

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
HYDERABAD | THURSDAY | 19 FEBRUARY 2026



WEATHER

Max: 30.2° C
Min: 19.0° C
RH: 47%
Rainfall: 0mm

Forecast: Partly cloudy sky
Max/Min temp. 32/19 °C

ASTROGUIDE

Vishwawasu: Uttarayana
Tithi: Phalguna Shukla Vidiya till 3.55 pm
Star: Purvabhadra till 8.48 pm
Varyyam: From 6.07 am (Friday)
Durmuhurtam: 10.35 am to 11.21 am; 3.11 pm to 3.58 pm
Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm
HJRI CALENDAR
1st Ramzan 1447 H
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.40 am
Zohar: 12.40 pm
Asar: 4.42 pm
Maghrib: 6.25 pm
Isha: 7.32 pm
SUNRISE TOMORROW 06.40 AM
SUNSET TODAY 18.19 PM
MOONRISE 07.46 AM
MOONSET 20.04 PM

WORLD | 13

Zelenskyy says Russia stalling, talks conclude



SPORTS | 16

Team India defeat Netherlands by 17 runs

TABLOID

The scent-sational food-body essence

Factories will move out of core city: Revanth Hyd to turn net zero city by 2034, says CM

L. VENKAT RAM REDDY | DC HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Wednesday said that Hyderabad will achieve Net Zero emissions by 2034 and a city-wide carbon footprint audit will be undertaken shortly.

Addressing Mumbai Climate Week 2026 in Mumbai on Wednesday, the Chief Minister said that within the next five years there would be no factories within the Hyderabad urban area, as all manufacturing units will be shifted from the core urban region to peri-urban zones.

He highlighted sustainability initiatives in Hyderabad, including the rejuvenation of river Musi, restoration of lakes, strengthening of water and energy grids, and the establishment of HYDRAA, described as India's first dedicated environmental police force.

Describing energy as central to economic growth, the Chief Minister said development is measured by power generation and consumption. Telangana currently consumes an average of 16,610



From left: Charity Kathambi Chepkwony, Member of Parliament, Republic of Kenya; Suman Bery, Vice Chairman, NITI Aayog; Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy; and Rwitwika Bhattacharya, CEO, Swaniti Initiative, during a session at Mumbai Climate Week 2026 in Mumbai on Wednesday.

● **THE CHIEF MINISTER** says axes on electric vehicles have been removed, resulting in higher adoption. Discussions are under way with EV firms for manufacturing investments.

MW per day. The peak demand recorded last year was 17,162 MW, which is expected to exceed 19,000 MW this year and projected to cross 34,000 MW by 2034 as the state targets a \$1 trillion economy. Nearly 25 per cent of the state's energy is sourced

from green power, he said. In Hyderabad, he said, axes on electric vehicles have been removed, resulting in higher adoption.

Discussions are under way with EV firms for manufacturing investments. Over 2 lakh auto rickshaws are being retrofitted towards green alternatives, more than 3,500 RTC buses are being replaced with electric buses, and the Hyderabad Metro is being expanded from 71 km to over 200 km, he added.

■ **Page 5: CM calls for growth powered by green energy**

Modi holds 7 bilaterals, to open AI Summit's plenary

India, France, Brazil, Finland to push global AI partnership

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC NEW DELHI, FEB. 18

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday began a series of bilateral meetings with visiting world leaders ahead of the Leaders' Plenary of the India AI Impact Summit in New Delhi.

The Prime Minister held back-to-back meetings at Hyderabad House with Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, Bhutanese Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay, Finnish Prime Minister Petteri Orpo, Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic, Kazakh Prime Minister Olzhas Bektenov, Estonian President Alar Karis and Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic.

In the evening, he welcomed the dignitaries at Bharat Mandapam, the summit venue, and hosted a dinner. The leaders also attended cultural performances. On Thursday, the Prime Minister will inaugurate the Leaders' segment of the India AI Impact Summit. The opening session will also be addressed by French President Emmanuel Macron and United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres. The programme includes a visit to the India AI Impact Expo 2026 and participation in the Leaders' Plenary focusing on AI governance, infrastructure and international cooperation.

French President Macron arrived in New Delhi after talks with Modi in Mumbai. Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Dutch Prime Minister Dick Schoof, Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, Slovak President Peter Pellegrini and Mauritius Prime Minister Navinchandra Ramgoolam also reached Capital.

During talks with Sánchez, the two leaders reviewed bilateral cooperation across trade, technology, defence, space, renewable energy and cultural exchanges. They welcomed progress in the port aircraft final assembly line at Vadodara and stressed defence industrial collaboration.

With Tobgay, Modi discussed cooperation in AI and digital technologies and reaffirmed India's support for Bhutan's development priorities.

In meetings with Karis and Orpo, discussions centred on technology partnerships, trade, quantum and 6G collaboration.

\$50 bn

● Microsoft's planned investment in Global South by 2030.

- Where Microsoft intends to put money?**
- AI infrastructure.
 - Skilling programmes.
 - Multilingual AI tools.
 - Local innovation support.
 - AI adoption measurement.

Alphabet CEO Sundar Pichai recalled \$15 Billion AI Hub in India

- What it supports?**
- New subsea cable routes.
 - AI connectivity: US-India-Southern Hemisphere.
 - Gigawatt-scale compute capacity



Prime Minister Narendra Modi, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and other world leaders watch a performance by artists during the AI Impact Summit, in New Delhi on Wednesday.

■ **Page 11: India poised for 'extraordinary' AI growth, says Pichai**

\$30 bn

● Research push: AI for Science Impact Challenge

COUNTER POINT



IN BRIEF

Maha scraps 5% Muslim quota

Mumbai, Feb. 18: The BJP-led Maharashtra government has formally nullified the 5 per cent quota provided to Muslims in jobs and education, introduced by the erstwhile Congress-NCP dispensation in 2014 through an ordinance, but which never became a law, putting an end to the legal limbo. The move evoked sharp reactions from the Opposition.

■ Full report on Page 10

New PAN rules for 5 transactions

Mumbai, Feb. 18: The Centre has released the draft Income-Tax Rules, 2026, proposing higher thresholds for quoting PAN across five key financial transactions, offering relief to taxpayers and small businesses that frequently handle cash. They are cash deposits and withdrawals if aggregate cash deposits or withdrawals from one or more bank or post office accounts exceed ₹10 lakh in a financial year.

■ Full report on Page 14

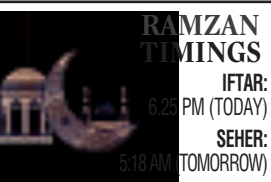
MOON SIGHTED, HOLY MONTH OF RAMZAN BEGINS

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

The sighting of the Moon on Wednesday marked the commencement of the Islamic holy month of Ramzan, with mosques across the city holding prayers soon after the siren announcement.

Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy and minister for minority welfare Mohammad Azharuddin directed power utilities to ensure uninterrupted power supply during Sehri and Iftar hours. Municipal authorities have been instructed to maintain sanitation in and around mosques throughout the month.

■ Page 2: Shops allowed to remain open till 5 am



Revanth attends Modi dinner, to join AICC meet

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy will attend a meeting of the All India Congress Committee in New Delhi on Thursday as part of the party's nationwide review and strategy exercise. Sources said the AICC has been holding similar meetings with leaders from 11 states to review organisational strength and electoral strategy ahead of the 2029 Lok Sabha elections. The Telangana review assumes significance as the Congress is currently in power in the state.

The meeting, convened by AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge, Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and AICC general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal, will focus on reviewing the performance of the two-year-old Congress government in Telangana and strength-

ening the party organisation in the state.

According to party sources, issues such as Cabinet expansion, filling of nominated posts including corporation chairpersons and working presidents, and coordination between the government and the party are expected to be discussed. Meeting will be held at Indira Bhavan, the AICC headquarters, at 10 am.

AICC Telangana in-charge Meenakshi Natarajan and AICC secretaries handling Telangana affairs are expected to participate. Revanth Reddy left for Delhi on Wednesday after attending Mumbai Climate Week. He also attended a dinner hosted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the national capital on the occasion of the India AI Impact Summit and is scheduled to participate in summit sessions on Thursday.

■ Page 5: Leaders to review schemes, Cabinet expansion

EC to hold elections for two RS seats

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

The Election Commission (EC) of India on Wednesday released the schedule for the biennial elections to the Rajya Sabha to fill two seats from Telangana that are set to fall vacant in April. The six-year terms of sitting members K.R. Suresh Reddy of the BRS and Abhishek Manu Singhvi of the Congress will end on April 9, necessitating elections to the Upper House from the state.

According to the schedule, the notification for the elections will be issued on February 26. The last date for filing nominations is March 5, scrutiny of nominations will be taken up on March 6 and the final date for withdrawal of candidature is March 9.

