

23-02-2026  
Total pilgrims: 77,803  
Tonsures: 27,766  
Hundi kanukalu: 4,66CR  
Waiting Compartments: 31

Approx. Darsan Time for Sarvadarshanam (with out SSD Tokens): 18H

'SURRENDER' MODI:  
RAHUL SAYS PM SLIPPED TO ISRAEL AMID US TRADE ROW

New Delhi: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday, February 25, took a swipe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying it has been more than 24 hours since he challenged the PM to scrap the India-US interim trade deal. In a post in Hindi on X, Gandhi said, "Narendra 'Surrender' Modi, it's been more than 24 hours since I challenged you to cancel the US Trade Deal — and once again, you've quietly slipped off to Israel."



US TRADE ROW

TRUMP'S THEATRICAL STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS OFFERS LITTLE HINT OF ANY CHANGE IN COURSE



WORLD NEWS

SRI LANKA OUT OF WORLD CUP; NZ WIN BY 61 RUNS



T20 WORLD CUP

IN BRIFS

BRIDE SHOT AT ON WEDDING STAGE BY LOVER IN BIHAR'S BUXAR

BUXAR(BIHAR): A bride was shot at by her alleged lover during the woman's wedding ceremony in Bihar's Buxar district, police said on Wednesday. The incident took place within Chausa police station limits of the district on Tuesday night when 18-year-old Aarti Kumari was on stage with her to-be husband. Talking to reporters, Chausa additional station house officer Chandan Kumar said, "The incident prima facie appears to be linked to a love affair. Aarti was shot in the stomach by the accused while she was standing beside the groom on the wedding stage. Family members and locals rushed the injured bride to Sadar Hospital in Buxar. Doctors later referred her to Varanasi for advanced treatment after her condition was stated to be critical, he said. Kumar said raids are underway to arrest the suspect. In her statement to police, the victim identified the shooter as her neighbour, Deenbandhu. Family members alleged that the accused was in a one-sided love with her and had earlier objected to the marriage.

Sudden rains in Telangana destroy crops, leave farmers in despair

Hyderabad: Untimely rains in Telangana caused a heavy blow to red chilli farmers, who woke up on Tuesday, February 24, to a devastating sight of their crops completely soaked and ruined. Of the many visuals that have surfaced is a heart-rending video of an elderly farmer couple — Banoth Anki and Laxma Naik — from Mahabubabad district, trying hard to dry their soaked crops with their bare hands. "What should we do now? We toiled hard, waking early, going hungry for days, only to be ruined by the rains. How will we survive now? What should we do, Oh Lord! Please tell us," a helpless Anki says as she attempts to dry their soaked crop. The couple had taken five acre of agricultural land on lease and invested around Rs 5 lakh. They were growing chilli crop on four acre and paddy on the remaining land.

CM Revanth, Adobe CEO discuss 'Telangana Rising 2047' vision

Shantanu Narayen and Revanth Reddy discussed the steps to be taken by the state government on global trends and the opportunities in investments.

Hyderabad (TSIT): Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Wednesday, February 25, emphasised that constructive plans needed to be envisaged to invite investments from noted global companies and promote the state as a manufacturing hub. In a meeting with Adobe Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Telangana Rising 2047 vision board member Shantanu Narayen, who made a courtesy visit to the CM at the latter's residence in Hyderabad, Revanth Reddy stressed that the state government needed to prepare new plans and act aggressively to attract huge global investments. Narayan and Reddy discussed the steps to be taken by the state government on global trends and the opportunities in investments. They shared their



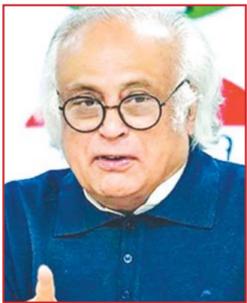
views on global manufacturing, green energy and the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on jobs, skilling and reskilling. The Chief Minister also inquired with Narayan about the impact of the AI revolution

on the economy and the effective use of AI in the coming days. He sought further cooperation from the board member to take Telangana forward on the path of development and bolster the state economy.

Indo-US trade deal one-sided, should be put on hold: Congress

NEW DELHI (TSIT): The Congress on Wednesday said the Indo-US interim trade deal is distinctly one-sided and the only way forward is for India to be bold in putting it on hold, as it will be disastrous for lakhs of farmers across the country. In a post on X, Congress general secretary, communications, Jairam Ramesh said it is quite

extraordinary that the US has just imposed 125.87 per cent duty on imports of solar modules from India. "What does this say of President Trump's commitment in letter and spirit to the India-US trade deal, so much praised and applauded by his good friend in New Delhi as opening doors for India's exports to the US?," he asked.



US imposes 126 % countervailing duty on Indian solar panels along with South East Asian countries

NEW DELHI/WASHINGTON (TSIT): The US Department of Commerce has announced preliminary countervailing duties on solar panel imports from India, Indonesia, and Laos, aimed at what it describes as offsetting subsidies provided by these countries to their producers. Preliminary duty rates have been set at 125.87 per cent for India, 104.38 per cent for Indonesia, and 80.67 per cent for Laos. U.S. Customs will begin collecting cash deposits based on these preliminary rates.

The duties follow petitions filed on July 17, 2025, by the Alliance for American Solar Manufacturing and Trade, representing domestic solar panel producers. The petitions claimed that imports of crystalline silicon photovoltaic cells, whether or not assembled into modules, from the three countries were being sold in the US at less than fair value (LTFV) and were causing, or threatening, material injury to the domestic solar industry. The petitions included countervailing duty requests and were



accompanied by supplementary information submitted between July 21 and August 4, 2025, records revealed. The action follows findings by the US International Trade Commission in August 2025 that imports from India, Indonesia, and Laos had caused material injury to the domestic industry. The US Commerce department's review used import data from India's most recent fiscal year and 2024 calendar-year data for Indonesia and Laos.

Preliminary anti-dumping duty determinations are scheduled for

April, with final combined duty rates expected in September. A final injury determination by the International Trade Commission is set for October, after which Customs will collect the final tariffs. Shares of Indian solar equipment makers plunged on Wednesday after the United States imposed preliminary duties on imports from India, Indonesia, and Laos. Makers were hit hard in early trading, with Waaree Energies and Premier Energies tumbling around 15 per cent, while Vikram Solar fell nearly 8 per cent before partially recovering some losses.

L&T bags major power transmission project orders in India, West Asia

Mumbai (TSIT) Larsen & Toubro (L&T) officially announced here today its Power Transmission & Distribution (PT&D) vertical has won a batch of engineering, procurement and construction orders aimed at strengthening electricity grid systems in domestic as well as international markets in West Asia (Middle East).

The newly announced contracts fall under the "major" classification, which, according to L&T's order classification table, means projects which are valued anywhere between Rs 5,000 crore and Rs 10,000 crore. The scope of the orders covers establishing key grid system elements designed to enhance transmission capacity and network reliability, according to the company's official statement. In India, L&T has received an order for the design, supply and construction of two 220 KV Gas Insulated Substations in the Durgapur-Raniganj-Asansol industrial belt located in West Bengal. The West Bengal project also includes associated transmission line segments equipped with advanced conductors and multi-circuit towers, the statement mentioned.

MILAN 2026 Concludes Grandly Aboard INS Vikrant off Visakhapatnam Coast



Visakhapatnam (TSIT): The 13th edition of the prestigious multilateral maritime exercise 'MILAN 2026', organised by the Indian Navy, concluded grandly on Wednesday with a spectacular closing ceremony held on the deck of the indigenous aircraft carrier INS Vikrant. Rear Admiral Alok Anand, Flag Officer Commanding Eastern Fleet, presided over the ceremony, marking a significant milestone in maritime cooperation and security. A total of 75 friendly foreign nations participated in this edition of MILAN, conducted under the motto "Camaraderie, Cohesion, and Collaboration." The exercise was held from February 19 to 25 in two phases — the Harbour Phase (February 19-20) and the Sea Phase (February 21-25).

During the Harbour Phase, participating navies engaged in Subject Matter Expert Exchanges (SMEE), young officer interactions, and cross-deck visits. Sports and cultural programmes were also organised to foster camaraderie and mutual trust among naval personnel from different countries. The Sea Phase witnessed advanced combat drills and high-intensity maritime operations. A total of 40 ships and 29 aircraft took part, including 18 ships and

5 aircraft from foreign navies. Key manoeuvres included Anti-Submarine Warfare exercises, Air Defence operations, and Over-the-Horizon Targeting drills. A major highlight was the air defence demonstration featuring MiG-29K fighter jets operating from INS Vikrant. Precision gunnery firing was carried out to engage targets at sea, while mid-sea refuelling of foreign vessels was successfully executed by the fleet tanker INS Shakti. Officials stated that MILAN 2026 achieved new heights not only in scale but also in professional standards. Naval officers expressed satisfaction over the seamless coordination among participating nations, emphasising that such joint exercises play a crucial role in strengthening international maritime security. The exercise was aligned with India's MAHASAGAR vision — Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR). Foreign delegates at the closing ceremony commended the Indian Navy for its meticulous planning, professional excellence, and warm hospitality. MILAN 2026 has further reinforced cooperation and mutual understanding among partner nations in addressing shared maritime challenges and ensuring safe global sea lanes.

NAGARKURNOOL BABY DEATH:

KTR demands murder charges against perpetrators

Hyderabad (TSIT): Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) working president KT Rama Rao on Wednesday, February 25, strongly condemned the killing of a two-month-old infant during Kummera Mallanna Jatar in Telangana's Nagarkurnool district and demanded action against the perpetrators irrespective of their party affiliation. Stating that the entire Telangana society has bowed its head in grief and anguish over the inhuman tragedy, he asserted that anyone who stands by the killers of the innocent child is unquestionably guilty.



KTR visited Kummera village in Nagarkurnool district and consoled the family of the

deceased child. He met leaders and activists from various sections who have been protesting for justice and expressed solidarity with the victim's family.

The incident occurred on February 18 when the family, belonging to the OBC, was alleg-

edly denied entry to the temple and was attacked by a few persons. The child sustained critical injuries and was rushed to a hospital, but succumbed on February 21. The BRS leader said that it is absolutely wrong for anyone, whether Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, the local MLA, or the local MP, to support those responsible for taking the life of the child.

Demanding strict action, KTR stated that irrespective of who the perpetrators are or which party they belong to, they must be sent to jail. He specifically demanded that murder charges be filed against the eight accused involved in the attack and that they be arrested immediately.

Those in high constitutional office must not target communities, says SC

New Delhi (TSIT) The Supreme Court has observed that it is constitutionally impermissible for anyone, including State and non-State actors, to vilify or denigrate any community through speeches, memes, cartoons or visual art.

The apex court emphasised that this mandate becomes even more critical when individuals holding high constitutional posts, such as ministers, engage in such conduct. "Cultivating a sense of brotherhood and respecting fellow citizens irrespective of caste, religion or language is a constitutional dharma each one of us must follow," Justice Ujjal Bhuyan observed.



THE TOP COURT SAID THIS RULE BECOMES EVEN MORE IMPORTANT WHEN PEOPLE HOLDING HIGH CONSTITUTIONAL POSTS, SUCH AS MINISTERS, BEHAVE IN SUCH A WAY.

These remarks come days after a bench led by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant dismissed a petition seeking an

FIR against Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma for alleged hate speech. The court had directed the petitioners to approach the Gauhati High Court with their grievances.

The matter gained traction following the release of a now-deleted video by the state Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) unit, which purportedly showed the Chief Minister pointing a gun at two men from the Muslim community. While Sarma maintained he was unaware of the video and asserted that his remarks remained within the constitutional framework, the court's observations highlighted the specific responsibilities of public office holders.

MODI, NETANYAHU HAVE 'PRODUCTIVE MEETING', REVIEW FULL SPECTRUM OF BILATERAL RELATIONS

Tel Aviv/New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu held a "productive meeting" and reviewed the full spectrum of the India-Israel bilateral relations. The two leaders discussed expanding cooperation in areas such as water management, agriculture, technology and more, the Prime Minister's Office said.

"Had an excellent meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu. Expressed gratitude to him for the warm welcome earlier in the day. It is a delight to be back in Israel after 9 years. We discussed a wide range of subjects aimed at boosting bilateral ties. Sectors such as



technology, water management, agriculture, talent partnership and more offer immense scope for close collaboration.

We also discussed key developments in the region," Prime Minister Modi said on X. On his arrival, the Prime Minister said he is "extremely honoured" to be received by Prime Minister Netanyahu and Mrs Netanyahu at the airport.

# NCERT pulls chapter on 'judicial corruption' after CJI rebuke

**NEW DELHI:** Chief Justice of India Surya Kant on Wednesday strongly objected to a chapter on judicial corruption in the NCERT's Class 8 social science curriculum, prompting the syllabus-setting body to withdraw the contentious textbook from its website.

A three-judge bench comprising the CJI and justices Joydip Chatterjee and Vipul M Pancholi took suo motu cognizance of the "objectionable" statements about the judiciary in the new textbook after senior advocate Kapil Sibal, alongside Abhishek Singhvi, mentioned the matter for urgent consideration. The NCERT (National Council of Educational Research and Training) social science textbook for Class 8 says corruption, a massive backlog of cases, and the lack of an adequate number of judges are among the challenges faced by the

judicial system. After stern words by the Supreme Court that it will not allow "anyone on earth" to tarnish the judiciary's integrity, the NCERT pulled the textbook from its website, with sources saying the government was livid with the controversial references in the curriculum.

The council, responsible for school education curriculum, is also considering the removal of the controversial portions from the books already printed, sources said. Several schools in the national capital, however, said they had no directive yet about whether or not to teach the portions in question. The NCERT is said to have called an internal meeting to review the recommendations of the subject experts involved in the chapter and the officials who approved it. NCERT Chairman Dinesh Prasad



Saklani did not respond to calls and messages on the issue. Another top official at the council refused to comment, saying the matter was sub judice.

