaining discretion about specific names. Speaking to reporters at Vidhana Soudha, Shivakumar stated he would meet leaders who summoned him, alongside Union Jal Shakti Minister and legal counsels. When questioned about Rahul Gandhi's involvement, he declined specifics: "Why are you so curious? I am not just DCM but also KPCC President."



Shivakumar emphasized his dual role, noting he completes six years as Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee chief on March 10. He described the meetings as routine

duty to connect with MPs and leaders, sharing "difficulties, sorrows, joys and aspirations."

The trip coincides with pre-budget meetings in his departments. Shivakumar clarified he would seek Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's permission before departing, downplaying concerns about scheduling conflicts. "CM knows more about irrigation than me," he remarked, adding that officials would brief Siddaramaiah on Mekedatu project matters in his absence. The Delhi visit assumes significance amid ongoing political dynamics within Karnataka Congress, with Shivakumar balancing governmental responsibilities and party organizational duties.

Kumaraswamy Launches Rs.11,887 Cr PLI 1.2 for Specialty Steel

New Delhi: Union Steel Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy launched PLI Scheme 1.2 for Specialty Steel at Vigyan Bhawan, securing Rs.11,887 crore in investment commitments through 85 MoUs with 55 companies. The initiative aims to add 8.7 million tonnes of specialty steel capacity by FY 2031.



The scheme advances Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of global manufacturing leadership while supporting Make in India and Aatmanirbhar Bharat objectives. Kumaraswamy emphasized that PLI 1.2 addresses critical gaps in high-value steel production,

reducing import dependence in strategic sectors including defence, railways, automobiles, and aerospace. Incentive rates ranging from 4% to 15% over five

years will drive technology upgradation and value addition. The minister highlighted that previous PLI rounds already attracted Rs.43,874 crore in investments, demonstrat-

ing policy effectiveness in capacity creation and employment generation.

PLI 1.2 specifically targets electrical steel, alloy and stainless steels, coated products, and grades essential for strategic applications. Kumaraswamy urged companies to implement projects swiftly while maximizing indigenous technologies, assuring government support for operational issue resolution.

The scheme positions India as a reliable global supplier of advanced steel, conserving foreign exchange and integrating domestic manufacturers into international value chains.

Ballot papers: Karnataka BJP chief accuses Siddaramaiah govt of manufacturing distrust

Bengaluru, Feb 9 (TSIT) Karnataka BJP President Vijayendra Yediyurappa on Monday accused the Siddaramaiah-led Congress government of indulging in naked political opportunism by deciding to revert to ballot papers for local body elections.

democracy, it is about manufacturing suspicion where none exists," he said.

He noted that in the 2023 Assembly elections, the people of Karnataka voted through Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), and the 2024 by-elections also saw the use of EVMs without any controversy when the results were in favour of Congress. "If EVMs were reliable enough to bring them to power, how can they suddenly become unreliable for local body polls? This selective logic clearly exposes the hypocrisy behind the move," Vijayendra said.

In a statement, Vijayendra said the decision was aimed at manufacturing distrust rather than strengthening democracy. "After repeatedly questioning democratic institutions at the national level with the 'vote chori' slogan, they now appear intent on recreating the same suspicion within Karnataka. This is not about strengthening

tently upheld the security and credibility of EVMs. "India's shift to EVMs was meant to move away from an era associated with booth capturing, invalid votes, delayed counting, and manipulation. Reintroducing ballot papers risks reopening the door to the very problems the country worked hard to eliminate," he said.

Vijayendra asserted that Karnataka deserves governance, not gimmicks. "If EVMs were legitimate enough to make Congress the ruling party, they are legitimate enough for local elections. This is not reform, it's the deliberate creation of anarchy to serve narrow political interests," he said.

Kaup native among three killed in Oman road mishap

Muscat, Feb 9: Three people, including Chethan (26) from Uchila Kalathur in Kaup, lost their lives, while three others were injured in a multi-vehicle road accident in the Wilayat of Liwa in Oman's North AlBatinah Governorate on Sunday. According to the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority, the accident involved three vehicles and occurred earlier in the day, triggering an immediate response from rescue and medical teams. Three victims were declared dead at the spot, while the injured sustained moderate to critical injuries and were rushed to nearby hospitals for emergency treatment.

Tamannaah Unveils Mysuru Sandal Soap's New Look



Bengaluru: Karnataka Soaps and Detergents Limited (KSDL) will relaunch the iconic Mysuru Sandal Soap with a contemporary redesign on Tuesday, marking the start of actress Tamannaah Bhatia's two-year tenure as brand ambassador.

Large and Medium Industries Minister M.B. Patil announced the initiative on Monday, stating that KSDL aims to achieve Rs.5,000 crore annual turnover by 2030. The heritage brand, established over a century ago by Maharaja Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wadiyar, Diwan Sir M. Visvesvaraya, and industrial chemist S.G. Shastri, seeks to expand its youth appeal through Tamannaah's social media reach of over 3 million followers.

The relaunch targets North Indian markets while

strengthening existing southern strongholds. KSDL currently manufactures 57 premium products including shower gels, talcum powder, agarbathis, and Millennium Soap. The company recorded all-time high production last month across its soaps, detergents, and cosmetics divisions.

Patil confirmed that Tamannaah's contract includes exclusivity clauses preventing endorsement of competing private products during her tenure. Promotional videos and campaign materials will accompany Tuesday's launch.

KSDL Chairman C.S. Appaji Nadagouda revealed that production scaling utilizes existing machinery through strict three-shift operations, without new equipment purchases. The company explores European and West Asian markets while targeting non-resident Kannadigas.

Senior Citizens' Input Vital for Budget: Bengaluru North Commissioner

Bengaluru: Pommala Sunil Kumar, Commissioner of Bengaluru North City Corporation, emphasized that value-based suggestions from senior citizens and local associations are essential for preparing the 2026-27 municipal budget.



Addressing a consultation meeting at Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Bhavan, Yelahanka, Kumar gathered inputs from Resident Welfare Associations, NGOs, and senior citizens' groups. He stressed that achieving a clean Bengaluru requires public cooperation alongside official efforts, noting that civic improvement cannot rest solely on corporation staff. The Commissioner highlighted operational progress since the Greater Bengaluru Authority's formation 170 days ago.

Regular morning field inspections with Joint Commissioners have assessed footpaths, roads, waste management, and streetlights, driving ground-level improvements. The weekly Friday phone-in program has resolved 863 of 1,112 complaints over 20 weeks, achieving 78% resolution rate.

Participants appreciated the consultation process and phone-in initiative. Kumar assured that all suggestions would be reviewed against revenue and expenditure data before budget finalization.

Compliance with Notified Ward Boundaries Mandatory for GBA City Corporation Elections: Maheshwar Rao

Bengaluru : For the elections to five city corporations under the jurisdiction of the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA), strict adherence to the ward boundaries specified in the official notification is mandatory, stated Chief Commissioner Maheshwar Rao while issuing directions to officials. The Chief Commissioner issued these instructions during a meeting held today at the GBA head office to review the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the verification of draft electoral rolls of the five city corporations.



Directions on Updating Map Boundaries:

To ensure alignment with the notified ward descriptions, the Chief Commissioner directed officials of the IT Department to correct and update map boundaries. He further instructed that, in the long term, verification should be

carried out through a systematic survey process.

Formation of Election Sections: The Chief Commissioner directed that an election section be constituted in each city corporation, comprising one Tahsildar, one Manager, one FDA, one SDA, and one Data Entry Operator.

Appointment of Nodal Officers: To address data-related issues concerning the total number of polling stations, wards divided within city corporations, and wards divided between different city corporations, and to ensure coordination with the GBA Election Section, he directed that

the Additional Commissioners (Revenue) in all five city corporations be appointed as Nodal Officers.

Verification and Confirmation of Divided Wards:

Based on the draft electoral roll data, all wards—particularly divided wards—must be thoroughly examined by Electoral Registration Officers and Assistant Electoral Registration Officers. Additionally, City Corporation Commissioners were directed to independently verify and confirm the accuracy of information related to divided wards.

Special Commissioner for Elections R. Ramachandran stated that strict adherence to a uniform Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is essential to ensure accuracy, transparency, and credibility during the verification of the draft electoral rolls.

TATA CAPITAL LIMITED

Reg. Office: 11th Floor, Tower A, Peninsula Business Park, Ganpatrao Kadam Marg, Lower Parel, Mumbai-400 013. Branch Address: 1st Floor, Puthuram Plaza, KPCC Junction, M G Road, Cochin, Kerala- 682011.

SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTY (Under Rule 8(6) RW Rule 9(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002)

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) r/w Rule 9(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. LOAN ACCOUNT NO: 6508790: Mr. K R RAJESH KUMAR

This is to inform that Tata Capital Ltd. (TCL) is a non-banking finance company and incorporated under the provisions of the Companies Act, 1956 and having its registered office at Peninsula Business Park, Tower A, 11th Floor, Ganpatrao Kadam Marg, Lower Parel, Mumbai-400013 and a branch office amongst other places at Kerala ("Branch"). That vide Orders dated 24.11.2023, the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) Mumbai has duly sanctioned the Scheme of Arrangement between Tata Capital Financial Services Limited ("TCFSL") and Tata Cleantech Capital Limited ("TCCL") as transferees and Tata Capital Limited ("TCL") as transferee under the provisions of Sections 230 to 232 read with Section 66 and other applicable provisions of the Companies Act, 2013 ("said Scheme").

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the below Borrower/Co-Borrower that the below described immovable property mortgaged to Tata Capital Limited (Secured Creditor/TCL), the Possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Tata Capital Limited (Secured Creditor), pursuant to notice under Section 13(2) of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (SARFAESI Act) (No. 54 of 2002). The following immovable properties will be sold on 10th Day of March, 2026 on "As is where is basis" & "As is what is and whatever there is & without recourse basis".

Whereas the sale of secured asset is to be made to recover the secured debt and whereas there was a due of sum of Rs. 4,40,32,727.41/- (Rupees Four Crore Forty Lakh(s) Thirty Two Thousand Seven Hundred Twenty Seven And Paise Forty One Only) vide Loan Account 6508790 as on 06-Feb-2026 from Borrower & Co-Borrowers/Guarantors i.e., (1) Mr. K R Rajeshkumar, S/o. Rajendran T. N., 14/10, Rajesh Bhavan, Muthoor Post, Perumthuruthy, Thiruvalla, Muthoor, Pathanamthitta Dist. Kerala- 689107; (2) Mrs. Premla Mohan K. W/o. K. R. Rajeshkumar, 1/4/10, Rajesh Bhavan, Muthoor Post, Perumthuruthy, Thiruvalla, Muthoor, Pathanamthitta Dist. Kerala- 689107; (3) Mr. Rajendran Thundiyil Raman, 1/4/10, Rajesh Bhavan, Muthoor Post, Perumthuruthy, Thiruvalla, Muthoor, Pathanamthitta Dist. Kerala- 689107; (4) Mrs. Geethakumari Rajendran, Thundiyil Raman, 1/4/10, Rajesh Bhavan, Muthoor Post, Perumthuruthy, Thiruvalla, Muthoor, Pathanamthitta Dist. Kerala- 689107; (5) M/s. Aramam Restaurant represented by its Managing Partner Mr. K R Rajeshkumar, Building No 279, Ward No VI, Peeringara Gramma Panchayath, Perumthuruthy Post, kavumbhagam Village, Thiruvalla Taluk, Kerala- 689107.