■ Page 7: Congress eyes sweep in Rajya Sabha

INSIDE

■ Page 10: 37 Rajya Sabha seats go polling on March 16: EC

BIG BOOST Hyderabad's start-ups enter mature phase, all set to make a mark on national scene

Hyd firm may turn India's first unicorn in space tech

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

Hyderabad-based space-tech start-up Skyroot Aerospace could soon become India's first space-tech unicorn, as it plans to raise about \$200 million (around ₹1,800 crore) in its fresh round of funding.

The company was valued at \$519 million in its 2023 funding round, up from \$163 million a year earlier. In 2023, Singapore-based investors Temasek and GIC invested \$27.5 million in the company. Skyroot has appointed

Kotak Mahindra Capital to advise on the sale of a minority stake. The company is expected to issue primary shares to new investors, with no dilution for existing shareholders. Founded in 2018 by former Isro engineers Pawan Kumar Chandana and Naga Bharath Daka, the company provides on-demand satellite launch services and focuses on low-cost launch vehicles.

In 2022, Skyroot became the first Indian private firm to launch a rocket

into space with the Vikram-S sub-orbital mission. It is preparing for the first orbital launch of its Vikram-I rocket in 2026. The Vikram series is designed for small satellite launches and incorporates 3D-printed engines and carbon-fibre structures. The company operates the Infinity Campus, described as India's first private integrated rocket development facility. It plans to scale up launch frequency to one mission per month by 2027.



CDFD-incubated firm eyes world's first obesity vaccine

DEEPIKA PASHAM | DC HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

Hyderabad-based biotech start-up Utopia Therapeutics, incubated at the Centre for DNA Fingerprinting and Diagnostics (CDFD), is developing what it describes as an immunotherapy-based obesity vaccine and has secured a US patent for its lead candidate.

The company said its candidate, UT-009, is designed to stimulate the immune system to produce antibodies targeting fat accumulation and

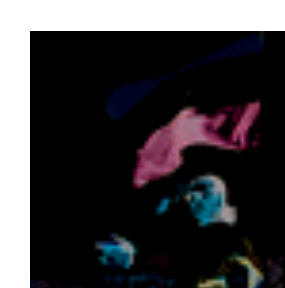
abnormal lipid levels. It aims to offer longer-lasting effects compared to daily injections or tablets.

Founded by Dr Uday Saxena and Dr Gopi Kadiyala, the start-up recently received US Patent No. 12,502,428 from the US Patent and Trademark Office covering the vaccine composition and methods of use.

Dr Saxena said the product could take about five years to reach the market and added that the company would continue to oper-

ate from the CDFD incubation centre until commercialisation. He noted that obesity represents a \$30 billion global market.

In addition to the vaccine programme, the company is developing NexaSweat, a functional sweetener positioned as supporting gut health and metabolic resilience. The product was showcased at a start-up-investor meet organised by Whale Tank BioCatalysts at the Indian School of Business.



President Droupadi Murmu and Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi at the International Fleet Review on Wednesday.

Indian Navy hosts global fleet review

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC with bureau inputs VISAKHAPATNAM, NEW DELHI, FEB. 18

President Droupadi Murmu watched the three dimensional process of the Indian Navy at the International Fleet Review held at the anchorage, 22km off the Visakhapatnam shore, on Wednesday morning. This is the third International Fleet Review hosted by India, after Mumbai (2001) and Visakhapatnam (2016).

The President, as supreme commander of defence forces, entered the presidential yacht INS Sumedha and led the presidential column. She reviewed 71 ships including 19 from various foreign countries.

■ Page 10: India hails naval strength, global unity

EVENTS TODAY

- Cultural programmes by Kruthi Cultural Organisation**
Time: 6 pm
Venue: Ravindra Bharathi
- Srirama Bhakti Tatva Geeta Sravanti by Sri Bhupathi Nagendhra**
Time: 11.30 am
Venue: AAA- Allied Artists Auditorium
- Sharon Verma Live: A standup comedy show**
Time: 8 pm
Venue: KLN Prasad Auditorium
- Yoga Adhyayana Shibir: Holistic wellness course for all**
Time: 5 pm
Venue: Sri Ramakrishna Math

SHORT TAKE

BHARATHI BUILDERS BOOKED IN ₹5.39 CRORE SCAM

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

The Cyberabad Economic Offences Wing (EOW) has registered a fresh case against Bharathi Builders India Private Limited and its founders for allegedly duping their customers of ₹5.39 crore in a pre-launch scam. According to officials from the EOW, the persons named in the FIR are chairman Dupati Nagaraju, managing director Shivarama Krishna, CEO Ponnari, and shareholders Sunil Kumar Ahuja and Ashish Ahuja.

According to the complaint, the company promoted a pre-launch real estate project at Bhanur, promising investors that their money would double within two years under a "pre-launch offer".

P Kishore Kumar, a private employee from Chikkadpally, said he agreed to purchase a 1,150 sqft double-bedroom flat in the proposed project. Accordingly, in October 2021, he paid ₹11.5 lakh towards the flat, known to be half of the total cost. During a later visit to the site, he noticed a board showing that the land was owned by Sunil Kumar Ahuja and his associated companies.

When inquired, Kishore learnt that a substantial portion of the land had been transferred without informing nearly 300 customers. Kishore subsequently found that at least 22 investors had collectively paid ₹5.39 crore and faced similar issues. The victims approached the EOW.

In 2024, the EOW had registered another case against the firm, and named Dupati Nagaraju and Shivarama Krishna in the FIR, for allegedly collecting nearly ₹60 crore from around 350 investors for a project named "Bharathi Lake View" in Kompally, spread over 6.23 acres. The land was reportedly sold to another party instead of constructing flats. The accused were arrested in that case.

Police said that a cheating case has been registered against the company and further investigation into the incident is underway.

● DURING A LATER site visit, he saw a board stating the land belonged to Sunil Kumar Ahuja and his companies. Kishore discovered that much of it was transferred without notifying around 300 customers. At least 22 investors had paid ₹5.39 crore and faced similar issues, prompting them to approach the Cyberabad Economic Offences Wing.

NHRC: Probe into drug trial abuse

Centre, ICMR directed to investigate case

DC IMPACT

BALU PULIPAKA | DC HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has directed the Union health ministry, and the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) to investigate the case involving a drug trial in Hyderabad last year which resulted in one of the trial participants suffering a heart attack.

The NHRC, in its directions issued on Wednesday, said allegations in a complaint it received over the issues faced by the participant, "prima facie seem to be violations of the human rights of the victim." In the directions, the NHRC made it clear that the complaint must be investigated and an action taken report submitted to it in four weeks.

The complaint with NHRC was filed by human rights lawyer Rama Rao Immaneni following reports in *Deccan Chronicle* on the trials and tribulations of Dipanker Dey, a migrant worker who signed up for the trial that was being conducted by a city-based clinical research organisation (CRO) for a breast cancer drug. During the course of the trial, Dey, reportedly suffered a cardiac arrest but was not attended to by the CRO which sent him off to Gandhi Hospital to get treatment. Dey had also complained then when he was fighting with the CRO that he was under intense pres-



The report published by Deccan Chronicle on September 5, 2025.

● DURING THE TRIAL, Dey suffered a cardiac arrest but was sent to Gandhi Hospital by the CRO. Pressured to delete posts about his health and financial struggles, he accepted compensation.

sure from the CRO to delete his posts on social media platforms about the problems he was facing both health and financial wise, finally had said he was willing to take any compensation he can get and give a letter to the CRO giving it a clean chit, and after a nearly two month struggle, returned to his hometown Kolkata.

"He was under severe duress and with no one helping him and the CRO pressurising him for any compensation, he was likely tricked by agents to take whatever money the company gave him in return for his silence.

Now that the NHRC has initiated action, he will hopefully receive justice finally," Rama Rao Immaneni said. In its notice to the Union health ministry, the NHRC said "the complainant alleged that a

poor and illiterate labourer was made to participate in a clinical trial for a breast cancer drug by an agent who made false promises. During the trial, the victim suffered a heart attack but did not receive proper medical care until the police intervened." The NHRC continued, "Afterwards, the clinical research organisation and the sponsoring pharmaceutical company pressured the victim to sign a false declaration claiming he was cured."

When he refused, the ethics committee and others involved failed to report the adverse event to the drug authorities. As a result, the victim suffered a second heart stroke, leading to permanent disability and loss of livelihood."

"The complainant has requested that the licenses of the companies involved be cancelled and that they be ordered to pay compensation of ₹1 crore to the victim. They also requested legal action against those responsible for exploiting poor and uneducated individuals in clinical trials," the NHRC said.



Muslims gather for Taraweeh prayers after the moon sighting, celebrating the start of the month of Ramzan with devotion on Wednesday. — DC

Shops allowed to remain open till 5 am, says govt

FROM PAGE 1

Speaking to DC, Syed Azmatullah Husseni, chairman of the Telangana Waqf Board, said, "All committees or Mutawallis have been advised to undertake repair works in their mosques well in advance to avoid any inconvenience to pil-

grims." Syed Azmatullah Husseni also appealed to all concerned departments, committees and community members to extend full cooperation to ensure peaceful celebration in the holy month of Ramzan.

