

OM NAMO VENKATESAYA



18-02-2026
Total pilgrims: 63,804
Tonsures: 24,142
Hundi kanukulu: 3,90 CR
Waiting Compartments: 14

Approx. Darsan Time for Sarvadarshanam (with out SSD Tokens): 10-12H

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Create AI Ministry, India must lead: CM Revanth

Hyderabad TSIT BUREAU: Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy has called for the creation of a dedicated Ministry for Artificial Intelligence (AI) at the Centre, asserting that India must position itself as a global AI powerhouse. Speaking at an AI Summit in New Delhi, the Chief Minister said Artificial Intelligence is one of the most transformative technologies in human history. Comparing AI to groundbreaking innovations such as fire, the wheel, agriculture, electricity, and the internet, he said AI represents a decisive turning point in human evolution. Unlike earlier technologies, AI systems can learn, analyse, and make decisions independently, and when combined with robotics, they possess both cognitive and physical capabilities.

Call for National AI Roadmap
Revanth Reddy emphasized the urgent need for a comprehensive National AI Roadmap. He stated that India must adopt a clear strategy covering every stage of AI development semiconductor chip manufacturing, GPU capacity, data centres, green energy integration, AI platforms, and application ecosystems. Warning that the global AI race has already begun, the Chief Minister



said India should not repeat the missed opportunities of past industrial revolutions. While India has achieved global recognition in services and software, it must now lead in core technology innovation and production, he asserted. The Chief Minister proposed the establishment of a national "AI War Room" with coordination between the Centre and States to closely monitor global AI developments. He stated that Telangana is ready to host such a war room in Hyderabad if the Centre approves. He also suggested setting up a world-class AI University in India to promote advanced research and innovation in emerging technologies. Addressing concerns about job

losses due to AI expansion, Revanth Reddy acknowledged that certain sectors may face disruptions. However, he expressed confidence that with proper reskilling and upskilling initiatives, AI would create far greater employment opportunities in new domains. He called upon policymakers to prepare India's youth for an AI-driven future.

Telangana Ready for AI Startup Village To boost innovation, the Chief Minister proposed the creation of a National AI Fund to support startups. He announced that Telangana is ready to establish an "AI Startup Village" that can serve as a national hub for AI-driven entrepreneurship. He further urged the Prime Minister to consider forming an India AI Council as a premier body to guide policies, legal frameworks, and ethical standards in the AI sector. Revanth Reddy concluded by stating that AI development must contribute to social justice, poverty alleviation, improved public services, and national security. He called upon global experts, institutions, and governments to collaborate in building a responsible, inclusive, and future-ready AI ecosystem, asserting that this is the moment for India to take global leadership in the AI era.

India, US sign Pax Silica declaration to deepen strategic tech partnership



PAX SILICA

Securing the Silicon Supply Chain

New Delhi (TSIT): India and the United States on Friday signed the Pax Silica Declaration, marking a major step forward in their strategic technology and economic partnership. The agreement was signed in the presence of union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw and US Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs Jacob Helberg.

At the signing ceremony of the Pax Silica Declaration between both countries, US Ambassador to India, Sergio Gor,

announced India's formal entry into Pax Silica, describing it as a "defining move that will help shape the 21st-century economic and technological order."

Referring to the recently concluded Interim Trade Agreement, Gor said the pact goes beyond trade flows and tariff schedules, reflecting a shared commitment by "two great democracies" to build together rather than merely buy from one another. The declaration underscores deepening strategic convergence between New Delhi and

Washington, positioning India as a key partner in shaping global technology standards and driving next-generation economic growth.

India's participation in Pax Silica is being viewed as a long-term investment in shared prosperity, technological leadership, and democratic cooperation in a fast-evolving global landscape. Ashwini Vaishnaw, union Minister for Electronics & Information Technology extended special thanks to External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, and the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

He credited their leadership for making the AI Impact Summit and the evolving silicon supply chain partnership possible. "This entire AI impact summit, the silicon supply chain that we are building, and that huge set of new opportunities that are coming for the young population," he said.

UNICC to set up AI-Quantum Centre in Amaravati



Amaravati (TSIT): The United Nations International Computing Centre (UNICC) will establish a Centre of Excellence for artificial intelligence (AI) and quantum at the Amaravati Quantum Valley in Amaravati, the capital city of Andhra Pradesh. A letter of intent to this effect was signed between at the AI Impact Summit 2026 in New Delhi on Friday in the presence of Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu. He posted on social media platform X that the

Centre of Excellence will position Amaravati as a Digital Embassy for secure AI, enabling sovereign, cybersecurity AI deployments aligned with UN grade standards. "This collaboration will bring international best practices and global partnerships, placing Andhra Pradesh on the global map of trusted AI and quantum readiness," Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu said, who interacted with Sameer Chauhan, UNICC Director, and Anusha Dandapani, UNICC's AI Hub Chief.

Congress defends shirtless protest at AI Impact Summit 2026

New Delhi, Feb 20 : The Congress on Friday defended a shirtless protest by members from its frontal organisation for youth at the AI Impact Summit 2026 in Delhi, calling it their expression of anger against the Union government over a reported trade deal with the United States. "Today, Youth Congress comrades have expressed the anger of the youth, farmers and businessmen of the country in the form of protest," the Congress party posted on its social media "X" handle.

"By striking a trade deal with America, Narendra Modi has attacked the interests of our youth, farmers, and businesspeople. Modi has mortgaged the country to America; he is completely compromised," it alleged.

The party added that nothing can be more anti-national than



this. Incidentally, the government has clarified that farmers' interest remains a priority for the country and that there has been no compromise over this stand. The final details of the agreement will be known next month.

A political controversy erupted over the Indian Youth Congress's manner of protest at an event where many foreign delegates and visitors

were present. Among global leaders attending were France's President Emmanuel Macron, Secretary-General of the United Nations António Guterres and several tech giants like Sam Altman and Sundar Pichai, among others.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has criticised the Congress, accusing it of disrupting an international event

and demanded an apology. BJP MP Sambit Patra attacked the protest as a "topless, brainless, and shameless" exercise for orchestrating the stunt.

BJP national spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari accused the party of attempting to "choke India's development", and termed it a "national shame".

However, the social media post by the Congress added in the end, "It is extremely important to raise our voices against this. The Constitution grants Indian citizens the right to protest. We will amplify the voice of the people under the Constitution and will not allow injustice to happen to them." Four Youth Congress leaders entered the Summit venue at Delhi's Bharat Mandapam by registering online earlier, scanning the QR codes and concealing T-shirts with graffiti under underwear.



VICE PRESIDENT OF SEYCHELLES HIS EXCELLENCY MR. SEBASTIAN PILLAY ON 20TH FEBRUARY, 2026 AT THE VICE PRESIDENT'S HOUSE IN NEW DELHI, VICE PRESIDENT MR. C.P. WHILE MEETING RADHAKRISHNAN.

India attended Board of Peace meeting as an observer: MEA

New Delhi, Feb 20 : The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Friday stated that India attended the Board of Peace's first meeting in Washington on Thursday as an observer country and continues to back all efforts underway to find peace in Gaza as part of the UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution.

"We did attend the Board of Peace meeting in Washington DC as an observer. We have also welcomed the Gaza Peace Plan initiative of President Trump, as well as all such efforts underway as part of Resolution 2803 of the UNSC," Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal stated at the weekly media briefing in New Delhi.

Representatives from over 40 countries, including several Heads of State attended the inaugural meet. India was represented at the meeting by



Namyga Khampa, Charge d'Affaires at the Indian Embassy in Washington DC.

The MEA spokesperson also clarified India's stance on signing a joint statement that had expressed concerns over Israel's "unilateral" measures in the occupied West Bank.

"You may be aware that this was not a negotiated document as is usually the case in the UN. Our position on this issue was most recently expressed in the India-Arab League Ministerial

Joint statement," said Jaiswal. He was referring to the Delhi Declaration of the Second India-Arab Foreign Ministers' Meeting issued on January 31 following the second India Arab Foreign Ministers' Meeting. The meeting saw the participation of Foreign Ministers of Arab States and the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States and was preceded by the meeting of India Arab Senior Officials on January 30.

CBI Court in Hyderabad gets bomb threat again

Hyderabad, Feb 20 : Another bomb threat email was sent to CBI Court in Nampally here on Friday, triggering panic. A bomb-threat email was sent to the court, warning that blasts will occur on a 'Holy Friday'. The court authorities alerted the police. The email threat triggered evacuation of the premises and intensive searches. Bomb disposal and dog squads were pressed into service to comb the complex thoroughly. The email warned that '12 RDX bombs' have been planted in the court, which will explode at 12:05. Following the receipt of the mail, authorities evacuated judges, staff, lawyers and litigants from the court building. Police officials said the search operation was carried out in accordance with standard protocol. However, no suspicious material was found. Police registered a case and took up further investigation. This is the second time in three days that the CBI Court received bomb threat email.

US Supreme Court strikes down Trump global tariffs, says they are unlawful

Washington, Feb 20 : In a major setback to President Donald Trump's economic agenda, the US Supreme Court on Friday struck down most of his sweeping tariffs, ruling that he lacked authority under a 1977 emergency law to impose broad import levies on America's trading partners across the world, including India. The ruling marks a rare instance of the conservative-led court reining in Trump's use of executive power. According to Politico, the court in a 6-3 decision struck down the tariffs, calling it "a major repudiation of a core piece of Trump's economic programme."

Chief Justice John Roberts, writing for the majority, said: "The President asserts the extraordinary power to unilaterally impose tariffs of unlimited amount, duration, and scope. In light of the breadth, history, and constitutional con-



text of that asserted authority, he must identify clear congressional authorization to exercise it."

Roberts added that the 1977 law Trump relied on "falls short" of the Congressional approval required. The Washington Post reported that the justices ruled the president did not have the authority under a 1977 emergency economic powers law to impose a vast array of import levies on goods from nearly all of the

nation's trading partners.

The Hill said the court "cast aside the bulk of President Trump's sweeping tariffs Friday, obliterating a canon of his economic strategy in ruling that his use of an emergency statute to remake global trade was unlawful." The justices rejected Trump's expanded use of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), a 1970s-era statute that allows the president to "regulate" imports when necessary to respond to national emergencies that pose an "unusual and extraordinary" threat.

"We claim no special competence in matters of economics or foreign affairs," Roberts wrote. "We claim only, as we must, the limited role assigned to us by Article III of the Constitution. Fulfilling that role, we hold that IEEPA does not authorize the President to impose tariffs."

UN Secretary General Guterres calls on President Murmu



New Delhi, Feb 20 : United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres on Friday called on President Droupadi Murmu at Rashtrapati Bhavan on the sidelines of the AI Impact Summit in New Delhi.

According to the President's Secretariat, the UN Secretary General appreciated India's leadership role in convening the successful AI Impact Summit, and its longstanding collaboration with the United Nations in various fields. President Murmu welcomed the initiative of Secretary General Guterres to create a global scientific panel on AI to serve all of humanity.

"The President noted that at a time of global uncertainties, multilateralism is facing major challenges, including a widening trust deficit. She added that the existing outdated framework of the UN Security Council must be reformed to reflect contemporary geo-political realities, and the Global South must have a greater say in decision-making. She emphasized that urgent reform of the UN Security Council is the key to maintaining the relevance and effectiveness of the UN," read a statement issued by the President's Secretariat.

"The President noted that while the 'UN-80' initiative offers a good platform for reforms, it is important that developmental priorities of the Global South are protected in any restructuring exercise. The President extended her good wishes for the rest of Mr Guterres' tenure as UN Secretary General, and reiterated India's full support towards multilateralism," it added. Earlier in the day, Guterres met

Prime Minister Narendra Modi during which both leaders talked about making Artificial Intelligence (AI) all inclusive and how the UN can play a constructive role in this regard.

"Reiterated India's support towards any effort aimed at harnessing AI for a better planet. We also exchanged perspectives on UN reforms, especially giving greater voice to the Global South," PM Modi posted on X after the meeting.

In his address at the landmark event, Guterres on Friday cited AI fragmentation risks, calling for global interoperability standards for better outcomes at the 'India AI Impact Summit 2026'.

"Technological rivalry is growing. Without a common baseline, fragmentation wins, with different regions and different countries operating under incompatible policies and technical standards," he warned.

Addressing the Summit, he said that when we agree on how to test systems and measure risk, we create interoperability.

"So a startup in New Delhi can scale globally with confidence because the benchmarks are shared and safety can travel with technology," he noted.

Guterres also called for science-led AI guardrails to protect people and accelerate innovation. "Once we understand what AI systems can do and what they cannot, we can move from rough measures to smarter, risk-based guardrails. Guardrails that protect people, uphold human rights, and preserve human agency," he told the gathering.