Notice is hereby given that, in the absence of any postponement/discontinuance of the sale, the said property shall be sold by E- Auction at 2.00 PM, on the said 10th Day of March, 2026 by TCL, having its branch office at 1st Floor, Puthuram Plaza, KPCC Junction, M G Road, Cochin, Kerala-682011.

The sealed E- Auction for the purchase of the property along with EMD Demand Draft shall be received by the Authorized Officer of the TATA CAPITAL LIMITED till 5.00 P.M. on the said 09th Day of March, 2026.

Description of Secured Asset	Type of Possession Constructive/Physical	Reserve Price (Rs)	Earnest Money EMD (Rs)
All that is part and property of immovable property measuring 8.15 Ares (20.13 cents) of land comprising of 4.07 Ares of land in Re Sy No. 36/17-2, and 4.08 Ares in Re Sy No. 36/17, Block No 8 (Old Sy No. 54/10A) in Kuttappuzha Village together with a residential building bearing Door No. 27/6/13/41(1) in Thiruvalla Municipality which is covered under the schedule of the title deeds 1691/1999 and 1693/1999 registered in Thiruvalla SRO.	Physical	₹ 1,05,23,000/- (Rupees One Crore Five Lakh(s) Twenty Three Thousand Three Hundred Only)	₹ 10,52,300/- (Rupees Ten Lakh(s) Fifty Two Thousand Three Hundred Only)

The description of the property that will be put up for sale is in the Schedule. Movable articles/House hold inventory if any lying inside and within secured asset as described above shall not be available for sale along with secured asset until and unless specifically described in auction sale notice. The sale will also be stopped if, amount due as aforesaid, interest and costs (including the cost of the sale) are tendered to the 'Authorized Officer' or proof is given to his satisfaction that the amount of such secured debt, interest and costs has been paid. At the sale, the public generally is invited to submit their tender personally. No officer or other person, having any duty to perform in connection with this sale shall, however, directly or indirectly bid for, acquire or attempt to acquire any interest in the property sold. The sale shall be subject to the rules/conditions prescribed under the SARFAESI Act, 2002. The E-auction will take place through portal https://augs.samill.in on 10th Day of March, 2026 between 2.00 PM to 3.00 PM with unlimited extension of 10 minutes each. All the Bids submitted for the purchase of the property shall be accompanied by Earnest Money as mentioned above by way of a Demand Draft favoring the "TATA CAPITAL LIMITED" payable at Cochin. Inspection of the property may be done on 02nd Day of March, 2026 between 11.00 AM to 5.00 PM.

Note: The intending bidders may contact to Tata Capital Limited at Mobile No. +91-8691005238 / Authorized Officer Mr. Rakesh Dawny Kokkattu., Email id: rakesh.kokkattu@tatacapital.com and Mobile No. +91-6282658079.

For detailed terms and conditions of the Sale, please refer to the link provided in secured creditor's website, i.e., http://www.tatacapital.com/content/dam/tata-capital/pdf/e-auction/tcsl/7th-e-auction-sale-notice-newspaper-publication-K-R-RAJESH-KUMAR-6508790.pdf

Place: Cochin (Kerala) Authorized Officer, Tata Capital Ltd. Date: 10-02-2026

EDITORIAL

WHEN UNIVERSITIES BECOME SITES OF SILENT REPRESSION

Recent developments at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi, including protests directed at philosopher Divya Dwivedi, have brought into sharp focus a question Indian universities have been quietly postponing: what happens to disagreement when institutions stop treating it as an intellectual matter and begin managing it as a problem of order? The issue at stake is not the correctness of any one scholar's arguments, nor the intent of those who oppose them.

It is the growing tendency for universities to respond to contested ideas not through debate, critique, or counter-argument, but through procedural escalation, reputational anxiety, and administrative intervention. When philosophical disagreement over caste, feminism, or political thought is shifted from classrooms and seminars into committees and complaints, something fundamental changes in how democratic institutions relate to dissent. This is not an argument about individual guilt, intent, or the correctness of any particular scholarly position. Nor is it a defence of one person's views. It is an attempt to understand a broader institutional shift, one in which disagreement increasingly migrates from the domain of intellectual engagement into the terrain of discipline, procedure, and risk management. What that shift reveals is less about ideology than about the condition of democratic institutions today.

India continues to describe itself as a democracy committed to free expression. Constitutional guarantees remain intact, courts periodically reaffirm them, and censorship is officially disavowed. Yet writers, journalists, academics, and students continue to experience forms of silencing. Not through mass bans or explicit prohibitions, but through slower, more diffuse mechanisms that make speech costly, uncertain, and professionally risky. Episodes like the one at IIT Delhi are not aberrations. They are symptoms of this wider transformation. Censorship in contemporary India rarely announces itself. It does not arrive as a ban on books or a formal prohibition on speech. Instead, it operates through procedure. Through complaints, inquiries, notices, and committees. Through reputational anxiety and institutional caution. Through the quiet reclassification of disagreement as disruption, and critique as liability. At IIT Delhi, this logic has been visible in the way philosophical disagreement has been shifted out of the space of intellectual contestation and into administrative terrain. Work on caste, feminism, and political philosophy has been framed not simply as scholarship open to critique, but as material requiring institutional response. The question subtly changes from whether arguments are persuasive to whether they should circulate without consequence. This shift matters because it alters how disagreement is resolved. Not through argument, but through management. This is how democratic censorship often works today. It does not silence by decree. It silences by changing the costs of speaking.

The same pattern can be seen across India's public life. Journalists face legal harassment, access denial, strategic litigation, and economic pressure. Poets and writers encounter criminal cases, forced withdrawals, and sustained intimidation. Academics increasingly operate under reputational and political constraint rather than intellectual autonomy. Speech remains legally permissible, but institutionally hazardous.

Universities occupy a particularly revealing position within this landscape. They are meant to be spaces where disagreement is not only tolerated but constitutive. Yet increasingly, they resemble risk management institutions. Administrations must navigate donor expectations, government scrutiny, media attention, and social media outrage. In this environment, caution becomes a rational strategy. Silence begins to look like responsibility.

What has unfolded at IIT Delhi echoes developments at other institutions. At Ashoka University, political controversy around faculty research and public commentary has led to administrative distancing, resignations, and faculty protests over academic freedom. Even when courts intervene to protect scholars, the broader signal remains clear. Think carefully. Speak cautiously. Know the limits.

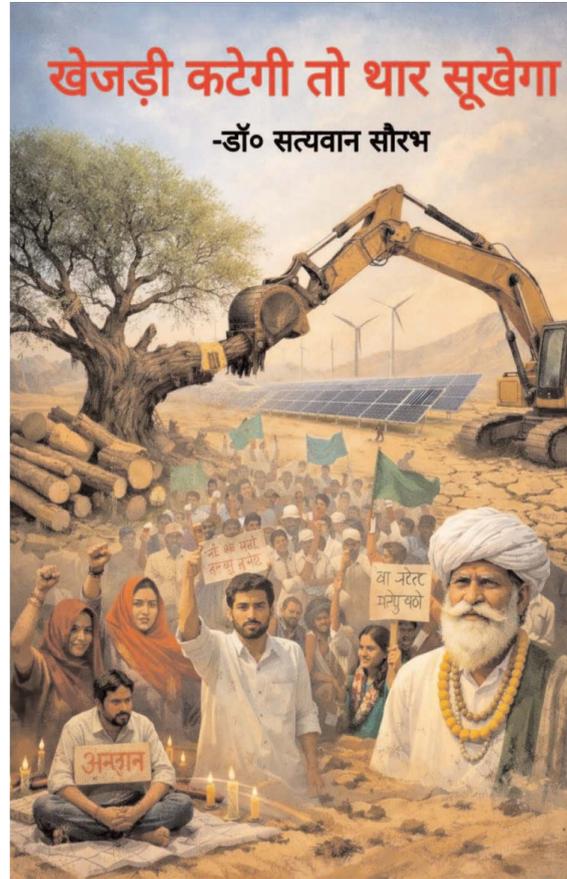
Public universities face an additional constraint. As state institutions, they are tasked with producing critical knowledge while remaining subject to intense political oversight. Faculty learn, often implicitly, that dissent can be reframed as indiscipline, critique construed as misconduct, and disagreement converted into administrative procedure. Universities do not ban ideas outright. They render certain ideas institutionally risky. It is important to be clear about what this argument is not. It is not a rejection of accountability, protest, or disagreement within universities. Contestation is essential to academic life.

If Khejri is cut, Thar will dry up

Dr. Satyawan Saurabh

The Thar Desert of Rajasthan is not just a stretch of sand, but a complex and sensitive ecosystem whose lifeline is linked to native trees like the Khejri (*Prosopis cineraria*). In recent years, the rapid expansion of solar power projects in western Rajasthan—particularly in Jodhpur, Barmer, Nagaur, and Bikaner—has put this ecosystem under serious threat. Against this backdrop, the Khejri Bachao Andolan (Save Khejri) has become more than just a local protest, but has sparked a broader and deeper debate on current models of development, environmental justice, and democratic participation. Declaring the Khejri as the state tree of Rajasthan wasn't merely symbolic. This tree has been the foundation of water conservation, soil fertility, a pastoral-based rural economy, and biodiversity in the dry and harsh Thar climate. Its pods provide nutritious fodder for livestock, its leaves provide green food, and its deep roots hold groundwater. In the folk culture of desert societies, the Khejri is not just a natural resource but a symbol of life and dignity, aptly described as, "Even if the head is flat, it's still cheap." The widespread felling of such trees is not only a detriment to the environment, but also a breakdown of the centuries-old symbiosis between humans and nature.

