



# HYDERABAD HEADLINES

RNI NO.APENG/2010/33328 VOL NO.16 ISSUE NO.: 303 HYDERABAD PAGES: 12 RS. 1/-

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2026

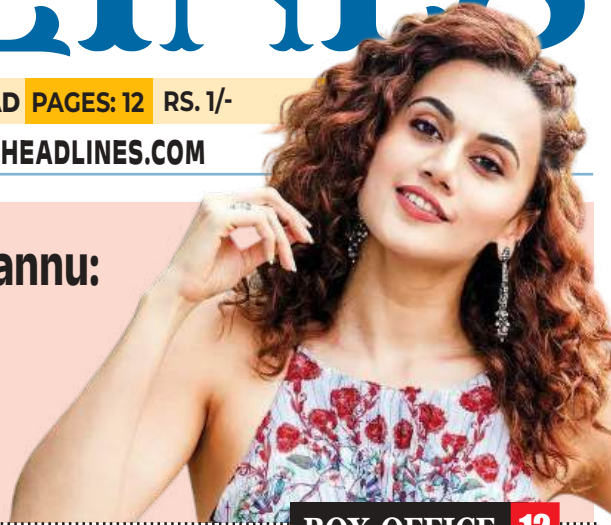
WWW.HYDERABADHEADLINES.COM



### Apple Plans India Payment Entry

MONEY MATTERS 09

### Taapsee Pannu: 'Repeated Casting Is Unfair'



BOX-OFFICE 12



### COULD A 12-HOUR FAST BOOST YOUR HEALTH

Time-restricted eating – leaving at least 12 hours between meals – may not dramatically shift the scales, but experts say it could still support metabolic health, gut function and inflammation control. Meanwhile, creatine has moved beyond bodybuilding circles, with growing evidence it may aid muscle strength, brain function and healthy ageing.

FOCUS-POINT 10

### SHORT TAKES



### India Wins, Faces West Indies Next

Abhishek Sharma scored his maiden World Cup fifty as India tweaked their batting lineup to post the second-highest T20 World Cup total, surpassing Zimbabwe's 254 from their previous match.

STADIUM 11



### Mass IAS transfers in Telangana

The government has carried out a large-scale reshuffle of the IAS cadre, transferring 45 senior officials across various departments. Key changes include Sanjay Kumar moving to Panchayat Raj and Rural Development, N Sridhar taking charge of ITC&C and Industries.

SPECIAL 02



### What's In An 'M'?

In the Union Cabinet, amid weighty national concerns, a remarkably trivial decision was made: the Centre has approved the State's request to rename Kerala as "Keralam."

OPINION 06

### THE DAILY MANTRA

LIFE @ VISION



In life:

- Work should not depend on praise.
- Character should not depend on recognition.
- Discipline should not depend on supervision.

True personality development comes from internal cultivation

Collected by

Venna Srinivasa Reddy

## 100 TG public schools from this Academic Year: CM

HYDERABAD, FEB 26



- ❖ One in every Assembly constituency as a pilot project
- ❖ Transport facilities for students similar to Arutla Public school
- ❖ CM Revanth Reddy instructed officials to complete all facilities in government schools under the CURE in a year
- ❖ As part of 99 day programme, a weeklong special session in schools and colleges
- ❖ Short-term training for teachers and lecturers on AI technology
- ❖ Breakfast for students from primary to 12th class
- ❖ Submit a report on the requirement of funds to universities
- ❖ CM holds a review of the Education department today
- ❖ Education Commission submitted the Telangana Education Policy report to the Chief Minister
- ❖ Committee member Keshava Rao is entrusted with the responsibility of prepare a report on the implementation of issues and adopt a legislation
- ❖ Government to constitute a committee under the chairmanship of a retired judge or retired Chief Secretary on fee regulation

Chief Minister Shri A Revanth Reddy has announced that Telangana Public Schools would be opened in 100 constituencies across the state (outside Hyderabad city) from this academic year. All the 100 public schools would be developed similar to the famous Telangana Public School in Arutla, Manchala mandal of Rangareddy district. All the schools would be equipped with teaching friendly classrooms, sports grounds, teaching staff and also the transport facilities. The Chief Minister on Thursday conducted a review of the Education department at the Command Control Center. Emphasizing that all the government schools in Telangana should be developed as a role model to provide quality education, the CM made it clear that the government is ready to provide adequate funds to strengthen the education sector.

Directing the engineers to construct government schools in the Core Urban Region Economy (CURE) area on the lines of corporate schools, CM Revanth Reddy stressed that modern technology should be used in the construction and the construction of 12 integrated new schools specified under the CURE area should be completed within a year. CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >

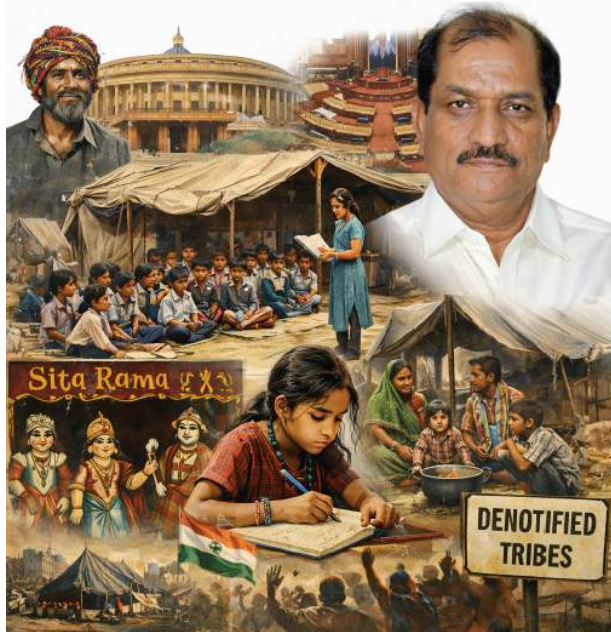
### CS Calls for 100-Day Action Roadmap



Hyderabad, Feb.26: Chief Secretary K. Rama Krishna Rao announced that, following the directives of the Chief Minister, a comprehensive 100-day initiative is being initiated to execute a range of welfare and development programmes across Telangana. He instructed all departments to engage in extensive endeavors within this 100-day framework, which will involve participation from CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >

## SHOULD THE CENTRE SEND DR DASARI SREENIVASULU TO RAJYA SABHA?

A FIELD ADMINISTRATOR WITH A TRIBAL MISSION DESERVES A NATIONAL PLATFORM



Dr Dasari Sreenivasulu IAS Retired has channelled his administrative experience into a sustained grassroots mission through SANCHARI, focusing on nomadic and denotified tribes in Andhra Pradesh. With reported improvements in school enrolment, reductions in child marriage and child labour, and a mobility adapted education model, he frames tribal empowerment as a long term social cause. His work highlights the urgent need for structured national attention to India's ten crore nomadic citizens beyond political cycles.

BY C SUBRAHMANYAM

Here is a question worth asking. If the Union government is serious about addressing the deep and persistent marginalisation of India's nomadic and denotified tribes, should it consider nominating Dr Dasari Sreenivasulu CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >

Parliament needs domain voices shaped by lived field experience, not only political managers. A Rajya Sabha platform can convert ground realities into structured reform.

### Cong govt puts Food & Shelter First Huzurnagar model colony ready for launch

Hyderabad/ Huzurnagar, Feb.26: Reaffirming that food security and housing remain the twin pillars of its welfare agenda, Telangana Irrigation and Civil Supplies Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy on Thursday announced that the prestigious Huzurnagar housing project at Ramaswamy Gutta is 95% complete and ready for inauguration in the first week of

March by Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy. Conducting an extensive on-site inspection along with Suryapet District Collector Tejas Nandalal Pawar, the Minister reviewed infrastructure, amenities and housing blocks of the Rs.125-crore project spread across 110 acres. Calling it more than just a housing scheme, Uttam said the colony reflects

Congress's commitment that "no poor family in Telangana should sleep hungry or under the open sky."

Once reduced to a garbage dumping yard during the previous regime, the land has now been transformed into a model township that will house 2,160 poor families. Each 317 sq ft single-bedroom unit is equipped CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >

### Vijay-Rashmika Tie the Knot in Udaipur



Actors Vijay Deverakonda and Rashmika Mandanna tied the knot in an intimate ceremony in Udaipur, attended by close family and friends.

The couple, who have long been linked together, kept their relationship largely private.

Wedding pictures shared online quickly went viral, with fans and film personalities pouring in congratulatory messages.

Both actors continue to remain busy with their film commitments across industries.

### "Bulldozer raj in the name of Indiramma?"

KTR slams cong over Khammam demolitions

Khammam, Feb.26: Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) working president K. T. Rama Rao on Thursday came down heavily on the Congress government over the demolition of houses in Velugumatla (Vinoba Bhava Colony) in Khammam, terming the drive "inhumane" and "legally questionable". He criticised the Revanth Reddy government for adopting a "bulldozer-first governance model". After visiting the affected families, KTR, addressing a gathering, alleged that nearly 62 acres of Bhoodan land – originally donated CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >

### "MUSI GOSA - BJP BHAROSA"

BJP Opposes Demolitions, Backs Riverbank Families

Hyderabad, Feb.26: Asserting that "development should not be carried out on the tears of the people", the Telangana BJP on Thursday launched a visit to assess and understand the plight of families who allegedly lost their homes along the banks of the Musi River flowing through the heart of capital city. The visit, titled "Musi Gosa - BJP Bharosa" (Musi suffering - BJP assurance), a fact-finding visit aimed to extend support to families who claim they lost their houses under the Gandhi Sarovar Project CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >

VICAT  
TRUST. LEGACY. FOREVER.

## CEMENTING DREAMS WITH SUPERIOR STRENGTH.

**Bharathi CEMENT**  
SUPERIOR QUALITY. GUARANTEED.

**ULTRAFAST**  
FAST SETTING CEMENT

GERMAN TECHNOLOGY  
ROBOTIC QUALITY CONTROL  
TAMPER PROOF PACKING

# 3 TIMES BETTER

# Should the Centre send Dr Dasari Sreenivasulu to Rajya Sabha?

FROM PAGE 1

## IAS RETIRED TO THE RAJYA SABHA?

This is not about party patronage. It is about whether Parliament is willing to draw upon individuals who have spent decades working at the intersection of administration and social reform. The Rajya Sabha's nominated category was envisaged precisely for such domain expertise. In Dr Sreenivasulu's case, that expertise lies in one of India's most neglected policy zones.

## A CAREER SHAPED BY FIELD REALITIES

Dr Dasari Sreenivasulu served as District Collector of Prakasham from 1997 to 2000, a tenure marked by an emphasis on tribal education and health outreach. In 1999, he was kidnapped by Naxalites in the then undivided Andhra Pradesh, an experience he has since described as transformative rather than embittering. The episode reinforced his belief that tribal distress cannot be addressed through force alone. It requires engagement, structural reform and sustained state presence. Unlike many officers who retreat into consultancy after retirement, Dr Sreenivasulu shifted to grassroots mobilisation.

## SANCHARI - REIMAGINING EDUCATION FOR THE NOMADIC CHILD

Through SANCHARI, a forum focused on the advancement of nomadic and denotified tribes, he has attempted to address a structural flaw in India's welfare design. Most social schemes assume a settled population. Nomadic communities do not fit that template. India's nomadic and denotified tribes are estimated at over ten crore people. In Andhra Pradesh alone, 28 major nomadic communities, including Banjaras, Lambadis, Yerukulas and itinerant labour groups, remain vulnerable to educational disruption, early marriage, child labour and documentation gaps. SANCHARI's approach is mobility sensitive. Field surveys reportedly identified more than 25,000 children living in thathadas, roadside camps and temporary settlements. Bridge courses were introduced for first generation learners. Seasonal schools were set up near work sites to prevent dropouts during migration cycles. Volunteer networks coordinate across districts to maintain continuity when families move.

## THE INVISIBLE TEN CRORE WHY DENOTIFIED AND NOMADIC TRIBES REMAIN A POLICY BLIND SPOT

Denotified and nomadic tribes are not a marginal demographic. Estimates place their population at over ten crore nationwide. Yet, in policy terms, they remain among the least structurally represented communities in India. Historically branded under colonial era criminal tribe legislation, many of these communities were formally "denotified" after Independence. The law changed. Social perception did not fully follow. Stigma, policing bias and documentation hurdles continue to shadow everyday life.

The problem is compounded by mobility. Welfare architecture in India is largely address based. Ration cards, school enrolment, health records and social security benefits are tied to location. For families that move seasonally for livelihood, this fixed address framework becomes a barrier.

Education is the first casualty. Migration leads to dropouts. Dropouts feed child labour. Child labour often reinforces early marriage cycles, particularly for girls. The absence of documentation makes access to targeted schemes inconsistent.

While specific schemes exist for denotified and nomadic tribes, implementation varies across states and sustained monitoring is limited. There is no permanent, empowered institutional structure with exclusive focus on this demographic at the national level. The result is a policy paradox. A population running into crores remains administratively fragmented. Any serious reform requires integrated databases, portability of welfare benefits, mobility sensitive schooling and sustained budgetary allocation. This is not a niche issue. It is a mainstream social justice challenge.

Reported outcomes in certain focus areas show school enrolment rising from roughly 20 percent to 85 percent. Child marriage reportedly fell by 60 percent. Child labour saw a 45 percent decline. While independent verification would strengthen these claims, the direction of change is significant.

Girls are given special priority. Early education is followed by integration into government hostels where possible. Nutrition, health checks and counselling are integrated into the model. Cultural preservation, including traditional performance art, is encouraged alongside formal learning. This is a grassroots attempt to adapt the state's educational architecture to the realities of migration.

## THE POLICY GAP

Denotified tribes carry a historical burden dating back to colonial criminal tribe legislation. Though legally repealed, stigma and systemic exclusion continue. Documentation hurdles, limited access to welfare, and fragmented policy attention persist. There have been discussions around permanent institutional mechanisms for DNT communities. Economic empowerment schemes exist, but their implementation remains uneven. Education for migratory populations is still an underdeveloped policy domain. This is where a practitioner's voice

in Parliament could matter. A nominated Rajya Sabha member with direct field experience could press for better documentation frameworks, mobility sensitive schooling models, targeted budget allocations and long term institutional backing for DNT communities. Parliamentary debates often lack this granular perspective.

## BEYOND POLITICS, A SOCIAL IMPERATIVE

Dr Dasari Sreenivasulu's work has drawn both support and scrutiny, particularly regarding the cultural framing of certain initiatives. That debate is part of a plural democracy. But the larger issue transcends ideology. India's nomadic and denotified tribes represent a significant demographic whose challenges remain under reported and under addressed. Bringing a domain expert into the legislative space would be a signal that social reform is not confined to manifesto promises. The Rajya Sabha was conceived as a chamber of reflection and expertise. If the Centre wishes to demonstrate seriousness about structural reform for marginalised nomadic communities, nominating a field grounded administrator like Dr Dasari Sreenivasulu would be a step worth considering. The test is simple. Are we prepared to move from acknowledgement to action when it comes to India's most invisible citizens?

# Cong govt puts Food & Shelter First

FROM PAGE 1

with a kitchen and bathroom, supported by CC roads, underground drainage, 24x7 water supply, electrification, green spaces, a school, park and community centre.

The per-unit construction cost is estimated between Rs.6 to 6.5 lakh (excluding land), while the present market value significantly enhances the asset value for beneficiaries.

In the first phase, 1,000 families will receive allotment letters next week. Uttam asserted that the selection process will be strictly merit-based under an official committee headed by the RDO, with "zero tolerance" for corruption or political interference.

The Minister emphasized that food security initiatives — including distribution of fine rice to ration-card holders and



issuance of new ration cards — are being implemented without discrimination. He said large-scale housing construction and MSP procurement for farmers reflect a people-first governance model.

According to the minister, nearly 5.5 lakh houses are under construction, marking one

of the largest housing drives in Telangana's history. In Huzurnagar Assembly constituency alone, apart from this colony, 3,500 Indiramma houses have been sanctioned. The inauguration ceremony will culminate with a community meal ('Sahapankti Bhojanam') for beneficiaries. (NSS)

# "Bulldozer raj in the name of Indiramma?"

FROM PAGE 1

under the movement inspired by Vinoba Bhave — had been distributed to 1,895 beneficiaries with valid pattas in 2014. In fact, Bhoodan land, by definition, is meant for the poor and cannot be treated as encroached property without due process. "Calling them encroachers despite documented proof is unjust", he remarked and alleged serious procedural lapses.

Questioning the "Indiramma Rajyam" slogan by the ruling Congress, KTR asked whether the government's promise of welfare for the poor now meant demolishing their homes. He alleged that the late-night eviction, backed by heavy police deployment, resembled a "military-style crackdown".

The BRS leader hinted at possible real estate interests behind the drive and questioned the reported transfer of the local RDO. "There is a growing perception that this land is being eyed for high-end development. The government must place all facts in the public domain", he added.

Assuring legal support to the affected families, KTR said BRS would fight the case in all forums, "even up to the Supreme Court if needed", and demand on-site rehabilitation for eligible families. He urged the state government to immediately halt further coercive action, conduct a transparent review of land records in Velugumatla and engage directly with affected families. Senior BRS leaders, including former minister Puvvada Ajay Kumar and MP Vaddiraju Ravichandra, were present during the visit. (NSS)

# "MUSI GOSA - BJP BHAROSA"



FROM PAGE 1

initiated by the Congress-led government under Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy. BJP alleged large-scale injustices in the ongoing Musi Riverfront works and assuring support to affected families. State BJP president N. Ramchander Rao began the tour at Babu Ghat after paying tributes to Mahatma Gandhi, and visited several localities along the Musi river to interact with residents. He alleged that hundreds of houses were demolished as part of the Musi Riverfront Development and the proposed Gandhi Sarovar project under the Congress government. Addressing the media, Rao demanded an immediate halt to the "forced demolitions", stating that development should not come at the cost of the poor. He clarified that the BJP is not against Musi beautification but insisted that cleaning the river and preventing industrial and sewage discharge must precede expansion of buffer zones.

Citing Gujarat's Sardar Sarovar Dam as an example of scientific development, Rao said poor families should not be displaced in the name of progress. He also asserted that the project is solely a State initiative and not backed by the Centre. The BJP vowed to continue its agitation until affected families receive justice, with residents in several colonies expressing fear and anguish over losing their homes. The BJP leader visited various areas, including Madhu Park Ridge Apartments, lands and apartments near Lotus National School and Aditya Enclave. During the interactions the victims expressed deep distress over losing their homes in the name of Musi Riverfront project. Families pour out their grievances, many break down in tears while sharing their plight and women and the elderly are feared at the prospect of losing their shelter. (NSS)

# CS Calls for 100-Day Action Roadmap

FROM PAGE 1

the Chief Minister, Ministers, and elected representatives.

A special meeting was held by the Chief Secretary with Special Chief Secretaries, Principal Secretaries, and Secretaries of the State Government at the Secretariat on Thursday.

During the meeting, the Chief Secretary indicated that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is scheduled to attend a meeting with secretaries on February 28 concerning the 100-day initiative.

Additionally, the Chief Secretary announced a meeting for district collectors on Sunday, March 1. He emphasised that each department should formulate its action plan for the 100-day period, focusing on various development activities from March 2 to June 9, and that discussion points should be promptly established during the district collectors' meeting.

Furthermore, the Chief Secretary highlighted that the Chief Minister and Ministers will inaugurate a number of development and welfare initiatives, and urged that all government structures already completed should be made ready for the forthcoming programme. (NSS)

# 100 TG public schools from this Academic Year: CM

FROM PAGE 1

The officials were also ordered that all the facilities available in Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan and Jubilee Hills Public Schools in the city should be provided in these integrated schools. The Government will not compromise in the upgradation of 164 schools with additional rooms and other facilities to be provided in the 17 schools in the Cure. The CM suggested a weeklong program be taken up on education related issues during the 99 day programme in the schools. The public representatives and officials should visit schools and colleges to find out about the provision of necessary facilities and other issues and take steps to resolve them.

In the wake of the increasing role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the world, CM Revanth Reddy instructed the officials to immediately take necessary steps to provide education on AI from the school level. Organizing short-term training classes on AI for teachers and lecturers to keep abreast of the changing technology and honing skills of the students in AI to grab the world of opportunities was discussed in the meeting. The Chief minister asserted that the changes should also be brought in the technical education system.

