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## Secretariat police book case in Hussain Sagar boat fire incident

Hyderabad: The Secretariat police have booked a fire accident case in connection with the boat fire mishap that occurred in Hussain Sagar on Sunday night.

According to the police, as part of the 'Bharatha Matha Maha Harathi' celebrations, a boat and a jetty (platform) were arranged by the event organisers. It was burning firecrackers, accidentally one firecracker had missed the direction and hit the boat which was loaded with firecrackers. "Due to this, all the crackers started bursting and the boat caught fire. The jetty which was beside it too caught fire and was damaged in the incident," said an official.

## PM Modi speaks to U.S. President Donald Trump over phone

GNS News Agency, Jan 27

Further the Prime Minister tweeted "Congratulated him on his historic second term. We are committed to a mutually beneficial and trusted partnership." Mr. Modi further added "We will work together for the welfare of our people and towards global peace, prosperity and security." Donald Trump was sworn in as 47th U.S. President on January 20. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar attended the inauguration ceremony of Mr. Trump on behalf of India. The United States is India's largest trading partner and two-way trade between the two countries surpassed \$118 billion in 2023/24, with India posting a trade surplus of \$32 billion.

Indian and U.S. diplomats are trying to arrange a meeting of the two leaders as early as February, Reuters reported last week. India, a strategic partner of the United



States in its efforts to counter China, is keen to enhance trade relations with the U.S. and make it easier for its citizens to get skilled worker visas.

## Deceiving farmers hallmark of Cong rule, says Harish Rao on unfulfilled poll promises



GNS News Agency, Jan 27

Hyderabad: Former Minister and senior BRS MLA T Harish Rao has launched a fierce attack on Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy and the Congress government, for repeatedly renegeing on promises made to the people, particularly farmers. He questioned the Congress leadership's credibility, pointed out delays and postponement of implementing welfare schemes, and also unfulfilled assurances

under the Congress rule. "How many more times will Revanth Reddy break his promise? Changing commitments and deceiving the people has become the hallmark of Congress rule," he said. In a post on X, Harish Rao cited the much-delayed crop loan waiver scheme, with the deadline for implementation being shifted repeatedly and farmers yet to see the promised relief. "First, it was December 9, 2023, then August 15, 2024, then Dasara. To this day, loans of over 20 lakh farmers remain unpaid," he said. Similarly, the BRS MLA stated that the Congress government has consistently let farmers down on the implementation of the Rythu Bharosa Scheme. He said Revanth Reddy promised to enhance Rythu Bandhu investment support from Rs 10,000 to Rs 15,000 per acre after the Congress assumes power. While the Congress government skipped Rythu Bharosa amount for the Vaanakalam (Khari) season, it promised to release Yasangi amount by January 14 this year and then shifted the date to January 26. "Now, he has set another deadline of March 31. Farmers are left in the lurch with no clarity," he added. Harish Rao contrasted the Congress government's failures with the proactive measures under former Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao's leadership. "He ensured Rythu Bandhu reached farmers on time. Under Congress, farmers are left insecure and unsupported," he remarked.

## Telangana Tourism department to come up with restaurant on island in middle of Singur reservoir

GNS News Agency, Jan 27

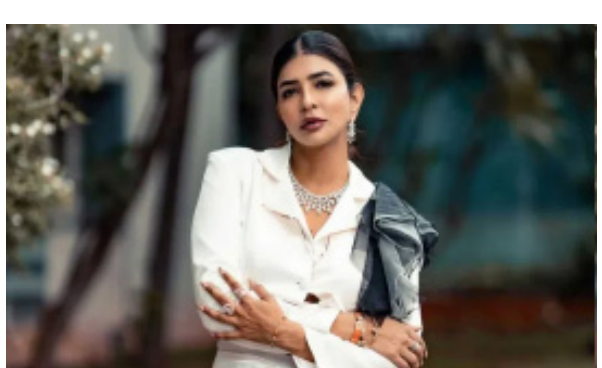
Sanagreddy: The Singur project is all set to get a face-lift, as officials prepare a proposal to develop the project into a sought-after tourist destination. Health Minister Damodara Rajanarasimha directed Tourism officials to purchase two 50-seat boats to operate on the island in the reservoir. Speaking after examining the Singur project and surroundings on Monday, the Minister asked tourism and other district officials to prepare a master plan and road map to develop the area into a sought-after tourist destination. Since it was located close to Hyderabad, it would attract a huge number of tourists, he said, and asked officials to come up with a design to build a restaurant on the watch tower on the island in the middle of reservoir. A food court, children's play area, landscaping and gardening too were suggested on the island.

Damodara Rajanarasimha also asked them to plan a tourist hub downstream of the Singur reservoir in 29 acres of land. There would be a modern restaurant, which would be built with Rs 5 crore apart from 25 modern cottages along with food court, children's play area, land-



scaping and enough place for parking. He directed the irrigation department officials to build a BT road up to Singur dam, a park, cycling track, walking track and central lighting on the dam. The Minister also directed irrigation officials to prepare for the proposal by the first week of February. He asked the R&B officials to build a four lane road from Peddareddy Pet Cross to Singur project to ease traffic congestion.

## Manchu Lakshmi criticises IndiGo over 'rude behaviour,' 'harassment'



GNS News Agency, Jan 27

New Delhi: Telugu actor Lakshmi Manchu on Monday accused the staff of IndiGo Airlines of harassment after her bag was pulled aside at the Goa airport, prompting the air carrier to clarify that the baggage was detained by airport security due to strict regulations on carrying prohibited items in check-in luggage.

In a series of posts on X handle, the 'Yakshini' actor said her bag was taken by the security personnel for a check and she wasn't allowed to open it on her own. "My bag pulled aside and @IndiGo6E and they won't let me open my bag. They insist to do it or else my bag will be left in Goa, some-

one help!!! Ft 6e585.. this is ridiculous, and the staff is being extremely rude, (sic)" she wrote, tagging the airline's official X handle. "This is harassment @IndiGo6E after all that they did not even put a security tag in front of my eyes. In spite of insisting that they would do so if anything is missing, I doubt IndiGo will take any responsibility. How is this even possible to run an airline like this... (sic)" she said in another post. According to Lakshmi, the staff pulled people aside for carrying "sleep apnea machine, spoon fork and knife cutlery" on flight. "

## CPI (M) demands Rs 15 lakh under Indiramma Housing Scheme

GNS News Agency, Jan 27

Sanagreddy: The CPI (M) passed several resolutions during the third day of the four-day State Mahasabha being held in Sangareddy. Addressing the media on Monday, State executive committee member S Veeriah said they passed a resolution demanding the government to provide Rs 15 lakh under the Indiramma Housing Scheme since the Rs 5 lakh would not be sufficient to build a house. The party also asked the government to provide house sites for the landless where they could build houses under the scheme.

## ACB nabs two government officials taking bribe in Medak, Khammam

Hyderabad: Two government officials were nabbed on Monday by the Anti-Corruption Bureau while taking bribes in various incidents in Sathupalli of Khammam and Manoharabad of Medak district.

According to ACB statements, 32nd ward officer of Sathupalli Town in Khammam, Nallanti Vinod was caught red-handed at the Bharat Juice Centre near the District Cooperative Bank while demanding and accepting a bribe of Rs 2,500 from a person for doing an official favour. Vinod had demanded the bribe from a woman to process her ration card and Indiramma house sanction application.

## Search committee set up to shortlist names for next Chief Election Commissioner, say sources

GNS News Agency, Jan 27

The government has set up a search committee under Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal to shortlist names for the appointment of the next chief election commissioner, sources said on Monday (January 27, 2025), citing an order. The Finance and the Department of Personnel and Training secretaries are the other two members of the panel.

So far, the senior-most election commissioner (EC) was elevated as chief election commissioner (CEC) following the retirement of the incumbent. However, after a new law on appointments of the CEC and ECs came into force last year, a search committee shortlists names of five secretary-level officers for consideration of the committee for appointment as the CEC and ECs. CEC Rajiv Kumar demits office on February 18 upon attaining 65 years of age.

While provisions of the "Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023", are being applied for the first time to appoint a CEC, it was used to appoint ECs Gyannesh Kumar and SS Sandhu to fill vacancies created by the retirement of Anup Chandra Pandey



and the resignation of Arun Goel last year. According to the law, the CEC and ECs will be appointed by the President on the recommendation of a selection committee headed by the prime minister and comprising the Lok Sabha opposition leader and a Union Cabinet minister to be nominated by the prime minister. After Rajiv Kumar, Gyanesh Kumar is the senior-most election commissioner. His tenure is till January 26, 2029. Sources said the search committee was constituted on January 17 by an order issued by the Union law ministry and it could meet during the Budget Session of Parliament that begins on January 31.

## RTC unions to go on strike from February 9

GNS News Agency, Jan 27

Hyderabad: The Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TGSRTC) unions on Monday announced an indefinite statewide strike from February 9. The Joint Action Committee, comprising members from a host of RTC unions, submitted a strike notice to VC Sajjanar, the Corporation's Managing Director, at Bus Bhavan on Monday. The JAC members contend that they are vexed over the Congress government's apathy and inaction towards the welfare of the RTC employees. "Despite being in power for 14 months, the State government is yet to ground a single welfare measure aimed at RTC employees and their family members. We have submitted our charter of demands and if they are not met in the coming days, a massive strike will be launched," the JAC members said after meeting the RTC MD. If successful, it would be first RTC union strike to be taken up in the last five years. The RTC union leaders expressed dissatisfaction over the State government's inaction on promises made to the Corporation's employees.

There is a sense of fear among RTC employees regarding speculations of RTC privatisation that are circulating in Telangana. The employees fear that such a move could lead to large-scale retrenchment. Furthermore, the RTC unions are also dissatisfied with the lack of wage revi-



sions and nonpayment of pending dues/arrears. The RTC union leaders charged that the State government was neglecting its promises that were made during the election campaign, which included RTC's merger with the government, removal of restrictions on trade unions and immediate implementation of wage hikes. They also expressed concerns that deploying electric buses as part of modernising the RTC fleet could jeopardise thousands of jobs. These buses are maintained by private operators, RTC union leaders said, and warned of intensifying their protests Statewide if their demands are not met.

## Rahul Gandhi to address two rallies in Delhi tomorrow

GNS News Agency, Jan 27

New Delhi: Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi has recovered from his sickness and is all set to boost the Congress campaign in Delhi by addressing two election rallies on Tuesday, said a party leader. Gandhi, who had to cancel his campaign rallies last week due to poor health, will address rallies in Patparganj and Okhla constituencies between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. on Tuesday, announced former Union minister Pradeep Jain Aditya. The Congress star campaigner had addressed a rally in Seelampur on January 14 but was soon forced out of action due to poor health, resulting in the cancellation of a few of his rallies. On Monday, Gandhi was in Madhya Pradesh's Mhow, the birthplace of Ambedkar, where he launched the party's nationwide programme 'Jai Bapu, Jai Bhim, Jai Samvidhan'.

Earlier, reaching out to the Jain community in poll-bound city, the Delhi Congress announced the creation of a Jain Welfare Board on the lines of a similar panel in Rajasthan. The party will also hold simultaneous candle marches in all 70 Assembly constituencies to protest the desecration of Dr B.R. Ambedkar's statue in Punjab, said Jain. Addressing a press conference, Jain said AAP National Convener Arvind Kejriwal is silent on the vandalism of Ambedkar's statue in Amritsar and "we want to expose his double standards". He also hit out at Kejriwal for ignoring the Jain community and not giving a representation in the



Delhi Minorities' Commission - which is shut since August 2023. Highlighting that religious minority status was given to the Jain community on January 27, 2014, during the Congress government at the Centre, Jain also hit out at the BJP for not giving recognition to the Jain community. "Members of the Jain community are being harassed in Delhi to procure a minority certificate," he said. Seeking votes for the Congress in the February 5 election, Jain said when the Congress comes to power in Delhi one member of the Jain community will be posted in the city's minorities' panel. The Congress has failed to win even a single seat in the last two Assembly elections for a 70-member House.

## Supreme Court dismisses plea on Adani-Hindenburg controversy

GNS News Agency, Jan 27

New Delhi: The Supreme Court has upheld an order passed by the apex court registry in August 2024 refusing to admit a lawyer's application seeking direction to SEBI to submit its conclusive probe report into the Adani-Hindenburg controversy. Advocate Vishal Tiwari had moved an appeal against the order passed by the Registrar on August 5 last year. Earlier on July 15, 2024, the top court had dismissed a review petition filed against its earlier verdict refusing to form any SIT or group of experts to conduct an investigation. After perusing the review petition, a bench, headed by then CJI D.Y. Chandrachud said that there was no error apparent on the face of the

record. "No case for review under Order XLVII Rule 1 of the Supreme Court Rules 2013. The review petition is, therefore, dismissed. Pending applications, if any, stand disposed of," added the Bench, also comprising Justices J.B. Pardiwala and Manoj Misra. In a detailed order passed on January 3, the Supreme Court had said that reports prepared by third-party organisations such as the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) and Hindenburg Research cannot be regarded as "conclusive proof". It had said that the reliance placed by PIL litigants on newspaper articles or reports by third-party organisations "does not inspire confidence" to question the comprehensive investigation undertaken by the SEBI.

# Indian Chronicle

English Daily

## Loans and liabilities

THE Supreme Court's ruling on improper loan sanctions by banks underscores a crucial flaw in India's banking practices — the lack of robust title verification for mortgaged properties. This oversight jeopardises public funds, risks fraudulent transactions and compromises financial stability. Highlighting a specific case, the SC pointed out that loans sanctioned on properties with unresolved title disputes could have been avoided with rigorous title searches. Currently, banks rely on empanelled lawyers for these reports, but the absence of standardised guidelines has resulted in inconsistencies and errors. The judgment has rightly directed the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to collaborate with stakeholders to establish a uniform mechanism for title clearance reports.

The SC's proactive stance emphasises three significant aspects. First, it recommends criminal liability for bank officials who approve loans based on defective title reports, ensuring accountability within the sector. Second, the RBI must standardise the fees and quality benchmarks for title reports, discouraging cost-cutting measures that compromise accuracy. Lastly, banks are urged to prioritise diligence, preventing fraud and safeguarding public interest. The directive also acknowledges practical challenges, such as the status of older or under-construction properties that often lack certificates. These grey areas necessitate legal clarity to balance regulatory compliance with operational feasibility. As loans against property represent a significant portion of banking portfolios, especially for small and medium enterprises, the sector must act swiftly. The RBI's adherence to the SC guidance is essential not only to restore public trust but also to fortify the financial system against vulnerabilities. In implementing these reforms, India's banking sector has an opportunity to set a precedent for due diligence and accountability in property-backed lending.

## 54 cases of Guillain-Barré Syndrome reported in Pune, doctors urge citizens not to panic



GNS News Agency, Jan 27

Guillain-Barré Syndrome autoimmune disorder Guillain Barre Syndrome is an autoimmune disease that produces antibodies which attack the body's nerves. Pune Divisional Commissioner Dr Chandrakant Pulkundwar announced that 54 people have been diagnosed with Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) in the district, and another four are suspected of having this rare neurological disorder.

Dr Pulkundwar held a meeting with state and district health officials to review the situation in Pune after hospitals reported 24 people with GBS to the Pune Municipal Corporation. He said he had directed health authorities to take a detailed medical history of the patients. GBS is an autoimmune disease that produces antibodies which attack the body's nerves. It is a sequela of either gastrointestinal or influenza-like illness. Doctors have also urged citizens not to panic as about one in every 1,000 people with Campylobacter infection gets GBS. However, the chances of recovery are high with supportive ventilation and medicines like intravenous immunoglobulin (IVIg), they said. District Collector Jitendra Dudi said a household survey will be carried out in the areas merged within the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) limits. These are mainly areas around Sinhad Road, including Nanded, Kirkatwadi and others. GBS cases have been reported to the PMC primarily from the Sinhad Road area, following the admission of patients to the intensive care units of Deenanath Mangeshkar Hospital, Poona Hospital, and others.