India has made solar energy a pivotal area of development, aiming to become a global leader in renewable energy. Rajasthan, due to its geographical location, is being developed as a solar hub, and the state government is pursuing a target of approximately 90 gigawatts of solar power. However, the question arises: can green energy expansion be achieved at the cost of greenery destruction? Large-scale land acquisitions have been undertaken for solar parks in western Rajasthan, resulting in the wholesale felling of protected trees like the Khejri. In many cases, environmental impact assessments were either not conducted or merely a formality. This has resulted in the destruction of traditional grazing lands, impacting the livelihoods of pastoralists, and accelerating soil erosion in desert areas. This situation directly conflicts with the concept of sustainable development, which considers energy security, environmental protection, and social justice equally important. The Save Khejri Movement highlights this contradiction. It emerged locally in 2024, but by 2026, it had transformed into an organized mass movement.



The Mahapadav held at Bikaner Polytechnic College on February 2, 2026, proved to be a decisive moment in this struggle. Markets remained closed, educational institutions declared a holiday, and thousands of people—saints, sadhus, women, and youth—gathered on a common platform. This scene clearly demonstrates that this struggle is not limited to a single community, but has become a matter of widespread social concern. The movement's organizers issued a clear warning to the government that if a strict tree protection law was not enacted at the state level, the movement would intensify. Pressure was exerted on the government through peaceful democratic measures such as relay hunger strikes, candlelight marches, and collectorate sieges. By February 4th, hundreds of hunger strikers had been recorded, with the significant participation of women

lending moral and social strength to the movement. This participation of women not only symbolizes protest but also expresses concern for rural livelihoods, folk culture, and future generations. This movement is deeply rooted in the historical consciousness of the Bishnoi community, which traces its roots to the Khejadli incident of 1730. The sacrifice made by Amrita Devi Bishnoi and her 363 companions to protect the Khejadli grove is considered the first organized example of environmental protection in world history. Standing on the same land nearly three hundred years later, this movement connects historical memory and current struggle. This continuity gives the movement not only emotional but also moral legitimacy, distinguishing it from typical environmental protests. The Rajasthan government has

declared the Khejri tree as the state tree, but the lack of an effective and binding legal framework for its conservation has long been felt. Despite tree protection directives issued by the National Green Tribunal and the Supreme Court, enforcement on the ground has been weak. The main demand of the protesters is that a strong Rajasthan Tree Protection Act be implemented across the state, making tree felling a last resort, not a prerequisite, for development projects. Temporary bans or partial orders in some districts cannot address this structural problem.

Although the movement claims to be apolitical, its influence on politics is clearly visible. Slogans like "No tree, no vote" have elevated the environment to the forefront as a crucial electoral issue. The silence of local MLAs and MPs is being questioned, and threats of social boycott represent a new form of democratic pressure. This indicates that the environment in India is no longer just a matter of policy, but a question of democratic accountability, the impact of which will be clearly felt in the upcoming elections.

This movement is not against solar energy or development. The protesters' argument is clear: while the energy transition is necessary, it cannot be synonymous with deforestation. Solutions include strict tree protection laws at the state level, mandatory green belts for solar projects, participation of local communities, prioritization of wasteland and rooftop solar, and reforestation campaigns. Internationally, models such as those being adopted in countries like China and the United States, where biodiversity conservation is integrated with solar parks, could be emulated for India. Ultimately, the Khejri Bachao Andolan reminds us that development cannot be limited to energy production, investment, and statistics. This movement underscores the power of democracy, where ordinary citizens can organize and change the direction of policies. From a researcher's perspective, it can be said that the Khejri Bachao Andolan has the potential to become an important chapter in the history of Indian environmental movements. If the government adopts a path of dialogue, balance, and sensitive policy, this struggle can become an example of sustainable development rather than conflict. Saving the Khejri is not just about saving a tree, but about protecting the identity of Rajasthan, the ecology of the Thar, and the rights of future generations.

The Great Claude Shakeout: What You, A 'Techie', Must Do To Stay Relevant

Are we shifting from Cloud Computing to Claude Computing? Pardon the pun, but it is time to look deeper at the future of the software industry, especially that of the people variously described as software engineers, programmers, cyber coolies, or, fashionably, code jocks. To understand what might be in store after a week of pessimism that roiled stock markets worldwide, you may want to look at journalists on the one hand, fashion designers on the other, and then, at the history of the software industry itself. An ability to connect such distant dots would hopefully keep some human minds worthwhile even if an economic tsunami triggered by artificial intelligence (AI) sweeps humanity, mixing the delicious optimism of getting things done fast with a delirious pessimism of job losses ahead. What Claude Brings To The Table Software As A Service (SaaS) has, in recent years, been a key driver of cloud computing, in which applications are available on tap over the Internet. Your familiar Gmail account is actually a SaaS product, as are Salesforce or Microsoft 365. SaaS got rattled after Anthropic released its Claude Cowork, an "agentic AI" model that threatens the worldwide \$300 billion per-hour billing industry that has for decades enriched coders in stock market darlings like Infosys, Wipro and Tata Consultancy Services (TCS). Claude, in its latest corporate-use release, can read, edit, create, rename and organise files inside a folder and offers 11 plug-ins that allow it to automate legal, sales, marketing and data analytics. Cowork is said to transform AI into "outcome-based execution" rather than a dumber dialogue style. A solid agentic AI like Claude can be likened to a cool mix of Jeeves, the efficient British butler created by humourist PG Wodehouse, and Alladin's Genie, which does every task obediently and quickly. SaaS is essentially nothing but loads of organised code rented by groups like a shared hostel dormitory. While you may joke, "Kyunki SaaS Bhi Kabhi Code Thi", the fact is that Claude potentially sends survival threats to coders as well as the



humongous SaaS bundles that do everything from writing and presentations to complex mathematical, corporate and algorithmic work. As the genie arrives to do big tasks on the fly, the cyber coolie gets hurt - or so thought the markets last week, when the benchmark Nifty IT index saw steep drops that wiped out Rs 200,000 crore worth of market value in two days. Elsewhere, Amazon, which offers a lot of industry-specific SaaS, saw its share drop by nearly 6% on Friday, eroding co-founder and executive chairman Jeff Bezos' estimated \$230 billion holdings in the company by well over \$12 billion on a single day. That had officially nothing to do with the layoffs of about a third of journalists employed by the Washington Post that Bezos owns in his individual capacity, unless you think it was his bad karma. Learn From The Layoffs But the scribe layoffs may give us a clue on what coders need to do to stay afloat. As a journalist, I have grown from the age of rickety typewriters, bland press releases and teleprinters to smartphones, the Internet and social media. I have experienced and adapted myself all along the way. SaaS applications like Grammarly or even Microsoft Word can now do 50% of what I got paid for as a young journalist editing news. Like myself, coders have to grow up and embrace new technologies and shift from hourly coding to innovative and adaptive techniques to grow. Admittedly, this is a challenging order

when an industry is getting fragmented. Bright young YouTubers, podcast hosts and Instagram Reels and video "jocks" now do what old newspaper "hacks" did. They offer cool, consumable packages for Gen Z appetites. Journalism is not dead, but its forms have changed, and challenges continue. This is likely to happen to software as well. Smart journalists of the old school were not exactly sleeping, and neither would code companies. Infosys in front of my eyes has embraced business process outsourcing, products and various industry solutions over the decades, and currently has its own "AgenticAI Foundry" as part of its Topaz software suite. Wipro has its ai360 and TCS its WisdomNext. The IT giants are also retraining lakhs of employees between them to embrace AI. But profitability now involves business and social knowledge and innovation, probably more than ever before, not to speak of constant learning. That implies a need to cut back hiring and stop taking the jam on their bread for granted. 'Alternative Careers' The future is not necessarily bleak, but is certainly cloudy - perhaps in a literal sense as cloud-based simplicity gives way to more customisable software apps. This is what probably led Sridhar Vembu, founder of SaaS firm Zoho, to say: "At this point, it is best for those of us who depend on writing code for a living to start considering alternative livelihoods.

WEST BENGAL BUDGET: SUBSTANCE OVER HYPE

This fortnight's column could have been about the historic appearance by a sitting Chief Minister in the Supreme Court. Or, a piece on the tepid Union Budget presented by the Finance Minister, which even the stock markets gave a thumbs down - Sensex saw its worst Budget-day fall in six years. Or, we could have written about how the Election Commission have completely botched up the Special Intensive Revision (SIR). Or, crafted a column on the canine habits of women MPs who were, absurdly, accused of being all set to injure the Prime Minister if he spoke in Lok Sabha. But, instead, let me write about how a state government, poised to comfortably win the forthcoming Assembly polls, turned out a Budget for the State that was low on hype and high on substance. Here are 15 stats you cannot ignore. State finance. West Bengal's Gross State Domestic Product grew almost five times in the last 15 years. Reducing unemployment. According to the Union government's PLFS data, unemployment in Bengal, among the age group 15 years and above, has been cut by almost half in the last eight years. Jobs. 2.5 crore jobs have been created in the state across private sector, public sector, and self-employment. Youth. Banglar Yuba Sathi scheme, introduced for unemployed youth between 21-40 years, ensures that Rs 1500 is transferred into their bank accounts every month till they get a job. In contrast, for the PM Internship Scheme, where Rs 10,800 crore was allocated, only 5% of that has been spent. Industry: 93 lakh MSMEs, the second highest in India, operate in Bengal. The state also has the highest share of women-led MSMEs in the country. Information Technology. IT sector exports have recorded growth of a whopping 677% in the last 15 years. Poverty alleviation. Over 1.72 crore people have been brought out of poverty. Healthcare. Bengal's Swasthya Sathi health insurance



scheme was launched in 2016. The Union government's Ayushman Bharat scheme followed two years later. 2.45 crore families in Bengal have been covered under the scheme, and more than one crore beneficiaries have availed services. The health card is in the name of the woman head of the family and parents of both spouses are included. Now, the scheme has been extended to gig workers as well. The girl child. Bengal's Kanyashree scheme was launched in 2013. The Union government's Beti Bachao Beti Padhao followed two years later. You can put a hard number to the Kanyashree scheme: financial assistance has been provided to over one crore girls. In comparison, the Union government's Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme has no data available to indicate how many lives have been touched. School transport. Students do not have to walk miles to reach school. The Sabooj Sathi programme has provided bicycles to one and a half crore students. Nobel laureate Amartya Sen's Prathichi Trust, in their assessment of the scheme, notes "a perfect union of policy, based on ideological commitment, and a sound implementation mechanism makes

the program unique". Food security. Now ensured to nine crore people by providing them subsidised food-grains. Women empowerment. The success of the Lakshmi Bhandar scheme, where money is transferred directly into the accounts of women, has inspired many states to adopt similar models. Over two crore women will now receive Rs 1500 per month, a 50% increase from the existing payout. Housing. This financial year, 32 lakh households have been provided housing under the Banglar Bari scheme. Overall, one crore families have benefited. Roads. Over two lakh kilometres of roads have been constructed, and another 30,000 kilometres are being built under Pathashree-Rastashree - one of the 95 schemes rolled out by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in the last 15 years. Water. Functional tap water connections have increased from two lakh in 2011 to nearly one crore households today. Beyond these statistics, some stories are worth telling. A girl from a poor family being able to continue her studies because she is now provided with real financial assistance. A student from a remote village cycling to school on her bicycle.

