# INDIAN (CHRONICIA

### GMR Hyderabad International Airport launches more travel options from Hyd to Phuket

Hyderabad: GMR Hyderabad International Airport Limited (GHIAL) on Friday announced the launch of new flight services between Phuket and Hyderabad, enhancing international connectivity for travellers.

The inaugural flight took off on Friday. To begin with, Air India Express will operate three weekly flights on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Sundays, and from February 15 the frequency of the flights will be six days a week on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. The duration of the flight is approximately 3 hours and 45 minutes. Pradeep Panicker, CEO, GMR Hyderabad International Airport Ltd, said, ".

### 'Congress hates poor': PM Modi slams Sonia, Rahul's remarks on President's address

GNS News Agency, Jan 31

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday hit out at the Congress and the AAP-da (AAP) party for their arrogance and launched a blistering attack on the "Royal (Gandhi) family" of the Congress for mocking President Droupadi Murmu after her speech in Parliament. Addressing an election rally in west Delhi's Dwarka, PM Modi said: "Today, our respected President addressed the Parliament, highlighting development and the vision for Viksit Bharat.""But a member of the Royal family of the Congress said the President gave a boring speech another member of the Royal family of the Congress insulted a tribal woman by calling her 'poor thing'," he said.

"This is an insult to 10 crore tribals and every poor in the country. The Royal family of the Congress does not like Dalits, STs or OBCs rising in life," he said, indirectly referring to reaction of Sonia Gandhi and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi to the President's address on the opening day of the Budget Session of Parliament. "Abusing people and defaming the country abroad and loving Urban Naxals is their forte," said PM Modi referring to both the Congress and the AAP. "These two arrogant parties have joined hands behind the scenes and we need to stay alert," he said, asking voters to elect a BJP government in the February 5 Assembly election in Delhi. Arrogance is common to both the AAP-da and Congress - the AAP-da considers itself the owner of Delhi and the Congress considers itself the ruler of the country, he said.Referring to the political storm over pollution in the Yamuna, the PM said due to the fear of loss in election AAP-da leaders are pursuing zehrili raajniti (poisonous poli-

PM Modi hit out at the ruling party in Delhi for the poor state of the Yamuna and indulging in blame game and corruption. He said the AAP-da government has not increased the budget for infrastructure over the past four years. "They are not spending money on public welfare but on their publicity and ads," he said. Hitting out at corruption in the AAP-da government and calling it an enemy of the middle class, he said: "Those who live in Sheesh Mahal have no respect for a two BHK of a middle class family."Touching upon Arvind Kejriwal's Yamuna 'poison' remark, he said the AAP-da people hate Haryana. "They blame the neighbouring state for air pollution, and now they



are blaming Haryana for poisoning Yamuna water," he said. The land which gave the message of Gita has been accused of poisoning the Yamuna. "Yamuna is not just a river but a part of the Indian ethos, but it is in a decaying state today," he said. He said in Gujarat, the poor state of Sabarmati river in Ahmedabad used to hurt him. "I later rejuvenated the river and developed a river front there," he said, adding, "I would personally oversee the revamp of the Yamuna in Delhi as well". He said the BJP government will change the future of Delhi NCR by developing the Yamuna. "The water will be cleaned, we will develop the river front, we will build a green tourism corridor and run water Metro for transportation," he said, adding that rejuvenation of a river also promotes the economy. Claiming that the BJP not only undertakes development but also facilitates savings for the poor, he said: "We will give houses to the poor in Delhi at double the speed once a BJP government is formed.'

Repeating BJP's no tolerance for corruption, PM Modi said the BJP government will call an Assembly session early and the CAG report, carrying details of the AAP government's financial lapses, will be tabled to expose the corruption spread by the AAP-da government. He also highlighted the PM Surya Ghar solar energy scheme under which the BJP government will give Rs 75,000-80,000 to each household for installing a solar plant, which will translate into 300 free units of electricity every month. He urged women to link their bank accounts with phone numbers as they will soon get messages on their phones that Rs 2,500 financial assistance has been deposited in their account under the Mahila Samriddhi Scheme."

### KCR slams Congress over Telangana's economic decline, vows to join people's movement

GNS News Agency, Jan 31

Hyderabad: Former Chief Minister and BRS chief K Chandrashekhar Rao on Friday said the Congress government would not be forgiven if it continued to neglect public welfare. He declared that if the Congress continued to ignore people's issues, there would be a major backlash from the public. "I will also participate in people's movements. Time has come to take an aggressive stance," he said, addressing hundreds of BRS supporters from Medapalli village in Zaheerabad constituency, who walked 140 km over five days to meet him, at his Erravelli residence to express their dissatisfaction with the current Congress government.

Citing a CAG report, Chandrashekhar Rao pointed out that while the BRS government ensured an annual revenue growth of Rs 15,000 crore over the last five years, the Congress rule had led to a Rs 13,000-crore decline, pushing Telangana towards economic instability. He said economists feared that the financial health of the State would be irreparable if such situation continued any further. He pointed out that the government was not even releasing retirement benefits to retired employees since March last year. He blamed



the Congress for undoing Telangana's progress, stating that under the BRS rule, the State had achieved irrigation growth, drinking water supply through Mission Bhagiratha, constructed reservoirs such as Mallanna Sagar and launched major welfare schemes like Rythu

### Embrace deregulation to let businesses prosper, says Chief Economic Advisor

GNS News Agency, Jan 31

New Delhi: Give entrepreneurs and households back their time and mental bandwidth, Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran said while making a strong case for significant roll back of regulations both by the Union and State governments. In the Preface of the Economic Survey 2024-25, he said, "Getting out of the way" and allowing businesses to focus on their core mission is a significant contribution that governments around the country can make to foster innovation and enhance competitiveness. "The most effective policies governments – Union and States – in the country can embrace is to give entrepreneurs and households back their time and mental bandwidth. That means rolling back regulation significantly. That means vowing and acting to stop micromanaging economic activity and embracing riskbased regulations," Nageswaran wrote. Effective government policies also mean changing the operating principle of regulations from 'guilty until proven innocent' to 'innocent until proven guilty'. Adding layers of operational conditions to policies to prevent abuse makes them incomprehensible and regulations needlessly complicated, taking them further from their original purposes and intents, said Nageswaran, who led the team which authored the key pre-Budget document. Observing that there is no choice but to trust the people, he cautioned that "business as usual carries a high risk of economic growth stagnation, if not economic stagnation". "Yes, trust is a two-way street and the non-government actors in the



economy have to vindicate the trust reposed. In fact, quite a significant chunk of the complicated compliance requirements stem from the efforts of businesses wanting to keep out domestic and foreign competition to the detriment of other industries and the economy," he added.

The chief economic advisor emphasised that wiping out the trust deficit in the country as it is imperative and government agencies have to set the agenda in this regard. "Then, it is a good bet that the Indian public will overcome the challenges and turn them into opportunities on the way to Viksit Bharat by 2047," he said. The survey argues that the government needs to embrace risk-based regulations and change the operating principle of regulations from 'guilty until proven innocent' to 'innocent until proven guilty'.

### Apollo Hospitals collaborates with New Jersey caregiver Hyderabad: Apollo Hospitals Group and Hackensack Meridian Health (HMH), a health care network from New

Jersey, USA, on Friday announced a strategic affiliation agreement to explore and implement innovative health care solutions, a press release said.

The collaboration will leverage the strengths and resources of both Apollo and HMH to develop and implement joint initiatives focused on enhancing patient care, improving affordability, and promoting community health. "By combining our respective strengths, we aim to create impactful solutions that address the evolving needs of patients and health care

### CM Revanth Reddy lays foundation for new Osmania General Hospital building amid protests

GNS News Agency, Jan 31

Hyderabad: Amidst protests by Goshamahal Parirakshana Samithi demanding the government to withdraw the plans, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy laid foundation for construction of new Osmania General Hospital (OGH) building on Friday. People have been raising concerns over the traffic issues, environmental issues and others due to the construction of OGH. Accompanied by Health Minister Damodar Rajanarasimha, R&B Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy and others, the Chief Minister laid foundation for the OGH building. The project is being taken up with a cost of Rs.2700 crore and is expected to be ready in two years. The Government is utilizing 26 acres of the 38 acres, for developing the hospital with 2000 beds. The balanace 11 acres are likely to be used by police department for its requirements. The existing OGH is a heritage structure and case is under progress in the High Court. With



heritage activists opposing the plans to construct the new building at the same place, the government is constructing the new structure in police grounds, Goshamahal

### India has world's 3rd-largest metro network: Prez Murmu in Parliament

#### address

GNS News Agency, Jan 31

India has the world's third-largest metro network, said President Droupadi Murmu in her address to the joint sitting of Parliament on Friday. She said the country's metro rail network has now crossed the 1000-kilometre milestone, and "India has the world's third-largest metro network". The President highlighted the government's achievements in expanding the rail network and modernising it at the same time and also connecting the unconnected areas for the first time"Today, several Vande Bharat, Amrit Bharat and Namo Bharat trains are being operated. In the last six months, 17 new Vande Bharat trains and one Namo train have been introduced. The government is working rapidly... In the last decade, my government has given new energy to the journey of Viksit Bharat. "She also said that in the last six months, the Central government has made record investments in future infrastructure and highlighted the engineering marvel of the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla rail link project"I am happy to inform you that the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla rail link project has been completed and now the country will be connected by railway line from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. Under this ambitious project, the world's highest rail bridge has been constructed over the Chenab River," she said. After successful trial runs of passenger and freight trains, the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) project is set for its muchawaited official inauguration in the first week of February 2025.President Droupadi Murmu in her Praleimant address also said that digital fraud and deepfakes were serious challenges to national security and that the gov-



ment is continuously working towards ensuring efficiency in cyber security. Digital fraud, cybercrime and DeepFake are serious challenges to social, financial and national security. "She said that today, India is making its presence felt as a major global player in the field of digital technology. "Developed nations of the world are also impressed with the success of India's UPI transactions system...My government has used digital technology as a tool for social justice and equality."The President said the government aims to make India a global innovation powerhouse. "Our aim is to make India a global innovation powerhouse...In the area of artificial intelligence, India's Al Mission has been started," she said.In her address to the joint sitting of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, President Murmu highlighted the government's various schemes and goals. She said that the government was committed to fulfilling the dreams of the poor and the middle class and also was aiming to make India a global innovation powerhouse. "Today our youth is bringing glory to the country in every field from startups to sports to space...India is showing the way to the world in the fields of Artificial Intelligence and the adoption of technology," the President said.

### BRS president KCR asks cadre to gear up for direct fight with Congress

GNS News Agency, Jan 31

Hyderabad: Breaking his silence on the Congress administration in the State, BRS president and former Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar Rao on Friday, asked his party cadre to gear up for a direct fight with the Congress regime. He announced a massive public meeting in the last week of February."I have been watching the Congress administration silently for the last one year. But it is time to take up a direct fight. I would not strike my opponents easily, as it has to be decisive and forceful. People of Telangana as well as Congress leaders are well aware of it," he declared.

Speaking to BRS leaders from the Zaheerabad constituency at his Erravelli residence, Chandrashekhar Rao launched a full-throttle attack, charging the Congress of betraying people who trusted it and voted it to power. He criticised the ruling party for failing to implement a single welfare scheme properly, stating that Telangana was facing a severe crisis under the Congress leadership. He said people were already disillusioned with the Congress's oneyear rule and were gearing up to thrash Congress leaders. He reminded that he had warned voters about the Congress's lack of commitment to farmer welfare and Dalit empowerment, but the electorate ignored it.

"The people of Telangana did not listen to my warnings during the elections. They voted for Congress, believing in false promises. Now, they are paying the price," he said. The former Chief Minister remarked that the Congress leaders were suppressing dissent by filing police cases against those questioning the government. He said under the Congress rule, Telangana is facing power cuts, drought, and water shortages. Key irrigation projects like Sangameshwara and Basaveshwara were stalled, while the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Scheme was being emptied, putting the lives of farmers in jeopardy. He called upon BRS leaders to conduct large-scale protests at irrigation project sites, demanding timely water supply for farmers. He also expressed concerns over falling land prices, deteriorating conditions in Gurukul hostels, and food poisoning incidents among students, blaming Congress's negligence."Let us show the power of the people of Telangana to the Congress and bring them to their knees," he said. Chandrashekhar Rao charged the Congress with using the Muslim community for votes and failing to uphold its promises. He alleged that welfare funds had dried up, leading to economic instability. Comparing the current situation to Telangana's past



struggles under the Congress regime, he said history was repeating itself."Telangana is once again suffering in the hands of the Congress leaders."He gave a strong counter to the Congress leaders who have been criticising his Erravelli residence as a farmhouse giving an impression of a palatial building where illegal activities are conducted, though it is his residence and he cultivates crops.

### BRS will return to power in 2028, KCR will be Telangana CM again: KT Rama Rao

GNS News Agency,

BRS Hyderabad: working president KT Rama Rao on Friday asserted that the party would return to power in 2028, with K Chandrashekhar Rao reclaiming the Chief Minister's position.He criticised the Congress government for halting the progress achieved over the last decade. He reiterated that the people of Telangana would soon recognise Congress'

, **Edara Nagamani** W/o

Survanarayana, currently residing a 3-45/4, Bankapuram, Nidamanoor Mandalam, Nalgonda District, Telangana, 508278, here by confirm that I have changed my name to Eedhara Nagamani W/o Suryanarayana for all future purposes and official communi cations .I kindly request you to change my name in all your records passport accordingly. Please treat this as my official confirmation for the name change.

Eedhara Nagamani (Contact Information: 9963336051)

### **Indian Chronicle**

English Daily

### Merit vs domicile

India faces an acute shortfall of doctors both in terms quantity as well as quality; the situation is even worse when it comes to specialists. A major stumbling block as been domicile-based reservation under the state quota n postgraduate (PG) medical courses; it has brazenly indermined the primacy of merit. Righting a grave wrong, he Supreme Court has ruled that such reservation is unconstitutional. Allowing it would infringe upon the fundanental rights of many students, the court has rightly said. ndeed, giving aspirants a raw deal because they belong o a different state runs counter to Article 14 (equality before the law) of the Constitution. This equality is guaranteed to every Indian citizen across the length and readth of the country. Now, the playing field has been evelled for medical graduates who opt for specialisation o boost their career prospects.

The bottom line is that merit cannot be compromised at the PG level, even as residence-based reservation can e permissible to an extent in undergraduate or MBBS ourses. India's ailing healthcare system cannot afford o be crippled by the presence of below-par specialists. According to the Health Dynamics of India 2022-23 reort, which was released by the Union Health Ministry in September last year, the problem is severe in rural areas, where there is nearly 80 per cent shortage of speialist doctors at community health centres. No wonder ountless patients rush to multi-speciality hospitals in earby or even distant cities, thereby putting these overstretched institutions under greater strain. The widespread eluctance of some medical professionals to serve in the interland is another issue that needs to be urgently ad-

Competent specialists can make all the difference vhen it comes to giving timely and effective medical treat-

### Should you link your credit card to UPI?



GNS News Agency, Jan 31

Since the integration of Rupay Credit Cards with UPI, a number of credit card issuers have launched Rupay variants of their popular cards, with some offering new cards on the Rupay network. Some card issuers have also started incentivising UPI payments with accelerated value-back.

Earlier UPI transactions were limited to the funds available in your savings account. With the linking of credit cards with UPI, you can make UPI spends using the limit available on your credit card, eliminating the need to carry a physical card everywhere. In addition to offering convenience of digital payments, this facility opens up more opportunities for cardholders to earn rewards and cashback. However, it also comes with the risk of overspending along with certain other downsides.