Further, the CM ordered that AI-based courses be started immediately in polytechnic colleges and ATCs by stopping the outdated courses. Those who completed courses in polytechnics and ATCs should immediately get employment opportunities in various industries, the Chief



minister said that funds will be allocated to all universities in the state. The CM reminded that Rs. 1000 crore has already been allocated to Osmania University. The Chief Minister ordered the Chairman of the Higher Education Board, Balkishta Reddy, to submit a report on the requirement of funds for the remaining universities. Reviewing the arrangements on introducing breakfast for students in all government schools from 2026-2027 academic year, the CM made several suggestions to the officials and representatives of the Hare Krishna Mission regarding the provision of breakfast. Along with breakfast, milk should be provided to every student, the Chief minister said, ordering the officials to purchase milk from the government owned Vijaya Dairy. The officials were also instructed to use technology to ascertain the requirement of calories for students regularly. A new Kit of books, uniforms, school bag, pens, pencils, sharpeners, colored pencils, geometry boxes, dictionary, shoes, and socks would

be provided to the students. The government will provide sufficient funds for this.

During the meeting, the Telangana Private Schools Fee Regulatory Monitoring Commission submitted its report to CM Revanth Reddy regarding the regulation of fees in private schools. The Commission briefed the CM about the policies implemented in various states in regulating the fees. The Chief minister instructed District Collectors and DEOs to conduct a visit at the district level and submit a report on fees. At the state level, a committee with a retired judge or retired chief secretary would take final decisions on fee structure. The CM also suggested that the draft should be kept in the public domain to seek the opinions of students' parents, intellectuals and social workers on the fee structure.

Telangana Education Commission Chairman Akunuri Murali and members submitted the report on the Telangana education policy to Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy. The Education Commission

Chairman and members briefed the CM that they visited America, Vietnam and Malaysia and studied the best practices in various countries and states and prepared the report.

The Chairman explained each point in the report at length. CM also expressed his views on the respective issues and made several suggestions. Thereafter, the Chief Minister entrusted the responsibility of preparing a report on the issues that need to be implemented and adopting legislation with Government Advisor Dr. Kesava Rao.

Chief Minister's Advisor Vem Narendar Reddy, State Government Advisor Dr. Kesava Rao, CM's Principal Secretary Sesshadi, CM's Special Secretary Ajith Reddy, Higher Education Council Chairman Professor Balakrishna Reddy, Education Secretary Yogita Rana, Technical Education Commissioner Devasena, Intermediate Board Director Krishna Aditya, Education Department Special Secretary Venkatesh Dhotre, School Education Department Director Naveen Nicholas, Samagra Shiksha Nodal Officer, D. Nagaraju, Osmania University VC Professor Moulugam Kumar, Dr. BR Ambedkar Open University VC Professor Ghantha Chakrapani, Education Commission members Professor P.L. Vishweshwar Rao, Dr. Charakonda Venkatesh, Jyotsna Shiva Reddy, Professor Padmaja Shah, Karthik Subrahmanyam, Veera Vasavi, Dr. Zennatfar Azmi Syed, Dr. N. Venkatesh, Sheikh Javed Afroz, Dr. J. Swapna and others participated.

# Mass Transfers of IAS Officers in Telangana

Hyderabad, Feb 26: In Telangana, the government has issued orders transferring and assigning new responsibilities to 45 officers.

## KEY IAS TRANSFERS

- **Sanjay Kumar** - Transferred from Special Chief Secretary of Industries & IT Departments to Special Chief Secretary of PR & RD and RWS Departments.
- **Sabyasachi Ghosh** - Assigned responsibilities for the Flagship Welfare & Development Schemes Unit along with CSR.
- **M. Dana Kishore** - Continues as Special Chief Secretary of Labour, Employment, Training & Factories Department; given additional charge of Disaster Management.
- **N. Sridhar** - Appointed as Principal Secretary of IT & Industries Department.
- **Rahul Bojja** - Transferred as Principal Secretary (Political Affairs) in the General Administration Department; given additional charge of BC Welfare Department.
- **E. Sridhar** - Appointed as Secretary of Irrigation & CAD Department.
- **Gaurav Uppal** - Appointed as Secretary of Finance & Planning Department; given additional charge as EO DG of TGRAC.

## OTHER KEY POSTINGS

- **B. Vijiendra** - Transferred from Mahabubnagar Collector to Secretary of Telangana Social Welfare Residential Educational Institutions Society.
- **D. Divya** - Continues as SERP CEO; given additional charge as State Nodal Officer for Prajavani.
- **Adwait Kumar Singh** - Transferred from Mahabubabad Collector to Special Secretary, Coordination Department, Telangana Bhavan (Delhi).
- **M. Hanumantha Rao** - Transferred from Yadadri Bhuvanagiri Collector to Director of Endowments.
- **Sikta Patnaik** - Transferred from Narayanpet Collector to Special Secretary, Finance Department.
- **Sandeep Kumar Jha** - Transferred from GHMC Zonal Commissioner to Jangaon Collector.
- **M.D. Musharraf Ali Faruqi** - Transferred from TGS PDCL CMD to CMD of the third DISCOM.
- **Pamela Satpathy** - Transferred from Karimnagar Collector to Special Commissioner, Labour Department.
- **Anuraag Jayanti** - Transferred from GHMC Zonal Commissioner to Yadadri Bhuvanagiri Collector.
- **Rahul Raj P.S.** - Transferred from Medak Collector to Special Commissioner & Registrar of Cooperation Department.
- **Bhavesht Mishra** - Redesignated as Special Secretary in IT Department.

## NEW DISTRICT COLLECTORS

- **Jitesh V. Patil** - Appointed as TGS PDCL CMD.
- **Rizwanbasha Shaik** - Transferred from Jangaon Collector to Jogulamba Gadwal

- Collector.
- **Santhosh B.M.** - Transferred from Jogulamba Gadwal Collector to Director of Tribal Welfare.
- **Prateek Jain** - Transferred from Vikarabad Collector to Narayanpet Collector.
- **Sneha Shabarish** - Transferred from Hanumakonda Collector to Mahabubabad Collector.
- **P. Katayani Devi** - Appointed as Joint Managing Director, State Finance Corporation.
- **G. Phaneendra Reddy** - Transferred from TGMIDC MD to Additional Collector of Narayanpet.
- **Chitra Mishra** - Appointed as Karimnagar Collector (from Eturnagaram ITDA Project Officer).
- **Garima Agrawal** - Appointed as Rajana Sircilla Collector.
- **Deepak Tewari** - Appointed as Vikarabad Collector.
- **Pratima Singh** - Appointed as Medak Collector.
- **Ankit** - Appointed as Bhadradi Kothagudem Collector.
- **Chahat Bajpai** - Appointed as Hanumakonda Collector; given additional charge as GWMC Commissioner.
- **Khushboo Gupta** - Appointed as Mahabubnagar Collector.

## OTHER POSTINGS

- **Manda Makarand** - GHMC Rajendranagar Zonal Commissioner.
- **Faizan Ahmed** - Additional Collector, Medchal-Malkajgiri.
- **Shivendra Pratap** - Joint Managing Director, Hyderabad Metro Rail Limited.
- **Parmar Pinkeshkumar Lalitkumar** - GHMC Quthbullapur Zonal Commissioner.
- **Uma Shankar Prasad** - Additional Collector, Vikarabad.

## STATE CIVIL SERVICE (SCS) OFFICERS POSTINGS

- **G. V. Shyam Prasad Lal** - Additional Collector, Nagarkurnool.
- **P. Chandraiah** - Additional Collector, Mancherla.
- **Y. V. Ganesh** - Additional Collector, Warangal.
- **Abdul Hameed** - Additional Collector, Siddipet.
- **B. Venkateshwarlu** - Additional Collector, Nirmal.
- **N. Kheemya Naik** - Additional Collector, Wanaparthy.

## OTHER APPOINTMENTS

- **K. Vidyasagar** - Appointed as Additional CEO, Industry & Investment Cell.
- **M. Surender** - Appointed as Additional Nodal Officer, Prajavani.

Overall, the government has issued orders transferring and assigning new responsibilities to 45 officers.

## SBI Hyd Circle contributes ₹53 lakh to Armed Forces Flag Day Fund

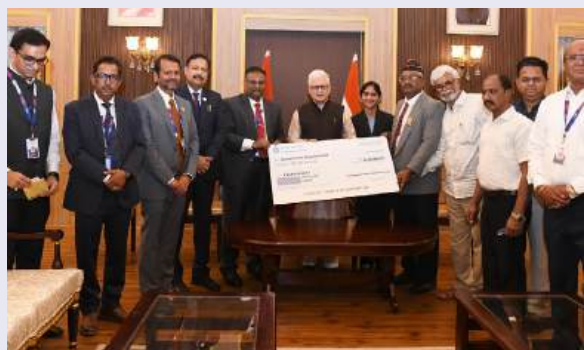
Dr Srinivas Vooradi

HYDERABAD

Governor Jishnu Dev Varma lauded the dedication of the staff of the State Bank of India, Hyderabad Circle, for their generous contribution of ₹53,00,000 to the Armed Forces Flag Day Fund. Chief General Manager of SBI Hyderabad Circle S. Radha Krishnan presented the cheque to the Governor at Lok Bhavan, Hyderabad on Thursday. The Governor, who is also the Chairperson of the Armed Forces Flag Day Fund, was joined on the

occasion by Director, Sainik Welfare Capt. Sreenivasulu along with other senior officials from the Department of Sainik Welfare and SBI, Hyderabad Circle.

Appreciating the commendable efforts of SBI employees, the Governor described the contribution as a noble gesture and expressed confidence that it would inspire other organizations and citizens to extend similar support. He also acknowledged the consistent and valuable role played by SBI in promoting the welfare of war veterans, ex-servicemen, war widows, and their dependents.



## Startupedia'26 - 12<sup>th</sup> Edition Day 1 Highlights at IPE

HYDERABAD

The Institute of Public Enterprise (IPE), Hyderabad, a premier B-School in India inaugurated the 12<sup>th</sup> edition of Startupedia'26 on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2026, launching a two-day national-level startup summit organized by its E-Cell. The event began with a traditional lamp-lighting ceremony, followed by addresses from academic leaders and industry experts.

Dr. Prarthana Kumar, Coordinator of Startupedia and Head of E-Cell, highlighted the event's innovation-driven vision and strong response, with 90 teams shortlisted from 180 entries. Prof. S Sreenivasa Murthy, Director

highlighted the eco system for startups at IPE and emphasized entrepreneurial values, particularly the 3Ps - Passion, Perseverance, and Patience - and the importance of calculated risk-taking for success in startups. Prof V Srikanth, Dean described Startupedia as a celebration of entrepreneurship that fosters interaction, learning, and growth among students. He reiterated the importance of the 3Ps and encouraged participants to actively engage in the learning experience.

Chief Guest Shri T Kameswara Rao spoke about scaling startups and funding opportunities ranging from 210 lakh to 210 crore. Guest of Honour Shri D

Chennapa Naidu Darapaneni, Founder of MERA Events, shared insights on innovation and introduced the BUILD framework - Believe, Understand, Integrate with AI, Learn, and Deliver.

Day 1 also featured expert sessions and panel discussions on Climate Tech, funding strategies, innovation beyond AI, and the Creator Economy. Notable speakers included Jeeten Desai of Ambassador and Shri Charan Lakkaraju, Founder & CEO of Student Tribe.

The event will continue on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2026 with the Jury and Valedictory Sessions, concluding the 12<sup>th</sup> edition of Startupedia with awards and celebrations of entrepreneurial excellence.

## UoH, Thai consulate step up academic partnership

HYDERABAD

Strengthening international academic cooperation, the University of Hyderabad (UoH) hosted a delegation from the Royal Thai Consulate-General, Chennai for discussions on expanding student and faculty exchanges.

Racha Aribag, Consul General, and Pornpun Pupiapiang, Deputy Consul General, met with UoH Vice Chancellor Prof. B.J. Rao. Also present were Prof. Bramanandam Manavathi, Director, Office of International Affairs (OIA), and

Prof. Arvind Susarla, Associate Director, OIA. The meeting emphasized intensifying academic collaborations between UoH and Universities in Thailand through structured exchange programmes. Both sides exchanged information on opportunities available to UoH students and faculty, as well as avenues for Thai scholars to engage with the Hyderabad-based institution.

Further consultations with the OIA are expected to finalize modalities for sustained collaboration and academic mobility initiatives. (NSS)

SOUTHERN RAILWAY (CONSTRUCTION ORGANISATION)	
<b>Tender Notice No. TBM-SG-CN-2025-26-11-OT Dated: 23/02/2026</b>	
<b>(TWO PACKET SYSTEM)</b>	
For and on behalf of The President of India, The Deputy Chief Signal & Telecommunication Engineer, Construction, Southern Railway, Tambaram invites e-tender for the following works:	
<b>Name of Work</b>	Provision of Electronic Interlocking Signalling Arrangements (Both Indoor and Outdoor) at Rameshwaram Yard in connection with Proposed construction of New Platform Line Road 5 with yard Modification and construction of Pit Line
<b>Cash value in (Rs.)</b>	174435625.88
<b>Bid Security /EMD in (Rs.)</b>	10,22,200.00
<b>Last Date and time of submission of e-Tender through IREPS site</b>	17/03/2026
<b>Cost of Tender Document (Rs.)</b>	0
<b>Period of Completion Months</b>	Nine (09)
Tenderers can view full details of tender and submit their offer at the e-tender portal <a href="http://www.ireps.gov.in">www.ireps.gov.in</a> of Indian Railways.	
The supply/work is subject to GST rules applicable from time to time	
By, CHIEF SIGNAL & TELECOMMUNICATION ENGINEER / CONSTRUCTION / S.R.LY, TAMBARAM, CHENNAI - 600045 On behalf of The President of India	

## MGU Botany Department welcomes its juniors



NALGONDA

"This welcome party isn't just a celebration; it's a testament to the spirit of our Botany family - nurturing growth, one leaf at a time. To our new MSc cohort, welcome to the green heart of our university! You've chosen botany not just as a subject, but as a gateway to understanding life's quiet miracles right from the intricate dance of photosynthesis that powers our planet, to

the resilient ecosystems fighting climate change," said Head of the Department of Botany of Mahatma Gandhi University (MGU) Dr Madhavi.

Participating as the chief guest at the Welcome Party organized by the final year students of the Department of Botany on Thursday, Dr Madhavi wished the students best of luck in their future endeavours. Speaking on the occasion, Adjunct Professor Dr B Digambar Rao encouraged the

students to dive into labs alive with ferns and fungi, field trips blooming with discoveries, and research that could shape a sustainable future.

Earlier the welcome party truly came alive with cultural performances by students with folk songs and dances and skits, showcasing their talent and team spirit. Teachers of Botany Dr P Sreenu, Dr Y Venkateshwarlu, Dr T Narsimha Swamy and Dr E Shrivaya Puri were also present.

## High Court extends validity of journalist accreditations until April 30

HYDERABAD

In a significant development, the Telangana High Court has directed continuation of journalists' accreditation cards till April 30, 2026, in a case challenging the validity of G.O. Ms. No. 252, as amended by G.O. 103. The matter arises out of writ petitions filed by the Telangana Urdu Working Journalists' Federation, questioning the impugned Government Orders and seeking protection of accreditation facilities pending adjudication.

The petitioners are represented by Advocate Barkat Ali Khan. During the course of hearing, the Special Advocate General submitted that the

Government of Telangana has decided to temporarily extend the validity of existing accreditation cards by two months in order to avoid disruption to the professional events of working journalists.

Recording the submission, the Court directed that the present accreditation cards shall remain valid until April 30, 2026.

The Court also granted time to the State to file its detailed counter affidavit addressing the challenge to G.O. Ms. No. 252 and the amended G.O. 103. The matter is likely to be listed for further hearing after the filing of the counter. The matter is posted after four weeks.

SOUTHERN RAILWAY SALEM DIVISION (SIGNAL & TELECOM BRANCH)	
<b>E-Tender Notice No. SA-SG-120-IOT-26-2025</b>	
<b>Closing Date: 16/03/2026</b>	
Senior Divisional Signal & Telecommunication Engineer/Southern Railway/Salem Division, Salem - 636005 for and on behalf of the President of India invites ONLINE tenders for the following works as per tender notice given in our e-tender portal <a href="http://www.ireps.gov.in">www.ireps.gov.in</a> . The tenderer(s)/contractor(s) intending to apply for e-tender for WORKS in Salem Division, need to get enrolled in the e-tender portal <a href="http://www.ireps.gov.in">www.ireps.gov.in</a> and only online tenders will be accepted. Payment of Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) & Tender Document Cost (TDC), in respect of e-tendering, should be accepted through net banking or payment gateway only. Fixed Deposit Receipt (FDR) will not be accepted as EMD for tenders invited on IREPS (e-tender portal).	
<b>Tender Notice No.:</b>	SA-SG-120-IOT-26-2025
<b>Name of Work:</b>	Salem Division - Signal and Telecommunication Works in Connection with Various LUS and Allied Engineering Works over Salem Division
<b>Approximate Cost of the Work:</b>	Rs.2,35,69,751.44
<b>Earnest Money Deposit:</b>	Rs.267900.00
<b>Cost of tender form including:</b>	Nil
<b>Eligibility criteria for similar single work:</b>	Applicable
<b>Period of Completion in months:</b>	12 Months
<b>Tender closing date and time:</b>	16/03/2026 at 15.00 Hrs.
NOTE: Details of approximate value of tender, tender form cost, EMD & location are given on the e-portal, <a href="http://www.ireps.gov.in">www.ireps.gov.in</a> . For other details, terms and conditions, the tenderers are advised to refer to the Tender documents which are available at <a href="http://www.ireps.gov.in">www.ireps.gov.in</a> website. Senior Divisional Signal & Telecommunication Engineer/Southern Railway/Salem - 636 005	



## Pramana 2026 Set to Dazzle GITAM with Celebration and Talent

HYDERABAD

GITAM Deemed to be University, Hyderabad is all set to host Pramana 2026, its much-awaited Annual Fest, on 27-28 February 2026, under the overall supervision of the Directorate of Student Life.

Team Pramana announced that this year's festival promises an exciting blend of performances, competitions, pre-fest events, and vibrant cultural showcases. As part of the Pre-Pramana celebrations held from 24-26 February, students participated in dance and singing competitions, an Auto Expo, and interactive "Fit Body, Fit Mind" talkaway sessions.

The Auto Expo will mark the Grand Opening of Pramana on 27 February, followed by electrifying performances including The Deccan Project and The Headliner Band. Popular playback singer Geetha Madhuri will enthral students with her melodious renditions, and the day will conclude with an energetic live DJ set by DJ NANDZY.

On 28 February, the celebrations will continue with performances by Kasyap - The Musical Sensation - and DJ Swattrex, promising an unforgettable EDM experience. Elite competitions in dance, music, drama, and cultural battles will provide students a



grand platform to showcase their talent and creativity.

Celebrated under the theme "Three Days - Three Vibes," the fest highlights Motorsports (Feb 26), Glam & Gala (Feb 27), and Main Character (Feb 28), along with several surprise unveilings and collaborations.

Team Pramana invites students and visitors to experience the vibrant pulse of Hyderabad through one of the region's largest student festivals—where innovation meets tradition, and youthful energy finds its brightest stage.

## National conf on plant health innovations begin at NIPHM, Hyd

HYDERABAD

A three-day National Conference on "Innovations in Plant Health Management for Resilient Agriculture and Agri-Export Promotion (IPHMRA - AEP)" commenced at the National Institute of Plant Health Management (NIPHM), Hyderabad.

The conference is jointly organised by NIPHM under the Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Government of India, in collaboration with the Plant Protection Association of India, Entomological Society of India, Indian Ecological Society, Indian Society of Agricultural Engineers and Indian Phytopathological Society.

The inaugural session was chaired by Dr. Sagar Hanuman Singh, Director General, NIPHM, in the presence of senior officials including Dr. Poonam Jasrotia (ICAR), Dr. J.P. Singh (DPPQS), Dr. S.N. Puri (Former VC, CAU Imphal), and representatives of partner organisations.

In his address, Dr. Singh emphasized the need to bring scientists, academia, farmers and industry stakeholders onto a common platform to tackle plant health challenges and boost agri-exports. Speakers highlighted the role of AI-driven pest diagnostics, remote sensing tools, biosecurity measures, natural farming research and quality control of pesticides.