The government sources said while the NCERT is an autonomous body, the officials responsible for adding chapters should

have applied their minds. If the issue of corruption was to be included in the textbook, it should have been about all three organs (the executive, the legislature and the judiciary), they said. "We are very disturbed as members of this institution to find that children of Class 8 are being

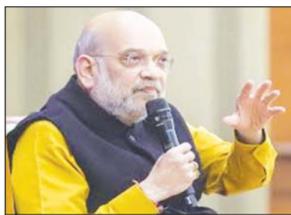
taught about corruption in the judiciary. It is part of the NCERT book. We have great stake in the institution... it (the chapter) is entirely scandalous. We have the copies of the book," Sibal said in court. "I can assure you all that I am fully aware of this," the CJI said, adding that he received various calls and messages and many high court judges were "perturbed". When Sibal said he hoped the bench would take suo motu cognizance, the CJI said, "Wait for a day. This is definitely concerning the entire institution. The bar and the bench are perturbed. Every stakeholder in the system is really perturbed. I am receiving a lot of calls and messages. There are judges of the high courts who are perturbed." The CJI told Sibal he had already passed an order taking suo motu

cognizance of the issue. "I will not allow anyone on earth to taint the integrity of the institution and defame the institution. At any cost, I will not permit it. However high it may be, the law will take its course. I know how to deal with it," a visibly irked CJI said. Singhvi raised the issue of the NCERT adopting a selective approach and said it presumed that "there was no corruption elsewhere. There was not a word about corruption in bureaucracy, politics, public life and other institutions". "It seems to be a very calculated and deep-rooted measure to... we don't want to say anything more... I am aware and I have done my duty," the CJI said and thanked the lawyers for raising the issue. Justice Bagchi referred to the basic structure doctrine and said

"constitutional integrity to the basic structure is missing in the contents of the textbook". The book pegs the approximate number of pending cases in the Supreme Court at 81,000, in high courts at 62.40 lakh, and in district and subordinate courts at 4.70 crore. It highlights the judiciary's internal accountability mechanisms and refers to the established procedure for receiving complaints through the Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System. According to the book, over 1,600 complaints were received through this mechanism between 2017 and 2021. The textbook also quotes former Chief Justice of India BR Gavai, who in July 2025 said that instances of corruption and misconduct within the judiciary had a negative impact on public confidence.

## Shah in Bihar on three-day visit; review of 'demography change' on agenda

**PURNEA:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah arrived in Bihar on Wednesday for a three-day tour during which he is expected to attend several functions in the strategically located Seemanchal region, besides reviewing "demographic changes" in the area. During the day, he chaired a meeting of the Land Ports Authority of India, a statutory body functioning under the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, which is responsible for creating, upgrading, maintaining and managing border infrastructure. After Shah reached Purnea airport, he was welcomed by senior BJP leaders like Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai, Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary and state party president Sanjay Saraogi. Photographs of the occasion were shared on the X handle of the "Office of Amit Shah" with the remark "Union Home Minister Amit Shah reached Purnea for a three-day Bihar tour. He is likely to dedicate to the nation border outposts, lay foundation stones for projects of the Sashastra Seema Bal and attend meetings to review demographic change". From Purnea, Shah left in a helicopter for Kishanganj, the lone Bihar district



with a Muslim majority population, where, according to the X post, he chaired a meeting of the Land Ports Authority of India. Shah is also likely to hold a meeting with officials of the departments responsible for guarding the porous border with Nepal. "The Union Home Minister is likely to brief officials on measures needed for putting a check on smuggling of drugs and circulation of counterfeit currency along the Indo-Nepal border," DGP Vinay Kumar had said on Tuesday. This is the first Bihar visit of Shah, widely regarded as the BJP's principal strategist, who was last seen in the state capital in November, at the swearing-in ceremony of the new Nityanand Rai cabinet after the NDA's

landslide victory in assembly polls. State minister and former Bihar BJP chief Dilip Jaiswal, who hails from Kishanganj, wrote on X: "It is a matter of pride for us that Amit Shah, the Chanakya of Indian politics, has visited our land". Shah is scheduled to visit the adjoining Araria district on Friday, where he will inspect the Indo-Nepal border, interact with officials of Sashastra Seema Bal, and also inaugurate a newly constructed "SSB Bhawan". He will wind up his Bihar tour on Friday with a visit to Purnea, from where he is scheduled to board his return flight. "Union Home Minister Amit Shah's tour of Seemanchal is a decisive step in the direction of strengthening national security. It is a strategically important region, by virtue of its proximity to Nepal and Bangladesh and presents challenges with regard to maintaining an intelligence network and demographic balance," state BJP spokesperson Prem Ranjan Patel said in a statement. Located in the north-eastern extreme of Bihar, Seemanchal is a densely populated, but flood-prone and impoverished area, situated close to the border with Nepal and West Bengal.

## Rahul on compromised mission, has links with pro-Pak elements: Nitin Nabin

**PATNA:** BJP president Nitin Nabin on Wednesday launched a blistering attack on Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, accusing him of undertaking foreign visits without informing central security agencies, and having close links with "anti-India and pro-Pakistan" elements. Nabin charged Gandhi, the Leader of Opposition, with being on a "compromised mission" that began with his great grandfather and first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and "continued through generations". The BJP president's comments come amid a row over the Indian Youth Congress activists staging a shirtless protest at the AI Summit in Delhi last week, with the slogan "PM is compromised", an allusion to the proposed trade deal with the US allegedly under pressure from the Donald Trump adminis-



tration. "Today, I wish to expose the compromised mission of the Nehru-Gandhi family, which has traded national interests for personal gains. I wish to expose Rahul Gandhi, who is trutting about like a babbar sher (lion)," the 45-year-old Bihar MLA, who was made the BJP president a month ago, told reporters. Nabin raked up Nehru's alleged reference to the country's burgeoning population as a "liability" and

the defeat in the 1962 war with China, and charged Indira Gandhi with "giving up Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, after defeating Pakistan in 1971" as examples of the "compromised mission". He also alleged that Rajiv Gandhi, the father of Rahul and a former Prime Minister, had made use of the Bofors gun deal to "fatten up his personal bank balance". "The compromised mission continued under Rahul's mother Sonia Gandhi,

who functioned as a 'super prime minister' from 2004 to 2014, compromising the authority of the top constitutional post," the BJP president asserted. Nabin slammed Rahul Gandhi for "undertaking 247 foreign visits, without informing security agencies back home". "All this has been a part of Rahul Gandhi's compromised mission," said Nabin who also accused the Rae Bareilly MP of having close links with "anti-India, pro-Pakistan and China" elements abroad, including billionaire George Soros, US Congress member Ihan Omar and Kenyan financier Shaker Merali. "Rahul Gandhi is a poster boy of negative politics. But the people of the country, especially the youth, have seen through his game and they will not be misled by his rhetoric," Nabin added.

## 'Shirtless' protest: Court extends police custody of 5 arrested IYC workers by 4 days

**NEW DELHI:** A court here on Wednesday extended by four days the police custody of five Indian Youth Congress (IYC) workers who were arrested in connection with holding a 'shirtless' protest at the AI Impact Summit at Bharat Mandapam. Arguing that the incident was not spontaneous but executed after prior planning, the Delhi Police said that the initial probe revealed structured allocation of roles, concealment tactics and coordinated post-incident movement. It, however, said that the entire conspiracy, including its hierarchy, funding and inter-state coordination, needed to be unearthed. Chief Judicial Magistrate Mridul Gupta extended the custodial interrogation after hearing the arguments by the public prosecutor and counsel for the accused persons. The Delhi Police sought an extension of the custodial interrogation by five days. These accused include Krishna Hari, national secretary of the Youth Congress from Bihar; Kundan Yadav, state general secretary of Bihar; Ajay Kumar Singh, state vice-president of east Uttar Pradesh; and Narasimha Yadav, national coordinator of IYC from Telangana, who were arrested



after the protest inside an exhibition hall at the summit on February 20. Jitendra Yadav, another national coordinator of the IYC and who was arrested on February 22 in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, was also produced in court. The magistrate extended his police custody. In its plea for extension of remand, the Delhi Police said, "Investigation conducted till date has revealed that the incident was not spontaneous but executed pursuant to prior planning, coordination and structured strategy among the accused persons." The application said that during ini-

tial interrogation, it "emerged that the protest was executed pursuant to structured planning, allocation of roles, concealment tactics and coordinated post-incident movement". "However, the entire conspiracy, including its hierarchy, funding and inter-state coordination, is yet to be fully unearthed," it said. The remand paper said that two "key conspirators", IYC president Uday Bhanu Chib and one Bhudev Sharma, were arrested on Tuesday and remanded in police custody till February 28. It sought further police custody re-

mand, saying the five accused persons needed to be confronted with Chib and Sharma to "ascertain the hierarchy within the conspiracy, distribution of roles, planning meetings, decision-making authority and funding/logistical support". "Multiple mobile phones have been seized. Preliminary extraction reveals inter se communications. However, detailed forensic analysis, CDR correlation, location mapping and WhatsApp/Telegram group analysis are in process," the application said. It said that the accused were required to be confronted with technical evidence to "verify authenticity, explain communication patterns and identify other conspirators". "Several co-accused persons, including Manish Sharma (national in-charge of IYC), belonging to different states are still absconding. The present accused are required to disclose their exact identities, whereabouts and role in the conspiracy," the application said. It said that the investigation regarding financial contributions, printing source, accommodation arrangements and travel logistics were on-going and required further custodial interrogation for effective recovery and verification.

## Cross-border drug, weapon smuggling cartel busted: Punjab Police

**CHANDIGARH:** Punjab Police on Wednesday claimed to have busted a cross-border drug and weapons smuggling cartel with the arrest of a person. Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav said the State Special Operations Cell (SSOC), Fazilka, recovered 2.102 kg of heroin, 7 pistols including one Glock 9mm, four pistols of .30 bore, and two pistols of 9mm. The SSOC also seized 10 live cartridges and impounded a motorcycle, which was being used for smuggling the contraband. The accused has been identified as Gurnam Singh alias Gama, a resident of Bhange Wala (Jhugge Kishore Singh Wala) in Ferozepur. A preliminary investigation revealed that the drone-dropped consignment of heroin and weapons was sourced from Pakistan-based smugglers for executing criminal activities

in the state. Further investigations are underway to unravel former drug and backward linkages, he said. Sharing operational details, Assistant Inspector General, SSOC Fazilka, Naresh Kumar Dogra said, based on a tip-off, teams from SSOC Fazilka launched a special operation in the area of Jalalabad and arrested the accused from near Baghe Ke Uttar village in Fazilka, when he was riding his motorcycle. During the search, 2.1 kg of heroin and three pistols were recovered from his possession, he said. The officer added that four pistols were recovered from the location pinpointed by the accused. An FIR has been registered under relevant sections of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act and the Arms Act at Fazilka SSOC police station, he said.

## Quietly slipped off to Israel after my challenge to scrap US deal: Rahul's dig at PM Modi

**NEW DELHI:** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday took a swipe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying it has been more than 24 hours since he challenged the PM to scrap the India-US interim trade deal and once again, he (Modi) has "quietly slipped off to Israel". In a post in Hindi on X, Gandhi said, "Narendra 'Surrender' Modi, it's been more than 24 hours since I challenged you to cancel the US Trade Deal -- and once again, you've quietly slipped off to Israel." "At least once, you've already 'danced and sung' in Israel at Epstein's behest - so this time, on whose orders will you striking a deal against the country's interests and return?" the leader of opposition in Lok Sabha said. Speaking in Bhopal, Gandhi on Tuesday had said the Indo-US interim trade deal was sealed under pressure and dared Prime Minister Modi to scrap the "anti-farmer" agreement, following the US Supreme Court ruling. Addressing the 'Kisan Mahachaupal' rally, the former Congress chief had described the agreement as "an arrow in the heart of farmers". "After the US Supreme Court ruling on the trade deal (global tariffs), I challenge PM Modi to scrap it if he has courage...but he won't be able to do so," Gandhi had said. In a major setback to Trump's pivotal economic agenda for his second term, the US Supreme Court, in a 6-3 verdict, ruled that the tariffs imposed by the president on nations around the world were illegal and that he had exceeded his authority when he imposed the sweeping levies. Gandhi has alleged that the prime minister approved the agreement under external pressure linked to the threat of releasing "Epstein files" and an ongoing criminal case involving industrialist Gautam Adani in the US.

## India can be called developed only if all get equal opportunity to progress: Murmu

**NAGPUR:** India can be called developed in true sense only if everyone gets an equal opportunity to progress, President Droupadi Murmu said on Wednesday. She was speaking after launching the 'Golden Era of Maharashtra through Unity and Trust' campaign, organised by Brahma Kumaris in Nagpur. "We have to discard negativity and embrace positivity," the President said. She described Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj as an inspirational figure, who fought for justice and freedom. The campaign aims to promote trust, harmony, unity, and respect for human values across Maharashtra. The Brahma Kumaris have outlined eight guiding principles for the initiative, including building an addiction-free society, encouraging sustainable lifestyles, ensuring cleanliness,



strengthening civic responsibility, fostering readiness for humanitarian service, promoting value-based education, advocating a disciplined and pure life through yoga, and working towards a green and sustainable Maharashtra. Governor Acharya Devvrat, state revenue minister Chandrashekhar Bawankule, and senior Brahma Kumaris functionaries were present at the event.