PVR INOX brings a new entertainment landmark to Hyderabad with 9-screen cinema launch at Lakeshore mall, Kukatpally

Hyderabad, February 09, 2026: PVR INOX, India's leading multiplex chain, today announced the launch of its newest 9-screen cinema at Lakeshore Mall, Y-Junction, Kukatpally, further strengthening its footprint in Hyderabad. This marks the company's 18th cinema in the city, taking the total PVR INOX screen count in Hyderabad to 111 screens. Strategically located at one of Hyderabad's busiest and fastest-growing hubs, the cinema is housed within Lakeshore Mall, a large, metro-connected shopping and entertainment destination near Balanagar Metro Station on the Red Line. Positioned at a high-traffic junction with strong youth and working-professional footfall, the mall is fast emerging as a popular hang-out for Gen Z and young millennials, offering a mix of fashion, food, and social spaces. The newly launched multiplex features 9 state-of-the-art auditoriums with a total seating capacity of 1,476 seats, anchored by two distinctive formats designed for diverse audience segments. PXL, PVR INOX's large-format screen, delivers a powerful, immersive experience



built for tentpole blockbusters and event cinema. Playhouse offers a vibrant, safe, and engaging environment curated especially for children and young families. The remaining seven mainstream auditoriums cater to a wide range of films across languages and genres—from mainstream entertainers and regional cinema to youth-driven content, pop culture titles, and global releases that resonate strongly with Gen Z audiences. Technology-led design defines the cinema experience. The PXL auditorium is powered by 4K laser

projection and Dolby Atmos immersive sound, complemented by RealD 3D for a large-format, blockbuster-ready experience. Among the mainstream auditoriums, five screens feature Dolby Atmos immersive sound, while two screens are equipped with DTS:X immersive sound systems, ensuring rich, spatial audio across viewing formats. Playhouse is designed to deliver an engaging cinematic experience calibrated for younger audiences. This launch also marks PVR INOX's second PXL screen in Hyderabad, fol-

lowing the recent introduction of the format at Inorbit Mall. Premium seating options such as Front Row Loungers and Celebrity Recliners add comfort and flexibility, appealing to young moviegoers who view cinemas as social, experiential destinations rather than just viewing spaces. The cinema also introduces PVR INOX's latest cinema food court concept, featuring multiple counters, quick-service favourites, and fresh offerings. Designed as a bright, social space, the food court complements Gen Z prefer-

ences for shared experiences, convenience, and casual dining before and after shows. Commenting on the launch, Mr. Ajay Bijli, Managing Director, PVR INOX Limited, said: "Hyderabad is a dynamic, future-facing cinema market, with a strong youth and Gen Z audience that seeks immersive, social, and high-quality experiences. Kukatpally is rapidly evolving into a key lifestyle hub, and our new 9-screen cinema at Lakeshore Mall reflects our focus on combining technology, comfort, and curated formats to make moviegoing more relevant, accessible, and exciting for the next generation of audiences." Mr. Sanjeev Kumar Bijli, Executive Director, PVR INOX Limited, added: "This cinema has been designed to align with evolving audience preferences—from premium formats and immersive sound to flexible seating and social food spaces. Whether it's families, working professionals, or Gen Z movie lovers discovering content across languages and cultures, the Kukatpally cinema delivers a contemporary moviegoing experience that fits seamlessly into today's lifestyle."

Japanese stocks surge as Takaichi secures historic election victory

Japanese stocks surged to a record high on Monday, as Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) basked in a historic election victory. The LDP secured 316 out of 465 seats in Sunday's election, the first time a single party has won a two-thirds lower house majority since Japan's parliament was established in its current form in 1947. The Japan Innovation Party, the LDP's coalition partner, won in 36 more constituencies, taking their combined total to 352 seats. The resounding mandate is a gamble that paid off for Takaichi, who now faces the challenge of reviving Japan's moribund economy and tackling cost-of-living woes. The Nikkei 225 index rallied by more than 5% in early trade on Monday, briefly crossing the 57,000 mark for the first time. It then gave up some gains, but still closed up 3.9% at a record high of 56,363.94. The LDP's decisive win will help Takaichi advance her pro-business policies without having to negotiate extensively with opposition parties. Takaichi told reporters on Sunday that she would pursue a "responsible yet aggressive" fiscal policy and would not reshuffle the Cabinet, which was formed less than four months ago. Japan's first



female prime minister called the snap election last month, just a few months after taking office in October. Her success is in marked contrast to her two predecessors, under whom the party lost its parliamentary majority, battled corruption scandals and struggled to curb rising costs. Markets commentators say Takaichi's policies could boost the Japanese economy. The election outcome and upcoming moves like "stimulus, tax tweaks, and deregulation" will be "additional fuel for an existing bull trend", investment analyst Yuka Marosek told the BBC. Chris Scicluna, head of research at Daiwa Capital Markets Europe, said Japanese stock investors had "long been believers in Takaichi". "They're confident that Japanese firms will benefit from her pledge to end austerity, they love her promises of more investment to boost growth,

[and] they like the fact she's identified several strategic sectors such as defence and AI to benefit from extra policy support," he told the BBC's Today programme. However, he added that investors in Japanese government bonds and the yen were "a lot more agnostic if not downright sceptical" about Takaichi's intentions. "Japanese government debt's extremely high and investors in bonds and the yen want to know how she intends to finance her plans," he said. Historically low inflation in the country has made it very sensitive to the rising cost of living over recent years. At this election, voters at polling stations told the BBC that they were worried about the increasing costs of groceries and rent. The economy is also under pressure from the country's ageing population, which has seen a shrinking workforce and ballooning social care costs.

Stock markets trade higher in early trade tracking rally in Asian peers

Mumbai: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty opened on a positive note on Monday, February 9, amid foreign fund inflows, a rally in Asian markets and optimism following a fresh trade agreement between India and the US. The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 441.77 points, or 0.53 per cent, to 84,022.17 in the morning trade. The 50-share NSE Nifty rose 129 points, or 0.50 per cent, to 25,822.70. Among the 30-share Sensex constituents, State Bank of India, Titan, Eternal, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Bharat Electronics Ltd, Tata Steel, Sun Pharmaceuticals, Larsen & Toubro, Adani Ports, IndiGo, Reliance Industries and Bharti Airtel were the gainers. On the other hand, PowerGrid, ITC, Hindustan Unilever, Bajaj Finance, Trent, Infosys, ICICI Bank, Axis Bank, NTPC, Tech Mahindra, Tata Consultancy Services, HDFC Bank were among the laggards. Foreign institutional investors bought equities worth Rs 1,950.77



crore on Friday, according to exchange data. "A big positive for the market is that FIIs who were sustained sellers in the market have bought in the cash market in three out of the last four trading days. The fact that the derivatives market continues to be heavily net short might impart resilience to the market, on expectations of short covering," VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments Ltd, said. He added that the recent 'Anthropic shock' will continue to impact sentiments in the IT sector. On the contrary, banking stocks are likely to gather strength on news of

improving credit growth, which will have positive fall out for GDP growth and corporate earnings in FY27. In Asian markets, Japan's Nikkei 225, South Korea's Kospi, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index trading higher. Devarsh Vakil, Head of Prime Research, HDFC Securities said Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party, led by Sanae Takaichi secured a decisive victory pushing the Nikkei to record highs. He noted that Indian equities stand to gain as Japanese capital pivots away from China under Takaichi's "Economic Security" policy, with billions in FDI expected to

flow into Indian infrastructure and technology sectors, he said. Vakil further said India and the US on Saturday reached an interim trade agreement ending their ten-month tariff war, with Washington reducing tariffs on Indian goods from 50 per cent to 18 per cent. India successfully protected sensitive agricultural sectors like dairy while committing to purchase USD 500 billion in US goods over five years, focusing on energy, aircraft, and defence technology. The deal strategically integrates India into the US-led "Pax Silica" initiative for critical minerals and AI supply chains, positioning India as a counterweight to China in the Indo-Pacific, he added. US markets ended more than 2 per cent higher on Friday. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, declined 0.94 per cent, to USD 67.41 per barrel. On Friday, the 30-share BSE Sensex advanced 266.47 points to settle at 83,580.40, while the NSE Nifty climbed 50.90 points to end at 25,693.70.

GODREJ AGROVET LAUNCHES NEW INSECTICIDE TAKAI

February 9, 2026: Godrej Agrovet Limited (Godrej Agrovet), one of India's leading diversified agri-businesses, has launched a new insecticide TAKAI, developed for rice crops. Powered by Cyclapryn™ technology developed by ISK Japan, TAKAI is effective against key rice pests, Stem Borer and, also controls Leaf Folder. When applied at a dose of 160 ml at 15-30 Days After Transplant (DAT) and again at 40-60 DAT, it provides an extensive protection window for the rice crop. The company is in process of getting label approval in Maize, Chilli, Cabbage, Soybean, Chickpea and Sugarcane crops too for TAKAI. Stem Borer cause 30% - 40% yield loss during severe outbreaks, whereas leaf folder infestation can result in 20% - 30% yield loss under severe conditions, often attacking the crop at early and mid-growth stages when detection and timely intervention are challenging. Hence, although India is the world's largest producer of rice, with production of 150.18 million tonnes, its per-



hectare yield remains significantly low at ~2.9 tonnes/hectare compared to global best of 5 tonnes/hectare. Sunil Kataria, MD & CEO, Godrej Agrovet, said, "Effective pest management determines the success of the Indian rice

farmer. Through TAKAI, we intend to enable rice farmers to protect their crops from pest attacks by offering them a solution that offers quick control and is effective for a longer duration thereby improving crop health." "At Godrej Agrovet, our endeavor

is to deliver crop protection solutions that address environmental and market challenges faced by our farmers. Today's launch of TAKAI is in sync with our strategy of strengthening our portfolio across key crops by leveraging our research expertise and strong on-ground reach that empower farmers and uplift farming families," he added. Rice, being a multi-season crop - Kharif, Rabi and Summer, is grown in warm, humid and water-logged conditions making it ideal for pest attacks throughout the year. In the early critical stage, i.e. vegetative stage during 15-30 DAT, Stem Borer damages the plant and makes it difficult for farmers to detect early. Later at reproductive stage during 40-60 DAT, both Stem Borer and Leaf Folder attack the plant. Leaf Folder feeds on the leaf tissue by folding the leaves thereby reducing the plant's photosynthetic area and hence crop growth. It is at these stages that TAKAI should be applied at a dose of 160 ml when the crop is 15-30 days old and again at 40-60 DAT.