The Telangana Labour Commissioner ordered shops and establish-

ments to operate beyond regular hours till 5 am from February 19 to March 20, and allowed them to remain open till 5 am.

The government has already allowed its employees following Islam to leave at 4 pm and Urdu medium schools to announce half-day working hours till March 20.

SPRITUAL | OBSERVANCE

Ash Wednesday observed with prayer

Christians begin lent with fasting

SANJAY SAMUEL PAUL | DC HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

Lent, the season of fasting and prayer observed by Christians from Ash Wednesday for over 40 days, commenced with special services across churches in the city.

The faithful marked the day with food restrictions, fasting, and a commitment to simplicity, purity of thought and extended prayer: From morning until night, preachers explained messages from the Bible, while ashes were applied on foreheads as a symbol of repentance, humility and mortality. Traditionally, the ashes are made from burnt palm leaves.

At Centenary Baptist Church, Secunderabad, Rev. Dr Y. Rajendra Prasad, registrar of Andhra Christian



A priest marks the foreheads of devotees with ash as a symbol of repentance at St Joseph's Cathedral on Ash Wednesday. — DEEPAK DESHPANDE

Theological College, delivered the Ash Wednesday message, describing the beginning of Lent as a sea-

son of sober reflection, prayer and fasting. Cardinal Poola Anthony led the Ash Wednesday

mass at St Mary's Basilica, Secunderabad, applying ashes on the foreheads of the faithful. He reminded worshippers of the words from Ecclesiastes 3:20: "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." He said Lent breaks routine and disturbs comfort, inviting the community to stand before God with humility, and called for repentance.

Rev. G. Kiran Kumar of CSI Wesley Church noted that churches will hold special services each morning during Lent, with Holy Communion administered every Wednesday and meditations on Friday evenings. The season will continue with key observances: Palm Sunday on 29 March, Maundy Thursday on 2 April, Good Friday on 3 April and Easter Sunday on 5 April.

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As per result compiled till 17 Feb. 2026 (07:00 PM)

*Subject to the scholarship rules and the T&Cs.

IN BRIEF

Couple robbed of gold chain

Hyderabad: A couple was allegedly threatened at knife-point and robbed of a three-tola gold chain at an open layout near Shankarpally at around 5.30 pm on Wednesday. Shankarpally inspector Srinivas Goud said the incident occurred when the complainant Srikanth along with his partner was travelling from Isnapur to Vikarabad. The duo stopped at an open layout near Shankarpally, when four masked men riding on two separate two-wheelers, that too without having number plates, allegedly threatened them with a knife. The assailants then snatched a three-tola gold chain from the woman's neck and fled the spot.

2 die in accident on way to Hyd

Hyderabad: Two persons died and three others sustained injuries after their car allegedly rammed into an unknown vehicle near the toll gate on the Shadnagar Bypass road late on Tuesday night. According to Shadnagar sub-inspector, Rajesh, deceased were identified as Purshottam Reddy and Madhusudhan Reddy. Both were running businesses in the city. Five persons were returning to Hyderabad in a car after visiting a temple in Arunachalam, when the incident occurred. Police said the car rammed into an unidentified vehicle moving ahead of it towards the city from Shadnagar. What exactly led to the accident was not known yet and it is being investigated.

Migrant worker dies by suicide

Hyderabad: A 21-year-old labourer died by suicide at a construction site at Nanakramguda in Gachibowli on Monday night. According to police, deceased has been identified as Dalendra Kumar. A complaint filed by deceased's 40-year-old uncle Tuman Lal, stated that Dalendra was staying with him for the past three months and both were working at the same site. Both are natives of Chhattisgarh. Gachibowli police said at around 9 pm on February 16 (Monday), they had dinner together, during which Dalendra was alleged to be in an inebriated condition. Later at about 10 pm, he died by suicide in his room. Tuman said Dalendra was addicted to alcohol and was brought to the city for work and also to get rid of taking liquor.

Dundigal GHMC office raided by ACB

Hyderabad: Sleuths from the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Wednesday raided the town planning department at Dundigal GHMC office in Malkajgiri district. It is reported a billing collector was caught for accepting bribes during the raid. Sources said ACB officials reached Dundigal GHMC office before the arrival of staff and officials of the municipal corporation. After some time when employees occupied their chairs, the ACB officials carried out checks on the office premises. During checks, a billing collector was caught while he was accepting the bribe money. However, the ACB officials were yet to confirm the trap. The deputy commissioner's office and his chamber were inspected by the ACB officers. Members of the raiding team reportedly collected records, documents and others that were issued recently.

MEMBERS OF PVT JUNIOR COLLEGES STAGE PROTEST

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

Managements of private junior colleges staged a protest inside the Telangana Board of Intermediate Education secretary's chambers on Wednesday over the issue of hall tickets for the upcoming intermediate public examinations. The Telangana Private Junior Colleges' Managements Association urged the Board to allow 300 students to pay the examination fee. They said these students could not pay on time due to negligence of some principals. The association asked the board to permit fee payment with fines imposed on colleges and issue hall tickets for the exams starting February 25. The managements also objected to hall tickets being hosted on the board's website. Meanwhile, the board said hall tickets have been uploaded in each college's login for download and distribution.

Man tracks ex-wife on SM, stabs her to death

Accused locks doors, stabs woman multiple times

PRIYA RATHNAM | DC HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

A 30-year-old woman was stabbed to death by her former husband at her residence in Green City Colony, BN Reddy Nagar, on Wednesday. Police said the accused traced her through social media posts and location details before committing the crime. The deceased has been identified as Buddhathi Sunitha, a native of Ballarsha in Maharashtra. She married Devarakonda Mahesh, a native of Manthani, in 2022. Mahesh, who was working as a software professional in Canada, took Sunitha abroad soon after their wedding. However, frequent quarrels led to differences, and Sunitha returned to India with-

NEIGHBOURS alerted the police, who reached the spot and apprehended the accused.

in four days of reaching Canada. Later, she filed a criminal case against Mahesh in Manthani. With the case pending, his passport was cancelled, preventing him from returning to Canada. Police sources said the prolonged dispute and separation caused severe stress in Mahesh's family. His mother, unable to bear the strain of her son's troubled marriage and the ongoing case, suffered a heart attack and passed away before the divorce was finalised. The couple legally divorced in 2025. By the end of the same year, Sunitha married

Srinath, a colleague who had formally approached her parents. The couple moved into an apartment in Green City Colony. While Sunitha worked from home, Srinath attended office regularly. Police said Mahesh bore a grudge over the criminal case, the cancellation of his passport, the loss of his career abroad, and his mother's death. He began monitoring Sunitha's social media activity, and her social media posts about her married life helped him locate her residence. On Wednesday, Mahesh reached the flat carrying three knives and a can of petrol. Finding the door open, he entered and attacked Sunitha. He first hit her on the head with a flower pot, causing her

to scream. Neighbours rushed to help, but Mahesh poured petrol inside and threatened to set the house on fire, preventing them from intervening. He then locked the doors and stabbed Sunitha multiple times in the stomach. Neighbours alerted the police, who reached the spot and apprehended Mahesh. Sunitha died on the spot due to her injuries, police confirmed. In his statement, Srinath told police that he believed this was Sunitha's first marriage. It was only after her sister from Bachupally informed the authorities that it was her second marriage. A case has been registered with Vanasthalipuram police and is under investigation.

In limbo



The construction of a foot overbridge has not been completed at Mehdiapatnam. Hence, people are facing hardships. — S. SURENDER REDDY

Devotee's murder solved by CCTV, forensic trail

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

The IV additional district and sessions judge, Medchal-Malkajgiri, at Kushaiguda has sentenced temple priest Anumala Murali Krishna alias Kittu to life imprisonment for the murder of Gorthy Uma Devi, 57, at Sri Swayambhu Siddi Vinayaka Temple in April 2022. The court said the priest was guilty under Sections 302, 392 and 201 IPC for murder, robbery and destruction of evidence. According to the judgment, Uma Devi went to the temple on April 18, 2022, and did not return home. Her husband, Venkat Narayana Murthy, lodged a missing complaint that night. He told the court that when he went to the temple, the priest claimed she had already left, though her footwear was outside. He said he saw the priest washing blood inside the sanctum, and when ques-

tioned, the priest replied that a stray dog had dragged in a dead cat. Police said Uma Devi's decomposed body was found two days later in bushes near the temple. Investigators told the court that CCTV footage showed her entering the temple but not leaving. Witnesses said she was last seen speaking to the priest. The priest's mobile tower location placed him at the temple at the time. The prosecution said blood samples were collected from the temple drain and the crime scene, and a hair strand was recovered inside the temple. An iron rod used in the temple was seized as the murder weapon. Forensic experts told the court that the cause of death was head injury. Investigators said the priest was in financial distress and observed the victim wearing gold ornaments. He lured her into the