## Ex-branch manager, 3 more nabbed in Rs 590-cr IDFC First Bank case in Haryana

**CHANDIGARH:** Haryana's State Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau has arrested four people, including the masterminds behind the Rs 590-crore IDFC First Bank fraud, officials said on Wednesday. Of the four arrested, two are ex-IDFC First Bank employees and two are private persons who own a partnership firm, they said. The arrests were made on Tuesday evening as part of the ongoing investigation of the IDFC First Bank fraud case, they said. Speaking to the media in Panchkula, ACB director general A S Chawla identified the arrested individuals as Ribhav Rishi, Abhay Kumar, Swati Singla, and Abhishek Singla. While Rishi and Abhay are former employees of the IDFC First Bank, Swati and Abhishek are siblings who ran a firm called the Swastik Desh

Project. Rishi was the head of the bank's Sector 32 branch till six months ago when he left the job. Abhay, the bank's relationship manager, quit the job around August last year, Chawla said. Rishi and Abhay masterminded the fraud, he said. He said that, in all, Rs 300 crore was transferred to the Swastik Desh Project's bank account. The officer said the firm's main owner is Swati Singla, who holds 75 per cent shares in it, while her brother Abhishek Singla holds the remaining 25 per cent. "Swati Singla is Abhay's wife. We have arrested all four," Chawla said. Earlier, the ACB registered an FIR in connection with the fraud, while the state government constituted a committee to probe it. A Special Investigation Team



was constituted under the overall supervision of senior IPS officer Ganga Ram Punia, Chawla said. On Sunday, the IDFC Bank disclosed that a Rs 590-crore fraud was committed by its employees and others in accounts held by the Haryana government. On Tuesday, Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini said in the

Assembly that the government will spare no one involved in the fraud. Leader of Opposition Bhupinder Singh Hooda and Haryana Congress chief Rao Narender Singh have demanded a CBI probe in the matter. On Tuesday, IDFC First Bank said it had paid out 100 per cent of the principal and interest to the defrauded Haryana

government departments, releasing a total of Rs 583 crore. Earlier, Saini, in the Assembly, said that the irregularities were primarily related to the bank's Chandigarh branch and involved alleged collusion at the middle and lower levels. Following an inquiry, the ACB lodged a case under Section 13 (2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, and sections 316(5) (criminal breach of trust) 318(4) (cheating), 336(3) (forgery), 338 (forgery of valuable security), 340(2) (forged document) and 61(2) (criminal conspiracy) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. A committee formed by the director of the development and panchayats department of Haryana recommended a police investigation after uncovering alleged forgery and procedural lapses involving officials from both IDFC First Bank and AU Small Finance Bank.

# Govt will take steps for corruption-free recruitment drive: Shivakumar

Have done it in the past, are doing it now, will do it in the future



Bengaluru : Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar today assured the youth that the government was working on steps to ensure corruption-free recruitment drive.

message soon. We are committed to it." Asked about protest by youth in Dharwad, he said, "Vacant posts could not be filled during the previous BJP rule due to many scams. We understand the pain our youth, hence our government is working on corruption free recruitment drive."

responsibilities to KPSC and other agencies to fill up the positions. There are some obstacles with respect to internal reservations. We brought Yuvanidhi to help the youth," he said.

Metro expansion one of the objectives of the govt Asked about the expansion of metro to 175 km by 2027, he said, "We are conducting a survey regarding this and we will fulfil our promises. I will shortly meet the Union Minister as the Centre is asking for clarifications on double decker flyovers."

Asked about the pending bills in various departments, he said, "During Yediyurappa and Bommai's period, the BJP government had issued more tenders without considering the financial situation. Some contractors are in trouble as they took up work without funds."

# Addressing India's vertigo challenge, NeuroEquilibrium expands specialised clinics in Bengaluru

Bengaluru : In India, nearly six crore people suffer from vertigo and balance disorders, yet many are misdiagnosed or managed only with symptom-suppressing medication instead of addressing the root cause. FutureCure Health Private Limited, a super-specialty healthcare provider, is working to bridge this gap by expanding access to evidence-based care for vertigo and balance disorders through its wholly owned subsidiary, NeuroEquilibrium, which focuses on accurate diagnosis and targeted treatment of these conditions.



Most approaches treat symptoms. NeuroEquilibrium - the world's largest chain of vertigo clinics - identifies the root cause of vertigo - whether in the inner ear, brain, or balance system - so the treatment is targeted, not temporary. Working closely with hospitals, ENT clinics, and neurology centres, NeuroEquilibrium has diagnosed and treated over 150,000 patients, significantly improving long-term outcomes. Dr. Anita Bhandari, Founder, FutureCure Health, added: "Vertigo/dizziness is often misdiagnosed, leaving patients untreated for years. Our work with more than 150,000 patients proves that accurate diagnosis changes outcomes. This funding will help us take specialised vertigo care global." NeuroEquilibrium currently operates 16 clinics in

Bengaluru, covering Hebbal, Sahakar Nagar, Kodigehalli, Malleswaram, Whitefield, Kundalahalli, Kalyan Nagar, Hennur, JP Nagar, Arekere, HSR Layout, Electronic City, and Frazer Town.

FutureCure Health recently raised Rs 104 crore in a completed funding round, led by Carnelian Asset Management LLP and other investors. The fundraising follows an earlier USD 4 million round in 2022 backed by Kotak Alternate Asset Management, RVCF Ventures, and Unicorn India Ventures. Rajneesh Bhandari, Founder, FutureCure Health, said: "This funding has reinforced our conviction that globally relevant healthcare technologies can be built in India. As we scale NeuroEquilibrium across hospitals in India and international markets and expand into chronic lifestyle diseases such as migraine and diabetes, our focus is on using technology to bridge the shortage of specialist doctors. Precise, scalable diagnostics can democratise super-specialty healthcare and act as a true force multiplier for better outcomes."

# Family of Brain-Dead Youth from Mandya Donates Organs, Brings Hope to Six Lives

SUCCESSFUL ORGAN TRANSPLANT AT VICTORIA HOSPITAL'S TRAUMA CARE CENTRE

Bengaluru : In what doctors are calling the noblest of all donations, the family of a young man from Chikka Mandya village in Mandya's Kasaba hobli has turned grief into purpose by consenting to donate their son's organs, giving a new lease of life to several patients. The organ transplant was successfully carried out at the Trauma & Emergency Care Centre (TECC) of Victoria Hospital, Bengaluru, with the government hospital's medical team providing the service at affordable cost to the public.



Medical Superintendent Dr. Deepak and special officer at TECC Dr. Asima Banu while sharing details of the case, commended the dedicated efforts of the Bengaluru Medical College and Research Institute (BMCRI), the Trauma & Emergency Care Centre staff, and the Jeevasarthakate (organ donation facilitation) team.

"We are deeply grateful to the family members who, even in their moment of profound grief, made the noble decision to serve society and brighten others' lives," said Dr Asima & Dr. Deepak.

Darshan, a young man from Chikka Mandya village, fell off his bike on February 22 and sustained injuries. Initially dismissing the fall, he

returned home and went to sleep. When his condition appeared serious, he was rushed to hospital, where doctors discovered severe internal brain hemorrhage.

He was immediately transferred to the TECC at Victoria Hospital, Bengaluru. Despite extensive treatment and tests, he showed no response. After two days, a senior medical panel comprising Dr. Kavya, Dr. Deepak, and Dr. Asima Banu of BMCRI officially declared him brain dead.

Following counseling sessions with the family by the Jeevasarthakate team, the family of Dinesh consented to organ donation — a decision that will live on as a tribute to his memory. Dinesh's liver, kidneys, heart valves, and other organs were retrieved and transplanted into eligible recipients. The hospital's medical team has wholeheartedly applauded the family's courageous and selfless decision.

# 34 LEADING GLOBAL SCIENTISTS WRITE TO MINISTER N.S. BOSERAJU, BACK KARNATAKA'S Q-MINT INITIATIVE

Bengaluru : Karnataka's technology vision has received significant global endorsement, with 34 eminent scientists from some of the world's most prestigious research institutions formally writing to Minister for Science and Technology N.S. Boseraju, expressing strong support for the State's proposed Quantum Materials Innovation Network (Q-MINT). The endorsement emerged during the recent Frontiers in Quantum Condensed Matter Physics (FQCM) international conference held at ICTS-TIFR. In a joint communication, the global scientific community lauded Karnataka's forward-looking proposal to establish Q-MINT as a key pillar of the State's ambitious Quantum City programme. The scientists emphasized that advanced quantum materials form the critical foundation for next-generation breakthroughs in computing, communication and sensing technologies. Welcoming the global backing, Minister Boseraju said the support from 34 leading quantum researchers reaffirms Karnataka's direction in building a world-class innovation ecosystem. "Karnataka has always stood at the forefront of technological progress. This endorsement from globally respected scientists demonstrates that we are on the right path. Through Q-MINT, we aim to create a robust ecosystem for advanced research and manufacturing, laying the foundation for a \$20 billion quantum economy by 2035 while generating employment opportunities and achieving technological self-reliance," he stated. In their recommendations, the scientists advised the State's Science & Technology and IT/BT Departments to establish a centralised Quantum Materials Foundry, develop integrated computational and data science infrastructure, and promote multi-institutional collaboration. They also highlighted the need for phased implementation through confidence-building pilot projects.

# Kumaraswamy Stresses Robust Financing Ecosystem for Construction Equipment Growth

New Delhi: Union Minister for Heavy Industries and Steel, H. D. Kumaraswamy, on Wednesday highlighted the importance of a resilient financing ecosystem in accelerating India's infrastructure and manufacturing ambitions. He was addressing the 6th Annual Construction Equipment Finance Conclave held in the national capital.



Emphasising the theme of the conclave — "Building a Resilient Infrastructure and Construction Equipment Financing Ecosystem: Towards Building Domestic Strength for Global Reach" — the Minister said it aligns strategically with India's rapid economic growth. He noted that India is currently the world's fourth-largest economy and is on track to become the third-largest in the coming years, driven by infrastructure expansion, manufacturing growth and sustained capital investment.

Referring to the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Kumaraswamy stated that the government is not only building roads and bridges but laying the

foundation for Viksit Bharat 2047. He said the Centre's long-term focus includes strengthening industrial capacity along with creating physical infrastructure.

The Minister pointed out that the Union Budget 2026-27 has allocated a historic Rs.12.2 lakh crore towards public capital expenditure, covering highways, railways, logistics corridors, ports, renewable energy infrastructure and urban expansion. He described it as a structural and multi-year push to enhance national development.

Kumaraswamy also spoke about the proposed Scheme for

Enhancement of Construction & Infrastructure Equipment (CIE), being steered by the Ministry of Heavy Industries, aimed at boosting domestic manufacturing of high-value and technologically advanced construction equipment. The initiative, he said, will help manufacturers scale operations, innovate confidently and compete in global markets. According to industry estimates cited by the Minister, the Indian construction equipment market is currently valued at around \$9.5 billion and is expected to more than double by 2030. The sector recorded sales of over 1.4 lakh units in FY25 and aims to reach a \$25-billion market size by the end of the decade.

Highlighting technological advancements, Kumaraswamy said automation, AI-enabled fleet management, predictive maintenance, and electric and hybrid equipment are transforming the sector. Government initiatives such as PM E-DRIVE are also supporting the transition towards cleaner and sustainable industrial growth.

# Hi Life Brides Brings Exclusive Bridal Showcase to Bengaluru

Bengaluru: The city's most awaited bridal showcase, Hi Life Brides, is all set to offer an extraordinary wedding shopping experience on February 27 and 28 at the iconic Taj West End. Positioned as a one-stop destination for brides-to-be, Hi Life Brides promises an exclusive collection of breathtaking bridal couture, exquisite fine jewellery, trousseau essentials, and curated wedding inspirations. The showcase will feature renowned designers and premium brands, bringing together the latest trends and timeless classics under one roof. From elegant wedding ensembles to statement jewellery and must-have accessories, the exhibition aims to make bridal shopping seamless and memorable. Brides and their families can explore a wide range of collections tailored to different tastes, traditions, and contemporary styles. With its luxurious setting and carefully curated exhibitors, Hi Life Brides offers not just shopping but a



complete wedding planning experience. For those embarking on their wedding journey, the event promises inspiration, exclusivity, and unforgettable finds—all beginning at Hi Life Brides.

# Flood Management Committee Constituted for Comprehensive Urban Flood Action Plan - D.S. Ramesh

Bengaluru: In order to prevent water logging during the monsoon season within the jurisdiction of the Bengaluru East City Corporation, a Flood Management Committee has been constituted to implement comprehensive urban flood management measures. Additionally, a Road Restoration Committee has been formed to ensure quality restoration of roads cut by various departments and agencies for development and public service works, informed Commissioner D.S. Ramesh.



**Flood Management Committee** Considering the increasing incidents of urban flooding caused by rapid urbanization, obstruction to smooth flow of rainwater, encroachments on stormwater drains (rajakaluves), drainage issues, and gaps in emergency response systems, the Flood Management Committee has been constituted under the leadership of the Commissioner. The committee comprises officials from the Corporation's Engineering Department, KRIDL,

Minor Irrigation Department, Police Department, South Western Railway, Public Works Department, BESCOM, District Disaster Management Authority, and other concerned departments. The committee will function in coordination with the Engineering, Health, Disaster Management, and other relevant departments to ensure that public life is not disrupted during the monsoon season, while safeguarding public safety and urban infrastructure.

**Road Restoration Committee** Within the Corporation's jurisdiction, various utility agencies undertake road cutting works for laying electric cables, water pipelines, sewer lines, telecom lines, and other infrastructure. Improper restoration of such roads has resulted in traffic disruptions, accidents, and deterioration of road quality. To address this issue, a Road Restoration Committee has been constituted under the leadership of the Additional Commissioner. The committee includes officials from the Corporation's Engineering Department, BESCOM, KPTEL, BWSSB, GAIL, Traffic Police, and OFC

# Public Information on Releasing Street Dogs at the Same Location after Surgery as per ABC Act 2023

Bengaluru: Within the jurisdiction of the Bengaluru North City Corporation, the Animal Birth Control (ABC) programme is being implemented systematically in accordance with the ABC Act 2023 and the guidelines of the Central Government, with the objective of controlling the street dog population and safeguarding public health.