Businesses face extinction unless they protect nature, major report warns

Businesses risk extinction themselves unless they protect and restore the natural world, scientists across the globe are warning. A major new report sets out how companies can shift from harmful approaches to ones that help restore nature. It comes amid major concerns over UK nature loss. The assessment, by Ipbes (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services), is based on contributions from leading scientists and approved by 150 governments. Businesses can either lead the way or "ultimately risk extinction... both of species in nature, but potentially also their own", said co-author Matt Jones, from the UN World CThe report pointed to everyday incentives that are driving nature's decline: Large subsidies that damage biodiversity rather than repair it, fuelled by lobbying from businesses and trade associations Confusion and a lack of meaningful action on how businesses measure



their impacts and reliance on nature. It said better stewardship of nature is not a distant environmental issue but a core challenge for every boardroom. Yet, less than 1% of publicly reporting companies mention their impacts on biodiversity in their reports. nervation Monitoring Centre in Cambridge. Ipbes found that all businesses, even those seemingly far removed from it, rely on the services nature provides for free, from clean water to fertile soils. Co-chair, Prof Stephen Polasky, said the loss of biodiversity is among the most serious threats to business, "yet the

twisted reality is that it often seems more profitable to businesses to degrade biodiversity than to protect it". Commenting on the report, Leigh Morris, International Director of the consortium of UK wildlife charities, The Wildlife Trusts, said we need "clear metrics and toolkits so businesses can get their own houses in order on biodiversity". For many UK businesses, engaging with nature protection has gone from "a nice-to-do" to a "must-do", he added. One example of how companies are working hand-in-hand with nature is at Steart Marshes in Somerset.

PLANE MAKERS CHASE ASIA'S SUPER-RICH WITH LUXE NEW PRIVATE JETS

Clean lines, sweeping wings and wide oval windows: Gulfstream's G700 is among the most eye-catching aircraft at the Singapore Airshow, Asia's largest aviation and defence trade fair. Parked in a quieter corner of the tarmac, away from passenger jets and bulky military aircraft, it has drawn long queues of visitors waiting in the heat for a glimpse inside - a sign of the enduring interest in one of the world's leading private jet manufacturers. The lines move slowly. Sales conversations are still taking place on board, as customers consider aircraft that can cost tens of millions of dollars. Step inside and the appeal is immediate. Light streams in through almost panoramic windows onto pale leather seats and polished wood veneer. Staff describe the cabin as having "living areas": one with a sofa and TV console, while at the rear, a bedroom they call a "grand suite with a shower."



This is more than a touch of luxury. It reflects a broader shift in aviation. As commercial airlines continue to chase large volumes of passengers, private jet makers are focusing on a much smaller but far richer group of customers. The numbers underline the trend. In 2025, global private jet flights reached roughly 3.7 million - up 5% from 2024 and around 35% higher than before the pandemic, according to aviation intelligence firm WingX. Between 2020 and 2025, the number of ultra-high-net-worth individuals

globally - defined as those worth more than \$30m (£22.2m) - has also grown by more than 70%. "We are seeing a big shift of business aircraft for larger corporations and high net worth individuals," said Scott Neal, Gulfstream's head of worldwide sales. "More companies are doing business globally, and they need to travel to more places around the globe, and the most efficient way to do that is on a business aircraft." Gulfstream is not alone: rivals including Dassault, Bombardier, Embraer and

Textron Aviation, which makes Cessna jets, are all competing in the space. But not everyone is cheering the trend, with environmental concerns being amongst the criticisms levelled at the industry. Nonetheless, plane manufacturers have sensed the business opportunity. Airlines - especially those offering long routes and full services - operate on thin profit margins. Airlines usually make a small amount of money from their operations, often just 2% to 4% above what they spend, according to the International Air Transport Association (IATA). Private jets are sold in small numbers but at very high prices. Plane makers also make money from support, parts and maintenance programmes. France's Dassault Aviation, best known for its military jets, is pushing its Falcon aircraft, saying that the technology developed for its combat planes improves the performance and com-

fort in its business jets. Dassault says corporations and governments are big customers, as well as high-net worth individuals. Private jets may cost tens of millions of dollars, but Carlos Brana, head of civil aircraft at Dassault Aviation says they make sense for frequent travellers. Customers that fly often may spend less over time than they would on multiple first-class tickets. He says most buyers are not chasing extravagance as much as efficiency. "I want to go from that point to that point as fast as I can and not lose time in stopovers or connections. That is the real stuff," he told the BBC aboard the company's flagship Falcon jet. "They are not necessarily chasing luxury. As you can see, this interior is elegant, well done, well made, with a high quality of materialism. It's not luxurious, not over-luxurious - we don't have chandeliers in the ceiling or anything like that."

EPSTEIN SURVIVORS CALL FOR FULL RELEASE OF FILES IN VIDEO

Survivors of late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein have appeared in an advert calling for the release of more files related to him. In the 40 second video from the World Without Exploitation group, released in the US on Super Bowl Sunday, survivors held up photographs of their younger selves and said "we all deserve the truth". The US Department of Justice (DOJ) was required by law to make all the files public in December last year. However, only some have been released - many with redactions. The DOJ said files not published were either unrelated, duplicates, or had been withheld under deliberative process or attorney-client privilege. Deliberative process privilege allows US government agencies to withhold documents which reflect decision-making processes, while attorney-client privilege is intended to protect the confidentiality of communications between lawyers and clients. Deputy US Attorney General Todd Blanche said last month that the most recent release of material, on 30 January, "marks the end of a very comprehensive



document identification and review process". Blanche also said there was a "built in assumption that somehow there's this hidden tranche of information of men that we know about that we're covering up or that we're not we're choosing not to prosecute", before adding "that is not the case". Sunday's advert featuring the survivors

began with a text slate on screen that said: "On November 19, 2025, the Epstein Files Transparency Act was signed into law." It continued with a statement that said: "3 MILLION FILES Still Have Not Been Released." The survivors appeared with black redaction marks over their mouths, addressed the camera directly and each said "we're stand-

ing together". The advert concluded with a call for people to "stand with us" and "Tell Attorney General Pam Bondi IT'S TIME FOR THE TRUTH". While the video was released on the day of the Super Bowl it was not aired on television during the match, which traditionally has the largest television audience in the US. The group told the

Reuters news agency it could not afford to air a commercial during the game, noting that a 30-second Super Bowl advertisement can cost "more than \$8 million (£5.9m)". The DOJ's release of documents has shed light on the disgraced financier's close association with many prominent people. However, the justice department has faced heavy scrutiny after missing the 19 December deadline to release all files as mandated in the Epstein Files Transparency Act, which passed Congress and was signed into law in November. Epstein was found dead in his prison cell in 2019 while awaiting trial on sex trafficking charges, with officials saying his death was an apparent suicide. Gislaine Maxwell, the jailed associate of convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, is scheduled to appear before the congressional committee investigating the federal government's handling of the Epstein files on Monday. She has agreed to testify under oath but her legal team previously said she would decline to answer questions under her constitutional right to remain silent unless she is granted legal immunity.

Outrage as South Korean official suggests 'importing' foreign women to boost birth rate



A South Korean official who suggested the country "import young women" from "Vietnam or Sri Lanka" to boost its birth-rate has been expelled from his party. Kim Hee-soo, the head of the southern Jindo County, said the woman could be married off to "young men in rural areas" during a town hall last week. The suggestion comes as South Korea continues to grapple with the lowest birth-rates in the world, which could see the country's 50 million-strong population drop by half in 60 years. But Kim's statement, which was televised, did not go down well - triggering a diplomatic protest from

Vietnam, days of public anger and his expulsion from the ruling Democratic Party. Attempts by Kim to defuse the outrage with an apology a day after the town hall appear to have failed. The town hall had been called to discuss a potential merger between the province where Jindo County is located and a nearby city - something regions with shrinking populations are looking at for administrative reasons. Kim said his comment had been intended to highlight population issues in rural regions but admitted the language he had used was "inappropriate", local media reported.

Bad Bunny makes history as Trump criticises 'terrible' Super Bowl show



Bad Bunny's Super Bowl half-time show was one big love letter to his native Puerto Rico, culminating in a message of pride in his home and the Americas, and an appeal for unity with the US. The 14-minute set included guest performances from Lady Gaga and Ricky Martin, along with cameos from the likes of Pedro Pascal, Cardi B, Karol G and Jessica Alba, who could be seen dancing on the porch of his famous casita, a staple of his shows designed to look like a traditional Puerto Rican home. The 31-year-old, who was the world's most-played artist in 2025 according to Spotify, made history by becoming the first musician to perform entirely in Spanish at a Super Bowl, which is normally the most-watched event on US TV. He did choose to say one line in English, "God bless America", before listing nations of Central, South and North America as dancers carried their

flags. Behind them, a billboard message read "The only thing more powerful than hate is love", and he held a football at the end of the segment bearing the slogan in English: "Together, We Are America." However, Bad Bunny, real name Benito Antonio Martinez Ocasio, did not use his performance to make any explicit political statements against the current US administration. Despite that, President Donald Trump, who did not attend this year's Super Bowl, called Bad Bunny's set "absolutely terrible, one of the worst, EVER!" on his social media platform Truth Social. He added that it was "an affront to the Greatness of America" and "nobody understands a word this guy is saying". An alternative event, the All-American Halftime Show, was organised by Turning Point USA and was headlined by Trump-supporting singer Kid Rock.

How off-the-shelf drones are changing jihadist warfare in West Africa

Jihadist groups are increasingly carrying out drone strikes in West Africa, raising alarm that they are building the capacity to wage a "war from the skies". A leading violence monitoring organisation, Acled, has recorded at least 69 drone strikes by an al-Qaeda affiliate in Burkina Faso and Mali since 2023, while two Islamic State (IS) affiliates have carried out around 20 - mostly in Nigeria, which has been battling numerous insurgent groups for almost 25 years. The latest drone attack took place in Nigeria's north-eastern Borno state on 29 January, when jihadists carried out a two-pronged assault - with multiple armed drones and ground fighters - on a military base. The military said nine of its soldiers were killed in the attack by the Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP) -



identified by Acled as the "most prolific" IS African affiliate in "drone warfare". The jihadists tended to carry out strikes with "commercially available, relatively inexpensive quadcopter [unmanned] drones" that were "rigged with explosives", while also using them for reconnaissance and surveillance missions in preparation for ground attacks. Acled senior Africa analyst Ladd Serwat told the BBC. Despite the fact that Nigeria's government tightly controls the import of commercial and hobby drones and prohibits their use without official permission.