Tirupati laddu case: Andhra Pradesh constitutes one-man committee

Amaravati, Feb 20 : Andhra Pradesh government on Friday constituted a one-man committee to recommend suitable action against erring officials in the case relating to the supply of alleged adulterated ghee for Tirumala laddu. Dinesh Kumar, a retired Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer, will examine the Self-Contained Note (SCN) of the Special Investigation Team (SIT) and recommend initiation of suitable action against erring committee members and senior officers of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam (TTD) for lapses,



omissions, and failures in the relaxation as well as enforcement of ghee tender conditions. A Government Order (GO) was issued on Friday, constituting the one-man committee. It has been asked to submit its report within 45 days.

No increase in divisions in Khammam



Khammam (TSIT): The number of divisions in the Khammam Municipal Corporation will continue to remain at 60, as the state government has not accorded approval for their enhancement. Though there was widespread speculation that five to eight new divisions might be added in view of the

growing population within the civic body limits, no official clearance has been issued so far, putting an end to the expectations at least for the present. In recent years, the corporation limits were expanded with the merger of several surrounding gram panchayats, leading to a substantial increase in population in many areas. As a result, voter strength in certain divisions has reportedly risen to between 8,000 and 10,000, raising concerns over equitable representation and administrative convenience. Municipal authorities are learnt to have forwarded a proposal to the state government seeking reorganisation and increase in the number of divisions to address these imbalances.

Sarpanch role key for village development: Additional Collector

Karimnagar, February 20 (TSIT): Additional Collector Ashwini Tanaji Wakade said Sarpanchs play a crucial role in the overall development of villages. She spoke at a five-day training program for newly elected Sarpanchs at Wageshwari Engineering College, Timmapur Mandal. Around 50 Sarpanchs from Choppadandi, Chigurumamidi and Gunneruvaram mandals are attending the training. She advised them to understand the Panchayat Raj Act, government schemes, and focus on village development, public health, education and use of technology to make villages ideal.



10-Day Sustainability Upskilling Workshop Successfully Conducted at HITAM

A 10-day employability skill development workshop on the theme "Sustainability Through Data-Driven Decision Making" was successfully conducted at Hyderabad Institute of Technology and Management (HITAM), Hyderabad.



During the inaugural session, the Principal, Dr. S. Arvind, addressed the students and emphasized the importance of sustainability and data analytics in today's technological and environmental landscape. Throughout the workshop, participants were provided with practical exposure to Data Analytics, Business Intelligence, Circular Economy concepts, and Sustainable Waste Management practices. The Head of the Department of CSE, Dr. S. V. Hemant, stated that the program significantly enhanced students' data-driven thinking abilities and strengthened their understanding of sustainable technologies.

SHE TEAM HOLDS AWARENESS PROGRAM AT GUNDRATHIMADUGU SCHOOL



Mahabubabad: SHE Team organized a Bharosa and Cyber Crime Awareness program at ZPHS High School, Gundrathimadugu, under Kuravi Police Station limits on the instructions of the District SP.

She Team SI Sunanda explained about the POC SO Act and laws related to crimes against women and children. She said strict

action will be taken against harassment, ragging, social media abuse and online crimes. Students were asked to report issues without fear, assuring confidentiality.

Officials shared helpline numbers including 1930 for cyber crimes and 1098 for child-related complaints. School staff and students attended the program.

Congress Govt Taking Steps to Prevent Fire Accidents in Hyderabad Dr. Kota Neelima



Hyderabad: Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) Vice President and Sanathnagar Constituency Congress In-charge Dr. Kota Neelima stated that the Congress government is taking proactive measures to prevent fire accidents in Hyderabad city. Dr. Neelima visited the site of the recent fire accident at a coaching centre located in Aditya Enclave building, Maitrivanam, Ameerpet, and reviewed the situation.

Speaking on the occasion, she said that Ameerpet and SR Nagar are densely populated and constantly busy areas, requiring heightened safety vigilance. She emphasized that the government is not remaining indifferent and is conducting advance inspections to ensure that such fire mishaps are prevented in the future.

She appreciated the swift response of the Fire Department and police personnel, who reached

the spot immediately after receiving information about the incident and began rescue operations. Using ladders, firefighters safely evacuated students who were stranded on the fourth-floor balcony and seeking help. Wearing protective masks, the personnel courageously entered the smoke-filled premises and carried out rescue operations.

Dr. Neelima added that the authorities acted promptly by cutting off the power supply to prevent the fire from spreading further.

She also strongly condemned the remarks made by MLA Talasani Srinivas Yadav, who alleged that the government had failed to control frequent fire accidents in the city. Questioning the previous decade of governance under the BRS, she asked what preventive measures were taken during that period. She criticized attempts to politicize the incident instead of expressing solidarity with the victims.

Illegal teak wood seized at Thalapur check post

Mancherla, February 20 (TSIT): Forest officials under the Kawal Tiger Reserve intercepted a lorry at Thalapur check post and seized illegal teak wood during vehicle inspections. The vehicle was shifted to the Forest Range Office for investigation. In a separate raid at Chintapalli village, officials found illegal-



ly stored teak wood at a house and seized 5 teak rough squares and 3 planks worth Rs.24,821. Forest officials said strict action will continue against illegal transport and storage of forest produce.

Uma Rani assumes charge as Nizamabad Mayor

Nizamabad: Uma Rani took charge as Mayor of Nizamabad Municipal Corporation at a grand function. Salma Tahseen also assumed office as Deputy Mayor. Minister Ponnab Prabhakar and PCC President Mahesh Kumar Goud attended as chief guests and congratulated the new Mayor and Deputy Mayor. The Minister said the government will focus on employment and municipal development and



assured support for efforts beyond party lines for the development of Nizamabad city.

Warangal Police Commissioner who won the bronze medal in table tennis

WARANGAL TSIT : Warangal Police Commissioner Sunpreet Singh bagged the bronze medal in table tennis gazetted officers category in the fourth state level police sports and games meet organized by Cyberabad Commissioner.



MEPA greets Neerati Anitha Raju on wedding anniversary



Hanamkonda: Members of the Mudhiraj Employees and Professionals Association Telangana (MEPA) extended wedding anniversary wishes to State Secretary Neerati Anitha Raju Mudhiraj on her 17th anniversary. They also conveyed greetings to Mutyala Rajesh and Rajitha on their special day. MEPA leaders visited her residence, felicitated the couple with shawls and bouquets, and celebrated by cutting a cake. MEPA Founder and State President Puli Devender Mudhiraj praised Anitha Raju's service to the community and said the association always supports those working for social welfare. Other leaders and members were present at the celebration.

CENTRE SENDS NOTICES TO 6 E-COMMERCE PLATFORMS OVER SELLING RESTRICTED DRONE AND GPS JAMMERS

New Delhi, Feb 20: The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) on Friday said it has issued notices to six e-commerce platforms for listing and offering for sale restricted wireless transmitting devices including drones.

The six e-commerce entities are Everse, IndiaMart, Xboom, Javiat Aerospace, AirONE Robotics and Maveric Drones & Technologies Pvt Ltd. The online entities sold "Anti-

regulatory approvals/authorisations; legal basis for offering the restricted equipment for commercial sale; and number of units sold during the preceding two years along with complete purchaser details, among others.

"Import of such restricted equipment is governed under the Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992 and applicable DGFT notifications. Such equipment



Drone Systems", "Drone Jammers" and "GPS Jammers", in an alleged violation of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 and other applicable telecom and trade control laws, said Ministry of Consumer Affairs in a statement. According to the statement, drone jammers and signal jamming equipment are regulated under the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 and the Wireless Telegraphy Act, 1933, and are subject to strict licensing and regulatory control by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) and Wireless Planning and Coordination (WPC). The CCPA has directed the concerned entities to furnish detailed information, including the source of procurement/import along with copies of import licences, invoices and related documents; copies of

is ordinarily permitted only to authorised Government agencies and law enforcement authorities, subject to statutory approvals," said the statement.

The CCPA had earlier issued an advisory to e-commerce entities against illegal sale and facilitation of wireless jammers. Under Rule 4 of the Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020, marketplace entities are required to exercise due diligence and ensure compliance with applicable laws. Hosting or facilitating sale of restricted jammings equipment without verifying statutory authorisation may also attract penal consequences under the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, the Wireless Telegraphy Act, 1933, and relevant provisions of the Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992.

Youth Congress members stage shirtless protest at AI Summit, detained

New Delhi, Feb 20 : Members of the Indian Youth Congress staged a dramatic protest inside Bharat Mandapam on Friday during the India AI Impact Summit 2026, raising slogans against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Central government over alleged "unemployment, inflation and the reported India-US trade deal".

According to officials, several Youth Congress workers removed their shirts and shouted slogans, including "PM is compromised", before security personnel intervened. The protesters were swiftly detained and taken away from the venue to prevent disruption of the high-profile international event attended by government officials, industry leaders and foreign delegates. Shouting slogans, some of the party workers

were topless and stood in front of an India AI Summit board, clicking pictures and attempting to create a ruckus.

The security personnel deployed there quickly acted and forced them out. It was not known how the workers gained entry into the venue where thousands of people, including foreigners, were present.

The Youth Congress shared videos of their protest on their X handle. Police said legal action is being initiated against the demonstrators for violating security norms at the venue. The detained workers were taken to Tilak Marg Police Station for questioning and further proceedings. In a statement issued later, the youth wing of the opposition Indian National Congress said the demonstration was meant to highlight concerns that "corporate interests are being prioritised over national interests."

4th Telangana State Police Sports and Games Meet-2026 Intensifies on Day Three

Hyderabad : The 4th Telangana State Police Sports and Games Meet-2026 continued with great enthusiasm on its third day at the Cyberabad Police Parade Grounds, witnessing intense and spirited competitions among police personnel from across the State.

Hundreds of athletes representing various districts, zones, commissionerates, and special forces units showcased their sporting excellence in a range of events. Major disciplines such as athletics, volleyball, and kabaddi drew significant attention, while group events also witnessed fierce and closely fought contests.

A notable highlight of the meet has been the impressive participation of women police personnel,



who displayed remarkable skill, determination, and sportsmanship. Their strong presence added vibrancy and inspiration to the ongoing competitions. Senior officials observed that such sporting events not only enhance physical fitness among police personnel but also strengthen mental resilience, discipline, and team coordination. The friendly yet competitive atmosphere among different units has fostered camaraderie and unity within the force.

PM'S ADVISOR FLAGS PRIVATE SECTOR INERTIA AS INDIA'S GROWTH HURDLE

Bengaluru, Feb 20 (UNI) India cannot afford hesitation in private investment if it is to reclaim its historical economic prominence, Dr Mahendra Dev, Chairman of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council, said on Friday. Speaking at the Ecofluence 3.0 conference organized by the Indus Business Academy (IBA) here, he warned that private sector inertia, often blamed on "uncertainty," must give way to decisive investment and strategic action.



tion, and early post-independence policy choices caused a steep decline.

Between the 1950s and 1970s, India's GDP growth averaged only 3.5 percent, with per capita income barely rising. The reasons were avoidable: an obsession with heavy industry over labor-intensive manufacturing, and chronic neglect of human capital through education and health. Attempts at agricultural-led growth and other alternative models were sidelined, leaving India behind its East and Southeast Asian peers, he noted. Post-1991 reforms began to change India's trajectory. Over the last three decades, growth has averaged 6-6.5 percent, despite major shocks—the East Asian crisis, the global financial meltdown of 2008, the NBFC crisis, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, Dr Dev was clear: resilience alone is not enough. Per capita income remains low, and India must move faster to close historical gaps.

Global uncertainties are substantial. Geopolitical tensions, protectionist poli-

cies, disruptions in supply chains, and technological dominance by a few countries make international markets unpredictable. Yet India is carving out a role through strategic engagement in South-South cooperation, diversification of exports, and careful negotiation of free trade agreements, including the recently concluded India-US deal.

Domestically, Dr Dev emphasized, the opportunity exists if India acts decisively. Investment and exports are the twin engines of growth. India's investment rate is currently 31-32 percent, but private sector lethargy has slowed progress. Government reforms have laid the groundwork: Make in India, production-linked incentive (PLI) schemes, GST simplification, labor code reforms, and Atmanirbhar Bharat policies have strengthened competitiveness. Results are tangible: mobile phone imports fell from 78 percent to 4 percent, and domestic electronics manufacturing has surged. Yet structural transfor-

mation remains the real challenge. India's manufacturing sector suffers from a "missing middle": too many micro firms and too few mid-sized enterprises. MSMEs, long heralded as engines of employment, need scale, investment, and support. Services growth complements manufacturing, but without robust industrial development, India cannot generate sufficient quality employment for its rapidly urbanizing, digitally connected population.

Human capital development remains critical. India has world-class higher education institutions, yet basic education and health services, particularly in rural areas, lag far behind. Climate change adds urgency. India has pledged net-zero emissions by 2070, with renewable energy growth ahead of schedule, but achieving sustainable, low-carbon growth will require coordination at the state and district levels.