Two Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) on Store Grain Management and Appropriate Pesticide Management Techniques were launched during the event for extension officers, students and stakeholders. The conference features plenary lectures, technical sessions, panel discussions, exhibitions and special farmer-focused sessions on digital pest diagnosis and Integrated Pest Management (IPM). The deliberations aim to enhance agricultural resilience,

ensure food safety, strengthen phytosanitary compliance and promote India's agri-export competitiveness in a changing climate scenario. The recommendations from the conference are expected to strengthen plant health systems and support innovation-driven, trade-safe agriculture in the country. (NSS)

**RAJAPUSHPA**  
PROPERTIES PVT. LTD  
Shaping Innovations

WHEREVER THERE IS A DREAM,  
THERE IS RAJAPUSHPA

18  
YEARS OF  
XCELLENCE

48.67 +  
MILLION SQ.FT.  
PORTFOLIO

11.2  
MILLION SQ.FT  
COMPLETED PROJECTS

37.47  
MILLION SQ.FT  
UNDER CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

18000+  
HAPPY RESIDENTS

20+  
PROJECTS

ONGOING PROJECTS

RAJAPUSHPA  
PROVINCIA  
NARSINGI

RAJAPUSHPA  
IMPERIA  
TELLAPUR

RAJAPUSHPA  
PRIZENTIA  
KOKAPET

RAJAPUSHPA  
Aurelia  
TELLAPUR

RAJAPUSHPA  
CASA LUXURA  
NEOPOLIS

RAJAPUSHPA  
INFINA  
MANCHIREVULA

RAJAPUSHPA  
skYra  
NEOPOLIS

766 000 55 00 [www.rajapushpa.in](http://www.rajapushpa.in)

## SHORT TAKES

### Governor hails SBI's Rs.53 lakh contribution to Armed Forces Flag Day Fund

**HYDERABAD:** Telangana Governor Jishnu Dev Varma lauded the staff of the State Bank of India (SBI), Hyderabad Circle, for contributing Rs.53 lakh to the Armed Forces Flag Day Fund. SBI Hyderabad Circle Chief General Manager S. Radha Krishnan presented the cheque to the Governor at Lok Bhavan here on Thursday. The Governor, who also serves as Chairperson of the Armed Forces Flag Day Fund, appreciated the gesture and said it would inspire other organisations and citizens to extend similar support. Sreenivasulu, Director, Sainik Welfare, along with senior officials from the Department of Sainik Welfare and SBI, attended the event.

### CBI secures return of fugitive Anil Kumar Reddy Yedula from UAE

**NEW DELHI /HYDERABAD:** The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) successfully coordinated the return of Red Notice subject Anil Kumar Reddy Yedula from the UAE through INTERPOL channels. Yedula, wanted by Andhra Pradesh Police in multiple cases involving cheating, criminal breach of trust and criminal intimidation, was brought back on February 26. He arrived at Rajiv Gandhi International Airport from Dubai under escort and was handed over to state police authorities. The Red Notice was issued in September 2022 at the request of Andhra Pradesh Police. CBI, acting as India's National Central Bureau for INTERPOL, coordinated the operation in collaboration with UAE authorities and the Ministry of External Affairs.

### Massive fire erupts at Mangala Gowri shopping mall in Jubilee Hills

**HYDERABAD:** A major fire erupted at the Mangala Gowri Shopping Mall located on Road No. 36 in Jubilee Hills on Thursday afternoon. There have been no reports of casualties related to the incident. Firefighting units from adjacent fire stations, in collaboration with the Disaster Response Force and local police, have initiated a coordinated effort to extinguish the flames. Four individuals trapped within the building were successfully rescued by firefighting personnel. Following the fire, extensive traffic congestion was observed in the vicinity.

# Telangana aims to emerge as global logistics hub by 2047: Sridhar Babu

HYDERABAD

Telangana is working with a structured roadmap to emerge as one of India's leading logistics hubs and position itself as a global logistics destination by 2047, IT and Industries Minister D. Sridhar Babu said on Thursday.

Speaking at the Transport Logistic India 2026 conference organised by Messe München India at the Jio World Convention Centre in Mumbai, the Minister outlined the State government's strategy to build a future-ready logistics ecosystem through infrastructure expansion, digital integration, policy support, sustainability initiatives and skill development.

Mr. Sridhar Babu said the logistics sector would play a key role in the State's long-term development vision under the Telangana Rising 2047 framework, which targets increasing Telangana's contribution to India's GDP from about 5% at present to 10% by 2047 while supporting the goal of building a \$3-trillion State economy. Referring to global shifts in the



sector, he highlighted supply-chain realignment, AI-enabled logistics and sustainability as major trends shaping the industry, adding that Telangana is leveraging its geographic location to strengthen its logistics competitiveness.

The Minister said infrastructure projects such as the Regional Ring Road, Metro Rail Phase-II, proposed airports, development of a

dry port, implementation of Telangana Logistics Policy 2.0 and creation of dedicated logistics parks would strengthen the State's logistics ecosystem.

He said the government is working with Young India Skills University and industry partners to build a skilled workforce aligned with emerging logistics requirements. Inviting industry participation,

Mr. Sridhar Babu called for investment in multi-modal logistics, rail-linked infrastructure, air cargo, cold chain, Grade-A warehousing, automation, digital logistics platforms and green mobility.

The State government would support investors through faster approvals, transparent policies and an industry-friendly regulatory framework, he added.

# Jagga Reddy urges party high command to send VH, Kusuma Kumar to Rajya Sabha

NEW DELHI,



Telangana Congress working president Jagga Reddy met AICC chief Mallikarjun Kharge in New Delhi on Thursday and urged for nominating senior party leader V. Hanumantha Rao and Youth Congress leader Jetty Kusuma Kumar to the Rajya Sabha from Telangana.

Speaking to the media after the meeting, Jagga Reddy said he had discussed the issue of the two upcoming Rajya Sabha vacancies in Telangana with Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, TPCC President Mahesh Kumar Goud and AICC in-charge Meenakshi Natarajan. He urged the party leadership to consider VH and Kusuma Kumar for the Upper House seats.

Reddy said he travelled to Delhi to meet Rahul Gandhi and Kharge on the matter. While Rahul Gandhi could not meet him due to prior engagements, he conveyed his request to the party chief. Highlighting the credentials of the aspirants, Reddy noted that Jetty Kusuma Kumar is a Youth Congress and former

student leader from the Kamma community and belongs to a family of freedom fighters. He also recalled that V. Hanumantha Rao had served three terms as a Rajya Sabha MP and had worked with several Chief Ministers in the undivided AP state and present Telangana. Late Rajiv Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi had earlier given Rao the opportunities to serve in Parliament, he added.

The terms of 37 Rajya Sabha members from 10 states are set to end in April. The Election Commission has issued a notification for the polls. The last date for filing nominations is March 5, scrutiny will follow, and the final date for withdrawal is March 9.



# Komatireddy orders strict monitoring for ongoing road projects

NALGONDA,

Minister for Roads and Buildings Komatireddy Venkat Reddy on Thursday reviewed the progress of key works in Nalgonda district and set strict deadlines for their completion.

At a review meeting held at the Minister's camp office, Indira Bhavan, the progress of Buddharam, Appajipeta and Bramanavelamla roads came up for detailed discussion and the Minister directed officials to complete the works within two months and avoid further delays.

The Pagidimarri Bridge over Somannavagu was also reviewed, with instructions to finish the project within three months. Officials were told to closely monitor execution and ensure adherence to quality standards.

The Minister instructed authorities to immediately commence the proposed four-lane road from Kanagal Junction to Kanagal village and to expedite

the Kanagal-Thimmannagudem road works. Periodic progress reports were sought.

Komatireddy Venkat Reddy also examined the status of works at Mamidala, Godhorigudem and Yellammagudem and specifically ordered that the CC road in Mamidala be laid without further delay to address public inconvenience. Strong directions were issued to the concerned contractor to immediately begin the Narketpally-Mandra road works. The progress of YTPS road works was also reviewed with the Superintending Engineer, Nalgonda.

Reiterating the government's commitment to strengthening road connectivity across Nalgonda district, Komatireddy Venkat Reddy emphasised that infrastructure development remains a top priority and warned that accountability would be fixed for any negligence or delay. Superintending Engineer R&B Sridhar Reddy, DyEE Ganesh and others were participated in the review.

# MCRHRD institute to enter an MoU with Harvard University

- The US university will provide training to officials in the institute
- CM Revanth Reddy appeals to newly recruited officers to serve people with dedication and fulfill their aspirations of Telangana martyrs
- Telangana people will not tolerate dominance
- Previous BRS government did not recruit Group one post and created hurdles in recruitment
- Many revolutionary leaders revolted against oppression in Telangana history
- New law soon to cut 10-15 per cent of the salary of employees who neglect their parents

HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Shri A Revanth Reddy has announced that the MCRHRD institute would enter an agreement with the world famous Harvard University soon. The experts in administration from the university would visit the MCRHRD and offer training in public administration to the officials, the Chief minister said.

Addressing the newly recruited Group one and Group -2 officers after completing their training in the institute, the CM appealed to the newly recruited officers to serve people with dedication and fulfill the aspirations of Telangana martyrs. "You were students and unemployed before becoming the officers of the state government and ready to serve 4 crore Telangana people. After be-



coming officials, the newly recruited should not forget the responsibility and become a good human being also. It is the officers responsibility to deliver welfare programs to the people. The officers are the eyes and ears of the government, the CM said that he was meeting the newly recruited officers with an emotional attachment and urged them to remember noted people's officer SR Sankaran before attending the duties.

The Chief minister criticized the previous BRS government for not recruiting Group one posts during the 10 year rule. The people's government organized Group 1 and fulfilled their aspirations. TGpsc was also

reformed and appointed reputed persons as Chairman and member of the commission.

Within hours after Group one results, the opposition approached the courts against the recruitment. Against all odds, the government filled the posts, CM Revanth Reddy said that the Commission successfully conducted the group exams without paper leaks. Out of 6 lakh candidates, 582 candidates got Group 1 and 1,775 were selected for Group 2 jobs.

Stating that the people of Telangana will tolerate hunger but not accept domination, CM Revanth Reddy remembered that Ranji Gondu and

Komaram Bheem did not fight for the kingdoms but rebelled against those who were dominating them. Sammakka Saralamma have also rebelled against the Kakatiya dynasty.

We respect all the fighters and they also became martyrs for social justice, equality, freedom and equal opportunities. In the first parliament elections in the country, the chief minister said that leader from Telangana Ravi Narayana Reddy won with a huge majority. The CM reiterated that the state government would bring a new law in the assembly to cut 10 to 15 per cent salary of the government employees who do not care about their parents.



# Cyberabad Explores AI-Based Predictive Traffic Management Model

HYDERABAD

Cyberabad Police today reviewed the adoption of AI-based predictive traffic management systems, aligned with European standards, at a meeting held on 25.02.2026 at the SCSC Meeting Hall, PSIOC, Cyberabad Police Commissionerate.

The meeting was chaired by CP Cyberabad Dr. M. Ramesh, who directed officials to examine the feasibility of introducing intelligent traffic technologies to improve congestion management, enforcement efficiency, and road safety across the Commissionerate.

During the session, Dr. Lucas Ambul, CEO of Swiss company

Transcalcity, Zurich, \*demonstrated AI-driven predictive traffic solutions capable of analysing traffic patterns, forecasting congestion, and optimising signal control for better traffic flow. The proposed model can predict and simulate traffic situations in real time and support long-term traffic preparedness, particularly in view of upcoming infrastructure development in the capital. The meeting was attended by DCP Admin T. Annapurna, DCP Traffic I. Ranjan Ratan Kumar, ADCP Traffic Madhapur Hanumantha Rao, SCSC CEO Naved, along with senior officers. Officials and staff from the Administrative Staff College of India (ASCI) also participated.

# Prof Koppula Anji Reddy appointed Registrar of Mahatma Gandhi University

Dr Srinivas Vooradi

NALGONDA

Prof Koppula Anji Reddy, Professor of Economics and Dean of the Faculties of Arts and Social Sciences, has assumed the charge as the Registrar of the Mahatma Gandhi University on Thursday. Renowned for his gentle demeanor and strong administrative skills, Prof Koppula's journey is truly inspiring. Prof Koppula's rise to becoming the Registrar of a university showcases his remarkable resilience and dedication. Hailing from Singaram village in the Atmakur mandal of the Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district, Prof Koppula completed his primary education in his hometown and continued his studies in Chada village. He earned his degree in Bhuvanagiri and did his PG and PhD from Osmania University.

Coming from a family with illiterate parents, Anji Reddy's commitment to education grew stronger when he had to work as a shepherd for a year after his father fell ill while he was in 6th standard. His determination not only led him to continue higher studies himself but also inspired his brother to obtain a PhD, transforming their family's educational background. Koppula Anji Reddy began his teaching career as a



lecturer at Sardar Patel College and spent ten years there before joining Mahatma Gandhi University in 2007 as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Economics.

He quickly proved his capabilities within the university administration, starting as the Hostel Warden and Director of IQAC (Internal Quality Assurance Cell) playing a vital role in enhancing the university's NAAC grading.

He also served as the Principal of the College of Arts and Social Sciences and held several important positions, including Director of the Audit Cell, Controller of Examinations, and

OSD to the Vice-Chancellor, earning him the respect of colleagues and students alike.

In addition to his administrative duties, he actively contributes to research in Economics as a member of the Executive Council of the Telangana Economic Association. Following his new appointment, Vice-Chancellor Acharya Khaja Althaf Hussain, along with Convener of TG ICET-2026 Prof Aluvula Ravi, Director (Infrastructure) Prof Akula Ravi, various college principals, faculty members, and students extended their heartfelt congratulations to Prof Koppula Anji Reddy.

# Employees are true brand ambassadors: Vivek

HYDERABAD

Minister for Labour, Employment, Mines and Geology Dr. G. Vivek Venkatswamy said employees serve as the genuine brand ambassadors of any organisation, with the Human Resources department playing a vital role in the implementation of progressive policies within a company.

Dr. Venkatswamy emphasised that employee satisfaction is directly linked to enhanced productivity. He made these remarks during the 3rd HR Summit organised by ASSOCHAM at HICC Novotel on Thursday. Expressing his delight in attending the event, he conveyed a sense of reconnection with industry leaders, reminiscing about his previous role as President of CII.

He recalled that his father, Katta Venkatswamy, had held the position of Labour Minister in united Andhra Pradesh and subsequently within the Union Government.

Reflecting on the past, the Minister noted the multitude of HR-related issues, such as wage disputes and labor concerns, acknowledging considerable advancements that have occurred over the years.

He remarked that although HR departments were once viewed as less significant, they have now

evolved to become one of the most essential components of any organisation. Ensuring the well-being of employees and maximising productivity is a shared responsibility of both management and HR departments. He identified the retention of talented employees and enhancement of productivity as ongoing challenges faced by HR professionals. The Minister expressed optimism that the summit would yield innovative ideas to further refining HR practices.

He also highlighted the initiatives of the State Government, asserting that Telangana is prioritizing skill development in the years to come. Existing ITIs are being upgraded to Advanced Training Centres (ATCs) with the support of Tata's CSR initiatives. Numerous ATCs are set to be established in rural regions and are anticipated to commence operations within the year. Dr. Venkatswamy called on HR leaders and management to recruit skilled personnel trained at these centers and encouraged them to propose new courses that align with future industry demands. Furthermore, he stated that departmental officials have been directed to maintain close collaboration with industries to ensure a unified approach to employment generation.

## K'taka Godman Kisses Minor, Video Sparks Outrage

BENGALURU

A self-styled godman in Karnataka's Yadgir district has been booked under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (Pocso) Act after a viral video showing him behaving inappropriately with a seven-year-old girl sparked outrage. The video shows the godman, Mallikarjuna Muttava of a shrine in Shahapur, holding the child in his lap and kissing her while the parents look on. A police case was initiated after the Karnataka State Commission for the Protection of Child Rights took cognisance of the video and sought action from the authorities. "Notice has been issued to him. We will carry on with the investigation. The parents and the girl have recorded their statements; they did not find anything wrong in his touch, and they themselves recorded the video. However, the footage shows the child appearing uncomfortable. After counselling, the Child Welfare Committee recommended the registration of an FIR," the Yadgir Superintendent of Police said. The parents, who had recorded and uploaded the video on social media, claimed they did not find his actions inappropriate. However, after counselling, the Child Welfare Committee observed that the child appeared uncomfortable in the video and recommended that a case be filed.

## 30 MLAs of DK Shivakumar camp huddle at Bengaluru hotel amid power-sharing buzz

The closed-door meeting comes days after over 20 Karnataka Congress legislators travelled abroad, even as the party leadership continues to publicly deny any internal rift or power-sharing arrangement.

Around 30 Congress MLAs, including two ministers, from the camp of Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D. K. Shivakumar met at a private hotel in Bengaluru, triggering fresh political speculation within the ruling party.

Sources told India Today TV that the meeting, held under the pretext of celebrating an MLA's birthday, saw discussions around the ongoing leadership churn within the Karnataka Congress. Legislators are understood to have informally deliberated on



possible next steps and are closely watching the party high command in New Delhi for any signal. The gathering assumed significance amid persistent buzz over a potential power tussle in the state unit, though the Congress leadership has repeatedly denied any internal rift. Among those present were D Sudhakar, Magadi Balakrishna, CP Yogeshwar, Kadalur Uday,

Ravi Ganiga, Basavaraj Shivaganga, Nayama Mottamma, Sharath Bachegowda, Kunigal Ranganath, Prakash Kolivada, Anekal Shivanna and Venkatesh Pavagada. The closed-door meeting comes days after more than 20 Congress legislators from Karnataka travelled to Australia and New Zealand, a trip that also drew political attention amid leadership speculation.

The legislators, some of whom are considered close to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, are expected to return to Bengaluru on March 1. Participants described the visit as a study tour focused on agriculture, though at least one MLA said he was funding the travel personally. Sindhanur MLA Hampanagouda Badarli had maintained the tour was purely personal and not politi-

cally driven. Earlier, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge dismissed reports of any leadership confusion, asserting that the party high command had created no uncertainty and that any issues should be handled by the state leadership. Speculation within political circles has long centred on an alleged power-sharing understanding between Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar for the Chief Minister's post, reportedly for 2.5 years each. Siddaramaiah took oath on May 20, 2023, and expectations of a leadership shift around the government's halfway mark last November had intensified chatter.

The Congress, however, has consistently denied the existence of any such agreement and has maintained that Siddaramaiah will complete the full five-year term.



## K'taka Mulls Social Media Ban for Under-16s

BENGALURU, FEB 26

Karnataka School Education and Literacy Minister Madhu Bangarappa said on Thursday that the state government is considering regulating or banning social media for children below the age of 16, with a final decision to be taken after consulting students, parents, and experts. Speaking to reporters after attending the National Science Day programme at the Jawaharlal Nehru Planetarium in Bengaluru, the minister said the move is being explored in the interest of children's well-being and development.

He expressed concern over the increasing dependence of children on mobile phones and said parents share responsibility for the growing problem. He noted that many parents had over mobile phones to keep children quiet, which has

contributed to excessive exposure to social media and digital distractions.

Bangarappa said the government is planning an awareness campaign titled 'Put away mobile phones, pick up books', following directions from Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. He added that the Chief Minister has repeatedly stressed the need to address the issue and promote healthier habits among students. The minister said any decision would be taken only after extensive consultations with stakeholders, including students, teachers, parents, and subject experts.

He emphasised that the objective is to ensure decisions are made in the best interest of children. He added that the proposal is currently in the discussion stage and that the government will take an appropriate decision soon under the guidance of the Chief Minister.

## Blueprint to be prepared to complete irrigation projects: Chandrababu Naidu

AMARAVATI, FEB 26

Asserting that the coalition government is committed to supplying water to all regions in Andhra Pradesh, Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Thursday announced that a blueprint to complete irrigation projects will be prepared soon.

Speaking on budget allocations to the irrigation sector in the Assembly session, the Chief Minister said that the state government is focusing on water security, which is essential to attract investments and industries.

He stressed the need for linking of rivers right from



Vamsadhara to Penna to ensure water supply to all the regions in the state and stated that efforts are on to prepare necessary plans.

The Chief Minister said that Rs 20,000 crore was spent

on the irrigation sector during the past 20 months. As a result, water was supplied to the Paramasamudram tank in Kuppam through the Handri Neeva canal.

Stating that all the irrigation projects were developed during the TDP regime, the Chief Minister said that Telugu Ganga, Galeru Nagari and Handri Neeva projects were launched during former chief minister NT Rama Rao's regime to supply water to Rayalaseema. Through the Pattiseema lift irrigation, 100 TMC of water was supplied to Rayalaseema.

He assured the completion of the Veligonda project to

benefit the Markapuram and Prakasam districts. He said that the Polavaram project will be completed before the Godavari pushkaram, and the Chintalapudi lift irrigation scheme will be completed to supply water to the upland areas of both Krishna and Eluru districts.

The Chief Minister said that at present, 793 tmc of water is available in various reservoirs in the state and is making efforts to supply water to Rayalaseema through transplants from May 15.