Some doctors have stated that studies indicate that GBS-related bacteria are linked to inadequately disinfected water and can lead to outbreaks. Dr Amit Dravid, an infectious diseases consultant at Poona Hospital, mentioned that some patients diagnosed with GBS were found to have contracted the infection from Campylobacter bacteria.

When asked about the source of the infection, the district collector said instructions had been issued to collect water samples from these areas. "The team from the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)-National Institute of Virology (NIV) has also collected samples from patients, and their report is expected soon," Dudi said. The collector also said as the medicines are expensive, they have sought approval from the government to include them under the Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Jan Arogya Yojana, the Maharashtra government's flagship health insurance scheme. "We are also issuing an advisory to boil water for drinking purposes", he added. Dr Sameer Jog, a consulting neurologist at Deenanath Mangeshkar Hospital, stated that teams from the NIV, state health, and civic health departments interacted with patients on Wednesday and collected samples.

## TS Medical Council serves notices to Alakananda Hospital

Hyderabad: Taking suo moto cognizance of the alleged illegal kidney transplantation racket at Alakananda Hospital, Saroomagar, the Telangana State Medical Council (TSMC) served notices to the hospital. The hospital was seized by the Health Department following a raid on Tuesday.

The Council directed the hospital management to share all the details, including the registration of doctors and surgeons involved in transplantations. Medical records from the hospital related to donors, and organ recipients and human resources were also sought. "We have taken suo moto cognizance of the development and have decided to serve notices to the hospital management. They have to share all their details of registrations. Later, the hospital doctors will have to appear before the Medical Ethics and Malpractice Committee of the Council and present their case.

## Blamed for Sandur bypoll defeat, Karnataka ex-minister Sriramulu threatens to quit BJP



GNS News Agency, Jan 27

In a fresh headache for the Karnataka BJP, senior leader and former minister B Sriramulu on Wednesday threatened to resign after he was blamed for the party's defeat in the Sandur Assembly bypoll. Sriramulu told news channels that Radha Mohan Das Agarwal, BJP general secretary in-charge of Karnataka, blamed him for the bypoll loss during the party's state core committee meeting on Tuesday. "I asked him how he could say that since I campaigned for the party till the last day... I also told BJP state president (B Y Vijayendra) that he should have defended me when such allegations were made. I am hurt that he did

not," he said.

According to Sriramulu, the allegations against him were made on the basis of BJP MLA Janardhan Reddy's words. "I told them (party leadership) that if the party had suffered due to me, I was ready to get out," the former minister said. Sriramulu alleged that Reddy, a mining baron, had been trying to politically eliminate leaders like him ever since he was allowed to return to Ballari. "After Reddy came to Ballari, he started his own group. He is trying to finish us off politically," he said. Sriramulu also said the BJP Karnataka in-charge had subsequently withdrawn his remarks. The exchange between Sriramulu and Agarwal took place during a review of the bypolls held to three constituencies last November. The BJP-JD(S) coalition lost all three bypolls, increasing pressure on the state BJP leadership. The Sriramulu episode comes at a time when the BJP high command is struggling to contain factionalism in the Karnataka unit. The recent announcement of elections to pick the state BJP chief has led to MLA Basangouda Patil Yatnal's camp ramping up attacks on party president Vijayendra. The latest episode is being viewed as a fallout of Reddy's attempt to dominate the political landscape in parts of the Kalyana Karnataka region. Reddy won the 2023 polls on the ticket of his Kalyana Rajya Pragathi Paksha and later merged the party with the BJP ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

## West Bengal expired saline death case: Suspended doctor moves Calcutta HC to quash CID case against her

GNS News Agency, Jan 27

west bengal saline death, expired saline, west bengal, midnapore medical college, At the medical college, four new mothers were allegedly administered expired Ringer's Lactate saline on January 8. A day later, Mamoni Rui Das's health began to deteriorate, and she died. One of the doctors suspended over the death of a new mother at the Midnapore Medical College due to administration of expired saline on Wednesday moved the Calcutta High Court to quash the CID's case against her. The matter will be heard on an urgent basis on Monday.

At the medical college, four new mothers were allegedly administered expired Ringer's Lactate saline on January 8. A day later, Mamoni Rui Das's health began to deteriorate, and she died on January 10. The others — Mampi Singh, Nasreen Khatun, Minara Bibi, and Rekha Sau — were in critical condition. Singh, Khatun, and Minara were referred to the SSKM Hospital in Kolkata after their condition worsened. Senior resident doctor Pallavi Bandhopadhyay, who is an anaesthetist, alleged that the death of the mother was "due to the saline" and not due to anaesthesia, and that the CID is "trying to falsely implicate" her instead of investigating the expired Ringer's Lactate saline. The FIR reads

## Under World Bank project, Himachal imported 33.20 lakh plants in 8 years; more than 80% were apple



GNS News Agency, Jan 27

Himachal Pradesh plant imports Of the 33,22,760 imported plants, 28.57 lakh (28,57,975) were of 45 varieties of apple; 54,000 were of 18 varieties of pear; 27,140 were of six varieties of walnut; and 17,200 were of six varieties of California almond. Himachal Pradesh imported approximately 33.20 lakh plants of 122 varieties of 11 fruits, including apples, California almonds, walnuts, and cherries, between 2016 and 2024 as part of an eight-year World Bank-funded agriculture development project. The plants were sourced from countries such as the US, Germany, Italy, France, and Russia's Siberia.

"Of the 33.20 lakh imported plants, 13.09 lakh were grafted plants, and 17.12 lakh were rootstocks sourced from foreign countries. We stored these imported plants in our specially designed 93 Progeny-cum-Demonstration Orchards (PCDOs) under quarantine norms," Satish Kumar Sharma, Joint Director of Horticulture, Himachal Pradesh, said. Of the 33,22,760 imported plants, 28,57 lakh (28,57,975) were of 45 varieties of apple; 54,000 were of 18 varieties of pear; 27,140 were of six varieties of walnut; and 17,200 were of six varieties of California almond. Additionally, 15,747 plants of 19 varieties of peach, 14,000 plants of 21 varieties of stone fruits, 4,617 plants of six varieties of plum, 1,920 plants of three varieties of hazelnut, and 1,250 plants of 19 varieties of nectarine were also imported.

## Retired bank manager in Pune loses Rs 2.22 crore in cyber scam after she purchases 'insurance policies'

GNS News Agency, Jan 27

Cyber scammers have allegedly defrauded a retired bank manager in Pune of Rs 2.22 crore after she was asked to take multiple insurance policies on the promise of very high maturity benefits. The fraudsters posing as government officials, including those from the finance ministry, also asked the victim, a resident of Pimpri Chinchwad, to transfer amount of money as processing charges, the police said on Tuesday.

The callers misused names like Deendayal Upadhyaya, a late leader of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, and of renowned finance experts and government bodies and designations of top government officials to deceive the victim, the police said. The fraud has taken place since 2023-end and continued until recently, said Pimpri Chinchwad police that filed a First Information Report (FIR) on Tuesday based on a complaint of the 62-year-old woman. Over

this period, the complainant received calls from the criminals under 19 different identities, the police said. "They allegedly coaxed her into purchasing various insurance policies and kept seeking money for GST charges, Income tax, TDS, transaction charges, verification charges, NOC charges, etc.," said an officer.

Later, the woman started receiving calls from "officials" of agencies like National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDAI) and even those from the Ministry of Finance, he said. These callers claimed that all the payments made by the complainant had gone to fraud accounts and further sought funds from her as fees to recover her previous payments, the police said, adding that the woman ended up losing more money as she believed all these false claims to be true. The police have launched an investigation into the incident.

## Cidco extends registration deadline for 26,000 affordable homes in Navi Mumbai; no reduction in prices



GNS News Agency, Jan 27

The City and Industrial Development Corporation (Cidco) has announced an extension for registrations under its My Preferred Home scheme, which offers 26,000 affordable homes in Navi Mumbai. Applicants can register until January 25, while the last date to select and prioritise 15 housing options is January 26. This marks the fourth extension since the scheme's launch in October 2024. Around 55,000 applicants have paid the registration fee.

Under the scheme, Cidco is offering homes for the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) and low-income group (LIG) categories in Navi Mumbai's nodes, including Vashi, Bamandongri, Kharghar, Taloja, Mansarovar, Kharkopar, Khandeshwar, Panvel, and Kalamboli. These homes are being sold under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY). Applicants are required to pay a registration fee, select their preferred homes, and then pay the booking fee. Cidco emphasised that this extension would be the final opportunity for potential buyers to participate in the scheme. The pricing of the homes has led to dissatisfaction among many applicants, who raised concerns about affordability. Former Cidco chairman Sanjay Shirsat had indicated the possibility of revising the prices, but his tenure ended shortly afterward. Shantanu Goyal, Joint Managing Director, Cidco, clarified that there would be no price reductions. "The houses we have built are of great quality and the applicants can also visit the experience centres with ready sample flats to understand why the rates are justified. The prices have been decided considering the land rates, quality and location," said Goyal.

According to Cidco, the prices are based on ready-reckoner rates, and the homes come with modern amenities. In the future, all these houses will be well connected to all the urban infrastructure, making it a viable option for buyers. Cidco's scheme aims to cater to the growing demand for affordable housing in Navi Mumbai. However, the pricing and limited flexibility have left many applicants feeling disheartened. The corporation has maintained that the homes meet the necessary standards and offer value for money.

## Punjab politicians make beeline to Capital in election season, Delhi police say: Share travel plans, security detail



GNS News Agency, Jan 27

Republic Day According to the sources, on January 10, a letter was sent from the Delhi Police's security division to its counterpart unit led by Punjab's Additional Director General highlighting an "area of concern relating to security of protected persons". After Delhi Police asked their counterpart in Punjab to "intimate tour plans and security details" of protectees during elections and Republic Day function in the national capital, the Punjab Police have appointed an assistant inspector general (AIG) as a nodal officer to maintain "liaison and coordination" between the two, sources said. The Punjab Police have also written to all its protectees, including Punjab ministers and MLAs, to inform them to provide their tour details to the AIG, they said. The move comes amid a war of words between the Aam Aadmi Party and the Bharatiya Janata Party after New Delhi candidate Parvesh Sahib Singh questioned the presence of several cars registered in Punjab being part of the AAP's campaign ahead of the Assembly polls. Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann and several other ministers from the AAP-ruled state are in the National Capital to campaign for AAP. Mann has addressed at least six rallies in the city already. According to the sources, on January 10, a letter was sent from the Delhi Police's security division to its counterpart unit led by Punjab's Additional Director General highlighting an "area of concern relating to security of protected persons". The letter states that in view of the heightened security alertness in connection with Republic Day 2025 and Delhi Assembly elections, the Punjab Police should provide information regarding tour programmes of protectees of Punjab and accompanying security components while travelling to Delhi. In compliance with the letter, the Punjab Police replied to the Delhi Police commissioner and stated that they have asked ADGP, Security, to maintain liaison and coordination with the special commissioner of police, Protective Security Division, Delhi, and also to take suitable measures for briefing and sensitising the Punjab Police officers involved in the provisioning of security to the protectees whenever they intend to undertake road, train, air journey to Delhi. The Punjab Police also appointed an AIG, Security, Punjab, as nodal officer to remain in touch with the deputy commissioner of police (DCP), security, in Delhi Police, the sources said, citing the contents of the letter. It further stated that in the view of Punjab being a border state having been affected by terrorism, continuous attempts of revival of terrorism in Punjab with several grenade attacks having taken place on police stations in the state recently, and continuous efforts of anti-national elements to foment trouble, the threat perception of the protectees factors all relevant inputs to ensure safety and security of the protectees.

## BBMP plans to remove 157 trees for Ejjipura flyover, here's how Bengaluru residents can raise their concerns



GNS News Agency, Jan 27

The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) on Wednesday invited public objections and suggestions concerning the proposed removal or relocation of 157 trees along the under-construction 2.5-km Ejjipura flyover in Koramangala. BBMP clarified that removing and relocating these trees is necessary to make way for the flyover ramps and service roads. The BBMP notification includes details such as the species of the trees, their locations, and the areas that will be affected. This information is available for public reference on the BBMP website. Citizens can submit their objections or suggestions within 10 days, and feedback can be sent via email or post to the deputy conservator of forests (DCF) and BBMP tree officer.

Speaking to The Indian Express, Raghu Rajagopal, president of Koramangala 4th Block Residents Welfare Association, said, "If the identified 157 trees are relocated, this is a welcome move. It is important to ensure that these trees should be relocated and essentially relocated within Koramangala. As residents, we have been supporting the BBMP in identifying the space to relocate these trees. We have given them four or five locations to choose from, including government lands, layouts, and nearby lakes, among other places." He added, "Objecting to removing and relocating trees serves no purpose because we have all been fighting for years to complete the flyover." In 2023, researchers from Azim Premji University, in a rapid Environ-

mental Impact Assessment (EIA) report, observed the environmental impact of the proposed Ejjipura flyover project. The study by Harini Nagendra, Seema Mundoli, Vidya Ramesh, Vivek G and Soumi Das highlighted that more than 200 trees were under threat due to this project. In the 2.5-km stretch, they counted 207 trees of 24 species from 11 families. Of the 207 trees, 51 are rain trees. As per the study, the original Detailed Project Report (DPR) highlighted that 286 trees would need to be axed to build the elevated flyover and the loops. The Karnataka government has extended the deadline for completing the long-pending 2.5-km Ejjipura flyover to December-end, allowing the same construction firm to continue the work. The decision comes after the intervention of BTM Layout MLA and Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy, under whose constituency the flyover falls. Ejjipura flyover: a tale of several delays

Initially launched in 2017, the flyover project, which aims to ease congestion from Ejjipura to Kendriya Sadan, has been marred by repeated delays, cost escalations, and logistical issues. Originally scheduled for completion by November 4, 2019, at an estimated cost of Rs 203.20 crore, the project's cost has skyrocketed to Rs 1,761 crore. Simplex Infrastructure, the first contractor awarded the tender, received multiple extensions but failed to deliver on time. This led to the current contractor, BSCPL Infrastructure Ltd, taking over the project in November 2023 with a 15-month deadline. However, the firm failed to meet monthly milestones, prompting BBMP to consider contract termination. Following a meeting with BBMP engineers and the contractor, Reddy intervened to address concerns, including delays in receiving materials and segments prepared by the previous firm. In a bid to resolve the challenges, the contract period has been extended by another year. Meanwhile, commuters continue to face severe hardships on the stretch, which has around seven traffic signals between Kendriya Sadan junction and Ejjipura junction. During peak hours, the 2.5-km journey takes 30 to 40 minutes, with potholes and waterlogging adding to their woes, especially for two-wheeler riders during rains.

## Ram Gopal Varma opens up on his upcoming film titled 'Syndicate'; details inside



GNS News Agency, Jan 27

Chennai: Director Ram Gopal Varma, popular as RGV, who recently penned a note of confession to himself in which he expressed regret for having failed to set his film 'Satya' as the benchmark for all his films and promised that every film that he made henceforth would be made with a reverence towards why he wanted to become a director in the first place, has now announced his next film called 'Syndicate'. Talking to his X timeline to make the announcement, RGV said that he had taken a vow to wash away all his cinema sins that he had committed over the past few years, with this just one single film called 'Syndicate' and added that the cast and other details of this film would be announced very soon.