Demographics provide both opportunity and challenge. With a median age of 28, India is one of the youngest major economies, unlike Japan or Germany. States such as Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, with younger populations, will drive future growth, while older states like Kerala face demographic headwinds. Digital infrastructure—the JAM trinity and UPI—offers the means to leverage this advantage efficiently.

"Learn from Mistakes, Promote Workplace Wellness for Higher Productivity," Says MP Dr. C.N. Manjunath

Bengaluru: Member of Parliament, Bangalore Rural, Dr. C.N. Manjunath, delivered an impactful address at the Southern Regional Conference 2026 organized by the National Institute of Personnel Management (Karnataka Chapter) at NIMHANS Convention Centre, Bengaluru.

He further noted that every third mobile phone and every fourth generic pharmaceutical tablet sold in the U.S. is manufactured in India, showcasing the nation's industrial and technological capabilities. Dr. Manjunath stressed that while managing industries and innovation is crucial, managing people



In his speech, Dr. Manjunath emphasized India's remarkable economic progress, noting that India has recently overtaken Japan and is projected to surpass Germany by 2027. He stated that the country is currently experiencing a transformative phase driven by technological innovation and digital advancement.

Highlighting India's global footprint, he pointed out that a significant percentage of doctors, engineers, and scientists in the United States are of Indian origin.

remains one of the most challenging aspects of leadership. He called for improved organizational systems, accountability, and responsible leadership at all levels.

Sharing an example from global best practices, he emphasized that mistakes should be treated as learning assets. Citing corporate models where weekly meetings are held to openly discuss errors, he stated that organizations must respect, correct, and learn from mistakes to achieve sustained growth.

Walk for 6.0 km clean, safe footpaths at Kodigehalli

10TH EDITION OF PROJECT "WALKALURU" IN BENGALURU
NORTH CITY CORPORATION

Bengaluru : North City Corporation Commissioner Pommala Sunil Kumar will flag off "Project Walkaluru" at 7:00am on this Sunday, 22nd Feb, 2026. A 6.0 km walk is organised for local residents, officers and staff of the corporation. Purpose of this Footpath Walk:

The purpose of the Walkaluru project is to have citizens walk on footpaths and identify major obstacles along the way, even pedestrians are stopped at all major junctions to take photographs and identify the number of jeopardized foot paths themselves. This is Walk No 10 of Project Walkaluru, and will cross 80km distance since its inception on Nov 1st. 10th Footpath walk will start at 7:00am, 22nd Feb at Rekha Govindam Cafe, Railway Parallel Rd, Kodigehalli. There will be no prior registration required to participate in this unique initiative.

Bengaluru North Civic Body Resolves 865 Grievances Through Commissioner's Phone-In Drive



Bengaluru: In a continued effort to strengthen public outreach and improve civic services, Bengaluru North City Corporation Commissioner Pommala Sunil Kumar conducted a Phone-In programme at the Commissioner's Office on Amrutahalli Main Road at 7:00 AM on Friday. The initiative aims to directly hear citizens' grievances and ensure prompt redressal.

During the session, the Commissioner received 60 calls, registering 77 grievances from various wards. He reviewed each complaint and issued directions to concerned officials for immediate action.

Since the programme's launch on September 26, it has completed 21 weeks. A total of 1,177 grievances have been registered so far, of which 865 have been resolved. About 72 complaints falling outside the North City Corporation's jurisdiction were transferred to respective departments, while officials were instructed to expedite action on the remaining 203 cases.

Road maintenance topped the list with 35 complaints, followed by 16 grievances related to waste collection and disposal. Six complaints were received regarding hazardous trees and overhanging branches. The Commissioner directed officials to prioritize road repairs, ensure timely waste management, and take preventive measures to address tree-related risks. The weekly Phone-In programme will continue every Friday to ensure direct interaction with citizens and effective governance.

Government Support to Those Who Insulted Shivaji Maharaj is Condemnable: MP Basavaraj Bommai

Bengaluru: Former Chief Minister and Member of Parliament Basavaraj Bommai has alleged that the State government has extended support to those who insulted Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

He said Bagalkot is known as a land of harmony where all communities have coexisted peacefully. In such a district with this background, it is extremely unfortunate that religious fanatics are receiving the patronage of the government. The recent incident clearly shows that the government is fully backing those who pelted stones, threw footwear, and showed disrespect to Shivaji Maharaj.

In a post on X, Bommai stated that Shivaji Maharaj is an unparalleled leader in the history of India and is respected across the country. Insulting him is highly condemnable, he said. Referring to the incident in Bagalkot, he pointed out that despite visuals showing the district Superintendent of Police bleeding after being hit by stones, the SP



reportedly claimed that nothing had happened. He further alleged that no action is being taken against those who threw stones and footwear or those who conspired behind the incident, and that only symbolic arrests are being made.

Bommai accused the State government of reaching the peak of appeasement politics, stating that there is no value for justice, righteousness, or ethics under the present administration. According to him, it has become clear that only appeasement, corruption, and divisive politics are being given importance. He further said that by forgetting the responsibilities entrusted to it by the people, the government is engaging in actions that could cause long-term harm to the State. If such a situation continues, people will inevitably be forced to protest against it. He termed the incident highly condemnable.

Action under Goonda Act should be taken against Muslim fanatics: Opposition leader R. Ashok demands

Congress's appeasement politics is the reason for Bagalkot communal riot

Bengaluru : Opposition leader R. Ashok demanded that action should be taken under the Goonda Act against the Muslim fanatics who pelted stones at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj procession.

Speaking to reporters, he said that in Bagalkot, Muslim fanatics pelted stones at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj procession and the cutout, thereby insulting him. Shivaji Maharaj fought for Hindu religion. All this is a pre-planned act. Previously, in Mandya, stones were pelted at the Ganesh immersion procession, Shri Ram's flex was torn down, and in similar ways, Muslim fundamentalists had attacked. The Congress government has instructed the police not to arrest such fanatics, he said. Those who explode cooker

bombs are our brothers, those who say Pakistan Zindabad in Vidhana Soudha are our relatives, Congress leaders have said. They have instructed the police not to register cases against them. Because of this, such incidents are happening in all districts. Shivaji Maharaj's family members themselves built a temple in Bengaluru. The Congress government is responsible for the incident where such a great person has been insulted. Home Minister Dr. G. Parameshwar is telling lies. No action will be taken against them. In previous cases, cases have been withdrawn. Knowing this, Muslims are doing such things. The Congress government is anti-Hindu. The government should apply the Goonda Act against such miscreants and put

them in jail. Otherwise, it will have to be assumed that the government itself is involved in this and is appeasing for votes, he warned.

It should be checked if these fanatics have links to Pakistan or Bangladesh. Previously, after the encroachment clearance at Kogilu Cross, Pakistanis had tweeted condemning it. Therefore, in this incident too, what links are there should be examined, he said.

Provide 15 thousand crore in the budget to eliminate discrimination. The government has accepted the Prof. Govindarao report. In this report, more areas have been identified as backward compared to the taluks in the previous Nanjundappa Commission report. The report has recommended providing a total of

45,000 crore Rs. to eliminate this discrimination. In this year's budget, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah should allocate at least 15,000 crore, I demand. I have also written a letter regarding this. Shedding crocodile tears is of no use. Allocation should be reserved as per the report's recommendation. Otherwise, people will conclude that the Congress government is against the development of backward areas, he said.

Murder of democracy. Thousands of crores have come back due to the MUDA scam being exposed. By arresting activist Snehamayi Krishna, the government has strangled democracy. It is not right to try to suppress social activists who expose the government's irregularities, he said.

When Pakistan slogans were raised in Vidhana Soudha, the government remained silent. Now, restrictions have been imposed on media in Vidhana Soudha. A situation has been created where even press conferences cannot be held in my office. It is said that law will be violated by media. According to Minister Mahadevappa, even dogs can roam in Vidhana Soudha, but media representatives should not perform their duties? To prevent their scandals from coming out, CM Siddaramaiah and other ministers have taken such a bad decision, which reminds of the dark days of emergency. One can roam in Vidhana Soudha with money and gold. During emergency, Congress imposed restrictions on media. Siddaramaiah,

Action Initiated for Auction of 107 Properties in North City Corporation Zone-1 & Zone-2 on February 21: Pommala Sunil Kumar



Bengaluru : Commissioner Pommala Sunil Kumar has informed that auction proceedings will be conducted on February 21 for properties with pending property tax dues in the jurisdiction of Bengaluru North City Corporation. In Zone-1, arrears amounting to Rs.1,65,30,717 are pending from 66 properties, and in Zone-2, Rs.84,69,037 are pending from 41 properties. In total, Rs.2,49,99,754 in property tax arrears is pending from 107 properties across the North City Corporation limits, necessitating auction proceedings.

Property tax collected from properties within the corporation limits is utilized

for the development and maintenance of essential civic infrastructure and public services. As per the Greater Bengaluru Governance Act, 2025, all property owners within the corporation jurisdiction are required to pay property tax every financial year.

In cases of non-payment of property tax, action is being taken in accordance with the Property Tax Assessment, Collection and Enforcement Rules-2024. Show-cause notices and demand notices have already been issued to defaulters as per the relevant Act and Rules. Details of defaulters are available on the official website https://bbmp.gov.in, where

property owners can also pay their dues. Despite providing sufficient opportunities, notices have been served through mobile messages, in person, and by affixing notices at the property locations.

Since adequate time has been provided and dues remain unpaid, it has been decided to initiate auction proceedings (Distress Sale) against such defaulting properties as per the provisions of the Act and Rules (list of defaulters attached).

The auction of the identified properties will be conducted on 21-02-2026 at 3:00 PM at the 3rd Floor Hall, Yelahanka Mini Vidhana Soudha, near N.E.S., Bengaluru-560064, in the presence of the Joint Commissioners of Zone-1 and Zone-2. Members of the public and interested bidders are requested to participate in the auction process.

If the property tax dues are cleared before the auction date, the concerned property will be removed from the auction list. Property owners will also have the opportunity to submit their objections to the Commissioner's office prior to the auction proceedings.

Instructions to Complete Ejjipura Flyover by End of July: Maheshwar Rao

Bengaluru : Chief Commissioner Maheshwar Rao has directed the contractor to complete the entire Ejjipura Flyover project by the end of July. During an inspection of various development works under the GBA limits today, he reviewed the progress of the Ejjipura Flyover and expressed concern over the slow pace of work. He instructed the contractor to deploy additional machinery and manpower and to execute all components simultaneously to ensure timely completion.

Noting that three weeks had passed since obstacles related to the installation of pillars near St. John's were resolved, and that piling work had commenced only yesterday, he reprimanded the contractor. He directed that piling works be expedited and completed within 15 days. He further instructed that pile cap and pillar construction be carried out alongside piling works and that superstructure segment casting be undertaken in parallel to accelerate progress. The contractor was directed to make all necessary preparations and carry out work round the clock to meet the deadline. Immediate Completion of Ramp Works: The down ramp on the Madiwala side must be com-



pleted at the earliest. Permission from the Traffic Police should be obtained to restrict traffic on one side of the road to facilitate rain water pipeline works. Directions were also issued to take possession of land belonging to Kendriya Sadan and the Astrophysics premises for the construction of a footpath, and to expedite ramp works near the Ejjipura signal.

Filling of Potholes: Observing potholes on the grade-level road beneath the flyover, he directed the contractor to immediately undertake pothole filling and implement necessary safety measures.

Inspection of White Topping Works: Sarjapur Road: White topping works are underway on a 1.06 km stretch. One section has been completed and opened to traffic, while approximately 50 percent

of the remaining stretch is pending. Officials were instructed to construct footpaths with a minimum width of 2.5 metres as per norms and complete the entire project by the end of March. Koramangala 80 Feet Road: White topping works are in progress, and officials were directed to execute footpath works simultaneously. Noticing waste dumped along the roadside and in the stormwater drain, he instructed that the issue be resolved within a week. Marshals should patrol at night and impose fines on offenders to prevent further dumping. He also directed that brushed or stamped concrete be used instead of paver blocks for footpaths. Palm Grove Road: Of the 700-metre stretch, work has been completed on one portion, while 300 metres remain pending. Footpath works are in progress and must be completed by the end of March. Sultanpete Road: White topping work covering 1.15 km has been planned.

EDITORIAL

IN BANGLADESH, A STORY OF MANY WINS

As a member of the Indian Parliament, I have watched the unfolding events in Dhaka with a mix of cautious optimism and profound respect for the democratic resilience of our neighbour. The 2026 general election in Bangladesh, which saw the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) return to power with a sweeping mandate, is not merely a change in government; it is a seismic shift in the political landscape of South Asia.

I find myself in complete agreement with the recent reflections of my dear friend Mahfuz Anam, a veteran Bangladeshi editor, who characterises this election as the moment that has truly "saved" his country. From my vantage point in New Delhi, I believe it is essential for us Indians to understand and respect the core arguments he has made: that this transition represents a triumph of public will over authoritarianism, a rejection of regressive extremism, and a unique opportunity for India to reset its relationship with a democratic and stable Bangladesh.