He claimed that Andhra Pradesh stands in first place in micro irrigation in the country. With the measures initiated by the state govern-

ment towards water security, the groundwater levels increased and are available at 7.3 metres, resulting in savings in power consumption to the tune of Rs 91 crore.

Stating that there will be no loss to anyone with the linking of Polavaram and Nallamala Sagar, the Chief Minister said the surplus Godavari water, which is flowing into the sea, will be used, and both the Telugu states will benefit from it. He said that he never objected to the Kaleshwaram project of Telangana. He made it clear that the coalition government is committed to supplying water to every acre in the state.

## Odisha Farmer Death Sparks Minister Exit Demand

BHUBANESWAR, FEB 26

The tragic death of a farmer in the Rajnagar area of Kendrapara district, reportedly due to harassment during paddy procurement, has triggered a political war of words in the state. The deceased farmer, identified as Trilochan Nayak, was from Junagadi village under the Rajnagar block of Kendrapara district. As per reports, Nayak received a message regarding the sale of his paddy at the nearby Mandi on January 16.

The farmer's efforts to get his paddy procured at the Mandi for over a month proved unsuccessful, despite the reported official registration at the Mandi on February 14. Nayak's family members alleged that 6 kg per quintal was illegally deducted during the registration process at the Mandi. After waiting several more days, the society secretary directed Nayak to deliver the paddy to a mill just a couple of days ago. They claimed the mill accepted the crop only after deducting 3 kg per quintal, bringing the total deduction to 9 kg per quintal. It was



also alleged that the mill owner had demanded another Rs 3,000 from Nayak while he reportedly spent around Rs 15,000 on transportation and other related matters, with the overall expenditure of Rs 18,000. Nayak's family claimed that at the Rice Mill, the victim spent three days guarding his paddy without adequate food or rest. After returning from the mill on Wednesday, he experienced chest pain and reportedly suffered a fatal heart attack. The incident further heated the political confrontation with opposition BJD stepping up its attack on the state government over the prolonged chaos at the Mandis across the state. The BJD criticised the state government, alleging that the paddy procurement system in the state has completely collapsed.

## Koraput Police bust interstate hashish oil unit, seize contraband worth ₹225 crore

BHUBANESWAR, FEB 26

In a major development, the Koraput Police on Thursday busted an interstate hashish oil manufacturing temporary unit and seized 1,800-litres of oil worth around Rs 225 crore.

Following the receipt of precise and actionable Intelligence inputs regarding suspicious activities in the region, a raid was meticulously planned and led by Koraput Superintendent of Police, Rohit Varma. Acting swiftly on the information, a coordinated operation was launched in the dense forested stretch along the Jholapat Reservoir under Padua Police Station limits in Koraput, situated close to the Odisha-Andhra Pradesh border. To maintain complete operational secrecy and surprise the accused people, the police teams avoided conventional road routes. Instead, personnel advanced discreetly by boats across the reservoir and subsequently trekked on foot through the



jungle terrain to reach the targeted site. Koraput Police sources stated that the strategic decision to approach through the waterway and forest pathways was aimed at concealing the movement of the force and preventing any possible alert to the accused drug peddlers. "Remoteness of the area, tough terrain, difficulty to reach and quick assembly and disassembly of the manufacturing units were posing a big hurdle in successful raids by police in the past few days," informed the Koraput Police in an official statement. During the raid, the police officials seized 1,800 li-

tres of hashish oil with a market value of around Rs 225 crore and Ganja weighing 1,000 kgs worth Rs 5 crore. Police sources claimed that the masterminds of the manufacturing unit have been identified and efforts are on to arrest the culprits soon. The Koraput Police also found prima facie evidence regarding the accused persons operating the manufacturing unit having links with drug peddlers outside the state.

In another separate raid in Koraput district, police arrested four accused persons, including two interstate smugglers from Haryana, in connection with the seizure of 1,143 kg of ganja worth over Rs 5 crore under Nandpur Police Station limits.

Police sources said that two of the arrested persons are suppliers from Semilguda in Koraput, while the other two are receivers from Haryana.

It is worth mentioning that earlier hashish oil over 62 kgs was seized in two separate cases under Chittrakonda Police Station in Malkangiri district of Odisha. As ganja is bulky its transportation is difficult and carries a higher risk of detection by the security forces.

So, the drug peddlers are now increasingly adopting new strategies, such as processing ganja into hashish oil and transporting smaller quantities of the high-value contraband. Notably, the market value of one litre of hashish oil is nearly 25 times higher than that of one kilogram of ganja, prompting criminals to manufacture and traffic hashish oil in pursuit of higher profits.

Police sources said that two of the arrested persons are suppliers from Semilguda in Koraput, while the other two are receivers from Haryana.

## Vizag earns global honour for its climate resilience initiative

VISAKHAPATNAM, FEB 26

Visakhapatnam secured a major global honour, winning a \$1 million grant in the prestigious Bloomberg Philanthropies 2025-2026 Mayors Challenge for its innovative climate resilience initiative, Vizag-Prajamukhi Urban Living Lab (V-PULL).

According to a government statement on Thursday, the award was announced on Wednesday. Visakhapatnam was selected as one of the 24 global winners, emerging from more than 630 cities across the world that competed in the challenge. Visakhapatnam joined global cities like Rio de Janeiro, Barcelona, Toronto, Cape Town, Budapest, Medellin and Belfast on Global Climate Innovation Platform. V-PULL, a



flagship model of the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC), earned international recognition for its civic participation framework aimed at mitigating the impacts of floods, cyclones and severe heatwaves through collaborative, citizen-driven solutions. The initiative operates under a citizen-centric, climate-resilient and hyperlocal governance approach.

In the initial phase of the competition, GVMC was shortlisted among the top 50 finalists and received \$50,000

in seed funding along with technical assistance. "With this support, the civic body implemented pilot interventions at the local level. Structured ward-level community meetings were conducted, hyperlocal sensing systems were tested and data-driven decision-making tools were introduced," the statement said.

Participatory climate resilience and disaster preparedness measures helped establish an effective feedback mechanism between citizens and municipal departments, strengthening bottom-up governance. "Being selected as a winner of the Bloomberg Philanthropies 2025-2026 Mayors Challenge is a great honour for GVMC. This recognition strengthens our belief that cities can lead transformative change when innovation

is grounded in citizen participation and field-tested solutions," GVMC Commissioner Ketan Garg said. "The \$1 million grant will be utilised to strengthen the bottom-up governance approach, enhance disaster preparedness and expand these initiatives to more wards across the city," he added. The Mayors Challenge was launched by Michael R. Bloomberg, former Mayor of New York City, to support bold and creative city governments in solving pressing urban challenges.

With this recognition, Visakhapatnam now shares the global platform with leading international cities, marking a significant milestone in Visakhapatnam's journey towards globally recognised climate-resilient urban governance.

## TN govt enhances pension, retirement benefits for nutrition and Anganwadi workers

CHENNAI, FEB 26

The Tamil Nadu government has announced an increase in pension and retirement benefits for nutrition organisers, Anganwadi workers, village panchayat secretaries, and several other categories of special time-scale employees, reaffirming its commitment to grassroots welfare staff. In an official statement, the government said the monthly pension for nutrition organisers, Anganwadi employees and village panchayat secretaries has been raised from Rs 2,000 to Rs 3,400. In addition, the lump sum retirement benefit provided at the time of completion of service has been increased from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 2 lakh. The decision follows the recommendations of the Officers' Committee constituted in 2017 to review pension and retirement benefits for special



time-scale employees. Based on those recommendations, the government has issued orders granting special periodic pensions and enhanced lump sum retirement benefits to employees receiving special time-scale pay. The beneficiaries include nutrition organisers, Anganwadi workers, mini Anganwadi workers, forest field workers, Anganwadi helpers, cooks, kitchen assistants and cleaners. Chief Minister M.K. Stalin has also approved measures to provide

enhanced family pension and funeral assistance in the event of the death of retired workers. According to the notification, if a retired nutrition organiser or Anganwadi worker passes away, their family will be eligible for a special family pension along with funeral assistance. The move is aimed at providing social security and financial support to families dependent on these workers. The government clarified that the revised special pension, lump sum retirement

benefit and family pension will be disbursed under the relevant account heads of the respective departments. Any additional financial expenditure arising from the enhanced benefits will be debited to the appropriate account heads already allocated to those departments. The announcement is expected to benefit thousands of grassroots workers who play a crucial role in delivering nutrition services, early childhood care and rural administrative support across the state. By strengthening their post-retirement security, the government aims to recognise their contribution to public welfare and community development in Tamil Nadu. Officials said the enhanced benefits will come into effect in accordance with the government order, and detailed implementation guidelines will be issued by the concerned departments.

EDITORIAL

**GULF DREAMS, INDIAN TEARS:  
THE HUMAN COST OF  
FRAUDULENT MIGRATION**

Many people look toward foreign countries hoping for a better future. But to settle into some job abroad, many of them lack the necessary qualifications. Others are unaware of the prescribed visa procedures. Taking advantage of this, fraudulent agents collect lakhs of rupees and send Indians abroad through illegal means. Once they arrive, they are caught during inspections and end up in jail. After enduring various hardships, they eventually return home in distress. By deceiving innocent people with false promises, these cheating agents are ruining lives. In the past three years, 3,925 complaints have been registered nationwide against such agents. Of these, 1,495 were filed from Andhra Pradesh, followed by Tamil Nadu (357) and Telangana (339). This shows that victims of fraudulent agents are mostly from the Telugu states.

It is tragic that strict action against these swindlers—who exploit ordinary people's dreams of going abroad and push their lives into misery—is still lacking. Within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which consists of six countries, more than 9 million Indians are employed. From Telangana's districts such as Adilabad, Karimnagar, Nizamabad, and Medak, as well as Andhra Pradesh's Godavari districts and Rayalaseema, lakhs of people have migrated there for work. Fraudulent agents mislead ordinary laborers by claiming that life will turn golden if they go to the Gulf. They collect whatever money they can, promising responsibility for sending them abroad, and then vanish. Some send victims on temporary visitor visas under the guise of company jobs, washing their hands of responsibility once the workers board flights. Others lure them with promises of "stress-free work" but place them in grueling jobs. Meanwhile, exploitation by employers—such as harsh treatment and negligence in paying wages—further worsens the plight of Indian workers in Gulf countries. Reflecting this, in just one year, the Indian government received over 3,000 complaints from Saudi Arabia alone. Additionally, 2,749 requests for help came from the UAE, Oman, and Kuwait, highlighting the dire conditions faced by Gulf workers.

After handing over all their savings to agents and reaching the Gulf, many unfortunate workers realize too late that they have been cheated. Unable to return home and with no way to repay the debts they incurred, some end up committing suicide. Others, working under harsh conditions, lose their health or die in accidents. A large number of lives are lost, and even bringing their bodies back to India immediately is often not possible.

According to official statistics, in the past five years nearly 35,000 Indians have died in GCC countries. During the same period, 167,000 Indians who had gone abroad through illegal means were caught and sent back home. Of these, 72% were deported by Saudi Arabia alone.

To prevent illegal migration—which is causing economic and social crises—unscrupulous agents and consultancies must be curbed everywhere. While governments celebrate the huge foreign exchange inflows from the Gulf, they must also pay attention to the welfare of Indian workers living there.

OPEN-FORUM

what's  
in an  
'M'?

In the hallowed halls of the Union Cabinet, where one might imagine the nation's stewards are busy grappling with a stuttering global economy or the complexities of maritime security, a decision of earth-shattering insignificance has been reached. With the solemnity usually reserved for declaring war or devaluing currency, the Central government has graciously acceded to the State Government's request to change the name of Kerala to "Keralam".

At last, the people of the southwestern-most state can breathe a sigh of relief. Forget the mounting debt, the vanishing coastline, and the agonising wait for a premier medical institute; we finally have an extra consonant.

**A Move That Costs Nothing**

This is the politics of symbolism at its most vacant: a master-

phonetics than to address the existential threat of coastal erosion or the Byzantine delays in port development. While our fishermen lose their homes to the rising Arabian Sea, they can at least take comfort in knowing the waves are now crashing against the shores of "Keralam".

However, even as a linguistic exercise, the move is rooted in a certain historical amnesia. There is a prevailing, somewhat romanticised notion among the proponents of this change that "Keralam" is the "pure" or "original" name, rescued from the clutches of Anglophone corruption. But history, as it often does, refuses to cooperate with the slogans.

**Live And Let Live? Perhaps Not**

As the historical records show, the term "Kerala" actually predates "Keralam" by several centuries. We are, in effect, ditching a version of far greater antiquity

navigate the world in English. Languages evolve through usage, not by cabinet decree, and the sudden insertion of "Keralam" into the Anglophone lexicon creates an aesthetic and phonetic nightmare. What, pray tell, are we to call the denizens of this newly christened entity?

I posed this question recently to the digital ether, and the results were predictably absurd. Does a "Keralite" now become a "Keralamite"? To my ear, that sounds less like a proud citizen and more like a particularly resilient strain of intestinal microbe. Or perhaps we shall be "Keralamians"? It has a certain ring to it, I suppose, if you happen to be a rare earth mineral found in the periodic table between Neodymium and Promethium. Perhaps the Chief Minister's Office should launch a statewide competition to find a term that doesn't sound like it belongs in a pathology lab or a geology textbook. This is the "electoral zeal" of the linguistic purist: solving problems that didn't exist by creating new ones that shouldn't.

**How Not To Use The Taxpayer's Money**

When I raised these points on social media, I was met with the usual refrains of identity politics. One Communist MP urged me to drop my objections, loftily proclaiming that "identity isn't a spelling test".

It was a clever line, but it missed the obvious riposte: If identity isn't a spelling test, then why on earth are we changing the spelling of the state?

If the soul of the Malayali is so robust that it transcends the mere arrangement of vowels and consonants on a map, then why waste the administrative machinery, the taxpayer's money, and the Cabinet's time on this cosmetic surgery? The truth is that for the political class, identity is indeed a spelling test - specifically, one they can pass without having to study the more difficult subjects of fiscal management or infrastructure.

Let us look at what is being ignored while we celebrate this linguistic triumph. Kerala's financial needs remain acute, with the state frequently locked in a grim tug-of-war with the Centre over borrowing limits and GST dues. Our health sector, though historically strong, desperately needs the specialised boost that a long-promised AIIMS would provide. Our development projects are often mired in the sludge of bureaucratic inertia.

**If the soul of the Malayali is so robust that it transcends the mere arrangement of vowels and consonants on a map, then why waste the administrative machinery, the taxpayer's money, and the Cabinet's time on this cosmetic surgery? The truth is that for the political class, identity is indeed a spelling test - specifically, one they can pass without having to study the more difficult subjects of fiscal management or infrastructure.**



class in the art of the otiose. It is a move that costs the Central government absolutely nothing, which is precisely why they were so happy to grant it. In the high-stakes bazaar of federalism, the State asked for bread and New Delhi gave them a suffix. And the State, eyes firmly fixed on the fast-approaching elections, is parading this "m" around like a trophy of decolonial liberation.

One must admire the sheer efficiency of the pandering. By rebranding the name of the state to mirror its Malayalam pronunciation, the political class is attempting to harvest local sentiment without the messy inconvenience of actually delivering on substantive demands. It is much easier to change a letterhead than it is to build an AIIMS. It is far simpler to debate

in favor of an 11th-century formulation, simply because the latter feels more like authentic Malayalam. Both the State and Central governments have conspired to privilege linguistic parochialism over historical accuracy. If the goal was to return to our "roots", we've managed to trip over them and land in the wrong century. It would have been simplest to have gone on calling the state "Kerala" in Malayalam and "Kerala" in English, just as the Germans call their country "Deutschland" in their own language but accept Anglophones terming it "Germany", but this simple "live and let live" approach would have scored no political brownie points for anyone involved.

Then there is the practical headache for those of us who still

By acceding to the name change, the Centre gets to play the role of the indulgent elder brother, granting a harmless wish while keeping the purse strings tightly closed. They have, in the PM's words "honoured the sentiments of the people" without spending a single paisa on a relief package. It is a cynical transaction where symbols are traded for silence.

**A Rare Consensus**

There is a particular irony in seeing a Communist-led government in the state and a nationalist government at the Centre join hands in this endeavour. It is a rare moment of bipartisan consensus, fueled by the realisation that "Keralam" is a cheap date. It satisfies the sub-Nationalist urges of the Left to score a cheap quick win before the Assembly elections due in April, and the vernacular-first optics of the Right, anxious to demonstrate that it supports all Indian languages, not just Hindi. It is the perfect political placebo: it has no active ingredients, but it makes the patient feel he's better because something is being done.

In the end, we are left with a state that will be spelled differently but will face the same old problems. The 'm' at the end of Keralam will not stop the sea from encroaching, it will not fill the coffers of the state treasury, and it will not provide a bed in a super-specialty hospital.

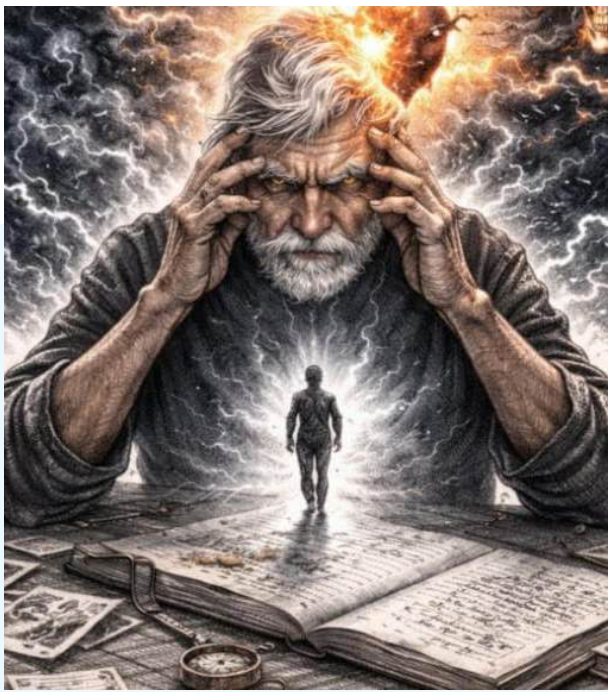
So, long live linguistic parochialism! Let us celebrate our new name with all the pomp and ceremony it deserves. We may be "Keralamites" or "Keralamians" now, inhabiting a mineral-rich or microbe-adjacent future, but at least we can say we changed the map. It's just a pity we couldn't change the reality on the ground. But then again, in the modern political playbook, why bother with the substance when the symbol is so much easier to spell?



**- SHASHI THAROOR, MP, AUTHOR, FORMER DIPLOMAT**

*Disclaimer: These are the personal opinions of the author*

DEFIANCE OF DUST



*Old age, they say, is a curse  
A slow erosion, a silent hearse.  
But listen, youth of fleeting years:  
The fire within still burns past fears.*

*Shall we lie down like beasts in pain,  
As time pours down like ruthless rain?  
No! Our will is not yet torn  
In shattered wheels, new paths are born.*

*Our limbs may creak, our steps may slow,  
But in our minds, the tempests blow.  
The world may hush, pretend we're done  
But age is not eclipse of sun.*

*If we must sit, let it be thrones,  
Of dreams carved deep in aging bones.  
Let hearts still burst, but not in vain  
In thunderous love, not silent pain.*

*Oh youth who scroll and swipe and stray,  
Learn from the soul that won't decay.  
Rise not with haste, but with resolve  
Let character, not clicks, evolve.*

*The end is not the end, you see  
But wisdom passed eternally.*



**...: Dr. Peruka Raju ...  
7810032847**

**Bengal Polls: Why Both Trinamool And BJP  
Want To Woo The Rajbanshis**

The rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in West Bengal since the 2019 Lok Sabha polls has been exceptional. From raising its Lok Sabha tally from just two seats to 18 in 2019, to wiping out the Congress and the Left parties in the 2021 assembly polls to emerge as the main opposition in the state, winning 77 of 294 seats, the BJP's march has been powered primarily by the Rajbanshi and Matua communities of the state, spread across the northern and eastern border regions, respectively.

The BJP's stunning performance in 2019 was a jolt for Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress. Well into her second term then, Mamata wasted no time focusing on north Bengal - both in the context of her government's initiatives and the Trinamool Congress's organisational push. The efforts in north Bengal yielded some results for her party in the 2021 assembly polls. The BJP still gathered most of its strength from north Bengal to make it to 77 seats but had to yield some to the Trinamool.

In the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, the BJP went down from 18 to 12 seats in Bengal but continued to derive support from north Bengal, where the Rajbanshis are a dominant SC community, and from Matua-dominated areas across districts on



the eastern Bangladesh border.