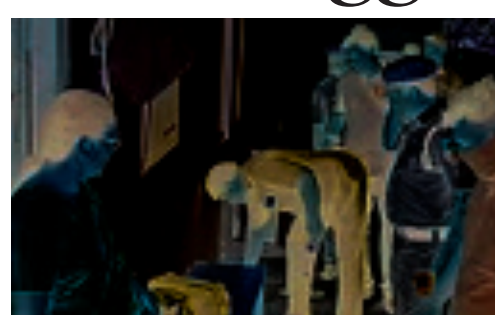
sanctum on the pretext of performing a special pooja for her son's marriage, asked her to kneel and close her eyes, and struck her repeatedly with the iron rod. He concealed the body in a blue plastic drum and removed her jewellery. Police said he later sold the ornaments for ₹3.6 lakh, cleared debts, and bought gold bangles for his wife. He was arrested on April 22, 2022, and confessed during interrogation. The court said the chain of circumstantial evidence, including CCTV footage, last seen testimony, recovery of the drum and weapon, blood samples, mobile tower location, stolen jewellery and forensic findings, proved his guilt beyond doubt. It concluded that the accused attempted to destroy evidence and mislead investigators, but scientific and circumstantial proof established his involvement, leading to conviction.

HOAX | THREAT

Premises of court evacuated after email Bomb scare triggers alert

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

An anonymous email threatening to blow up the Karimnagar District Court triggered a major security alert on Wednesday, prompting evacuation of the premises and a multi-hour search by police. The email, received by court officials, claimed that 12 RDX bombs had been planted in the court complex and were set to detonate at 12.05 pm. Police immediately cordoned off the area and evacuated judges, lawyers and staff. The entire complex was placed under lockdown. Bomb Disposal squads and sniffer dog units



Police personnel, along with bomb disposal squads and sniffer dog units, conduct a room-to-room search of the District Court premises following a bomb threat in Karimnagar on Wednesday.

conducted a room-to-room search of court halls, record rooms and the parking area. After completing the inspection, police declared the threat a hoax as no explosives or suspicious materials were found. Following the all-clear from security teams, court proceedings resumed. Police have registered a case and initiated an investigation to trace the origin of the email.

Cyber Cell officials are working to identify the IP address and source of the message. Authorities said those responsible for issuing such threats would face legal action. Further probe is going on.

Illegal sand extraction raided

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

Vigilance and Enforcement department officials have raided sand beaches, where the illegal sand mining and transportation were taking place in Karimnagar. According to vigilance and enforcement director-general Shikha Goel, officials intercepted five sand-loaded tractors, each transporting approximately 5 metric tonnes of sand from the Manair river belt under the guise of free sand meant for Indiramma Houses. Following the raids, the police have registered a criminal case under the relevant sections of BNS against the tractor drivers and owners for illegal sand transportation, causing damage to natural public resources, theft of state property and rash and

negligent driving, and endangering human life and personal safety. With onset of summer, miscreants would indulge in illegal transport of sand from different sand reaches. Following the tip-off, the vigilance would crack the whip on illegal transportation of sand. Similarly, the vigilance officials intercepted the vehicle carrying 12 MTs PDS rice to Zaheerabad from Hyderabad. Civil supply officials registered cases and seized PDS rice worth ₹4.5 lakh. Police registered cases against Pawar Jitu, Pawar Vijay and the driver Md Shabbir.

37th Death Anniversary

Late Adam Shanker Rao
 DOD: 19-02-1989
 Your memories will remain in our hearts forever.
 Inserted by:
 Grand Son: Rishikesh (Civil Engineer)
 Grand Daughter: Dr. Simran, Grand Son: Aarav.

OBITUARY
 "When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true. Death has been swallowed up in victory." 1Cor 15:54

Mrs. THAMMADI SAROJINI DEVI
 Retd. Headmistress
 Govt. Zilla Parishad High School, Vanasthalipuram, Hyderabad.
 DOB: 9-8-1948 DOD: 18-02-2026
 W/o. Mr. Late Thammadi Bhusnam
 Funeral will be held on 19-02-2026 at 11 AM in Narayanaguda Cemetery.
 Inserted by: Family Members. (S/2526/D00968)

9th DEATH ANNIVERSARY
 "He will swallow up death forever: the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces." Isaiah 25:8

Late Mrs. Bollam Vasantha Wesley
 Retd. Nursing Superintendent
 DOB: 23.11.1956 DOD: 19-02-2017
 "Gone from our sight, never from our hearts forever."
 We pray and hope that you are in a better place.
 Your memory walks with us, not as sorrow alone, but as quiet strength and abiding love."
 Inserted by:
B.M. John Wesley & Family Members

1st ANNIVERSARY

SARVANI THIGULLA
 W/o. Sandeep Kiran Thigulla
 Fond remembrance and cherished Memories. You are always in our hearts.
 Inserted by:
 Husband: SANDEEP KIRAN, Son: Aryan Thigulla, Daughter: Seva Thigulla, USA, Father-in-law: Surya Kiran Thigulla, Advocate, Mother-in-law: Geeta Kiran Thigulla
 Ph: 9949060608

10TH DEATH ANNIVERSARY

PULLELA VENKANNA
 BORN 06.04.1929 DIED 19.02.2016
 WE LOVE YOU DEARLY NANNAGARU
 Inserted by: FAMILY MEMBERS

SHRADHANJALI

MUDDATI PRITHVI RAJ
 [20-06-1959] - [10-02-2026]
 It is hard to believe that you are not with us anymore. We pray and hope that you are in a better place. Your memories will never be forgotten. May your soul REST IN PEACE.
 Inserted by:
Manju, Maneesh Sai Raj, Sushmitha Raj, Dablu

19th ANNIVERSARY
 The memory of the just is blessed Pro. 10:7

P. MARY, M.Sc., M.Ed
 (PG Teacher AP Residential School Society)
 DOB: 12.12.1958 DOD: 19.02.2007
 W/o. Late. Dr. R.D.V.J. Prasad Rao M.Sc (AG) PhD
 Inserted by:
 Loving Bro. Pili David, Loving Sis. P.A.R. Sudeepa Alfred Vijay (Son) Meryn Sandeepa (Daughter) Son-in-law, Daughter-in-law & Grand Children

In Loving Memory of

M.C. ROY CHOUDHARY
 Passed away on 7th Feb. 2026
 He remains forever in the hearts of loving family
 Deeply Mourned by: Wife: B. Raja Lakshmi Daughters - Sons-in-law: Nirmala - Sree Krishna Lavanya - Srinivasa Ratnam Grand Daughters: Ansh & Sahana

37th Death Anniversary

Late Adam Shanker Rao
 DOD: 19-02-1989
 You will always live in our memories and be guiding light.
 Inserted by: Son: Adam Vijay Kumar Daughter-in-Law: Adam Sirisha Grand Son: Adam Manikanta Grand Daughter: Adam Ritsika

14th Death Anniversary of
 "And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever"

Sri. PERAM SAMUEL
 Exp. on 19th Feb, 2012
 Inserted by:
 Daughter, Son-in-law, Grand Children and Great Grand Children

37th Death Anniversary

Late Adam Shanker Rao
 DOD: 19-02-1989
 A beautiful soul, always helpful ascended to heaven, away from us. Missing you. Inserted by: Son: Adam Bharath Kumar Daughter-in-Law: Adam Shilpa Grand Daughter: Adam Nainika Grand Son: Adam Kesari

37th Death Anniversary

Late Adam Shanker Rao
 DOD: 19-02-1989
 You are loved beyond words & missed beyond measures
 Inserted by:
 Grand Son: Adam Srujan Kumar (Architect) Grand Daughter: Adam Anusha

4th Death Anniversary
 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 2 Timothy 4:7

Bodi Jeeva Kireetam
 DOB: 17.11.1936 - DOD: 19.02.2022
 We miss you every moment in our life, your presence continues to surround us, in our hearts, you are always there.
 Inserted by: Family Members
 Mob: 9032675227, 9989018444

12th Death Anniversary

K. SRINIVASAN
 DOB: 15.01.1994 - DOD: 10.02.2014
 Those we love remain with us, for love itself lives on. Cherished memories never fade, because a loved one is gone. Those we love can never be, more than a thought apart. For as long as there is a memory, they'll live on in our heart.
 Inserted by: Dad, Mom, Sister's and Brother-in-law J.K. Kumar 9989827207

BIRTHDAY REMEMBRANCE
 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven... and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them... to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 1Th 4:16-17

NIRMALA SURYA RAO SARIPALLI
 W/o. Dr. Surya Rao Saripalli; D/o. Late. Dr. Jacob Goretta
 Missing you so dearly and awaiting the glorious return of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to join you and Pappa in heaven.
 Inserted by:
 Son-in-Law: B. Sanjay Kumar Daughter: B. Prasanna Latha Grand Daughter: B. Snigaha Grand Son: B. Siddhi Kanta

37th Death Anniversary

Late Adam Shanker Rao
 DOD: 19-02-1989
 We miss you every moment in our life, your presence continues in our hearts.
 Inserted by: Son: Adam Prem Kumar Daughter-in-Law: Adam Sagarika Grand Daughters: Adam Teertha, Adam Krithika.