He wrote, "In continuation to my confession note on 'Satya' film, I decided to make the biggest film ever. The film is called 'Syndicate'. It's about a terrifying organisation

which threatens the very existence of India. (sic)"

From then on, Ram Gopal Varma goes on to explain the concept of his new film. "Street gangs which flourished till the 70s were finished when they got absorbed into headline political parties and later when the smugglers rose up due to heavy demand of electronic goods, gold etc. They too were destroyed by the economic reforms, and then the deadly corporate gangs like D COMPANY etc arrived, to be once again victoriously crushed... (sic)" Similarly the early Black September terrorists paled in comparison to the deadly Al Qaeda, which in turn looked like nothing in front of the horrific ISIS group. There has been no notable criminal organisation since the last 10 to 15 years in India, but right now, the intense polarisation between various in the country makes the timing ripe for a new kind of criminal organisation to rise. But unlike the organisations of the past, this new organisation joins forces from various groups including policing agencies, politicians, ultra rich businessmen and also the military, thus making it a Syndicate. (sic)"

"...Syndicate is a futuristic story not set in the far away future, but what can happen even tomorrow or next week. For example, the entire world woke up to Al Qaeda on September 11th 2001, but did not know its existence even on September 10th. Syndicate begins with a statement... Only man can be the most terrifying animal. (sic)" This sets the stage for a chain of unimaginable but highly terrifying and intricately calculated events, orchestrated by a shadowy organisation called the Syndicate, whose only goal is to replace India with a new India, (sic) he added. "Syndicate will be a very scary film not due to any super natural elements, but because it will scarily expose, what horrors human beings can do. The film will deeply dwell into the cyclical nature of crime and terror proving that while we have our victories the dark truth is that crime and terror never die. They keep coming back in more deadlier forms. I took a vow to wash away all my cinema sins that I committed over the past few years with this just one single film called Syndicate. The cast and other details will be announced very soon, (sic)" concluded the filmmaker.

## Doctors back to work at Khanauri farmer protest site hours after complaining of harassment

GNS News Agency, Jan 27

Khanauri border protest, Khanauri border, farmers protest, doctors harassment at farmers protest. According to the Government, nearly 55 senior and junior doctors have been deputed at the Khanauri border within a 1 km radius of the protest site and they work in three shifts. Hours after complaining to the medical superintendent of Rajindra Medical College and Hospital, Patiala, regarding harassment and verbal abuse they allegedly faced at the hands of protesting farmers at Punjab's Khanauri border, the doctors resumed their duties at the site. Nine doctors submitted a letter complaining about persistent harassment and verbal abuse by farmers and "media personnel". The letter named Jagjit Singh Dallewal, who has been on a hunger strike for close to two months, and his supporters as the perpetrators of multiple incidents of verbal abuse.

The doctors also wrote that they could no longer continue their duties at the Khanauri border because of the repeated incidents. Despite their concerns, they returned to duty later in the day. In the afternoon, Dr Jagpalinder Singh, Civil Surgeon of Patiala, came to Khanauri to interact with Dallewal, other farmer union leaders and the medical team. Dr Singh, while talking to The Indian Express, said, "The matter has been sorted out and now all the doctors have come back to Khanauri. The issues between the doctors and the farmers have been sorted out." But farmer union leaders had a different account. Kaka Singh Kotra, general secretary of Bharatiya Kisan Union Sidhpur, said, "On the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday, a junior doctor had come to give IV fluid to Dallewalji. The doctor wasn't even able to locate a vein, and it caused bleeding in the arms of Dallewalji. Hence, we asked Health Minister Dr Balbir Singh if it was possible for the Government to provide medical help. Otherwise, we can arrange private doctors, we told him." Kotra added that private doctors had administered IV fluids to Dallewal that midnight.



According to the Government, nearly 55 senior and junior doctors have been deputed at the Khanauri border within a 1 km radius of the protest site and they work in three shifts. About eight-nine doctors remain present near Dallewal's stage round the clock, in addition to staff at a temporary hospital set up in a restaurant about 1 km away and staff in two acute life-saving ambulances.

Dr Swaiman Singh, a US-based cardiologist whose 5 Rivers Heart Association has provided medical assistance to Dallewal, said, "If the Punjab Government is unable to provide proper care, I am prepared to fly to India myself to support the farmers. Neglecting your responsibilities is unacceptable. The letter written by doctors is a clear violation of medical ethics and simply another tool to defame farmers." Meanwhile, on Wednesday, when his hunger strike entered its 58th day, Dallewal was shifted to a modern, spacious, and well-ventilated trolley-cum-temporary room near the stage to ensure proper light and air. He has been on IV fluids since midnight on January 18. Farmers have been protesting at the Shambhu and Khanauri borders since February 13 last year, seeking legally guaranteed minimum support prices for crops, among their 12 demands.

## 'Not before this court': Gujarat HC judge recuses himself from hearing journalist Langa's plea against FIR

GNS News Agency, Jan 27

Justice Sandeep Bhatt of the Gujarat High Court on Tuesday recused himself from hearing journalist Mahesh Langa's plea seeking quashing of an FIR filed against him for allegedly "possessing confidential files" of the Gujarat Maritime Board (GMB). In an oral order, which was uploaded on Wednesday, Justice Bhatt said, "Not before this court" when the matter was listed on Tuesday. Langa, a senior Assistant Editor with The Hindu, was booked under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) Sections pertaining to criminal breach of trust by professionals, theft, criminal conspiracy, influencing public officials, bribing a public official, and other sections after an FIR by the Gandhinagar police in October last year. Langa's plea sought quashing of the FIR on the grounds that the allegations were "based on conjecture" as it has been alleged in the FIR that Langa had procured the documents from "an unidentified employee"



of the GMB by "using an unauthorised channel". Earlier this month, the Gujarat High Court had granted Langa bail in one of the five cases filed against him. However, he will continue to remain in judicial custody due to the other cases.

## After fight with Coast Guard officer husband, woman throws 2 children off balcony, arrested for murder

GNS News Agency, Jan 27

woman kills children, Daman balcony tragedy, woman throws kids from fourth floor, Coast Guard tragic incident in Daman where a woman allegedly threw her two children off a balcony, resulting in their deaths. Following an argument with her husband, who is a Daman Coast Guard officer, a 29-year-old woman allegedly threw her two children, aged two and three, off the balcony of their fourth-floor house resulting in their death, police said. The woman also tried to end her life by jumping off the balcony but was stopped by her husband, they added. The incident took place around midnight on Monday; the woman was arrested under the charges of murder on Tuesday.

According to details received from Daman police, which have withheld the name of the officer, the woman had a heated exchange with her husband at their home in

Dalvada in Nani Daman. The woman then went to the bedroom with their two children, they added. After some time, the husband went to the bedroom and spotted the woman attempting to jump from the balcony and stopped her. This was when he realised that she had already thrown their two children off the same balcony, police said. The officer immediately rushed to the ground floor and took both the children to the Community Health Centre (CHC) at Moti Daman where the doctor declared them dead. On receiving information from medical staffers, Kadaiya police reached the CHC and noted down details of the incident. The officer's mother lodged a complaint of murder against her daughter-in-law. Talking to The Indian Express, Daman police officer Ketan Bansal said, "After primary investigation, we found that the couple had quarrelled over an unknown reason. Angered by this, the woman killed both her children by throwing them from the fourth-floor balcony onto the ground."

## RG Kar rape-murder case: CBI moves Calcutta High Court seeking death penalty for Sanjay Roy

GNS News Agency, Jan 27

The CBI filed an appeal before the Calcutta High Court, seeking death sentence for Sanjay Roy, who was sentenced to "life imprisonment until death" by a Sealdah court in the rape-cum-murder case of an on-duty doctor at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, officials said. The agency received a legal advice suggesting that the case may be categorised as the "rarest of rare", deserving capital punishment, they said. The agency's plea seeking death penalty for Roy was turned down by the trial court, where Additional District and Sessions Judge Anirban Das said that the crime did not fall under the "rarest of the rare" category.

"The CBI prayed for the death penalty. The defence lawyer prayed that a jail term be given instead of the death penalty. This crime does not fall under the 'rarest of the rare' category," the judge said on Monday while sentencing Roy. "I am sentencing you to life imprisonment, meaning till the last day of your life, for causing injury during the act of committing rape on the victim that led to her death..." he told Roy. The West Bengal government has already approached the high court, challenging the verdict and seeking death penalty for Roy.

The CBI has opposed the state's right to file an appeal in the case, claiming that as it was the prosecuting agency, it had the right to appeal on the grounds of inadequacy of the sentence. Appearing for the CBI, Deputy Solicitor General Rajdeep Majumdar on Wednesday opposed the state's submission, maintaining that the West Bengal government does not have the right to appeal against the trial court's order on the ground of inadequacy.



He submitted that the CBI had prayed for awarding capital punishment to Roy before the trial court. The high court said it would hear the CBI, the victim's family and the convict before deciding on the admission of the state government's appeal. The high court said it will hear the matter on January 27.

The trainee doctor was raped and killed in the early hours of August 9 in the seminar hall of RG Kar Medical College and Hospital when she had gone to have rest during her graveyard shift. Her body with severe injury marks was found inside the hall by a doctor next morning. Civic volunteer Sanjay Roy was arrested the next day based on CCTV footage in which he was seen entering the seminar hall at 4.03 am on the day of the incident. On August 13, the Calcutta High Court ordered the transfer of the probe from Kolkata Police to the CBI, which took over the case on August 14.

## Assam minister Ashok Singhal hosts Investor Roadshow in Bengaluru to promote 'Advantage Assam 2.0 Summit 2025'

GNS News Agency, Jan 27

Advantage Assam 2.0 Investor Roadshow, Assam investment summit Guwahati. Ashok Singhal Assam roadshow Assam Minister Ashok Singhal addresses investors at the Advantage Assam 2.0 Roadshow in Bengaluru. Ashok Singhal, Assam Minister of Health and Family Welfare and Irrigation, on Wednesday hosted an Investor's Roadshow in Bengaluru, generating momentum for the highly anticipated Advantage Assam 2.0: Investment and Infrastructure Summit 2025, set to take place in Guwahati on February 25 and 26.

The event, held at Hotel ITC Gardenia, highlighted Assam's vast economic potential to over 200 investors, business leaders, policymakers, and industry experts. Singhal emphasized Assam's strategic positioning as India's gateway to South and Southeast Asia and showcased several marquee projects, including India's first International Multi-Modal Logistics Park in Jogighopa under the Bharatmala program, the Dhubri-Phulbari bridge that will reduce travel time between Bhutan and Bangladesh, Tata OSAT's Rs 27,000 crore semiconductor project, and the elevated corridors planned for Kaziranga National Park. He also highlighted Assam's forward-thinking policies in green energy and emerging technologies, including Green Hydrogen and Electronics System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM). Sectors such as aerospace, defense, food processing, and IT were also identified as key areas for investment, alongside the state's commitment to sustainable tourism driven by its natural heritage, seven national parks, and three UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The roadshow featured key addresses by prominent dignitaries, including Mr. K. Ullas Kamath, Chairman of FICCI Karnataka State Council and Chairman of UK & Co., who delivered a virtual welcome address; Dr. P. Ashok Babu, IAS, Commissioner & Secretary, Health & Family Welfare, Government of Assam, who presented an in-depth overview of Advantage Assam; and Mr. Nitin Basant, Chief Technical Officer of NESFB, who spoke about Assam's evolving financial ecosystem. Singhal's keynote address set the vision for the state's investment future. The Advantage Assam 2.0 Invest-



ment and Infrastructure Summit will be preceded by a spectacular Jhumoir dance performance featuring over 8,000 youth on February 24. The event will be graced by Prime Minister of India and other Union ministers.

## Royal Enfield launches Scram 440 with price tag of Rs. 2.08 lakh

Hyderabad: Royal Enfield has officially launched the Scram 440 in India on Wednesday, replacing the Scram 411. With this launch, the two-wheeler maker marks its entry into the very competitive ADV crossover motorcycle segment. Scram 440 features a powerful Long Stroke 443CC single-cylinder, air-cooled engine which delivers 34 Nm of torque at 4000 rpm and 25.4 horsepower at 6,250 rpm. The engine comes paired with a 6-speed gearbox, which is also a significant upgrade from the 5-speed gearbox on the Scram 411. Built on the same chassis as the outgoing Scram 411, the Scram 440 has slightly enhanced weight and a saddle height of 795mm and ground clearance of 200mm.

# Tale of two villages deep within forests



GNS News Agency, Jan 27

Seven-year-old Anagha of Byrigadde village studies in class 2 at the Government Primary School, Kundur, about three kilometres from her place deep in the Saragodu Reserve Forest of Mudigere taluk in Chikkamagaluru district. Every day, her father, Narayana, drops her off and picks her up from school. Narayana rides his bike in the uneven forest terrain, keeping his eyes and ears alert for any wild animal's sudden appearance.

A few days ago, Narayana was busy at the brick kiln where he works. Anagha's mother had the responsibility of dropping her off at school. They had just walked a few yards from their house when they found a wild tusker right in the middle of their path. "The elephant was only a few feet away from us. We managed to run back home. The elephant remained there for a while, forcing us to stay indoors. And that day, I missed my school," said Anagha. For the girl and other residents of the locality, encountering a wild animal is not unusual. Her grandmother, Bhagirathi, said, "We spot them regularly around our place. Over the years, the number of people living around here has come down while the number of wild animals has increased." She has lived in Byrigadde for more than 60 years but has never had the luxury of good roads or electricity supply. Her son, Narayana, 52, cultivates a couple of acres of land that was never registered in his name and works at a kiln to augment his income. As many as 16 families settled in Saragodu Reserve Forest in Mudigere taluk are scheduled to be shifted out of the forest. The families have been living in the forest without proper roads, electricity, or other amenities. As many as 16 families settled in Saragodu Reserve Forest in Mudigere taluk are scheduled to be shifted out of the forest. The families have been living in the forest without proper roads, electricity, or other amenities. | Photo Credit: Sathish G.T. This family of four is one of 16 families scheduled to be shifted out of the Saragodu Reserve Forest area. On October 28, 2024, the Karnataka Cabinet cleared the proposal to rehabilitate the families in Saragodu Reserve Forest and gave consent to shift them to Haduoni village in Balur hobli of Mudigere taluk. The Chikkamagaluru district administration has identified 33 acres and 24 guntas of land for rehabilitation. Each family will get two acres of land for cultivation and four guntas each to construct a house.

Saragodu Reserve Forest, spread over 3,690 hectares, was notified in 1904. However, many families have lived within this reserved area over the years. Following the directions of the Central Empowered Committee (CEC), which oversees the implementation of the Supreme Court's orders regarding forests, the Forest Department identified the families within the reserve forest for relocation. As many as 16 families settled in Saragodu Reserve Forest in Mudigere taluk are scheduled to be shifted out of the forest. The families have been living in the forest without proper roads, electricity, or other amenities.

As many as 16 families settled in Saragodu Reserve Forest in Mudigere taluk are scheduled to be shifted out of the forest. The families have been living in the forest without proper roads, electricity, or other amenities. | Photo Credit: Sathish G.T. "The department relocated 148 families in 2006. However, these 16 families were left out, as they had been staying there since before 1978. Considering them as traditional forest dwellers, they were not included in the rehabilitation package back then," said N. Ramesh Babu, Deputy Conservator of Forests of Chikkamagaluru division.

The families, including those from Other Backward Classes and Dalits, urged the government to relocate them as living in the forest was highly challenging, including sending their children to school. Sumithamma, who also stayed at Byrigadde, has three children. Her eldest son gave up his studies soon after the government gave him a bicycle in class 8. "At that age, for him, a bicycle was more important than education. He stopped going to school from the day he got the bicycle. Now, he works as an agricultural labourer. However, my two other children studied well as I sent them to hostels at a young age," Sumithamma said.