The BJP's Rajbanshi and Matua campaign was largely driven by the citizenship plank. The Centre's NRC-CAA move generated fear among the Matuas, who came from East Pakistan - or today's Bangladesh - post-Partition. The Rajbanshis have been demanding a separate "Kamtapur" and want their language to be recognised in the 8th Schedule of the Constitution, among other things. They hope that the BJP government at the Centre would be able to deliver these things.

But while such issues take time to be resolved, Mamata Banerjee has been trying to sway the Rajbanshis away from the BJP. The community dominated over 22 of the 54 seats in north Bengal. Before the rise of the BJP, the region used to be a stronghold of the Congress as well as of the Communist Party of India (Marxist)

(CPI-M) and Left allies. The Trinamool was a weak player there.

In the Matua-dominated Nadia, North and South 24 Parganas, as well as in some other pockets along the eastern border, Mamata has already made her moves. She first divided the Matua vote by sending Mamata Thakur, a family member of the community's spiritual leader Harichand Thakur, to the Rajya Sabha on a Trinamool ticket. This was aimed at countering the BJP's Shantanu Thakur, another member of the same family. Mamata has also tried to capitalise on the apprehensions around the SIR process - the community is uncomfortable with the exercise and fears getting uprooted after having spent generations in Bengal. Mamata has sought to assure them that she will "not allow anyone to be disenfranchised". The fear of losing "voting rights" has also added

to the anxiety, which Mamata seemingly addressed when she went to the Supreme Court to "fight for the rights of the citizens". Since then, there has been no let-up in the Trinamool's messaging. The BJP, in any case, has called it Mamata's "desperation". Between 2019 and 2024, the Trinamool Congress's general secretary, Abhishek Banerjee, also worked on building a strong organisational machinery in the region. Not only did it pick Prakash Chik Barik, who hails from the tribal community in Alipurduar, as its Rajya Sabha member in 2023, but he also contested the 2024 general election from his home seat (though he lost to the BJP).

The Bangabushan award conferred on February 21 upon the BJP's Rajya Sabha MP, Ananta Maharaj, alias Nagendra Roy, from Cooch Behar, should be seen in the same light. The idea was to bring the Rajbanshi language into the limelight on World Mother Language Day. All these steps have gradually improved the Trinamool's foothold in the BJP-dominated region. Whether they'll yield results is a question for the polling day.

**- MOHUA CHATTERJEE, SR, JOURNALIST**

*Disclaimer: These are the personal opinions of the author*

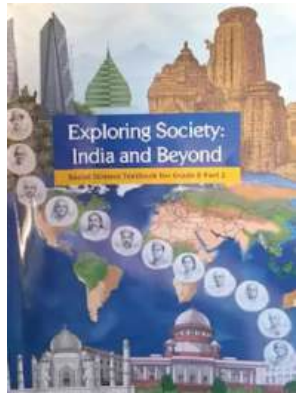
## How NCERT chapter on judicial corruption drew Supreme Court wrath and a ban

A Social Science textbook recently released by NCERT, which carried a section on 'corruption in judiciary', has the Supreme Court seeing red. The court, which described it as a deep-rooted conspiracy, has not only barred the sharing of the content but also banned the book altogether.

A small section on "corruption in the judiciary" in NCERT's new Social Sciences textbook has triggered a massive controversy. An infuriated Supreme Court has not only barred the sharing of the content but also ordered a complete ban on the publication and distribution of the textbook for Class 8 that was introduced under the new National Education Policy (NEP).

But what led to the fury? The top court has taken umbrage at the fact that NCERT was introducing the judiciary to young minds (13-14-year-old children) as being internally plagued by corruption and facing the challenges of a massive case backlog. The NCERT acted fast, withdrawing the newly released textbook and stopping its sale. However, the Supreme Court was faster, initiating a suo motu case in the matter, calling the move a "deep-rooted conspiracy". It did not end there. A show-cause notice was also issued to the Secretary of School Education, the Ministry of Education and the NCERT director. Here's the whole controversy explained in 10 points.

**NCERT judiciary chapter row**  
At the heart of the controversy is a chapter titled -



'The Role of the Judiciary in Our Society' - in the Class 8 NCERT Social Sciences textbook, released on February 24. It includes references to corruption, a heavy backlog of cases, and an inadequate number of judges. The matter was brought to the Supreme Court's notice by senior lawyer Kapil Sibal. An infuriated Chief Justice Surya Kant im-

mediately initiated a suo motu case, asserting that the court won't allow anyone to "defame the institution". The development comes on the heels of the Centre revealing that the CJT's office received around 7,500 complaints against judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts between 2016 and 2025. Following the Supreme Court's sharp remarks, the NCERT withdrew the textbook and began retrieving the 38 copies that had been sold out of the 2.25 lakh printed. Later, the NCERT issued an apology, saying the "error" was "unintentional" and the portion would be "rewritten". On Thursday, the Supreme Court came down heavily on the government and NCERT. It ordered the seizure of all the physical copies and a complete ban on the publication and digital circulation of the book.

"Ensure that all copies of the book, hard copy or soft copy, whether held in retail outlets or schools is removed from public access," the CJ said. A compliance report has been sought in two weeks. The court was not done. It also sought details on the members of the National Syllabi Board who wrote the chapter on the judiciary and suggested that a probe might be ordered. "We would like to have a deeper probe. We need to find who is responsible... Heads must roll! We will not close the case," CJ Kant said. A notice was also issued under the Contempt of Courts Act to the School Education Department and to NCERT director Dr Dinesh Prasad Saklani. The court, however, made it clear that its directions were not to stifle "legitimate criticism" of judiciary. On the

NCERT's clarification, the court said the choice of words in the book did not seem like a "bonafide error". "It seems to us that there is a calculated move to undermine institutional authority and demean the dignity of the judiciary," it said. At the outset, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, apologised to the court. He assured the court that the two officials who prepared the chapter would never work with UGC or any ministry. Meanwhile, senior lawyer Abhishek Manu Singhvi indicated that the move might have been deliberate. "The selectivity, my lord. Corruption is there in other areas also," said Singhvi. Kapil Sibal, who was also present in the court, weighed in, "What about politicians and leaders?" The matter will now be heard again after four weeks.



## Locked hospital, absent staff, woman delivers baby outside govt health centre

A pregnant woman was compelled to deliver her baby outside a government health centre in Khargone due to absence of medical staff, sparking public outrage and an official probe.

Labour pains met locked doors at a government hospital in Madhya Pradesh's Khargone, where a pregnant woman was forced to deliver her baby in the open, right outside the health centre gate, after doctors and nurses failed to turn up.

**LABOUR OUTSIDE, SILENCE INSIDE**  
The incident occurred at the primary health centre in Shivna village. Baisu Bai was brought to the government hospital by her family as her condition worsened. Instead of a delivery room, they found a locked building and empty corridors.

There was no doctor on duty. No nurse to respond. Only mounting panic as the woman's labour advanced by the minute. Repeated calls and messages to hospital staff brought no relief. With

no ambulance support and no medical help arriving, the family was left helpless. In full public view, just outside the hospital gate, the woman gave birth on the bare ground.

**'COMPLAIN TO MODI JI,' REMARK ADDS FUEL**  
As the family struggled to cope with the situation, a video recorded at the spot began circulating widely. In the footage, a woman staff member is heard saying, "Koi nahi hai, main tala khol to doongi," before adding, "Modi ji ko shikayat karo." The family replies that they would complain. The remark, captured at a moment of distress, has intensified anger, particularly as the hospital serves a largely tribal population.

**CMHO POINTS TO LATE ARRIVAL, ORDERS ACTION**  
Chief Medical and Health Officer DS Chauhan said the delivery point at the government hospital was unmanned on the day of the incident. One staff member was already on leave, while another took a sudden half-day leave.

## DGCA Brings 48-Hour Free Cancellation Rule

NEW DELHI, FEB 26

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has revised its Civil Aviation Requirements (CAR) related to airline ticket refunds and introduced a 48-hour "look-in" period that allows passengers to cancel or amend their bookings without paying extra charges. In a statement, the aviation regulator said that passengers can cancel or make changes to their tickets within 48 hours of booking without any additional fee. However, if the ticket is changed to another flight, passengers will have to pay the difference in fare, if any. This facility will apply only if the date of departure is at least seven days away for domestic flights and 15 days away for international flights. The benefit is available only when tickets are booked directly through the airline's official website. The DGCA clarified that once 48 hours from booking have passed, normal cancellation charges will apply.

The revised rules were issued on February 24 and will come into effect from March 26, 2026. The regulator has also laid down clear guidelines on name corrections and refund timelines. Airlines will



not be allowed to charge any fee for correcting the name of the same passenger if the error is reported within 24 hours of booking, provided the ticket was purchased directly from the airline's website. In cases where tickets are booked through travel agents or online portals, the responsibility for issuing refunds will lie with the airlines, as agents act as their representatives.

The DGCA said airlines must ensure that the refund process is completed within 14 working days in such cases. As per the new timelines, refunds for credit card transactions must be processed within seven days, while cash payments made at the airline's office should be refunded immediately at the same location.

The regulator has also made it mandatory for airlines to refund all statutory taxes and passenger-related charges in case of cancellations or no-shows, even if the base fare is non-refundable.

## Canadian PM Carney begins 4-day India visit on Friday

NEW DELHI, FEB 26:

India on Thursday said the talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Canadian counterpart Mark Carney next week will provide an opportunity to advance a forward-looking partnership between the two nations. Carney will undertake a four-day visit to India beginning Friday, in his first trip to the country as the prime minister. The visit is largely aimed at imparting a new momentum to the bilateral ties that came under severe strain following a diplomatic row over the killing of a Khalistani separatist in 2023. The Canadian prime minister's first stop will be Mumbai, where he will participate in separate business engagements, interact with top Indian and Canadian corporate leaders, financial experts and innovators. Carney will arrive in New Delhi on Sunday, and the two prime ministers will hold wide-ranging talks on Monday. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said both leaders will review the progress achieved till date across diverse areas of the India-Canada Strategic Partnership, building on their earlier meetings in Kananaskis in June last and Johannesburg in November last. "The visit comes at an important juncture in normalisation of India-Canada bilateral relations," the ministry said. "The two prime ministers have earlier agreed to pursue a constructive and balanced partnership grounded in mutual respect for each other's concerns and sensitivities, strong people-to-people ties, and growing economic complementarities.

## Railways Opens Doors to Innovators

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 26:

In a major technology-driven reform push, Union Minister for Railways, Information & Broadcasting and Electronics & IT, Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw, on Wednesday announced the Rail Tech Policy and launched the e-RCT system for complete digitisation of the Railway Claims Tribunal, marking the third and fourth reforms under Indian Railways' "52 Reforms in 52 Weeks" initiative.

**Rail Tech Policy to Drive Innovation**

The Rail Tech Policy aims to create a structured, transparent and innovation-friendly ecosystem by engaging start-ups, innovators, industry and academic institutions through a dedicated Rail Tech Portal. The portal enables end-to-end digital submission of proposals, allowing innovators to directly approach the Railways under a simplified, trial-focused framework that replac-

**Ashwini Vaishnaw Launched Policy & e-RCT**



es rigid specification-based procurement. The policy enhances financial support by increasing scale-up grants and doubling prototype funding. Railways will support up to 50 per cent of development costs for viable solutions, with successful technologies scaled up through long-term orders. Focus areas include AI-based elephant intrusion detection, fire detection in coaches, drone-based rail fracture detection, predictive track and overhead equipment monitoring, sensor-based load systems, solar-enabled coaches and digital pension processing.

**e-RCT: Complete Digitisation of Claims Tribunal**

Announcing the fourth reform, Vaishnaw said the e-RCT platform will digitally transform the Railway Claims Tribunal, which operates through 23 benches across the country. The system will allow 24x7 online filing of claims, hybrid hearings, digital scrutiny and real-time case tracking, eliminating the need for physical visits. The platform integrates e-Filing, a centralised Case Information System and a Document Management System to enable paperless courts, automated case allocation and online access to orders and judgments. All 23 benches will be fully digitised within the next 12 months, the Minister said.

The reform is expected to ensure faster case disposal, reduce litigation costs and improve transparency, making the claims process more accessible and citizen-friendly.

## grade-based driving licence system soon!

NEW DELHI, FEB 26:

To promote responsible driving and prevent road mishaps, the government is planning to introduce a grade-based driving license system with stricter provisions, including licence cancellation for certain traffic rule violations. Every year, around 1.8 lakh people die across the country due to factors such as using a mobile phone while driving, over speeding, wrong-side driving and drunk driving, Union Minister for Road, Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari said. People's lives are extremely important, and the government is taking various measures towards road safety, he said, addressing the National Conclave on Road Safety organised by industry body CII in the national capital. The government has already increased penalties for traffic violations, but the biggest issue is the en-

forcement, Gadkari said, adding that there is no fear or respect for the law. "We are bringing a graded point system in driving licences," he said. Explaining the concept, Gadkari said some points may be deducted for traffic offences. When all the points are deducted, the driving licence of the offender may be suspended for six months or even cancelled for repeat offences. The minister said, "We are going to launch the scheme soon." Road safety is one of the most important subjects for the country. Every year, India is witnessing 5 lakh accidents and 1.8 lakh deaths, Gadkari noted. He said 72 per cent of deaths are of people in the age bracket of 18-45 years, the number of accident victims below 18 years is 10,119, while deaths due to non-use of helmets are 54,122. Non-use of seat belt caused 14,466 deaths, while deaths due to over speeding were 1.2 lakh.

## MP Assembly Uproar Over ₹77 Cr Waqf Land Row

A major political row broke out in Madhya Pradesh after a report by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) was tabled in the Assembly, flagging large-scale irregularities in the registration of Waqf properties. The audit has revealed that between 2018 and 2023, government land worth about Rs 77 crore across 20 districts was recorded as Waqf property, allegedly in violation of established procedures, triggering uproar inside and outside the House. According to the CAG's findings, 81 properties were examined during the audit period, of which 33 - nearly 41 per cent - were found to be government-owned land. These included parcels housing schools, police stations, forest areas and even land mortgaged to banks. The report noted that although these lands were entered as state government



property in revenue records and earmarked for public use, they were listed as Waqf assets in the Auqaf Register. The audit has raised serious concerns over what it described as a "lax attitude" on the part of district administrations and questioned the functioning of the Waqf Board in processing such registrations without adequate verification. One of the key cases cited in the report pertains to a mosque in Sanjay Nagar, Bhopal. The land in question,

measuring 19.80 square metres at Lendia Talab, had been leased by the state government in June 1994 for a period of 30 years. Lease conditions clearly stated that ownership would remain with the government, the land would not be transferable, and it could be used only for residential purposes. The lease also allowed cancellation in case of violations. However, in August 2021, an application was submitted to register the property as Waqf. The les-

see allegedly donated the land for religious use, contravening lease conditions. The Board registered it as Waqf property in April 2022 under Section 36 of the Waqf Act. The CAG termed this an "irregular registration of inalienable government land." The state government, in its reply, claimed the site housed an old mosque that could not be registered earlier, and that local residents had renovated the structure, expanding its area to about 530.83 square feet. The audit observed that the leased land was now under "illegal possession" and recommended that it be taken back by the government, with accountability fixed on concerned officials. Another contentious case emerged from Mirrod in Bhopal, where 3,600 square metres of land was registered as Waqf property in November 2022 on the claim

that it was previously a graveyard. The same land currently accommodates a government high secondary school and the Mirrod police station. Objections were reportedly raised by local residents, the tehsildar and the station house officer. Even the Board's internal inquiry did not conclusively establish the land's status as a graveyard. The CAG noted that no correspondence was made with the Revenue Department before the entry was finalised. The audit also highlighted other disputed properties, including forest land in Vidisha district, a cemetery site in Sehore, and land in Dhar where a madrasa and religious structure stand. Reacting to the report, Madhya Pradesh Revenue Minister Karan Singh Verma said instructions had been issued to district collectors to conduct detailed inquiries.

## VIPs seen onboard the VSR Jets grounded for 'gaps' by DGCA

An India Today visual investigation has found that several prominent politicians and film stars had flown on these now-grounded aircraft in the past.

Weeks after the tragic death of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar in an air crash, India's aviation regulator has grounded four additional chartered aircraft operated by VSR Ventures for failing to meet regulatory standards. All four belong to the same Learjet series - one of which crashed on January 28 in Baramati. An India Today visual investigation has found that several prominent politicians and film stars had flown on these now-grounded aircraft in the past. Passengers aboard these jets included Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shi-



vakumar, actor-turned-politician Vijay and superstar Rajinikanth, among others. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said it identified evidence of "gaps in maintenance procedures" in at least four aircraft operated by the Delhi-based charter company. While the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) is expected to release its preliminary report into the fatal crash later, the DGCA had already ordered a special safety audit of VSR Ventures. "The

multi-disciplinary audit team observed several instances of non-compliance with approved procedures within the organisation in the areas of airworthiness, air safety and flight operations," the regulator said in a statement.

**THE GROUNDED FLEET**  
Four business jets - VT-VRA, VT-VRS, VT-VRV and VT-TRI - out of the seven Learjet aircraft operated by VSR Ventures were grounded on Tuesday. Aircraft VT-SSK crashed on January 28, killing

the Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister along with the crew. According to the company's website, VSR Ventures operates a total fleet of 12 aircraft: seven Learjets, three Beechcraft, one Pilatus and one Embraer. India Today identified at least five past instances in which aircraft VT-TRI carried high-profile passengers. Those on board included TVK chief Vijay, superstar Rajinikanth, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar. Aircraft VT-VRS was also seen ferrying senior political leaders, including Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis.

The operator's two remaining jets - VT-DBL and VT-CR - remain in service.

**DEVIL MAY LIE IN THE DETAILS**

Glittering with the presence of celebrities and powerful politicians, India's private aviation sector hides several under-appreciated puzzles - pressures

that may quietly test operational discipline. It is a capital-intensive business where aircraft acquisition, maintenance cycles, crew costs and regulatory compliance steadily often eat into margins. In such a sector, scale does not automatically translate into proportionate profit growth. The financials of VSR Ventures reflect this tight-rope. As per its corporate declarations, the company reported total revenue of 295.86 crore in FY24, yet its net profit stood at just 12.51 crore.

For FY25, it declared turnover in excess of 420 crore, while valuing its net worth at 75.45 crore, despite owning a fleet of aircraft. The business, however, continued to expand, and net profit for the period improved to 27.67 crore.

In an industry where safety margins must remain non-negotiable, the balance between financial growth and operational discipline becomes more critical.

## Haryana CM Links New Rural Job Scheme to Lord Ram

CHANDIGARH, FEB 26

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Wednesday said Lord Ram "represents the very soul of India, its moral foundations and the bedrock of its civilisation", while also clarifying the objectives and scope of a new rural employment initiative during the Budget Session of the Haryana Vidhan Sabha.

He said "it is deeply unfortunate that Congress harboured an aversion towards this sacred name". He alleged that the Congress had historically opposed the invocation of Lord Ram, and its senior leaders had even raised objections to the Ram Setu. "The Congress is anti-Ram," he said, adding that instead of participating in constructive discussions in the House, the Opposition chose to mislead the public outside. He said a motion of censure should be passed in this regard. The Chief Minister was speaking during the Budget



Session of the Haryana Vidhan Sabha on a proposal moved by MLA Ram Kumar Kashyap concerning the Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G Ram G). CM Saini said it was well known how, during the Opposition's tenure, members were physically lifted and removed from the House, alleging that the functioning of the Assembly had improved under the present dispensation. "Today, there is no such mindset against anyone. Every member is heard patiently. There is no ill will towards

anyone. The Speaker ensures that adequate time is allotted to all. Yet, despite this, members of the Opposition refrain from participating in discussions," he said. He further alleged that the Congress had shown hostility towards the name of Lord Ram and chose not to remain present during discussions on the proposal. The Chief Minister said the proposal had been brought forward as a measure to support the poor and enhance rural employment opportunities. CM Saini said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) framework has been expanded in Haryana under the Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) initiative. Under this initiative, he said, the limit of 100 workdays has been increased to 125 days to provide additional employment opportunities to rural workers.

## Sri Lanka Church Welcomes Arrest

COLOMBO: (FEB 26)

Sri Lanka's Catholic Church on Thursday welcomed the arrest of former State Intelligence Service chief Suresh Sallay in connection with the 2019 Easter terror attacks, saying the move reflected systematic investigations by the present government. Sallay was arrested on Wednesday by the police's Criminal Investigation Department (CID). According to Sanjeeva Madawatta, senior deputy inspector general, he will be detained for 72 hours for questioning under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. "This is the result of the current systematic investigations carried out by the present government," Church spokesperson Father Cyril Gamini told reporters here.