Rewards are one of the most important advantages that credit cards have over debit cards. By linking your RuPay credit cards to UPI, you can earn rewards or cashback on UPI transactions, allowing you to maximize benefits on everyday expenses like groceries, dining, or bill payments.Of late, several UPI-focused credit cards have also been launched, which provide accelerated rewards or cashback on UPI spends. For example, HDFC UPI Rupay Credit Card offers up to 3% CashPoints on UPI transactions and IndusInd Bank Platinum Rupay Credit Card offers 2% rewards on UPI spends. Rupay variants of other popular cards like Tata Neu Infinity HDFC Credit Card and Myntra Kotak Credit Card provide value-back on UPI transactions, though at the base rate.

However, it is important for cardholders to check the capping and restrictions applicable to UPI transactions. For example, HDFC Moneyback Plus Credit Card caps the rewards on UPI spends at 500 points per month. Moreover, all small-value transactions may not earn rewards. For instance, if the reward rate is 5 points per ?200, a transaction value below ?200 will not accrue any reward points. Another major advantage of credit cards on UPI is wider acceptance. Making payment through credit cards could be a challenge at Kirana stores and local shops as most of these do not have POS machines. By linking your credit card to UPI, you can make instant payments almost everywhere without the need for physical cards. • Easy Access to Credit in EmergenciesLinking your credit card to UPI acts as a backup payment option, which allows you to make big-ticket purchases or make a sizeable payment in case of emergencies even if you have limited funds in your bank account. While linking your credit card to UPI offers convenience and additional purchasing power, incurring several smaller transactions on your card may be difficult to track and could lead to overspending. Hence, like any other credit card, it is advisable to track your outstanding balance, before the dues become difficult to manage. Adding your credit card to UPI can be quite beneficial if used wisely. It not only makes your transactions more convenient but also allows you to maximize credit card rewards and benefits. Evaluate your spending habits and select a credit card that best suits your lifestyle. With responsible usage, you can effectively maximize the benefits of linking credit cards

### Book on women's health 'Stree' released in Hyd

GNS News Agency, Jan 31

Hyderabad: A Telugu book titled 'Stree', which provides holistic information related to a host of topics on women's health, authored by senior Gynaecological Endoscopic Surgeon and alumni of Osmania Medical College (OMC), Dr H Narmada, was launched recently in Hyderabad. From puberty to menopause, the book strives to cover everything a woman wants to know but doesn't know how to ask.

### CBI to step up crackdown on cybercrime syndicates by coordinating with international agencies



GNS News Agency, Jan 31

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), in coordination with domestic and international law enforcement agencies, will this year further intensify action against cybercriminals operating as syndicates with links in multiple countries. In many cases, "lone wolf" perpetrators have also been found indulging in online frauds using various

The new year began with the agency registering a case against seven people who allegedly ran separate cybercrime modules and had cheated people of at least ?350 crore. The accused were operating from Delhi, Hazaribag (Jharkhand), Bathinda (Punjab), Ratlam (Madhya Pradesh), Valsad (Gujarat), Pudukkottai (Tamil Nadu), and Chittorgarh (Rajasthan). The criminals would float Ponzi and fraudulent schemes, including micro-loans and investments in cryptocurrency, to trap people. They would reach out to prospective victims through social media groups. A significant portion of the ill-gotten money was converted into cryptocurrencies and stored in virtual wallets to evade detection."This case is an example of how 'lone-wolf' cybercriminals have also been active. The rising menace of cybercrimes has also been highlighted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his 'Mann Ki Baat' address in October 2024, during which he cautioned people against the 'Digital Arrest' fraud being committed to scam people by making phone or video calls posing mostly as law enforcement officials," said an agency official, adding that an integrated mechanism is being developed for effective crackdown. The recently launched Broadcast Hub for Assistance and Realtime Action against Transnational Crimes via International Police Cooperation (BHARATPOL) will play a key role in facilitating speedy crackdown on cybercrime networks.

The CBI, being the National Central Bureau for Interpol in India and also the designated authority for cooperation through the UN Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime, coordinates between various Indian law enforcement agencies and their counterparts in other countries to help solve such transnational crimes besides cases of economic offences and drug/human trafficking. The online portal is a unified platform which connects the CBI with all domestic law enforcement agencies, which can generate

prompt requests for international assistance through the Interpol using the platform. It may involve issuance of Interpol notices for tracking of criminals and even assets associated with criminals/crime syndicates (via the recently launched Silver Notice as a pilot project).

The platform also serves as a centralised repository for exchange of instrumental resources, analytical reports, drafting templates, training and capacity building material for equipping investigators and field officers with the latest tools and techniques. Citing the recent instances of action against cybercriminals, the official said the CBI filed a chargesheet last month against three people. The case was registered following inputs from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), stating that accused Tushar Kharbanda — posing as an RCMP official — cheated people of more than 93,000 Canadian dollars into cryptocurrency.Mr. Kharbanda, who is from Noida, allegedly targeted elderly U.S. and Canadian nationals through a fraudulent call-centre operating in Delhi and Noida. The call centre, run by him and co-accused Gaurav Malik, employed more than 150 telecallers who posed as representatives of enforcement agencies or of major tech companies. During the probe, another alleged accomplice named Ankit Jain was identified. He purportedly managed crypto wallets and assisted Mr. Kharbanda in converting Bitcoins collected from foreign victims into another cryptocurrency. More than 316 Bitcoins equivalent to ?260 crore were received in the wallets. The funds were withdrawn in Dubai. Earlier in July 2024, the CBI arrested 43 alleged cybercriminals following searches at a Gurugrambased call centre that had been operating since 2022 targeting foreigners on the pretext of repairing their computer software. The action was taken, as part of an operation codenamed "Chakra-III", in cooperation with other international law enforcement agencies, including the United States' Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Interpol.

During the "Chakra-II" operation, in October 2023, the CBI had cracked two cases of international online investment fraud. The agency found that Indian citizens were being cheated on the pretext of investment, loan, and job opportunities. Singaporean citizens were also targeted by the syndicates. The agency identified 137 shell companies that were used for transfer of funds. The second case, in which about 400 Singaporean citizens were cheated, pertained to more than 300 cyber-enabled frauds involving more than 100 Indian bank accounts in 10 States/Union Territory. Five other cases were covered under "Chakra-II", including those related to illegal call centres that targeted more than 2,000 Amazon and Microsoft customers in the U.S., Canada, Australia, Germany, Spain, and the United Kingdom. The CBI had initiated the "Chakra-I" operation in October 2022 when two such call centres being run since 2014-15 were detected in Pune and Ahmedabad. Through these, the criminal syndicates were cheating U.S. citizens. A tip-off in this regard was provided by the FBI.

### Moscow beckons tourists; cultural festivals added attraction



Hyderabad: Moscow will make you fall in love with the city. While the famous Kremlin, St Basil's Cathedral, and Tretyakov Gallery are the star attractions, the vibrant culture and festivals celebrated all year will make you return to the city again and again.

It is no wonder that the Russian capital is witnessing a steady increase in tourists. While traditionally the summer months from May to September is peak tourist season, more and more travelers are visiting Moscow during the winter from October to March to immerse themselves in

the friendly and colourful atmosphere that pervades the city streets during festivals. Numerous festivals are lined up throughout the year with the Christmas festival being the cherry on the cake. From mid-December until the end of the New Year holidays, the Journey to Christmas festival is traditionally held in Moscow, during which one can witness various theatrical and musical performances, attend creative workshops, or try traditional Russian cuisine.

Those wishing to get not only cultural but also gastronomic impressions can also visit the hotels and restaurants that host the "Moscow Tea Time" festival to feel the city's hospitality and get acquainted with Moscow tea traditions. Visitors can learn about different types of tea or the development of tea culture in Moscow over the centuries, and taste traditional Moscow pastries or drink tea from a samovar. Traditional Moscow tea ceremonies are also being held in central restaurants and hotels of the city. According to Evgeny Kozlov, Chairman of the Moscow City Tourism Committee, the development of event tourism is one of the priorities for the entire capital's tourism industry in the coming years. In 2023, the Russian capital was visited by 2.3 million travelers from other countries, primarily from China, Turkey, India, and Iran.

### AAP springs surprise, bags mayor's post in Amritsar



GNS News Agency, Jan 31

The Congress party was left stunned on Friday as the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) secured the posts of mayor, senior deputy mayor, and deputy mayor in Amritsar, despite having won only 24 seats in the 85-member municipal corporation house elections last month, compared to Congress' 38.AAP state president Aman Arora announced the victory on social media platform X, catching Congress leaders off guard. While Arora revealed that all three top posts had gone to AAP, he did not disclose the winners' names during the

It later emerged that Jatinder Singh Moti Bhatia was elected as the Mayor of Amritsar, with Priyanka Sharma and Anita Rani taking the positions of Senior Deputy Mayor and Deputy Mayor, respectively. The Congress party launched a protest soon after the announcement. State Congress president Amarinder Singh Raja Waring and leader of the opposition in the Punjab assembly Partap Singh Bajwa led a dharna outside the Government Medical College in Amritsar, where the meeting was held. Bajwa accused AAP of undermining democratic processes, calling it "a loot of the people's verdict." He said, "AAP has repeated what BJP did in the Chandigarh mayor election. The names were announced immediately after councillors took the oath, without holding a proper vote. Members were simply asked to raise their hands. The police commissioner Gurpreet Singh Bhullar and other officials facilitated this travesty. We will challenge this in the high court. Truth will prevail." Waring and other Congress leaders joined Bajwa in raising slogans during the dharna, voicing their anger over what they described as a mockery of electoral norms.

### CCTV footage refutes Gurgaon doctor's claim on Apple Watch going missing at Delhi airport: CISF

GNS News Agency, Jan 31

The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) has refuted a Gurgaon-based doctor's claim that his Apple Watch went missing during the mandatory security check and he recovered it from a man at the IGI Airport in Delhi. Tushar Mehta, who describes himself as an orthopaedic surgeon, educator, speaker, and a founder on his Instagram profile, posted on X on Saturday that he put his watch, along with other items, in a tray for scanning but when he got the tray back, his watch was missing. He claimed he saw a man walking away, tracked him to a nearby watch store and recovered the watch from him but CISF personnel told him to apologise for his rude behaviour. Mehta also named two men in his post, the man from whose pocket he claimed to have recovered his watch, and an employee at a watch store in the airport. In a post on X on Sunday, CISF, however, denied the sequence of events as described by Mehta. "The review of the CCTV has contradicted the seguence of events as narrated above. After security check, you were seen wearing your watch and heading for boarding gate without interaction with any CISF personnel. The boarding was completed smoothly and hassle-free... Posting of such unsubstantiated messages creates unnecessary apprehension in the minds of passengers

### 'He never met us after returning from Dubai, committed grave mistake': Mother of man arrested for trying to vandalise Ambedkar statue in Amritsar



GNS News Agency, Jan 31

Ambedkar statue vandalising attempt accused heldAkashdeep Singh, 24, during his arrest in Amritsar for trying to vandalise a BR Ambedkar statue. The mother of the man arrested for allegedly attempting to vandalise BR Ambedkar's statue near the Golden Temple in Amritsar condemned his action Monday and said his family mem-

On Republic Day, Akashdeep Singh, 24, a resident of Dharamkot in the Moga district of Punjab, climbed up a ladder placed near the Ambedkar statue with a hammer in an alleged attempt to vandalise it. He also allegedly tried to damage a sculpture depicting the Constitution placed beneath the statue. The Kotwali police arrested Akashdeep and recorded his statement. Speaking to the media in Dharamkot, Akashdeep's mother Asha Rani, who works as a domestic help, said, "When I returned from work, some women in the village informed me that my son had been arrested for an offence. They learned this from news up-

"Akash left home three years ago to work as a labourer in Dubai. We sent him there to improve our family's financial situation," said Rani. She said Akashdeep is unmarried and studied only till Class 12. "He had ended all relations with us and said he would not return home even if his parents died. After returning from Dubai, he started living in a rented room in Amritsar. He never met us after returning from Dubai." She said the family did not know if he had any links with any organisation or political party. "We strongly condemn what he has done. He has committed a grave mistake, and we accept it. But earlier, he was never like this. He has grown his hair and beard in the last two or three years," she added. Akashdeep's family lives on Chugga Road in Dharamkot town. His father works as a farm labourer. His sister works in Muscat, and two younger brothers are studying. After Akashdeep's arrest, former BJP MP Vijay Sampla urged the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) and Sri Akal Takht Sahib to issue a clarification on the attempted vandalism. Reacting to Sampla's remarks, the SGPC said in a statement that linking the act to the corridor of the Golden Temple was entirely incorrect. Sikh institutions respect Ambedkar and condemn the act of vandalism against his statue, the SGPC said in the statement.

### Bombay HC suggests mediation in trademark dispute between Abhishek Lodha's Macrotech and brother's firm

GNS News Agency, Jan 31

The Bombay High Court on Monday suggested that the trademark dispute between Macrotech Developersformerly Lodha Group-of Abhishek Lodha and his younger brother's House of Abhinandan Lodha Estate Holdings Private Limited (HoABL) be referred to a mediator. Abhishek and Abhinandan are sons of Maharashtra minister Mangal Prabhat Lodha. A single-judge bench of Justice Arif S Doctor proposed appointing a former chief justice of India or anyone else (former judge) by the consent of the parties as a mediator in the case. He asked Abhishek Lodha's counsel Janak Dwarkadas to respond on Tuesday whether his client was willing to attempt to resolve the issue through mediation. The court will decide on the appointment of a mediator during the hearing The high court was hearing an interim application by Macrotech seeking ad interim relief in its trademark infringement suit to restrain HoABL from using the "Lodha" trademark pending the hearing of the matter. "There appears to be a dispute between two brothers. In all matters where there is an element of dispute within a family, the genesis appears to be a dispute between two brothers. Has any serious effort been made before you launch into protracted litigation? Has some effort been made to sit down and resolve it? If a mediation or settlement of dispute is reached, won't everything else be put to an end?" the judge said. Senior advocate Darius Khambata, representing Macrotech, argued that besides the loss or damage provisionally estimated to be more than Rs 5,000 crore due to the use of the "Lodha" by HoABL, the flat purchasers of the firm were approaching Macrotech with complaints, suggesting there was confusion among them regarding the trademark. Senior advocate Dwarkadas said that several attempts were made to resolve the matter, including an intervention by the litigants' parents as they don't "like to see the dispute". "Naturally so, and it will further precipitate and therefore an attempt can be made to ensure that it does not happen," the judge responded.

He also sought Dwarkadas's response to the suggestion to appoint a mediator. In 2015, Abhinandan parted ways with Lodha Group and started HoABL and the separation was formalised on the basis of a family settlement agreement in 2017. Macrotech claims that due to non-compliance with the 2017 agreement, a new agreement was signed between the two parties in December 2023, which expressly prohibited Abhinandan from using a name similar to Lodha. Macrotech and Digirealty Technologies Pvt Ltd have sought a perpetual injunction against infringing on their registered trademarks and from offering, selling, advertising, distributing, marketing, exhibiting for sale, or otherwise dealing with impugned services or any goods that are the same or similar to the plaintiffs' goods and services that contain the mark Ranga Reddy INDIAN CHRONICLE SATURDAY 1 FEBRUARY 2025

### The failed 'Delhi model'



GNS News Agency, Jan 31

As Delhiites prepare to elect a new government, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government has been pushing its welfare-based governance model, called the 'Delhi model,' on the campaign trail. It has been advertising its welfare schemes, such as the free electricity and water supply, bus travel for women, and primary health care, arguing that it not only managed to prioritise human capital development by spending more on the social sector, but has also succeeded in augmenting the fiscal space by cutting down inefficient government spending and mobilising revenues. To check the validity of these claims, we examined the fiscal indicators of Delhi on average during the 10 years when the AAP was in power (2015-16 to 2024-25) compared with those in the pre-AAP decade (2004-05 to 2012-13).