The Karnataka government introduced a bicycle distribution scheme in 2006-07 to encourage children in rural areas to continue their studies. However, in this case, it worked quite the opposite way. As many as 16 families settled in Saragodu Reserve Forest in Mudigere taluk are scheduled to be shifted out of the forest. The families have been living in the forest without proper roads, electricity, or other amenities. As many as 16 families settled in Saragodu Reserve Forest in Mudigere taluk are scheduled to be shifted out of the forest. The families have been living in the forest without proper roads, electricity, or other amenities. | Photo Credit: Sathish G.T.

Solar tentacles The families' woes grew when the Forest Department put up tentacle solar fencing to stop wild elephants from entering human habitats. The department laid the solar fencing for about 24 km. "We have to cross the fencing to reach the nearest shop, which is about three kilometres away. Most of us have suffered electric shock while crossing the solar fencing. We felt as if we were in a cage," said Rajesh, a resident of Mandahulihara, another village within the reserve forest. He works as a writer in a private coffee estate at Merasanige, where his job is to look after the estate and manage the labour. Now, they are all ready to leave their places for a better life at Haduoni. They thank the officers and elected representatives, including MLA Nayana Mottamma, for their efforts in getting the proposal for rehabilitation approved by the Cabinet.

The road connecting the residents of Bidathala near Kottigehara in Mudigere is in very bad condition. Only vehicles with four-wheel drive can use it. The village's residents are seeking rehabilitation. The road connecting the residents of Bidathala near Kottigehara in Mudigere is in very bad condition. Only vehicles with four-wheel drive can use it. The village's residents are seeking rehabilitation.

H.D. Rajesh, a KAS officer who was Assistant Commissioner in Chikkamagaluru, identified land at Haduoni for rehabilitation. In fact, the Revenue Department had recovered land that had been encroached upon by a coffee estate owner. The officers retained the coffee plants, and the same land is being allotted to forest dwellers. Locals say district in-charge secretary Rajender Kataria, Chikkamagaluru DC Meena Nagaraj, and Additional DC

Narayanaraddi Kanakaraddi worked hard to get the proposal approved. "We are thankful to elected representatives and officers for fulfilling our demand," said Puttaraju, 65, who lives at Mandahulihara with his family. Until the Cabinet cleared the proposal, he was not confident that his family would shift to a new place one day. "No matter how much money and effort we have spent to develop the forest land so far, we are keen on moving to the new place. With not even minimum facilities and security, we cannot live here for long," said Geetha, Puttaraju's wife.

Finally, an alternative Getting the proposal approved by the Cabinet was not an easy task, according to Mudigere MLA Nayana Motamma. "These people were left out of the initial rehabilitation package. But they could not stay there for long with constant fear of attack by wild animals."

The government has assured the families of land to cultivate and build houses. They are also expecting a financial package from the Forest Department. Meena Nagaraj said, "We have identified developed coffee estates, ready for harvest, for the families. It will help them financially." The Forest Department will provide financial assistance for transportation and other family needs. The DC and other district officers allotted the plots and sites for houses to the families by picking lots at Chikkamagaluru on January 10, 2025. The families chose their plots by picking up chits with plot numbers. They hope to move to the new place within a few days. Finally, their days amidst the thick forest appear to be coming to an end. The residents of Bidarathala village in Mudigere taluk are seeking rehabilitation. Due to the frequent movement of wild elephants and other wild animals, they have not been able to cultivate their lands. The residents of Bidarathala village in Mudigere taluk are seeking rehabilitation. Due to the frequent movement of wild elephants and other wild animals, they have not been able to cultivate their lands. | Photo Credit: Sathish G.T.

Bad road to Bidarathala While the families in Saragodu Forest have hopes of moving to a better place soon, the residents at Bidarathala in Mudigere taluk may have to wait for longer. The families at Bidarathala (Madhugundi) village, close to Charmadi Ghat, have been urging the government to rehabilitate them for many years. As many as 10 families, all related to each other, are ready to give up their private land if the government offers each of them an alternative land of two acres each to cultivate. The major reason they want to leave is the lack of connectivity. Thanks to the restrictions on developing roads in forest areas, the village road is hard to walk on, let alone drive a vehicle. B.R. Sathish, 42, a native of Bidarathala village, recalled that he lost his father because of the road in April 2017 because it was impossible to transport the sick man to a hospital. B.K. Girish, 38, says that he also lost his father, Krishne Gowda, in a similar way about 26 years ago. He was a boy of 12 when family members carried his father on a 'doli' as no vehicle could reach the village. By the time they reached the hospital, he was dead. "We brought the dead body back in the same way for cremation," said Girish.

The nearest school is at Kottigehara, about 11 km away. As there is no transport facility to the village, only those who were admitted to hostels in distant places studied. "Altogether, we have eight-and-a-half acres of land in the village. We grew lemongrass, paddy, coffee, areca, and cardamom for several years. However, for the last eight years, safeguarding crops from wild animals has been difficult," said B.R. Nagesh, also a native of Bidarathala, who runs a hotel at Kottigehara. The residents of Bidarathala village in Mudigere taluk are seeking rehabilitation. Due to the frequent movement of wild elephants and other wild animals, they have not been able to cultivate their lands. | Photo Credit: Sathish G.T. Lemongrass trade The families remember a time when they earned well for about 15 years when they grew lemon grass (Cymbopogon) and extracted its oil. Rajappa, a native of Kerala who came to Bidarathala somewhere in 2003, showed the residents how to earn by processing lemongrass. The villagers, particularly the youth, of whom many had no formal education, picked up the skill. They grew lemongrass on their land and extracted oil from the grass. For that, they invested money and purchased machines required to extract oil. "After growing lemongrass for 45 days, we cut it and extracted oil. The maximum amount we got was ₹1,200 per kilo of oil. Each family produced 25 to 30 kg of oil every 45 days. That was a good earning," recalled Sathish.

However, they stopped growing lemongrass about eight years ago when the number of wild elephants in the area increased. "After 2009, when Charmadi Ghat was closed for road work, wild animals crossed the highway and entered human habitat in the locality. They increased in number gradually. Repeated incidents of crop damage forced the farmers to give up farming and look for alternative jobs. A majority of them shifted to Kottigehara and Mudigere in search of jobs," said Sanjay Gowda, a resident of Kottigehara. In 2019, the Chikkamagaluru district witnessed heavy rains that resulted in landslides. Hundreds of houses, including those in Bidarathala, were damaged. The residents were kept in temporary shelters. Later, the administration sanctioned sites for the rain-affected people at Banakal, about 15 km from Bidarathala. "Now we have sites at Banakal to construct houses, while agricultural land is still at Bidarathala.

Given the road conditions, we cannot travel regularly. We are expecting the government to come to our rescue and provide us with an alternative land as well," demanded Sathish. They want to relocate to build their lives and earn by cultivating the land. "In our families, there are seven men, aged between 25 and 43, all unmarried. Our children are not getting proposals because of the conditions in our village. As there is no road to the village and no yield from the land, who will marry our boys?" asked Nagesh. "We are hoping that life becomes better if we move out of this place. I have been living here for over 50 years with no electricity or road. I wish at least my son Girish can lead a happy life somewhere else," said Meenakshamma, 70.

The families have brought these issues to the attention of the district administration and the Forest Department. Ramesh Babu, DCF, said a few from the village recently met him and requested rehabilitation.

"We are aware of the problems the villages are facing. The department will look into the issue and prepare a proposal. All that they require is about 20 acres of land for rehabilitation," the officer noted. Earlier, IAS officer G. Sathyavathi, who was DC in Chikkamagaluru, had visited the village and interacted with the villagers. The villagers are expecting a response from the administration and elected representatives for their worries. Both MLA Nayana Motamma and DC Meena Nagaraj said they are yet to get details of the issue.

People of Bidarathala hope to, one day, move out for a better life as those in Byrigadde village will soon be able to.

# Making India attractive for Study Abroad



GNS News Agency, Jan 27

In August 2018, the Government of India launched the 'Study in India Portal' to attract international students. According to a government document, the portal aims to make India an education hub for foreign students. It focuses on, "increasing the inflow of inbound International Students through systematic brand building, marketing, social media, and digital marketing campaigns." Data from official documents presented as an answer to multiple Lok Sabha questions show that in 2018 72,268 international students arrived in India -- up by about 2,000 from 2017. According to Professor Sunny Luke, the founder chairman of the International Institute for Scientific and Academic Collaboration (IISAC), the list only takes into account full-time students and not those who visit for a shorter term for educational purposes. Pandemic took a big toll on international students coming to India. In 2023, however, 40,431 students arrived, a figure significantly above after the lockdown restrictions were lifted.

The National Education Policy 2020 envisages internationalisation of education which includes bringing foreign students to India. On January 13, a few colleges and delegates in the country were invited for a workshop on strategies for attracting international students to Kerala at the Rajagiri School of Business Studies, Kochin. "Foreign students are not only looking for an institution that allows them to develop hard skills but also cultural immersion in India," says Dr. Zachariah Mathew, University of Michigan-Flint, who led the workshop. The one-day event was conducted as a pre-conclave session for the International Conclave on Next-Gen Higher Education, which took place at Cochin University of Science and Technology (CUSAT) from January 14 - 15. An instance of welcoming international students goes back to the year 2010. Professor Luke brought a group of foreign students to understand the biodiversity of the tropical region in Kerala. They were once put up at Kottayam, Deva Matha College to learn plant taxonomy of tropical varieties. This was part of the faculty-led programme organised by the IISAC, either for three weeks or six weeks and allowed the overseas students to transfer three or six credits respectively to their home university.

In 2014 for the first time in Kerala IISAC tied up with University of Kerala coordinated by Professor Luke and Professor Achuthshankar S. Nair. According to Professor Luke, Students who came from more than 10 U.S. universities studied in various departments at Kerala University like history, sociology, and religious studies and transferred credits to their U.S. universities. "The programme was for four months. There were a few universities such as Grand Valley State University, Michigan State University, and St. Mary's College Netherlands. Students spent three months on campus to study with local students," says Professor Luke. Before the students were put in the university, for a month they took a Kerala tour to understand the culture of the state better so that they would be acquainted with the social circumstances. "The students came to Kerala to take up subjects like sociology, anthropology, history, and religious studies. There was not much demand for science programmes because students coming to Kerala are typically studying liberal arts courses at U.S. universities," says Professor Luke. As an outcome of this programme, Professor Luke and team managed to compile a comprehensive book titled "Introduction to Kerala Studies."

According to Dr. Mathew, bringing in international students to the country will have positive economic impacts too. "Just imagine 10 students coming from the United States for 15 days. They will be spending about \$35,000." A major part of the expenses, as Dr Mathew puts it, will go to the local community, state transport, and other facilities such as entertainment. Given these factors of cross-cultural learning experience and positive economic impacts on a particular state as per studies, our curriculum and the culture should be framed to fit students from overseas. To attract international students, "four critical factors were identified. These are internationally recognized education at an affordable cost, campus readiness, employment opportunities in India, and the experience of Indian culture," states a 2024 study. In this context, the higher education institutions (HEI) in India need to be prepared before welcoming overseas

## Kerala to launch 'Study in Kerala' scheme, sets goals to become global hub for higher education

GNS News Agency, Jan 27

The policy address presented by Kerala Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar in the Assembly on Friday (January 17, 2025) reiterated these goals, as he announced the launch of the 'Study in Kerala' initiative in the 2025-26 academic year, aimed at attracting international students to the State. This initiative will be complemented by the introduction of Centres for Skill Development Courses and Career Planning in all higher education institutions, aligned with the recently implemented Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUP).

Inclusivity and quality The Governor emphasised that the government's approach to higher education focusses on both inclusivity and quality. The key pillars of this vision include skill development, improved connectivity between educational institutions and industries, and enabling students to become entrepreneurs. The government is also revising curricula to meet contemporary needs, with the overarching goal of transforming Kerala into a knowledge society within the shortest possible time. Mr. Arlekar also credited the government for the notable progress made in the higher education sector, driven by the recommendations of the Commission for Reforms in Higher Education. The successful implementation of the FYUP and the introduction of a unified academic calendar have been key milestones. The calendar streamlines the processes of examination, evaluation, and result declaration. The policy address also highlighted Kerala's significant achievement under the PM-USAHA scheme, with substantial grants awarded to selected universities and colleges to bolster the state's higher education infrastructure. Moreover, the introduction of K-Reap, an advanced enterprise resource planning software, aims

students to India. The HEIs can address these at various levels such as structural preparedness where the institutions carefully look at fostering leadership in internationalisation of education at a particular institute. Alongside, as Prof. Neeta Inamdar (Professor and Head - Manipal Centre for European Studies) says, the HEIs can support an international office that enables better housing, security, food, health insurance, and sound HR policies. Meanwhile, the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) currently hosts 85 international students from countries like Nepal, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Iran and so on. These are all full-time students and they are part of IISc's UG, PG, and PhD programmes, according to Amita Sneh, Chief International Officer, IISc. In the past, as Ms. Sneh puts it, the institute was not active in terms of outreach. But the situation has been changing. "We are planning to visit a few SAARC countries, starting with Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Indonesia, and Thailand," says Ms. Sneh. According to her, the institute can attract more students from African countries as the previous batch of students acts like a campus ambassador who then brings other students to campus.

Who comes to India to study?

Professor Luke says that students from higher-income countries like the U.S. come here for short-term programmes to understand and experience culture whereas for the full-time programme the students are mostly from neighbouring countries like Nepal or African countries. While official policy and HEIs may want international students, the visa process and Indian missions abroad are not entirely eager about giving visas to students, says Prof. Luke. "American students found that when they approached Indian consulates for visas, students found it difficult to secure them even with the offer letter. But now things are changing, I feel."

Ms. Sneh sees that things related to visa processes are changing recently at least in the case of students going to IISc. "As soon as we finalise the list of students to be offered, we inform our embassies in different countries. Usually, the embassy considers those requests positively because the number of students is not too high," Ms. Sneh says. According to the Guides for Internationalisation of Higher Education published in 2021 by the UGC, capacity building is necessary for internationalisation initiatives including collaborative communication between Indian and International faculty. In a scoping study put forward in 2023 by the British Council India, each institution is recommended to analyse its own internationalisation experience. The British Council document emphasizes the need for maintaining a proper record of student flow from different countries to understand the local and global factors affecting internationalisation. For example, the Open Doors report brought out by the Institute of International Education (IIE) from the U.S. keeps track of its international students from various countries. As per the 2024 fast facts the U.S. received more than three lakh students from India, accounting for almost thirty per cent of the total international students. Such a data system keeps track of the student flow and helps in maintaining and planning internationalisation. No such report has been made for India, experts say. According to Mr. Vivek Mansukhani, head of the Institute of International Education's (IIE) India chapter, data regarding what courses are sought after in India are not available. "We have a problem compiling an atlas-like open-doors report from an Indian context," says Mr. Mansukhani. While Mr. Mansukhani understands the difficulty in putting together a report in a diverse country like India he also speaks for the necessity of such a database which will help in formulating strategies to prioritise policies related to internationalisation. "I am not putting any blame on one institution. Study in India is doing one thing. UGC is doing something else. The Association of Indian Universities (AIU) is doing another thing. As India is good at IT and statistics, all these players can come together to form a good database." While such capacity measures are stated by official documents, educationists also identify the need for integrating incoming students with local communities to have a cross-cultural experience. "Most overseas students from the U.S. students go to traditional destinations like Europe, Australia, and Spain. Less than 2% of the students go only to non-traditional places like India," speaks Professor Luke at the pre-conclave session at Kochin. International students are concerned with a list of challenges while selecting India as a destination for study. "India's higher education sector faces significant challenges in attracting international students by hosting less than 1 percent of globally mobile students," states a study published in December 2024 in Research in Globalization titled Rationales Behind International Students' Not Selecting India as an Education Destination. The study identifies, "inadequate financial support and safety concerns," as major bottlenecks seen by the students across the globe. Concerns reported by international students are safety, finances and cultural shock. Experts like Dr. Mathew say, step by step through interactive workshops among multi-stakeholders these challenges can be addressed through effective dialogue.



to enhance governance and administrative efficiency in universities.