## 2 policemen abducted, killed by militants in Pakistan

PESHAWAR: (FEB 26)

Two brothers, both police personnel, were abducted and later killed by militants in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, officials said on Thursday. The incident took place on Wednesday in Bannu district when armed militants stormed a mosque during Taraveh prayers and kidnapped three brothers, two of whom were serving police personnel. Police said the two policemen were later killed and their bodies dumped along Marwat Canal Road, while the third brother, a clerk at the commissioner's office, remains in the custody of the abductors.

## Bangladesh Court Flags Red Notice for MP

BY JULHAS ALAM

DHAKA: (Feb 26) (AP) A court in Bangladesh's capital on Thursday ordered authorities to request that Interpol issue a red notice for the arrest of a British lawmaker on charges of corruption in a private real estate project. Tulip Siddiq, a former British minister and an MP from Hampstead and Highgate in London, faces charges of corruption in Bangladesh as the country's Anti-corruption Commission pursues a case against her. Siddiq has already been sentenced to six years in jail in Bangladesh in three other corruption cases all involving her powerful aunt, the country's former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

# Tesla faces US lawsuit over hiring H-1B visa workers amid American layoffs

A court in the US said Tesla will have to face a lawsuit for allegedly favouring H-1B visa-holding foreign workers over American citizens. A software engineer claimed that the EV-maker hired over 1,300 workers on H-1B visas while sacking 6,000 employees, mostly Americans.



A federal judge in the US has ruled that American EV maker, Tesla, must face a lawsuit for discriminatory hiring practices that favoured lower-paid H-1B-visa-holding foreign workers over American citizens, reported the news agency Reuters. H-1B visa hiring is mostly associated with Indian- and Chinese-origin people, though it isn't clear the nationality of the people Tesla hired. The complaint alleged that Tesla hired at least 1,355 workers on H-1B visas while laying off over 6,000 employees, the majority of them American citizens. In a brief order issued late on Monday, US District Judge Vince Chhabria in

a San Francisco court, declined to dismiss the proposed class-action lawsuit filed by software engineer Scott Taub in September 2025. The court argued that the plaintiff had presented "just enough facts" about Tesla's hiring practices to allow the case to proceed. In his lawsuit, Taub alleged that the Elon Musk-owned electric carmaker maintained a "systematic preference" for hiring foreign workers through programmes like H-1B, in violation of federal civil rights law. The lawsuit comes amid heightened political and legal scrutiny over the H-1B visa programme, after Donald Trump became the American President for his second term. **DID MUSK'S TESLA DISCRIMINATE AGAINST AMERICAN PROFESSIONALS?** He claims the Elon Musk-led company passed him over for an engineering position and instead favoured candidates on H-1B visas. These American visas are granted to highly skilled foreign workers and are widely used across the technology sector. Taub alleged that a recruiter working with a staffing firm told him the engineering position he was applying for was "H-1B only". He also alleged that Tesla's recent rounds of layoffs disproportionately affected US citizens. Judge Chhabria, while

noting that Taub's allegations were limited, they were still sufficient for the lawsuit against Tesla to proceed, and that the company must respond to the allegations. However, at the same time, Judge Chhabria dismissed similar claims, brought on by a second plaintiff. Human resources specialist Sofia Brander argued that Tesla favoured foreign workers for HR roles, a claim that was declared as not plausible. Judge Chhabria did, however, give Brander two weeks to file an amended complaint with additional details to support her allegations. According to court filings accessed by news agency Reuters, Tesla denied Taub's allegations, labelling them as "preposterous". Taub's lawsuit argues that Tesla has become heavily reliant on foreign workers brought in via the H-1B visa programme. It pointed to 2024, when Tesla was estimated to have hired at least 1,355 H-1B workers, while at the same time laying off more than 6,000 employees, the majority of them American citizens. Judge Chhabria, however, said those figures alone do not

establish discrimination. He noted that hiring a large number of visa holders does not necessarily prove the company did not prefer American citizens. "All of this causes the Court to be somewhat sceptical of Taub's allegations," Chhabria wrote in his order. Several US firms employ large numbers of H-1B workers, with US tech giants like Amazon, Microsoft, and Google having filed petitions for thousands of new H-1B workers in FY2025. **H-1B UNDER FIRE AFTER TRUMP CAME TO POWER, BECAME TOOL FOR RACIAL HATRED**

The lawsuit comes amid heightened political and legal scrutiny over the H-1B visa programme, after Donald Trump became the American President. The programme, which has been a pathway for thousands of highly skilled workers, many of them Indians, to secure lucrative US-based jobs, is under severe strain from new policy changes like increased social media scrutiny of applicants. Meanwhile, the visa category has also attracted the wrath of American Right-wing.



## Ex-US Air Force pilot arrested for providing tactical training to Chinese Military

A former F-35 Lightning II instructor pilot of the US Air Force has been arrested and charged with illegally providing defence services and advanced tactical training to the Chinese military.

with training Chinese military pilots," Assistant Attorney General for National Security John A Eisenberg said.

He specified that when US persons -- whether military or civilian -- provide training to a foreign military, the activity is illegal unless they have obtained a licence from the State Department. A senior FBI official added, "Gerald Brown, a former F-35 Lightning II instructor pilot with decades of experience flying US military aircraft, allegedly betrayed his country by training Chinese pilots to fight against those he swore to protect." "The Chinese government continues to exploit the expertise of current and former members of the US armed forces to modernise China's military capabilities. This arrest serves as a warning that the FBI and our partners will stop at nothing to hold accountable anyone who collaborates with our adversaries to harm our service members and jeopardize our national security," said Assistant Director of the FBI's Counterintelligence wing. Officials further alleged that China has increasingly sought to recruit former Western military personnel to enhance its combat readiness and operational capabilities. US authorities have in recent years warned veterans and defence contractors against participating in such activities without proper clearance.

A former United States Air Force officer and fighter pilot has been arrested on charges of illegally providing defence services to Chinese military personnel, in a case that American authorities say raises serious national security concerns. Gerald Eddie Brown Jr, 65, also known by the call sign "Runner", was taken into custody on Wednesday in Indiana. Brown is accused of providing and conspiring to provide combat aircraft training to pilots of China's People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) without obtaining the required authorisation from the US State Department, in violation of the Arms Export Control Act (AECA). US officials alleged that Brown, a former F-35 Lightning II instructor pilot with decades of military aviation experience, knowingly offered his expertise to Chinese military personnel despite legal restrictions governing the export of defence services.

"The United States Air Force trained Major Brown to be an elite fighter pilot and entrusted him with the defence of our Nation. He now stands charged

# Cuban Troops Open Fire on Mystery Boat

NEW YORK, FEB 26

Cuba says it has killed four persons on a mystery US speedboat in a shootout in its waters, cranking up the already high level of tension between Washington and Havana, with US President Donald Trump declaring that country an "extraordinary threat". "We're going to find out exactly what happened here and then we'll respond accordingly," US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on the Wednesday incident. "It is highly unusual to see shootouts on the open sea like that," he said. "It's not something that happens every day. It's something, frankly, that hasn't happened with Cuba in a very long time". Cuba's Interior Ministry said that persons on the speedboat began shooting at



its border guards when they approached it for identification on Wednesday morning, wounding the commander of the Cuban vessel. When the Cubans fired back, four "aggressors" on the speedboat were killed, and six who were wounded were evacuated and are receiving medical treatment, the ministry said. It did not identify the people on the boat, but gave the registration number, which indicated that it was registered in Florida, just

about 150 kilometres from Cuba and has a large community of exiles. A boat with the number it provided is shown in a vessel database as a 24-foot Pro-Line boat that is about 45 years old and can accommodate about 10 people. The incident happened on a day the US made a show of slightly loosening the oil embargo to allow some Venezuelan oil to flow to it, but with a huge caveat that it can go only to the private

sector in a Communist country where most of the economy is under state control Rubio, who is in Kitts and St Nevis for a meeting with Caribbean leaders, said that US diplomats in Cuba were trying to get in touch with the wounded people from the boat to determine if they were US citizens or permanent residents and what happened. Rubio denied that it was a US government operation or that government employees were involved. Vice President J.D. Vance said in Washington that the US was monitoring the situation, and added, "Hopefully it's not as bad as we fear it could be" "But can't say more, because I just don't know more," he said, acknowledging the mystery of the boat. Florida Attorney-General James Uthmeier ordered state

# Zelenskyy-Trump Call on Russia Meeting

Zelenskyy said he and Trump agreed March trilateral talks with Russia should pave the way for a leaders' meeting, as Kyiv prepares reconstruction discussions and accuses Moscow of political pressure.



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Wednesday that he and US President Donald Trump agreed that the next session of trilateral talks in March on a war settlement should lead to a meeting of the countries' leaders. Zelenskyy, speaking after a phone conversation with Trump, said the three-sided talks with Russia and the United States would take place early next month. US negotiators Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner also took part in the phone call. "We expect this meeting to create an opportunity to move talks to the leaders'

level. President Trump supports this sequence of steps," Zelenskyy wrote on X. "This is the only way to resolve all the complex and sensitive issues and finally end the war." The telephone call took place on the eve of another meeting, between just Ukrainian and US negotiators, to discuss post-war reconstruction. Zelenskyy said the two leaders discussed both meetings. He thanked the United States for its "active involvement" in the peace process and for missiles for air defense systems that were helping Ukraine endure winter-time attacks. Addressing a news conference in Kyiv earlier alongside Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Stoere, Zelenskyy said Thursday's meeting would include discussion of a "prosperity package". Zelenskyy said the US wanted to find a way to end as soon as possible Europe's biggest conflict since World War Two. But Moscow and Kyiv remain far apart in their positions. "In my opinion, the difficulties are not at the military level right now. The problem lies in the po-

litical will to end this war and in the issue of territories," Zelenskyy said. "I think that trilateral talks will be held in early March. Tomorrow, economic documents will be prepared at a bilateral meeting between Ukraine and the United States." Zelenskyy also said that Russian claims on Tuesday that Kyiv was trying to obtain nuclear weapons were an attempt to exert political pressure on Ukraine during the talks. He reiterated that Ukraine had no nuclear weapons and called on the U.S. to react to what he described as dangerous Russian rhetoric.

**MORE TALKS IN GENEVA** Rustem Umerov, the secretary of the National Security and Defence Council and head of Ukraine's negotiating team will meet in Geneva on Thursday with special envoy Witkoff and Kushner, Trump's son-in-law. Russia's TASS news agency, quoting a diplomatic source, said President Vladimir Putin's envoy

Kirill Dmitriev would be flying to Geneva on Thursday to meet US negotiators, but gave no further details. There was no official Russian comment. Proceeding with the reconstruction of Ukraine after the destruction wrought by Russian aerial strikes and frontline combat has become a major element in broader talks on how to end the war, which entered its fifth year this week. Kyiv hopes to attract about \$800 billion of public and private funds over the next 10 years to rebuild the country. The latest assessment from the World Bank released on Monday showed that rebuilding Ukraine's economy will cost an estimated \$588 billion. The assessment is based on data from February 24, 2022, through December 31, 2025. Ukrainian officials are pitching Ukraine as a future European Union member and a lucrative investment destination but funds depend on a ceasefire and a peace deal.

# Taliban warns Pakistan over airstrikes

On Sunday, Pakistan confirmed carrying out overnight strikes in Afghanistan's Nangarhar and Paktika provinces, saying it targeted militant infrastructure linked to cross-border attacks. The Taliban has claimed that 17 people were killed in the attack.

"Naturally it would be a military response, but its details are confidential and I cannot explain further. Pakistan must receive a response for its shameful act," Mujahid said. On Sunday, Pakistan confirmed carrying out overnight strikes in Afghanistan's eastern Nangarhar and southeastern Paktika provinces, saying it targeted militant infrastructure linked to cross-border attacks.



Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said the operation hit "seven terrorist camps and hideouts belonging to the Pakistani Taliban and its affiliates in the border region," citing multiple recent attacks inside Pakistan since the start of Ramadan. Pakistani officials said the strikes were "intelligence-based and selective,"

aimed at camps tied to Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Islamic State-linked fighters allegedly operating from Afghan territory -- claims the Taliban government has repeatedly denied. Afghan authorities, however, accused Pakistan of striking civilian areas. He also rejected Islamabad's assertions that Afghan soil is used to stage attacks

against Pakistan. "Unfortunately, whenever attacks occur inside Pakistan, they immediately attribute them to Afghanistan without evidence and accuse us. We reject this. Afghan soil is not allowed to be used against anyone," Mujahid said. The airstrikes followed a surge in militant violence in Pakistan, including a suicide bombing near the Afghan border that killed 11 soldiers and a child, and another assault in Bannu that left two security personnel dead -- incidents Islamabad blames on groups based across the frontier. Border tensions have since spilled into direct clashes. On Tuesday, Pakistani and Afghan forces exchanged fire along sectors including Torkham and Tirah, each side accusing the other of initiating hostilities. The Pakistan Prime Minister's spokesman Mosharruf Zaidi said Afghan Taliban forces opened "unprovoked firing," adding that Pakistani troops "responded immediately and effectively, silencing the Taliban aggression," and warning any further provocation would be met "immediately and severely." Afghan officials gave a conflicting account, saying Pakistani forces fired first and Afghan troops responded defensively. Local authorities in Nangarhar said the fighting in Nazyan district's Shahkot area has since ceased with no Afghan casualties reported. The latest flare-up threatens a fragile ceasefire along the 2,600-km Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

## Giant python swims through flooded road in Bali amid historic rain

The shocking footage emerged after more than 72 hours of near-continuous rain lashed parts of the Indonesian resort island, swelling rivers, flooding homes and villas, and turning roads into waterways.



Days of relentless rainfall, among the heaviest in recent memory, have unleashed severe flooding across Indonesia's resort island of Bali, submerging neighbourhoods and forcing evacuations. Meanwhile, viral videos on social media show a massive python swimming through a flooded street.

The shocking footage emerged after more than 72 hours of near-continuous rain lashed southern parts of the tourist hotspot, swelling rivers, flooding homes and villas, and turning roads into murky waterways. The clip shows a large python, estimated to be at least 6 ft-long gliding through a road completely engulfed by floodwaters.

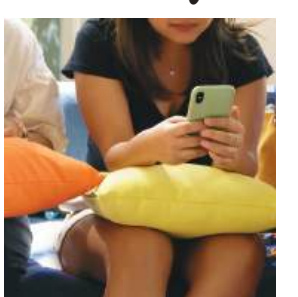
Authorities said communities in low-lying districts faced some of the worst

flooding in recent years, with parts of Badung Regency -- including tourist hubs like Kuta, Legian, Seminyak and Canggu -- and the provincial capital Denpasar heavily affected. The extreme weather has also disrupted tourism across the popular holiday island. Guesthouses and villas were inundated, forcing some visitors to relocate while others cut short or altered travel plans. Indonesia's meteorology agency has issued ongoing extreme-weather alerts, cautioning that although the seasonal peak has passed, heavy downpours may persist into early April. The current monsoon cycle has been unusually intense, with rains arriving earlier than normal and repeatedly triggering floods across Bali since late last year.

## Social Media Draws Users to ED Content: Study

BY PAULA SAUKKO, READER IN SOCIAL SCIENCE AND MEDICINE

LONDON: (Feb 26) People recovering from eating disorders often use social media for support, seeking out recovery content, body-positive creators and others with similar experiences. But recent research my colleagues and I have conducted suggests these platforms can also steer users back towards the very content they are trying to avoid. We carried out in-depth interviews with people who



had experienced eating disorders. Participants described how diet, fitness and body-focused posts repeatedly appeared in their social media feeds, even when they were actively trying to follow recovery content.

## NSE Moves Ahead with Rs. 23,000 Cr IPO Plan

MUMBAI, FEB 26

National Stock Exchange of India Ltd. has issued a request for proposals to investment banks, inviting them to pitch for roles on its long-awaited initial public offering, according to people familiar with the matter.

The exchange plans to select advisers by mid-March, according to some of the people, who asked not to be identified as the information is private. The company didn't immediately respond to an email seeking comment.

NSE this month formed



a committee and appointed Rothschild & Co. as an independent adviser to oversee the listing process. Rothschild is leading the selection of lead bankers, legal counsel and other intermediaries.

The move signals renewed

momentum for what could rank among India's largest-ever share sales. The IPO had been stalled for several years amid regulatory and legal challenges. The exchange operates the world's busiest derivatives market by number of contracts traded.

The planned share sale will be entirely an offer for sale, with existing shareholders expected to divest about 4% to 4.5% of the company's equity, Bloomberg News has reported. Based on prices in the unlisted market, the IPO could raise approximately \$2.5 billion (Rs 22,700 crore).



## Singareni Invited to Partner in Lithium Mining in Brazil

SINGARENI BHAVAN, FEB 26

A high-level delegation from Brazil's leading company Companhia Brasileira de Lítio (CBL) met Dr. Budhaprakash Jyoti, Chairman and Managing Director of Singareni Collieries Company Limited, and invited Singareni to join as a partner in their lithium mining operations in Brazil.

CBL Board Director Daniel Leme and CEO Sri Vinicius Alvarenga presented details about

their company and ongoing lithium mining projects in Brazil. They explained that, as lithium is a critical mineral of global importance, a partnership with Singareni—given its growing interest in critical minerals—would have a bright and promising future. They also mentioned that they are in discussions with other leading companies in India regarding potential collaboration.

During the meeting, they elaborated on the global significance

of lithium as a key mineral and its commercial profitability. On behalf of Singareni, Director (Projects & Planning) Sri K. Venkateswarlu and Director (Personnel & Finance) Sri Gowtham Potru shared details about the company's profile and capabilities. Singareni officials stated that they would examine the opportunities, feasibility, and profitability of lithium mining prospects in Brazil before taking a final decision.

## Global oil prices hovered near seven-month highs



NEW DELHI, FEB 26

Global oil prices hovered near seven-month highs yesterday as rising geopolitical tensions between the United States and Iran supported the market, even as growing American crude inventories pointed to concerns about oversupply. Brent crude futures were trading around 71 dollars a barrel in London, up about half a percent on the day and close to their highest levels since late July.

West Texas Intermediate futures were near 65.8 dollars per barrel, gaining about 0.3 percent and holding close to levels last seen in early August. Both global benchmarks have risen nearly eight percent over the past month as traders factored in a higher risk premium linked to tensions in West Asia East. Markets are closely watching the possibility of confrontation between Washington and Tehran, which could disrupt crude supplies from the region.

Iran is the third-largest producer in the OPEC. However, fresh data from the American Petroleum Institute showed U.S. crude inventories rose by about 11.4 million barrels in the week to February 20, highlighting concerns that global supply may still exceed demand. Traders are now awaiting official stockpile figures from the U.S. Energy Information Administration for further direction on prices.

## MSME Outlook Upbeat, Margins Under Strain: SIDBI

NEW DELHI, FEB 26

India's MSME sector remains resilient despite global headwinds, with business confidence staying firmly in expansion territory, according to SIDBI's MSME Outlook Survey Round V.

The MSME Business Confidence Index stood at 60.8, while forward-looking indicators strengthened, signalling sustained optimism for the coming quarters. Manufacturing led improvements in sales sentiment and working capital availability, exporters reported better finance access, and trading enterprises posted the strongest year-on-year gains.



However, profit margin pressures persist across sectors, with net margins the only parameter to weaken year-on-year due to continued cost stress. Overall, the survey highlights improved credit flow, stable macro conditions and positive near-term expectations for the sector.

The services sector report-

ed stable near-term sentiment, with a majority expecting revenue growth over the next year. Exporting MSMEs expressed confidence in sustained demand and credit availability, though export dispatch expectations showed slight moderation.

The survey also found a strong correlation between MSME confidence, GDP growth and credit expansion, underlining the role of macroeconomic stability. While new labour codes are seen as an opportunity for formalisation, some firms anticipate higher initial compliance costs and seek greater clarity and training support.

## Govt Announces 30-Day Duty Deferment Scheme

NEW DELHI, FEB 26

The Revenue Department is set to introduce a 30-day customs duty deferral facility for eligible manufacturer-importers from next month to improve liquidity and ease working capital pressures. Eligible manufacturer-importers under the new facility will be able to clear imported goods immediately and pay customs duty within 30 days, improving capital availability for manufacturing and exports, news agency PTI reported.

In the Union Budget 2026-27,

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman proposed extending to eligible manufacturer-importers the same duty deferral benefit currently available to Authorised Economic Operators (AEOs). The measure is also intended to encourage importers to obtain Tier 3 AEO accreditation. The Budget further extended the duty deferral period for Tier 2 and Tier 3 AEOs from 15 days to 30 days.