Under this programme, street dogs are captured in a humane manner (Humane Capture) and undergo sterilization (surgery) and Anti-Rabies Vaccination by qualified veterinarians. After the surgery, necessary post-operative care and recovery support are provided, following which the dogs are released as per the prescribed norms. Regarding Release at the Same Location: As per the provisions of the ABC Act 2023, sterilized street dogs must be mandatorily released at

their original location from where they were captured. This practice is followed for the following reasons:

- To maintain ecological balance in the area
- To prevent the entry of other aggressive or unsterilized dogs
- To respect the territorial nature of dogs
- To reduce human-dog conflict

Appeal to the Public: Street dogs that have undergone sterilization and bear an ear notch (identification mark) should not be relocated under any circumstances. Harming such dogs or shifting them to another location is illegal. Citizens are requested to cooperate and support the Corporation's ABC programme. City Corporation Commissioner Pommala Sunil Kumar has appealed to the public to extend their cooperation in making the ABC programme successful.

CORRIDGEM				
POSSESSION NOTICE (For Immovable Property)				
Whereas, the undersigned being the authorized officer of Manappuram Home Finance Ltd ("MANAPPURAM") under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest ("SARFESI") Act, 2002 (54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 9 of the security interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice calling upon the borrower and co-borrowers to repay the amount mentioned in the notice and interest thereon within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13(4) of the said "Act" read with rule 9 of the said rules. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the Manappuram Home Finance Ltd as mentioned below for each of the respective properties:				
Sr. No.	Name of Borrower and Co-borrower / Loan account number/ Branch	Description of Secured Asset in Respect of Which Interest has been Created	Date of Demand Notice and Outstanding Amount	Date of Possession
1	Athira Pa, Mandya No. /MHL015002197/ Kottayam	Extent of 2.20 Ares of Land in Sy. No. 84/7A, Thiruvalla Taluk, Pathanamthitta, Kerala, Pin: 686548, East-West Land, West-Vazhi & Property of Mappolakkal Malayil, South-Vazhi & Property of Palathil, North Property of Kachira	07-11-2025 & Rs.26963/-	14-02-2026
2	Shalaja Kumar A, /MHL022001982/ Malapuram	Extend 0.0405 Hectre, R. Sy. No. 23/6-3, Karakurum Village, Ernad Taluk, Malapuram, Kerala, Pin: 676123, East-Way, West-Subsidiary Property, South-Property of Kumpal & Way, North-Subsidiary Property	12-11-2025 & Rs.523849/-	14-02-2026

**इंडियन बैंक Indian Bank**

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K2 habitat Mangala Devi temple road  
Pandeshwar Mangalore

**APPENDIX- IV-A" [See proviso to rule 8 (6)]**  
**Sale notice for sale of immovable properties**

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the physical (constructive/ Symbolic (whichever is applicable) possession of which has been taken on 28.11.2025 by the Authorised Officer of Indian Bank, Mangalore branch, Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" on 11.03.2026, for recovery of Rs. 71,59,086/- (Rupees Seventy one lakhs Fifty nine thousand and eighty six only) (as on 25.02.2026 and the said amount carries further interest and charges at the agreed rate from 26.02.2026 till date of repayment) due to the Indian Bank, Mangalore branch, from Secured Creditor, 1. M/s Akriti Trading Corporation, 1 st floor Nanditha Building, Door no 3-T-28/2(8) Mulemar road Kottara, Mangalore-575013 (F-19.1 st floor Commercial complex, Empire Mall building, M G Road Mangalore 575001), 2.Mr.Hemachandra S/o Datta Suvarna, 7-9-1015/1 Sesama Compound Near Bookkapatha Church Gate, Kodialbail Mangalore 575003 (GUARANTOR), 3.Mrs.Veenakshi W/o Gokul Das, House Anuraksha, BRB Compound, Bhagwati Temple Road, Uppala Gate, Manjeshwara Kasargod 671322(PARTNER/GUARANTOR), 4.Gokul Das S/o Rajiva Bappange, House Anuraksha, BRB Compound, Bhagwati Temple Road, Uppala Gate, Manjeshwara Kasargod 671322 (PARTNER/GUARANTOR/MORTGAGOR).

The specific details of the property intended to be brought to sale through e-auction mode are enumerated below:

Detailed description of the Property	All the part and parcel of Residential building bearing Door no 2/92, "ANURAKSHA" BRB Compound, Bhagavathi Temple road, Uppala Gate, Uppala Village Manjeshwara Taluk Kasargod, Kerala-671322, belongs to Mr.Gokuldas. Sy no 63/2 (part) Area -13 cents Boundaries: East: Road, South: Remaining portion of same sy no. Tiled road house, West: Portion of the same sy no, Vacant Land, North: Portion of the same sy no., Vacant Land The above said property Door no 2/92 with right of way, water and easement rights and every thing attached thereto.
Encumbrances on property	Nil
Reserve Price	Rs. 70,00,000/-
EMD Amount	Rs. 7,00,000/-
Bid incremental amount	Rs.50000/-
Date and time of e-auction	11.03.2026, 11AM to 4pm.
Property ID No.	IDIB6674478078

Bidders are advised to visit the website <https://www.ebkray.in> of our e auction service provider PSB Alliance Pvt. Ltd. to participate in online bid. For Technical Assistance Please call 8291220220. For Registration status and for EMD status please email to [support.ebkray@psballiance.com](mailto:support.ebkray@psballiance.com). For property details and photograph of the property and auction terms and conditions please visit: <https://www.ebkray.in> and for clarifications related to this portal, please contact PSB Alliance Pvt. Ltd, Contact No. 8291220220. Bidders are advised to use Property ID Number mentioned above while searching for the property in the website with <https://www.ebkray.in>

Place: MANGALORE  
Date: 25-02-2026

Sd/- Authorised Officer  
Indian Bank

# EDITORIAL

## How Israel Once Defied Its Biggest Ally To Secretly Help India Against Pakistan

India and Israel enjoy a unique relationship steeped in historic people-to-people connect with ancient roots. The ancient Jewish communities in India, including the Bene Israelis, Cochin Jews, Baghdadi Jews and Bnei Menashe, survived and thrived in India and contributed to India's growth story and cultural treasure. Even though large numbers went back to Israel and the remaining have been invited, they remain a living bridge between the two countries. Having walked the halls of power from Asia to the Americas to Europe, I have often observed that diplomacy is usually a cold game of chess. Yet, the bond between India and Israel feels less like a match and more like a homecoming.

### THE 1980S

As we look toward the horizon of 2026, we must ask, what is the true crux of this partnership? It is no longer enough to simply list our trade figures. We must confront uncomfortable realities and the monumental successes that define us. Real trust is not built on signed papers. It is built by showing up when things get difficult. During the 1971 India-Pakistan war, Israel secretly supplied India with critical military equipment, such as 105 mm mortars, ammunition and specialised training, despite the absence of formal diplomatic ties and defying its own super-power ally, the US. This was a time when the world had turned its back on India. But Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir reportedly facilitated assistance through an Israeli arms manufacturer and promised continued help. Israel also helped the Mukti Bahini, the Bengali guerilla force fighting Pakistan, which ultimately helped in the creation of Bangladesh. The episode is recorded in the meticulously maintained papers of Indira Gandhi's principal secretary, PN Haksar, based on which American journalist Gary Bass wrote his book *The Blood Telegram*. In the early 1980s, Israel again offered to assist India in destroying Pakistan's Kahuta nuclear facility to dismantle the country's nuclear programme. It even sought permission for its fighter jets to use Indian airspace and refuelling facilities. The plan was shelved only due to fear of retaliation from Pakistan - which could lead to an all-out war - and intense pressure from the US, which, in turn, was relying on Islamabad for its Afghanistan operations. Israel's offer, nonetheless, was an audacious geopolitical move, driven by its own concerns about an 'Islamic bomb' and its implications for West Asia. The whole episode remains one of the great 'what ifs' of history. These precedents became an important precursor to the two countries finally establishing official diplomatic ties in 1992.

### Israel's Op Sindoor Support - Despite Trump's Comments

Today, that trust has matured. During the recent Pahalgam terror attacks, Israel's support during Operation Sindoor wasn't just diplomatic; it was a reflection of a shared understanding that terrorism is a civilisational threat. Because of this history, Prime Minister Netanyahu recently suggested that as India becomes a permanent power at the UN, Israel might rely more on New Delhi than on Washington. This is not just talk, it is a sign of deep faith in India as a strong and steady power. India has always supported a "two-state solution", where both Israel and Palestine live side-by-side in peace. This was recently repeated in the Delhi Declaration at the India-Arab League meeting. For decades, the narrative has been one of "Israeli occupation", but a historical audit reveals a more complex tragedy of missed opportunities.

## Telephone allowances for MLAs: Wasteful expenditure or a public relations necessity?



DR. SATYAWAN SAURABH

(When unlimited calls and data are possible for Rs 300-400, why such a huge allowance for public representatives?)

In a democratic system, the facilities provided to public representatives have always been a topic of discussion and debate. The fundamental purpose of salaries and allowances is to enable elected representatives to serve the public without financial worries. However, when the size of these benefits increases and transparency in their use is diminished, questions naturally arise. Recently, the Bihar Legislative Assembly decided to increase the monthly telephone allowance for MLAs and MLAs to ₹8,300. The most significant feature of this decision is that this amount will be provided without any bills or vouchers, meaning proof of expenditure will not be mandatory. This is why this issue has suddenly become the focus of public discussion. Today, India is undergoing a digital revolution. Mobile phones and the internet have completely transformed the face of communication. Until a few years ago, call rates and data packs were expensive, but now, thanks to private telecom companies, communication services have become significantly cheaper. A monthly recharge of 300 to 400 rupees provides the average citizen with unlimited calls, data, and messaging. At this time, it's natural to question why, when ordinary citizens can manage their communications with such a small amount, a separate allowance of thousands of rupees is necessary for public representatives. Bihar's decision has sparked widespread debate. The state has 243 MLAs. If each MLA is given a telephone allowance of ₹8,300 per month, the annual amount would reach crores of rupees. Critics say this money is public money and could



be used for education, health, rural development, or other important areas. This is why many on social media are viewing it as an unnecessary expense or a political privilege. However, there's another side to this issue that can't be ignored. The work of public representatives isn't limited to the Assembly. They have to maintain constant contact with the people of their constituency. Listening to citizens' problems, communicating with officials, providing information about government schemes, and participating in party events—all of these require constant communication. Often, an MLA has to make or receive hundreds of phone calls a day. Network problems in rural areas require carrying SIM cards from different companies. Furthermore, video conferencing, online meetings, and communication via social media have also become part of the work of public representatives. Yet the real issue of debate isn't just the amount, but transparency. Disputes are reduced if the use of an allowance is clearly documented and its accounting is made public. However, when an allowance is provided without a bill, it raises suspicions that the facility is becoming a source of additional income. This is why many experts believe that while providing a communication allowance isn't wrong, its

use needs to be transparent and accountable. Telephone or communication allowances for MLAs vary across different states in India. For example, in Uttar Pradesh, MLAs receive a communication allowance of approximately ₹10,000. In a large and expensive state like Maharashtra, this amount can be even higher. Haryana, on the other hand, provides a relatively lower allowance. Kerala set an example by reducing its allowances after the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, in Delhi, communication and travel allowances are combined. These examples clearly demonstrate that there is no uniform policy across states, and each state makes decisions based on its own circumstances. It's also true that technology has made communication easier and cheaper over time. While long-distance calls used to be expensive, internet-based services have significantly reduced the cost of communication. WhatsApp calls, video meetings, and social media interactions are now commonplace. Therefore, many question whether the current allowance structure is still based on outdated needs. Transparency and accountability are considered the most important principles in a democracy. The public elects its representatives so that they understand

their problems and work towards solutions. Clear information about the benefits provided to public representatives strengthens public trust. However, when expenditure details are unclear, criticism is natural. Experts suggest that certain improvements could be made to make this system more balanced. For example, bills or digital records could be made mandatory for telephone allowances. The government could provide official mobile connections, allowing direct control and monitoring of expenses. Furthermore, a maximum limit could be set for allowances to avoid unnecessary expenditure. Periodic audits and public reports could also make the process more transparent. This issue isn't just about a single allowance, but also about the very philosophy of governance. If governments and public representatives themselves promote transparency, public trust will be strengthened. On the other hand, if perks continue to increase while accountability diminishes, it could lead to a sense of distrust in democracy. Ultimately, it's important to understand that providing communication tools to public representatives isn't wrong. In fact, it helps them fulfill their responsibilities. However, this facility must be designed to be both practical and accountable.

## "5 Jets Down", Or 7, Or 11? Trump And The Horror Of His 'India-Pak' Fantasies

There is something almost surreal about the narrative that Donald Trump has constructed around the 2025 military escalation between India and Pakistan and how he claims personal credit for brokering peace. Over the course of nearly a year, Trump's recounting of the events has shifted repeatedly, not only in the details of what he supposedly achieved but even in the basic facts of what happened on the battlefield - the latest being his claim in his State of the Union (SOTU) address that Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had told him that "around 35 million people would have died" in India's Operation Sindoor if it were not for US intervention. At various public events, interviews, and speeches, Trump has been fashioning himself as the linchpin in ending one of the most dangerous escalations in South Asia in decades. His story of a brewing war between two nuclear-armed nations, which only stopped because he intervened, has all the makings of present-day gothic. A Faustian transactional bargaining rather than diplomatic finesse, and a shapeshifting narrator. Each time he narrates it, the elements of the story change. Sacrificing Facts For Drama At the Board of Peace event in Washington, Trump boasted about his most recent, framing the crisis in stark economic terms: "I said, if you're going to fight, then it's fine, but you are not doing business with the US, and you are going to pay a 200 per cent tariff... And they both wanted to fight. But when it came to losing a lot of money, they said, 'We don't want to fight...' 11 jets were shot down. Very expensive jets." The language is striking.