The Civic Engagement Must Be Applauded

The foundation of this new era was laid long before the first ballot was cast. The transition began with the extraordinary student-led uprising in 2024 (the "Monsoon Revolution"), which dismantled an autocratic regime that many believed was immovable. As an Indian lawmaker, I am struck by the sheer scale of civic engagement that has followed.

The 2026 polls recorded a turnout of 60%, a sharp and healthy rise from the 42% seen in the previous, widely boycotted electoral cycle. This is the clearest evidence that the people of Bangladesh have reclaimed their stake in the state. For years, the narrative in the region was one of "democratic backsliding", but Dhaka has proven that when institutions are pushed to the brink, the collective will of the general populace, led by the youth, can forge a path back to legitimacy. The youth didn't gain politically from their own revolt. Instead, the BNP, led by Tarique Rahman, triumphed after twenty years in the political wilderness, in a comeback of historic proportions. Critics often pointed to the party's past baggage, but this campaign was markedly different. Under Rahman's leadership, the BNP positioned itself as the guardian of the "July National Charter", a package of sweeping constitutional and institutional reforms designed to prevent the return of one-party rule. It disavowed some of its previous transgressions and promised to govern from the centre.

A Reassurance For India

By securing a two-thirds majority (212 seats), the BNP has been given the mandate it needs to govern effectively. However, the most significant takeaway for us in India is the party's conscious pivot toward inclusivity. In his maiden address as Prime Minister, Tarique Rahman vowed to make Bangladesh a safe haven for "all faiths - Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and Christians." For those of us in India (including the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs) who have raised concerns about the safety of minorities in Bangladesh, these words are a welcome and necessary assurance.

The Jamaat Snub

One of the most insightful points made by Bangladeshi observers like Mahfuz Anam relates to the rejection the voters delivered to the more regressive elements of the political spectrum. While the Jamaat-e-Islami saw an increase in its seat share, the electorate ultimately placed them in the opposition. The voters, particularly women and the youth, demonstrated a sophisticated discernment. They supported the call for reform but rejected the regressive rhetoric concerning women's rights and religious conservatism that surfaced in the Jamaat's statements during the campaign.

VULGAR ENTERTAINMENT IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS:

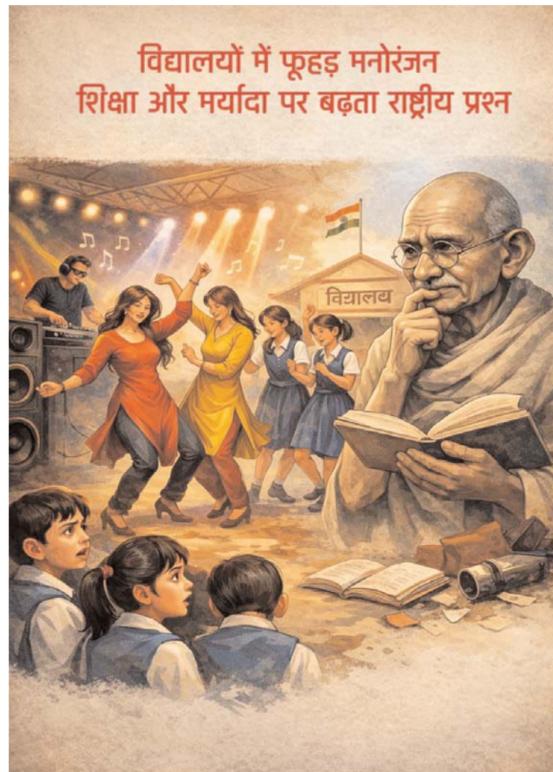
A growing national question about education and dignity



PRIYANKA SAURABH

(Serious concern over the basic objective of children's values, discipline and education amidst DJ culture and indecent performances)

Schools form the soul of any nation. (Serious concern over the basic objective of children's values, discipline and education amidst DJ culture and indecent performances) Schools form the soul of any nation. They are the places where society's direction is determined, shaping the thoughts, values, and behaviors of future generations. A civilized society is defined by its schools, for it is here that children are taught not only literacy but also discipline, morality, sensitivity, and responsibility. Therefore, if indecent dances, vulgar entertainment, and indecent performances are witnessed on school campuses, it is not merely the fault of a single institution, but a serious warning to the entire nation's education system. In recent years, scenes have emerged from various parts of the country where cultural programs in schools have featured songs and dances that have no connection to education and values. These incidents force us to wonder whether we are surrendering our schools to the same commercial culture that has placed entertainment above decorum? Are we unwittingly subjecting the innocent psyche of children to influences that could have long-term effects on their character and thinking? Today, it's true that DJ culture, social media, and the race for instant popularity have impacted every segment of society. The language of songs and entertainment has changed, the level of presentation has evolved, and the race to go viral has overtaken discretion. But



school is not a public forum or a place of entertainment. It is the place where children should be taught what is appropriate and inappropriate, what is acceptable and what is not. If schools themselves begin to erase these distinctions, how will children develop an understanding of moral boundaries? Another aspect of this whole question is that sometimes such events involve the involvement of outside DJs or organizers. It's possible that such music was played in a school without prior planning, or that children, in their excitement, chose an inappropriate song. But in every such scenario, the greatest responsibility lies with the school administration and teachers. Teachers aren't just textbook teachers; they are living examples of ideals, discipline, and

dignity. Their silence or indifference becomes tacit approval for the children. The purpose of cultural programs in schools is to channel children's creativity in a positive direction. Dance, music, and drama boost children's self-confidence, provide a platform for their talents, and connect them to their culture. But when this platform becomes a medium for vulgarity, its very purpose is defeated. Folk dances, patriotic songs, classical or light music, and inspirational plays—these not only entertain but also connect children to their roots. In contrast, vulgar performances may garner momentary applause but do not enrich children's personalities in any way. Equally important is the role of society and parents. Today, parents often expect only results and

competition from schools, while relatively little attention is paid to value-based education. If such incidents occur in a school, it is not enough to simply blame the teachers or the administration. Society must also decide what kind of environment it wants to provide for its children. Do we want schools to adopt the same culture that is being served on TV and mobile screens, or do we expect something better, something more responsible from them? On the other hand, it's also essential that each incident be responded to with a balanced approach. Putting the entire teaching community on trial or demanding harsh punishment based on a single lapse is not a permanent solution to the problem. Teachers are human and can make mistakes. If an incident occurs for the first time and is not malicious, corrective warnings, clear guidelines, and sensitive training may be more effective. However, if such incidents occur repeatedly, or if the decorum is deliberately violated, strict action is equally necessary to maintain discipline. Today, there is a need for clear and consistent guidelines for school cultural programs across the country. These guidelines should not remain confined to paper, but should be scrupulously followed. Clear rules should be in place regarding prior approval of programs, review of songs and performances, costume decorum, and stage management responsibilities. Regular training for teachers is also essential so that they can understand changing social influences and provide appropriate guidance to children. It's also worth noting that morality and culture don't mean rigidity or the suppression of creativity. Cutting children off from modernity isn't the solution; rather, teaching them to embrace modernity with discretion is more important. Schools should create an environment where children can freely showcase their talents, while also understanding that every platform has its own limits. A balance of freedom and discipline is the hallmark of a healthy education system. Looking at it from a broader perspective, this issue isn't limited to schools. It's a reflection of the social direction we're moving in.

THE PARADOX OF INDIA'S 'YOLO' CONSUMER

Do India's statisticians believe that the Indian citizen is becoming increasingly vain, hedonistic and imprudent? An analysis of the new inflation index indicates they do. It's not their fault. They have inferred those characteristics from the way Indians spend. Let's see how. Last week, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MosPI) released the first Consumer Price Inflation (CPI) number that uses 2024 as the base year, replacing the previous series with 2012 as the base year. January 2026 inflation clocked at a healthy 2.75%, slightly above the floor level that the Reserve Bank of India likes it to be and well below the ceiling when the governor starts frowning. The number itself is transient and hence not critical to this analysis, though it deepens the story. What offers a clue into the statisticians' thinking is the weightage assigned to each of the goods and services that are measured to build the index. Changing Consumption Trends It is necessary to change the building blocks of the CPI periodically to reflect changing consumer choices. The previous index, which was built on patterns of 2012, had six groups and included then widely used items such as video and audio cassettes, used clothing and rope. The new index removes such stuff and brings in now-common services such as video streaming and babysitters. Its 12 divisions of goods and services are selected on the basis of Classification of Individual Consumption According to Purpose (COICOP), a principle laid down by the United Nations' Statistical Division in 2018. COICOP keeps pace with changing consumption patterns and helps sketch a more accurate profile of the consumer. MoSPI statisticians have relied on the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) of 2023-24 to imagine the new Indian CPI basket based on consumer choices. A nation climbing out of wide-spread poverty while harbouring ambitions of becoming a superpower would be expected to spend more on superior foods, education and asset creation. But



the weightage for food, education, sports, recreation and culture is sharply lower, indicating a relatively lower consumer preference for them. Instead, the higher weightage for personal care, transport and intoxicants draws the picture of a consumer with a YOLO (you-only-live-once) approach. Rural-Urban Divide The HCES 2023-24, released in December 2024, showed that food expenditure in rural areas fell below half of households' average monthly spending. In the food basket, the sharpest spike was in the consumption of beverages, refreshments and processed foods instead of proteins, fruits and vegetables. The trend was the same in rural as well as urban areas. Similarly, the share of expenditure on education saw a drop in both rural and urban areas, while that of conveyance, entertainment and intoxicants shifted up. The breakup accompanying the new CPI series shows the deepening of the trend. Personal care, social protection and miscellaneous goods and services jumped by 19.02%. The next fastest price rise was for education at 3.35%. One reason for low household food expenditure is the free and highly subsidised distribution of essentials such as cereals, pulses and sugar to over 800 million Indians. That should logically free up household budgets for judicious expenditure, such as on education and protein-rich foods.

That does not seem to be the case. For instance, India has high internet penetration but low ownership of personal computers, crucial for upgrading knowledge and acquiring skills such as programming. Instead, internet connectivity is largely deployed to consume entertainment content on mobile phones. The 'Middle Class' Factor Consumption behaviour in India is also skewed by inequality, and weightages in the new CPI series appear to tilt towards middle-class consumption, even though most of India can hardly be categorised as that. A report of broking firm CLSA from November 2025, which slices the country by per capita income, found that 90% of Indians survive on \$900 annually, while the average national annual per capita income is a respectable \$2,400. The Rupee Road report, prepared from the perspective of identifying equity investment opportunities, says that, measured by affordability, shopping by the poorer cohorts rarely goes beyond basic essentials. And incomes are not rising enough to beat inflation. Analysing jobs data, Niti Ayog member Arvind Virmani had remarked last year that salaries had not kept pace with inflation in the past seven years. Real wages were stagnant even though the number of jobs was rising faster than the population growth rate, Virmani had said.

The 'Quiet Panic' That Led To Trump Blinking On Anti-India Tariffs

In recent years, India has concluded several bilateral trade agreements, including with the UK, Oman, and the EU. Another notable development is the announcement of an interim trade agreement between India and the United States. Although early discussions centred on a comprehensive, multi-sector agreement focused on market access and reducing trade barriers, the decision to settle for an interim deal appears influenced by broader factors. Rising inflation in the US, particularly following tariffs in sectors such as household durable goods, food and beverages and textiles, may have prompted a recalibration of trade relations. US Inflation Was Rising India has become an increasingly important supplier within the United States' import structure. In 2024-25, Indian exports to the US totalled approximately USD 86.51 billion, representing around 2.6% of total US imports. This role is particularly evident in several sectors, with India supplying approximately 9.2% of US textile and apparel imports, roughly 3.2% of housing-related consumer durables, and nearly 5% of food and beverage imports during that period. These figures indicate India's growing integration into key segments of the US consumption market. At the same time, the United States has implemented a series of tariff increases affecting a broad range of Indian exports. Inflation within the sectors under consideration, as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), remained positive throughout this period.