Before the AAP came to power, Delhi had demonstrated fiscal prudence from 2004-05 by containing revenue deficit and gross fiscal deficit (GFD). The revenue account remained in surplus throughout the pre-AAP and AAP regimes. However, the revenue surplus declined on average from -2.38% of gross state domestic product (GSDP) during the pre-AAP regime to -0.82% under the AAP regime. Although the GFD-GSDP ratio was within the Fiscal Responsibility Legislation (FRL) limit of 3% in the pre-AAP and AAP regimes, it declined from 0.68% on average in the pre-AAP regime to 0.25% in the AAP regime. But this downward correction in GFD was achieved by reducing muchneeded capital outlay, a violation of a 'golden rule' in public finance. The AAP government successfully reduced Delhi's debt-to-GSDP ratio to 2% on an average from 13.7% earlier. This is a stupendous achievement.

The share of revenue expenditure in the total spending of Delhi increased significantly from 58.27% on aver-

age in the pre-AAP regime to 77.63% in the AAP regime. Concomitantly, the share of expenditures which are incurred on asset creation, namely capital expenditure (CE) and capital outlay (CO), declined significantly on an average from 41.73% (CE)/15.82% (CO) in the pre-AAP regime to 22.37% (CE)/10.32% (CO) in the AAP regime. These trends show that public expenditure quality deteriorated under the AAP regime

Both the quantity and quality of the development expenditure and its components were compromised in the AAP regime. As a percentage of GSDP, expenditure on social services declined from 3.60% in the pre-AAP regime to 3.41% in the AAP regime. In the case of economic services, the decline was steeper from 2.29% to 1.28%. This drop was caused by a cut in the capital expenditure on these two functional heads. The capital expenditure on social services declined from 0.82% of GSDP in the pre-AAP regime to 0.56% in the AAP regime. In the case of economic services, the decline was steeper from 1.82% of GSDP to 0.38%. As a percentage of GSDP, the expenditure on education and medical and public health increased by only 0.08 and 0.06 percentage points in the AAP regime over the previous regime. The expenditures on water supply and sanitation, housing, urban development, transport, and communication declined as a percentage of GSDP under the AAP regime, with the decline being the highest for roads and bridges, water supply, sanitation, and urban development. On the revenue front, too, the AAP regime has performed poorly. On average, Delhi's total revenue receipts declined from 7.42% of GSDP in the pre-AAP regime to 5.82% in the AAP regime. Both own tax revenue and non-tax revenue contributed to the decline. The own tax revenue-GSDP ratio declined from 5.85% in the pre-AAP regime to 4.84% in the AAP regime. Own non-tax revenue decreased sharply from 0.85% to 0.10%, implying that the AAP government's free electricity, water supply, bus travel, and health care policy have adversely impacted non-tax revenues. Interestingly, Delhi received more grants from the Centre (0.88% of GSDP) than the previous regime (0.71%).

Overall, the revenue and expenditure trends reveal that the AAP regime has not augmented its revenue capacity to fund welfare programmes. Instead, fiscal space was created by reducing the much-needed capital expenditure. Sthanu R. Nair teaches Economics and Public Policy at IIM Kozhikode; Dhruv Jain is a post-graduate programme student at IIM Kozhikode. Views are personal

# One Nation, One time: Government drafts rules for mandatory adoption of Indian Standard Time across all official, commercial platforms



GNS News Agency, Jan 31

In a move to standardise timekeeping, the government has drafted comprehensive rules mandating the exclusive use of Indian Standard Time (IST) across all official and commercial platforms, with the Consumer Affairs Ministry seeking public feedback by February 14, 2025. The Legal Metrology (Indian Standard Time) Rules, 2024, aims to establish a legal framework for standardising timekeeping practices, mandating IST as the sole time reference for le-

gal, administrative, commercial, and official documents. "IST shall be the mandatory time reference across all sectors, including commerce, transport, public administration, legal contracts, and financial operations," as per the draft rule. Key provisions include, prohibition of time references other than IST for official and commercial purposes, mandatory display of IST in government offices and public institutions and requirement for time-synchronisation systems to ensure reliability, availability, and cybersecurity. The proposal comes as part of efforts to ensure precise timekeeping in critical national infrastructure, including telecommunications, banking, defence, and emerging technologies like 5G and artificial intelligence. "Precise time with nanosecond accuracy is essential for strategic and non-strategic sectors," a senior government official said. Exceptions will be allowed for specialised fields such as astronomy, navigation, and scientific research, subject to prior government approval. The Department of Consumer Affairs is collaborating with the National Physical Laboratory and Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) to develop a robust time generation and dissemination mechanism. Violations of the proposed rules will attract penalties, with periodic audits planned to

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The high court was hearing an interim application by Macrotech seeking ad interim relief in its trademark infringement suit to restrain HoABL from using the "Lodha" trademark pending the hearing of the matter. "There appears to be a dispute between two brothers. In all matters where there is an element of dispute within a family, the genesis appears to be a dispute between two brothers. Has any serious effort been made before you launch into protracted litigation? Has some effort been made to sit down and resolve it? If a mediation or settlement of dispute is reached, won't everything else be put to an end?" the judge said. Senior advocate Darius Khambata, representing Macrotech, argued that besides the loss or damage provisionally estimated to be more than Rs 5,000 crore due to the use of the "Lodha" by HoABL, the flat purchasers of the firm were approaching Macrotech with complaints, suggesting there was confusion among them regarding the trademark. Senior advocate Dwarkadas said that several attempts were made to resolve the matter, including an intervention by the liti-



gants' parents as they don't "like to see the dispute". "Naturally so, and it will further precipitate and therefore an attempt can be made to ensure that it does not happen," the judge responded. He also sought Dwarkadas's response to the suggestion to appoint a mediator. In 2015, Abhinandan parted ways with Lodha Group and started HoABL and the separation was formalised on the basis of a family settlement agreement in 2017. Macrotech claims that due to noncompliance with the 2017 agreement, a new agreement was signed between the two parties in December 2023, which expressly prohibited Abhinandan from using a name similar to Lodha. Macrotech and Digirealty Technologies Pvt Ltd have sought a perpetual injunction against infringing on their registered trademarks and from offering, selling, advertising, distributing, marketing, exhibiting for sale, or otherwise dealing with impugned services or any goods that are the same or similar to the plaintiffs' goods and services that contain the mark "Lodha". Through its interim application, Macrotech has sought urgent direction to the firm owned by Abhinandan to stop using the brand name pending the hearing of the suit. The lawyers representing Abhinandan and his firm denied the claims made by his brother.

### **Critical reflections on the Constitution**

India celebrated a remarkable milestone of its Republic, marking 75 years of its Constitution — a testament to its resilience amid a global average constitution lifespan of just 17 years. Unlike neighbouring nations such as Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh, which have experienced multiple constitutions due to coups, authoritarian regimes and unrest, India's Constitution has endured and evolved. Despite external threats, internal conflicts over religion, caste and language, challenges like the Emergencyera and attempts to undermine institutions, it remains a living document, adapting through 106 amendments to address shifting socio-political landscapes. This disproves Thomas Jefferson's belief that constitutions must be rewritten every generation. This milestone calls for a critical reflection on the successes and shortcomings of this second-oldest Constitution.

The framers envisioned justice, liberty, equality and fraternity for a newly independent yet fractured nation. Early challenges required reconciling these ideals with socio-economic priorities. Reforms such as the abolition of zamindari and land ceilings faced resistance due to constitutional property rights (Articles 19(1)(f) and 31). To bypass judicial hurdles, the provisional parliament, even before the first elections introduced the 1st Constitutional Amendment Act, 1951 (CAA) through Articles 31A and 31B, shielding land reform laws from judicial review via the Ninth Schedule, an idea borrowed from VKT Chari, a former Advocate General of Madras.Linguistic tensions were similarly addressed through the States Reorganization Commission (SRC), led by Justice Fazal Ali. The States Reorganization Act of 1956, through Articles 3 and 4 of the Constitution, reorganised State boundaries to meet regional demands for linguistic and cultural recognition.

Abolishing privy purses in 1971 through executive order revealed tensions between judicial conservatism and socialist governance. These payments, assured to princely States during their integration into India, were viewed as outdated colonial vestiges incompatible with socialist ideals by the government. However, the Supreme Court struck down the move in Madhav Rao Scindia v Union of India (1971), but ultimately Parliament countered with the 26th CAA, abolishing privy purses.

Our Constitution faced its gravest challenge during the Emergency of 1975–1977. The crisis began with Indira Gandhi's controversial re-election in 1971 which the Allahabad HC overturned on grounds of corrupt electoral practices. Article 352 was invoked, enabling mass detentions and suspension of fundamental rights under the draconian MISA Act.Key issues like appointment of ECs, delaying State bills, One Nation, One Election and delimitation need careful consideration

While some High Courts valiantly upheld citizens' rights, the SC's judgment in ADM Jabalpur Case (1976) silenced these efforts, ruling that even the right to life could be curtailed during the Emergency. The only silver lining was the dissenting opinion of Justice HR Khanna who declared otherwise. Amid these upheavals, the Basic Structure Doctrine, institutionalised in the Kesavananda Bharati Case (1973), emerged as a bulwark against parliamentary overreach, preserving core principles like democracy and the rule of law. This doctrine was put to use against the 39th CAA, which sought to exempt the elections of the Prime Minister from judicial review. However, the judiciary's independence faced direct threats, including the arbitrary transfer of judges to ensure a committed judiciary. Post-Emergency, reforms like the 44th CAA, 1978, were introduced to curtail emergency powers, safeguard democratic integrity and restore public trust in governance. The subsequent decades witnessed constitutional dynamism. The emergence of coalition politics in the 1980s and 1990s brought political instability, prompting the enactment of the 52nd CAA, 1985, which introduced the Anti-Defection law to curb opportunistic politics.

During this period, the judiciary significantly expanded its role through Public Interest Litigations, such as the Hussainara Khatoon Case (1979), which highlighted the plight of undertrial prisoners and upheld the right to a speedy trial, and the Bandhua Mukti Morcha Case (1984), which addressed the exploitation of bonded labourers and directed their rehabilitation. Also, the Legal Aid moment ensured access to justice for marginalised groups, advancing social equity. The push for grassroots governance culminated in the 73rd and 74th CAA, 1992, institutionalising decentralised governance via Panchayati Raj and urban local bodies. These landmark reforms, championed by Rajiv Gandhi and implemented under PV Narasimha Rao, em-



The framers envisioned justice, liberty, equality and fraternity for a newly independent yet fractured nation. Early challenges required reconciling these ideals with socio-economic priorities

powered local governments, ensuring community participation in decision-making.

Further, the issue of social justice gained prominence with the Mandal Commission recommendations in 1990, introducing 27 per cent reservations for OBCs in public employment. This led to widespread protests, igniting debates on social equity versus meritocracy. The SC, in Indra Sawhney v Union of India (1992), upheld the reservation policy while imposing a 50 per cent cap and excluding the "creamy layer," balancing affirmative action with constitutional principles. The early 1990s also saw economic liberalisation, with India shifting to market-driven policies. While this boosted economic growth, it brought challenges of financial accountability, intensifying scrutiny of corruption through the CBI and market regulator Sebi. Throughout this period, judicial independence remained a key focus, the appointments were streamlined through the Collegium following the Third Judges' Case (1998). Parliament later attempted to replace this system with the National Judicial Appointments Commission 99th CAA, but the SC struck it down in 2015, as violating the Basic Structure, particularly judicial independence.

The period from the 2000s to 2025 marks a transformative phase. The amendments, judicial interventions and reforms expanded rights and governance. For instance, the 86th CAA, 2002, made education a Fundamental Right under Article 21A. Similarly, the SC interpreted Article 19(1)(a) to include the right to information as part of freedom of speech and expression. In PUCL v Union of India (2003), the court upheld voters' rights to access candidates' criminal antecedents. These principles were institutionalised through the Right to Information Act, 2005, which empowered citizens and promoted accountability.

Economic reforms like the GST, through 101st CAA, 2016, unified the taxation system, fostering fiscal coherence. Simultaneously, the judiciary expanded constitutional rights, with the Right to Privacy judgment (2017) recognising privacy as a Fundamental Right under Article 21. Social reforms followed, including the NALSA judgment (2014) which recognised the rights of the third gender. Further, the decriminalisation of Section 377, IPC 1860 (2018), affirming LGBTQ+ rights, and the 103rd CAA, 2019, introduced 10 per cent reservations for economically weaker sections. The path forward lies in reaffirming and strengthening institutions like the Election Commission, CAG and the Judiciary. Any threat to the independence and integrity of institutions poses a danger to the Constitution. Further, a few constitutional conundrums, such as the misuse of the Governor's and Speaker's roles, the ineffective Anti-Defection law and the politicisation of investigative agencies like the CBI and the ED, require urgent reform. Similarly, issues like the appointment process for Election Commissioners, delays in approving State bills, unsustainable populist freebies and the failure to empower Panchayati Raj institutions demand critical attention. Proposals such as One Nation, One Election, and Delimitation should also be carefully implemented to balance federal diversity. Lastly, fostering a culture that balances rights with the duties of citizens is essential to uphold the Constitution's ideals and ensure its

continued relevance in a diverse and evolving democracy.

## 4-day international scrabble tournament concludes in Bengaluru

GNS News Agency, Jan 31

Bengaluru hosted the Karnataka State Scrabble Association Indian Open, one of the biggest events of its kind in the country, from January 23 to 26. The competition was held at the offices of Mu Sigma, the event sponsor, in Whitefield. While the previous edition of the tournament saw the participation of world champion Nigel Richards, many high-ranked international players also participated in the competition this year. These included Hubert Wee of Singapore, ranked third in the world, and the World Youth Scrabble Championship 2024 silver medallist, Bengaluru's Suyash Manchali, aged 14. Over 140 participants from 12 nations participated in this year's edition.

The tournament was divided into Divisions A, B, C, and D to account for differing skill levels. While Division A accommodated the highest grade of participant skill, the separate competition for the D Division on the last day of the tournament was intended to give exposure to new entrants to the competitive rules of Scrabble, which operates under a strict time limit. Competitive scrabble is starting to prove a hit with Indian youngsters too. According to Ganesh Ramakrishnan of the Karnataka State Scrabble Associa-



tion, "At the World Youth Scrabble Championship, two Indians came in the top five. Suyash won the silver medal, and 13-year-old Madhav Kamath, who came fourth, also came to the event (Karnataka State Scrabble Association Indian Open)." Hubert Wee, the top seed at the tournament, secured the top prize of Rs 1.35 lakh in Division A. The Division B prize was taken by Delhi resident Sudhir Kamath, while the Intermediate C Division was won by Bengalurean Nirupama Sivaraman. Among the newcomers, Abel George

# Stock market influencer, in Gujarat to attend Coldplay concert, 'abducted, forced to give up social media account access'

GNS News Agency, Jan 31

Police in Vadodara district have launched a manhunt for five unidentified persons who allegedly abducted a Madhya Pradesh-based stock market influencer and hacked into his social media accounts, while he was travelling on a private bus to attend the Coldplay concert in Ahmedabad on Saturday. The incident occurred at around 6.30am on Saturday when the complainant, Ramji Shrivastav, who runs a social media group by the name Stock Explorer, was travelling on a private bus from Bhopal to Bharuch to stay over with a friend, who was then supposed to accompany him to the Coldplay concert on Sunday. The FIR lodged at Karjan police station by Shrivastav alleges that the five unidentified accused accosted him while the traveller bus was stationary at a highway hotel on NH48 in Karjan and identified themselves as "personnel" from the "cyber crime branch". The accused allegedly told the complainant that he was needed for questioning in a case pertaining to the "suicide" of a stock market investor, who had "suffered losses of Rs 1 crore" due to the complainant. "The accused told the complainant to step down from the bus and accompany them in a vehicle parked near the bus... The complainant complied but on the way in the vehicle, the accused demanded the one-time password of the social media accounts operated by Shrivastav, who is a financial influencer. When he stated that the OTP could be received on a phone he had left behind at his home in Vidisha, the accused allegedly assaulted him and forced him to seek the passwords from his brother," the FIR states. According to the FIR, the accused gained entry into Shrivastav's social media accounts that have stock market clients and "usurped access" by associating "their own sim cards" with the social media accounts used for stock influencing. Vadodara district Superintendent of Police Rohan Anand told The Indian Express that the local police had identified the vehicle in which Shriavastav had been allegedly abducted. "We have begun a search and identified the vehicle. We are looking for the accused, based on the description shared by the complainant," Anand said. The accused have been booked under Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita sections 62 (attempting to commit offences punishable with imprisonment for life).