37th Death Anniversary

Late Adam Shanker Rao
 DOD: 19-02-1989
 We remember your care and love, we feel your blessings are there upon us.
 Inserted by:
 Son: Adam Santosh Kumar Daughter-in-Law: Adam Umadevi

37th Death Anniversary

Late Adam Shanker Rao
 DOD: 19-02-1989
 Your memories will remain in our hearts forever.
 Inserted by:
 Son-in-Law: B. Sanjay Kumar Daughter: B. Prasanna Latha Grand Daughter: B. Snigaha Grand Son: B. Siddhi Kanta

37th Death Anniversary

Late Adam Shanker Rao
 DOD: 19-02-1989
 We miss you every moment in our life, your presence continues in our hearts.
 Inserted by: Son-in-Law: Dr. D. Srinivas Daughter: D. Vijayalatha Grand Daughter: Dr. D. Bhavya Sri

37th Death Anniversary

Late Adam Shanker Rao
 DOD: 19-02-1989
 Your memories will remain in our hearts forever.
 Inserted by: Son-in-Law: Dr. D. Srinivas Daughter: D. Vijayalatha Grand Daughter: Dr. D. Bhavya Sri

SHORT TAKES

3 MUNICIPALITIES AWAIT INDIRECT POLLS OUTCOME

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, FEB 18

Suspense has continued over indirect elections for three municipalities of Ibrahimpatnam, Kyathanpally and Kanapur after clashes and law and order issues took place on Wednesday. The High court lifted the stay on Ibrahimpatnam Chairperson election. However, the order copy is yet to be reached to the officials. In Kyathanpally, law and order issues took place on Wednesday, and police arrested BRS leader Balka Suman for looting stones at the police. The officials also postponed Khanapur, Ibrahimpatnam and Kyathanpally elections.

BALKA SUMAN ARRESTED IN MIN'S CONVOY ATTACK

PILLALAMARRI SRINIVAS | DC
ADILABAD, FEB. 18

Former MLA Balka Suman was arrested by Mancheril police on Wednesday in connection with the alleged attack on the convoy of labour and mines minister Gaddam Vivek during the Kyathanpally municipality polls. He was remained to 14 days' judicial custody along with four others.

Police registered a case under Sections 189(3), 191(2), 191(3), 118(1), 324(5) and 223 read with 190 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

Police force was deployed in Kyathanpally as tension prevailed when officers reached Balka Suman's residence to execute the arrest. BRS supporters and cadre gathered at the location and attempted to prevent the police from taking him into custody. In connection with the incident, cases were registered against 26 BRS leaders and workers under multiple sections of the BNS. Police named Balka Suman, Mula Raji Reddy and Anil among the main accused.

Balka Suman alleged that minister Vivek was misusing his authority.

KTR, HARISH DEMAND BALKA SUMAN'S RELEASE

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

The BRS on Wednesday strongly condemned the arrest of its former MLA Balka Suman calling the arrest illegal and a strong-arm tactic by the Congress government which wants to grab power in Kyathanpally municipality.

The party working president K.T. Rama Rao, senior leader T. Harish Rao demanded the immediate and unconditional release of Balka Suman and said their former MLA was only protesting the "illegal pressure being exerted by minister G. Vivek Venkatswamy on officials in a bid to help Congress grab power in the municipality."

Rama Rao said the police was acting like a private army of the Congress government and warned that every police officer who is kowtowing to Congress leaders now will have to pay a price in the future for their actions now. "The state is in the grip of power-grab politics evidence of which was also seen in Thorur, Jangaon, and Zaheerabad municipalities. We demand that SEC and Governor take notice of the Congress atrocities and take action on all those involved in such acts," Rama Rao said.

Ponguleti: Will order code audit of Dharani

Warns action will be taken against those responsible

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

Revenue minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy has ordered a comprehensive code audit of the Dharani portal to detect irregularities allegedly committed during the previous BRS regime. He warned that strict action would be taken against those responsible.

Chairing a review meeting with senior revenue officials and members of a high-level inquiry committee at the Secretariat on Wednesday, he said the affairs of the portal were akin to "pulling a thread and seeing the entire knot unravel," indicating deep-rooted systemic issues. He alleged that a system originally designed to safeguard people's properties had been misused by influential persons in the past government for vested interests. The high-level committee probing irregularities related to the alleged siphoning of stamp duty and registration charges by exploiting loopholes in Dharani



Revenue minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy during a meeting with officials at Secretariat, on Wednesday.

has unearthed several findings. Ponguleti clarified that the lapses were not mere technical glitches but deliberately created flaws. Preliminary findings revealed that deficiencies identified during an earlier security audit were not rectified, though reports claimed otherwise. The portal was

allegedly designed to enable human interference and manipulation.

Suspicious land transaction data was made inaccessible, certain logs were deleted, and confidential login details were found missing.

He said information relating to land transactions conducted in violation of norms had been rendered unavailable, and a code audit was not undertaken as part of the earlier forensic audit. He noted that issues had arisen after entrusting maintenance of the portal to a foreign firm, Terrasis. He said the government would act firmly against those who misappropriated stamp duty and registration charges.

AZHAR LAUNCHES WELFARE SOPS FOR MINORITIES

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, FEB 18

Minorities welfare minister Mohammed Azharuddin launched the economic support and skill development schemes for minorities. He affirmed that the schemes would provide direct support to beneficiaries, particularly women and youth, enabling them to become financially independent.

With a total outlay of about ₹90 crore for schemes, these included ongoing schemes under economic support (2025-26). As part of these, ₹15 crore is being spent on distributing tool kits and generators to members of the Turka Kasha community, with a unit cost of up to ₹60,000, as a one-time grant for their empowerment. The corporation is also spending on economic support scheme (2024-25).

AZHAR EVENT: MIM CRIES FOUL OVER PROTOCOL

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

Tension prevailed at an event organised by the Telangana Minority Finance Corporation (TMFC) after AIMIM MLC Mirza Rahmath Baig objected to the presence of Siasat news editor and former MLC Amer Ali Khan on the dais, citing protocol concerns.

The programme, attended by several dignitaries, witnessed brief disruption when Baig said he would not share the stage with a person who does not currently hold a government position.

He stated that if Amer Ali Khan was attending in his capacity as a media representative, he should be seated in the designated media enclosure.

GOVT MADE TO BOW BEFORE DELHI: HARISH

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

Senior BRS leader T. Harish Rao on Wednesday said the summoning of the entire Telangana Cabinet by the AICC high command to New Delhi for a "review" is "deeply humiliating" to the state, and asked if the people voted for an independent government or for one that "runs on remote control from Delhi."

The act of "summoning the Cabinet to Delhi reflects an erosion of democratic spirit and the self-respect of Telangana. The state was formed after immense sacrifices for self-rule and political dignity and today it is being made to bow before a 'Delhi durbar', which is deeply humiliating for the state," Harish Rao said in an open letter to Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and senior party leaders Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi, and AICC in-charge for Telangana, Meenakshi Natarajan and Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

CM: Green energy key to sustainable growth

FROM PAGE 1

Revanth Reddy said every unit of power that turns green benefits the state, the country and the planet and underlined the need for manufacturing growth powered by green energy.

Outlining Telangana's long-term development vision, the Chief Minister linked economic growth with environmental sustainability. He said understanding 2047 required beginning with 1947, and noted that between 1950 and 1990 India prioritised education and irrigation, building educational institutions from village schools to premier institutes and constructing major dams for power and irrigation.

By 1990, he said, India had achieved food sufficiency, improved life expectancy, and gained global recognition for its professionals. Referring to the period from 1991 to 2020, he said the focus shifted to liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation, with India emerging as a services-driven economy led by telecom and software.

He said that although the period delivered significant success, the manufacturing opportunity was missed and



Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy speaks at the Mumbai Climate Week in Mumbai on Wednesday.

added that the approach had changed particularly after Covid-19.

He said Telangana's target of expanding its economy from \$200 billion to \$1 trillion by 2034 and to \$3 trillion by 2047. He listed the focus areas as economy, environment, education and skills, energy, employment, entrepreneurship and wealth creation.

Uttam for swift action on pre-monsoon agri works

P. SRINIVAS | DC
NALGONDA, FEB. 18

Irrigation and civil supplies minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy on Wednesday directed irrigation officials to utilise the February-June summer window to expedite ongoing works and ensure completion before the monsoon.

Reviewing irrigation projects in Nalgonda district at Mellacheruvu, he called for 24-hour operations at key sites while maintaining quality standards. He said land acquisition, crucial for project execution, would be taken up on a war footing and assured that there would be no funding constraints in paying compensation to affected farmers.