The State's higher education sector, Mr. Arlekar added, has seen remarkable progress, with most State universities achieving high National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) grades. Four public universities have made it to the top 100 in the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) Rankings for 2024, while 16 colleges secured positions in the top 100 and 42 colleges in the top 200. Besides, all government engineering colleges in the State have obtained NBA accreditation.

The Governor also reaffirmed the government's commitment to improving the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) and the quality of education by focussing on academic and infrastructure development, research, and student mentoring. As part of this effort, seven Centres of Excellence will be established to foster innovation in teaching, learning, training, and research.

## Prince Harry reaches legal settlement with The Sun publisher as Murdoch's U.K. tabloids offer rare apology



GNS News Agency, Jan 27

Rupert Murdoch's U.K. tabloids made a rare apology to Prince Harry in settling his privacy invasion lawsuit and will pay him a substantial sum, his lawyer announced News Group Newspapers offered a "full and unequivocal apology to the Duke of Sussex for the serious intrusion by The Sun between 1996 and 2011 into his private life, including incidents of unlawful activities carried out by private investigators working for The Sun," attorney David Sherborne read from settlement statement in court. It was the first time News Group Newspapers has acknowledged wrongdoing at The Sun, a paper once known for featuring topless women on Page 3. The statement itself was remarkable in breadth, acknowledging "phone hacking, surveillance and misuse of private information by journalists and private investigators" aimed at the prince, allegations NGN had strongly denied before trial. The statement even went beyond the scope of the lawsuit to acknowledge intruding on the life of his mother, the late Princess Diana. "We acknowledge and apologise for the distress caused to the duke, and the damage inflicted on relationships, friendships and family, and have agreed to pay him substantial damages," the settlement statement said. Ahead of trial the bombshell announcement in London's High Court came as the Duke of Sussex's trial was about to start against the publishers of The Sun and the now-defunct News of the World for unlawfully snooping on him over decades. Harry, 40, the younger son of King Charles III, and one other man were the only two remaining claimants out of more than 1,300 others who had settled lawsuits against News Group Newspapers over allegations their phones were hacked and investigators unlawfully intruded in their lives. In all the cases that have been brought against the publisher since a widespread phone hacking scandal forced Mr. Murdoch to close News of the World in 2011, Harry's case got the closest to trial. Mr. Murdoch shut down the News of the World after the The Guardian reported

that the tabloid's reporters had hacked the phone of Milly Dowler, a murdered 13-year-old schoolgirl, while police were searching for her in 2002. As the case was about to start Tuesday morning, his lawyer asked for a one-hour recess, then got a longer adjournment and finally asked to have the rest of the day as it became clear a settlement was in the works. One of three lawsuits

The case was one of three lawsuits Harry has brought accusing British tabloids of violating his privacy by eavesdropping on phone messages or using private investigators to unlawfully help them score scoops. His case against the publisher of the Daily Mirror ended in victory when the judge ruled that phone hacking was "widespread and habitual" at the newspaper and its sister publications. During that trial in 2023, Harry became the first senior member of the royal family to testify in court since the late 19th century, putting him at odds with the monarchy's desire to keep its problems out of view. His feud with the press dates back to his youth, when the tabloids took glee in reporting on everything from his injuries to his girlfriends to dabbling with drugs. Diana's death

But his fury with the tabloids goes much deeper. He blames the media for the death of his mother, Princess Diana, who was killed in a car crash in 1997 while being chased by paparazzi in Paris. He also blames them for the persistent attacks on his wife, actor Meghan Markle, that led them to leave royal life and flee to the U.S. in 2020. The litigation has been a source of friction in his family, Harry said in the documentary "Tabloids On Trial."

He revealed in court papers that his father opposed his lawsuit. He also said his older brother William, Prince of Wales and heir to the throne, had settled a private complaint against News Group that his lawyer has said was worth over 1 million pounds (\$1.23 million). "I'm doing this for my reasons," Harry told the documentary makers, though he said he wished his family had joined him. Harry was originally one among dozens of claimants, including actor Hugh Grant, who alleged that News Group journalists and investigators they hired violated their privacy between 1994 and 2016 by intercepting voicemails, tapping phones, bugging cars and using deception to access confidential information. Of the original group, Harry and Tom Watson, a former Labour Party member of Parliament, were the holdouts headed to trial. News Group had denied the allegations. NGN had issued an unreserved apology to victims of voicemail interception by the News of the World and said it settled more than 1,300 claims. The Sun has never accepted liability.

## US birthright citizenship: Indian-American lawmakers oppose President Donald Trump's executive order

GNS News Agency, Jan 27

Indian-American lawmakers have opposed the executive order by U.S. President Donald Trump on changes in birthright citizenship, a move likely to hit not only illegal immigrants from around the world but also students and professionals from India. On Monday (January 20, 2025,) in the opening hours of his second term as President, Mr. Trump signed an order declaring that future children born to undocumented immigrants would no longer be treated as citizens. The order would extend even to the children of some mothers in the country legally but temporarily, such as foreign students or tourists.

Mr. Trump's executive order asserts that the children of such non-citizens are not "subject to the jurisdiction" of the United States and thus are not covered by the 14th Amendment's longstanding constitutional guarantee. Indian-American Congressman Ro Khanna said changes in birthright citizenship as done through the executive order would impact newborn babies of not only illegal and undocumented immigrants but also those staying in this country legally, such as on H-1B visas. The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows the U.S. companies to employ foreign workers in specialty occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. Technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries such as India and China.

"Trump's order removes birthright citizenship for children born in the U.S. not just to undocumented parents but to 'lawful' immigrants who are temporarily on a student visa, H-1B/H2B visa, or business visa. So much for the pretence that the Republicans are for legal immigration," Mr. Khanna said. Indians are the main beneficiaries of the H-1B visas, which bring in the best of the talent and brains from across the world. Highly skilled professionals from India walk away with the overwhelming number of H-1B visas — which is Congressional mandate — 6,50,000 every year and another 20,000 for those who received higher education from the U.S. "No matter what Donald Trump says or does, birthright citizenship has and will be the law of the land. I will fight to protect it at all costs," Indian American Congressman Shri Thanedar said. Indian American Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal described it as unconstitutional. "Plain and simple this is unconstitutional and cannot be done with the stroke of a pen. If enacted, it would make a mockery of our country's laws and the precedents set in the Constitution," she said.

A coalition of immigration rights groups has challenged



this in court and said this is unconstitutional. As per the executive order, the U.S. would not give automatic citizenship to newborn babies after February 19, 2025, if one of the parents is not a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident. Also, attorneys general from 22 states sued President Trump in two federal district courts on Tuesday (January 21, 2025) to block the executive order that refuses to recognise the U.S.-born children of unauthorised immigrants as citizens, the New York Times reported. Eighteen states and two cities, San Francisco and Washington DC, challenged the order in the Federal District Court in Massachusetts, arguing that birthright citizenship under the 14th Amendment is "automatic" and that neither the President nor Congress has the constitutional authority to revise it. Four other states filed a second lawsuit in the Western District of Washington.

The states request immediate relief to prevent the President's Order from taking effect through both a Temporary Restraining Order and a Preliminary Injunction. "President Trump's attempt to unilaterally end birthright citizenship is a flagrant violation of our Constitution," said New Jersey Attorney General Matthew Platkin. "The President's executive order attempting to rescind birthright citizenship is blatantly unconstitutional and quite frankly, un-American," said California Attorney General Rob Bonta. Ajay Bhutoria, Biden White House Commissioner and Deputy National Finance Chair for the Democratic Party, in a statement, said, the 14th Amendment is not up for negotiation. "This executive order is not only unconstitutional but also undermines the values of equality and justice that define America," he said. Mr. Bhutoria urged the South Asian and broader immigrant communities to stand united against policies that threaten the fundamental principles of the Constitution. "We must work together to ensure that these divisive and unconstitutional actions do not succeed," he said.

origin, as AI policy adviser. Krishnan has been known to support the H-1B visa programme. Vivek Ramasamy, whom Trump appointed to co-lead the government efficiency endeavours along with Musk, has also talked of meritocracy in the context of those coming in with these visas. Trump supporters feel that any support to the H-1B programme was not really 'America First' that has been Trump's slogan.

The H-1B is a non-immigrant visa that the US offers to professionals whose skills are not found in the US. Per year, the US grants 65,000 such visas and an additional 20,000 to students who finished their Master's degree in a STEM subject. In the April-September 2024 period, one-fifth of the H-1B visas issued to different employers, were issued to Indian-origin companies. Out of these, Infosys took the lead with 8,140 beneficiaries, followed by TCS (5,274), and HCL America (2,953).

## Trump 2.0 as disruptor of the global legal order



GNS News Agency, Jan 27

Donald Trump's second term as President of the United States marks the start of a new 'Trumpian' era, defined by his leadership. Foreign policy experts expect that Mr. Trump will continue to embody the image of a disruptor. The international legal order is expected to experience substantial changes.

As the leading global power of our time, the U.S. has always maintained a complicated relationship with international law. The U.S. has played a vital role in establishing many key institutions and frameworks within international law, as well as in shaping their norms, priorities and agendas to align with American interests. This influence is evident across various areas of international law, including climate change law, space law, human rights law, and trade and investment law. At the same time, America has often followed a policy of exceptionalism, i.e., an attitude of being 'distinct' and thus an 'exception' to the law that binds all other nations. Thus, the U.S. has been criticised for violating or sidelining the same norms and institutions of international law that it helped create and expects other countries to follow. The Trump 1.0 years

While this has been the case for many American presidencies, the Trump Presidency took it to a completely different level, almost waging a war on international law. Elected with the slogan of "America First", Mr. Trump's first term reflected what international law scholars Oona Hathaway and Scott Shapiro call a 'sovereignist view of international law' which often misconceives entering into multilateral treaties as putting unacceptable limits on sovereign authority. Mr. Trump's first term was marked by scepticism towards multilateralism and a preference for bilateralism, which is usually the case of emerging revisionist powers but strange for the incumbent superpower. Accordingly, the Trump administration, in June 2017, famously walked away from the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Washington also reneged on a key nuclear treaty with Russia and a nuclear deal with Iran. Mr. Trump also posed major challenges to the international trade regime by using tariffs and other protectionist measures, including against allied countries. He continued blocking appointments into the World Trade Organization (WTO)'s Dispute Settlement Body's Appellate Body, which ultimately led to the organ

becoming dysfunctional. Under his presidency, the U.S. withdrew from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement that the Obama administration had so assiduously crafted and put an end to the North American Free Trade Agreement or NAFTA and negotiating a new trade agreement. Additionally, during the Trump first term, the U.S. withdrew from several international institutions such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), attempted to withdraw from the World Health Organization (WHO), and threatened withdrawal from the WTO.

Mr. Trump's return to the White House could accelerate the weakening of the normative authority of multilateral institutions. While the U.S. rejoined many of the multilateral institutions under the Biden administration, it might again disengage from them. In fact, within hours of his inauguration, he reportedly signed executive orders initiating the U.S.'s withdrawal from WHO and the Paris Agreement. Mr. Trump has announced fresh plans to pursue unilateralism by raising tariffs, even if it triggers a trade war and violates WTO rules. He has already announced that he may impose a 25% tariff on imports from Mexico and Canada. His belligerent onslaught on the Washington Consensus-based international trade and investment law model will continue unabated. Any hopes of the Global South of reviving the WTO's dysfunctional Appellate Body should be abandoned. While some hoped that Mr. Trump's policies may translate into renewed U.S. isolationism and less interventionism, his recent statements belie such hopes. His plans to annex Greenland and the Panama Canal, refusing to rule out coercive methods to do so, and include Canada as the 51st State of the U.S., are reminiscent of the 18th-19th century era of great powers acquiring sovereign territories through conquest and gunboat diplomacy. In the post-UN charter era, which considers the prohibition of using force and self-determination as central tenets, such ambitions may embolden other revisionist states such as China and Russia to embark on similar quests for obtaining territory. As scholars such as Marko Milanovic have pointed out, even if Mr. Trump ultimately does not use force, these statements potentially violate the norm of non-intervention under Article 2(7) of the UN Charter, further challenging the international order. The statements made by his allies, such as Elon Musk (who is part of the Trump administration), commenting on the internal politics and laws of allied countries such as the United Kingdom and Germany, have also irked many and could be construed as unacceptable intervention. International lawyer Harold Koh has pointed out that the participants involved in the 'transnational legal process', including many officials within the U.S. itself, were able to blunt many of Mr. Trump's policies in his first term, particularly those affecting international law. However, with Mr. Trump's renewed majority and control over both the Senate and the House, it is more likely that he will be able to push forward his policies more effectively. In that case, other countries must cooperate to preserve the international legal order.

## Garden City reimaged: New ways to restore Bengaluru's green cover

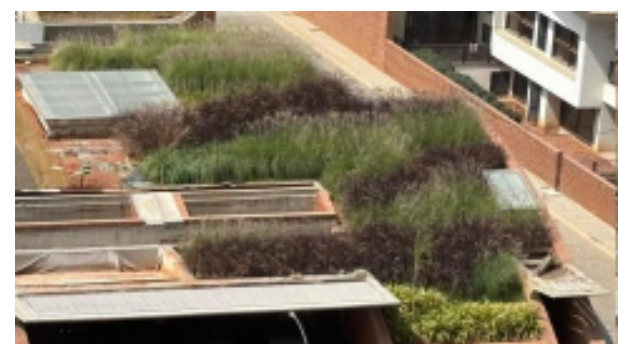
Bengaluru, once called the "Garden City", has been under immense pressure due to rapid urbanisation. However, a quiet revolution is underway, driven by collaborative efforts across various sectors to increase the green cover and take it back to its original form. Data from the Forest Survey of India, for instance, reveals a net increase of 147.70 sq. km in Karnataka's forest cover, making it one of the top five states in the country that contribute to green growth. And Bengaluru, with over 2,64,154 trees, is, not surprisingly, a significant contributor to Karnataka's overall green cover.

Historically, the greening of a city, technically located in the arid Deccan Plateau, can be traced back to the efforts of Hyder Ali, the ruler of Mysore, who initiated the city's first significant vegetation projects, including the commissioning of Lalbagh. His efforts were continued by his son, Tipu Sultan, who went on to complete the project. After his death in 1799 at the hands of the British during the ill-fated Battle of Srirangapatna, the latter moved the cantonment to this city, which—in turn—saw the planting of numerous trees, many exotic, in the city. Today, the city's urban landscape is enriched with a variety of trees, both native and exotic, including native species like jackfruit, neem, red silk cotton, Gulmohar and copper pod, among many others.

Apartments in the city appear to be leading the charge, embracing biodiversity and friendly practices to create sustainable habitats. One noteworthy example is Alembic Urban Forests in Whitefield. With 80% open space and over 10,000 trees spread across 8 acres, the apartment complex is a testament to urban planning. The project incorporates the Japanese Miyawaki technique to develop a dense, self-sustaining forest with native species that require minimal human intervention, an afforestation technique that helps create dense, biodiverse forests in a fraction of the time compared to traditional methods. Barbecue area within green cover at Alembic Urban Forest, Whitefield.

By planting a variety of Indigenous species in close proximity, the method mimics a natural forest ecosystem, allowing these forests to mature rapidly, often in just a few years. "These trees rely on rainwater for irrigation, and organic fertilisers are produced within the community using organic waste converters. In addition to the forest area, we've also designed a barbecue area within green cover to create a community space," said Ranjit Menon, a member of the management committee.