Dr Faustus being lured by Mephistophillis; a negotiation about war reduced to a tariff threat. For a heightened dramatic effect, the tally of aircraft losses is used as a prop. Yet, even this account has not been consistent. In July 2025, Trump was quoted saying something closer to "five jets were shot down" during the conflict, though he didn't specify whose aircraft they were. Later in that year, he told a different audience that "seven planes were shot down... and I got it stopped". Just months later, he referred to "eight planes were shot down" and claimed credit for stopping that escalation as well. This fluid number of jets down, ranging from five, seven, eight, ten, to eleven, reveals a lot about Trump's narrative strategy. A President Who Loves His Own Stories These shifting figures should not be dismissed as anecdotal quib-

bles. Each variant is presented as if it were a definitive account of how close India and Pakistan came to a larger war and how crucial his intervention was. But on the ground, neither India nor Pakistan has released verified figures supporting any of these tallies. Indian officials have outright rejected Trump's premise that the United States mediated the ceasefire. Whether it was a good diplomatic move is another story. Long after Trump began claiming to have brokered the ceasefire, India stated that at no point were issues like US trade deals or external mediation part of the direct communication between established India-Pakistan military channels. This contradiction illuminates the broader issue with most of Trump's accounts of geopolitical events. They often seem crafted not to clarify what happened, but to aggran-

dise his own role in it. At one moment, the crisis is framed as a narrowly avoided nuclear nightmare that only his tariff threats could stop. In another, it's one in a series of "eight wars" he claims to have ended. "I settled eight wars... India and Pakistan were ready to go at it big," Trump said in an interview, asserting once again that aircraft losses were evidence of how serious the situation had been. Jumpscare Diplomacy There is a clear script here. The more dramatic the claim, the more fluid the facts behind it become. The jets shot down are the necessary jumpscare. A visceral image meant to evoke intense fighting. The tariff threat is elevated as the central mechanism of peace. Trump the Saviour, Trump the Punisher. This is not how responsible diplomacy is done. Peace mediation, especially between rivals with a long history of mistrust and recent violence, is a delicate process involving back-channel discussions, verified communication, and a measured understanding of each party's interests. It is not typically described in terms of punitive economic ultimatums delivered from afar or narrative evolutions that depend on the audience's applause rather than factual accuracy. Trump's ever-changing narrative serves as a reminder of how modern political storytelling can diverge wildly from the on-the-ground reality. When the principal narrator of an event keeps rewriting the account, it becomes nearly impossible for outside observers to disentangle fact from self-serving fiction. In this case, the stakes are far higher than a campaign rally or a media soundbite.

## From Kerala To Keralam: What's Really In A Name? A Lot, Apparently

The Union Cabinet approved the long-standing demand of Kerala to be renamed Keralam. It marks a rare instance of political consensus across the board, in the backdrop of the trailer of *The Kerala Story 2* setting the internet on fire. Some formal legislative business might still be pending, but it can safely be concluded that Keralam, rather than Kerala, will go to polls come April. Shakespeare's famous adage - "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet" - may very well hold true for Kerala, but the change of nomenclature has thrown up mixed reactions in the state. It is a fact that Malayalis aren't generally as passionate as their Tamil brethren when it comes to identity - unless, of course, a propaganda film targeting them comes along. There also seems to be a generation gap between people who have welcomed the move, as opposed to those who aired their disapproval of it. Whereas the older generation has received the news wholeheartedly, the millennials seem less enthused about it. Kerala has always been Keralam - with an 'anusvara' suffixed to it - in Malayalam, the spoken language in the state, while in Hindi, it became 'Keral'. It's also not uncommon to see people misspelling Kerala as 'Karela' (bitter gourd), often leaving a bitter aftertaste for those at the receiving end of it. Provenance of Keralam A lot of misconceptions have also emerged in the wake of the change, especially regarding the provenance of Keralam. And so it becomes even more important to con-



textualise its historical significance. While multiple theories are ascribed to the origin of Keralam, most scholars agree that it is derived from 'Cheralam', the land of the Cheras (Chera dynasty). Keralam is a Sanskritised derivative of Cheralam, according to Ulloor S Parameswara Iyer, the great Malayalam poet. This is seconded by (the late) eminent historian MGS Narayanan, who had specialised in Kerala history over the course of his lifetime. There is another theory on Cheralam coming from 'cherive-alam' in Tamil, which translates to the sloping land sandwiched between the mountain (Western Ghats) and the water (Arabian Sea), over time becoming Keralam. The likes of Indologist MG Sasibhooshan place as much emphasis on this theory as the popular one. According to the Malayalam dictionary *Sabdatharavali*, Keralam is also identified as the land of the Kera, or coconut trees; 'Malayala Nadu' (land of Malayalis) is

listed as the closest synonym to Keralam. Another synonym for Keralam is Malabar, supposedly coined by spice traders, a mix of "Mala" (hill) in Malayalam and "bur" (country) in Arabic/Persian - as recorded in William Logan's *Malabar Manual*. German scholar Herman Gundert, who compiled the first Malayalam-English dictionary in the 19th century, placed emphasis on the theory put forth in *Keralolpathi* - whose provenance is disputed - of Keralam originally extending from Gokarna in Karnataka to Kanyakumari in the south, which would encompass the districts that make up 'Tulu Nadu' in Karnataka today, along with Kerala. This theory in *Keralolpathi* also corresponds to the legend of Parasurama, one of the ten avatars of Vishnu, credited with the creation of Keralam in the Puranas. The earliest historical record of Keralam is seen in Ashoka's edicts (as *Keralaputra* or son of Chera) from 3rd Century BC, as recorded in John Keay's

seminal work, *India: A History*. There are many references to Keralam in Sanskrit texts over the centuries, although there was no specialised strand of history-writing in Sanskrit, according to Kerala Sahitya Akademi president K Satchidanandan. There are references to Keralam even in epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, as per writer MN Karassery. Keralam as a Marker of Identity In spite of Keralam being geographically divided into the princely states of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar at the turn of the 20th century, the longing for a united Kerala was foremost in the literature of the times. The evolution of the Malayalam language from the 15th century also helped instil a sense of common identity among its speakers, leading to the sentiment of a united homeland. It was Ramakrishna Pillai, editor of *Swadeshabhimani* daily, who began writing about the 'Aiky Kerala', or a united Keralam, in the early 1900s, which caught on gradually.

# Paramount boosts Warner Bros offer to rival Netflix in takeover bid

Paramount Skydance has boosted its proposal to buy Warner Bros Discovery, with an offer that could finally knock rival bidder Netflix out of the game. Warner Bros, which put itself up for sale last year, said Paramount had agreed to increase its purchase offer by \$1 per share, creating a bid that its board had determined "could reasonably be expected to lead to a... superior proposal". Warner Bros said it would engage in further talks before making a final decision about whether to abandon the deal it struck with Netflix in December. Netflix, which would have four days to make a counter-offer, did not immediately comment. In a recent interview with the BBC, Netflix co-chief executive Ted Sarandos declined to say whether the company was prepared to engage in a bidding war, calling the back-and-forth "part of the process". "I don't want to do hypotheticals," he said, before the new Paramount bid was made. "We very much like the deal where we're at right now, we're very disciplined buyers and we always have been." "This is all a process of price-discovery," he added later. Paramount, which is backed by tech billionaire Larry Ellison and led by his son



David, has waged an outspoken campaign to buy Warner Bros since last year as it looks to transform itself into a Hollywood heavyweight. But Warner Bros has so far spurned Paramount's offers. Instead, in December it said it had agreed to sell its film and streaming divisions, including HBO, to Netflix in a deal worth \$27.75 per share or roughly \$82bn (£61bn), including debt. Warner Bros said it would spin-off the remainder of its business, including traditional television networks and the news channel CNN, as an independent company. After getting rejected, Paramount has sweetened its original pro-

posal, which called for paying \$30 per share to take over the entire company. But this is the first time the company has officially agreed to pay more. Warner Bros said Paramount had now offered to pay \$31 per share in cash, with additional money due if completion is delayed. It has also agreed to pay \$7bn should the deal fall through and cover the \$2.8bn fee Warner Bros had agreed to pay Netflix in the event of a break-up of the merger plan. Warner Bros said its board had not made a final determination on what to do. Lawmakers have raised concerns about both proposals, citing monopoly considera-

tions and the impact on the wider entertainment industry. In a hearing in Washington earlier this month, Sarandos faced questions about potential price rises and the future of cinema. The Ellison family's ties to the Trump administration have also drawn attention from Democrats. Warner Bros said the firm would "engage further... to determine if a proposal that constitutes a company superior proposal... can be reached," it said. In an interview before Paramount's offer was revealed, Luke Stillman, managing director at the US media and advertising consultancy Madison and Wall, said

he thought Warner Bros was looking to create a bidding war. He said he thought the price could ultimately go as high as \$33 per share.

## HIGH-STAKES BATTLE FOR HOLLYWOOD'S CROWN JEWEL

Either deal will reshape the power structure of Hollywood by handing the suitor one of the industry's most coveted studios and an extensive content library, as well as lucrative entertainment franchises such as "Game of Thrones" and DC Comics. Netflix has ample cash and could bump up its offer for the HBO Max owner. Paramount, though, has argued it has a clearer path to U.S. regulatory approval than Netflix, and it earlier indicated that if Warner Bros rejects the new bid, it would be ready to launch a board challenge at this year's annual meeting. One of its possible director candidates could be one of Warner Bros' biggest shareholders, Pentwater Capital Management's chief executive Matthew Halbow. Separately, activist investor Ancora Holdings, which owns a small stake in Warner Bros, has stepped up pressure on the HBO owner by saying the company did not adequately engage with Paramount.

# From April 1, all petrol pumps mandated to sell E20 fuel

**New Delhi:** The government has mandated the sale of petrol with up to 20 per cent ethanol and a minimum Research Octane Number (RON) of 95 across all states and Union Territories from April 1, 2026. The oil ministry in a February 17 notification, said, "the central government hereby directs that oil companies shall sell ethanol-blended motor spirit (petrol) with percentage of ethanol up to 20 per cent as per the Bureau of Indian Standards specifications and having minimum Research Octane Number (RON) of 95, in states and the Union Territories". The central government can allow exceptions in special situations, for specific regions and for a limited time. Ethanol is made from sugarcane, maize, or grain. It is renewable, domestically produced and has cleaner burning than pure petrol. The government has mandated ethanol blending in petrol to help cut oil imports as also reduce emissions. Such a mandate also supports farmers as it boosts demand for sugarcane, maize and agricultural surplus. Most vehicles manufactured in India from 2023-2025 onward are designed to run on E20 and no major issues are expected, industry officials said.



Older vehicles may however see a slight drop in mileage (3-7 per cent). Also rubber/plastic component may wear. The insistence on minimum RON 95 is to prevent engine damage. Encouraged by India achieving 10 per cent ethanol doping in petrol in June 2022 - five months ahead of the target date - the government advanced 20 per cent blending to 2025-26 from 2030. Most pumps in the country now sell E20 or petrol blended with 20 per cent ethanol. According to the oil ministry, since 2014-15 India has saved more than Rs 1.40 lakh crore in foreign exchange through petrol substitution. Most vehicles manufactured in India from 2023-2025 onward are designed to run on E20 and no major issues are expected, industry officials said.

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# Hyderabad's RGIA named best airport for arrivals in global passenger survey

**Hyderabad:** Rajiv Gandhi International Airport (RGIA) in Hyderabad has been named one of the best airports in the world for the arrivals experience at the 2025 Airport Service Quality (ASQ) Customer Experience Awards. Under the "Best Airports at Arrivals Globally" category, the honour, presented by the Council International (ACI) World, follows a comprehensive survey where passengers rated their experience at the airport in Shamshabad specifically upon arrival. In 2025, nearly 7.07 lakh passengers worldwide participated in the ASQ survey programme. The initiative is widely regarded as one of the most credible benchmarks for airport service standards as it collects feedback from travellers while they are physically present at the airport, making it harder to game than most industry recognitions. According to airport officials, the recognition reflects the facility's performance across several parameters, including arrival formalities, cleanli-



ness, ambience, staff service and overall ease of movement through the terminal. Pradeep Panicker, chief executive officer (CEO) of GMR Hyderabad International Airport Ltd, said the award was significant because it was based directly on passenger feedback. "Being recognised as one of the world's best airports at arrivals is deeply rewarding. We believe the arrival experience sets the tone for the entire journey," Panicker said. Justin Erbacci, Director General of ACI World, noted that the distinction acknowledges the airport's commitment to delivering high standards. The ASQ programme covers

more than half of the world's air passengers, making it a difficult standard to meet. The Hyderabad airport was among a select group of global airports to be chosen in the arrivals category for 2025. Currently, RGIA connects Hyderabad to over 100 domestic and international destinations, including major hubs in the Middle East, Europe and Southeast Asia. Mr. Justin Erbacci, Director General, ACI World, said, "Congratulations to GMR Hyderabad International Airport Ltd. for meeting and exceeding passenger expectations! Your success in the Airport Service Quality (ASQ) Awards reflects the

dedication your team puts into making each passenger's journey memorable. You've set a new standard for excellence, one that leaves a lasting impression on travellers and inspires airports around the world." ASQ Awards Highlights: In 2024, over half of the world's travellers passed through an ASQ airport, underscoring the program's credibility and influence in shaping the standards for exceptional airport services. From 7,00,000 surveys collected in 2024, 181 ASQ Awards have been won by 95 airports around the world. Categories for departures include Best Airports by Size and Region, as well as Most Dedicated Staff, Easiest Airport Journey, Most Enjoyable Airport, and Cleanest Airport. For arrivals, the category is Top Airports Globally. GMR Hyderabad International Airport has consistently set benchmarks in service and operational excellence. It secured a spot among the Top 3 Global Airports for nine consecutive years

# NMDC RD Centre and IIT Hyderabad Sign MoU Strengthening Academic and Research Collaboration

**Hyderabad, 25 February 2026:** The RD Centre of NMDC, Responsible Miner has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad (IITH), a significant step towards shaping the future of India's mineral and metals sector. The MoU was signed by Shri Sanjeev Sahi, ED (RD), NMDC, and the Dean (Sponsored Research Consultancy), IIT Hyderabad, in the presence of Prof. B. S. Murty, Director, IIT Hyderabad, aimed at advancing indigenous technology in mineral processing and allied areas. This partnership represents a strong collaboration between field expertise and academic excellence. Together, NMDC and IIT Hyderabad will drive research in iron ore beneficiation and agglomeration, green steelmaking technologies, alternate ironmaking using indigenous raw materials, and advanced modeling and simulation of mining and metallurgical processes. The collaboration will also chart new pathways in the extraction



of critical and rare earth minerals from primary and secondary sources, strengthening India's mineral security and resource resilience. Aligned with the rapid digital transformation of the mining sector, the MoU will drive research and pilot initiatives in autonomous vehicle movement, Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things (IoT), Mining 4.0 frameworks, and drone-enabled surveying and monitoring. By integrating operational strength with research-driven innovation, the collaboration aims to deliver sustainable, technology-led solutions that

enhance efficiency, productivity, and environmental stewardship across India's evolving mineral landscape. On the occasion of the MoU signing, Shri Amitava Mukherjee, Chairman-cum-Managing Director, NMDC, said, "The MoU with IIT Hyderabad strengthens NMDC's commitment to innovation through industry-academia collaboration. By leveraging IIT Hyderabad's research excellence and NMDC's domain expertise, this partnership will advance indigenous technologies in mining, mineral processing, and emerging areas, contributing to sustainable develop-

ment and the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat." This partnership underscores NMDC's commitment to innovation-driven growth and IIT Hyderabad's role in translating research into impactful industrial applications. Together, the institutions will contribute to the national vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat. Significantly, this collaboration comes at a landmark moment as NMDC's RD Centre celebrates 50 years of dedicated contribution to India's mineral growth story, reinforcing its legacy of research excellence and its enduring pursuit of technological advancement.