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### Gaza ceasefire: Israel allows Palestinians to return to north Gaza for the first time in over a year



GNS News Agency, Jan 31

Israel on Monday (January 27, 2025) began allowing thousands of Palestinians to return to the heavily destroyed north of the Gaza Strip for the first time since the early weeks of the 15-month war with Hamas, in accordance with a fragile ceasefire. The opening was delayed for two days over a dispute between Hamas and Israel, which said the militant group had changed the order of the hostages it released in exchange for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners. Mediators resolved the dispute overnight.

Palestinians who have been sheltering in squalid tent camps and schools-turned-shelters for over a year are eager to return to their homes — even knowing that they have likely been damaged or destroyed. Many had feared Israel would make their exodus permanent, and expressed similar concerns about an idea floated by President Donald Trump to resettle large numbers of Palestinians in Egypt and Jordan. Ismail Abu Mattar, a father of four, described "a sea of people" heading north. He said he and his family had waited three days to return to their home in Gaza City. "They were three days of hell," he said. "We were concerned that the truce would collapse and we wouldn't return." Hamas said the return was "a victory for our people, and a declaration of failure and defeat for the (Israeli) occupation and transfer plans."

The ceasefire is aimed at winding down the deadliest and most destructive war ever fought between Israel and Hamas and securing the release of dozens of hostages captured in the militants' October 7, 2023, attack, which triggered the fighting. Israel ordered the wholescale evacuation of the north in the opening days of the war and sealed it off shortly after ground troops moved in. Around a million people fled to the south in October 2023, while hundreds of

thousands remained in the north, which had some of the heaviest fighting and the worst destruction of the war.

Israel had delayed the opening of the crossing, which was supposed to happen over the weekend, saying it would not allow Palestinians north until a female civilian hostage, Arbel Yehoud, was released. It also accused Hamas of failing to provide information on whether the remaining hostages set to be freed in the first phase are alive or dead. Hamas in turn accused Israel of violating the agreement by not opening the crossing. The Gulf nation of Qatar, a key mediator with Hamas, announced early Monday (January 27, 2025) that an agreement had been reached to release Yehoud along with two other hostages before Friday (January 31, 2025). Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a statement that the hostage release which will include female soldier Agam Berger — will take place on Thursday (January 30, 2025). That release will be in addition to the one already set for next Saturday (February 1, 2025), when three hostages should be released.

Hamas also handed over a list of required information about the hostages to be released in the ceasefire's sixweek first phase. Under the first phase of the ceasefire, which runs until early March, Hamas is to free a total of 33 hostages in exchange for the release of nearly 2,000 Palestinians imprisoned by Israel. The militants have released seven hostages, including four female soldiers, in the current ceasefire, in exchange for more than 300 prisoners, including many serving life sentences for deadly attacks on Israelis. The second — and far more difficult — phase of the agreement has not yet been negotiated. Hamas says it will not release the remaining 60 or so hostages unless Israel ends the war, while Mr. Netanyahu says he is still committed to destroying the militant group and ending its nearly 18-year rule over Gaza. Hamas started the war when thousands of its fighters stormed into southern Israel on October 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting another 250. Around 90 hostages are still inside Gaza, and Israel believes around a third are dead. Israel's air and ground war has killed over 47,000 Palestinians, more than half of them women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. It does not say how many of the dead were combatants. Israel says it has killed over 17,000 militants, without providing evidence. Israeli bombardment and ground operations have displaced around 90% of Gaza's 2.3 million people, often multiple times, and flattened entire

## Trump administration suspends all foreign aid, orders review

GNS News Agency, Jan 31

President Donald Trump signed an executive order announcing the suspension of all foreign aid and ordered the review of American financial assistance to other countries, to ensure they are efficient and consistent with its foreign policy under the America First agenda. The United States has announced the suspension of all foreign aid and ordered the review of American financial assistance to other countries, to ensure they are efficient and consistent with its foreign policy under the America First agenda. The move comes after President Donald Trump signed an executive order in this regard. State Department Spokesperson Tammy Bruce Sunday (January 26, 2025) said, "President Trump stated clearly that the United States is no longer going to blindly dole out money with no return for the American people. Reviewing and realigning foreign assistance on behalf of hardworking taxpayers is not just the right thing to do, it is a moral imperative. "She said Secretary of State Marco Rubio has paused all U.S. foreign assistance funded by or through the State Department and US Agency for International Development (USAID) for review.

"He is initiating a review of all foreign assistance programmes to ensure they are efficient and consistent with US foreign policy under the America First agenda," Ms. Bruce said. She added that the secretary is proud to protect America's investment with a deliberate and judicious review of how to spend foreign assistance dollars overseas. "The mandate from the American people was



clear — we must refocus on American national interests. The Department and USAID take their role as stewards of taxpayer dollars very seriously," State Department spokesperson said. The implementation of Mr. Trump's Executive Order in this regard and the secretary's direction furthers that mission, she added. Ms. Bruce reminded reporters that Rubio has said, "Every dollar we spend, every programme we fund and every policy we pursue must be justified with the answer to three simple questions: Does it make America safer? Does it make America stronger Does it make America more prosperous?"In 2023, USAID distributed nearly \$45 billion in foreign aid to 158 countries. This included \$400 million to Bangladesh, \$231 million to Pakistan, \$1 billion to Afghanistan, \$175 million to India, \$118 million to Nepal, and \$123 million to Sri Lanka.

## MGNREGS stares at fund crunch; no additional allocation forthcoming



GNS News Agency, Jan 31

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) has not received an additional budget for financial year 2024-25, resulting in delay in disbursal wages to workers. As per sources, the Union Rural Development Ministry is falling short of ?4,315 crore for the wages for which Fund Transfer Order (FTO) has been generated. The Section 3 (3) of the MGNREG Act clearly states that "the disbursement of daily wages shall be made on a weekly basis or in any case not later than a fortnight after the date on which such work was done."The Centre also has a liability of ?5,715 crore against its share for material components. The Centre bears 60% of the cost of the materials used for MGNREGS works and the remaining 40% is provided by the States. The delay in the material component has a domino impact affecting the future projects. When there is a continued delay in material component payout, the local vendors, who supply the raw material become reluctant to supply and thereby break the work cycle. In the 2024 Interim Budget, the government had allotted ?86,000 crore for the scheme. Despite being a deficit, the Union Finance Ministry did not revise the budget for the scheme even after several requests from the Ministry.

Last year, responding to a criticism on low fund allocation for the scheme, the government had maintained that the programme is a demand-driven scheme, and the additional allocation is made available whenever needed. For example, in FY 2020-21, when pandemic forced reverse migration to the villages and the demand for MGNREGS

work soared, the government revised the original allocation of ?61,500 crore to ?1,11,500 crore, one of the highest jumps ever seen. Academics and activists, who are closely monitoring the programme, have said the low budgetary allocation leads to artificial suppression of demand. This problem was also flagged by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Rural Development in its report tabled in February 2024. "The pruning of funds at Budget Estimate (BE) stage itself does have a cascading effect on various important aspects such as timely release of wages, release of material share etc. which have a telling impact on the progress of the Scheme. The Committee feels that for smooth implementation of MGNREGS at ground level, shortage of funds is a big obstacle which does not augur well for the performance of the scheme," the panel noted in its report.

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

GNS News Agency, Jan 31

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.

Three persons identified as Ganapathi, the crackers operator, P Pranith, the boat driver and D Sunil, another boat driver suffered burns in the incident. While Ganapathi was severely injured, the condition of others is said to be stable. They are being treated at the hospital.

The case was booked on the complaint lodged by Prabhudas, the Unit Manager at Lumbini Park. Officials said that based on further investigation necessary action will be taken

## Indonesian President Subianto highlights Indian influence on Indonesian language, genetics



GNS News Agency, Jan 31

Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto on Saturday (January 25, 2025), at a banquet hosted by President Droupadi Murmu in his honour, spoke about the historical and cultural ties between India and Indonesia, and emphasised the influence of ancient Indian civilization on Indonesian culture, language, and genetics. President Subianto highlights Indian influence on Indonesian language and genetics sequencing test. He added, "A few weeks ago I had my genetic sequencing test and my DNA test and they told me that I have Indian DNA. Everybody knows when I hear Indian music, I start dancing." President Subianto also lauded Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership and commitment towards alleviating poverty and helping the marginalised while affirming that he himself learnt a lot from him in the few days. The Indonesian President said he is proud to be in India and further wished "prosperity, peace,

and greatness" for the people of India in the coming years.

Mr. Subianto said, "I am very proud to be here (in India)...I am not a professional politician, I am not a good diplomat, I say what is in my heart. I came here for a few days but learned a lot from Prime Minister Modi's leadership and commitments... His commitment to alleviating poverty, helping the marginalized, and helping the weakest part of your society, is an inspiration for us.""I would like to wish the people of India prosperity, peace, and greatness in the coming years. I would like to see Indonesia and India continuing to be close partners and friends," he added. Notably, at the invitation of PM Modi, President Subianto paid a State Visit to India from January 23-26. He also attended the celebrations of the 76th Republic Day of India as the Chief Guest. He was accompanied by a highlevel delegation including several Ministers as well as Senior Officials of the Indonesian government and a business delegation. The visit of Indonesian President Prabowo Subjanto to Delhi witnessed the signing and renewal of five Memorandums of Understanding on wide-ranging fields, including health, traditional medicine and maritime security. MoU on Health Cooperation was signed between the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the Ministry of Health, Indonesia. The MoU on Maritime Safety and Security Cooperation between the Indian Coast Guard and BAKAMLA, Indonesia was renewed. Another MoU was signed in the field of Traditional Medicine Quality Assurance between the Pharmacopoeia Commission for Indian Medicine and Homeopathy, which comes under the Ministry of AYUSH and the Indonesian Food and Drug Authority.

## In letter to CEC, Atishi and Mann accuse Haryana Government of 'water terrorism', 'influencing' Delhi polls

GNS News Agency, Jan 31

Delhi Chief Minister Atishi and her Punjab counterpart Bhagwant Mann have written to the Chief Election Commissioner, alleging that the BJP-led Haryana government is responsible for the ammonia contamination in the Yamuna River, which has disrupted the water supply in the national capital. This issue has arisen just as the city prepares for elections, and Atishi and Mann assert that it will impact the conduct of free and fair polls. In their letter, the chief ministers stated that ammonia levels in the river had spiked sharply over the past four days, affecting water treatment plants at Wazirabad, Chandrawal, and Okhla.

In the strongly worded letter, they said, "... denying their rightful share of water to 34 lakh people of Delhi amounts to water terrorism, and is a blatant attempt to cause panic and chaos across Delhi thereby influencing the free and fair nature of Delhi elections ... We... urgently solicit your intervention into the matter within 24 hours so that either only pure raw water is released so that ammonia levels can be diluted..."Addressing the media, Atishi said Monday, "The BJP is afraid of its expectant historic failure in the upcoming elections, which is why it is resorting to repugnant tactics... Wazirabad, Chandawal, and Okhla water treatment plants run with the raw Yamuna water from the Wazirabad barrage. Over the past four days, with a plan to defunct the plants, Haryana's BJP government has started to release industrial waste into the Yamuna River to disrupt the water supply of the people in Delhi." Atishi said this has affected water production so much that the three water treatment plants are on the brink of shutting down. She added this will have an impact on Civil Lines, Hindu Rao, Karol Bagh, Paharganj, Jhandewala, Patel Nagar, Wazirpur, Punjabi Bagh, Model Town, Kingsway Camp, Kalkaji, Batla House, and Kalindi Kunj among other areas.

The water supply in Central Delhi and NDMC areas like the President's House, Supreme Court, High Court, and embassies will also be disrupted. About the ammonia lev-



els, Atishi claimed it to be the highest-ever spike recorded. According to the letter, the ammonia levels exceeded the treatable limit of 1 part per million (ppm). The ammonia levels consistently remained above 6.8 ppm from Saturday. It also said that the water production in the plants has been affected as follows: 30 per cent in Wazirabad, 15-20 per cent in Chandrawal, and 10 per cent in Okhla. "The BJP-led Haryana government is releasing toxic water to the capital... Does the party want to starve to death 30 per cent of Delhi's population?... Let me tell the party that we will tell about your sinful tactics to every household. In Hinduism, there is no bigger sin than stopping water. The people of Delhi will answer the BJP for this sin on February 5," said Atishi. The Delhi and Punjab chief ministers have sought an appointment granted by the Election Commission and requested its urgent intervention to stop the BJP's attempt to allegedly "influence the election". "Diliwalon ko unke hag ka paani ham dilwakar rahenge (We will ensure that the people of Delhi get their rightful share of water)" said Atishi. The Delhi government has repeatedly accused the BJP-led Haryana government of not releasing the Capital's adequate share of water. In June last year, Atishi went on an indefinite hunger strike over this demand, alleging that the Haryana

### West Bengal expired saline death case: Calcutta High Court calls for case diary



GNS News Agency, Jan 31

Calcutta High Court West Bengal , Midnapore Medical College and Hospital, Midnapore Medical College and Hospital death, Midnapore hospital deathThe Calcutta High Court questioned the state as to why the FIR copy has not yet been uploaded in the expired saline deaths case. The Calcutta High Court on Monday called for the case diary in the case of expired saline allegedly being administered to new mothers at Midnapore Medical College.

Jayanti Narayan, the counsel representing suspended anaesthetist Pallavi Bandhopadhay, submitted to the single bench of Justice Tirthankar Ghosh, "My client is an anaesthetist who is one of the 12 doctors suspended, but till now no FIR copy has been uploaded. Yet, she has been summoned."The court questioned the state as to why the FIR copy has not yet been uploaded and observed that a copy of the FIR has to be provided to the petitioner by Monday. The court further asked for the case diary to be presented in court on Tuesday during the hearing. On Wednesday, Bandhopadhay, who is a senior resident doctor and anaesthetist, moved the court alleging that the death of a mother in the hospital 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. 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.

The FIR by Bandhopadhyay reads that the mother had died on January 10, whereas she delivered the child on January 8.On January 16, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee suspended 12 doctors, including the

medical superintendent and six postgraduate trainee doctors, of Midnapore Medical College and Hospital for "clear cases of medical negligence" as per a report submitted by the CID and a team of experts formed by the state government. The CID has been asked to investigate the 12 doctors who were suspended by the state health department. Banerjee had alleged that it was the negligence of the junior doctors that led to the death of a pregnant woman who was administered spurious saline from West Bengal pharmaceuticals. The saline-providing firm has already been blacklisted by the state government.

# Farmers attack agriculture market office in Nagarkurnool over low price for groundnut

GNS News Agency, Jan 31

Nagarkurnool: Tension prevailed at the agriculture market in Achampet here on Monday afternoon, when farmers in large numbers attacked the market office and a few staff members complaining that remunerative prices were not being offered by traders for their groundnut crop.

The farmers thrashed Market Committee chairperson A Rajitha's husband A Mallesh and a couple of other staff members. Alleging that Mallesh and traders were hand in glove, the farmers abused and thrashed him. As tempers were running high, Mallesh managed to escape and locked himself up in the market office. However, farmers broke open the doors and damaged the furniture in the office.