Specifically, for January 2025-26, CPI inflation was approximately 2.9% for food and beverages, 1.7% for textiles and apparel, and 3.9% for housing-related consumer durables. Notably, larger movements in inflation were observed following the tariff notifications issued in August 2025. While multiple factors likely contributed, the timing suggests that recent trade measures may have played a role alongside other domestic and global influences in shaping observed price trends. Americans Felt The Pinch Recent inflation forecasts highlight concerns regarding tariff pass-through for domestic policymakers. According to RBC Economics, core goods inflation in the United States is expected to increase this year, peaking at approximately 3%. These figures are comparable to levels observed during the 2008 financial crisis in the United States. Empirical research increasingly supports the link between tariffs and price

pressures. Research from Federal Reserve organisations, including the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, has provided evidence that the recent increase in tariffs indeed contributed significantly to the growth in consumer prices. This observed link between tariffs and inflation has prompted the US to deploy compensatory measures. One example has been the expansion of federal support packages for American farmers as agricultural producers were among the most visible casualties of retaliatory tariffs, prompting administrations to authorise significant amounts in relief and subsidy programmes. These transfers acknowledge that trade restrictions can generate domestic economic stress requiring fiscal mitigation. Federal Reserve data indicate that overall consumer goods production increased modestly in 2025, with output rising by approximately 0.7% in December 2025 compared to earlier months. Food and beverage manufacturing, a non-durable good,

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

India's oil import shift signals structural energy security pivot: Global Data

New Delhi: India's recalibration of crude oil imports marks a structural shift from opportunistic discount buying to disciplined geopolitical risk management, according to analytics firm GlobalData. With oil accounting for roughly a quarter of India's primary energy consumption and import dependence at about 87 per cent, the country is prioritising compliance resilience, supply diversification and stronger US energy linkages as part of a more strategic energy security doctrine, the firm said. India, the world's third-largest oil consumer, is projected by the International Energy Agency to see demand rise from 5.5 million barrels per day (mbpd) in 2024 to 8 mbpd by 2035. Import dependence could increase to 92 per cent by 2035 despite ongoing domestic exploration, widening exposure to external supply shocks. Arnab Nath, Associate Project Manager of Economic Research at GlobalData, said the growing gap between demand and domestic output is driving efforts to broaden the supplier base and



reduce reliance on concentrated or politically constrained supply corridors. India's crude sourcing has shifted significantly since 2022. Russia's share of India's oil imports rose from 2.7 per cent before the Ukraine conflict to 25.9 per cent in 2024 on the back of discounted cargoes. However, imports from Russia fell more than 40 per cent year-on-year in January 2026 amid tightening trade and sanctions dynamics. At the same time, the United States and Venezuela have re-emerged in India's crude mix. While Venezuelan

volumes are expected to remain limited due to heavy grades and production constraints, they are seen as a tactical alternative as India seeks to rebalance geopolitical risks, GlobalData said, adding the shift is also influenced by US tariff threats linked to Iran-related trade. According to Nath, the recalibration could ease near-term friction between New Delhi and Washington and open space for deeper cooperation in liquefied natural gas (LNG), critical minerals and clean-technology supply chains. However, he noted that India will

continue to prioritise price competitiveness and supply security, maintaining sourcing flexibility, including from the Middle East and select sanctioned-origin barrels where feasible. For Washington, the move reinforces the effectiveness of tariffs and sanctions as negotiating tools, potentially making energy a recurring element in bilateral trade discussions, the report said. Following the India-US trade agreement announced on February 2, India faces stronger incentives to reduce sanctions exposure and tariff risks

while preserving access to competitively priced crude. The US had imposed an additional 25 per cent tariff in August 2025 linked to Russian oil purchases and signalled the possibility of further increases. GlobalData said refiners are now optimising for compliance resilience and supply continuity. While Russian crude may remain part of the mix when commercially viable, India's overall direction points to a broader supplier base anchored by stronger US energy ties and selective engagement with alternative sources. "India's crude strategy is evolving from opportunistic discount capture to a more structured approach to managing geopolitical risk," Nath said, adding that energy trade with the US is likely to remain transactional in oil but increasingly convergent in long-term transition areas such as grid modernisation and nuclear cooperation. India, the world's third-largest oil consumer, is projected by the International Energy Agency to see demand rise from 5.5 million barrels per day (mbpd) in 2024 to 8 mbpd by 2035.

Gold climbs to Rs 1.59 lakh/10g; silver trades flat at Rs 2.64 lakh/kg



New Delhi: Gold prices appreciated by Rs 850 to Rs 1,59,500 per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday, February 20, while silver stayed flat at Rs 2.64 lakh per kilogram, tracking a firm global trend, according to marketmen. The yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs 1,58,650 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) on Thursday. However, silver prices remained unchanged at Rs 2,64,000 per kilogram. In the international market, spot gold gained USD 30.83, or 0.62 per cent, to USD 5,027.13 per ounce, while silver was trading 2.55 per cent higher at USD 80.5 per ounce. "Gold has rebounded above USD 5,020 per ounce, while silver has also surged to around USD 81 driven by

■ **Gold prices appreciated by Rs 850 to Rs 1,59,500 per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday, February 20, while silver stayed flat at Rs 2.64 lakh per kilogram, tracking a firm global trend, according to marketmen. The yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs 1,58,650 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) on Thursday.**

rising concerns over a potential US-Iran conflict," Kaynat Chainwala, AVP Commodity Research, Kotak Securities, said. She added that investors remained cautious ahead of key economic releases, including Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) inflation, Q4 GDP,

and flash PMI data. Gaurav Garg, Research Analyst at Lemonn Markets Desk, said the uptick in bullion prices comes after recent consolidation, with buyers stepping in on dips following sharp volatility earlier this month. Global cues, including geopolitical tensions and expectations around US interest rates, continue to drive near-term sentiment, he added. "Despite intermittent corrections, the broader trend for precious metals remains supportive. Investors are viewing current moves as part of a consolidation phase rather than a reversal," Garg said. The yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs 1,58,650 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) on Thursday.

INDIA-US INTERIM TRADE PACT LIKELY TO BE OPERATIONALISED IN APRIL: GOYAL

New Delhi: An interim trade agreement between India and the US is likely to be signed in March and operationalised in April, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Friday, February 20. Earlier this month, India and the US released a joint statement announcing a framework for an interim trade agreement. To finalise the text of the first phase of the bilateral trade agreement, the chief negotiators of the two countries will meet in Washington next week. The three-day meeting between the two teams will begin on February 23. Goyal told reporters here that the pact is expected to be signed next month and may be implemented in April. US Trade Representative (USTR) Jamieson Greer is likely to visit India in March to sign the agreement. In an event at the AI Impact Summit here, US Ambassador Sergio Gora said that the India-US trade deal is set to be inked soon. India on Friday joined the US-led strategic alliance Pax Silica aimed at building a resilient supply chain for critical minerals. "From the trade deal to Pax Silica to



defence cooperation, the potential for our two nations to work together is truly limitless," Goyal said in his remarks. The joint statement, released separately by the two nations earlier this month, lays down the contours of the deal. These now need to be translated into a legal agreement, for which the two sides will meet next week. The Indian team will be headed by chief negotiator Darpan Jain, who is a joint secretary in the Commerce Ministry. Under the pact, both sides would extend duty concessions to each other on a number of goods traded between them. The US has announced that it will reduce

the reciprocal tariffs on Indian goods from 25 per cent to 18 per cent. It has already eliminated the 25 per cent punitive tariffs on India for buying Russian crude oil. The move is a big relief to the domestic industry as they were facing steep 50 per cent tariffs by the US. Goyal expressed hope that an executive order to cut the tariffs to 18 per cent would be issued by the Trump administration this month. While speaking at the launch of seven components of the Rs 25,060-crore export promotion mission (EPM), Goyal said the India-US trade agreement has opened huge business opportunities for Indian exporters.

He said that India has protected all the sensitive sectors, including agriculture. "Now once that rate (50 per cent tariff) comes out to lower than any of our competitors, we are lower than anybody else who is an emerging market or a developing economy, and plus having safeguarded all the sensitive sectors, it's a great win-win solution for both countries," he said. The minister said that labour-intensive sectors like apparel, leather and marine were suffering from high tariffs. He also criticised Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for raising concerns about the deal. Stepping up his attack on the government over the interim US trade deal, Gandhi on Friday said the answer to why Prime Minister Narendra Modi agreed to a deal, where India gives so much and appears to get so little, and makes an "abject surrender" lies in the "grips" and "chokes" placed on him. Gandhi questioned that why the government has agreed to increase US imports by USD 100 billion a year without a reciprocal promise. "I think he (Gandhi) lives in a world very detached from reality.

AMAZON OVERTAKES WALMART AS WORLD'S BIGGEST COMPANY BY REVENUE

Amazon has surpassed Walmart to become the world's largest company by revenue, marking a significant milestone for the e-commerce and cloud computing major that began as an online bookseller in Jeff Bezos' garage in 1994. Walmart, which had held the top spot for more than a decade, reported sales of \$713.2 billion for the 12 months ended January 31. Amazon, which follows a December-ending fiscal year, earlier this month posted 2025 revenue of \$717 billion, according to a Bloomberg report. Over the past decade, Amazon's revenue growth has outpaced Walmart's by nearly 10 times, driven by a shift in consumer spending from brick-and-mortar stores to online platforms, as well as the rapid expansion of its cloud arm, Amazon Web Services (AWS). Amazon and Walmart remain direct rivals in retail. Amazon is the largest online retailer, with its website and mobile applications drawing about 2.7 billion visits each month. On the other hand, Walmart is the world's biggest physical retailer,



operating more than 10,000 stores and shopping clubs globally. Amazon's rise to the top in revenue terms is largely attributable to its dominance in cloud computing, a segment where Walmart has no presence. Excluding AWS, Amazon's 2025 revenue would have stood at \$588 billion, Bloomberg reported. Before Walmart, Exxon Mobil and General Motors had held the distinction. In terms of market capitalisation, Nvidia is currently the world's most valuable company at \$4.5 trillion, more than double Amazon's valuation and more than four times that of

Walmart, according to Bloomberg. Amazon's rise to the top in revenue terms is largely attributable to its dominance in cloud computing. — Amazon has surpassed Walmart as the world's largest company, measured by sales, breaking Walmart's 13-year streak at the top of the list. Amazon posted \$717 billion in sales in 2025. Walmart, the largest company in the world for more than a decade, recorded \$713 billion in sales in 2025, the retailer announced Thursday. Although the two companies are significant competitors in consumer retail, Amazon's revenue

growth in cloud computing, advertising and other businesses helped it overtake Walmart. Jeff Bezos started Amazon in 1994 as an online bookstore, but the company brought in nearly \$129 billion in sales last year from its Amazon Web Services division. AWS provides a vast network of computing, storage and artificial intelligence options to companies and governments around the world. AWS is also a key profit driver for Amazon and helps the company offset losses from its retail business. The majority (\$464 billion) of Amazon's revenue last year came from sales on its online and physical stores as well as from third-party sellers. Amazon also brought in more than \$100 billion combined from advertising and Prime subscriptions. By contrast, more than 90% of Walmart's sales come from its physical stores and websites. Despite Amazon's rapid rise, Walmart has adapted and is in its strongest shape in years. Walmart's stock recently surpassed \$1 trillion in value, the first traditional retailer to hit that mark.

Tata Punch EV facelift launched: price range, specs and details

Mumbai: Tata Motors on Friday, February 20 launched the facelift version of the Punch EV and said it expects the latest offering to democratise the adoption of entry-level EVs, which account for almost two-thirds of electric car demand. The company, which commanded 40 per cent of the total 1.76-lakh electric car sales in India in the 2025 calendar year, also said that the entry of more players, including bigger players in the space, will be beneficial to the country's overall EV mission of green mobility. India has set a target of achieving 30 per cent electric vehicle penetration by 2030. With a starting price of Rs 9.69-lakh (ex-showroom Mumbai), Punch.ev comes with an alternate financing option with BaaS at a starting price of Rs 6.49 lakh plus battery EMI of Rs 2.6 per km, the company said. "We have been very committed to the entry EVs, because this is where 65 per cent of the demand lies. Until we don't crack this, we will not be able to mainstream EVs and that's why Punch EV



becomes one of the critical launch in the journey of the progress and evolution of electric vehicles in India," Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles (TMPV) Managing Director and CEO, Shailesh Chandra said in a media interaction. Among 16 lakh passenger cars priced above Rs 12 lakh that are sold annually, EVs number stands around 1.60 lakh, or 10 per cent penetration, he said and added that on the contrast, the share of EVs in the 30 lakh cars priced below Rs 12

lakh is around 50,000 or just 1.6 per cent. "This is the real challenge of mainstreaming electric vehicles in the country. And if this segment does not get electrified, then you will never achieve the objective of EV mainstreaming," Chandra said. Citing factors such as "very less" real-world range and lower charging speed, among others as the factors for the 12 lakh segment not progressing towards a 10 per cent penetration, where mid as well as high segment are, he said.