He said he would review the progress of irrigation schemes in the combined Nalgonda district every 10 days,



Irrigation minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy inaugurates a bullock-cart competition at Mellacheruvu in Suryapet district on Wednesday.

involving district collectors, and asked officials to report issues directly to him to avoid delays. He noted that monsoon-related backwater effects from the Krishna river at Pulichintala could hamper construction and stressed the need to accelerate works during the dry season. Referring to irrigation under the Congress government, he said irrigated area, water utilisation, pad-

dy cultivation and procurement had recorded significant growth over the past two years. He attributed the progress to adequate inflows into the Nagarjunasagar Dam.

He asked officials to ensure irrigation to every acre under the Nagarjunasagar Left Canal, with priority to tail-end ayacut and advocated implementation of 'Warabandi' system for rotational water supply.

BETTER INFRA Bhatti reviews functioning of minority welfare, transport, irrigation, civil supplies depts

Edu, healthcare will get top priority: Bhatti

L VENKAT RAM REDDY | DC
HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka on Wednesday said that the state government is giving the highest priority to education and healthcare and will not hesitate to allocate the necessary funds to achieve the best outcomes in these sectors. He said hostel infrastructure would be repaired and that proposed Ambedkar Knowledge Centres would emerge as a national model for competitive exam preparation.

He was speaking at a series of pre-Budget meetings held at the Secretariat, where he reviewed the functioning and financial proposals of the minority

welfare, BC welfare, transport, irrigation, civil supplies, roads and buildings and cinematography departments. The meetings were attended by ministers N. Uttam Kumar Reddy, Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, Ponnamp Prabhakar, Adhuri Lakshman Kumar and Mohammed Azharuddin, along with senior officials. Bhatti said the government is establishing Young India Integrated Schools with world-class standards to create an inclusive environment where students from all sections of society learn together like one family. He instructed officials to implement biometric attendance systems for students and teaching staff in all welfare institutions



Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka speaks at the pre-Budget meeting at the Secretariat, on Wednesday. Ministers Ponnamp Prabhakar and Md Azharuddin are also seen.

and link them to a central control room for continuous monitoring.

He directed that all pending bills relating to welfare hostels and gurukuls be cleared expeditiously and assured that bills submitted without delay would be

settled promptly. He also ordered that hostel building repairs be completed at the earliest.

He asked departments to explore the installation of solar power systems on hostel and residential buildings, noting that this would

reduce electricity expenditure and generate additional income.

He recalled that the government had already enhanced diet and cosmetic charges for welfare hostels and introduced a new menu, and directed district and state-level officials to conduct regular inspections and, if necessary, stay overnight in hostels to assess conditions.

Secretaries were told to ensure close monitoring through district collectors. Hostel charges are being cleared every three months, and repair bills must be submitted immediately for prompt payment, he said. Emphasising welfare of BCs, Bhatti Vikramarka said infrastructure in BC

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ABVP PROTEST OVER INTER HALL TICKETS

Hyderabad, Feb.18: Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) activists staged a protest at the TGBIE here on Wednesday demanding issuance of hall tickets for some students who did not receive them due to their college's mistake. Protesters wanted the Board to release hall tickets of students and ensure that students do not miss

out examinations due their management negligence.

Activists pointed out that some students who approached the High Court on the hall tickets issue were declared eligible to write the exams. They demanded all other students be allowed to sit for exams. Police, who reached the spot, detained the protesters.

Career Chronicle

WALK - IN INTERVIEW

POSITIONS FOR ALL BRANCHES

Cambridge Teachers CICT or CIDTL Certified Teachers / 3 to 5 Years Teaching experience in Cambridge Curriculum	ICGSE CBSE SCHOOLS
PGTs, TGTs & HODs (Primary & Secondary) English, Hindi, Telugu, Mathematics, Science, Chemistry, Physics, Biology, Social Science, ICT	22nd FEB 2026 (9:00 AM - 1:00 PM)
PRTs (Pre-Primary) Coordinators, Homeroom Teachers, Associate Teachers	School Leaders (Female) Principals, Vice Principals, Coordinators
Admin (Female) Admission Counsellors, Front Desk Executive Minimum 3 Years of Experience Desirable Note: Freshers may also apply	APPLY NOW careers@akshara.edu.in

WALK - IN INTERVIEW @ A. S. RAO NAGAR CAMPUS ☎ 94196 59999

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SAROJINI NAIDU VANITA PHARMACY MAHA VIDYALAYA (Co-Ed.)
(Sponsored by the Exhibition Society) (Affiliated to Osmania University, Approved by PCI)

UGC AUTONOMOUS INSTITUTION

RECRUITMENT

Interested eligible candidates may send their application on white paper enclosing all signed relevant certificate copies which should reach Hon. Secretary, of the Institution by E-mail or Speed Post on or before 28.02.2026. Sd/- B. Hanumanth Rao, Hon. Secretary

INDICATIVE NOTIFICATION

RECRUITMENT AGAINST SPORTS QUOTA (Open Advertisement) in various pay levels in Northeast Frontier Railway for the year 2025-26 (Part-2)

EMPLOYMENT NOTICE NO. 01/2026

Northeast Frontier Railway invites ONLINE applications from eligible sportspersons who are citizens of India, for filling up 09 posts [Level-2/3=05 posts and Level-1=04 posts] for the year 2025-26 against the sports disciplines of Archery, Athletics (High Jump), Boxing, Cricket & Golf.

Opening date of application : 20-02-2026
Closing date of application : 10-03-2026

Applicant can view detailed notification by visiting website: www.nfr.indianrailways.gov.in ⇨ General Info ⇨ Recruitment Notification (Sports, Scouts & Guides and Cultural) ⇨ RECRUITMENT AGAINST SPORTS QUOTA ⇨ SPORTS QUOTA RECRUITMENT 2025-26 (Part-2).

Candidates can also submit online application directly by visiting website:- <https://www.nfr-recruitment.in>.

General Manager (P), Maligaon, Guwahati
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
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SHORT TAKES

EXCESS FEES: COLLECTOR ORDERS PROBE

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

Allegations that engineering colleges are collecting fees beyond the approved structure have reached the Hyderabad District Collector's office, prompting formal communication to higher education authorities.

A grievance filed through the Prajavani portal by Devarala Rakesh Yadav has been forwarded by district collector Harichandana Dasari to V. Balakista Reddy, chairman of the Telangana State Council of Higher Education (TSCH), and T. Kishen Kumar Reddy, vice-chancellor of Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University Hyderabad (JNTUH), for further action. The collector has directed the authorities to conduct an enquiry, submit a report, and inform the complainant directly.

Yadav, a National Students' Union of India (NSUI) leader, alleged that certain engineering colleges are collecting fees in violation of the prescribed structure. He demanded strict action if violations are proved, refunds for affected students, and regular inspections to prevent recurrence.

Speaking to Deccan Chronicle, Yadav said he had earlier approached the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) against three colleges — Sridevi Engineering College, JB Institute of Engineering and Technology (JBITE), and Joginipally B.R. Engineering College (JBREC) — alleging excess fee collection.

Following this, AICTE wrote to JNTUH to examine the issue. The JNTUH registrar issued notices to JBITE and JBREC, seeking explanations within a week. According to Yadav, one college initially denied the allegations, after which he submitted documentary evidence. Another notice was then issued, but with no response even after three weeks, he escalated the matter through the Prajavani portal, leading to the collector's intervention.

100 VCs FROM 6 STATES TO ATTEND AI MEETING AT OU

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

Artificial Intelligence and quantum technologies will be in focus as around 100 vice-chancellors from six states assemble at Osmania University from Thursday to Friday for the Association of Indian Universities Central Zone Vice Chancellors' Meet 2025-26.

The two-day meet, themed "Creating AI & Quantum Enabled HEIs", will deliberate on how universities can integrate emerging technologies into curriculum design, pedagogy, governance and research. The conference is part of the association's zonal consultations held annually to carry collective academic concerns to policy-making bodies.

Governor Jishnu Dev Varma will attend the inaugural session. The event will be presided over by association president Prof. Vinay Kumar Pathak and hosted by OU VC Prof. Kumar Molugaram.

Three technical sessions are planned, focusing on integrating AI and quantum technologies into higher education systems, AI-driven indigenous research and product development, and regulatory and ethical frameworks for AI.

Life sciences firms told to partner with state

120 start-ups shortlisted at BioAsia, 40 exhibit cutting edge tech

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

IT and industries minister D. Sridhar Babu on Wednesday invited industry leaders in life sciences to partner with Telangana in advancing innovation-led growth as the Telangana government views it as a domain with significant social impact.

Sridhar Babu said several global companies, including Sanofi, Opella, Vaxxinova Animal Health, Tredence and Rx Propellant, had expressed interest in investing in Telangana during the summit.