The farmers alleged that until three days ago, a quintal of groundnut was offered nearly Rs.7,000. On Monday, the traders were not offering remunerative prices and the prices were slashed to Rs.4,000 to Rs.4,500 per quintal, citing poor quality and other reasons, the farmers said. This apart, the farmers also complained that their stocks were not being weighed properly. The same was brought to the notice of the officials at the market, however there was no action. Irked over the behaviour of the traders and agriculture market officials, the farmers attacked the office. Learning about the attack, police reached the spot and tried to control the situation.

Ranga Reddy INDIAN CHRONICLE SATURDAY 1 FEBRUARY 2025

## Sri Lanka former President Mahinda Rajapaksa's son issued travel ban in corruption case



GNS News Agency, Jan 31

The son of Sri Lanka's former president Mahinda Rajapaksa was banned on Monday from leaving the country following his arrest for alleged money laundering. The case against Yoshitha Rajapaksa dates back years, but has received renewed impetus since President Anura Kumara Dissanayake — who has vowed to fight endemic corruption — won a landslide election victory. Several members of the powerful Rajapaksa family and close associates have been charged with an array of offences over the years, including corruption and even murder — all of which are still pending in the courts. A former junior naval officer, Yoshitha Rajapaksa, 36, was hit with the travel ban after police said he was unable to explain the sources of income

used to purchase a home while his father was in power from 2005 to 2015. He was arrested and spent two days in detention before being released Monday by a magistrate in Colombo on a bond of 100 million rupees (\$344,000). Yoshitha had told investigators that he raised money to buy the property by selling a small bag of gems his grand-aunt had given him. She was unable to recall how she acquired the precious stones when asked. He was arrested in 2016 on a separate money laundering charge related to his purchase of a television network. Both cases have sat dormant for years. His older brother Namal, a lawmaker in Sri Lanka's parliament, also faces separate money laundering charges which have not yet gone to trial. Dissanayake came to power in September 2024 after pledging to expedite the pending criminal cases and bring back stolen assets allegedly stashed abroad. Cabinet spokesman Nalinda Jayatissa told reporters in Colombo over the weekend that the new government was providing more resources to the criminal investigations department to speed up prosecution. This is not a political witch hunt, but people voted us in to ensure that these dragging cases are concluded," Jayatissa said. Mahinda Rajapaksa's younger brother Gotabaya became president in 2019 but was forced out of office in 2022 after a popular revolt, sparked by a ruinous economic crisis. Gotabaya Rajapaksa also faces corruption charges over military procurements when he was a top defence official during Mahinda's presidency at the tail end of Sri Lanka's civil war.

## What is Guillain-Barré Syndrome? Explained

GNS News Agency, Jan 31

Following a reported outbreak of Guillain-Barré syndrome, a rare neurological disorder, in Pune, with 73 cases so far, the Union Health Ministry has now sent a team to the city to assess the situation. The Maharashtra government has also set up a Rapid Response Team to investigate the sudden rise in infections. A total of 47 men and 26 women have been affected, with 14 on ventilator support, the State Health Department has said, as of Saturday, January 25, 2025.

What is Guillain-Barré Syndrome?

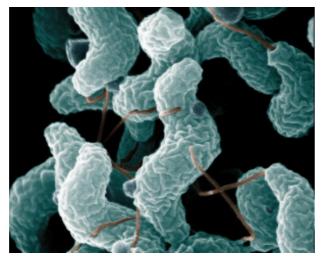
Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) is an autoimmune neurological disorder in which a person's immune system attacks their peripheral nerves, leading to muscle weakness that can progress to paralysis. It can develop over a few days or several weeks. People of any age can be affected, but it is more common in adults and males. The condition is rare, with an estimated incidence of 1/2 per 100,000 population. While the causes of GBS are still not fully understood, in most cases, it occurs after a viral or bacterial infection. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), infection with the bacteria Campylobacter jejuni, which causes gastroenteritis (including symptoms of nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea), is one of the most common risk factors for GBS. People can also develop GBS after having the flu or other viral infections including cytomegalovirus, Epstein-Barr virus, and the Zika virus. In rare instances, vaccinations may increase the risk of people getting GBS, but the chance of this occurring is extremely low.

How does it affect the body?

In autoimmune conditions, the body's immune system begins to attack its own cells. In GBS, the immune system destroys the myelin sheath -- a fatty layer wrapped around nerve cells. This impacts the nerves' ability to send signals to the brain, which causes weakness in the muscles. GBS affects the peripheral nervous system -- the part of the nervous system outside the brain and spinal cord -- that controls the movement of muscles, temperature, touch and pain sensations.

What are the signs and symptoms?

The first signs of GBS are usually tingling and weakness that start in the feet and legs before spreading to the upper body, arms and face. Symptoms include a pins and needles feeling in the toes, fingers, ankles or wrists, back pain, pain in the legs, not being able to walk or climb stairs, trouble with facial movements and double vision. For some people this can lead to paralysis of the legs, arms or face. The



severity of the symptoms can range from mild to severe. In approximately one-third of people, the chest muscles are affected, making it hard to breathe, the WHO says. The ability to speak and swallow can become affected in severe cases. GBS can lead to life-threatening complications when it affects the autonomic nervous system which controls your blood pressure and heart rate.

How is it treated?

There is no known cure for GBS. However, there are some treatments that aid in recovery. Most people can make a nearly full recovery. A few may be left with remaining muscle weakeness. The treatments primarily include plasma exchange and intravenous immunoglobin therapy. In plasma exchange or plasmapheresis, the plasma (liquid part of the blood) is removed, treated and then returned to the body. This removes the antibodies from the plasma that are attacking the nerves. Intravenous immunoglobin therapy involves injecting the body with immunoglobins, which are proteins that the body makes to identify and neutralise pathogens. This helps decrease the immune system's attack on the nerves. Supportive treatment is also given and rehabilitation including physical and occupational therapy may be required. Recovery can take a long time.

When do you see a doctor?

The WHO says Guillain-Barré syndrome is potentially life-threatening. People with Guillain-Barré syndrome should be treated and monitored as quickly as possible and some may need intensive care. If you experience sudden muscle that get worse over some days, see a doctor immediately.

### Guillain-Barre Syndrome: Centre deploys seven-member team of experts in Maharashtra amid surge in GBS cases

GNS News Agency, Jan 31

The Centre has deployed a seven-member team of experts in Maharashtra to assist the state in monitoring and managing the increasing cases of Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS), an official source said Maharashtra reported its first suspected death linked to GBS in Solapur, while the number of cases of the immunological nerve disorder in Pune has crossed 100, health officials said The man had come to Pune, where he is suspected to have contracted the disease, and died in Solapur, an official said without giving more details."The total number of GBS cases in Pune on Sunday increased to 101, comprising 68 males and 33 females. Of these, 16 patients are on ventilator support. One suspected death has been reported in Solapur," the state health department official said. Meanwhile, the Rapid Response Team (RRT) and the Pune Municipal Corporation's health department continued surveillance in the affected Sinhgad Road

"A seven-member high-level team of experts has been deployed in Maharashtra to assist the state in the monitoring and management of the increasing cases of GBS," an official source said.

What is GBS?

Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) is an autoimmune neurological disorder in which a person's immune system attacks their peripheral nerves, leading to muscle weakness that can progress to paralysis. It can develop over a few days or several weeks. People of any age can be affected, but it is more common in adults and males. The condition is rare, with an estimated incidence of 1/2 per 100,000 population.

Bacterial and viral infections generally lead to GBS as they weaken the immunity of patients, according to doctors. While GBS is prevalent in both paediatric and youngage groups, it will not lead to an epidemic or pandemic, they said, adding that most patients recover fully with treatment. The state health department has set up the RRT



to investigate the sudden rise in this infection after 24 suspected cases were found initially.

## 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. Three persons identified as Ganapathi, the crackers operator, P Pranith, the boat driver and D Sunil, another boat driver suffered burns in the incident. While Ganapathi was severely injured, the condition of others is said to be stable. They are being treated at the hospital

## Ties between India, US strong because of shared democratic values by both countries: Satya Nadella



GNS News Agency, Jan 31

New Delhi: Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella on Monday said that he is thrilled to see bonds grow between India and the US. Speaking at the 76th Republic Day celebration in Seattle, US, Nadella said the bond is strong because of shared democratic values by both countries. The event was organised by Indian Consulate in Seattle.

"Looking forward, I am, again, very thrilled to see the

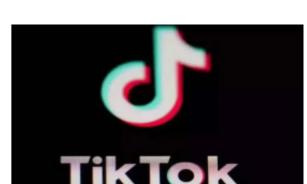
bonds between the two countries continue to grow, both because of the community here, but also because of the shared bonds of being two democracies that are grounded in their constitutions," Nadella said. "I think what happens at the end of the day is people who get elected have to serve all the constituents and to us to have the privilege to build technology that allows these leaders to then pursue what then gets them elected is perhaps the best virtual cycle of a democracy," he added. The Microsoft CEO said that he hopes "the role model of both the countries doing are what is best in their best interest for each country". This will also "create the model for the world to be able to sort of emulate and thereby build a better world for everybody," he said. Earlier this month, Nadella announced a \$3 billion investment to boost AI and cloud infrastructure in India. The investment aims to accelerate Al innovation in the country, which is pivotal for achieving Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of becoming a developed nation (Viksit Bharat) by 2047. The tech giant also announced to train and skill 10 million people in Al by 2030. The company has already empowered 2.4 million Indians, including civil servants, college students, and people with disabilities, with Al skills.

### New bid for TikTok

GNS News Agency, Jan 31Washington: Perplexity AI has presented a new proposal to TikTok's parent company that would allow the US government to own up to 50 per cent of a new entity that merges Perplexity with TikTok's US business, according to a person familiar with the matter. The proposal, submitted last week, is a revision of a prior plan the artificial intelligence startup had presented to TikTok's parent ByteDance on Jan 18, a day before the law that bans TikTok went into effect.

The first proposal, which ByteDance hasn't responded to, sought to create a new structure that would merge San Francisco-based Perplexity with TikTok's US business and include investments from other investors. The new proposal would allow the US government to own up to half of that new structure once it makes an initial public offering of at least \$300 billion, said the person, who was not authorised to speak about the proposal. If the plan is successful, the shares owned by the government would not have voting power, the person said. The government also would not get a seat on the new company's board. ByteDance and TikTok did not immediately responded to a request for comment.

Under the plan, ByteDance would not have to completely cut ties with TikTok, a favourable outcome for its investors. But it would have to allow a "full US board control," the person said.Under the proposal, the China-based tech company would contribute TikTok's US business without the proprietary algorithm that fuels what users see on the app, according to a document seen by the Associated



Press.In exchange, ByteDance's existing investors will get equity in the new structure that emerges. The Perplexity proposal comes as several investors are expressing interest in TikTok. President Donald Trump said late Saturday that he expects a deal will be made in as soon as 30 days. On a flight from Las Vegas to Miami on Air Force One, Trump also said he hadn't discussed a deal with Larry Ellison, CEO of software maker Oracle, despite a report that Oracle, along with outside investors, was considering taking over TikTok's global operation. TikTok CEO Shou Chew attended Trump's inauguration on January 20, along with some other tech leaders who've been forging friendlier ties with the new administration.

### **Building super intelligence**

In 1941, faced with imminent threats from hostile Axis powers, U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt initiated a secret assignment known as the Manhattan Project. That monumental research and development initiative culminated in the creation of the first atomic bomb. Seven decades later, Donald Trump, the 47th President of the U.S., faces a powerful adversary in China, and is embarking on mission to solidify America's position as a dominant artificial intelligence (AI) superpower.

Announcing 'Project Stargate', a multi-billion-dollar initiative aimed at establishing a vast network of AI-optimised data centres and developing increasingly sophisticated generative AI models, Mr. Trump called it "the largest AI infrastructure project in history."Through this initiative, OpenAI, Oracle, and SoftBank will establish a state-of-the-art AI ecosystem across various regions of the U.S. Notably, while the Manhattan Project incurred an estimated \$2 billion in 1945 (about \$30 billion in today's currency), Stargate commences with an initial investment commitment of \$100 billion from SoftBank. Over the course of the next four years, the investment company will further augment its commitment with an additional \$400 billion. Such a huge financial commitment has triggered varied responses, including from Mr. Trump's close aide, Elon Musk. The Tesla CEO posted a pithy reply to an X post by OpenAI on Stargate, saying, "They don't actually have the money." OpenAl CEO Sam Altman retorted, "Wrong, as you surely know. Want to come visit the first site already under way?'

Mr. Musk, who was one of the co-founders of OpenAl when it was started as a non-profit in 2015, is beefing up his own Al platform, xAl, which directly competes with Mr. Altman's Al company. Apart from missing details on financing the project, there isn't any information on how the consortium will be structured. Based on some estimates, both SoftBank and OpenAl could come up with a combined investment of about \$20 billion in the initial stage. Some experts have pointed out that the \$500 billion claim should not be taken seriously unless SoftBank plans to sell all its holdings in Alibaba and Arm. Despite the glaring gaps in funding, OpenAl's role is pivotal to Stargate. As a leader in generative AI, the ChatGPT creator can provide the technological foundation with its advanced language models that



have revolutionised AI, enabling the development of more powerful and general-purpose AI systems. Oracle's role in the project is already putting OpenAI's current investor, Microsoft, on the spot, as the tech titan has invested \$14 billion in the Silicon Valley startup.

The collaboration with Oracle, a direct competitor in the cloud services market, signifies a strategic move to diversify OpenAI's dependencies while leveraging Oracle's capabilities. For Oracle, Stargate presents a significant opportunity to challenge the dominance of Microsoft Azure, Google Cloud, and AWS. By hosting OpenAl's models and constructing AI-optimised data centres, Oracle will reposition its cloud strategy and re-enter the increasingly competitive cloud market. China's AI development has surged forward, with state support and strategic goals driving innovation. It must be noted that China prioritised AI as a core component of its national strategy even before the COVID pandemic shut the whole world down. The race to dominate Al comes at a time when countries are belittling regulations and hitting the pedal on building super intelligent systems. Some experts have cautioned against this approach as Al, which is better than humans in cognition and problem solving, could improve at a terrifying pace. In such a scenario, the words of General Leslie Groves, director of the Manhattan Project, comes to one's mind. "'Was the development of the atomic bomb by the United States necessary? I reply unequivocally, 'Yes'. To the question, 'Is atomic energy a force for good or for evil?' I can only say, 'As man-

## Southern California rain helps fire fighters but creates risk of toxic ash runoff

GNS News Agency, Jan 31

After weeks of windy and dry weather, rain has fallen in parched Southern California and is expected to aid firefighters who are mopping up multiple wildfires. But potentially heavy downpours on charred hillsides could bring new troubles such as toxic ash runoff.Los Angeles County crews spent much of the past week removing vegetation, shoring up slopes and reinforcing roads in devastated areas of the Palisades and Eaton fires, which reduced entire neighborhoods to rubble and ash after breaking out during powerful winds Jan. 7. Most of the region was forecast to get around an inch (about 2.5 centimeters) of precipitation over several days, but "the threat is high enough to prepare for the worst-case scenario" of localized cloudbursts causing mud and debris to flow down hills, the National Weather Service said on social media. "So the problem would be if one of those showers happens to park itself over a burn area," weather service meteorologist Carol Smith said. "That could be enough to create debris flows."Rainfall that began late Saturday was expected to increase Sunday and possibly last into early Tuesday, forecasters said. Flood watches were issued for some burn areas, while snow was likely in the mountains.Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass issued an executive order last week to expedite cleanup efforts and mitigate the environmental impacts of fire-related pollutants.