GOVT ANNOUNCES SEVEN MEASURES TO HELP BOOST EXPORTS

New Delhi: The government on Friday, February 20, announced seven measures, including credit assistance for e-commerce exporters and support for alternative trade instruments, with an aim to promote the country's outbound shipments. These measures are part of the Rs 25,060 crore export promotion mission. Out of 10 components of the mission, three have already been rolled out in January. To support exporters using digital channels, the commerce ministry announced credit facilities with interest subvention and partial credit guarantees. The Direct E-Commerce Credit Facility will provide support up to Rs 50 lakh with 90 per cent guarantee coverage. The Overseas Inventory Credit Facility will extend support up to Rs 5 crore with 75 per cent guarantee coverage, and an interest subvention of 2.75 per cent will be available, subject to an annual ceiling of Rs 15 lakh per applicant, the commerce ministry said. To promote export factoring as an affordable working capital solution for MSMEs, an interest subvention of 2.75 per cent will be provided on the factoring cost for eligible transactions undertaken through RBI/IFSCA-recognised



entities. Assistance is capped at Rs 50 lakh per MSME annually and will be processed through a digital claim mechanism to ensure transparency and timely disbursement. To support emerging export opportunities, the ministry said this intervention enables exporters to access new or high-risk markets through shared-risk and credit enhancement instruments such as Letters of Credit confirmation and negotiation. For Trade Regulations, Accreditation and Compliance Enablement (TRACE), support will be extended to exporters in meeting international testing, inspections, certifications and other

conformity requirements. Under this, partial reimbursement of 60 per cent under the Positive List and 75 per cent under the Priority Positive List will be provided for eligible testing, inspection and certification expenses, subject to an annual ceiling of Rs 25 lakh per IEC (import export code). Facilitating Logistics, Overseas Warehousing and Fulfillment (FLOW) will enable exporters to access overseas warehousing and fulfillment infrastructure, including E-Commerce Export Hubs integrated with global distribution networks, it said. Under this, an assistance of up

to 30 per cent of the approved project cost will be provided for a maximum of three years, subject to prescribed ceilings and MSME participation norms. For exporters from northeastern and hilly regions, Logistics Interventions for Freight and Transport (LIFT) was announced. LIFT mitigates geographical disadvantages faced by exporters in remote, hilly, northeastern and landlocked districts. Under this, there will be partial reimbursement of up to 30 per cent of the eligible freight expenditure, subject to a ceiling of Rs 20 lakh per IEC per financial year. Financial assistance will also be extended for an integrated Support for Trade Intelligence and Facilitation (INSIGHT). It is generally limited to 50 per cent of project cost, with up to 100 per cent support for proposals from central and state Government institutions and Indian Missions abroad, subject to notified ceilings. Through these coordinated financial and ecosystem interventions, the government aims to reduce the cost of capital, diversify trade finance instruments, enhance compliance readiness, address logistics constraints and strengthen overseas market integration for MSMEs.

Trump says world has 10 days to see if Iran agrees deal or 'bad things happen'

US President Donald Trump says the world will find out "over the next, probably, 10 days" whether the US will reach a deal with Iran or take military action. At the first meeting of his Board of Peace in Washington DC, Trump said of negotiations with the Islamic Republic about its nuclear programme: "We have to make a meaningful deal otherwise bad things happen." In recent days, the US has surged military forces to the Middle East, while progress was reported at talks between American and Iranian negotiators in Switzerland. The Iranian government has told the UN Secretary-General that it will regard US bases in the region as legitimate targets if used in any military aggression against Iran. Tehran's UN mission said in a letter to UN Secretary-General António Guterres that Trump's rhetoric sig-



nalled a real risk of an attack - but it said Iran did not want a war. Democratic lawmakers, and some Republicans, have voiced opposition to any potential military action in Iran without congressional approval. In his remarks, Trump noted that Special Envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, who is also Trump's son-in-law, had "some very good meetings" with Iran. "It's proven to be, over the years, not easy to make a meaningful deal with Iran," he said. "Otherwise bad things happen." One day earlier, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt warned that Iran would be "very wise" to make a deal with the US, adding that Trump was still hoping for a diplomatic solution over Tehran's nuclear programme. When Trump first announced the Board of Peace, it was thought to be aimed at helping end the two-year war

between Israel and Hamas in Gaza and oversee reconstruction. But in the last month its mission has appeared to go beyond one conflict, with many wondering if the Trump-chaired board, made up of about two dozen countries, is meant to sideline the United Nations. US missile and aircraft struck three Iranian nuclear facilities in June last year, and the White House was reportedly discussing new attack options this week. American forces have been ramping up their presence in the region in recent weeks, including the deployment of the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier. However, the BBC understands that the British government has not given permission for the US to use UK military bases to support any potential strikes on Iran. In previous military operations in the Middle East, the US used RAF Fairford, in Gloucestershire, and the UK overseas territory of Diego Garcia, in the Indian Ocean. Satellite images have also shown that Iran has reinforced military facilities, and the country's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has posted messages to social media threatening US forces. "The US President constantly says that the US has sent a warship toward Iran. Of course, a warship is a dangerous piece of military hardware," one of Khamenei's posts read. "However, more dangerous than that warship is the weapon that can send that warship to the bottom of the sea." Several members of US Congress have expressed opposition to any military action against Iran. California Democrat Ro

Austrian climber found guilty after girlfriend froze to death on mountain



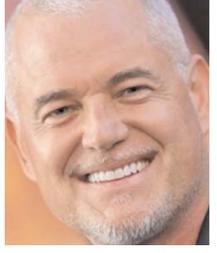
An Austrian climber has been found guilty of gross negligent manslaughter after his girlfriend froze to death on Austria's highest mountain last year. The man, named only as Thomas P in line with Austrian privacy laws, has been given a five-month suspended sentence and fined 9,600 (€8,400). His girlfriend, Kerstin G, died of hypothermia during a climbing trip on the Grossglockner mountain in January 2025. In a statement sent to the BBC, the court said it considered Thomas P's previous clean record and the loss of a person close to him "to be mitigating factors". It said it also took into account "the public discussion on social media, which was incriminating for the defendant". The judge, Norbert Hofer, himself an experienced climber who works with mountain and helicopter rescue teams in Tyrol, said Thomas P was an excellent Alpinist, but that his girlfriend was light-years behind him in terms of her climbing abilities. He said the couple should have turned back as Kerstin G did not have enough experience in winter conditions. Although the judge decided Thomas P had misjudged the situation, he said he had not left her behind "wilfully": "I don't see you as a murderer, I don't see you as cold-hearted."

Venezuelan opposition politician released after amnesty law passed



Venezuelan opposition politician Juan Pablo Guanipa has announced on social media that he has been freed after "almost nine months of unjust imprisonment". His comments come shortly after the country's interim President, Delcy Rodríguez, signed an amnesty bill approved by its National Assembly that could lead to the release of hundreds of political prisoners. Rodríguez's interim government has faced pressure from the US to speed up the release of Venezuela's remaining political prisoners after delays to the law. However, Guanipa described the bill as a "flawed document" that excludes many Venezuelans who remain "unjustly" behind bars. Guanipa is the leader of Venezuela's centre-right Justice First party and was a former vice-president of the National Assembly. He went into hiding after being accused of terrorism and treason for challenging Venezuela's disputed 2024 election result, and was tracked down by security forces and detained in May 2025. Guanipa was initially released from prison earlier this month, but was then rearrested and placed under house arrest for allegedly breaching the terms of his release. He is now among hundreds of political prisoners that have been freed since US forces seized Venezuela's President Nicolás Maduro in a raid on 3 January. Venezuela's socialist government has always denied holding political prisoners but first announced days after Maduro's capture, on 8 January, that "a significant number" of prisoners would be freed as a goodwill gesture. Opposition and human rights groups have said the government under Maduro for years used detentions of political prisoners to stamp out dissent and silence critics. Interim President Rodríguez has described the amnesty bill as being intended for the offering and receiving of forgiveness. But activists within the South American country have denounced delays to the amnesty law and a lack of transparency over who is being freed. Guanipa is a close ally of Venezuela's exiled opposition leader María Corina Machado, who won last year's Nobel Peace Prize. Machado has vowed to lead the country "when the right time comes", after giving US President Donald Trump her Nobel Peace Prize medal last month.

Grey's Anatomy star Eric Dane dies at 53 after ALS diagnosis



Eric Dane, the actor best known for his roles on Grey's Anatomy and Euphoria, has died less than a year after revealing he had amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). He was 53. Dane starred as family patriarch Cal Jacobs on hit HBO teen drama Euphoria. Before that, he was perhaps best known as Dr Mark Sloan, or "Dr McSteamy", on medical drama Grey's Anatomy. The California-born actor shared his ALS diagnosis in April 2025 and spent his final months raising funds and awareness for the most common form of motor neurone disease (MND). His family said in a statement: "With heavy hearts, we share that Eric Dane passed on Thursday afternoon following a courageous battle with ALS." Dane was married to fellow actress and model Rebecca Gayheart, with whom he had two children. The statement said he spent his final days surrounded by friends and his devoted wife, and his two daughters, Billie and Georgia, "who were the center of his world". "He will be deeply missed, and lovingly remembered always. Eric adored his fans and is forever grateful for the outpouring of love and support he's received."

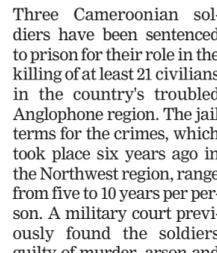
ASOS CO-FOUNDER DIES AFTER THAILAND APARTMENT BLOCK FALL

A co-founder of online fashion giant Asos died after falling from a high-rise apartment block in Thailand, police have said. Quentin Griffiths has been named by Thai police as the man found dead on the ground in the eastern seaside city of Pattaya on 9 February. A police investigator told the BBC Griffiths, a British passport holder, was by himself, his room was locked from the inside, and there was no trace of any break-ins at the time of the death. An autopsy did not reveal any evidence of foul play. Griffiths co-founded Asos in 2000 and remained a significant shareholder after leaving the firm five years later. An Asos spokesperson said: "We're saddened to hear



about the passing of Quentin, one of our original co-founders." He played an important role in Asos's earliest days and we're forever grateful for his contribution. "Our thoughts are with his family and friends." A Foreign Office spokesperson said: "We are supporting the family of a British national who has died in Thailand and are in contact with the local authorities." Police in Pattaya told the BBC Griffiths was found dead outside a luxury hotel where he had been staying in a suite on the 17th floor. He was involved in two ongoing court cases that might have caused him stress, police also told the BBC. Griffiths was separated from his second wife, a Thai national, and had reportedly been engaged in a legal dispute with her over a business they ran together, the BBC understands. He co-founded Asos in London with Nick Robertson, Andrew Regan and Deborah Thorpe. Its name originally stood for As Seen On Screen as it sold fashion inspired by clothing worn by TV and film stars. It grew to become an online fashion marketplace stocking hundreds of brands as well as its own lines and at one time was valued at more than £6bn. Its largest shareholders include Danish billionaire Anders Holch Povlsen - who owns Danish clothing giant Bestseller and Mike Ashley, owner of Frasers Group.

RARE PRISON SENTENCES HANDED TO CAMEROON SOLDIERS AFTER KILLING OF 21 CIVILIANS



Three Cameroonian soldiers have been sentenced to prison for their role in the killing of at least 21 civilians in the country's troubled Anglophone region. The jail terms for the crimes, which took place six years ago in the Northwest region, range from five to 10 years per person. A military court previously found the soldiers guilty of murder, arson and destruction - a rare occurrence in a country where military personnel are seldom convicted of crimes against civilians. Nevertheless, lawyers for the victims told the BBC they were disappointed with the length of the jail terms handed down on Thursday, calling them "insignificant". The convictions centre on the events of 14 February 2020, when soldiers, supported by a local militia of ethnic Fulanis, raided the village of Ngarbuh and killed civilians. The victims included

13 children, according to Human Rights Watch, who added that the assailants burnt down homes and beat up residents. What followed was a rare instance of Cameroon's government acknowledging the atrocities of its soldiers in the Anglophone regions, which have been wracked by a separatist conflict for nearly 10 years. The authorities initially denied responsibility for the attack on Ngarbuh but later backpedalled following international pressure and the findings of an investigation ordered by the country's President, Paul Biya. Alongside the three soldiers sentenced on Thursday evening, a militia member also received a jail term for murder, arson and destruction. One of the victims' lawyers, Sother Menkem, told the BBC: "The sentence was so mild, I even qualify it as friendly because we are talking of a massacre."

HAMAS HOLDS VOTE TO CHOOSE NEW INTERIM LEADER



Hamas is holding an election for a new interim leader, a senior Palestinian official familiar with the armed group's affairs has told the BBC. Voting is taking place across Gaza, the occupied West Bank and among Hamas's members elsewhere. The outcome may signal which direction the movement intends to take - particularly as the US and other mediators discuss post-war governance of Gaza, reconstruction efforts and the future status of armed groups there. The elections come after most of Hamas's senior leadership were killed in Israeli strikes following the group's 7 October 2023 attacks on Israel, in which about 1,200 people were killed and 251 others taken hostage. People in Gaza have already cast their votes in secret, according to the source, but it is unclear whether the process has concluded elsewhere. When announced, the new leader will hold office for a year. Hamas governs the Gaza Strip and in recent years has had growing support in the West Bank, though its activities there are heavily constrained by the Israeli military and Palestinian Authority security forces. A US-backed ceasefire in Gaza came into effect in October, and negotiations continue over the deal's later phases. Under the proposed terms of the US plan, Hamas would have no role in the future governance of the territory. Governance would eventually be handed over to the Palestinian Authority, which administers parts of the West Bank, once it has undergone reforms. Yahya Sinwar, the overall head of Hamas, was killed by Israeli forces in Gaza in October 2024, and its political leader, Ismail Haniyeh, was killed in an Israeli attack in Iran in July that year. Hamas's military chief Mohammed Deif was also killed that July, in an Israeli air strike on Gaza. The position of overall head of Hamas has remained vacant since the deaths of Haniyeh and Sinwar, with the movement being led by an interim committee headed by Qatar-based Mohammad Darwish after the latter was killed. Under the movement's rules, the head of Hamas is chosen by an electoral college of around 86 members drawn from the General Shura Council, Hamas's top decision-making body representing Gaza, the West Bank, Palestinian prisoners in Israel, and officials based abroad.