### Trusted Ecosystem

Speaking at the National Symposium on Customs Reforms-2026, Revenue Department

Joint Secretary (Customs) Anupam Prakash said around 6,000 entities currently operate within the Customs 'trusted ecosystem', including 1,500 with Tier 2 and Tier 3 AEO status.

"We want to increase the number of entities in trusted scenarios. For the eligible manufacturer importers, the process will start from next month. They will be getting the same duty deferral feature and the capital available with these importers will improve, and they can contribute to manufacturing and export," PTI quoted him as saying.

## Ex-Servicemen Get 5,000 Railways Jobs

New Delhi, Feb 26: Indian Railways will recruit over 5,000 ex-servicemen as Pointsmen on a contract basis to quickly fill vacancies, the Ministry of Railways announced on Thursday. The initiative is part of a new Framework of Cooperation with the Indian Army to support retired soldiers and Agniveers transitioning to civilian careers.

Under the plan, ex-servicemen will be employed across various Railway zones until regular recruitment processes are completed. Nine Railway divisions have already signed MoUs with Army units to facilitate appointments, while recruiting units are coordinating with Railway divisions to expedite the process. The ministry also highlighted reservation provisions: 20% for ex-servicemen and 10% for ex-Agniveers in Level-1 posts, and 10% and 5% respectively in Level-2 and above posts. In 2024-25, a total of 14,788 posts were earmarked for ex-servicemen. This move aims to ensure a smoother transition from military service to civilian employment while reinforcing Indian Railways' commitment to veteran welfare and national development.

## UIDAI, Google Launch Aadhaar Centre Mapping

NEW DELHI, FEB 26

The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) and US tech giant Google will enable the display of authorised Aadhaar centres on Google Maps to enhance access and convenience for citizens, the government said on Thursday. The citizens will be able to identify Aadhaar Centres by the nature of services offered, such as adult enrolment, child enrolment or only address and mobile update, according to an official statement.

The facility is expected to be available in the coming months, it added. Information related to centre accessibility, including features such as divyang-friendly infrastructure and availability of parking facilities, operating hours, will also be displayed wherever applicable, further enhancing convenience for residents, said the statement from Ministry of Elec-



tronics and IT. The collaboration is designed to enhance public convenience, combat misinformation, and ensure residents have seamless access to over 60,000 Aadhaar centres including state-of-the-art Aadhaar Seva Kendras (ASKs) nationwide. The initiative aims to ensure that when users search on Google Maps they are directed to verified Aadhaar centres. "UIDAI is always focused on improving ease of living for Aadhaar

number holders. This collaboration will ensure that navigating the authorised Aadhaar centres is now simpler, faster, and more transparent," said Bhuvnesh Kumar, CEO, UIDAI. In the next phase of the collaboration, UIDAI will use Google Business Profile to manage centre information and respond directly to people's feedback, ensuring a transparent and responsive service ecosystem. The partnership in the next phase will explore direct appointment booking through the Google Maps interface allowing residents to plan their visits more effectively. "By joining hands with UIDAI to integrate verified Aadhaar centres, we are making it easier for millions of residents to find trusted services with confidence and bridging the gap between essential government infrastructure and the people who need it most," said Roli Agarwal, Country Head, Strategic Partnerships at Google India.

## Gold enters long-term uptrend as global risks boost demand

MUMBAI, FEB 26

Gold's long-term outlook remains bullish as global de-dollarisation, fiscal stress and increasing geopolitical tensions reshape the global financial order, according to Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd (MOFSL). In its latest Precious Metals Quarterly Report, the brokerage firm said the yellow metal prices crossed the USD 5,000 per ounce mark in early 2026, marking one of the strongest long-term bull phases in modern history. It said the gold has entered a "structural repricing phase," marking the beginning of a new supercycle rather than a cyclical rally.

## Mutual Fund Classification Gets a Makeover: SEBI



MUMBAI, FEB 26

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) on Thursday discontinued the solution-oriented mutual fund category, which includes children's and retirement funds, and announced a major overhaul of mutual fund categorisation rules to bring more clarity and transparency for investors.

The markets regulator said that the solution-oriented category stands discontinued from the date of the circular. Existing schemes under this segment will immediately stop accepting fresh subscriptions. These schemes will now be merged with other schemes that have similar asset allocation and risk profiles, subject to prior approval from SEBI. As of January 31, 2026, there were 15 schemes in the children's fund category and 29 schemes in the retirement fund category. SEBI had first

proposed changes in July 2025 as part of a broader review of mutual fund categorisation. The aim was to improve clarity, introduce new schemes and address the issue of portfolio overlap across different schemes. At that time, the regulator had said mutual funds should be allowed to offer different types of schemes in the solution-oriented category with varying mixes of equity and debt, provided the asset allocation was suitable for the scheme's stated objective.

The regulator had also proposed that mutual funds be allowed to invest the residual portion of their solution-oriented schemes in REITs and InvITs, except for Retirement Fund -- Hybrid and Children's Fund -- Hybrid schemes, within regulatory limits. In its latest circular issued on February 26, SEBI introduced new categories such as contra funds and sectoral debt funds.

## HEALTHCARE, PSU BANKS BOOST MARKETS AMID MIXED TRADING

MUMBAI, FEB 26

The Indian stock market ended a volatile trading session on a mixed note on Thursday, with healthcare and PSU bank stocks leading the gains while media and FMCG shares lagged behind. The benchmark Nifty closed marginally higher by 0.06 per cent, or 14.05 points, at 25,496.55. In contrast, the Sensex slipped 27.46 points, or 0.03 per cent, to settle at 82,248.61. Commenting on Nifty technical outlook, experts said that a deci-

sive close above 25,700 accompanied by strong volumes would be required to alter momentum meaningfully.

"Until then, selective dip-buying may continue as long as 25,400 holds as a structural base," an expert added. Among 30-share pack, Trent was the worst performer, down 1.61 per cent. Eternal, Power Grid, HDFC Bank, Bajaj Finserv and Asian paints were among top losers. On the other side, BEL was the top performer during intra-day trading session. Sun Pharma,

Adani Ports, Maruti Suzuki India and Bharti Airtel were among top gainers. The broader markets also showed a mixed trend by the end of the session. The Nifty MidCap index declined 0.58 per cent, while the Nifty SmallCap index ended almost flat, down 0.01 per cent. On the sectoral front, healthcare stocks outperformed the market. The Nifty Healthcare index rose 1.24 per cent and the Nifty Pharma index gained 1.08 per cent. PSU bank stocks also witnessed positive momentum dur-

ing the session. On the other hand, media and FMCG stocks came under pressure. The Nifty Media index ended 0.68 per cent lower, while the Nifty FMCG index slipped 0.16 per cent. In terms of institutional activity, foreign institutional investors (FIIs) remained net buyers and purchased shares worth Rs 3,024.50 crore on February 25. Domestic institutional investors (DIIs) also supported the market, buying equities worth Rs 3,639.97 crore during the same session.

## Apple Plans India Payment Entry

NEW DELHI, FEB 26

Apple Inc. is in discussions with key Indian banks and global card networks in preparation to start Apple Pay in the world's most populous country.

The iPhone maker is in talks with ICICI Bank Ltd., HDFC Bank Ltd. and Axis Bank Ltd., as it aims to introduce its payment service in India around the middle of 2026, according to people with knowledge of the matter. The timeline remains fluid, but the talks indicate an approaching launch.

Apple is also discussing the plan with payment networks Mastercard Inc. and Visa Inc., said the people, who asked not to be named because the de-



liberations are private. Apple declined to comment, while representatives of the banks and payment networks didn't immediately respond to requests for comment.

The planned launch marks another step in Apple's push to expand in the country of 1.4 billion people with a rapidly expanding middle class.

While its market share is still small in a region dominated by less expensive Android devices, Apple's increased manufacturing and retail presence in India has helped it make inroads.

Apple Pay in India is expected to support India's state-backed Unified Payments Interface, or UPI, alongside card

based payments. UPI, which allows Indian customers to instantly transfer money and pay bills, dominates India's digital payments space.

The National Payments Corporation of India, which operates and manages UPI, didn't respond to request for comment. The Times of India earlier reported the India plans for Apple Pay.

Rival Alphabet Inc.'s Google Pay, Walmart Inc.-controlled PhonePe and Amazon.com Inc. are among the global players already operating digital payments platforms in India alongside homegrown players like Paytm.

India's central bank late last year set new rules that allow biometric authentication,

such as fingerprint or facial recognition, for digital payments. Indian authentication mechanisms have previously largely relied on one-time passwords sent via text message.

Apple Pay relies on Face ID or Touch ID to approve payments in-person via tap-to-pay, on websites and through apps.

With more than 750 million smartphone users on cheap mobile data and a state-backed push, India is one of the world's fastest-growing digital payments markets, serving as a potential gateway for Apple to grow services revenue in the region. The company is known to take a cut of Apple Pay transactions.

## Acerpure Launches 7 Energy-Efficient Split Inverter ACs in India

New Delhi, February 2026:

Acerpure India, part of the Acer Group, has launched seven new models under its Acerpure Chill Neo Split Inverter AC range.

The new lineup includes 1 Ton, 1.5 Ton, and 2 Ton variants in 3-Star and 5-Star ratings, compliant with the 2026 ISEER energy norms. The ACs are designed to deliver cooling even at temperatures up to 58°C. Key features include 7-in-1 Convertible technology for adjustable cooling capacity, Ice Blast Mode for rapid cooling, 100% copper condenser and evaporator coils, and an advanced DOC sensor system



for stable performance. The units also come with Self-Clean technology and removable filters for easy maintenance, while select models offer 4-way air swing.

The range starts at ₹29,990 and will be available on Amazon, Acer Exclusive Stores, Acerpure Connect, Acer Plaza, the Acerpure Online Store, and leading retail outlets across India.

# Could a 12-hour fast improve your health?

What is fasting and how does it work? Time-restricted eating – which is a form of intermittent fasting – is a common way people try to shed some weight. Recent research says it may make little difference to weight loss. But could it still improve your health? The idea is, you leave a gap of at least 12 hours – ideally more – between meals on a regular basis (overnight, for instance), according to Dr Adam Collins, associate professor of nutrition at the University of Surrey. There are other forms of intermittent fasting too, including the 5:2 approach, where you restrict your calorie intake for two days of the week and then eat normally on the other five. The 4:3, or 'every other day', involves similar restrictions on alternate days. "Whichever one you choose, make sure you're doing it consistently," Collins advises.

## IS FASTING UNIVERSALLY BENEFICIAL?

No regime will be right for everyone all the time, says Collins: "So much depends on what you eat and, to some extent, when you eat it." It also depends on whether you're going to follow eating with activity or inactivity, and whether you've accumulated lots of calories throughout the day." Another contributing factor is your circadian rhythm, external – natural cycles of sleep and activity based on cycles of light and dark. Scientists are investigating whether eating out of kilter with your circadian rhythm – having a large meal at night when your body is signalling for sleep – is not optimal for health, external.

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF FASTING?

Regular breaks between eating give our bodies time to carry out valuable 'housekeeping', according to Collins. After a meal, the glucose from carbohydrates in food is used for energy – either immediately or stored for later. In a fasted state, which can start 10–12 hours after your last meal, the body has less of this form of glucose. So the liver begins to break down stored fat into fatty acids called ketones, external to use as fuel instead. This process is known as metabolic switching, external and is a reason why, previously, fasting has been linked to weight loss. But while some of the latest research questions whether fasting actually does have an impact on weight loss, external, there is evidence it may come with other benefits – like potential improvements to your gut microbiota, external. The problem is, most of us are too full for too much of the

time to experience these benefits, says Collins. Eating three meals a day plus snacks means we're in a "constantly fed state". As a result, our bodies continuously process new intakes of food instead of

dealing with fat reserves. "All the things we associate with poor metabolic health and disease risk – cardiovascular disease, insulin resistance, diabetes and low energy – are essentially a manifestation of fuel mismanagement," he says. "Eating in a grazing pattern means you're not able to store, liberate and utilise fuel in the right way."

## BENEFITS TO GUT HEALTH

Short periods of fasting (which you can do by having breakfast later or dinner earlier, for instance), may benefit your gut microbes, explains professor Tim Spector of King's College London in his book *Spoon-Fed*. Evidence suggests that during fasting, certain species of

microbes replicate and feed off carbohydrates in the gut lining, making the gut barrier (which plays a role in the immune system) healthier and more efficient. Researchers believe this could improve your mood and energy levels in the short term and possibly lead to weight loss in the longer term.

## BENEFITS TO INFLAMMATION CONTROL

Chronic inflammation is linked to heart disease, external, type-2 diabetes, cancer, multiple sclerosis, inflammatory bowel diseases and other conditions, external. Some experts believe intermittent fasting has the potential to manage or prevent chronic inflammation, external. The idea is that ketones produced during fasting improve your

cells' ability to suppress inflammation and repair damage.

## BENEFITS TO METABOLIC HEALTH

"From a metabolic point of view, we definitely see benefits in intermittent fasting," says Collins. "You're better at clearing, storing and utilising carbs and fat [when you're intermittent fasting], so there are improvements in insulin sensitivity, blood lipids (fats) and other cardiovascular risk factors." Such improvements are evident in lean people as well as those who are overweight, he says. This is possibly because people of a healthy weight can still carry harmful deposits of fat in their internal organs, says Collins.



## Fasting evidence not yet wholly conclusive

Fasting is a highly complex area, where research is ongoing and robust clinical trials are lacking, according to Collins. The *New England Journal of Medicine* study, external suggests intermittent fasting might be useful in treating diseases including Alzheimer's and Parkinson's, slowing the growth of some cancers, repairing tissue damage and enhancing athletic performance. Krista Varady, professor of nutrition at the University of Illinois says, "There's good evidence to show the 'every other day' and 5:2 diets are the most effective fasting patterns for weight-loss

and health benefits. But she urges caution. "Many of the claims about the benefits of intermittent fasting are overblown," she says. "A lot of the results of studies on animals just haven't been replicated in humans." Emerging evidence suggests that regular periods of fasting may have health benefits beyond weight loss, but the science is not yet proven. Intermittent diets are not suitable for people at risk of, or with a history of, eating disorders or anyone underweight. Diabetics and those with a pre-existing medical condition should seek medical advice before undertaking any form of fasting.

# WHAT IS CREATINE, WHAT DOES IT DO AND SHOULD YOU BE TAKING IT?

Creatine used to be the stuff of bodybuilder and elite athlete chat. Now, thanks to its documented impact on strength, recovery, brain health and healthy ageing, it's gone mainstream. Influencers have fuelled its rise, with hundreds of thousands of social posts tagged with #creatine. People, of all ages and athletic abilities are making claims about how it can improve your life

## WHAT IS CREATINE?

Produced in the kidneys, liver and pancreas, creatine is often associated with protein – and there's good reason. Amino acids are the building blocks of protein, and creatine is made from three of them (arginine, glycine, and methionine). That said, it's not actually classified as a protein, external – its structure and makeup aren't complex enough. A quick source of energy for muscles, creatine's especially important if you do short-duration, high-intensity activities like sprinting. It contributes to performance, external in exercises that require more continuous effort and plays a role in post-exercise recovery, potentially even reducing the risk of injury. Science expert Greg Foot investigates whether creatine can boost your mind and body.

## CREATINE FOR HEALTHY AGEING AND MUSCLE STRENGTH

Growing evidence suggests creatine could help us as we age, supporting muscle growth and reducing the effects of sarcopenia, external, the age-related deterioration of muscle. But all the evidence shows that, crucially, it has to be used alongside exercise – specifically resistance training – to make a difference. On its own, creatine is unlikely to give any substantial improvements in strength or lean muscle, although it may help reduce fatigue. When combined with movement, though, it's been shown to improve strength, support mobility and increase muscle mass, external. This is especially true for those who are post-menopausal, external.

## CAN CREATINE BOOST BRAIN FUNCTION AND MEMORY?

Research suggests creatine could help improve mood, external, brain function during sleep deprivation, external memory, external and cognitive performance. The UK Nutrition and Health Claims Committee, external has even acknowledged there could be cognitive benefits but it has stopped short of approving any health claims, saying more evidence is needed.

## CAN YOU GET ENOUGH CREATINE FROM FOOD?

While our bodies make most of the creatine we need, we do need to replenish around 1-3g per day, external through our diet. If you're sporty or take part in high-intensity training, you'll probably need a little more. It's mainly found in meat and fish, making it harder for vegetarians or vegans to reach the amounts they need. While eggs and dairy offer small amounts, there are no plant-based sources. That said, some plant foods come with amino acids like glycine, arginine and methionine, which the body uses to produce its own creatine. These include nuts and seeds like almonds, walnuts and sunflower seeds; legumes such as chickpeas, lentils and beans; mushrooms, particularly shiitake and oyster varieties; and soy products like tofu and tempeh. This might not pack the same creatine punch as animal sources or supplements, but food tends to have more varied nutritional value than capsules.

## ARE CREATINE SUPPLEMENTS SAFE AND WHO SHOULD TAKE THEM?

There's no UK guidance on creatine supplements or how much to take. So, if you're considering it, it's a good idea to speak to a healthcare professional first, especially if you have underlying health conditions. While creatine supplements at the recommended doses are considered safe for most healthy adults, they can have side effects like bloating, nausea or temporary weight gain due to increased water retention. Some supplement formats, such as gummies, can also contain added sugars. It's not a one-size-fits-all situation. You'd do better to look at your overall diet, not just a single nutrient. Eating balanced meals with a variety of foods is still the foundation for long-term health and sports performance.

**Disclaimer:** Information is not intended as a substitute for proper medical diagnosis or dietary advice provided by your doctor or dietitian. Please always seek advice from a dietitian for tailored dietary advice and support.





# India Crush Zim by 72 Runs In Must-Win Super 8

CHENNAI



brought in place of Rinku Singh to break the left-handed monotony at the top and deter Zimbabwe from bowling a spinner in the power-play - signalled intent. He flat-batted a hard length ball from Richard Ngarava to six, before thwacking Blessing Muzarabani for another maximum.

Abhishek began more cautiously before a no-ball boundary off Tinotenda Moposa woke him up. A driven four through the line was followed by a pulled six off a slower ball that signalled that Abhishek was ready to get going. But Muzarabani struck back in the fourth over when Samson miscued an offcutter to deep midwicket. But Abhishek was unfazed - he launched Brad Evans over cow corner and got a thick edge for four.

Ishan Kishan joined in by lapping Ngar-

ava over fine leg and pulling with authority, before being given a reprieve by Musekiwa. The middle overs saw Abhishek continue his assault. He danced down to Bennett for a six over long-on and brought up his fifty off just 26 balls with a pull off Raza. Kishan too found rhythm, striking Raza for four and six in consecutive balls. But Raza had the last laugh as Kishan slashed and was caught by the short third man.

Suryakumar Yadav walked in and immediately unfurled his trademark stroke - sweeping Raza for four, carving Evans over short third, and then hitting Moposa for a six and four. Abhishek, meanwhile, continued to pepper boundaries until he fell for a sparkling 55, toe-ending a slower ball to long-on.

Pandya entered to rapturous applause and wasted no time in hitting the ground running by smashing Ryan Burl for a massive 89m six over long-on. Suryakumar kept the tempo going before slicing to deep cover off Ngarava. After that, Pandya and Varma hit 11 breathtaking boundaries between themselves, including the former reaching his fifty on the final ball, to ensure India have the record for the highest score in this competition so far.

Zimbabwe's chase never gained the foothold it needed, though, to their credit, they had a wicket-less power-play. Opener Tadiwanashe Marumani struggled early and was even dropped on 17 by Ishan Kishan. But Marumani couldn't capitalise and fell for 20 when he sliced to cover-point off

Axar Patel's second ball of the game. Though Bennett continued to strike fantastic boundaries via loft, inside-out shot, and slog-sweep, before getting his fifty with a flat six over long-on, India continued to keep things tight - local lad Varun Chakaravarthy had Dion Myers holing out to deep mid-wicket.

By the time Sikandar Raza joined Bennett in the middle to provide some momentum, the asking rate had long since climbed to insurmountable levels. Despite that, the duo continued to plunder boundaries, especially with Shivam Dube being wayward with his bowling and conceding 26 runs in his first over.

Arshdeep then returned to have Raza hole out to long-on, before trapping Ryan Burl lbw for a two-ball duck and casting Tony Monyonga with a sharp yorker. Though Dube had Tashinga Musekiwa out in the final over, Bennett damaged his figures by hitting a six and four on the last two balls to carry his bat throughout the innings. Though India got the win, which improves their net run rate hugely, Dube's bowling returns will concern the think-tank. He conceded 46 runs in just two overs - the most expensive two-over spell by any bowler in T20 World Cup history - while Chakaravarthy went for 35 in his four overs.