LA County supervisors also approved an emergency mo tion to install flood-control infrastructure and expedite and remove sediment in fire-impacted areas. Fire crews filled sandbags for communities, while county workers installed barriers and cleared drainage pipes and basins. Officials cautioned that ash in recent burn zones was a toxic mix of incinerated cars, electronics, batteries, building materials, paints, furniture and other household items. It contains pesticides, asbestos, plastics and lead. Residents were urged to wear protective gear while cleaning up. Concerns about post-fire debris flows have been especially high since 2018, when the town of Montecito, up the coast from LA, was ravaged by mudslides after a downpour hit mountain slopes burned bare by a huge blaze. Hundreds of homes were damaged and 23 people died. While the impending wet weather ended weeks of dangerous gusts and reduced humidity, several wildfires were still burning Saturday across Southern California. Those included the Palisades and Eaton fires, which killed at least 28 people and destroyed more than 14,000 structures. Containment of the Palisades Fire reached 81% on Saturday and the Eaton Fire was 95% contained. In northern Los Angeles County, firefighters made significant progress against the Hughes Fire, which prompted evacuations for tens of thousands of people when it erupted on Wednesday in mountains near Lake Castaic. Ranga Reddy **SATURDAY 1 FEBRUARY 2025 INDIAN CHRONICLE** 

### Need to maintain upward trend in AI and tech-specific investments



Despite multiple challenges and uncertainties, India's Gross Development Product (GDP) growth rate has rebounded, largely driven by the services sector, which accounts for approximately 55 percent of the current GDP, according to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. This growth is particularly notable in the IT sector, which contributes about 56 percent of India's total services exports on the national landscape, as per a report by the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI)

As reported by World Bank, the US\$3.5 trillion Indian economy enters 2025 with immense potential in areas such as healthcare and insurance, infrastructure, Electric Vehicles (EVs), Fast-moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) and renewable energy. It is expected to be another exciting year for the technology sector, which will continue to play a pivotal role in the previously mentioned (but not limited to) areas. Notably, the rise of Al/GenAl in the tech space is revolutionising various aspects of governance, economy, security and society at large.

According to Nasscom, India's AI market noted a CAGR of 25-35 percent and is projected to reach about US\$17 billion by 2027. Al's growth in India is supported by a robust ecosystem comprising start-ups, academic institutions, government initiatives and MNCs. India's IT services and Global Capability Centres (GCCs) are expected to grow to US\$100 billion by 2030, as per a report by Inductus. They are also setting up Al/GenAl Centres of Excellence (CoEs), signalling an uptrend for Al/GenAl technologies and associated workforce training.

Government bodies and public-sector organisations have been some of the early adopters of Al.Spending on Al software for digital government services is expected to reach US\$6 billion by 2027, as per International Data Corporation (IDC)

Al in India and the government's pushThe Government of India has been bullish on new-age advancements. Investments in the semi-conductor space (~US\$10 billion investment, according to the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology), Quantum technologies (~US\$0.7 billion investment, as per the National Quantum Mission (NQM) by the Department of Science & Technology) and Al/GenAl (commitment of ~US\$1.2 billion investment, as per the Government of India) underscore the government's focus on high-tech. In 2018-19, the Finance Minister mandated the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog to establish the National Programme on AI, which aims to guide the R&D of emerging technologies. NITI Aayog released the National Al Strategy, outlining the government's vision for AI development in the country.In March 2024, the cabinet approved the comprehensive national-level India Al Mission with a budget outlay of US\$8.8 billion. This step further boosts the vision of "Making AI in India" and "Making AI Work for India."To realise "Vision 2047," the government must continue its push on AI, as India is a rewarding destination considering its skilled talent pool. Per a Deloitte report on Generative AI in Asia Pacific, India leads in GenAl adoption across Asia Pacific, with 93 percent of students and 83 percent of employees actively engaging with the technology.

Key sectors for AIThe government must establish AI research centres and innovation hubs that help solve specific healthcare, agriculture and education challenges. For example, the agri-industry could benefit from AI through precision farming, pest and disease detection, crop yield optimisation, smart rainwater harvesting and AI-powered drones. Other applications of AI are in the manufacturing sector, such as predictive maintenance, quality control, supply chain optimisation and smart manufacturing. Al can also help deploy social and welfare programmes through improved identification of beneficiaries, personalised welfare programmes, fraud detection and effective resource allocation. Budget expectations

For FY2024-25, the Indian government allocated INR551.75 crore to the IndiaAl Mission to strengthen the country's Al infrastructure. This allocation is expected to increase as India aims to position itself strategically as a hightech destination on the global map. While all industries stand to benefit from an AI push, advancements in sectors such as healthcare and education would lead to significant social

impact.Al in healthcare could assist in areas such as early diagnosis and detection, telemedicine, targeted interventions and chronic disease management. Similarly, the education sector should benefit from personalised tutoring, e-learning in regional languages and Al-driven counselling. The government should provide benefits and incentives to solidify a strong R&D ecosystem that fosters economic growth and job creation. Conclusion The government must continue with an upward trend in AI and techspecific investments with a special focus on key industries. There could not be a more opportune time to position India

### 'Felt this hand sliding in through the window, under my pillow...': Ruskin Bond's tug-of-war with a spectacle thief during his obscenity trial in 1975



In a landmark case that challenged literary boundaries, renowned author Ruskin Bond faced an obscenity trial in 1975 after publishing his provocative short story 'The Sensualist' in Debonair, a men's lifestyle magazine. Recalling the incident in an interview with Twinkle Khanna for Tweak India, the author shared a humorous anecdote from a turbulent time in his life, saying, "That was the year of the Emergency. Somebody complained and there was an obscenity charge brought against me and I had to go to Bombay to appear in court. It was quite a funny journey in a way because we went by passenger train in those days, which took I think two nights and two days. And I was told, 'Mr Bond when the train gets into Baroda, make sure the window is closed because people snatch things.' I said, 'I've got nothing to lose.' I didn't keep my wallet under my pillow, so I kept the window open. I put my glasses under the pillow... and the train stopped there for almost an hour and then I felt this hand sliding in through the window, under my pillow and my spectacles were moving away, and I grabbed. So I caught one arm and the thief, who was just a boy, had the other arm. So we had a tug-of-war, I got my glasses back. But the arms (of the spectacle) were very loose, and they kept slipping off. I had to appear in court in Bombay that morning. But every time the judge asked me a question, and I would say, 'Yes, your honour,' the glasses kept

falling off because they were so loose. It was quite a ridiculous experience."

The story that sparked controversy

Bond's narrative was no ordinary piece of writing. Set against the backdrop of a rapidly changing India, 'The Sensualist' offered an unflinching exploration of human sexuality — a subject typically shrouded in silence and social taboo. The story's raw, unvarnished depiction of sexual experiences shocked the conservative sensibilities of the time. immediately drawing the attention of legal authorities. The legal battle begins Charged under Section 292 of the Indian Penal Code — a legal provision designed to suppress 'obscene' publications — Bond faced a potentially career-destroying prosecution. The stakes were high: potential fines, imprisonment, and the very real threat of being branded a literary pariah. The timing was particularly significant. India was in the midst of the Emergency period (1975-77), a time of unprecedented political suppression and curtailed personal freedoms. Against this backdrop, Bond's legal battle became more than just a personal struggle — it was a defiant stand for artistic integrity.

The trial was gruelling. Bond navigated a complex legal landscape for two years, his reputation and creative freedom hanging in the balance. Debonair magazine stood by him, transforming the case into a broader conversation about literary expression and censorship. In 1976, the verdict arrived. Bond was acquitted. The court's decision was more than a personal victory — it was a landmark moment for Indian literature. By distinguishing between literary exploration and legal obscenity, the judgement carved out critical space for writers to push creative boundaries. A defining momentThe trial crystallised Bond's reputation as a fearless storyteller. It demonstrated his willingness to challenge societal norms and confront uncomfortable truths about human experience. For Bond, the experience was transformative. It reinforced his commitment to honest, uncompromising storytelling and highlighted the power of literature to challenge, provoke, and ultimately, enlighten. Today, the incident is remembered as a pivotal moment in India's literary history — symbolising the enduring power of creative expression in the face of institutional resistance.

### Madhabi Puri Buch's 3-year term ends Feb 28; govt invites application for SEBI Chairman

The Ministry of Finance has invited applications for the post of Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) by February 17. The current three-year tenure of SEBI chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch will end on February 28. She took over the charge as the chief of capital markets regulator on March 2, 2022. "Applications are invited from the eligible candidates for filling up the post of Chairman in Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)," according to a notice by the Department of Economic Affairs (Financial Markets Division).

or till the age of 65 years of age, whichever is earlier, and will be eligible for re-appointment, the notice said. The SEBI to a Secretary to the government of India; or a consolidated salary of Rs 5,62,500 per month.

The chairman will hold office for a period of five years

Buch who took over as the SEBI Chief in March 2022 was the first person from the private sector to be at the helm of the regulatory body. Before being appointed as the SEBI Chairperson, Buch served as a whole time member



based Hindenburg Research has alleged that Sebi Chairperson Buch and her husband, Dhaval Buch, had stakes in offshore funds used in the Adani money siphoning scandal. The Buch couple had denied the allegation.Later in September 2024, nearly 500 SEBI employees had protested against the "toxic" work culture at the regulator.

## of the regulator, till October 4,2021. In August last year, US-

### Laveesh Bhandari: 'Need focus on labour laws, land and cities; speed up overburdened judicial system'

Budget 2025-26 should be seen in the context of India's march towards Viksit@2047. While new opportunities such as those in technology, high-tech manufacturing, etc need to be utilised, we must also unlock India's immense energies held back due to our own inaction.

A difficult labour law regime prevents businesses from managing their operations well. At the core of this sits the Industrial Disputes Act whose Chapter 5 prevents businesses employing more than 100-300 workers, depending upon state laws, from laying off a worker without the permission of the union(s) and the government. Other labour laws such as Contract Labour Act also consequently need to be more stringent to ensure that people don't circumvent the IDA Chapter 5. Effectively hundreds of rules and regulations, worsened by judicial delays, prevent firms from having the freedom to manage their workers as they need to. If businesses can't lay off, assign work, or contract easily, productivity is naturally compromised. This also impacts investment and therefore growth. There is enough data to show that the average productivity level of Indian labour is lower than in comparable countries. There are many ways of protecting workers, but in-

stead of protecting the worker's job, why don't we protect the worker's consumption or income? That is, why not replace Chapter 5 with a comprehensive unemployment insurance for industrial workers?

Land is extremely expensive in India, many times than that in comparable countries, for one because of the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition Act of 2013 that was implemented in 2015. The year the Bill was passed and implemented reveals that there has been a political consensus on this and therefore we cannot hope to repeal it. The net outcome of the act is inordinately high land prices for manufacturing in India, and a complex process of acquiring large tracts of land. These when combined with poor land records and judicial delays make it extremely costly and cumbersome for businesses to acquire land. Land for industry is also available in about 4,700 industrial parks spread across India, but most are poorly run, have poor facilities, and are costly. So the government needs to make the land cheap and ensure key facilities and services such as effluent and waste management, lighted streets, etc of good quality are available at low cost for manufacturing units. By getting state governments to privatise industrial parks and the Union government fully

absorbing the cost of land both these goals of cheap land and good facilities can be met. If the land is cheaper, investment requirements are lower, interest burden is lesser, thereby reducing the costs of manufacturing and enhancing global competitiveness.

The 8,000 odd cities across India are mostly run by officers and not by politicians. They go by different names, but let us refer to them as CEOs who report to the states' Ministry of Urban Development. They have little motivation to improve their city as their future career is not dependent on their performance as city CEO. And therefore they spend their times looking for their next transfer rather than improving city's financial resources, utilities and public facilities. So let us change that. Academic work talks of decentralising cities and empowering mayors. That's not going to happen due to the politics of it. So let us give more powers to the city-CEOs, and make their next transfer dependent on improvement in their city's economic growth, employment and basic facilities. This is broadly how China runs its cities. To do this, monitor economic performance of cities, employment generation, improvement in facilities and services for each of the 8,000 cities well, empower city-CEOs by delegating more authority and resources to them, and motivate city's CEO better by awarding good performance and punishing bad one. Something similar happened in Surat and Indore, now let's do that for the other 8,000 cities. The bulk of urban employment is in the informal sector which includes a mix of micro and small units including craftsmen and many service providers. Remarkably, whether it be informal manufacturing, craftsmen, traders, mechanics and many service providers, across India no physical space is allocated to them. Consequently, the informal sector, both manufacturing and services, operates perpetually in the illegal domain. Municipal inspectors and police personnel are able to therefore harass them. The problem unfortunately is not just corruption, but because of this lack of space-allocation and associated illegality the informal sector participants are perpetually prepared to run, rather than invest in their business improvement. The MUDRA scheme helped them by providing credit to the informal sector, but that did not address the space problem. The Budget therefore will need to implement a new scheme where the crores of informal sector participants are allocated some space for their livelihood. This space may not be complete ownership but temporary occupation rights along with a basic rental.

### 'High maintenance to be low maintenance': An (expensive) skincare trend redefining beauty investments

The beauty and wellness industry is embracing the "high maintenance to be low maintenance" trend, which advocates investing in expensive, professional treatments to streamline and reduce daily skincare routines. These include laser hair reduction. advanced facials, and semipermanent makeup, promising long-term convenience and cost savings. In the simplest of terms, it can be understood as a trade off --significant upfront investment in professional treatments to minimise daily grooming efforts. Win-win, right? Indianexpress.com spoke to industry professionals and learnt more about the pros and cons associated with the trend.

Ajit Marathe, founder and chief innovation officer at Skin Bevond Borders. said that while not new, social media has amplified this trend, framing these treatments as essential investments for a modern lifestyle. IV Drip therapy, for instance, has gained traction through influencer promotions.Krishna Vakharia, Vice President, Sales & Marketing, Kumar Lifespaces, believes that taking the time to nurture her skin through a high-maintenance routine isn't about extravagance, but empowerment and consistency. "I use Argireline, sunscreen, and moisturizer. My evening routine involving caffeine-infused under-eye serum and collagen sleeping masks work to preserve and enhance my natural glow," she

Vakharia also supports her skin with vitamins, minerals, collagen, and probiotics for radiance, immunity, and firmness, complemented by regular dermatologist visits for expert guidance. According to Dr Rashmi Shetty, aesthetic dermatologist, a one-time hyaluronic acid injection might be expensive, but it becomes a cost-effective alternative compared to layering on 25 creams and serums in a quest for hydrated skin. Skin booster injections with popular names such as "skin weave," "profilo," and "skin booster" are all the rage in the market right now



Aesthetics, Delhi, said,

"People also tend to go for

laser hair reduction (LHR) to

she said. Marathe, however,

shared concerns about the

way these treatments are

being promoted. "Influencers

create compelling content

showing supposedly effort-

less results but rarely dis-

cuss the ongoing mainte-

nance, costs, or potential

risks. A person might see a

glowing review of a hair

smoothening treatment but

won't hear about the touch-

ups needed every few

months," he said. "In India,

this trend is part of urban

lifestyle and is being dis-

cussed among peers. But

the difference now lies in how

these services are marketed

as time-saving investments

that aim to stimulate your collagen and elastin.