HONG KONG PRO-DEMOCRACY TYCOON JIMMY LAI GETS 20 YEARS' JAIL

Jimmy Lai, Hong Kong's pro-democracy media tycoon, has been jailed for 20 years for colluding with foreign forces under the city's controversial national security law. Rights groups called it a death sentence for the 78-year-old, whose family has raised concerns about his health, but Hong Kong's leader said it was "deeply gratifying". This is the harshest punishment to be handed down under the law, which China imposed after huge protests in 2019 demanding more freedom, and defends as essential for the city's stability. Lai, a British citizen, is the most prominent of the hundreds arrested under the law. A fierce critic of China, he often wielded his paper, Apple Daily, as a tool of protest. "It is

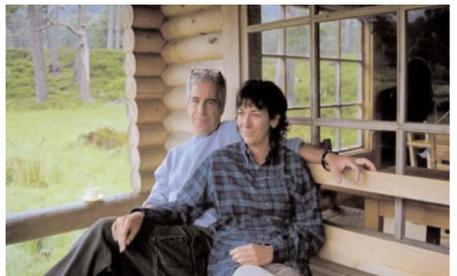


incredibly heartbreaking," Lai's son, Sebastien, told the BBC's Today programme, adding that he had repeatedly raised Lai's imprisonment with the UK government but "obviously my father is still in prison". Sebastien Lai and others have criticised Prime Minister Keir Starmer's recent visit to China as a wasted opportunity. The sentence "signifies the total

destruction of the Hong Kong legal system and the end of justice", Sebastien said. Hong Kong authorities and China's foreign ministry, however, insist the Lai's sentencing demonstrates the city's rule of law. In sentencing Lai, the judges condemned his "serious and grave criminal conduct" and said he was involved in conspiracies that were of the "most serious" category. On Monday morning, ahead of sentencing, there was a heavy police presence around the court. But there were also throngs of Lai's supporters, some of them having camped out for days hoping to get inside for his sentencing. "I just wish to greet Mr Lai in person in court... That's all I ask for, because I think it will be the last time I see him," said one supporter, who said he'd stood in line since Thursday night. Inside, Lai, who wore a white jacket and black glasses, smiled brightly at his family and other supporters. He nodded calmly when his sentence was announced, while some members of the public were heard sobbing. His wife Teresa held back tears as she left the court.

MAXWELL WON'T ANSWER QUESTIONS FROM CONGRESS, LAWYER SAYS

Gislaine Maxwell, the convicted associate of sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, intends to invoke her right to remain silent during questioning by the US House Oversight Committee, according to her lawyer. Maxwell is expected to appear virtually for Monday's closed-door deposition from the Texas prison where she is serving a 20-year sentence for sex trafficking. "I can confirm that she will take the 5th," Maxwell's lawyer David Oscar Markus told the BBC on Sunday, referring to the right to avoid self-incrimination outlined in the Fifth Amendment of the US constitution. Instead, Maxwell



will read "a prepared statement at the outset of the deposition", Democratic Representative Ro Khanna said. Maxwell was convicted in 2021 for her role in luring underage girls for Epstein, her former boyfriend, to exploit.

he plans to ask Maxwell about a court document she filed last year saying there were "four named co-conspirators" and 25 others who were not indicted as part of the Epstein investigation. He also plans to ask about her and the deceased financier's "social relationship" with Donald Trump, and whether the US president ever discussed a potential pardon for Maxwell with her defence team. Trump has consistently denied any wrongdoing in relation to Epstein, with whom he says he severed contact decades ago, and has not been accused of any crimes by Epstein's victims.

Epstein died in prison in 2019. She is seeking a pardon from Trump and has been accused of lying to federal officials. In a letter addressed to Oversight Committee chairman James Comer, a Republican, Khanna said

Venezuela's opposition says party leader kidnapped hours after being freed



Venezuelan opposition leader María Corina Machado said her opposition colleague Juan Pablo Guanipa has been kidnapped just hours after being released from detention. The Nobel Peace Prize winner said on Sunday that Guanipa, leader of the Justice First party, was taken in the Los Chorroos neighbourhood of the capital, Caracas. "Heavily armed men dressed in civilian clothes arrived in four vehicles and took him away by force," she wrote on social media early on Monday. A former vice-president of the National Assembly, Guanipa spent eight months in prison and was among several political prisoners released since the US seized Venezuela's then-President Nicolás Maduro in January. Guanipa's centre-right party said he had been kidnapped by the "repressive forces of the dictatorship" while he was moving between locations. They added that those accompanying him said weapons were pointed at the group before Guanipa was loaded into a car. "We hold Delcy Rodríguez, Jorge Rodríguez, and Diosdado Cabello responsible for any harm to Juan Pablo's life,"

Justice First wrote on social media, referring to Venezuela's interim president, the National Assembly speaker, and the interior minister respectively. The party also called on the international community to demand the "immediate release" of Guanipa and an end to the Venezuelan government's "persecution of the opposition". Just hours earlier, Guanipa's son Ramón was celebrating his father's release on social media: "Our entire family will be able to hug again soon." He subsequently posted a video online in which he demanded immediate proof that his father was still alive. "I hold the regime responsible for anything that happens to my father. Enough of this repression," Ramón Guanipa said in the video. Guanipa was among at least 30 people freed on Sunday, according to Foro Penal, which provides assistance to political prisoners in Venezuela. The leader of the Justice First party, he was elected governor of the Zulia region in 2017 but was barred from taking office after he refused to swear an oath before Maduro's National Constituent Assembly.

POLICE PEPPER SPRAY PROTESTERS AS ISRAELI PRESIDENT VISITS SYDNEY

Australian police have used pepper spray against protesters in Sydney demonstrating against Israeli President Isaac Herzog's visit to the country. A number of people were arrested after scuffles with police officers broke out on Monday. Herzog earlier laid a wreath and two stones from Jerusalem at Bondi Beach, the site of a mass shooting at a Jewish festival in December during which 15 people - including a 10-year-old girl - were killed. Australia's senior Jewish leaders hope that Herzog's four-day visit will comfort a grieving community, but others have warned he should not have been invited due to allega-

tions he has incited genocide in Gaza - a claim he denies. The demonstration in the centre of Sydney was organised by the Palestine Action Group, despite restrictions on public protest brought in after December's shooting. Just a few days ago, the New South Wales government introduced additional "major event" powers effectively giving police authority to shut down areas of the city, search people and impose fines of up to \$5,500 (£2,839, US\$3,862) for non-compliance. Protest organisers had said the rally would still go ahead, with some 5,000 people expected. On Monday, crowds gathered in Sydney, many wear-



ing Palestinian headscarves and holding placards. "I'm not anti-semitic, I am anti-genocide," read one poster. "Arrest Herzog," read another. When the peaceful rally ended, protesters started chanting, "Let us march" - but a heavy police presence stopped them. There was growing

frustration and the atmosphere became more tense, with pepper spray used to disperse some protesters and police reinforcements also brought in. A protest was also held in Melbourne. Herzog was invited to visit the country by Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, who said the visit

would contribute to social cohesion and a "greater sense of unity" after the Bondi attack. As he laid a wreath at the site of the mass shooting, Herzog said: "When one Jew is hurt, all Jews feel their pain." He added that he was there to "embrace and console the bereaved families". When asked earlier on about the planned protests, Herzog answered: "I have come here in goodwill and in a message that... Australia and Israel are close friends and allies since the days of old. These demonstrations in most cases, what you hear and see, comes to undermine and delegitimise our right, my nation's right... of its mere existence

and it's contradictory to whatever was said and done by Australia". The Israeli president will now travel to Canberra and Melbourne, and will also hold talks with Albanese. Alex Ryvchin, co-chair executive of Australia's peak Jewish body, the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, on Monday said Herzog's visit was warmly welcomed. "For the victim families and for the survivors [of the Bondi attack], it means a great deal," he said. "His visit will lift the spirits of a pained community and we hope will lead to a much-needed recalibration of bilateral relations between two historic allies," he said.



ICC Turns Down Pakistan's Three Key Demands Amid T20 World Cup Boycott U-Turn Negotiation: One Was Bilaterals With India

The drama surrounding Pakistan's boycott of the T20 World Cup group-stage match against India - and a potential U-turn - is heading towards its final act.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) and the International Cricket Council (ICC) engaged in a meeting to end the stalemate over the costliest cricket match, which, according to some reports, amounts to over Rs 4,000 crore if all factors are taken into account.

The PCB placed several demands before the ICC. However, the Jay Shah-led global cricket body has rejected some of the key proposals, sources told. Here are Pakistan's demands and what the ICC said about them: Demand 1: No financial penalty for Bangladesh. The PCB



insisted that Bangladesh must receive its full ICC revenue share even though it did not play the T20 World Cup. ICC's response: It clarified that this was already its decision - the Bangladesh Cricket Board would not

be penalised. Demand 2: Compensatory ICC event for Bangladesh. The PCB sought an additional ICC event for Bangladesh in the next cycle. ICC's response: An Under-19 World Cup in the next cycle is being considered.

Demand 3: India-Pakistan bilateral series. The PCB pushed for ICC intervention to facilitate a bilateral series between India and Pakistan. ICC's response: The request was rejected, with the ICC stating that bilateral series

are outside its mandate, including during the World Test Championship cycle. Demand 4: India-Pakistan-Bangladesh tri-series. The PCB proposed a tri-series featuring India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. ICC's response: The proposal was turned down, again citing lack of jurisdiction.

Demand 5: India tour of Bangladesh in 2026. The PCB sought ICC involvement in securing an India tour of Bangladesh. ICC's response: It declined to intervene, reiterating that tours are decided bilaterally. Sources added that the ICC has given the PCB 24 hours after chairman Mohsin Naqvi sought time to consult Pakistan's Prime Minister. A follow-up meeting is expected shortly, with an official ICC announcement likely in the next 24 hours.

Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma Demoted To 'Grade B' In BCCI's Central Contract List For 2025-26



BCCI Central Contracts: The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has announced the Annual Player Contracts for Team India Senior Men and Senior Women for the 2025-26 season (October 1, 2025 to September 30, 2026). Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma have been demoted to Grade B in BCCI's central contract list for 2025-26. Thirty senior men's cricketers have been awarded cen-

tral contracts, with the BCCI doing away with the A+ grade. Only three cricketers - Test and ODI skipper Shubman Gill, Jasprit Bumrah and Ravindra Jadeja - have been placed in Grade A, the top tier as per the latest decision by the BCCI. As per the 2024-25 BCCI contracts, any player in Grade A would receive Rs 5 crore annually, while Grade B players would get Rs 3 crore. Grade C play-

ers would get Rs 1 crore. Earlier, Grade A+ players (Kohli, Rohit, Jasprit Bumrah, Ravindra Jadeja) used to receive Rs 7 crore. The BCCI has not yet officially declared whether the payment structure for 2025-26 will be any different. In Grade B, the following players have been included: Washington Sundar, Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, KL Rahul, Mohammed Siraj, Hardik Pandya.