Many other gated communities in the city are doing their own bit towards greening the city. At Brigade Orchards in Devanahalli, for instance, a mango grove featuring diverse varieties serves as a biodiversity haven, connecting residents to greener roots. The apartment also boasts a rock garden surrounded by different species of trees, adding an artistic dimension to the landscape. Then there is Total Environment's upcoming project in Devanahalli, Tangled Up in Green, which plans to establish a tree museum at the entrance, showcasing plant species from across the world. Similarly, their Whitefield property, Pursuit of Radical Rhapsody, follows a similar philosophy with villas and apartments featuring lush, green rooftops and other greening initiatives the apartments have taken. Prathima Sharma, a resident, shares, "Every villa here gets a green roof and a patch of greenery where you can have a lawn or grow plants," she says. She herself, she adds, has created a pit to plant trees, including bougainvillea and flowering plants like ratrani. "The apartment has also set up drip irrigation for maintenance, and there are people who help take care of the greenery." Some projects go even beyond this, focusing on enriching biodiversity in a larger surface area. JRC Wildwoods boasts over 10,000 large tropical trees



## From apartment complexes to public spaces, Bengalureans are trying their hardest to bring back the city's green cover

within its premises, a four-acre green zone, designated green cover for bird watching, treehouses and campfires. Similarly, Good Earth Malhar, an eco-village in Kengeri, has transformed 50 acres into a thriving green hotspot. The community is home to over 500 plant species and 144 bird species, alongside themed educational parks to promote environmental awareness.

Additionally, public spaces such as Cubbon Park in Bengaluru and the Bengaluru International Airport have also adopted the Miyawaki method, planting thousands of native trees to establish green buffers that reduce noise pollution and improve air quality. Pushkar Kumar, an Indian Forest Service (IFS) officer, also highlights the efforts of BIMP and BDA, whose forest wings have undertaken plantation drives and implemented green belt initiatives. "Tree parks such as Jarakabande in the north and Banashankari in the south are 2 out of the 132 excellent examples of initiatives taken by the government under the Tree Park Scheme and for preserving green cover for the future generations," he says. "We advise adopting a coexistence model, where wildlife is not disturbed and urban planning accounts for their needs."

Urban planners like Abhay D., a designer and urban planner in Bengaluru, stress the importance of striking a balance between development and maintaining green spaces. "Development has primarily been driven by concrete, but we need to find a balance," he says, pointing out that thinking about sustainable architecture is essential today. "I often recommend incorporating courtyards in houses to bring in more green and encourage clients to use sustainable materials and select plants that positively influence mood," he says. He also emphasises the need to incorporate more local and native plants into urban landscapes. "Exotic plants are often chosen for sale purposes, but they require more maintenance. Local plants are much better because they adapt to the environment and are lower maintenance. For example, the snake plant is an excellent air purifier," says Abhay, who is currently designing a school in Bengaluru, carefully selecting plants that enhance the environment while also ensuring the health and safety of the children. "Sometimes, too much oxygen from plants can be harmful, so balance is key," he believes.

## Trump's trade policy: Fix 'unfair, unbalanced trade, counter currency manipulation'



US President Donald Trump on Monday instructed his commerce and treasury departments to investigate the causes of America's "large and persistent" annual trade deficits in goods, as well as the "economic and national security" implications of such deficits, according to an official document titled 'America First Trade Policy' released by the White House. This holds significance for India, which recorded a \$50 billion trade surplus with the US in 2023 compared to \$25 billion in 2019. Indian trade policy researchers have highlighted that India's consumer goods exports, such as pharmaceuticals, gems and jewellery, and marine products, are particularly vulnerable to US tariffs due to the trade imbalance. During his first term, Trump had invoked national security provisions to impose 25 per cent tariffs on steel and 10 per cent on aluminium from India and other countries and had revoked the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), a preferential trade agreement which benefited India the most.

"The Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of Commerce and the Secretary of Homeland Security, shall investigate the feasibility of establishing and recommend the best methods for designing, building, and implementing an External Revenue Service (ERS) to collect tariffs, duties, and other foreign trade-related revenues," the White House stated. Trump also directed the United States Trade Representative (USTR) to review existing US trade agreements and sectoral trade agreements and to "recommend any revisions that may be necessary" or appropriate to achieve or maintain the general level of reciprocal and mutually advantageous concessions with respect to free trade agreement partner countries. Notably, India, the US and 12 other members including Australia, Indonesia and Japan signed an Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), a regional agreement to increase economic integration and cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. India

is a signatory of three pillars of IPEF: supply chains, clean economy, and fair economy.

The White House instructed the USTR to review the economic and trade agreement between the US and China to determine whether the latter is adhering to its commitments under the agreement. "The USTR shall recommend appropriate actions to be taken based on the findings of this review, up to and including the imposition of tariffs or other measures as needed," the White House statement read.

Notably, Trump has appointed China sceptic, Jamieson Greer as the US Trade Representative (USTR). Greer, a former military officer and international trade attorney, is expected to carry forward the trade policies of Trump's first term. The announcement followed speculation that Robert Lighthizer, the architect of Trump's tariff war, might serve a second term as USTR. However, Greer, known as Lighthizer's protégé, is anticipated to play a similar role, having previously served as Lighthizer's chief of staff during Trump's first term. China's exports gained momentum in December, pushing year-on-year growth in 2024 up by 5.9 per cent to \$3.58 trillion, according to customs data released by Beijing on Monday. Imports, however, grew at a slower pace of 1.1 per cent to \$2.59 trillion, resulting in a trade surplus of \$992.2 billion for the year. "The Secretary of Commerce and the United States Trade Representative shall assess legislative proposals regarding Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR) with the PRC and make recommendations regarding any proposed changes to such legislative proposals," the White House said. If the US decides to revoke China's PNTR status, it would result in a tariff increase on all Chinese goods entering the US.

Target on China's currency manipulation The White House has indicated that US measures to address the trade gap with China will extend beyond tariffs. "The Secretary of the Treasury shall recommend appropriate measures to counter currency manipulation or misalignment that prevents effective balance of payments adjustments or that provides trading partners with an unfair competitive advantage in international trade, and shall identify any countries that he believes should be designated as currency manipulators," the White House stated. The US on multiple occasions said that China has taken concrete steps to devalue its currency and the purpose of China's currency devaluation is to gain an unfair competitive advantage in international trade. According to the US Treasury, China should pursue more market-based economic reforms to bolster growth and confidence in its currency.

## Supercharge Your Office Efficiency with HP's LaserJet Tank MFP 2606sdw Duplex Printers



on their tasks without the frustration of dealing with constant paper jams, low toner warnings, or technical issues. It allows them to complete their work on time, whether it's printing reports, invoices, or assignments. HP LaserJet Tank MFP 2606sdw Duplex Printer allows the users to reload toner in less than 15 seconds and come with 5,000 pages of pre-filled Original HP Toner which delivers up to five times more toner page yield for higher efficiency and is equipped with a built-in 50,000-page imaging drum, ensuring long-lasting, high-quality prints with minimal maintenance. HP LaserJet Tank MFP 2606sdw Duplex Printer helps you tackle everyday tasks easily. With fast two-sided printing, a 40-page Auto Document Feeder, and self-resetting Wi-Fi, it keeps your work moving smoothly. Along with this, the HP Smart App makes scanning simple, printing up to 22 pages per minute (A4) to keep you on schedule. It comes with built-in HP Wolf security and a 17% smaller design, offering both protection and space-saving, making it a great fit for busy spaces or shop owners who are too busy printing files, and documents for students/office requirements and others. Keeping sustainability in mind, switching to duplex printing businesses can reduce paper waste, which has a direct positive impact on the environment. This printer significantly reduces waste by up to 90% through the innovative Toner Reload Kit and helps to minimize its carbon footprint, by having a cartridge-free design to enhance the environmental responsibility. HP LaserJet Tank MFP 2606sdw Duplex Printer come with an Energy Star certification and carry the EPEAT Silver designation. So, whether it's a school or any business looking to be more sustainable, the printer helps them make a difference while still delivering high-quality prints.

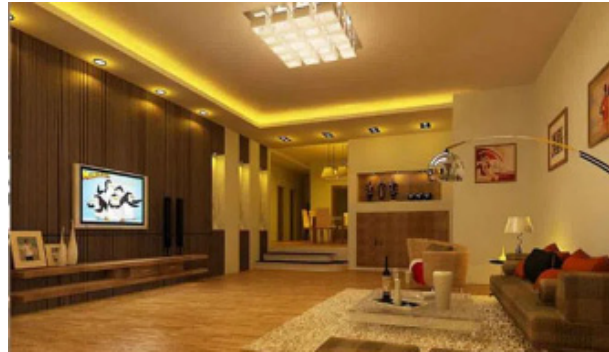
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## Demand for larger homes takes a beating in Hyderabad for the first time in 6 years

Hyderabad: The positive sentiment of home buyers to have bigger living spaces that came up in Hyderabad over the last decade seems to have taken a beating in one year.

The demand for more spacious flats in the city has primarily grown since 2019 and rose by 24 per cent till last year. According to the latest data released by Anarock on Wednesday, the average flat size in Hyderabad in this six-year period rose from 1,700 sq ft in 2019 to 2,103 sq ft in 2024. However, the growth was stunted and between 2023 and 2024, Hyderabad had the average flat size decrease by 9 per cent from 2,299 sq ft in 2023 to 2,103 sq ft in 2024. Despite a significant rise in housing prices across cities in 2024, homebuyers continue their quest for bigger living spaces across the country. Stating this, Anarock based on its data, says the average flat sizes in the top seven cities rose by 8 per cent annually in 2024 – from 1,420 sq ft in 2023 to 1,540 sq ft in 2024.

The data shows that Hyderabad however is the only city to see flat sizes decrease in this period. Anarock report says, "In Hyderabad, the average flat size rose 24% in this six-year period – from 1,700 sq. ft. in 2019 to 2,103 sq. ft. in 2024. Contrastingly, between 2023 and 2024, Hyderabad



was the only city to see the average flat size decrease (by 9%). "Meanwhile, at 29 per cent, NCR saw the highest annual growth of average flat size – from 1,890 sq ft in 2023 to 2,435 sq ft in 2024. Anuj Puri, Chairman, Anarock Group said, "This surge is primarily attributable to the increased new luxury housing supply in the region over the last one year. Developers here are closely tracking and responding to demand, which is why NCR has seen significant new supply in the above Rs 1.5 crore price bracket.

## Do you really need to brush your dog's teeth like Instagram has been influencing us to do?



Understanding the importance of dog dental care with insights from Dr. Harsh Veerban, Founder of WAAT Pet Clinic. Learn why brushing your dog's teeth matters, along with alternative oral health solutions. Understanding the importance of dog dental care with insights from Dr. Harsh Veerban, Founder of WAAT Pet Clinic. Learn why brushing your dog's teeth matters, along with alternative oral health solutions. If you've ever scrolled through Instagram and stumbled upon influencers meticulously brushing their dog's teeth, you might have wondered, "Is this truly necessary, or just another social media trend?" The answer, according to Dr Harsh Veerban, Founder of WAAT Pet Clinic, is a resounding yes—but with some practical caveats.

Brushing your dog's teeth is undeniably beneficial. Dental hygiene plays a critical role in a dog's overall health, preventing issues like gum disease, bad breath, and more severe complications such as heart disease linked to poor oral hygiene. However, as Dr Veerban points out, "Most

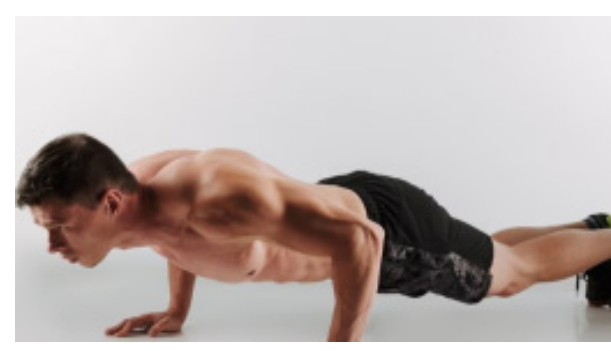
dog parents, myself included, understand that brushing a dog's teeth isn't exactly a walk in the park." While it's simpler to train puppies to accept brushing as part of their routine, adult dogs often resist the process. One crucial tip to remember is to avoid using human toothpaste. Many contain ingredients like baking soda, which can be toxic to dogs due to its high sodium content. Instead, opt for pet-safe toothpaste available in enticing flavours like chicken or peanut butter to make the experience more appealing.

But what if your furry friend simply won't tolerate a toothbrush? Dr Veerban reassures us that brushing isn't the only way to maintain your dog's dental health. "Dental chews, toys designed for teeth cleaning, and water additives are excellent alternatives," he says. These options not only reduce plaque but are also much easier to integrate into your daily routine. Pet-safe dental gels or sprays can also serve as hassle-free substitutes. Diet is another critical factor in ensuring oral health. Crunchy kibble helps minimise tartar buildup, while natural snacks like carrots, apples, and turmeric can act as gentle teeth cleaners. Coconut oil, known for its antimicrobial properties, can also promote healthier gums and fresher breath. Dr Veerban advises avoiding sugary or sticky treats, which can contribute to dental problems. Instead, prioritise healthier options that support overall wellness and dental hygiene. So, should you be brushing your dog's teeth like an Instagram influencer? If your dog is amenable, absolutely. But if not, don't fret—there are plenty of other ways to keep those pearly whites shining. As Dr Veerban aptly summarises, "A holistic approach to dental care is what matters most, whether that's brushing, chew toys, or a diet rich in natural teeth-cleaning options."

## Sky Force actor Veer Pahariya talks about working out with Akshay Kumar while shooting film: '108 pullups, 108 pushups, 108 dips. Let's do one more'

Veer Pahariya, who is making his debut with Akshay Kumar-starrer Sky Force, opened up about training with the 57-year-old star during the film's shoot, adding that the actor's commitment blew him away and that he can even beat a 20-year-old at the fitness game. "I was locked in for the film after Akshay sir was roped in; it took two years to meet him. So, I had prepped myself. I am not an adrenaline junkie, but I put myself out there. I did my training on a stunt plane, and put 5-6 jeeps to get that experience. I have done skydiving, I jumped into the sea, I have done everything for this. So, I did it because I didn't want to hesitate or feel fearful when I would get the opportunity to do action," Pahariya told Zoom ahead of the film's release.

The 30-year-old also opened up about witnessing Kumar's dedication to his workouts. "I did workouts, and I did calisthenics like Akshay sir. I wanted to do muscle ups and 50 kg pullups because Akshay sir is so fit. I am not saying it as a cliché, but I have seen it through my own eyes. I got the good fortune of working out with him. 108 pullups, 108 pushups, 108 dips. Let's do one more. His dedication is something else. Every day he will do it. I have some amazing videos working out with him. He can beat a 20-year-old in his fitness. Incredible," said Pahariya, adding that he is "glad" to have pushed himself. "So, now I feel that I have the experience of 4-5 films in one (sic)," added Pahariya. The resistance or difficulties encountered during a workout create a dynamic and engaging training experience. "This approach is designed to go beyond traditional exercise routines, pushing individuals to develop broader



skills, including strength, agility, problem-solving, and adaptability," said Garima Goyal, a fitness trainer. Unlike conventional workouts in controlled settings, such as unpredictable training exposure, especially in outdoor terrains with natural obstacles, and urban environments with structures to navigate, can "simulate challenging scenarios". Goyal elaborated that exercises mimic real-life activities emphasising the integration of multiple muscle groups and promoting a holistic approach to fitness. "This might include lifting, carrying, crawling, jumping, and climbing, all designed to enhance overall strength, flexibility, and coordination," said Goyal. However, safety is paramount. Participants are encouraged to focus on proper form and technique to minimise the risk of injury. "Trainers play a crucial role in guiding individuals through the challenges, ensuring that exercises are performed safely and effectively," said Goyal.