Addressing the valedictory session of BioAsia 2026, the minister highlighted the success of the event, as it hosted over 4,000 high-impact business-to-business meetings aimed at fostering investments and partnerships and witnessed participation from 4,394 delegates from India and abroad, including representatives of Fortune 500 companies.

"A total of 120 start-ups were shortlisted, and over 40 have exhibited their most innovative and cutting-edge tech solutions," he noted.

Highlighting the state's industrial base, he said Telangana is home to over 2,000 life sciences companies and accounts for nearly one-third of India's pharmaceutical production and about one-fifth of the country's pharma exports.

Sridhar Babu said the "Telangana Rising 2047" initiative was conceived with inputs from citizens and domain experts to increase the state's contribution to national GDP to 10 per cent. Outlining the government's strategy to strengthen the ecosystem, he referred to the Telangana Next-Gen Life Sciences Policy (2026-2030), establishment of the Telangana Life Sciences School and the OneBio Incubator and expansion of Genome Valley.



IT and industries minister D. Sridhar Babu presents the Startup awards during the valedictory ceremony of BioAsia at Hitex Exhibition Centre on Wednesday. — R. PAVAN

GCCs help cut pharma costs

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

India's pharma and life sciences global capability centres (GCCs) are accelerating drug development timelines and reducing R&D costs, according to a report released at BioAsia.

The report, titled "Making it matter: How GCCs transform capability into end-patient impact", was developed in collaboration with KPMG in India and UnearthIQ.

It stated that adoption of AI, automation and analytics across the value chain is compressing drug development timelines and enabling Research & Development teams to focus on innovation.

GCCs are contributing to faster target identification, protein modeling and compound screening, cutting early-stage timelines by five to six years.

In clinical trials, AI-driven patient recruitment, trial design and real-time analytics are shortening development cycles by four to six years and improving success rates, the report

THE REPORT stated that adoption of AI, automation and analytics across the value chain is compressing drug development timelines and enabling R&D teams to focus on innovation.

"The next phase of evolution of the GCC model will be driven by the business context and core sector/domain knowledge. The GCCs, technology and innovation hubs focused on streamlining the underlying data structures will pave the way forward for global Healthcare and life sciences players," said Shalini Pillay, partner and India leader — GCCs, KPMG in India.

India has over 150 healthcare and life sciences GCCs. The sector is dominated by pharma (30-35 per cent), life sciences (20-25 per cent) and medical devices (20-25 per cent), with a growing presence in healthcare and health-tech (20 per cent), providers (10 per cent), and payers (5 per cent), the release said.

GLOBAL PANEL HAILS INDIA'S BIOTECH POWER

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

India's growing role in global life science and health innovation came into focus during a panel discussion titled "India's Innovation Moment: Scaling the Next Phase of Global Impact" on Day-2 of the BioAsia event.

Policy makers, industry leaders and technology experts discussed opportunities and challenges shaping India's innovation journey.

Dr Murali Ramachandra, CEO of Aurigene Oncology, recalled how Dr Reddy's Laboratories pioneered innovative drug discovery, achieving early global licensing deals though few reached commercialisation. He noted limited overall successes, with companies like Glenmark, Lupin, Zydus and Orchid Pharma making progress in global trials and antibiotic approvals.

Dr Jitendra Kumar, MD of BIRAC, said public funding and start-up ecosystems have transformed ideas into solutions, but India must now focus on commercialisation and global partnerships.

Sanjeeva Reddy re-elected INTUC chief

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

The 97th birthday of Dr G. Sanjeeva Reddy was celebrated during the 21st triennial delegate conference of the Andhra Pradesh and Telangana branch of the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) held at the VST Union Office on Wednesday.

The event was jointly organised by the Deccan Chronicle Employees Union, VST Employees Union and the AP-TS branch of INTUC. Delegates at the conference unanimously re-elected Dr G. Sanjeeva Reddy as president.

Speaking on the occasion, Kasireddy Jagan Mohan Reddy, general secretary of the Deccan Chronicle Employees Union and vice-presi-



Deccan Chronicle employees greet G. Sanjeeva Reddy, national president of the INTUC on his 97th birthday at VST on Wednesday. — DEEPAK DESHPANDE

INTUC also raised concerns over the four Labour Codes introduced under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

to workers' rights and knowledge of labour legislation and industrial relations. He also raised concerns over the four Labour Codes introduced under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, stating that they could impact workers' rights and emphasised the need for awareness among workers. Among those present were Mahesh Kumar Goud, V. Hanumanth Rao, B. Janak Prasad, Prakash Goud, R.D. Chandrasekhar, Adil Shareef, Naganna Goud, Vijay Kumar Yadav and L.D. Paul.

HC examines legality of theatre parking fees

L. RAVICHANDER HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

Justice N.V. Shrivani of the Telangana High Court sought the state government's response on the power to collect parking charges at various cinema halls. He was dealing with a writ petition filed by Ramavath Prem Kumar challenging a 2021 government order permitting collection of parking fees at cinema theatres. The petitioner argued that while an exemption in favour of cinema halls was introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic as a relief measure, the broader permission to levy parking charges lacks statutory backing. He relied upon Section 176(6) of the Telangana Municipalities Act, 2019, which mandates compliance with parking requirements as a precondition for grant of building permission, to contend

that commercial establishments are obligated to earmark adequate parking space and cannot impose a separate charge on patrons. It was argued that cinema theatres, already allowed to raise ticket prices citing maintenance costs, cannot impose a separate parking fee as operational expenditure. Referring to an earlier High Court ruling, counsel contended that customers purchasing receipts cannot be forced to pay parking charges and that selective exemptions amount to hostile discrimination. Justice Shrivani observed that while providing parking space is mandatory under law, managing traffic and maintaining order at high-footfall venues entails costs. The Court indicated that any challenge to such recovery requires a stronger legal basis and granted the state two weeks to file its response.



LEGAL STORIES

HC SEEKS TIMELINE FOR LIFT SAFETY LAW

Expressing concern over the prolonged delay in introducing a statutory framework for lift and elevator safety, the Telangana High Court on Wednesday called upon the state government to clarify the status of the proposed legislation. The panel comprising Chief Justice Aparesh Kumar Singh and Justice G.M. Mohiuddin was hearing a suo motu public interest litigation initiated on the basis of a letter addressed to the Chief Justice in March 2025, followed by a formal application filed by advocate

Barkat Ali Khan. The bench sought clarity from the state on whether a comprehensive Lift Act had been enacted and, if so, when it would be notified, directing it to file a status affidavit. The state said a draft Act prepared on September 9, 2025, is under consideration and may take six months to be implemented. Appearing party-in-person, advocate Barkat Ali Khan said he had studied lift safety laws in other states and submitted guidelines to prevent accidents. He pointed to deaths and injuries in lift incidents and pressed for legislation. The bench asked the state to consider guidelines while finalising the law and adjourned the case for four weeks.

COMPTENT: NOTICE TO CIVIL SUPPLIES CHIEF

A two-judge panel of the Telangana High Court ordered notice to the com-

missioner of civil supplies and the vice chairman and managing director of the civil supplies corporation Stephen Ravendra, IPS, in a contempt plea. An employee of the Civil Supplies Corporation alleged wilful non-compliance with earlier High Court orders on his promotion and consequential benefits in a contempt plea before a bench of Justice P. Sam Koshy and Justice Narsing Rao Nandikonda. The petitioner, G. Gopal, said a fire at JD Agro Gunny Godown in Nirmal destroyed about two lakh gunny bags, after which he was suspended. Though the suspension was revoked and the censure set aside on appeal, his promotion as assistant manager (general), granted in March 2013, was later withdrawn and he was reverted.

Full report in deccanchronicle.com

Annual Brahmotsavams begin on grand scale at Yadagirigutta

P. SRINIVAS | DC NALGONDA, FEB. 18

The annual Brahmotsavams of Sri Lakshminarsimha Swamy temple at Yadagirigutta started on Wednesday with priests chanting swasti vachanam and performing special rituals. The temple was decorated with flowers and illumination for the festival, which will be held from February 18 to February 28.

Priests performed nijabhishekam and Vishwakshena aradhana in the morning amid Vedic chants. Ankurarpana was conducted in the evening as per tradition. Samprokshana was performed at the temple and along the mada vedulu before the commencement of the rituals. In addition to the temple priests, 100 rithwiks have been invited for the conduct of the ceremonies. Dwajaroohanam, marking the formal beginning of the Brahmotsavams, will be held at 11 am on February 19, followed by bheri puja at 6.30



Priests performed nijabhishekam and Vishwakshena aradhana at Yadagirigutta as part of Sri Lakshminarsimha Swamy temple annual Brahmotsavams on Wednesday.