MOTHER AND INFANT BURNT TO DEATH IN INDIAN STATE OVER WITCHCRAFT ALLEGATIONS

Four people have been arrested in the eastern Indian state of Jharkhand for allegedly burning to death a woman and her 10-month-old son on suspicion of practising witchcraft earlier this week. The woman's husband, who was also attacked, suffered severe burns and is in hospital. Police say they are searching for more people who may be involved. The accused are in custody and haven't commented publicly yet. According to the National Crime Records Bureau, more than 2,500 people, mostly women, were killed in India on suspicion of witchcraft between 2000 and 2016. Tuesday's murder of Jyoti Sunku and her son occurred months after five members of



a family in neighbouring Bihar state were brutally killed and allegedly burned alive on accusations of practising witchcraft. Such cases are often reported from areas inhabited by disadvantaged tribal communities, where superstition is rife and a non-existent public health system leads to dependence on quacks for medical advice. The murders in Jharkhand occurred in the Kudsai hamlet, a remote tribal settlement of around 50 mud houses located 250km (155.3 miles) from the state capital, Ranchi. The violence appears to have been triggered by recent incidents in

the village, including rumours of sudden cattle deaths and the illness and death of a local man named Pustun Birua. His wife Jano Birua says she consulted an informal healthcare provider - common in villages where no doctors are available - when he began suffering from anxiety and fainting spells. He told her that her husband was not suffering from any physical illness. Asked why she did not take him to a hospital, she said: "We are poor people, so it wasn't possible to take him that far." Meanwhile, rumours spread that Jyoti Sunku was practising witchcraft and was responsible for the man's illness. Pustun Birua died on Tuesday evening. That night, according to Jyoti's husband Kolhan Sunku who is in hospital, a mob of about a dozen people, including five women, stormed their home and set fire to his wife and child. Recalling the horror from his hospital bed, he said: "I pleaded with folded hands to have the matter resolved in the village council but the attackers didn't listen to me." Based on the testimonies of Kolhan Sunku and another family member, the district police have registered a complaint of murder and criminal conspiracy. Police say four men have been arrested and a special police team has been set up to track down other members of the mob.

PAK PLAYERS NOT TO BE BOUGHT FOR IPL-LINKED THE HUNDRED FRANCHISES OVER 'UNWRITTEN RULE': REPORT

After being barred from participating in the Indian Premier League (IPL), Pakistani players are set to face a 'partial boycott' in England's The Hundred. Though Pakistani players have registered for The Hundred auction, a report has claimed that an 'unwritten rule' bars IPL owners-owned franchises from buying Pakistani players in the auction despite the fact that the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has no IPL-like ban on these players. According to a report by the BBC, a senior official at the ECB has signalled that interest in Pakistan players would be limited to teams that do not have ties with IPL owners. Another agent, aware of the situation, described this as an "unwritten rule" in The Hundred auction books. Not just that, this 'rule' is in place across various leagues where there is Indian investment. Since its inaugural season in



2021, England's The Hundred has seen its eight franchises draw investment in some form or other from the IPL owners. At present, Manchester Super Giants, MI London, Southern Brave, and SunRisers Leeds are four franchises with ownership ties to the Indian Premier League. Asked about this

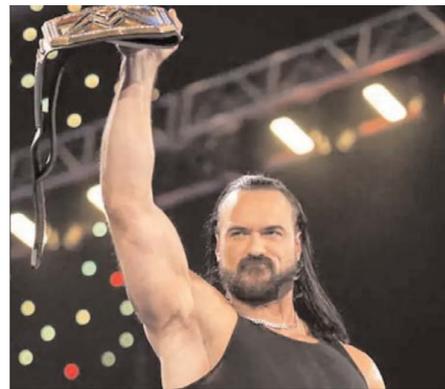
development, James Sheridan, the deputy chair of Manchester Super Giants, told BBC: "The only conversations we've had are to pick the two best squads to give us the best possible chance of winning the two competitions." On the surface, even an ECB spokesperson said that players would be picked

from all teams in the world. "The Hundred welcomes men's and women's players from all over the world, and we would expect the eight teams to reflect that," the spokesperson said. "Almost 1,000 cricketers from 18 nations have registered for The Hundred auction, with representation on the longest

of over 50 players respectively from Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, Pakistan and West Indies," the spokesperson added. Shaheen Shah Afridi, Shadab Khan, and Haris Rauf are some of the top players to have featured in earlier seasons of the men's competition in The Hundred.

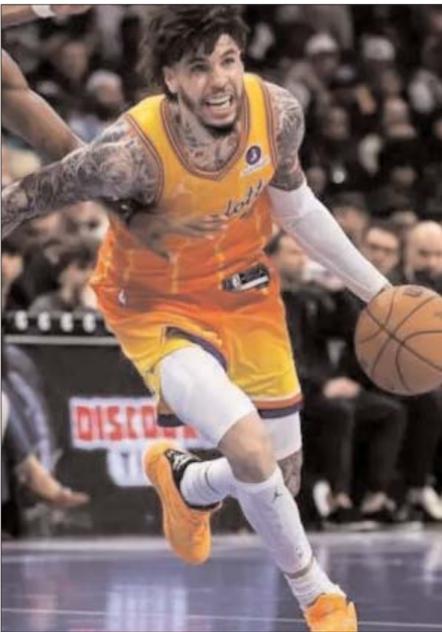
DREW MCINTYRE NAMES WWE SUPERSTAR HE DOESN'T WANT TO FACE IN WRESTLEMANIA 42

The countdown for WrestleMania 42 has begun, with all eyes on the matchups the storyline is going to put inside the ring at the big event. As fans share their preferences and predictions, the Undisputed WWE Champion Drew McIntyre has named the performer he doesn't want to face at WrestleMania. Speaking his mind, McIntyre said that he is open to facing anyone in the world, barring Cody Rhodes. While the challenger for the championship is yet to be officially announced through the upcoming Elimination Chamber match, McIntyre is clear on what he doesn't want. "Anybody but Cody Rhodes. I'm concerned, considering how the first two matches went, and the referees bailing him out. Then for Cage match, I won but people were like 'it was because of Jacob'. Was it, though? I haven't said this because I don't have to, but Jacob said it himself, 'wasn't Drew on his way out of the Cage when I got there?'," he said during an



appearance on Busted Open Radio. Some of the storylines are already in the final stage, with Roman Reigns reportedly set to challenge for the World Heavyweight Championship against CM Punk. The likes of Randy Orton, LA Knight, and Jeyvon Evans could be McIntyre's opponents, but Rhodes can't be ruled out yet. Explaining why he doesn't want to face Rhodes, McIntyre said: "I didn't just overcome Cody, I

overcame Cody and Jacob, I can't let the title back on Cody where he's protected again and back in the golden boy spot." McIntyre said that it is crucial for him to retain the WWE Championship title at WrestleMania 42 as he wants to remain the leader of the blue brand. "I liberated this title for everybody, but mostly me, because I believe I'm the man that needs to carry it forward into the future."



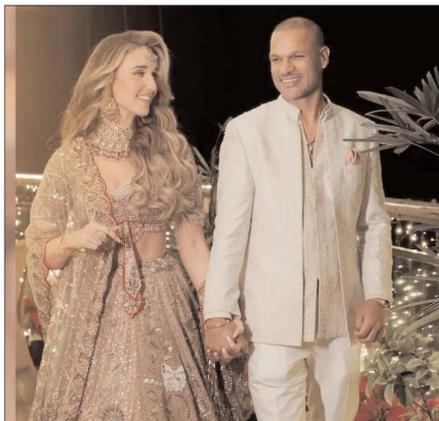
'BLESSED' BALL STARS FOR HORNETS ONE DAY AFTER CAR CRASH

Charlotte Hornets guard LaMelo Ball says he feels 'blessed' after featuring against Houston Rockets a day after being involved in a car accident. The 24-year-old's custom-made Hummer was in a collision with an oncoming vehicle in Charlotte, North Carolina on Wednesday. The American put up 11 points and recorded seven rebounds and seven assists in his side's 105-101 loss - but Ball was just thankful to participate. "I'm alive and blessed," he said. "God is great." The front left tyre of Ball's vehicle came off during the accident but nobody suffered any serious

injuries. Ball was spotted being picked up by a black Lamborghini shortly after the accident. Police were on the scene at the time. "Fortunately everybody is cool, so blessings," added Ball. Ball joined the Hornets in 2020, when he was the third pick in the overall draft. In 2021, he was named Rookie of the Year after a standout debut season in North Carolina, while he was named an NBA All-Star in 2022. In November 2024, Ball was fined \$100,000 (£79,000) by the NBA for making an "offensive and derogatory" homophobic comment during a court-side interview.

"Almost The Dhawans": Shikhar Dhawan Posts 'Sangeet Night' Photo With Fiancee Sophie Shine

Shikhar Dhawan, former Indian cricket team star, posted photos from his Sangeet night with fiancée Sophie Shine on Thursday. "Sangeet night. Almost the Dhawans," Dhawan wrote on Instagram. He had confirmed his engagement to Sophie in January. "From shared smiles to shared dreams. Grateful for the love, the blessings, and every good wish for our engagement as we choose togetherness forever - Shikhar & Sophie," he had written in an Instagram post then. The wedding ceremony is likely to take place in the Delhi-NCR region, with big names from both the cricketing world and Bollywood expected to attend. Preparations for the lavish event are already underway.



Reports suggest that Sophie worked as a product consultant and holds a degree in Marketing and Management

from the Limerick Institute of Technology. While cricketing celebrities are often linked with personalities from the

world of social media and entertainment, Sophie's case is quite different. The Ireland-born professional has an impressive academic background at Castleroy College, along with credentials that can impress anyone. She currently serves as Second Vice President at Northern Trust Corporation, based in Abu Dhabi. Sophie completed all her education in Ireland. She now heads the Shikhar Dhawan Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Da One Sports. Sophie has close to 367,000 followers on Instagram and has been posting pictures and videos with Shikhar for a while now. She has been spotted with Dhawan on multiple occasions, watching cricket matches with the former India opening batter.

USA SUPERSTAR LIU WINS WOMEN'S SKATING OLYMPIC GOLD



American superstar Alysa Liu added Olympic figure skating gold to her world title as she beat a standout field in the women's final. Liu came into the free skate in third place following a couple of errors in the short program, but produced a performance for the ages. Appropriately wearing a sparkly gold dress and performing to Donna Summer, she scored a staggering 150.20 in her free skate. It pushed her to the top of the leaderboard with an overall score of 226.79, narrowly beating Japan's Kaori Sakamoto - who Liu beat to the world title last year. Sakamoto, in her final performance before retirement, won silver with 17-year-old compatriot Ami Nakai claiming bronze. Japan's Mone Chiba finished fourth, ahead of Amber Glenn - who rose from 13th to fifth after an excellent free skate - while Russian champion Adelina Petrosian came sixth following a fall. Liu, 20, becomes the first American Olympic champion in women's figure skating since Sarah Hughes in 2002,

and the first USA medallist since Sasha Cohen in 2006. She was playing catch up on Nakai - leader after the short program - and Sakamoto after Tuesday night following a mistake on her triple lutz where she failed to fully rotate in the element. But there were no mistakes here with a truly showstopping routine that drew deafening cheers from the crowd. It was a much needed boost for the USA, as their only gold in singles figure skating following Ilija Malinin's collapse in the men's event. Malinin was among those in the crowd who gave Liu - the alt girl with her iconic halo hair and lip piercing - a standing ovation as she wrote herself into Olympic folklore. "My family is out there, my friends are out there. I had to put on a show for them," she said. "When I see other people smiling, because I see them in the audience, I have to smile, too. I have no poker face." It completes a remarkable comeback for Liu, who previously quit the sport aged 16 after missing out on a medal at Beijing 2022.