ZIMBABWE OUTCLASS OMAN, WIN WITH 6.3 OVERS TO SPARE

Zimbabwe vs Oman T20 World Cup 2026, Highlights: Zimbabwe put in a clinical bowling performance en route to a thumping victory over Oman in their T20 World Cup Group B opener in Colombo on Monday. Opting to bowl, Zimbabwe pacers Blessing Muzarabani, Richard Ngarava and Brad Evans caused havoc, taking three wickets each as Oman were bundled out for just 103. Oman were tottering at 27/5 at one stage. With the bat, Brian Bennett remained unbeaten on 48 as Zimbabwe chased down their target in just 13.3 overs to clinch a dominant win. Manic Monday continues - We are done with the second game of the day and so far, we have



seen two of the more experienced sides sweep away their opponents, albeit in contrasting fashion. Scotland did it by putting on a mammoth total on the board and then getting the chasing side under pressure. Whereas Zimbabwe laid the foundation with the ball and then chased the low total

with ease. The action now moves to Ahmedabad, where South Africa are all set to get their campaign underway against Canada. That game will begin at 1.30 pm GMT but you can switch tabs and join our build-up right away. Cheers! Sikandar Raza, the captain of Zimbabwe - Sikandar

Raza says his bowlers have stepped up whenever he asked them to. On Brendan Taylor, Raza says it is something that happened before, where he went on to play, so he didn't want to risk it. Mentions that Taylor felt it was bad, but they are waiting for the scans to get a clearer picture. Mentions this performance had courage and character from his players and hopes they show the same in the next matches as well. Sikandar Raza, the captain of Zimbabwe - Sikandar Raza says his bowlers have stepped up whenever he asked them to. On Brendan Taylor, Raza says it is something that happened before, where he went on to play, so he didn't want to risk it.

Olympic bosses investigate why medals are breaking

Milan-Cortina 2026 organisers say they are giving "maximum attention" to why Olympic medals are breaking after several athletes experienced issues with theirs. Two of the USA's gold medalists, Breezy Johnson and Alysa Liu, revealed the ribbon had come away from the medal soon after they received their prize. Johnson, who won gold in the women's downhill alpine skiing, showed her broken medal at the post-event media conference. "So there's the medal. And there's the ribbon," she told reporters. "And here's the little piece that is supposed to go into the ribbon to hold the medal, and yeah, it came apart." Liu disclosed a similar issue in a video on social media, external after she won gold as part of the



United States squad in the figure skating team event. The video shows Liu holding up the medal and ribbon in separate hands, with the text: "My medal don't need the ribbon." The issue also befell the German team who won bronze in the biathlon. An Instagram video, external shows the medal falling from the ribbon of one of the athletes as they jumped up and down in celebration at

the team hotel. Andrea Francis, Milan-Cortina 2026 chief games operations officer, said the organisers are investigating the issue. "We are fully aware of the situation," Francis said. "We are looking into exactly what the problem is. We are going to pay maximum attention to the medals, and obviously this is something we want to be perfect when the medal is handed over because this is one of the most important moments for the athletes." A United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee spokesperson told BBC Sport they are waiting for organisers to resolve the issue. It has not yet been confirmed whether athletes will receive replacement medals. This is not the first time the quality of medals awarded at Olympic Games has been called into question. As of February 2025, a total of 220 requests have been made to replace medals won at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games because of wear and tear - roughly 4% of those awarded. Diver Yasmin Harper, who won Team GB's first medal of the 2024 Games, was among the athletes to notice her medal was showing signs of "tarnishing".

Dale Steyn Counters Fan Alleging Him Of Making "Subtle Jibes" On Team India



South Africa's Dale Steyn is one of the fiercest fast bowlers world cricket has ever seen. He played for the national team for around 16 years. The fast bowler went on to play 93 Tests for the Proteas, scalping 439 wickets. He appeared in 125 ODIs with 196 scalps to his name. Steyn also played 47 T20I matches and claimed 64 wickets in them. His impact was, however, way beyond numbers. Steyn's extreme pace, with the ability to swing the ball both ways, made him one of the best in the business during his playing days. His aggression just added to the charisma. Post his international career, Steyn is now actively involved in commentary and is quite vocal in expressing his opinions on social media as well, especially X. On Sunday, a fan accused Steyn of making "subtle jibes" at the Indian cricket team, and the former South Africa player responded to it with a fiery remark. "Really? Show me one example."

replied Steyn. He later added, "I pose the same question to you, show me what I've said that's negative or untrue about any player or the team? You can't." "That said, it's not my fault if the coaches make or say the wrong things, I just call it out, I think that's fair enough and also, my job! However, I also praise when they do well, that's called being unbiased and levelheaded." India were tested by USA in their very first game of the T20 World Cup 2026 but managed to clinch a 29-run win at the Wankhede Stadium, Mumbai, on Saturday. Suryakumar Yadav played a fighting knock, helping the hosts post a total of 161 for 9 after getting an invitation to bat first. The side got off to a horrible start, going down to 46 for 4 in the Powerplay. Abhishek Sharma fell to Ali Khan for a golden duck, while Shadley van Schalkwyk struck thrice in the final over of the Powerplay to dent India.

Gotterup wins play-off to claim Phoenix Open

-16 C Gotterup (US), H Matsuyama; -15 A Bhatia (US), N Hojgaard (Den), S-Woo Kim (Kor), S Scheffler (US), M Thorbjornsen. Selected others: -13 M Fitzpatrick (Eng); -12 V Hovland (Nor); -10 J Smith (Eng); -6 J Parry (Eng) Full leaderboard Chris Gotterup beat Hideki Matsuyama in a play-off to win the Phoenix Open. American Gotterup, who started the final round four shots behind overnight leader Matsuyama, shot five birdies in his last six holes to card a seven-under-par 64 and finish on 16 under. Japan's Matsuyama then bogeyed the final hole - his only dropped shot in a round of 68 - to miss out on



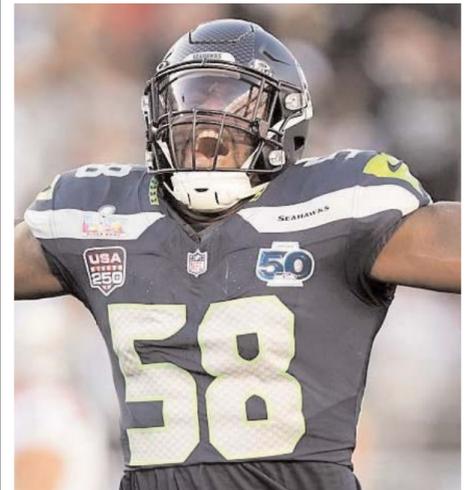
the title and take the tournament to a play-off. Matsuyama, the 2021 Masters champion, found the water on the first play-off hole at the 18th, while Gotterup's birdie secured

victory at TPC Scottsdale. Gotterup, who followed up a first-round 63 with rounds of 71 and 70, said: "I didn't think this would happen, especially after Friday and Saturday, but here we are.

"Hideki was playing great. I just figured I would stay loose." Victory gave Gotterup his fourth PGA Tour title, and his second of the season after the Sony Open in Hawaii last month. World number one Scottie Scheffler missed out on the play-off by one shot after going round in 64.

"I played pretty well - only one round where I didn't have my best stuff," said American Scheffler, who carded a first-round 73. "If I get in the house the first day with a couple under par, it's a little different story today." England's Matthew Fitzpatrick finished in ninth on 13 under after a 69.

From 1% chance of survival to Super Bowl winner



Derick Hall doesn't just feel blessed to be a Super Bowl champion. He feels blessed to be alive after being born with a 1% chance of survival.

The Seattle linebacker played a key role as the Seahawks beat the New England Patriots 29-13 in Sunday's NFL title decider, claiming two sacks in a dominant defensive display. But it is a wonder the 24-year-old is even here at all after being born four months premature in 2001. Hall weighed less than 3lb and was on life support when his mother refused to have it discontinued. Now 6ft 3in (1.91m) and 18st 2lb (115.2kg), he hugged his mother on the field in Santa Clara, California, after Seattle's second Super Bowl win.

"Everyone knows my story, what it took for me to get here, what it took for me just to be alive and have the chance," said Hall. "I'm very blessed - kudos to Mom. That was a special moment after the game. I feel like she's an unsung hero, an unsung warrior through this whole process. She always fought for me. She never gave up. "Just being able to play football and what this game has done for me and my life and my family... "I always love and respect playing this game, and I feel like I show that every single time I step on the field." After a difficult start to his NFL career, it seemed Seattle quarterback Sam Darnold was destined to become a journeyman back-up.

DRAMATIC OR DISTRACTING? OLYMPIC DRONE FOOTAGE CATCHES THE EYE

If you were watching the downhill skiing or luge at Milan-Cortina 2026 over the weekend, you will have noticed the dramatic new camera angles being provided at these Games. Drones have been used in Olympic coverage since 2014, but they have been much more prevalent at these Winter Games. Carrying cameras, the drones have been flown close behind athletes as they ski or slide, capturing dramatic footage which has never been seen at a Games before. But they have proved divisive for audiences, with social media split between admiring the footage or being put off by the noise. The whirring of the drone blades is audible in the live coverage. Some have described it as the Winters' answer to the vuvuzela, the infamous horns heard throughout the football World Cup in 2010. It has led



to concerns that the sound might be impacting the athletes, putting them off as they compete in the biggest events of their careers. "I spoke to a USA skeleton and luge coach and he said that the athlete can't hear it and aren't affected by it, but I think if I was competing with a drone I would be super aware of it," Lizzy Yarnold, two-time Olympic gold medalist in the skeleton for Great Britain, told BBC Sport. "Any small things or changes can put

athletes off their mental game." However, Games organisers say they have had no complaints from athletes or teams. Pierre Ducrey, International Olympic Committee sports director, said: "When you prepare a broadcast, you take a lot of time to test things, including with high-level athletes, to make sure there is minimum level of disturbance. That is something we have worked at a lot. "You saw the action at the weekend. We have to

make sure it does not come in way of performance. "It is an evolution. The integration seems to be something we can manage, so we are very happy." Games sports director Anna Riccardi said: "We tested drones before competitions. "We have listened to the athletes' community so that the impact would not affect their performances - would not bother them in any way. "Each athlete has a different level of sensitivity, awareness and capability for tackling innovation. "So far we have not received any complaints that might lead to the non-use of drones in the future." While drone pilots have been heaped with praise for their ability to control the tiny, flying cameras at such speeds, things have not been completely perfect. One of the drones crash-landed in the first downhill training, leaving debris on the course.