"Proteins that you put on the skin, aka peptides to increase your cell turnover and keep your skin youthful, such as the retinol can now be supplemented by in-clinic treatments such as PDRN Peptides, available in the form of Salmon Sperm extracted PDRNs," Shetty said. While retinol were the gold standard for skin treatments, they required consistent daily use in a certain quantity, concentration, and formulation. They also carried risks of purging, sensitivity flakiness.According to

Shetty, hybrid lasers, including carbon dioxide and erbium glass combination, work brilliantly to give you more rejuvenated, refreshed, and even-toned skin with fewer visible pores. "It is expensive, but one shot in two or three months and you're good to go," she said. "Ultherapy, a machine using Ultera technology called Hifu - highly focused ultrasound — prevents the skin from becoming excess and coming down onto your jaw and spoiling the jawline, and requires once a year session," she said. She also said, "fillers are always an option to get rid of lost volume from the face, a common result of ageing. Desocial demonising filler migration, these are permanent till dissolved and are a worthwhile one-time investment."Dr Neha Khuraana, MD, a Board-certified dermatolo-

gist and founder of House of

reduce the need to shave or wax the body hair regularly, ments. chemical peels to diminish the appearance of skin pigmentation, microneedling to reduce the occurrence of wrinkles and acne scars by boosting collagen synthesis, botox and fillers that aim to offer a youthful glow by remaking are key. ducing the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles, semipermanent tattooing or makeup to reduce the daily of makeup application."Khuraana considers skin treatments a worthy investment, provided a well-trained dermatologist executes them. "By cutting down the cost of routine sa-Ion visits and cumulative savings on the products, you actually save money. Certain treatments such as laser hair reduction and botox save both time and energy for daily grooming,"

rather than luxury treatments. The 'low maintenance' claim often overlooks these ongoing commit-Marathe said.Consumers should prioritise personal needs over trends. "Not every treatment suits every skin type or budget," Marathe said, stressing that transparency and informed decision-

What's the way for-

Marathe emphasised on the need for more transparent dialogue about beauty treatments: "We need to move beyond the 'quick-fix' narrative and foster more honest conversations about what these treatments truly entail – both the benefits and the commitments they require and consumers can always consult a dermatologist for the right information."Swagatika Das, co-founder, Nat Habit, shared that investing in higheffort routines like treatments from dermatologists, clinical facials, or multi-step skincare routines might feel high-maintenance initially, but it's really about creating a strong foundation so your skin can thrive over time. "When products work at a deep level, they repair damage, strengthen the skin barbie and enhance natural regeneration processes. For those trying to save time and effort, it's important to understand your skin first. Do your research, figure out which ingredients suit you, and stick to a routine," she

### Rakesh Roshan recalls Hrithik Roshan's neardeath accident on Krrish set; actor refused to stop shooting: 'This fear will remain with me'

Hrithik Roshan's father and director Rakesh Roshan recently shared details about his son's near-fatal mishap on the Krrish set and how the actor escaped from it unhurt.Krrish is the second instalment in the eponymous franchise that began with the 2003 sci-fi action drama Koi... Mil Gaya. No matter how many precautions the team takes, every action sequence in a movie comes with a certain degree of risk. The danger is even greater when doing actioners. During the filming of the superhero movie Krrish (2006), Bollywood star Hrithik Roshan had a near-death experience, which he escaped by a hair's breadth. Recently, his father and the film's director Rakesh Roshan shared details about the incident and how the actor escaped from the mishap unhurt.

"While filming Krrish, before every shot featuring Hrithik, I would pray that everything goes well. When he's swinging from one place to another, he's on a pendulum and people below are controlling him. These controllers are so experienced that if he had to land somewhere, his legs needed to touch the ground first. If he landed on his knees, they would have been broken. Since the speed is so high, every shot of him swinging from one place to another was filmed at 200 fps instead of (the usual) 24 fps," he shared during a recent chat with Connect Cine.

Recalling the near-tragic accident that occurred in Singapore in 2005, Rakesh said, "He was climbing very high and I was sitting across the road with the cameras. I could sense that he wasn't comfortable and was trying to adjust something. By the time I got up from my chair to inform my action director, he had already fallen. The cable snapped and he fell. Since he fell behind a tree, I couldn't see what had happened. So, we all rushed to the spot. Fortunately, he landed on a canopy."He continued, "I believe these are all God's blessings. Just half an hour before that, it had rained in Singapore, so all the restaurants had their



canopies out. He fell right in the centre of one of the canopies and didn't even touch any of the iron rods. And then he said, 'Papa, I am fine; don't worry.' I told him we wouldn't shoot today, but he replied, 'No, we have to shoot today; otherwise, this fear will remain with me." The second instalment in the franchise that began with the sci-fi action drama Koi... Mil Gaya (2003), Krrish featured Priyanka Chopra, Naseeruddin Shah, Rekha, Sharat Saxena and Manini Mishra in key roles. The film later received a sequel in 2013 titled Krrish 3.

# Chhaava director Laxman Utekar deletes dance scenes from Vicky Kaushal-starrer amid controversy: 'Raj Thackeray gave guidance'

Laxman Utekar, the director of highly anticipated period drama Chhaava, has announced that a song featuring film's leads Vicky Kaushal and Rashmika Mandanna has been removed from the film following objections. Chhaava is based on the life of Maratha ruler Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj with Vicky essaying the lead role. The ruling Shiv Sena and the descendants of Shivaji Maharaj had raised objections about the historical accuracy of the movie.On Monday, Chhaava director Laxman Utekar confirmed that the makers will remove the sequence which has Sambhaji Maharaj performing a Lezim dance with his wife, Maharani Yesubai. The decision came after his meeting with MNS chief Raj Thackeray. In an official statement released to the media, Utekar emphasises that the dance scene is nothing in front of the legacy of the Maratha king.

Chhaava in Marathi means 'lion's cub'. The film is based on Chhaava, a book written by late novelist Shivaji Sawant. In a statement, the director said, "I have met Raj Thackeray. He is an avid reader and studious person. So I have taken some suggestions and guidance from him. And I can say, his words are very helpful for me. And after meeting him, I have decided to delete those scenes where we have shown Sambhaji Maharaj was playing Lezim dance.""Lezim dance is not a big deal. Sambhaji Maharaj is very much bigger than that Lezim dance. So we are going to remove those scenes from film," Laxman said.

He further explained and said, "When Sambhaji Maharaj launched an attack in Barhanpur, he was just 20 years old. We have taken the rights of Shivaji Sawant's book titled Chhava where he wrote about Sambhaji Maharaj taking part in the Holi festival. He would remove a coconut from the holy fire. We thought of Maharaj as a 20-year-old. It was obvious that he had played the Lezim dance. And why not? Lezim is a part of Maratha culture. It is just our traditional dance. But, if anyone is hurt by those dance moves or Lezim dance, we will remove them. Lezim dance is not bigger than Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj."The director also



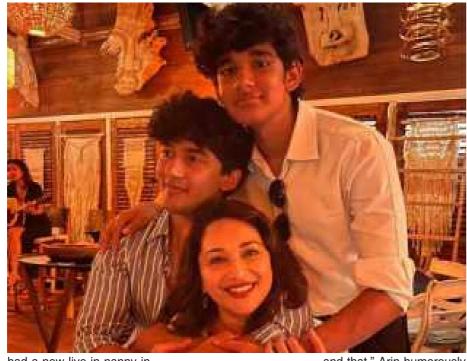
took the concerns of many Maharashtra ministers into account, demanding that experts should watch the film prior to its release. Hence, he said, "We have organised a special premiere show on 29th of January. Some historians and people who study history will be there. We will take their quidance."

Earlier, Maharashtra minister Uday Samant's had written on X (formerly Twitter), "It is a matter of joy that a Hindi film based on the life of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, the protector of religion and protector of freedom, is being made. Such efforts are necessary to make the world understand the history of Chhatrapati. However, many have expressed their opinions that there are some objectionable scenes in this film. Our position is that this film should not be released without first showing it to experts and knowledgeable people. Anything that will harm the honour of the Maharaj will not be tolerated." Meanwhile, Laxman Utekar confirmed in his statement that the movie would hit the theatres as scheduled on February 14. Chhaava also stars Akshaye Khanna, Ashutosh Rana, Diana Penty and Divya Dutta, among others

# Madhuri Dixit reveals sons Ryan, Arin inherited love for cooking from dad; recalls 3-year-old Ryan instructing nanny on making eggs

Actor Madhuri Dixit and her husband, Shriram Madhav Nene, frequently share glimpses of their personal life on their YouTube channel. In a recent video, the couple was joined by their sons, Ryan Nene and Arin Nene, for a heartwarming family chat. During the conversation, the family discussed their shared love for cooking and how the boys developed an interest in it from an early age, inspired by watching their parents, especially their father, cook for them regularly. Madhuri also reminisced about a time when Arin cooked a meal for the family after they had returned home jet-lagged from a trip abroad.

Ryan, Madhuri's younger son, acknowledged during the chat that he has led a privileged life. However, he shared that studying overseas has taught him to manage daily tasks independently, including cooking for himself. Reflecting on Ryan's early affinity for food, Madhuri recounted a memorable incident from his childhood. She shared, "We



had a new live-in nanny in Denver and in the morning I woke up and I heard noises downstairs. When I stepped down I saw Ryan instructing the nanny on how to cook the eggs how he likes it. He told her to put milk in eggs and then whisk it. You devel-

oped this interest because

you saw dad and how he loves cooking."

Speaking about the time their elder son Arin cooked them a whole dinner, she said, "You started cooking at 9:30 and we had dinner at 10:30. It was a whole dinner with salad and this

and that." Arin humorously recalled, "Yes, and you guys were jet-lagged so you woke up from your sleep, woke up for the food and went back to sleep."Shriram Madhav Nene concluded the video by emphasizing that every family has an activity that brings them closer.

# Sana Khan reveals name of her son, shares first family photo: 'Becoming a parent is one of the biggest blessings...'

On Sunday, actor-turned-businesswoman Sana Khan revealed the name of her second child and later shared a photo, which featured elder son Saiyad Tariq Jamil, newborn Saiyad Hasan Jamil, and husband Mufti Anas Saiyad. Sana also shared a photo with Saiyad Hasan. Sharing the pictures, Sana wrote, "Alhamdullilah ???? Allahumma barik ???? Becoming parents is one of the biggest blessings from Allah SWT."

Earlier, Sana Khan shared a video, and the text on it read, "All praises are due to you, along with your blessings and grace. Grant us the ability to raise him well, guide us to be kind and just toward him, and make him among your righteous servants." She added, "Dear loved one, with hearts full of gratitude, we humbly request your prayers for our baby boy. May Allah bless him with a life of health, happiness and barakah. We named our prince: Saiyad Hasan Jamil".

Sana Khan and her husband welcomed their second child, a baby boy, on January 5. "We are overjoyed to share the beautiful news of the arrival of our little prince! Alhamdulillah for everything we have. Alhamdulillah for everything e had. It's a Boy! Overflowing with joy, Big brother Tariq Jamil welcomes his baby brother! Born on 5th January 2025," read the text on announcement video. Sana captioned the post, "Allah Taala Ne Har Chiz Mukaddar Me Likhe Hai... Waqt Aane Par Allah Usko Atta Karta He Aur Jab Atta Karta He To Jholiya Khushiyon Se Bhar Deta Hai



(God has written everything in destiny...At the right time, God will grant it and when he does, life will be showered with happiness)....Happy Parents."In October 2020, Sana Khan announced her decision to step away from the entertainment industry, citing her desire to "serve humanity and follow the order of her Creator".Sana Khan and Mufti Anas Saiyad tied the knot on November 21, 2020, in Surat, Gujarat. They welcomed their first child, Saiyad Tariq Jamil, on July 5, 2023

# Dhoom Dhaam trailer: It's band, baaja and blast as Yami Gautam and Pratik Gandhi's wedding night turns into a nightmare

It's all about band, baaja, and plenty of fireworks in Yami Gautam and Pratik Gandhi's upcoming film Dhoom Dhaam. The makers unveiled the trailer on Monday, giving audiences a glimpse into this high-energy romantic action-comedy. Directed by Rishab Seth, the film also stars Ajaz Khan in a pivotal role.

The trailer introduces Koyal (Yami Gautam) and Veer (Pratik Gandhi) as newlyweds. The story kicks off with Ajaz Khan, playing a menacing antagonist, barging into Veer and Koyal's hotel room on their wedding night. He demands to know the whereabouts of a mysterious "Charlie." As Veer tries to reason with him, Koyal surprises everyone by picking up a gun and firing at the intruders to protect herself and her husband. This marks the beginning of a chaotic adventure, where the seeminaly timid bride transforms into a fierce, swearing, and unabashed protector. Meanwhile, Veer, the nervous groom, follows



Koyal's lead in an attempt to survive the mayhem. Though their wedding night turns into a nightmare, Koyal seems to revel in the chaos, enjoying the thrill of the unexpected adventure. The trailer also teases a cameo by Prateik Babbar, who plays Koyal's ex-boyfriend.

Earlier, the makers re-

leased the film's teaser, which hinted at the same wild and entertaining premise. Dhoom Dhaam is produced by B62 Studios, co-founded by Yami's husband Aditya Dhar, in collaboration with Jio Studios.Reflecting on their recent projects, Yami Gautam previously starred

in Article 370, a box-office hit. On the other hand, Pratik Gandhi featured in four films last year, including Madgaon Express, Do Aur Do Pyaar, Dedh Bigha Zameen, and Agni. While none of these were major box-office successes, Pratik received widespread acclaim for his performance in Madgaon

# Alia Bhatt reminisces about her wedding at Sabyasachi's 25th anniversary show, poses with Ananya Panday.



Alia Bhatt, Ananya Panday, Sabyasachi, sAlia Bhatt and Ananya Panday were a part of Sabyasachi Mukherjee's special show to commemorate 25 years of his label. Alia Bhatt, Ananya Panday and Deepika Padukone, among others, were a part of designer Sabyasachi Mukherjee's special show to commemorate 25 years of his label. Alia and Ananya took to their Instagram accounts to share glimpses of their looks for the night. The two were also seen posing for photos.

Along with a note for her favourite designer Sabyasachi, Alia shared a series of photos and videos. Alia captioned her post, "25 years of crafting dreams, preserving heritage, and redefining excellence. To me Sabya, you are more than a designer—you're a visionary and a storyteller." Alia, who wore a Sabyasachi creation for her wedding, added, "I've been privileged to wear your creations over the years, from global red carpets to personal mile-



stones (wedding memories I'll cherish forever). Your work isn't just fashion—it's art, blending tradition and innovation with unmatched finesse.""You once said, "I believe that the best fashion comes from a deep understanding of culture and heritage." And that's exactly what you do. Your commitment to Indian craftsmanship and culture is an inspiration to us all ???? Here's to many more years of brilliance and magic!!!!!???," wrote Alia.

Ananya Panday also shared her look for the night and wrote, "In @sabyasachiofficial for #25YearsOfSabyasachi?? What an experience!! What a show!! What a moment!! In awe and beyond?? big big big congratulations to the genius and the entire team??."See Ananya Panday's photos from Sabyasachi's 25th anniversary celebration:Stylist Anaita Shroff Adajania shared a photo of Alia Bhatt and Ananya Panday from the event and wrote, .

Ranga Reddy **SATURDAY 1 FEBRUARY 2025 INDIAN CHRONICLE** 

## Ranji Trophy after five years



GNS News Agency, Jan 31

KL RahulIndia's KL Rahul bats during play on day four of the third cricket test between India and Australia at the Gabba in Brisbane, Australia. KL Rahul has been named in Karnataka's 17-member squad for their final league match of the Ranji Trophy Elite Group C. Karnataka will take on table-topper Haryana on January 30 at M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru.Rahul had missed the previous game against Punjab due to an elbow injury but is fit and will practice with the team on Tuesday and Wednesday.It will be KL Rahul's first appearance for Karnataka in the Ranji Trophy since appearing against Bengal in Kolkata in 2020. His last domestic First-class appearance came during the Duleep Trophy in September last year when he turned out for India A in a losing cause.Cheteshwar Pujara on KL Rahul India vs Austra-

lia India's KL Rahul celebrates his fifty runs on the second day of the first cricket test between Australia and India in Perth, Australia, Saturday, Nov. 23, 2024. (AP Photo/Trevor Collens)Karnataka are placed third in Group C with 19 points behind leaders Haryana (26) and Kerala (21). Karnataka hammered Punjab by an innings and 207 runs in their last match. Karnataka can qualify for the knockouts by bonus points if they claim their second such win of the season over Haryana. After the Sydney Test, India head coach Gautam Gambhir had said that he would want everyone to play domestic cricket. "I would always like everyone to play domestic cricket. That is how much importance domestic cricket needs to be given."In February last year, then BCCI secretary Jay Shah had written to top cricketers, centrally contracted as well as with India A, warning them that domestic cricket remains a "critical yardstick for selection" to the national team and non-participation will have "severe implications". "Legends like Sunil Gavaskar exemplified this dedication, playing club cricket the morning they arrived from an international tour. Domestic cricket was seen not just as a commitment but as a responsibility and a source of pride," Shah had written. Karnataka squad against Haryana: Mayank Agarwal (captain), KL Rahul, Shreyas Gopal (vice-captain), Devdutt Padikkal, KV Aneesh, R Smaran, KL Shrijith (wk), Abhinav Manohar, Hardik Raj, Prasidh Krishna, Vidwath Kaverappa, Vasuki Koushik, Abhilash Shetty, Yashovardhan Parantap, Nikin Jose, Sujay Sateri (wk), Mohsin Khan.