Hodgkinson smashes women's indoor 800m world record

JOSE MOURINHO MADE 'UNACCEPTABLE, HUGE MISTAKE' - KOMPANY

Jose Mourinho made a "huge mistake" with his "unacceptable" post-match comments after the alleged racist abuse of Real Madrid winger Vinicius Jr, says Bayern Munich boss Vincent Kompany. The Brazil forward scored the only goal in Real Madrid's 1-0 Champions League win against Benfica on Tuesday. Vinicius was booked for his goal celebration and the match was halted for 10 minutes shortly afterwards when the player reported alleged racist abuse from Benfica winger Gianluca Prestianni. Uefa has since opened an investigation into the claims, which Prestianni denies. Speaking after the match, Benfica boss Mourinho - who was sent off late in the game for arguing with the referee - said Vinicius had been "disrespectful" with his goal celebration and pointed to the



club's legendary striker Eusebio as proof that Benfica is not a racist club. On Friday, Kompany spoke passionately and emotionally for more than 10 minutes when asked about Mourinho's comments at his pre-match news conference before Bayern's game with Eintracht Frankfurt on Saturday. "After the game you have leader of an organisation, Jose Mourinho, who basically attacks the character of

Vinicius Jr by bringing in the type of celebration to discredit what Vinicius is doing in this moment," added Kompany, who answered in English "so I can be a bit clearer about what I'm saying". "For me, in terms of leadership, it's a huge mistake and it's something that we should not accept." Kompany was also critical of Mourinho for using Eusebio's name as supposed proof that Benfica is not a racist club.

"Do you know what black players had to go through in the 1960s?" added the former Manchester City captain and Burnley boss. "Was he (Mourinho) there to travel with Eusebio to every away game? Probably at the time the only option they had was to be quiet, to say nothing, be above it and to be 10 times better in order to get a little bit of credit for people to say 'actually, he is good'. "That was Eusebio's life." Kompany, who also spoke about racial abuse he experienced as a player, said talk of Vinicius' celebration should not distract from the player's immediate response to Prestianni's alleged remarks. "I'm just thinking when Jose Mourinho is doing the knee slide at Old Trafford, when he does his celebration in front of the [Barcelona] fans in the Champions League semi-final with Inter Milan.

FOUR TEENAGERS CHARGED AFTER DRIVE-BY SHOOTING OF UTAI



New South Wales Police has charged four teenagers over the drive-by shooting of former NRL player Matt Utai and the alleged arson attacks targeting his family in Sydney. Utai sustained gunshot wounds to his leg and shoulder during a drive-by shooting in Sydney suburb Greenacre on Tuesday. A 16-year-old boy and a 19-year-old man have both been charged with "accessory after the fact to shoot at with intent to murder". A 18-year-old and another 19-year-old have both been charged with damaging property by fire, while the latter was also charged with supplying prohibited drugs. Utai, 44, remains in a serious condition after undergoing surgery for his injuries. Police said the shots had been fired from a white SUV, which was later found burned out in nearby Wiley Park. On Wednesday, police attended a further incident after shots were fired at a house in St Clair. A woman in her

50s was at home but was not injured. A short time after they found a car on fire in Colyton and later the same day a house and vehicle were found ablaze in Guildford West. New South Wales Police department said a task force was assembled to investigate the incidents - all of which are believed to have been targeting the same family. On Thursday, police executed six search warrants - during which they seized three vehicles, 1kg of cocaine and knuckle dusters - and made four arrests. The 16-year-old boy was refused bail and will appear at a children's court on Friday 20 February. The two 19-year-old males were refused bail, while the 18-year-old man was granted conditional bail. Utai played for Canterbury Bulldogs and Wests Tigers during his domestic rugby league career and won caps for New Zealand and Samoa. Police say Utai is not suspected of any wrongdoing.

Theaters rock with entertainment at Hey Balwanth: Film unit at Successmeet

Hilarious entertainer 'Hey Balwanth' is made by promising protagonist Suhas and Shivani Nagaram. Directed by Gopi Acchara, this film was produced by B. Narendra Reddy under the banner of Trishul Visionary Studios. The successful duo of Bunnyvas and Vamsi Nandipati brought this film to the audience under the banners of Nandipati Entertainments and Bunny Vas Works. This film, which was released in front of the audience on Friday 20th of this month, will be hailed by the audience as a hilarious entertainer and will be praised by the critics, and it will be a blockbuster talk. In this context Vamsi Nandipati said that wherever the shows were performed, there was an excellent response. It collected up to 100k for the premieres in overseas. Very positive. Premieres in Telugu states are full. Matinee collections have increased as compared to morning. For those who are under a lot of stress, Hey Balwanth movie is like medicine and it will ease the mind very comfortably. Everyone is enjoying watching it with their families. You get the feeling of watching a good movie. He said he hopes to break even this weekend. Director Gopi said thanks for everyone's support. Good response is coming from paid premieres. Everyone is appreciating



it as a fantastic movie. Everyone smiles and says that they are relaxing. Collections are also growing. I definitely hope that the audience will appreciate the film more', he said. Producer Narendra Reddy said, "The response is very good. I am happy that everyone who has seen it says it is a good movie. Our banner said this is a blockbuster film. Actress Sravanti.. Everyone is not only laughing hilariously but also feeling emotional. Everyone watch the movie in theaters and enjoy. Said. Actor Sudarshan

said theaters are rocking with hilarious comedy. After watching the response of the movie, we slept happily. Families are enjoying the movie very much. Those who have not seen it said they want to see the movie in theaters. Heroine Shivani said that she is happy to come before the audience once again with a good movie. Watch with all the families. Everyone is enjoying the movie. They are laughing happily. Hero Suhas said it was the biggest opening in Knockerrir. I can't believe the collec-

tions. Everyone is laughing and watching the movie. He said that Ranu Ranu collections are increasing. Naresh said, "I am happy to see the premiere theatrical experience. Such an experience is very rare in my career. I saw theaters swaying with laughter. No one is sitting in the seats. Getting up and falling down laughing. Seeing the joy of the audience brought tears to my eyes. I have not seen the audience give a standing ovation in the theater when the famous scenes of

Same Time ended with an emotional scene of a quarter of an hour. It is a complete family entertainer. Showku Showku collections are increasing. I am enjoying this success very much. The response of this movie is less than the buzz. I could not bear the joy of watching the movie and kissed the director and hero Suhas. Everyone should watch this rare movie. I will never get a film like this again, a role like this. The director has made a blockbuster movie with a new concept', he said.

Havish, Trinadha Rao Nakkina, Nikhila Koneru, Harnix India LLP complete shooting of 'Nenu Redi'



Young hero Havish is teaming up with blockbuster director Trinadha Rao Nakkina for a complete entertainer called 'Nenu Redi'. Produced by Nikhila Koneru under the banner of Harnix India LLP, the film stars Kavya Thapar as the female lead opposite Havish. The film has already created a good buzz with its posters, title and teaser glimpses. The shooting of this film was completed today. Yesterday, the climax was shot at Ramoji Film City. The entire shooting was completed today. The film turned out very amazing. This movie is a marked out and out entertainer directed by Trinadha Rao. "Nenu Redi" is being prepared to entertain all sections of the audience. Nenu Reddy is going to be

Highlights

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a wonderful entertaining film in the career of hero Havish. The makers will kick start the promotions soon after the shooting is completed. In this movie, a prominent cast like Brahmanandam, Vennela Kishore, Murali Sharma, Srilakshmi, GTV Ganesh, Rohini, and Hariteja are ready to make the audi-

ence laugh. It is a special moment that 'Nenu Redi' has such a good star cast in recent times. Star composer Mickey J Meyer has composed the chartbuster album for this film. Nizar Shafi is working as the DVP and Praveen Pudi is working as the editor. The film is set to hit the screens this summer.

PADDINGTON BEAR SET TO ATTEND AND PRESENT AT BAFTA FILM AWARDS

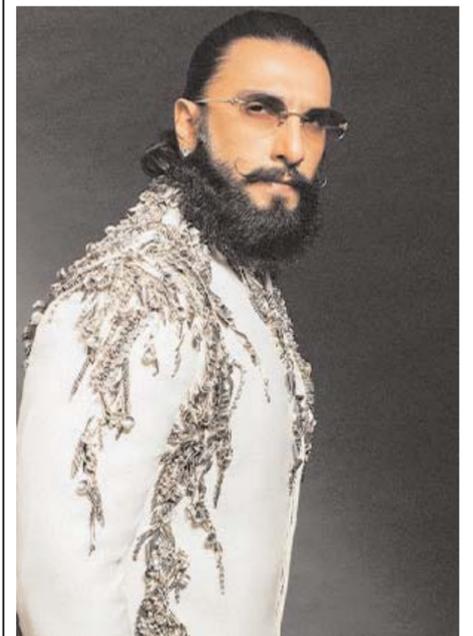


AYYAPPA SHARMA CHANGES HIS LOOK AFTER 14 YEARS

Tollywood character actor Pudipeddi Ayyappa Sharma has become a hot topic on social media with his new makeover. After a long gap of nearly 14 years, he has changed his signature style, which has now become a major talking point in industry circles. Known for always appearing with long hair and a thick beard in a rugged look, the actor has now gone clean-shaven and looks like a perfect police officer. He took this bold decision for the Kannada film 'Pabbar', in which he is playing a powerful SP (Superintendent of Police) role. Having maintained the same image for more than a decade, Ayyappa Sharma did not hesitate to completely transform his visual appeal to meet the character's demands. Fans are loving his new look. Looking at his career graph, his villain roles have always stood out. He particularly excelled in rural dramas and faction-based films. His intense eyes and commanding voice earned him a separate fan base. With his unique mannerisms, he not only frightened audiences but also impressed them in every film. While his past roles were remarkable, this new police role is on another level. The actor, who left his mark even in big films like KGF, now appears in a police uniform with a next-level screen presence.



Ranveer Singh threat case: Lawrence Bishnoi gang demands Rs 10 crore



Mumbai: In a fresh development in the case, Bollywood star Ranveer Singh reportedly received a threat from the Bishnoi gang, which demanded Rs 10 crore through a voice note sent to his manager from an American number. A senior Mumbai Police official said the crime branch is contacting the concerned agency in the United States through official protocol to obtain details about the number. During its probe, the Mumbai crime branch found that one of the Bishnoi gang's close aides, Harry Boxer, reportedly sent the voice note threatening Ranveer Singh and demanding Rs 10 crore as extortion. In the preliminary investigation, the crime branch confirmed that the voice note received on Ranveer Singh's manager's WhatsApp bore Harry Boxer's voice. Officials are

currently gathering further evidence in the case. According to the crime branch, the voice note was sent after the firing incident at filmmaker Rohit Shetty's residence. The threat was sent to Ranveer's manager's mobile number following the firing at Rohit Shetty's house. After the threat surfaced, security around Ranveer Singh was tightened. The crime branch has recorded the statement of his manager and is continuing the investigation. Police have not yet registered an FIR in the matter, but have initiated a preliminary inquiry. On the professional front, Ranveer will soon be seen in the sequel to the blockbuster Dhurandhar. Titled 'Dhurandhar: The Revenge', the film is slated to release on March 19. Dhurandhar also stars R. Madhavan, Akshaye Khanna, Sanjay Dutt, and Arjun Rampal.

Yash's Toxic teaser released: Fans say 'Dhurandhar 2 is in danger'

Hderabad: Yash's upcoming film Toxic: A Fairytale for Grown-Ups has created a storm online after the release of its teaser. The intense visuals and action-packed sequences have generated massive buzz, especially with Yash in the lead role.

The film is set for a major box office clash with Ranveer Singh's Dhurandhar 2 on March 19, 2026, creating a highly anticipated competition. The teaser has sparked excitement among Yash's fans, with many praising the scale and action of the film. Comments like "Dhurandhar is in danger" and "Rs 2000 crore loading" flooded the internet. However, not everyone is impressed. Some fans of Dhurandhar 2 argue that Toxic is relying too much on style and swag, while Dhurandhar 2 offers a more grounded narrative that the teaser for Toxic lacks substance, with one

comment stating, "This is not even one and a half of Dhurandhar 2's teaser." The Toxic teaser opens with dark visuals and quick shots of Raya, played by Yash, who refuses to back down, even when warned about a more dangerous enemy. The teaser features brutal action, with graphic scenes of fights, beatings, and shattered bones, making it clear that mercy is not an option. The film's antagonist, portrayed by Malayalam actor Tovino Thomas, enters the frame with a direct challenge, saying, "I'm home, Daddy!" Fans are already speculating about a possible double role for Yash, with some hinting that he could be playing both a father and a son.

DHURANDHAR 2 Dhurandhar 2, starring Ranveer Singh, also has an intense teaser that has been met with positive reactions. However, some fans feel that Toxic is relying too much on style and swag, while Dhurandhar 2 offers a more grounded narrative. The competition is particularly fierce in the Hindi markets, where Dhurandhar 2 is expected to dominate. Both films will be releasing on the same day, making March 19, 2026, a significant date in Indian cinema. While Toxic is expected to perform well in Kannada markets, Dhurandhar 2 seems to have a stronger fan base in the Hindi belt. The box office battle is still to be decided, but the teaser war is already in full swing.

■ THE CLASH WITH