# NTPC SRHQ CSR Initiatives Drive Meaningful Impact Across Communities

**February 25, 2026:** NTPC Southern Region Headquarters (SRHQ) organised a CSR Meet themed "Care, Collaboration & Community Impact", highlighting the organisation's impactful CSR initiatives across health, education, sanitation, sports, and community development in Telangana and the Southern Region. The programme highlighted the proposed signing of two MoAs (Memorandum of Agreement)—with CSEA Foundation for support to the Telangana Softball Association (Men & Women) to enable participation in national and international tournaments, and with the Sports Coaching Foundation for financial assistance towards procurement of e-Auto Rickshaws to promote grassroots sports and community mobility. A key highlight was the interaction and felicita-



tion of beneficiaries of the life-saving cardiac surgery support programme for children born with congenital heart disease, implemented in partnership with Sri Sathya Sai Health & Education Trust. Under this initiative, 30 children received free corrective surgeries at Sri Sathya Sai Sanjeevani Hospital. In his keynote address, Shri S. N. Panigrahi, CGM (HR) - NR & SR, reiterated NTPC's CSR focus on health, education, sanita-

tion, and sports, and underscored the importance of strategic partnerships for creating sustainable community impact. Senior NTPC officials, CSR partners, beneficiaries, sportspersons, were present on the occasion. Through sustained partnerships and targeted interventions, NTPC SRHQ continues to create measurable social impact, reinforcing its commitment to inclusive development and community well-being.

# AIRLINE LOSSES TO NARROW TO RS 12,000 CRORE NEXT FISCAL: ICRA

**Mumbai:** Indian airlines are expected to reduce losses to an estimated Rs 11,000-12,000 crore next fiscal from a projected Rs 17,000-18,000 crore this financial year, ratings agency ICRA said on Tuesday, February 24, even as it maintained a "stable outlook" for the domestic aviation industry. ICRA also estimates the domestic air passenger traffic to grow by 6-8 per cent and touch 175-179 million passengers in FY2026-27. ICRA, in December 2025, had revised its domestic air passenger growth estimates to 0-3 per cent for the current financial year from 4-6 per cent envisaged earlier. The international air passenger traffic growth for Indian carriers is expected to remain relatively stronger, aided by low base effect, expanding e-visa/visa-on-arrival coverage, and the Central Government's focus on developing theme-based and iconic tourist destinations, the ratings agency said. ICRA said the international air passenger traffic is seen growing at 7-9 per cent for this financial year and 8-10 per cent next year, and added that the current fiscal year has seen a period of modest domestic air passenger traffic growth due to cross-border



disruptions, weather-related disruptions, travel hesitancy following the June 2025 aircraft accident, the impact on business travel owing to the headwinds stemming from elevated US tariffs and operational disruptions at IndiGo in December 2025. ICRA has maintained a "stable outlook" for the Indian aviation industry, supported by expectations of modest growth in domestic air passenger traffic and a gradually improving operating environment, despite near-term challenges, said Kinjal Shah, senior vice president at ICRA. "The Indian aviation industry is expected to report a net loss of Rs

170-180 billion (17000-18000-crore) in 2025-26, significantly higher than the estimated net loss of around Rs 55 billion (5,500 crore) in 2024-25. However, the same is likely to reduce to Rs 110-120 billion (11,000-12,000 crores) in 2026-27, led by growth in domestic air passenger traffic and expected normalisation of operations post disruptions seen in 2025-26 that had resulted in flight cancellations and passenger refunds," she said. The industry's debt metric, which weakened in 2025-26 with an estimated interest cover of 0.7-0.9 times from 1.8 times in 2024-25, is also expected to

improve to 1.3-1.5 times in 2026-27, despite increasing debt linked with new aircraft deliveries, according to Shah. The yields of the industry have declined in the April-December period of 2025-26 on a YoY basis due to a series of external events like cross-border escalations, airplane crash and operational disruptions at IndiGo in the first week of December 2025, ICRA said. Despite these challenges, the drop in yields was not as steep as the reduction in fuel Cost per Available Seat Kilometre (CASK), as airlines strived to sustain the yield levels amid rising cost pressure from currency fluctuations and operational expenses related to flight cancellations and delays, it said. ICRA expects the yields to improve in the near term as temporary disruptions ease. Nonetheless, the movement in prices of ATF and the USD-INR rate will remain key monitorable. According to the ratings agency, the industry saw around 4 per cent capacity addition in CY2025, and the total number of aircraft stood at 865 as of December 31, 2025. Various industry players have announced large aircraft purchase orders and as per the indicative numbers.

# Trump's theatrical State of the Union address offers little hint of any change in course

Donald Trump delivered a combative State of the Union address on Tuesday night that hailed what he said was an American "turnaround for the ages". At a time when polls suggest many in the US are dissatisfied with the current state of the nation - and with Trump's leadership of it - the president offered little hint of a change of course. Instead, with an eye on crucial midterm elections later this year, he delivered a sales pitch to the nation, a patriotic rallying cry to his loyal supporters and taunts for his political opponents. It was a speech filled with theatrical flourishes - the kind of made-for-the-camera moments the man who once hosted a reality television show seems to enjoy. Early on, he welcomed the US Olympic men's hockey team to the gallery. They held up their gold medals as Republicans chanted "USA!" and even Democrats stood and applauded. Later, Trump praised military heroes

including a 100-year-old World War Two veteran who received a Medal of Honor, and a Coast Guard swimmer who rescued 165 people trapped in last year's Texas flooding and was given a Legion of Merit award for Extraordinary Heroism. Although his speech set a record for length at 107 minutes, these moments quickened the pace of the evening and fit with the president's larger theme of American patriotism and accomplishment. His speech opened with familiar lines. "Our nation is back," he said. It was the "hottest" country in the world. At one point, after blaming Democrats for creating a crisis of "affordability", he added: "We are doing really well." He pointed to the rising incomes, a growing stock market, lower petrol prices, a southern border with dramatically reduced undocumented migrant crossing and tamed inflation. "Our country is winning again," he con-



cluded. The challenge for the president is that his public approval ratings are hovering around 40 percent, and the American public wants him to do more to address their concerns. Two months ago, he gave a national address from the White House where he struck similar themes and cited similar statistics - but it hasn't convinced the public. The president and his aides appear to

be hoping that with a bigger State of the Union audience, which should measure in the tens of millions, the results will be different. What Trump didn't do in this speech, however, was offer much in the way of new policies. He sprinkled the nearly two-hour address with a handful of ideas, including new retirement savings accounts for working-class Americans and a deal with

AI companies to provide sufficient electricity for their plants to avoid consumers being hit with higher bills. He made new pitches for other, older ideas, such as a healthcare plan that provides direct payments to Americans to help cover insurance premiums, a law to require all voters to prove their citizenship and a ban on providing commercial driver's licences to undocumented migrants. He also pledged to continue to push ahead with his broad tariff regime, even in the face of last Friday's Supreme Court decision striking down many of the duties he had previously imposed. Three of the justices who had ruled against the president remained expressionless as they watched on from the front row. Earlier, Trump and Chief Justice John Roberts - who penned the court's tariff opinion - briefly shook hands, but neither man smiled. In a speech that was

## Don't break up NewJeans and I'll forgo \$18m payout, says ex-K-pop boss



The ex-boss of NewJeans' record label has offered to forgo a 25.6bn won (\$17.9m; £13.2m) payout if entertainment giant Hybe drops all lawsuits against the K-pop group. Min Hee-jin said she "can no longer bear to watch" NewJeans get "torn apart" when its five members "should instead be standing happily on stage". Hybe, whose client list includes K-pop royalty like BTS and Seventeen, said in December it had terminated the contract of NewJeans member Danielle Marsh and was suing her for contract violation and other damages. The chart-topping band has been locked in a bitter feud with its label Ador, a Hybe subsidiary, since it sacked Min as the label's CEO in August 2024. NewJeans, who saw Min as a mentor, announced they would leave the agency following her dismissal, but a South Korea district court ruled last October that they must honour their contract with Ador, which runs until 2029. In a separate ruling earlier this month, the court sided with Min in a put option dispute with Hybe, ordering the entertainment giant to pay her 25.6bn won. A put option is a contract that gives its owner the right to sell an asset at a future date at a predetermined price.

## Chinese dance group's tour triggers bomb threat against Australian PM



A bomb scare at the Australian prime minister's home originated from written threats directed at a Chinese dance and music group banned by Beijing. In emails seen by local media and the BBC, performers of the Shen Yun group were told to cancel their upcoming Australian shows or risk explosives being detonated at Anthony Albanese's official residence in the nation's capital. Authorities refused to comment on the emails, only confirming they had attended an "alleged security incident" at the leader's home on Tuesday and "nothing suspicious was located". Shen Yun was founded by the religious movement Falun Gong, which is banned in China.

The threat was reported to police by Shen Yun on Tuesday, according to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. A statement from Shen Yun sent to the BBC said they would proceed with their performances in Australia and called on the Australian government to conduct a comprehensive investigation. Asked about the email threats, a spokesperson for the Australian Federal Police declined to comment. In a social media post on Wednesday morning, Albanese thanked police and people who had sent in "kind messages", accompanied by a photo of his cavoodle guarding the door. "Toto on alert but all good," he said. Interrupted by protesters at Albanese was evacuated from his home at 18:00 local time (07:00 GMT) and taken to another location for several hours, police said. One of the emails, which was written in Chinese, said large quantities of nitro-glycerine explosives have been placed around the Lodge, the name of the prime minister's official residence in Canberra. "If you insist on proceeding with the performance, then the Prime Minister's Lodge will be blown into ruins and blood will flow like a river."

## Australia police make arrests over alleged murder of grandfather mistakenly kidnapped



Australian police have arrested two men for the murder of a Sydney grandfather they say was mistakenly kidnapped, a day after human remains were found. Widower Chris Baghsarian, 85, was abducted from his North Ryde home in a pre-dawn raid on 13 February. Police say he was not the intended target of the alleged attack, which local media have reported may have been aimed at a family with links

to organised crime. On Wednesday, two men, aged 24 and 29, were arrested for questioning, as forensic testing confirmed the body located near a golf course on the city outskirts belonged to Baghsarian. Police have said they expect to charge both men, who were previously known to authorities for minor matters. More arrests are likely, investigators added, as they believe others were involved in the alleged kidnapping and murder. Baghsarian's family have welcomed news of the arrests, and requested the media respect their privacy. In the days after the kidnapping, police made several pleas for those who had taken the octogenarian to safely return him as he had health issues and needed daily medication.

## JAPAN TO DEPLOY MISSILES ON ISLAND NEAR TAIWAN BY 2031



Japan plans to deploy surface-to-air missiles to its remote western island near Taiwan by March 2031, its defence minister said, as regional tensions simmer. It is the first time that Japan specified a timeline for the missile deployment to Yonaguni island since it was announced in 2022. China claims self-ruled Taiwan as its own and has not ruled out the use of force to "reunify" with it. Yonaguni is visible from Taiwan's shores on a clear day, located just 110km (68 miles) away. Tensions between Tokyo and Beijing have run high since November when Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi appeared to suggest that Japan would activate its self-defence force in the event of an attack on

Taiwan. The worry has long been that any attack on Taiwan, which counts the US as an ally, could result in a direct military conflict between Washington and Beijing, then widen to include other US allies in the region such as Japan. Takaichi's remarks to parliament plunged ties with China to their lowest level in years and Beijing has been

piling on the pressure in a wide range of ways - sending warships, throttling rare earth exports, curbing Chinese tourism, cancelling concerts and even reclaiming its pandas. Japanese defence minister Shinjiro Koizumi announced the timeline for the missiles on Tuesday, a day after China imposed export curbs on 20 Japanese companies and

entities, citing national security concerns. Koizumi said the Yonaguni unit will be equipped with medium-range surface-to-air missiles able to intercept incoming aircraft and missiles. With a range of about 50km and 360-degree capability, the Japanese-made missile system can track up to 100 targets simultaneously and engage up to 12 at once. China has yet to react to Koizumi's announcement. But when Koizumi visited Yonaguni in November, Beijing said Japan was moving to "create regional tension and provoke military confrontation". Within days, China flew drones near the island to express its anger, prompting Japan to scramble aircraft jets in response.