## Gautam Adani's son Jeet to marry Diva Shah on February 7, industrialist says, 'shaadi bahut simple aur traditional tarah se hone wali hai'

GNS News Agency, Jan 27

The Adani Group, under Gautam Adani's leadership, has transformed into a global infrastructure conglomerate. The Adani Group, under Gautam Adani's leadership, has transformed into a global infrastructure conglomerate. In what promises to be one of India's most anticipated weddings of 2025, Jeet Adani, the youngest son of industrialist Gautam Adani, is set to tie the knot with Diva Jaimin Shah, daughter of prominent diamond merchant Jaimin Shah.

Gautam, who is visiting Prayagraj for the Maha Kumbh Mela, confirmed to ANI, "Dekho aisa hai... Jeet ki shaadi 7 February ko hai... actually humari karyashaili jo hai woh ek common person ki tarah hai aur Jeet ki shaadi... yahan Jeet bhi aaya tha toh woh Maa Ganga ka aashirwad lene hi aaya tha... aur Jeet ki shaadi bahut simple aur traditional tarah se hone wali hai (Look, here's the thing... Jeet's wedding is on February 7... actually, our way of doing things is quite simple, like a common person, and Jeet's wedding... when Jeet came here, he came to seek the blessings of Maa Ganga... and Jeet's wedding is going to be very simple and traditional)." The union brings together two influential business families, merging the infrastructural empire of the Adanis with the diamond legacy of the Shahs. A private romance steps into the spotlight. The couple, who formalised their relationship with an intimate engagement ceremony in Ahmedabad on March 12, 2023, has maintained a notably low profile despite their prominent family backgrounds. Their engagement celebration was a private affair, with only a single photograph making its way to social media, showing the couple in traditional attire. Adding to the buzz are reports of potential international entertainment, with News18 indicating ongoing discussions with global pop icon Taylor Swift for a performance at one of the pre-wedding events. The power couple: Education, enterprise, and excellence.

Jeet Adani, a University of Pennsylvania School of Engineering and Applied Sciences graduate, has been carving his own path in the business world since joining the Adani Group in 2019. As Vice President of Group Finance, he has taken charge of strategic initiatives, including Adani Airports and Adani Digital Labs, where he's spearheading the development of a super app to integrate the group's diverse consumer services.

While specific details about the wedding celebrations remain closely guarded, the event is expected to be a harmonious blend of tradition and grandeur. While specific details about the wedding celebrations remain closely guarded, the event is expected to be a harmonious blend of tradition and grandeur.

His bride-to-be, Diva Shah, represents the next gen-



In what promises to be one of India's most anticipated weddings of 2025, Jeet Adani, the youngest son of industrialist Gautam Adani, is set to tie the knot with Diva Jaimin Shah, daughter of prominent diamond merchant Jaimin Shah.

eration of India's diamond industry aristocracy. Her family's firm, C Dinesh & Co. Private Limited, established in 1976, is a testament to excellence in diamond manufacturing and trading, with operations spanning Mumbai and Surat. The company, under the leadership of her father, Jaimin Shah, and other directors, has built a formidable reputation in the global diamond trade.

A union of business dynasties The wedding represents more than a personal milestone; it symbolises the union of two of India's most influential business families. The Adani Group, under Gautam Adani's leadership, has transformed into a global infrastructure conglomerate, while the Shah family has helped establish India's prominence in the international diamond trade. This marriage follows the family tradition of powerful alliances, reminiscent of Gautam Adani's elder son Karan's marriage to Paridhi Shroff, daughter of legal luminary Cyril Shroff. Karan currently serves as the CEO of Adani Ports & SEZ Limited and director of Adani Airport Holdings Limited. While specific details about the wedding celebrations remain closely guarded, the event is expected to be a harmonious blend of tradition and grandeur, reflecting both families' stature in Indian business circles. The wedding will likely serve as a gathering of India's business elite, potentially setting new benchmarks for celebration and sophistication in high-society weddings.

## Paatal Lok Season 2 uses violence as a smokescreen to expose how the personal is inherently political



carries that burden like a permanent scar. The violence he survived becomes a debt he must continually repay, binding him to his new father figure, Uncle Ken (Jahnu Barua), in a cycle that blurs survival with servitude. On the opposite end of the spectrum is Reuben (LC Sekhose), who fights tirelessly to break away from his father. There is always a simmering aggression within him, poised to erupt, not out of spite, but from a desire to give back to his land and his people. He wants to do the right thing but finds himself bound to the wrong alliances. Perhaps, this ties into the show's larger thematic foundation (one that was deeply rooted in the first season): sons who cannot see their fathers as... fathers. Perhaps that is why, in the lone moment when Hathi Ram meets Reuben, there is empathy in his gaze. Perhaps, in Reuben's rage, he sees traces of his own son's directionless anger. Perhaps, he also sees, a reflection of himself: two men burdened by the presence of fathers who exist but have never truly been present.

This time, however, the show shifts its focus to grieving mothers and their bonds with absent daughters. In that sense, if we look closer, Rose (a remarkable Merenla Imson) becomes a central character. She challenges our own biases, forcing us to confront the assumptions we carry. We rarely see her, but she is always the subject of conversation. When her story is revealed, it strikes with the force of shock, a reminder of how easily we judge those we barely understand. Rose's life has been shaped by endless violence, abuse, and guilt. She has navigated the depths of the netherworlds (Paatal Lok) in search of solace in the heavens (Swarg Lok), with her daughter whom she may have never truly known. The tragedy of her life is that she cannot claim her daughter, while she is not accepted by her own mother. Other women, like Aslena (Rozelle Mero) and Esther (Mengu Suokhrie), find their children stolen by brutality in the form of shame, and now they seek to develop bonds with daughters who were never truly theirs. But the world does not afford all women this opportunity for self-recognition. Many are confined to the role of combative figures within the constraints of the patriarchal order. Some are partners to men who view them as vessels to cleanse sins, while others are tools of establishment for the manipulation of power and image. Meghna (the ever-dependable Tillotama Shome) is perpetually belittled by the men who surround her, as her identity as an Assamese woman in Nagaland is systematically downplayed. While Grace (Theyie Keditsu) is relegated to the role of a drudge, her husband uses her to carry out his dirty work, all while maintaining his pristine facade. While the world constantly diminishes them, the show offers subtle avenues for reclaiming their narratives. For Grace, such a moment arrives not in an overt confrontation, but through a silent act that allows her some sort of solace. With Meghna, the lens directed at her is already steeped in prejudice, even from us as viewers. Pre-existing genre conventions condition us to misinterpret her adherence to protocol as a sign of corruption. It's no surprise, then, that even Hathiram assumes the right to lecture her on duty. However, in a standout moment, she turns the tables, challenging both him and us to confront the deeply rooted biases we impose on her.

Even Ansari (Ishwak Singh), hailing from a land ravaged by conflict, finds himself caught in another land drenched in a history of violence. He is soon boxed in by a system that views him as a convenient scapegoat for its failures. It is his name, his identity. He cannot escape the systemic violence and degradation that has been intentionally written for him. His fate mirrors that of peripheral figures, like Marx Rizu (Pauloi Phom), a drug lord whose violent outbursts are directed toward his wife over a missing tie, while his young son knowingly indulges in drugs. It is no coincidence that he meets his death with that very same tie. This tie, a symbol of generational abuse, suffocates him and his family, as though it had always been destined to strangle them. This tie, like the system that holds Ansari, binds its victims in a cycle that is as inescapable as it is tragic.

By the end, Hathi Ram comes to perceive the cyclical, unending manifestations of violence for what they truly are. When he finds the murder of a man at the hands of his own friends over a mere handful of notes, he doesn't just solve a crime; he realises the profound futility of it all. He sees that each character is trapped in their own version of the netherworld, striving for heaven, seeking redemption, or succumbing to decay, all while using violence as either a tool for ascension or a justification for their descent. The netherworld, in this light, is revealed not as a distant hell but a purgatory where violence becomes a grotesque carnival, one in which even the good samaritans are not spared. It is no coincidence that the show is set against the backdrop of Christmas. For Hathi Ram, violence transforms into a dark kind of baptism. Through the bloodshed, the betrayal, and the loss, he is unshackled from the need for belonging or validation. What remains is a man who has faced the abyss and, in doing so, has found his own salvation: not in the world, but in himself. He walks out with a subtle smirk, eyes teary from surrendering his doggedness for a strange satisfaction. He walks out not only from a system that refuses to reward, but from a society that dismisses its own.

## After Vicky Kaushal and Rashmika Mandanna, Akshaye Khanna impresses fans as Aurangzeb

Vicky Kaushal-starrer Chhaava has kept fans excited ever since the makers started to share the character posters of the stars. After Chhaava poster featuring Vicky in a fierce avatar on the battlefield, Rashmika Mandanna and Akshaye Khanna's first look too were shared. Rashmika Mandanna's regal look got a mixed reaction on the internet but Akshaye Khanna has impressed as the Emperor Aurangzeb. Vicky Kaushal is set to return to the big screen as the legendary Maratha warrior Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj in filmmaker Laxman Utekar's upcoming movie Chhaava. The makers are all set to release the trailer on January 22 and a series of posters and a new teaser have been shared online. Alongside Vicky Kaushal, the film stars Akshaye Khanna as the ruthless king and Rashmika Mandanna as Yesubai Bhonsale. A fan felt that Akshaye 'looks like Amitabh Bachchan' and wrote, "Why did he give me Amitabh Bachchan vibes at first glance?" another posted, "He's looking incredible!" A user also posted, "He looks convincing." Chhaava also stars Ashutosh Rana as Sarsenapati Hambirao Mohite, Divya Dutta as Soyarabai, Neil Bhopalram as Muhammad Akbar Mughal prince, Santosh Juvekar and Pradeep Rawat as Yesaji Kank among others.

The makers described Chhaava as a "stirring tale of the courageous warrior whose coronation in 1681 marked the beginning of a legendary reign." The film is an adaptation of the Marathi novel Chhava by Shivaji Sawant. The stars are all set to play some historic veterans on the big screen and here are some information about their characters: Also known as Shambhuraje, Vicky will be play-

ing the role of the second Chhatrapati of the Maratha Empire, who ruled from 1681 to 1689. He was the eldest son of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and also the founder of the Maratha Kingdom. It is said that Sambhaji's rule was largely shaped by the ongoing wars between the Marathas and the Mughal Empire, and also some other neighbouring powers. Vicky Kaushal underwent rigorous training in sword fighting, horse riding, and shooting for the role. Rashmika will be playing the wife of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, who was also referred to as Chhatrapati Maharani of the Maratha Kingdom. She stepped in to take important political decisions when needed. Akshaye Khanna as Emperor Aurangzeb He was the sixth Mughal emperor and reigned from 1658 until his death in 1707. Aurangzeb was the longest reigning Mughal Emperor and his empire was also one of the largest in Indian history. Under his reign, the Mughal Empire reached its greatest extent, with territory spanning nearly the entirety of the Indian subcontinent. He is often portrayed as the catalyst for demise of the empire. This character was a prominent Maratha general who has the esteemed position of the 5th Senapati of the Maratha Army during the reign of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. He was recognized for his exceptional military prowess and successfully led various campaigns on behalf of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. He subsequently continuing his service under Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj. She was second wife of Shivaji Maharaj, who was the founder of Maratha empire in western India. Soyarabai was mother of Shivaji Maharaj's second son, Rajaram and the younger sister of Maratha army chief Hambirao Mohite.

## 'Saif Ali Khan hugged me, his mother greeted me with respect': Auto driver Bhajan Lal, who saved actor's life, meets him



Actor Saif Ali Khan was discharged and returned home on Tuesday after the brutal attack in the wee hours of January 16. However, before leaving the hospital, Saif met the auto driver, Bhajan Singh, who rushed him to the hospital after he was attacked. As per reports, he was grievously injured and accompanied by son Taimur and staff. Now, a video of the auto driver narrating his meeting with the actor has surfaced online. He said Saif Ali Khan had personally called him on the day of discharge and requested to meet

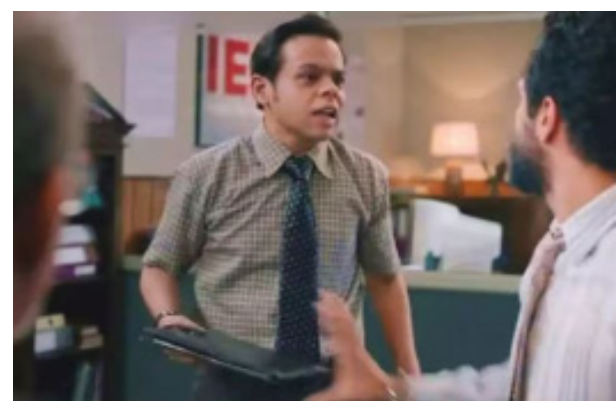
him. As per reports, he was asked to reach the hospital at 3:30 pm on Tuesday afternoon. All his family members were present there who greeted me and expressed gratefulness. They said, 'Thank you'. His mom was present and I think even his children. I don't recognise them by face as much. Saif Ali Khan Saif Ali Khan meets the auto driver. The driver recalls touching Saif Ali Khan's feet as well as Sharmila Tagore's. He said they treated him with respect and clicked pictures with him. He said the actor also promised to stay in touch. "Let me know if ever you need anything," the actor told him.

Earlier, recalling the events of the night, Bhajan Lal had told Indian Express that Saif got in his auto with a staff member and his son Taimur. "They were in such an urgent state that I couldn't think of asking for money. Having such a big actor sit in my auto was satisfaction enough for me." He said that when they reached Lilavati Hospital, there was a guard standing at the entrance. It was only then that he realised who was in his auto. "He (Saif) said, call him (the guard) quickly, 'Main Saif Ali Khan hoon (I am Saif Ali Khan)'. A stretcher was brought, and he got on it," he said. Saif Ali Khan was rushed to Mumbai's Lilavati Hospital when an intruder entered his residence with an alleged intention of robbery. The actor was stabbed multiple times with a severe injury on the back.

## Shah Rukh Khan's Dunki co-star Varun Kulkarni battles 'severe kidney issues', friend requests financial aid: 'Life of an artiste...'

Shah Rukh Khan's Dunki co-star Varun Kulkarni is currently hospitalised and battling 'severe kidney issues' with a need of dialysis at least two to three times a week. The actor's situation was brought to light by his friend Roshaan Shetty. Sharing a set of pictures on social media, Roshaan requested for financial help. In an emotional note, he wrote, "My dear friend and theatre co-artist, Varun Kulkarni, is currently battling severe kidney issues. Despite our previous efforts to raise funds, the expenses for his treatment continue to mount. He requires dialysis 2-3 times a week, along with regular medical care and emergency hospital visits." Sharing more details about Varun, Roshaan shared that the actor lost both his parents at a very young age and is a self-made artist. "The life of an artist often comes with financial challenges, and at this difficult moment, he needs our support more than ever."

Roshaan shared the details for people interested to help them financially. He wrote, "We, his friends and well-wishers, are coming together to help Varun during this critical time. If you know Varun or Rhea personally, you can send your contributions directly to them. For those who don't, a Ketto link has been created (link in the description) to make



donating easier." He added, "Your support—no matter the amount—can make a huge difference. Even sharing this message can help reach more people who might lend a hand. Let's come together to help Varun get back on stage, where he belongs." He also shared contact details for further details.

## Ahead of Chhaava trailer, Rashmika Mandanna opts for a wheelchair as she reaches Mumbai



Rashmika Mandanna Rashmika Mandanna was seen on a wheelchair at the airport this morning. Actor Rashmika Mandanna was seen on a wheelchair at the airport as she left for the launch of Chhaava trailer on Wednesday. The actor had suffered a leg injury while working out in the gym earlier this month. However, she will be a part of the launch event in Mumbai despite her injury.