It will be the two bowling avenues that India will want significantly sharper returns from before they face the West Indies. For now, the margin of victory spoke for itself, as India's batting firepower proved to be simply too much for Zimbabwe, and they would hope it comes good for Sunday, as they exactly know what's at stake - a semi-finals spot. Brief scores: India 256/4 in 20 overs (Abhishek Sharma 55, Hardik Pandya 50 not out; Sikandar Raza 1-29, Tinotenda Moposa 1-40) beat Zimbabwe 184/6 in 20 overs (Brian Bennett 97 not out, Sikandar Raza 31; Arshdeep Singh 3-24) by 72 runs

## T20 WORLD CUP

'We haven't played a perfect game'



COLOMBO: England may have sealed a semifinal spot in the ongoing ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 with a Super 8s game to spare, but bowling coach Tim Southee believes the team is yet to produce a perfect game in the multi-national tournament. Despite a strong run in the subcontinent, including a T20 series win over Sri Lanka followed by a dominant group-stage and Super 8s campaign, Southee said England still have room for improvement. "I think everyone wants to go out and do well. I think it's a great sign on this side. We've only dropped one game in the last however many games, and we've won in different ways. We haven't played the perfect game or played a complete performance."

## Ranji Trophy

DK hails J&K pacer Auqib Nabi



HUBLI: Former Indian wicketkeeper Dinesh Kartik has heaped praise on Jammu and Kashmir's pacer Auqib Nabi Dar after his excellent performance in the ongoing Ranji Trophy 2025-26 Final, where the right-arm pacer has dismantled Karnataka's top order by taking three wickets so far at the Hubli Cricket Ground on Thursday. Kartik loved the determination of Aaqib, who played all the matches in the ongoing tournament, weathered different conditions and has taken 58 wickets so far. He is one wicket away from becoming the highest wicket-taker in the current season. "Watching this Ranji Trophy campaign and following it closely."

Abhishek Sharma and Hardik Pandya struck blazing half-centuries while Arshdeep Singh claimed 3-24 as defending champions India secured a 72-run victory over Zimbabwe in their Super Eights clash in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on Thursday.

The result meant Zimbabwe are eliminated from the competition while confirming South Africa's place in the semifinals. The big win in Chennai puts India's campaign firmly back on track after an earlier 76-run stumble against South Africa, but it makes their clash against fellow two-time champions West Indies at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata on March 1 a virtual knockout clash.

Zimbabwe captain Sikandar Raza won the toss and elected to bowl due to sensing moisture in the pitch that might assist his seamers. But his gamble backfired spectacularly as India's batters attacked from the word go, sent Zimbabwe's bowlers for the better part of twenty overs chasing leather, as the defending champions hit an astonishing 17 sixes, also a new record in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup.

Sanju Samson began the fireworks with a 15-ball 24, before Abhishek Sharma showed signs of coming back to his best self by hitting a 30-ball 55. Pandya applied great finishing touches by smashing an unbeaten 23-ball 50, while Tilak Varma also played his part fantastically by hitting an unbeaten 44 off 16 balls.

Zimbabwe were never truly in the hunt to chase down an imposing 257. Yet Brian Bennett ensured the contest retained some dignity, as he struck an impressive 97 not out off 59 balls - laced with eight fours and four sixes. His lone act of defiance took Zimbabwe to a creditable 184/6, though Bennett fell three runs short of a landmark century. From the very first over, Samson

## Sujeet Kalkal clinches gold at UWW Ranking Series in Albania

TIRANA (ALBANIA)

U23 world champion Sujeet Kalkal clinched the gold medal in the men's 65kg freestyle category at the Muhamet Malo 2026 wrestling tournament. He topped the podium with four straight wins on technical superiority. The 23-year-old Indian dominated Azerbaijan's Rashid Babazade 10-0 in the final. He had a convincing 11-0 win over USA's two-time Pan American champion Joseph McKenna in the semifinal after beating Nika Zakashvili of Georgia 10-0 in the quarter-finals and starting his campaign with a 16-4 victory over Endrio Avdyli of Albania.

This is his second straight gold medal in the 2026 UWW Ranking Series, following his Zagreb Open victory in Croatia earlier this month. Sujeet warmed up with a 16-4 victory over Endrio Avdyli, who tossed the Indian for a four at the start of the bout. Nika Zakashvili (Georgia) fell next, 10-0, before Sujeet defeated Joseph McKenna (USA), 11-0, the same scoreline as the one in the semifinals of the Zagreb Open.

Rashid, who pulled off an incredible buzzer-beating four-pointer in the semifinals against Vitali Arujav (USA) to win 16-13, failed to put up a fight in the final. Sujeet laced him to win 10-0 to capture a second straight Ranking Series gold medal. Overall, this was Sujeet's fourth gold medal in the UWW circuit, having clinched the top spot at the 2022 Zouhaier Sghaier and the 2025 Polyak Imre & Varga Janos Memorial.

## Cristiano Ronaldo buys 25 per cent stake in Spanish club UD Almeria

NEW DELHI

Portugal star Cristiano Ronaldo has made a big investment in the Spanish Football. He has purchased a 25 per cent stake in the second-tier club UD Almeria, which is currently owned by Saudi Arabian investors. The Al Nassr forward has acquired the stake through the subsidiary CR7 Sports, and the investment comes as part of the club ownership consortium led by SMC Group.

Ronaldo explained the reason behind the interest in the club in a statement released by UD Almeria after the purchase. "It has been a long-held ambition of mine to contribute to football, beyond just on the pitch. UD Almeria is a Spanish club with strong foundations and clear potential for growth. I look forward to working alongside the leadership team to support the next phase of the club's growth," The Portugal star said. The president of Almeria, Mohammed Al Khereiji, expressed gratitude towards Ronaldo for the investment in the club. "He is regarded as the greatest to ever play the game, he knows Spanish football very well, and he understands the potential of what we are building here both in terms of the team and the academy," Khereiji said in a statement released by the club.

Almeria, currently competing in Spain's Segunda Division, is positioned third in the league and is striving to secure promotion to the main league. Meanwhile, Ronaldo is performing well for his club Al Nassr. The 41-year-old recently became the top goal scorer for the club when he completed his 121st goal for the team on Wednesday. Ronaldo has a perfect win record against Almeria. He has played seven times against Almeria during his time at Real Madrid, scoring seven goals in as many appearances. He also featured in a friendly fixture with Al Nassr in the summer, which Almeria lost by 3-2.



## South Africa Crush West Indies by 9 Wickets, Inches Closer to T20 World Cup Semis

AHMEDABAD

Skipper Aiden Markram led from the front with an unbeaten 82 as South Africa chased down a challenging target of 177 runs in just 16.1 overs for the loss of only one wicket and secured a nine-wicket win over the West Indies in their second match in Super 8s stage of the ICC T20 World Cup 2026 played at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Thursday.

With this win, the Proteas remain unbeaten in the ongoing tournament and have inched closer to officially confirming their semifinal berth. West Indies will have to face India in a do-or-die clash on Sunday to proceed to the next stage.

Earlier, former captain Jason Holder and Romario Shepherd helped the team make a strong comeback from a disastrous start as West Indies post-

ed 176/8 in 20 overs. Coming to chase a challenging total against a quality bowling attack, South Africa started the innings on a high note as both the openers, Markram and De Kock, scored 11 runs in the first over.

South Africa's prime batters were looking in great touch and made good use of the powerplay by smashing the West Indies bowlers all around the ground. The team was 69 for no loss at the end of the power play.

West Indies finally got the breakthrough in the eighth over when Roston Chase trapped De Kock with a slower ball. De Kock scored 47 runs off just 24 balls and hammered four boundaries and four sixes during his magnificent innings.

De Kock's wicket didn't bring any relief to the two-time champions as Markram continued the attack. The skipper completed his fifty in just 27 balls and remained unbeaten at

82 with seven fours and four sixes to his name. Ryan Rickleton also played a brilliant knock of 45 and remained unbeaten as South Africa completed the chase with balls remaining.

West Indies came to bat in the first innings after losing the toss. Their captain, Shai Hope, led the charge in the first over and hit 16 runs off just four balls against leg spinner Keshav Maharaj. The momentum continued in the second over as Brandon King smashed three consecutive fours against Marco Jansen.

However, the situation took a 360-degree turn in the third over as Africa's prime bowler Rabada dismissed skipper Shai Hope (16) and in-form batter Shimron Hetmyer (2). Ngidi also followed with two wickets in the next over as West Indies reached 52/4 at the end of the powerplay.

## 'She is fit and fine': Deepti confirms skipper Harmanpreet's availability



HOBART

India all-rounder Deepti Sharma has all but confirmed the availability of captain Harmanpreet Kaur for the second ODI against Australia, offering reassurance after the skipper's knee scare in the series opener. Harmanpreet had injured her left knee while batting against Megan Schutt during the first ODI in Brisbane, a match India eventually lost after clinching the preceding T20I series 2-1. With the three-match ODI contest now on the line, Deepti delivered an encouraging update on the captain's condition ahead of Friday's clash.

"I can say that she is fit and fine," Deepti stated during the pre-match press conference, signalling that India's leader

is ready to return as the series shifts to Hobart. While addressing the narrow defeat in the opener, Deepti underlined that the team's focus remains on execution rather than dwelling on the result.

"I think it's good. As a team, we played really well. But, obviously, the result has not come our way. But, obviously, we are looking forward as a team, and we will come back stronger in the next game," she said.

The experienced all-rounder also stressed belief within the group heading into the crucial encounter, saying, "Yeah, obviously, as a team. Personally, I'm always confident with them whenever we play. We want to play our best cricket in the next game." Reflecting on the conditions

at Bellerive Oval, Deepti suggested that the surface may assist spinners, but noted that practice sessions painted a slightly different picture. "When I played earlier, it was quite turning, and it's holding for the spinners. But, when we did training today, it's coming nicely on the bat. We are focusing on our skills, basically."

On India's bowling combinations and tactical approach, Deepti kept the message simple as she stated, "We will do it as simply as we are doing in the previous games also. We are not thinking that much. Not in my hand, actually. But, yes, it always depends on the team management on what they will do. I am focusing on myself and how I can contribute to the team."

## Mayank's defiant 130\* takes Karnataka to 220/5 at stumps

HUBLI (KARNATAKA)

Opening batter Mayank Agarwal produced a magnificent rearguard century to anchor Karnataka's resistance, but Jammu and Kashmir retained firm control on the proceedings at stumps on Day 3 of the Ranji Trophy final at the Hubli Cricket Ground, the home side closing at 220/5 in response to the visitors' imposing first-innings total of 584.

Resuming the day with Jammu and Kashmir's lower-order at the crease, Karnataka struck early through Prasadhi Krishna, who completed a superb five-wicket haul as the visitors added 57 runs to their overnight tally. Valuable contributions from Sahil Lotra (72), Abid Mushtaq (28), and Yudhvir Singh Charak (30) helped push Jammu and Kashmir to a commanding 584, establishing a dominant platform in the summit clash.

Facing a daunting deficit, Karnataka began cautiously but suffered an early



setback when Auqib Nabi Dar removed KL Rahul before lunch, leaving the hosts at 35/1. Nabi's disciplined seam bowling and probing lines set the tone for Jammu and Kashmir's relentless pressure.

The visitors tightened their grip further in a devastating post-lunch spell. Sunil Kumar struck soon after the interval, dismissing Devdutt Padikkal, before Nabi produced a sensational burst that turned the game decisively. The seamer removed Karun Nair and



Smaran Ravichandran off successive deliveries, reducing Karnataka to a precarious 57/4 and threatening to trigger a collapse.

Amid the crisis, Mayank stood tall with an innings of immense character and composure. Initially watchful against the moving ball, he gradually asserted himself, rotating the strike efficiently and punishing loose deliveries. His calm presence at the crease helped Karnataka regain some stability as he stitched together a crucial 105-run

partnership with Shreyas Gopal.

Mayank brought up a resilient century in the final session, raising his bat to a warm reception from the home crowd, reaching the milestone with a single off Sahil Lotra. The landmark knock underlined his resolve on a surface on which bowlers bending their backs were achieving a lot.

Jammu and Kashmir, however, struck back at a crucial juncture when Yudhvir Singh Charak trapped Gopal lbw for 27 with a sharp nip-backer, breaking the threatening stand and restoring momentum to the visitors.

Undeterred, Mayank continued to anchor the innings and found valuable support in Kruthik Krishna. The duo showed determination and discipline against a probing attack, ensuring Karnataka avoided further damage in the closing stages. Mayank survived a tense moment late in the day when wicketkeeper Kanhaiya Wadhawan dropped a chance off Abid Mushtaq with the Karnataka opener on 124.



## Akshay Kumar goes full fun mode in Bhooth Bangla song Ram Ji Aake Bhala Karenge

The nostalgia switch is officially on. Fans of Bollywood comedy are in for a treat as the makers of Bhooth Bangla have unveiled the film's first song, Ram Ji Aake Bhala Karenge, offering a lively glimpse into the film's humour-filled world. The release has further fuelled excitement around the much-awaited reunion of Akshay Kumar and director Priyadarshan, who are collaborating after 14 years.

Packed with colour, chaos and comic flair, Ram Ji Aake Bhala Karenge features Akshay Kumar in a high-spirited avatar that harks back to his iconic comedy roles. The song leans heavily on playful choreography, exaggerated expressions and situational humour, giving audiences a taste of the film's light-hearted tone. Set within the film's quirky 'Bhooth' universe, the visuals see Akshay interacting with an assortment of eccentric ghosts and characters. The sequence relies on comic timing rather than spectacle, tapping into the actor's

well-known strength in physical comedy and slapstick humour—elements that defined many of his earlier collaborations with Priyadarshan.

Musically, the track is designed to be upbeat and catchy. Composed by Pritam, with lyrics by Kumar, the song is sung by Armaan Malik and Aarvan (Dev Arijit). Rap portions written and performed by Mellow D lend a contemporary twist to the otherwise playful composition.

Bhooth Bangla is jointly produced by Balaji Motion Pictures, Cape of Good Films and Balaji Telefilms Ltd. Apart from Akshay Kumar, the film features Wamiqa Gabbi, Paresh Rawal, Tabu and Rajpal Yadav in key roles.

The film is directed by Priyadarshan, while Akshay Kumar, Shobha Kapoor and Ektaa R Kapoor serve as producers.

## USTAAD US BO: WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH PAWAN KALYAN FILM?



Generally, when a big hero film is arriving in theatres, the deals and theatrical advances are settled many months in advance. But that's not even remotely the case with Pawan Kalyan's Ustaad Bhagat Singh as the film is going on a struggle at the United States box office.

The latest buzz around Ustaad Bhagat Singh has raised a few concerns in trade circles. With just four weeks left for release, the film's overseas rights are reportedly still under discussion. At the same time, there are no visible signs of theatre bookings starting in key international markets.

For a big star film, especially one headlined by Pawan Kalyan in the lead, this is not considered an ideal situation at this stage. Typically, overseas distribution deals are closed well in advance, and theatre bookings begin at least a month before release to ensure smooth planning, promotions, and advance sales.

Delays in finalising overseas rights can impact marketing momentum and distributor confidence. Early bookings also help build hype among fans and give a clear indication of demand in international territories such as the US and Gulf markets, which are crucial for Telugu biggies.

However, industry observers note that last minute deals are not uncommon if negotiations are still ongoing. Sometimes, producers wait for better offers depending on market trends and competing releases.

As of now, there is no official clarification from the production team. With just weeks to go, trade analysts will closely watch how quickly these issues are resolved.

## TAAPSEE PANNU QUESTIONS DIRECTORS OVER REPEATED CASTING, CALLS IT "UNFAIR"

Taapsee Pannu has spoken candidly about challenging filmmakers over repetitive casting choices, calling it "unfair" to actors eager to experiment and break stereotypes. In a conversation with Galatta Plus, she noted that many directors prefer staying in their comfort zones, often casting the same actors in similar roles instead of reimagining characters with fresh faces. According to her, such patterns limit opportunities for performers who are keen to explore diverse genres and narratives. Taapsee revealed that she has directly questioned top directors about this recurring trend, encouraging them to move beyond fixed perceptions and take creative risks. She emphasised that growth in cinema comes from experimentation, both in storytelling and casting.

The actor also clarified that she is open to doing lighter roles or appearing in films where she may not be the central character. She stressed that every project does not have to be issue-driven or socially heavy, and that she is equally interested in entertaining cinema that allows her to showcase a different side of her personality.

In another interview with SCREEN, Taapsee admitted that landing a big project like Dunki was not easy. She shared that she does not fit the conventional "mainstream heroine" image and believes she secured the role because it required someone with her lived experiences and acting sensibilities. Calling Dunki a "gift" earned over a decade of hard work, she credited films like Assi and Gandhari for shaping her artistic identity. Directed by Anubhav Sinha, Assi is a courtroom drama addressing sexual assault and the pursuit of justice.

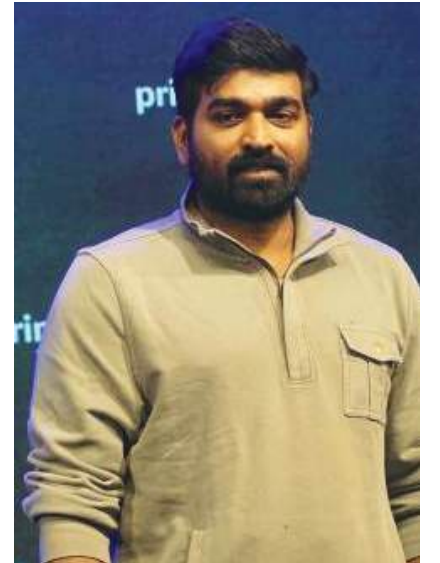


## Vijay Sethupathi Confirms Reunion with Mani Ratnam for Sai Pallavi's Movie

Actor Vijay Sethupathi has confirmed that he will soon reunite with director Mani Ratnam for a new project. In an interaction with a leading publication, he revealed that he will be collaborating with Mani Ratnam once again. The film features Sai Pallavi as the female lead, marking her first project with the acclaimed director.

Vijay Sethupathi said, "I have worked with Mani sir before, in Chekka Chivantha Vaanam in 2018. This time, we will be doing something completely different. The Vijay Sethupathi who entered the film industry seeking small roles is still alive." He continued, "I want to make sure he remains alive even while working with Mani Ratnam. When I entered the industry, all I wanted was to stand in front of the camera and deliver my dialogue. Even today, I feel so alive when I'm in front of the camera."

More details about the film are awaited. Vijay Sethupathi will next be seen in Slumdog: 33 Temple Road, directed by Puri Jagannadh. The film also stars Tabu and Samyuktha. Additionally, he has several projects in his pipeline, including Pocket Novel. He will also make a cameo appearance in Rajinikanth's Jailer 2.



## Is Selena Gomez Unbothered By Benny Blanco's Fart Or Dirty Feet Moment? Singer Reacts Amid Ongoing Debate

Selena Gomez and Benny Blanco are one of the most loved couples globally. The duo keeps making headlines for their romance and social media PDA. But recently, Benny went viral on the internet for all the weird reasons. A clip from his podcast surfaced on social media in which he was seen sitting barefoot with visibly dirty feet. What left the internet in shock was his farting on camera. Now, amid the noise, Selena has seemingly broken her silence and showered love on her husband.

### SELENA GOMEZ DROPS LOVED UP POST WITH BENNY BLANCO

Benny recently launched the pilot episode of his new podcast, Friends Keep Secrets, alongside Lil Dicky and Kristin Batalucco. However, much of the chatter around the 49-minute episode revolved around the producer's rather unfiltered on-screen moments. During the podcast, he casually propped his dirty feet up on the couch, drawing attention from viewers, and later even passed gas mid-conversation, jokingly asking whether the microphone had picked it up.

The video was instantly circulated on social media, and netizens were highly unimpressed with his appearance. One user wrote, "Selena, girl, blink if you need help girl." Another user wrote, "Save Selena. I'm horrified." One of the comments also read, "He looks like he should be a secret." Amid the ongoing debate, Selena took to her Instagram story and dropped a monochrome picture of herself kissing Benny. This post came after the internet urged her to reconsider her marriage. Along with the picture, she wrote, "I fall more and more in love with you every day my love." She shared the picture along with the song Gentle Sunlight by James Quinn. Meanwhile, Benny and Selena got married in an intimate ceremony in Santa Barbara on September 27, 2025. The duo dated each other for quite some time. They chose to keep their relationship under wraps, but the rumours began in 2023. Later that year, she confirmed the speculation by commenting on a fan page. She had written, "He is my absolute everything in my heart. Why has he been the best thing that's ever happened to me. He's still better than anyone I've ever been with."