## DRONES HAMMER SUDAN'S GOLD AND OIL ZONE - THE PIVOTAL NEW FRONT LINE

Intensified drone attacks on the new front line of Sudan's civil war have led to mass civilian casualties in recent weeks and are increasingly shaping the course of the conflict. The epicentre of the fighting has shifted to the south-central Kordofan region since both sides consolidated their gains in the other main battlefields of this nearly three-year war. The conflict between the Sudanese regular army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) has become one of the deadliest in Africa for civilians and shows no sign of abating despite US-led peace efforts. The near-daily drone strikes have hit targets including markets,



health facilities, aid convoys and residential areas across the Kordofan region, prompting outrage from the UN and humanitarian officials. "The continued attacks by all parties on civilian objects must stop," the UN human rights chief Volker Türk said last week. "The parties must take

urgent measures to protect civilians, including by refraining from the military use of civilian objects." He was speaking after reports that more than 50 civilians had been killed over two days in separate drone strikes in North and West Kordofan. Those attacks were blamed

on the Sudanese military by local reports and war monitors, but both sides are accused of deadly strikes on civilians and civilian infrastructure. Greater Kordofan comprises three states and serves as a vital axis linking the western Darfur region, controlled by the RSF, to the capital, Khartoum, in the eastern Nile Valley, now in army hands. The war erupted in April 2023, triggered by a power struggle between the leaders of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitaries. It began to intensify in Kordofan, a strategic area rich in gold and oil, once the SAF regained control of Khartoum last year.

## Senegal PM proposes tougher anti-LGBT law, doubling prison terms



Senegal's Prime Minister Ousmane Sonko has introduced legislation that could double the maximum penalty for same-sex relations, making them punishable by up to 10 years in prison. The proposal was sent to parliament on Tuesday after cabinet approval last week, after a wave of arrests over alleged same-sex relationships, already banned under Senegal law. Addressing lawmakers, Sonko said the bill would punish what it describes as "acts against nature" with prison sentences ranging from five to 10 years, compared with the current one-to-five-year terms. "If an act is committed with a minor, it will attract the maximum penalty," he said. The bill has been criticised by rights advocates. Debate over LGBT rights has long generated tension in Senegal, a conservative country where some groups portray pro-LGBT activism as foreign interference. Religious organisations have held demonstrations in recent years calling for harsher punishments. Earlier this month, police detained 12 men, among them two public figures and a prominent journalist,

under anti-LGBT laws. Local media outlets say around 30 people have been arrested in total this month. Sonko explained that the draft law defines any sexual conduct between two people of the same sex as an "act against nature". The bill proposes prison terms of three to seven years for anyone found to be promoting or advocating same-sex relations. It also prescribes separate punishment for those who accuse others of homosexuality "without proof". Those found guilty of crimes in the bill could also face fines up to 10 million CFA francs (about \$18,000; £13,000), Sonko added. Sonko said the revised law would keep the offence at its current misdemeanour level. "We can achieve the intended objectives without going so far as to elevate the acts to the level of more serious crimes," he added. A date has yet to be set for parliament to vote on the bill, in a chamber controlled by Sonko's Pastef party. Sonko, a former firebrand opposition leader appointed prime minister in 2024, had pledged to criminalise same-sex relations in the Muslim-majority country.

## Ukraine remembers its dead as war enters a fifth year

Four years since Russia launched its full-scale invasion, people across Ukraine have remembered their dead from a war which shows no sign of ending. As the conflict enters a fifth year, the Ukrainian military continues to resist being overrun by Russian forces, but military losses are mounting on both sides and Ukraine's population faces near-daily aerial attacks. On Tuesday, Volodymyr Zelensky said "Ukraine never chose this war", adding: "We have defended our independence, we have not lost our statehood." The Kremlin, which believed it could capture Kyiv within days, acknowledged its war aims "haven't been fully achieved yet" and said it intended to continue attacking Ukraine. Spokesman Dmitry Peskov

repeated a frequent Kremlin accusation that western support for Ukraine had enlarged the conflict, turning it into a "confrontation between Russia and the West". Russia now controls just under 20% of Ukraine but the Ukrainian military has prevented it from capturing the entirety of the eastern Donbas region. A minute's silence at 10:00 brought Kyiv to a halt on a sombre day for the country, though one on which a sense of solidarity was palpable. In the city's Maidan square, where a growing host of flags has commemorated the dead since the launch of Russia's full-scale invasion, banners and heads were lowered as people stood in silent contemplation. Surrounded by the glowing 11th Century mosaics of the Cathedral of



St Sophia, in the heart of the capital, Zelensky and his wife Olena led a prayer service. The Ukrainian president was accompanied by some of his most ardent European supporters, including Finland's Alexander Stubb, Sweden's Ulf Kristersson and European Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen. In Bucha, a town west of the capital that in 2022 witnessed some of the

worst horrors that have accompanied Russia's invasion, a steady stream of people laid flowers on the black granite headstones of soldiers. "The war has taken a lot of lives," observed a man called Valentyn, who had come to visit the graves of fallen comrades. "Unfortunately for us it's too many," he said. "No-one one thought it would last this long." Across the vast coun-

try there are many places like this, where photographs of the fallen stand alongside thousands of Ukraine's blue and yellow flags fluttering in the breeze. The war has touched everyone in Ukraine, in so many different ways, from losses on the battlefield, to the scattering of families, and the search for warmth and light in the midst of Russia's winter bombardments. In Zelensky's lengthy morning video address, the Ukrainian president was seen striding through subterranean corridors of the presidential palace in central Kyiv - underground passages lined with pipes and cables, reminiscent of Winston Churchill's World War Two offices in London. Acknowledging the staggering loss of life Ukraine has

endured, Zelensky said: "We have every right to say: we have defended our independence, we have not lost our statehood. Ukraine exists not just on the map." The video offered a rare glimpse of the world where the president and his staff have spent much of their time since February 2022. "This is where I held my first conversations with world leaders at the start of the war," Zelensky said as he walked along echoing underground passages. Back then, many thought Zelensky's days were numbered and that Ukraine would fall. Instead, four years on, Ukraine continues to hold its own against Russian troops across the east of the country, at an ever-increasing cost of manpower and resources for Moscow.



## Adani Group Working To Restart Formula 1 In Greater Noida: Karan Adani

The Adani Group is working on strategies to restart the Formula 1 motor sport at the Buddh International Circuit in Greater Noida, Karan Adani, the MD of Adani Cement said on Saturday. According to official sources, Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya recently visited the circuit and held talks with officials from Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority. "I'm very excited... obviously the Buddh circuit comes (as) part of the deal. I'm very personally engaged in terms of bringing Formula 1 back into India. I think India has a lot of potential. There's a lot of following in Formula 1 from India," Adani, who is also the MD of Adani Ports & SEZ, said while speaking at the 70th Foundation Day of All India Management Association (AIMA) in the national capital. The Adani Group is in the fray to buy the troubled Jaiprakash Associates Ltd (JAL) - the flagship company of the



Jaypee Group. In November 2025, the infrastructure-to-energy group won majority lenders' vote for takeover of debt-laden Jaiprakash Associates as its Rs 14,535 crore acquisition proposal included a higher upfront payment than rival bidders. Adani further said he has

been following the sport since 2000 and believes India can set a benchmark for global events like Formula 1. "Reputation of India and Indians has improved very, very significantly... I do believe that India can really showcase Formula 1... and can be a benchmark for a

global event," he said. Adani said the exposure to such sports in India is limited and people have to go to other countries like Abu Dhabi or Singapore to experience the sport. Re-starting Formula 1 will also provide an opportunity to showcase not just the infrastructure but the hospi-

tility and the heritage of country, he said. The F1 race was held in 2011, 2012, 2013 at the Buddh Circuit before being halted due to tax dispute with the Uttar Pradesh government, which said the event was entertainment and not a sport.

## Courting controversy and befriending Trump - Fifa's 'unlikely saviour'

It is 10 years since Gianni Infantino was elected Fifa president, with a remit to rescue football's world governing body. The decade since has been one of reform, expansion and, more recently, controversy. Infantino was installed with Fifa engulfed by claims of widespread corruption and after predecessor Sepp Blatter had resigned. Fifa's finances were in a desperate state. There was a reported \$550m (£392m) black hole, external after sponsors walked away. In Infantino, the game felt it had found a safe pair of hands. "I will work tirelessly to bring football back to Fifa, and Fifa back to football," Infantino said. Ten years on, there can be no doubt the governing body is in rude health. It expects to report record revenues, external of \$13bn (£9.6bn) for the three-year cycle through to the end of this year. But those figures only tell part of the story. They are boosted by the controversial Club World Cup, and the biggest-ever World Cup with its high ticket



prices. Infantino has clashed with players' unions and European football, but he remains in an impregnable position at the top of the world game. This is the story of his presidency and his legacy. It is easy to forget Blatter's successor as Fifa president was supposed to be Michel Platini. But after Platini was drawn into the scandal at the organisation - both he and Blatter were later fully cleared of corruption charges - Infantino was thrust forward as Uefa's preferred candidate. As the general secretary of European

football's governing body, Infantino had been the right-hand man of president Platini for seven years. But he was an unlikely saviour - a man who was rarely in the consciousness of the average football fan. To many he was just the guy who presented Champions League draws. Ten years on, you would be hard pressed to find a football fan who does not recognise him. Turning Fifa around was no small task. The US Department of Justice had indicted a large number of top executives and it needed root-and-branch reform.

## Ranji Trophy Final Highlights Karnataka vs Jammu And Kashmir Day 2: J&K consolidate to 527/6

Skipper Paras Dogra made a gutsy 70 but his intentional head-butting of Karnataka substitute KV Aneesh overshadowed an otherwise solid batting performance from Jammu and Kashmir, who reached 527 for 6 at stumps on the second day of the Ranji Trophy final. Dogra along with keeper batter Kanhaiya Wadhawan (70), Sahil Lotra (57 batting) all made handsome contributions as it became a real toil for the Karnataka bowlers save Prasidh Krishna (3/90 in 29 overs) didn't make much of an impact! See you tomorrow! And that's Stumps on Day 2! J&K are firmly in the driver's seat at a mammoth 527/6 and will look to pile on the runs tomorrow to bat the opposition entirely



out of the game. Because we lost a few overs to the fading light today, there will be a 10-minute early start on Day 3 to make up for lost time. Make sure you tune in at 9:20 am IST (3:50 am GMT). You can join us a bit earlier for our analysis as well. Until then, it's goodbye from the commentary box! Stumps called early due to bad

light! It was a shortened final session, but the batting side remains in complete control as fading light forced the umpires to call the players off the field. Sahil Lotra, unbeaten on 57 and Abid Mushtaq on 20 safely navigated the tricky period, ensuring their team walks back to the pavilion in the driver's seat with a mas-

sive 527/6 on the board. J&K dominated the afternoon session - In the afternoon, the batting duo continued their great work, putting together a massive 110-run stand before Wadhawan was caught out shortly after reaching his half-century. Dogra also pushed past fifty, but was eventually bowled by spinner Shreyas Gopal for a well-made 70. Even after losing these two wickets, J&K ended the Tea break in a dominant position at 478/6, with Sahil Lotra and Abid Mushtaq finishing the session safely at the crease. A crucial partnership for J&K - Just when Karnataka seemed to be gaining momentum, Kanhaiya Wadhawan and skipper Paras Dogra stepped up to rescue the innings for J&K.

## "I Think Players Would Agree": Daniil Medvedev Suggests Tennis Ranking System Rethink

Daniil Medvedev beat Shang Juncheng on Tuesday to reach the last 16 of the Dubai Open but implored tour organisers to limit ranking points to only the most prestigious events to reduce player workload. A week after beating the Chinese world number 262 in Doha, Medvedev again faced Shang and won 6-1, 6-3 in his opening match in the 500-level event in the UAE. After the victory, Medvedev said he would like to see more mandatory events in the calendar, but for ranking points only to be attributed to Masters-level events and Grand Slams in order to convince players to enter less tournaments. "I would think the players would agree, from what I'm hearing, to



making... even more mandatory tournaments," the 11th-ranked Russian told reporters. "I would say make four Grand Slams, I don't know, 11 Masters, and that's it. The other tournaments (500- and 250-level events), maybe make them without points or something." The 2021 US Open winner said

that the chase for points to climb the rankings and reach the ATP Finals - reserved for the top eight in the world - causes players to increase their workload, sometimes to the detriment of their bodies. "What happens is last year, Holger (Rune) got injured in Stockholm (250 event),

everybody was like, 'Yeah, but you don't have to play it'. If he wants to be in Turin (for the ATP Finals), he has to, even if it's not a mandatory tournament," Medvedev said. "Last year, I played in seven tournaments in a row. Did I have to? No. I played bad in the beginning of the year, maybe I can get 100 points here, 200 points here, be higher seeded next year. "If there would be no points there, at least it is an easier decision. But it's not going to happen." Medvedev will next meet a fellow former Grand Slam champion when he faces 40-year-old Stanislas Wawrinka in the round of 16. Elsewhere in Dubai, second seed Alexander Panik beat lucky loser Jan-Lennard Struff 6-3, 6-4.

## Morocco Captain Romain Saiss Announces International Retirement



Veteran Morocco captain Romain Saiss announced on Tuesday his retirement from international football, bringing to a close what he called "the most beautiful chapter of my life". Saiss's decision comes after repeated injuries, including in the last Africa Cup of Nations, where he only played 18 minutes in the opening match against Comoros before he was substituted due to an issue with his left thigh. The 35-year-old former Angers and Wolverhampton Wanderers centre-back said on social media the decision followed "careful reflection" and was made with "immense emotion". "Wearing the colours of Morocco and

becoming their captain will remain the greatest honour of my career," he wrote. "Every time I wore it, I felt the weight of responsibility, but above all an indescribable pride." His brief AFCON return in December had followed an 18-month absence, also due to injury, having skipped the side to the 2022 World Cup semi-final. Saiss's retirement comes just three months ahead of this year's World Cup, in which Morocco are set to face Brazil, Scotland and Haiti. "I will now be your number one supporter," he said. "I am leaving the national team, but I will forever remain a Lion." Saiss will still play for Qatar Stars League club Al Sadd.