Video of Rashmika were shared from both Hyderabad and Mumbai airports. She was seen wearing a black cap

and a mask to hide her face. In the clip, Rashmika was seen limping as she took her car. Many fans reacted to the video and wrote, "Get well soon." About a week back, the Pusha 2 star took to Instagram to share her health update. She also mentioned how the incident has affected the shoot of Rashmika's upcoming films, and she apologised to her directors for the delay. "Well... happy New Year to me I guess! ?????? Injured myself in my sacred gym shrine ???? Now I'm in "hop mode" for the next few weeks or months or god only knows, so seems like I'll be hopping my way back to sets for Thama, Sikandar, and Kubera! ???. To my directors sorry for the delay... I'll be back soon enough just making sure my legs are fit for action (or at least fit for hopping) ?????? In the meantime if you need me... I'll be the one in the corner doing a highly advanced bunny hop workout. HOP HOP HOP...???", posted Rashmika. After the success of Pushpa 2: The Rule where Rashmika reprised her iconic role as Srivalli, she will be seen in the upcoming movie, Chhaava portraying the role of Maharani Yesubai Bhonsale wife of Maratha warrior Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj which will be played by Vicky Kaushal. Filmmaker Laxman Utekar's upcoming movie Chhaava trailer will come out on January 22. The film will release on February 14, 2025.

## 'Tumhara baap kaun hai': Anupam Mittal gets mad at Ritesh Agarwal on Shark Tank India, defeats him in negotiations

Since Ashneer Grover's departure after the first season of Shark Tank India, conflicts between the 'sharks' have reduced drastically. But the latest episode of the reality show saw a heated back-and-forth between Anupam Mittal and Ritesh Agarwal. The panel of 'sharks' also included Vineeta Singh, Namita Thapar and Kunal Bahl. At some point or the other, several 'sharks' have made fun of Anupam's age, and he has been a good sport about it. But he seemed to lose patience when Ritesh made a similar comment in the new episode, featuring husband-wife entrepreneur duo Sahil and Arunima. They pitched their luxury goods servicing brand Sneakinn, and asked for Rs 90 lakh in exchange of 3% equity, valuing the company at Rs 30 crore.

They said that they noticed a gap in the market when people bought expensive shoes and bags worth lakhs of rupees, but didn't have options to get those goods serviced, repaired and refurbished. They said that their revenue has increased to Rs 7 crore in just four years, and want to set up physical stores in several cities across the country. Ritesh said that he had an unusual comparison to make. "I see your company as being in the diagnostics business," he said, at which Vineeta rolled her eyes.

Ritesh continued, "Earlier, every store would provide testing services, but later, they set up a centralised testing facility, and pick up centres in different cities. Their profit margin grew disproportionately." Anupam laughed, and said, "Aap bimaar jooton ki laboratory banayenge." Ritesh paused, and replied, "Humare yahan vridhdhawaste aur bimaar ke



aspaas ke sharks hain, unko bhi saath leke challenge." Namita and Vineeta laughed heartily at Ritesh's joke. But Anupam didn't seem too pleased. Turning towards Ritesh, he said, "Chalo, aap yeh toh samajh gaye aapka baap kaun hai." Ritesh carried on, and offered the entrepreneurs Rs 45 lakh for 5% equity, and the remaining Rs 45 lakh as debt for 10%. Vineeta and Anupam joined hands, and made an offer of Rs 90 lakh, but in exchange of 10% equity. They also asked for 1% in royalties, which gave the other 'sharks' an excuse to point out Anupam's hypocrisy. Anupam is usually the one who scoffs at royalties, and says that asking for them is the equivalent of valuing a company at 0. Kunal repeated this. Namita told the founders to not accept the royalty deal. "It's very bad for your business," she said, and Vineeta said, "Hello, I'm also there."

## Alex Hartley on England women's team after her fitness comments: 'Sophie Ecclestone refused to do a TV interview with me'



at the ground, wherever. But a few individuals – coaches, players – they literally haven't looked at me," said Hartley.

England coach Jon Lewis and skipper Heather Knight had ruled out fitness problems with the team. During the three ODI's in the Ashes, England team struggled on the field with some dropped catches as well errors on the field during the loss in every match in ODI format in Ashes. Hartley reiterated that England have struggled to match Australia's 'athleticism' in the series. "I've upset them, clearly. Jon Lewis has come out and said there isn't a problem with fitness in his squad. There isn't a problem with fitness in the England environment. They obviously think I'm completely wrong in my opinion. Which is fine, absolutely fine: I'm entitled to my opinions and they're entitled to theirs. It's my job to say if I see something that needs to be better, and I did, but the way that I've been treated since I think is totally unfair. But they will say that my comments were unfair, so if that's the way our relationship is going to be moving forwards, then so be it. If fitness isn't a problem, then it's athleticism from a few, isn't it?" said Hartley.

## R Ashwin's prediction on India vs England T20I series: 'Skyball vs Bazball will be entertaining'

aggressive batting approaches. "This new era of fearless cricket by India will be tested against a high-quality England side. This series will be a proper test of our abilities." England cricket team England cricketers during a practice session ahead of the first T20 match against India, at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata. "Bazball vs Skyball will be an exciting spectacle. This series will also test India's T20I depth." "All the venues are batting-friendly, with small boundaries and high-scoring grounds." "Both teams are packed with powerful hitters, and it promises to be an entertaining series for fans who enjoy aggressive batting." Ashwin also highlighted the evolution of the T20I format in recent years. "This T20I era is all about flexibility," he said. "Three or four years ago, batters were reluctant to play out of their usual positions, but bowlers now vary their bowling strategies throughout the 20 overs." India's playing XI Ashwin predicted a likely playing XI for India in the first T20I against England at Eden Gardens and discussed the challenges Indian batters will face. Sanju Samson can breathe easy as his captain Suryakumar has backed him to continue manning the gloves behind the stumps as well as open the batting against England. (BCCI) Sanju Samson can breathe easy as his captain Suryakumar has backed him to continue manning the gloves behind the stumps as well as open the batting against England. (BCCI)

"Sanju Samson has been exceptional as an opener. Tilak Verma also excelled in South Africa. I will be interesting to see if Surya, Tilak, and Sanju can maintain their high strike rates against the strong English attack," he said. "The playing XI is fairly straightforward. There might be a toss-up between Nitish Kumar Reddy and Washington Sundar, but at Eden, with dew likely to play a significant role, India might opt for Nitish."

Ashwin's India XI: Sanju Samson, Abhishek Sharma, Tilak Verma, Suryakumar Yadav, Hardik Pandya, Rinku Singh, Axar Patel, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Varun Chakravarty, Arshdeep Singh, and Mohammed Shami

## Jos Buttler on playing Afghanistan in Champions Trophy: 'I don't think a boycott is the way to go about it'



Jamie Overton, Gus Atkinson, Jofra Archer, Adil Rashid, Mark Wood

## Jasprit Bumrah retains top spot in ICC Test bowler rankings, Jadeja leads all-rounders' list

Dubai: India's pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah continued to remain the undisputed No. 1 Test bowler, while Ravindra Jadeja maintained his top spot in the all-rounders' category, in the latest ICC rankings released on Wednesday. Bumrah, who had made history ahead of the fifth and final Border-Gavaskar Test against Australia in January by recording the highest-ever ICC Rankings rating for an Indian bowler at 907 points, is currently on a career-best points tally of 908.

## Jim Courier on Novak Djokovic's historic win over Carlos Alcaraz: 'We have just seen what Novak could have...'

GNS News Agency, Jan 27

While Novak Djokovic created history with a 4-6, 6-4, 6-3, 6-4 win over world number 3 Carlos Alcaraz in the Australian Open quarter-finals to become the only male player to reach 50 Grand Slam semifinals, the Serbian also had to fight an injury scare in the opening set of the match. The world number 7 was seen struggling with his leg in the first set before he returned in the match with his upper thigh being strapped up. Six-time Grand Slam winner Jim Courier has termed the Serbian's comeback to the comebacks his compatriot Andre Agassi would make in his career. Courier, who had a 7-5 win-loss record against Agassi shared his views post the match.

"We have just seen what Novak could have played like for his entire career. If he decided that he wanted to return like Andre Agassi, I guess he could have! That's what it looked like tonight. It was born out of necessity. This was a guy who had limited options once the injury took place." Courier told Channel Nine. Novak Djokovic returned from a set down and a minor injury to defeat Carlos Alcaraz in the quarterfinal of the Australian Open on Tuesday. (AP) Novak Djokovic returned from a set down and a minor injury to defeat Carlos Alcaraz in the quarterfinal of the Australian Open on Tuesday. (AP)

37-year-old Djokovic had lost the opening set 4-6 before he won the next three sets in the quarter-final against Alcaraz to enter his 50th Grand Slam semi-finals. Djokovic first played in the Australian Open in 2005 where he lost to eventual winner Marat Safin in the first round. In 2006, the Serbian again suffered a first-round loss in the Australian Open when he lost against Paul Goldstein of USA in the first round. It was also the last time that the Serbian lost in the first round of a Grand Slam in his career to date. The Serbian has so far won 94 matches in the Australian Open with nine losses. Andy Murray's former coach Mark Petchey termed Djokovic style of play in the quarter-final as 'ultra-aggressive'. "The injury that Novak sustained midway through the opening set, we were wondering what that was going to do. But all it did was flick a switch in him, that allowed him to play the sort of tennis that we never really see. He was so ultra-aggressive on returns, a bit like Andre



Agassi. "I mean, he literally just stepped in and laseder returns. And what it said to all of us, it's like this guy's won 24 majors and he's played within himself. He's played within himself! There was another gear last night that nobody else has seen before from Novak, and he's good enough to be able to produce it and not miss. His return was so dominant against Carlos's second serve... He just went nuclear off returns and Carlos wasn't able to live with them," Petchey told Stan Sport's Grand Slam Daily. Novak Djokovic of Serbia reacts during his quarterfinal match against Carlos Alcaraz of Spain at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia, Wednesday, Jan. 22, 2025. (AP Photo) The Serbian has also struggled with injuries in recent years with a abdomen tear in 2021 and a hamstring injury in 2023 and has made a comeback. The Serbian will now face German Alexander Zverev in the semi-final. "There's lots of us that have looked at it, with the tear in the ab (in 2021), the hamstring (in 2023), how has he managed to do this? He is so spiritual when it comes to these things. He is so much about the cells in the body re-healing, he's got the power of the mind in these moments. Novak is the best that's ever been and it's worked for him. I don't know the extent of the injury but if you're sitting in Zverev's camp, you have to expect him to go out there and be 100 per cent fit when it comes to Friday," Petchey said.

## Mohammed Shami on his comeback: 'When you go through injuries, I feel you grow stronger as an athlete'



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After more than a year, Indian pacer Mohammed Shami is set to play his first international match since his ankle injury when India faces England in the first T20I of the five-match series at Eden Gardens in Kolkata today. The Indian pacer had last played for India during the ODI World Cup final in Ahmedabad in 2023 and was sidelined for a year due to an ankle injury. The 34-year-old underwent surgery post-injury and has made a comeback to the Indian T20 as well as the ODI team. "I waited for an entire year and I worked very hard. There was a sense of fear even while running about what will happen or what will not happen. It's very difficult for any player to get injured when he is in full flow. Then go to the NCA for rehabilitation and make a comeback. When you go through injuries, I feel you grow stronger as an athlete. Because you have to repeat a lot of things while being mentally strong," Shami told BCCI TV in an interview.

The Bengal pacer had missed key events for India, including last year's T20 World Cup in Australia and the West Indies, and also missed the Border-Gavaskar Trophy in Australia in recent months. Shami was the highest wicket-taker in the 2023 World Cup with 24 wickets. Shami had made his comeback in domestic cricket while playing

against Madhya Pradesh in the Ranji Trophy last November. India vs England, Gautam Gambhir and Mohammed Shami India bowler Mohammad Shami with head coach Gautam Gambhir during a practice session ahead of the first T20 cricket match against England, at Eden Garden in Kolkata.

The Indian pacer then played in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy for Bengal and then played in the Vijay Hazare Trophy too in recent days, taking a three-wicket haul against Haryana in his last List A match before his comeback in the Indian team for the England series and the Champions Trophy. The pacer also talked about the tough times faced during the last one year. "When you are scoring runs and taking wickets, everyone is with you. But the real test is to realize who is with you during your tough times. But that is the real test to see who is with you during your tough times and who is closer to you. Whatever is done, it is done. I have crossed that phase. If you work hard, then you will get results. That's what I believe. When we are young, our parents teach us how to walk. We rise or fall, but we never give up learning how to walk. We should never give up that hunger. Even if we fall, we have to get up and walk again. The same applies to sports too. If you get injured, you have to make a comeback for your team and for your country. So fight and grow," Shami said. During the interview, the Indian pacer was also seen flying a kite from the hotel terrace in Kolkata and compared the balance needed in cricket to that of flying a kite.

"It's been a long while since I flew a kite. It must be around 15 years. I didn't get a chance to fly a kite. I only had the ball in hand. I know how to fly a kite, how the balance should be. The balance is very important. Same like our cricket life. If you are set at the crease, you will score runs, and if you are set in bowling, you will take wickets. The rhythm is very important. Everything in life has a flow. Whatever it is, your fitness, mindset, and skill are important for bowling," said Shami.

## Rohit Sharma and Yashvi Jaiswal train with Mumbai Ranji Trophy team

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Yashasvi Jaiswal and Rohit Sharma Yashasvi Jaiswal (left) and Rohit Sharma at Mumbai practice session. Team India captain Rohit Sharma and opener Yashasvi Jaiswal on Wednesday trained at the Sharad Pawar Cricket Academy in BKC with the Mumbai Ranji Trophy team ahead of their clash against Jammu and Kashmir. Mumbai are third in Group A behind Baroda and Jammu & Kashmir, who happen to their opponents on Thursday. For the fixture to be played at BKC, Mumbai have included India captain Rohit Sharma, who will play under Ajinkya Rahane. Similarly, Yashasvi Jaiswal – who was India's best batsman in Australia – will also play the game and is set to open. Apart from the two, Mumbai will also have Shreyas Iyer, Shivam Dube and Shardul Thakur for the fixture. The inclusion of big names means there will be a few compromises to make. Yashasvi Jaiswal Yashasvi Jaiswal at the Mumbai teams Practice session at MCA ground in Bandra for the forthcoming Ranji trophy. If Jaiswal and Rohit are paired at the top then Mumbai will have to take a call on 17-year-old opener Ayush Mhatre who has been amongst their standout performers this season. It won't be an easy call to leave out a player who has performed consistently across formats.

Sarfraz Khan, who is suffering from a rib injury, will miss the fixture and so will his brother Musheer Khan who is recovering from a neck injury he suffered during a road accident in September. With Rohit named in Mumbai's 17-member squad along with fellow Test opener Yashasvi Jaiswal, a significant crowd turnout can be expected on the match day here at Mumbai Cricket Association's BKC



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facility. Rohit Sharma Rohit Sharma at the Mumbai teams Practice session at MCA ground in Bandra for the forthcoming Ranji trophy. The BCCI has made it mandatory for centrally-contracted cricketers to play domestic cricket and three other Test cricketers. Earlier this week, Rohit practiced with the Mumbai team at the Wankhede Stadium. The Delhi selectors have also named Kohli in a provisional team but his participation status is still unclear. Rohit last played for Mumbai in 2015 against Uttar Pradesh. He had a torrid time with the bat during the Border-Gavaskar Trophy with scores of 3, 9, 10, 3, 6 during the 1-3 loss in Australia. He opted to sit out of the final Test in Sydney and the team was captained by Jasprit Bumrah.