### Smriti Mandhana named ICC Women's ODI Cricketer of the Year

GNS News Agency, Jan 31

Smriti mandhana india vs irelandSmriti Mandhana of India Team with the Series trophy during the 3rd ODI Match between India and Ireland held at the Niranjan Shah Stadium, Rajkot, India on the 15th January 2025. (Sportzpics)India opener Smriti Mandhana has been named as ICC Women's ODI Cricketer of the Year on Monday.

The India vice-captain Mandhana set new career standards in ODIs, scoring more runs than she ever has before in a calendar year, racking up 747 runs in 13 innings across 2024. The southpaw's tally was the highest among leading run-scorer in Women's ODIs in 2024, ahead of Laura Wolvaardt (697), Tammy Beaumont (554) and Hayley Matthews (469). Mandhana has been in red-hot form in 2025

Smriti Mandhana Ireland Smriti Mandhana of India batting during the 3rd ODI Match between India and Ireland held at the Niranjan Shah Stadium, Rajkot, India on the 15th January 2025. Earlier this month against Ireland, Mandhana slammed fastest ODI century for India. She reached the milestone in just 70 balls and bettered captain Harmanpreet Kaur's previous record by 17 balls. In in the latest ICC women's ODI batting rankings, she is moved to No 2 position after an impressive series against Ireland.

Mandhana s the only Indian in the top 10. Against Ireland, she has scored 135 in the third ODI and 41 and 73 in the first and second matches, respectively. She currently has 738 points, while South Africa's Laura Wolvaardt sits at the top with 773 points, followed closely by Sri Lanka's



Chamari Athapaththu in third with 733 points.

Smriti Mandhana smashed the fastest ODI hundred by an Indian woman against Ireland in Rajkot. (BCCI) Smriti Mandhana smashed the fastest ODI hundred by an Indian woman against Ireland in Rajkot. (BCCI)"It's been an absolute honour to win the ICC Women's ODI Cricketer of the Year Award for 2024. I remember how special it was to have won this award in 2018 for the first time. It had fuelled my ambition to do well for my country. And now, having won the award for the second time it will motivate me even more to strive for excellence," she said. "It is an immense joy and a matter of pride to represent my country at the highest level and it makes me happy to play a role in helping the team succeed. I want to dedicate this award to my teammates, coaches and family who have been my absolute pillars of support."

### Azmatullah Omarzai named ICC Men's ODI Cricketer of the Year

GNS News Agency, Jan 31

Azmatullah OmarzaiAfghanistan's Azmatullah Omarzai celebrates scoring a half century during the Cricket World Cup match against India. Afghanistan all-rounder Azmatullah Omarzai, known for his dynamic pace bowling and powerful batting, was on Monday named the ICC Men's ODI Cricketer of the Year 2024. The 24-year-old built on an impressive 2023 to become one of the world's leading One-Day International performers last year."I am very proud to have been named the ICC Men's ODI Cricketer of the Year after a memorable year. It is an honour that I cherish both as an individual and as part of a talented Afghanistan team," he said."I would like to thank my teammates, coaches, support staff and fans for their support and prayers. It is thanks to these that I have been able to win this award."

Omarzai also enjoyed a strong year in T20Is and franchise cricket, but it was in ODIs where he proved most influential. He finished the year as his national team's second-highest run scorer behind Rahmanullah Gurbaz and second-highest wicket-taker behind AM Ghazanfar, with Afghanistan winning four of their five ODI series in 2024.He scored 417 runs while taking 17 wickets in 14 matches last year. His consistent performances powered Afghanistan to four consecutive series wins over Ireland, South Africa,



Bangladesh, and Zimbabwe. The Afghanistan all-rounder was a standout performer with bat and ball throughout the year, scoring his runs at an average of 52.12 and bagging his wickets at 20.47. Omarzai's brilliance lay not just in the overall numbers but in his individual performances, starting off in his very first ODI of the year, where he smashed an unbeaten 149 in a remarkable rearguard effort in the defeat against Sri Lanka. A destructive 86 not out from just 50 deliveries against South Africa was another memorable performance, with his rapid scoring helping set up a crushing win in the second ODI to win the series.

### Manchester United manager Ruben Amorim says he'd pick 63-year-old goalkeeping coach over Marcus Rashford

GNS News Agency, Jan 31

Manchester United manager AmorimManchester United's head coach Ruben Amorim gives instructions during the English Premier League soccer match between Fulham and Manchester United at Craven Cottage stadium in London. Manchester United manager Ruben Amorim didn't minced his words on England forward Marcus Rashford

Ruben Amorim said he would rather give a place on the bench to his 63-year-old goalkeeping coach Jorge than Marcus Rashford right now, because of his lack of effort in the training.Marcus Rashford has not been included in Manchester United's matchday squad in the last six weeks. Out-of-favor Rashford has not played for his hometown club since December 12 and seems firmly out in the cold under the United manager"It's always the same reason - the training, the way I see a footballer should do in life. It's every day, every detail," Amorim told reporters, when asked why Rashford was not available against Fulham.

"If things don't change, I will not change. It's the same situation for every player, if you do the maximum and right things we can use every player. "You can see on the bench we miss a bit of pace on the bench, but I would put [Manchester United goalkeeper coach Jorge] Vital before a



player who doesn't give the maximum every day."marcus Rashford Manchester United Manchester United's Marcus Rashford smiles during the warm up before the English Premier League soccer match between Manchester United and Newcastle at the Old Trafford stadium in Manchester, England, Monday, With January Transfer window closing on February 3, the future of Marcus Rashford is unclear. Rashford has posted a congratulatory post for his Manchester United teammates on his social media. There has been reported interest from Saudi Arabia and Monaco, but no confirmation of an official bid. The problem for Rashford and United is that he is only a year-and-a-half into a lucrative contract reportedly worth nearly \$400,000 a

### KL Rahul to play for Karnataka in West Indies beat Pakistan by 120-run in 2nd Test within three days in Multan



West IndiesWest Indies Jomel Warrican (center), and teammates celebrate after the dismissal of Pakistan's Sajid Khan during the day-three of the second cricket test match between Pakistan and West Indies, in Multan, Pakistan. West Indies spun out Pakistan for 133 to record a thumping series-leveling 120-run win inside three days of the second and final test on Monday. Pakistan, which needed a further 178 runs for an improbable win, fell quickly to Jomel Warrican's left-arm spin on Day 3 as the West Indies gained its first test win in Pakistan in over 34 years.

Warrican claimed 5-27 to finish the series with a se-

ries-leading 19 wickets and also pushed Pakistan to the bottom of the World Test Championship table as both teams ended its two-year campaigns. Resuming at 76-4 Monday, Pakistan lost both overnight batters without adding to the total, as Kevin Sinclair (3-61) had Saud Shakeel caught in the slips off the third ball of the morning and Warrican clean bowled nightwatchman Kashif Ali in the next over. Mohammad Rizwan (25) and Salman Ali Agha (15) added 39 runs before both fell to the left-arm spin of Warrican. Salman had already survived a close stumping chance off Warrican but was finally deceived by a looping delivery and was out lbw, while Rizwan couldn't read Warrican's brilliant delivery that spun back into him and knocked back the stumps. The spinner then wrapped up West Indies' famous win by clean bowling Sajid Khan.

It was a remarkable turnaround for West Indies which lost the first test by 127 runs at the same venue and were 7-38 on Day 1 of the second test before its tailenders lifted them to 163 all out for a slender first innings lead of nine runs. Captain Kraigg Brathwaite's half century in the second innings then led West Indies to post 244 for an overall lead of 253 runs before Pakistan's batters fell into their own trap of a turning pitch against the tourists spinners. West Indies finished eighth on the WTC table and Pakistan was at No. 9 with Australia and South Africa already qualifying

### Uzbekistan GM refuses to shake hands with Vaishali on 'religious grounds'

GNS News Agency, Jan 31

Vaishali Rameshbabu (right) and Uzbekistan grandmaster Nodirbek Yakubboev during their match in Tata Steel Chess Tournament. Vaishali Rameshbabu (right) and Uzbekistan grandmaster Nodirbek Yakubboev during their match in Tata Steel Chess Tournament. Uzbekistan grandmaster Nodirbek Yakubboev has cleared the air on he refuted to shake hands with Vaishali Rameshbabu in the ongoing Tata Steel chess tournament. Nodirbek Yakubboev has cited his religious beliefs behind his action. The Uzbekistan grandmaster is currently joint leader of the tournament with world champion D Gukesh and R Praggnanandhaa. "Dear chess friends, I want to explain the situation that happened in the game with Vaishali. With all due respect to women and Indian chess players, I want to inform everyone that I do not touch other women for religious reasons," Nodirbek Yakubboev wrote on X. Nodirbek Yakubboev and Vaishali Nodirbek Yakubboev refused to shake hands with Vaishali. (Screengrab)"I respect Vaishali and her brother as the strongest chess players in India. If I have offended her with my behavior, I apologize." I want to explain the situation that happened in the game with Vaishali.



With all due respect to women and Indian chess players, I want to inform everyone that I do not touch other women for religious reasons." I do what I need to do. I do not insist others not to shake hands with the opposite gender or for women to wear hijab or burqa. It is their business what to

"Today I told Irina Bulmaga about it. She agreed to it. But when I came to the playing hall, the arbiters told me that I should at least do Namaste as a gesture. "In the games with Divya and Vaishali I couldn't tell them about it before the game and there was an awkward situation.'

### Pragg and Gukesh share lead at Tata Steel Masters after draw

GNS News Agency, Jan 31

Wijk Aan Zee (The Netherlands): Continuing his fine form in the Tata Steel Masters, Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa played out a solid draw with world champion D Gukesh in the eighth round here. Playing the white side of a Berlin defense, Praggnanandhaa had a slightly favourable position optically but Gukesh was always on the guard. It was in the early middle game that Gukesh sacrificed a pawn to get his counterplay rolling, and even though Praggnanandhaa tried to make use of it, the game was alwavs closer to a draw.

As the Queens got traded, the players arrived at a rookand-minor-piece endgame wherein Gukesh found the best resources and even got an outside passed pawn.With Praggnanandhaa's rook having the task of working against the pawn, the result of the game was never in doubt. The game was drawn after 33 moves.

With this draw, both Praggnanandhaa and Gukesh continue to share the lead on 5.5 points with Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan, who defeated Vladimir Fedoseev of Slovenia. Among other Indians in the fray, Grandmaster P Harikrishna played out a draw with highest-ranked Dutchman Anish Giri. The Arkhengelsk variation in the Ruy Lopez with black gave Giri an easy equality in the early middle game and the pieces got exchanged in a heap. The players arrived at an absolutely level rook-andpawn endgame where the draw was a just result. Harikrishna moved to four points out of a possible eight while Anish took his tally to 3.5 following his seventh straight draw.Arjun Erigaisi played out a draw with Alexey Sarana of Serbia while Leon Luke Mendonca also got the same result against Jorden van Foreest of Holland. Erigaisi, on two points, is a half point behind Mendonca. In the Challengers section, Nguyen Thai Van Dam of the Czech Republic shot into sole lead on six points defeating 14-yearold Chinese Miaoyi Lu. R Vaishali was held to a draw by



Arthur Piipers of Holland while Divva Deshmukh lost another game in the event against Kazybek Nogerbek of Kazakhstan. With five rounds to come, the battle comes to a halt with a rest day and the matches will resume on Tuesday. This will be the second rest day in the traditional event that has been running for almost nine decades.

Results: Round 8

Masters: R Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 5.5) drew with D Gukesh (Ind, 5.5); P Harikrishna (4) drew with Anish Giri (Ned, 3.5); Leon Luke Mendonca (Ind, 2.5) drew with Jorden van Foreest (Ned, 3) Arjun Erigaisi (Ind, 2) drew with Alexey Sarana (Srb, 4.5); Vincent Keymer (Ger) lost to Fabiano Caruana (USA, 4.5); Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzb, 5.5) drew with Vladimir Fedoseev (Slo, 5); Max Warmerdam (Ned, 3) lost to Wei Yi (Chn, 4.5)

Challengers: Arthur Pijpers (Ned) drew with R Vaishali (Ind, 4.5); Benjamin Bok (Ned, 5) drew Frederik Svane (Ger, 4.5); Yakubboev Nodirbek (Uzb) beat Irina Bulmaga (Rom, 1); Divya Deshmukh Ind, 1.5) lost to Nogerbek Kazybek (Kaz, 5); Nguyen Thai Van Dam (Cze, 6) beat Miaoyi Lu (Chn, 4.5); Suleymanli Aydin (Aze, 5) beat Faustino Oro (Arg, 2.5); Gurel Ediz (Tur, 4) drew with Erwin L'Ami (Ned,

### **Bumrah attends Coldplay** concert in Ahmedabad, fans go wild

GNS News Agency, Jan 31

Hyderabad: On the 26th of January, Ahmedabad witnessed an extraordinary fusion of two worlds that rarely meet—cricket and music. At the iconic Narendra Modi Stadium, where cricketing legends have created history, Coldplay's electrifying concert took centre stage, bringing together fans from all walks of life. And among the star-studded crowd was none other than India's cricketing sensation, Jasprit Bumrah. Although Bumrah is currently not playing due to injury, his presence at the Coldplay concert made

The Indian pacer, dressed in a black shirt, was seen thoroughly enjoying the atmosphere, immersed in the magical performance by one of the world's biggest bands. His love for music was evident, but it wasn't just about the concert. It was about the recognition he received that evening, a tribute from the music world to one of cricket's finest. The crowd went wild when Coldplay's lead singer, Chris Martin, dedicated a special performance to Bumrah. As the band played, Martin sang: "Well, Jasprit Bumrah, my beautiful brother. The best bowler in the whole of cricket. We did not enjoy watching you destroy England, wicket after wicket".

The heartfelt tribute was a testament to the respect and admiration Chris Martin and the band have for the pacer, who has become a cricketing legend. But that wasn't all -Coldplay took the tribute a step further by displaying Bumrah's signed Test jersey on stage as a mark of respect to the pacer, performing in his home city of Ahmedabad. Chris Martin had previously honoured Bumrah in Navi Mumbai, calling him "No. 1 in the world," cementing his status as a true global icon. Bumrah, clearly touched by the gesture, later shared a post on X: "

This made me smile! Incredible vibe at the @coldplay concert in Mumbai (from what I've seen here) and even more special to be mentioned." He also shared a video of the moment. On social media platform X, fans couldn't stop buzzing. From trending hashtags to posts flooding the platform, the excitement surrounding both the Coldplay concert and Bumrah's appearance was palpable. One fan wrote: "After all the shenanigans across the India shows!" While another posted: "When Coldplay meets the cold-blooded king of yorkers! Jasprit Bumrah, the GOAT honoured at the grandest stage. Legends celebrating a legend! In what an achievement to the ONE and ONLY BUMRAH."

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