Serie A: AC Milan Beaten By Parma, Napoli Rage At Officials

## CHELSEA AND WEST HAM FINED OVER 'MASS CONFRONTATION'

Chelsea have been fined £325,000 and West Ham £300,000 over a "mass confrontation" between players during their Premier League game in January. The incident at Stamford Bridge started when Chelsea forward Joao Pedro reacted to West Ham winger Adama Traore's shove on Blues defender Marc Cucurella in added time. Both sets of players came together in ugly scenes and, following a lengthy video assistant referee (VAR) check, Hammers defender Jean-Clair Todibo was shown a straight red card by referee Anthony Taylor for grabbing Joao Pedro by the neck. "It was alleged that Chelsea FC failed to ensure its players didn't behave in an improper and/or provocative way around the 95th minute," said an Football Association statement, external "It was also alleged that West Ham



United FC failed to ensure its players didn't behave in an improper and/or provocative way at this time." Both clubs subsequently admitted the charges against them." In imposing the fines, an independent regulatory commission took the fact that both clubs had committed previous breaches of FA Rule E20.1 into account. The rule states that there should be no behaviour that is "improper, offensive, violent, threatening, abusive, indecent,

insulting or provocative". Chelsea hit back from two goals down to beat West Ham Chelsea were 2-0 down in the match but went on to win 3-2 thanks to Enzo Fernandez's injury-time goal, which came before the confrontation. In its written reasons, the independent regulatory commission stated "this was a serious incident" involving a number of Chelsea's players. It added: "It was not accepted that Mr Cucurella was wholly without fault. He was aware of his actions

after conceding the corner kick and returning to his feet. "He sought to invite a reaction from Mr Traore. That is not to justify Mr Traore's disproportionate reaction from which the mass confrontation ensued." Furthermore, the commission noted that three of the Chelsea players were in some way seeking to incite the crowd during and towards the end of the incident. "There is no justification for this behaviour, irrespective of what had happened during the course of the game or within the mass confrontation itself. It was accepted that the club had admitted the charge and was contrite." The commission said both clubs "contributed to the incident" and that Traore's "disproportionate reaction to Mr Cucurella's movement as he returned to his feet, was the catalyst for what occurred".

## ROOKIE KNUEPPEL RACES TO NBA THREE-POINTER RECORD



Rookie Kon Knueppel became the fastest player to reach 200 three-pointers in NBA history as the Charlotte Hornets defeated the Chicago Bulls 131-99. The 20-year-old American scored 21 points, including three three-pointers, while Brandon Miller added 23 as the visiting Hornets condemned the Bulls to a 10th consecutive defeat for the first time since the 2018-19 season. Knueppel needed only 58 games to tally up his 200th three-pointer - 11 less than previous record holder Duncan Robinson - and is also just the second rookie to reach the milestone. With a league-leading 201 three-pointers, Knueppel only needs six more to break Keegan Murray's record of 206 in 2022-23 for the Sacramento Kings for the most three made by a player in their first season. Having played college basketball for the Duke Blue Devils, Knueppel was drafted as a

fourth overall pick by the Hornets in the 2025 draft. "It is exciting and refreshing [to coach Knueppel]," said head coach Charles Lee after the Hornets' eighth straight win on the road. "It elevates our whole culture when you have a guy who is that good but that humble and has no ego, and it becomes contagious throughout the whole organisation." Meanwhile, new signing James Harden scored 20 points as the Cleveland Cavaliers returned to winning ways with a 109-94 victory over the New York Knicks. The result helped them draw level on 37 wins and 22 losses with the Knicks, who are third in the Eastern Conference. Harden, who left the Los Angeles Clippers this month, is an 11-time NBA All-Star and regarded as one of the greatest guards in history, but the 36-year-old has never won an NBA title.

## EVERYONE WILL ENJOY 'SAMPRADAYINI SUPPINI SUDDAPOOSANI' RELEASING IN THEATRES ON MARCH 6: HERO SHIVAJI

The crime comedy family thriller 'Sampradayini Suppini Suddapoosani', produced and headlined by noted actor Shivaji under the banner of Sri Shivaji Productions, is set for a worldwide theatrical release on March 6. Shivaji and Laya, who earlier delivered several hit films together and earned popularity as a successful pair, are reuniting once again in this film. Directed by Sudheer Sriram, the movie is jointly produced by Shivaji and leading OTT platform ETV Win. Prominent producers Bunny Vasu and Vamsi Nandipati are releasing the film in theatres through their banners. A press meet was held in this regard. Speaking on the occasion, hero and producer Shivaji said that the film will release globally on March 6. He expressed happiness over the film being released with the support of ETV Win, Bunny Vasu, and Vamsi Nandipati. He stated that the project was initially planned for a theatrical release and was made as envisioned. Though ETV Win was looking for fresh original content for OTT, the team felt the film would offer a better theatrical experience and decided to release it in cinemas. He said everyone who watched the film laughed heartily and expressed confidence that it is



a good film that will appeal to all audiences. Shivaji thanked director Anil Ravipudi for supporting the theatrical release. ETV Win Business Head Saikrishna said it is a film that Shivaji and Laya are acting together again after a long gap. He described the film as a crime comedy family thriller and expressed confidence that audiences will enjoy it in theatres and extend their support. Actress Laya said she initially felt both happy and slightly disappointed when the film was planned for OTT release, as she always associates films with the theatre experience since childhood. She expressed joy that the film is now releasing in theatres and believes it will mark a strong beginning to her second innings. She added that the film contains all elements required for success and should be experienced in theatres for its emotional impact. Bunny Vasu said director Anil Ravipudi encouraged them to release the film in theatres after watching it. With Shivaji's confidence, they decided on a theatrical release. He appreciated Shivaji's performance,

stating that he has reached another level after his films in the 1990s. He also praised Laya's performance, saying her role will be memorable. He expressed confidence that the combination of crime thriller and family emotion will make the film a success. Vamsi Nandipati said Shivaji and Laya's hit combination is returning to the big screen with this film. He expressed happiness in associating with his favorite actress Laya and described the film as a thriller and entertainer. He voiced confidence that the film will become a blockbuster. Director Sudheer Sriram said the film was ini-

tially planned for OTT, but after Anil Ravipudi watched it and suggested a theatrical release, the team decided to bring it to cinemas. He said it felt like a miracle that ETV Win and Shivaji agreed to the decision. He added that good content has found its way to theatres and announced that a new trailer will be released soon. Actor Ali said the director has made the film in a neat and engaging manner. He invited audiences to watch and enjoy the film in theatres on March 6 and expressed confidence that the Shivaji-Laya combination will achieve success once again.

## Yuva Samrat Naga Chaitanya, Karthik Dandu, SVCC, Sukumar Writings' Never Before Mythical Thriller Vrushakarma First Glimpse On March 5th

Riding high on the phenomenal success of Thandel, Yuva Samrat Naga Chaitanya steps into an entirely new space by collaborating with Karthik Dandu, the filmmaker who made an emphatic statement with his debut blockbuster Virupaksha. Together, they embark on an ambitious mythical thriller unlike anything seen before, titled Vrushakarma. Crafted on a grand scale, the film is jointly produced by SVCC and Sukumar Writings, with Bapineedu presenting the project. From the moment two cryptic behind-the-scenes videos unveiled followed by first look, curiosity surrounding the film has only intensified. Meanwhile, the makers came up with an update on the film's first glimpse, which will be out on March 5th to give a first sneak peek into the mystical world of Vrushakarma. The announcement poster shows Naga Chaitanya standing inside a dark, rugged cave, bathed in sharp shafts of light breaking through from above. His muscular frame, rugged beard, and intense, unwavering gaze project resilience and quiet fury. Dressed in a worn outfit with climbing gear strapped around his waist and a digging weapon in hand, the character feels like a man pushed to extremes. The ropes, rocks, and uneven terrain around him heighten the sense of peril and adventure. Naga Chaitanya



has taken on an intense challenge in preparing for the role, undergoing a significant physical transformation and adopting a raw, rugged look demanded by the character. He will also be seen performing several breathtaking stunts, adding authenticity and thrill to this high-adrenaline adventure. Director Karthik Dandu, fully aware of the expectations following his blockbuster debut and the powerful combination in hand, is being extra cautious in shaping Vrushakarma to deliver a truly immersive experience. Meenakshi

Chaudhary is the leading lady opposite Chaitanya, while Sparsh Shrivastava of Laapataa Ladies fame will be seen as the antagonist. Vrushakarma brings together a powerhouse technical crew that elevates the film's scale and vision. The visual tone is crafted by Ragul D Herian behind the camera, while Ajaneesh B Loknath provides music. The world of the film is built under the guidance of production designer Sri Nagendra Tangala, with Naveen Nooli ensuring a sharp and impactful narrative flow through his editing.



## Priyanka Chopra Is an Asset to Varanasi!

Global star Priyanka Chopra is once again making headlines, but this time for consistently putting Varanasi on the world map. During almost every Hollywood interview for her recent projects, Priyanka has been passionately speaking about Varanasi and how close it is to her hearts. In one such interaction she said, "We travel time, we travel the world, it's an adventure. I think it's really cool and defining for Indian cinema," while referring to Varanasi. What stands out is her excitement and pride each time she mentions the SS Rajamouli film. Even while promoting big-ticket Hollywood ventures, Priyanka makes it a point to bring up Varanasi whenever possible, without hesitation. It is a known fact that big stars are usually not keen to talk

about other projects while promoting their ongoing films. But Priyanka breaks that barrier for Varanasi, openly expressing her enthusiasm every chance she gets. Industry observers feel that her repeated references are not random. By talking about Varanasi on global platforms, she is indirectly drawing international attention to the cultural richness of Indian films and the Mahesh Babu starrer. At a time when global audiences are increasingly curious about Indian stories, such mentions can play a key role in boosting the hype around the film. Many believe Priyanka is truly an asset to Varanasi. Her global reach, combined with her genuine enthusiasm, is helping create worldwide buzz around the film big time.

## Yash's 'Toxic' team introduces Darrell D'Silva as Salvador in film

Bangalore: The makers of director Geethu Mohandas's 'Toxic: A Fairy Tale for Grown Ups', featuring Rocking Star Yash in the lead, have now officially unveiled the stylish first look of actor Darrell D'Silva as Salvador in the film. Taking to his social media timelines, Yash shared Darrell D'Silva's first look poster, saying, "Introducing Darrell D'Silva as SALVADOR in - A Toxic Fairy Tale For Grown-Ups. #Toxic In Cinemas Worldwide from 19-03-2026. #ToxicTheMovie #ToxicOnMarch19th." Director Geethu Mohandas praised Darrell D'Silva's work in the film, saying, "It isn't easy to learn Kannada and deliver it with such fluency and confidence. I truly bow to your dedication and



discipline. Your energy on set was absolutely infectious. You lifted every moment with your presence and passion. See you soon in India @humphrybaudilaire." The makers have already released actors A k s h a y

Obero, Sudev Nair and Balaji Manohar's first looks in the film While Balaji Manohar plays Bheera, actors Akshay Oberoi plays Tony and Sudev Nair

plays Karmadi in the film. Director Geethu Mohandas, who took to her Instagram stories to share her experience of directing Balaji Manohar, wrote, "It has been an absolute pleasure working with you. I noticed how you chose to stay on set even after your shots were done, simply to soak in the process of cinema. That kind of dedication is rare. Your enthusiasm, your constant curiosity, and your willingness to contribute thoughtful suggestions never go unnoticed. You just don't perform your role, you invest in the film. Thank you @balajimanoharofficial." Speaking about Sudev, director Geethu Mohandas shared on social media, "This journey would have been much tougher without the right casting for Karmadi."

# MARVEL'S WOLVERINE GAME GETS RELEASE DATE FOR PS5

**Hyderabad:** Insomniac Games has confirmed that Marvel's Wolverine will release on September 15, 2026, only for PlayStation 5. This announcement comes after months of waiting and speculation. Fans have been excited about this game since it was first announced in September 2021.

### GAME DETAILS AND PLATFORM

Marvel's Wolverine will be available only on PlayStation 5. The game will use the full power of the PS5, with features like better graphics, lighting, and effects. The game will also work with the PlayStation 5 Pro, making it even better. Fans can now

add the game to their wishlist on the PlayStation Store, although it is not yet available for pre-order.

### PRICING AND EXPECTATIONS

The game is expected to cost Rs. 5,999 for the Standard Edition and Rs. 6,999 for the Deluxe Edition in India. The release date is set before other big games, like GTA 6, making it one of the most anticipated games of the year.

### GAMEPLAY AND STORY

In the game, players will control Logan (Wolverine), a mutant with sharp claws and fast healing powers. The game will focus on close com-

bat and stealth. The story will take players to places like the Canadian wilderness, Madripoor, and Tokyo. The game will explore Wolverine's past and his struggles.

### KEY CHARACTERS AND DEVELOPMENT

The game will include famous Marvel characters such as Mystique, Omega Red, and the Sentinels. The voice of Wolverine is Liam McIntyre, known for his role in Spartacus and for voicing characters in Gears of War and Star Wars Jedi: Fallen Order. Insomniac Games is developing the game with Marcus Smith as the creative director and Mike Dalyas the



game director. Marvel's Wolverine promises to offer a thrilling and

of the PS5, with features like better graphics, lighting, and effects.

### THE ULTIMATE WOLVERINE FANTASY

Marvel's Wolverine is built on Insomniac Games staples like fast, fluid, and ferocious combat; exhilarating, action-packed set pieces; robust accessibility features; and a gripping story that taps into the core tenets of one of the most compelling comic book characters of all time. The game will explore Logan's signature spin on heroism - which is much darker and more brutal than you might expect from Insomniac.

### ICONIC CHARACTERS

Independence is often the way of Wolverine, although he'll encounter familiar faces on his journey, like the elusive Mystique and the brutish Omega Red. Some will fight alongside Logan against all odds, while others will unleash all-out attacks, such as the Reavers, an enemy faction that will keep our hero's instincts on edge.