“YAMA YAMMA” THE 3RD SINGLE FROM FUNKY BRINGS A FULL-ON MASS BLAST!

The makers of Vishwak Sen's upcoming entertainer FUNKY have unveiled the film's third single titled "Yama Yamma...", a high-energy mass number that is sure to strike a chord with audiences. Written by Dev Pawar, the song is sung with electrifying vocals by Bheems Ceciroleo and Rohini Sorrat, with music composed by Bheems Ceciroleo, who once again delivers a foot-tapping chartbuster. Featuring Vishwak Sen and Kayadu Lohar, the track is packed with vibrant beats and energetic dance moves, choreographed by the Aata Sandeep Master, making it a complete treat for fans of mass songs. With the first two singles from the FUNKY album already emerging as huge hits, Yama Yamma... adds further momentum, strengthening the film's musical buzz. Meanwhile, the recently released trailer has been receiving a blockbuster response, drawing attention for KV Anudeep's trademark comedy, Vishwak Sen's impeccable timing. Bringing together a power-packed team synonymous with humour and entertainment, director KV Anudeep, known for the blockbuster Jathi Ratnalu, returns with his signature quirky storytelling, promising an even bigger and louder comic ride. The film



is produced by S Naga Vamsi and Sai Soujanya under the banners of Sithara Entertainments, Fortune Four Cinemas, and Srikrara Studios, known for their rich production values and stylish presentation. FUNKY is all set to deliver unlimited entertainment on the big screen this February 13, 2026, making it the perfect entertainer for the Valentine's Day weekend.

Natural Star Nani's Never-Before-Seen Intro Song Aaya Sher Shot In Style For The Paradise – Anirudh's Electrifying Mass Banger



Natural Star Nani is turning up the heat on the sets of his ambitious film The Paradise, currently filming at a rapid speed in Hyderabad. Directed by Dasara fame Srikanth Odela and produced by Sudhakar Cherukuri under the SLV Cinemas banner, the period action drama is building massive hype with its latest update from the shoot floor. The team has started filming for Nani's explosive introduction song Aaya Sher on a colossal set, swarming with hundreds of dancers. Rockstar Anirudh Ravichander delivered an electrifying mass banger packed with grit and high-adrenaline vibes, perfectly

tuned to Nani's raw, uninhibited dance style. Choreographer Sudhan Master, who recently worked for Vijay's Jana Nayagan, brings sharp, dynamic formations and fierce visual flair to elevate the song into a goosebump-inducing spectacle. Nani's trademark madness and dynamic moves promise to dominate the screen, marking this as one of the film's biggest highlights. Director Srikanth Odela is crafting The Paradise with prestigious attention to detail in every aspect of production. The film features Mohan Babu, Bollywood actor Raghav Juyal, and Sampurnesh Babu in prominent roles.

We will deliver entertainment worth every rupee the audience spends” – Hero Hemanth Kumar at ‘Alpha’ Trailer Launch Event



'Alpha' (sub-title: Men Love Vengeance), produced under the LA Productions banner, stars Hemanth Kumar, Ayana, and Gopika Suresh in lead roles. The film is directed by Vijay N and produced by Hemanth Kumar and Anand Kumar. The movie is set for release on February 20. The Telugu version is being distributed by Ravishankar and Manjunath. As part of promotions, the team recently held a grand trailer launch event, with noted director Samudra attending as the chief guest. The trailer opens with a powerful dialogue: "If everything happens by God's grace... then what about the demons?" It then showcases high-voltage action sequences, rowdy gang and mafia backdrops. The hero's dialogue "I entered the arena... not for the game" stands out as

a mass moment. The trailer also highlights romantic moments between the lead pair, along with strong father sentiment and family emotions through the dialogue "My past, present, and future... is my father." The shirtless six-pack reveal towards the end is expected to appeal strongly to mass audiences. Overall, the trailer suggests the film has action, emotion, romance, and family elements catering to all sections of the audience. Hero Hemanth Kumar said: "I love Telugu cinema. Watching Telugu films helped me learn the language. Thanks to director Samudra garu for supporting us. Ravishankar sir liked our content after watching the Kannada version and is releasing it in Telugu on a large scale. It feels great when newcomers like us are encouraged. We

will deliver entertainment worth the money audiences spend. We made this film very honestly. We are getting good response in Kannada, and we hope to receive the same love here." Director Samudra said: "The 'Alpha' trailer is excellent. The hero looks very handsome. Many Kannada heroes are succeeding here. I wish Hemanth achieves big success like Yash and Rishab Shetty. The lead pair performed very well. I hope audiences support 'Alpha' like they did for films like KGF and Kantara." Ayana said: "I played a police officer in 'Alpha', and it was a challenging role. The film has come out wonderfully. We believe audiences liked the trailer, and everyone who watches the movie will definitely enjoy it." Gopika Suresh said: "Thank you to everyone who attended the 'Alpha' event.

‘VIPLAVA VEERUDU’ MOVIE SHOOTING BEGINS

Hyderabad: Grand Pooja Ceremony at Filmnagar Temple. Renowned Actress Indira in a Key Role Viplava Veerudu, a film portraying the heroic role of common people in India's freedom struggle, has officially commenced shooting with grand pooja ceremonies held at a divine venue in Filmnagar Temple. Directed by S. Nagaraj Rao, the film stars Indira in a pivotal role, with Jaiswar and Sonali as the lead pair. The movie is being produced by AV Jayaram under the banner of AVJR Productions. Eminent writer Paruchuri Gopalakrishna gave the first clap on Indira for the muhurat



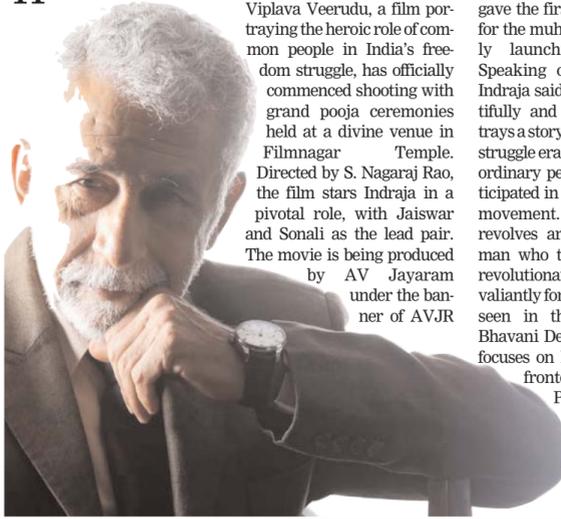
shot, formally launching the shoot. Speaking on the occasion, Indira said, "This film beautifully and realistically portrays a story from the

freedom struggle era. It highlights how ordinary people actively participated in the independence movement. The story revolves around a common man who transforms into a revolutionary hero and fights valiantly for freedom. I will be seen in the role of Rani Bhavani Devi.

The narrative focuses on how Indians confronted British rule. Producer Jayaram is making a meaningful film with a strong message, and I seek everyone's blessings." Hero Jaiswar stated, "I will be appearing before audiences in the role of Viplava Veerudu. This character is very special to me, and I believe the film will leave a lasting mark in cinematic history." Heroine Sonali setti said, "I am extremely grateful for this wonderful opportunity. This is my debut film, and I seek the blessings and support of everyone." Director S. Nagaraj Rao shared, "This is my dream project. We are presenting a historical story set during the British era. Indira garu plays a very significant role in this film."

‘Do not harass me’: Naseeruddin Shah snaps at reporter in Hyderabad

Hyderabad: Grand Pooja Ceremony at



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Actors Vikrant Massey, Tamannaah Bhatia forgo their fees for ‘O’Romeo’

Mumbai: Actors Vikrant Massey and Tamannaah Bhatia like to stick to their word when it comes to artistic pursuits. The actors, who will be seen in special appearances in the upcoming film 'O'Romeo', let go off their remuneration for the film as they found their parts to be intriguing. In fact, Vikrant did the film to keep a vow he made to director Vishal Bhardwaj. The film is mounted

on a substantial budget of INR 75-80 crore and will need to cross the INR 100 crore mark at the box office to be declared a hit. The film ranks among the big-budget projects of Shahid Kapoor's career and marks one of Vishal Bhardwaj's most ambitious directorial projects to date. Speaking about Vikrant Massey, Vishal Bhardwaj shared that Vikrant had committed to O'Romeo years ago when he was still an emerging talent. Despite becoming a major star after '12th Fail', Vikrant honoured that promise when approached again, choosing to do the role free of cost. The actor told Vishal Bhardwaj that watching 'Maqbool' inspired him to enter the film industry and changed his life forever.

making this special appearance his way of paying tribute. Vikrant shot for nearly 8-9 days, delivering a powerful performance that adds significant weight to the narrative. Vishal further revealed that Tamannaah Bhatia also agreed to be part of 'O'Romeo' without charging a single penny, despite budget constraints. Though her role is brief, it plays a crucial part in unveiling a major plot twist in the film. Tamannaah immediately said yes when approached and went on to shoot for nearly 12 days far more than initially planned, also participating in workshops and rehearsals to prepare for the layered character. Her commitment and generosity, Vishal noted, left a lasting

impact on the film. The film also stars Shahid Kapoor, Triptii Dimri, Avinash Tiwary, Nana Patekar, Farida Jalal, and Disha Patani. Presented by Sajid Nadiadwala, 'O'Romeo' is helmed by Vishal Bhardwaj, and produced by Nadiadwala Grandson Entertainment. The film is set to release on February 13, 2026. Tamannaah immediately said yes when approached and went on to shoot for nearly 12 days far more than initially planned. Meanwhile, Vishal Bhardwaj and the makers of O'Romeo have not responded to or denied these reports, even though they continue to circulate widely online. So far, neither the cast nor the production team has confirmed any official

details about fees or payments for the film. O'Romeo marks director Vishal Bhardwaj's third project with Shahid. They previously worked together on the highly praised films Kaminey (2009) and Haider (2014), where Shahid delivered some of his most memorable performances. The film will hit cinemas on February 13 and will face competition from Shanaya Kapoor and Adarsh Gorav's Tu Yaa Main. Also Read: Akshay Kumar, Ajay Devgn's Golmaal 5 Is Not A Remake Of Amitabh Bachchan And Shashi Kapoor's Comedy Do Aur Do Paanch, Confirms Rohit Shetty Get Current Updates on India News, Entertainment News, Cricket News along with

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