The presiding deity will be adorned in different alankarams during the festival, including Matsyavataram on February 20, Vata-patra Sai on February 21, Sri Krishna avataram on February 22 and Govardhana Giri alankaram on February 23. Erdukolu utsavam will be conducted on February 24. The celestial wedding of the deity will take place at 9.30 pm on February 25. Rathotsavam will be held on

February 26 and Chakratretham at 9.30 am on February 27. The festivities will conclude with Ashtothara Shataghat abhishekam. Temple executive officer Bhavani Shanker said arrangements have been made with an allocation of ₹2 crore for the conduct of the Brahmotsavams. He said adequate laddu prasadam would be made available in view of the expected rush of devotees.

Ramzan sanitation works reviewed

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

GHMC commissioner R.V. Karnan on Wednesday directed officials to ensure sanitation works across the city are carried out systematically and effectively, particularly during the Ramzan month. He gave the instructions while inspecting the Charminar zone.

He visited key locations including Mecca Masjid, Madina and the Charminar precinct, reviewing deploy-

ment of sanitation staff, route maps, cleanliness measures around places of worship, and waste collection in market areas.

The commissioner held on-site discussions with officials on drain desilting, preventing garbage accumulation, and supervision at Circle and Zonal levels.

Stating that footfall is expected to rise during Ramzan, Karnan asked officials to keep roads, junctions, prayer venues and congregation points clean at all times.

SET UP HALEEM BHATTIS ON GROUND FLOORS

Malkajgiri municipal corporation commissioner T. Vinay Krishna Reddy on Wednesday directed Ramzan Haleem sellers not to set up preparation units (bhattis) on upper floors of buildings.

Interacting with Haleem bhatti organisers within the corporation limits, he instructed that all cooking units be operated only on ground floor and that hygiene be strictly maintained.

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SHORT TAKE



Kongala Sai Kiran, a third-year MBBS student from Rajanna Sircilla Government Medical College performs CPR to a man who collapsed near the bus stand on Tuesday. — DC

MBBS STUDENT SAVES MAN WITH CPR AT SIRCIILLA

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

A third-year MBBS student from Rajanna Sircilla Government Medical College saved an unconscious man near the Sircilla bus stand by performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) on Tuesday evening.

Kongala Sai Kiran, who commutes daily to Karimnagar, said he noticed a collapsed man about 150 metres from the bus stop.

"A stranger was attempting CPR incorrectly. When they saw me in my medical uniform, they gave me space to perform it," he told *Deccan Chronicle*.

Sai Kiran said that on the 28th compression, the patient took his first breath and regained consciousness. He was immediately shifted to a nearby government hospital by ambulance.

Doctors later informed the family that the patient was suffering from a high-potency condition.

"The incident happened around 4.30 pm. I was nervous as it was my first time doing real CPR," Sai Kiran said, adding, "It is our duty to teach CPR to everyone so that more lives can be saved."

The patient, identified as Chandrasekhar, is currently under treatment at the hospital and is recovering. Further updates are awaited.

'No Bag Day' is uneven in Telangana's schools

Policy limits the bag weight in proportion to body weight

MRITTIKA BANERJEE | DC HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

Two years after Telangana introduced a monthly "No Bag Day" in schools, the policy remains in the academic calendar but implementation is uneven, especially in private institutions that remain exam-driven.

"It is being followed in government schools. However, many private and corporate schools are ignoring it," said Chava Ravi, state president of the Telangana State United Teachers Federation (TSUTF). He said while DEOs and headmasters monitor government schools, private institutions face little supervision.

The initiative, launched in June 2023, designates the third Saturday of each month as a bagless, activi-



A file picture of schoolchildren carrying bags to their schools. — DC

ty-based day for Classes I to X. It builds on earlier rules capping schoolbag weight, first issued in 2005 and revised in 2017.

G. Ramesh, director of SCERT, said reports are being sent from some

schools to MEOs and monitoring officers are visiting institutions.

"No specific study has been conducted yet, but we plan to," he added, stressing that DEOs have been instructed to ensure

compliance. Feedback suggests uneven adoption and lack of clarity on activities. "It should not become a mechanical exercise," said Ravi.

Some private schools say they observe the day regularly. Madhusudan Sadula, principal of a city SSC school, said his institution holds presentations, stage programmes and practical sessions. Dr Prasad Rao, who runs a group of schools, said his students engage in nature walks, carpentry, robotics, arts and music. He argued the concept should be implemented nationwide, not confined to circulars.

The Centre's School Bag Policy of 2020 also recommends bagless days and limits bag weight to a percentage of body weight, leaving execution to states.

SSC public exams: 3 to 5 days gap between subjects

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

The SSC Public Examinations will be conducted from March 14 to April 13 with a gap of three to five days between each subject, according to a detailed academic plan issued by the Director of School Education (DSE) for the examinations.

The director said schools must use every gap between two SSC exam papers for academic purposes such as daily revision, practice tests and answer writing drills.

Following the pre-final examination from February 17 to February 24, all answer scripts shall

be evaluated without delay, and evaluated answer scripts must be sent to parents for their perusal.

Based on their performance in pre-final exams, the department asked schools to categorise students into three groups — students not likely to pass, students securing average marks and students showing good progress. Separate academic plans have to be followed for each category with special attention to those unlikely to pass.

Special classes will follow a fixed time structure, with 20 minutes for detailed explanation of

concepts by the teacher and 40 minutes for student practice and writing work. Students must be given a minimum of three questions daily for answer writing practice.

Gap days between two subject examinations will follow a three-period structure.

The first period will focus on revision of important topics. The second period will be a daily practice test and the third period will focus on answer writing guidance. Adequate practice tests have to be conducted during the entire examination gap period for each subject.

Cong. eyes sweep in Rajya Sabha

FROM PAGE 1

Polling, if required, will be held on March 16 between 9 am and 4 pm, with counting scheduled for 5 pm the same day. With its comfortable majority in the Legislative Assembly, the ruling Congress is expected to bag both the seats.

Official sources said that 41 votes are required to win each Rajya Sabha seat. The Congress currently has a strength of 66 MLAs in the Assembly, besides the support of one MLA from its alliance partner CPI. In contrast, the BRS has 37 MLAs, the BJP has 8 and the AIMIM has 7. Except the Congress, no other party has the required 41 votes to secure a seat on its own. Sources in the Congress

● OFFICIAL SOURCES said that 41 votes are required to win each Rajya Sabha seat.

indicated that the party high command is likely to renominate Abhishek Manu Singhvi for another term. There are, however, several aspirants for the remaining seat.

Senior leaders who could not secure MLA or MP tickets in the 2023 Assembly elections and the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, as well as those who contested but failed to win, are said to be in the race for a Rajya Sabha berth.

Singhvi, a senior Congress leader and noted Supreme Court advocate, was elected unopposed to the Rajya Sabha from Telangana on August 27,

Stalled for 6 years



The 2BHK flats at the Dignity Housing Colony in Chilkalguda Dhubighat are yet to be handed over to beneficiaries even after 6 years. The building is getting damaged due to the lack of maintenance. — S. SURENDER REDDY

2024, in a bypoll. He secured only a 19-month tenure as he was elected to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of former BRS MP K. Keshava Rao.

Keshava Rao had joined the Congress in July 2024 and subsequently resigned from his Rajya Sabha seat after completing nearly four years of his six-year term, leading to the by-election in August 2024. The Congress fielded Singhvi, who was elected unopposed as no other party had sufficient strength in the Assembly to win the seat.

Official sources said the Election Commission is expected to conduct separate elections for the two seats on the same day, requiring MLAs to cast their votes separately for each candidate. Polling

will take place only if the BRS or any other party fields candidates; otherwise, the nominees will be declared elected unopposed.

In January 2024, when elections were held for three Rajya Sabha seats from Telangana, the Election Commission had decided to hold separate elections for three seats on the same day. At that time, 31 votes were required to win each seat.

While the Congress with a strength of 64 MLAs plus one CPI MLA had a strength to win two seats, the BRS with a strength of 39 MLAs had strength to win one seat easily. The Congress fielded two candidates and BRS fielded one candidate as per their strengths avoiding the need to conduct polling.



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DECCAN Chronicle

19 FEBRUARY 2026

Close India-France ties set to touch a new high

A new chapter is opening in the India-France relationship with the latest face-to-face meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Emmanuel Macron. The ties have been elevated to a "Special Global Strategic Partnership", furthering a friendship that is believed to "have no boundaries."

The ties between the countries are also inextricably melded by the multi-role fighter jet Rafale of which India will be buying more, many of them with an ideally indigenous content as high as 50 per cent. Whatever may be the misgivings about the Rafale jets after Operation Sindoor in which at least one may have been shot down, India is operationally and strategically fused to the Rafale and more significantly, politically too.

The latest acquisition of more Rafales, some in flyaway condition, may be subject to price negotiations and other details, but it is the IAF aircraft of choice and loading them with nuclear capable missiles can be subject to only French government clearance which, considering the closeness of the ties, can be assumed. And the IAF, in need of more squadrons to fulfil strategic requirements, cannot be more pleased.

Beyond the flying machines which have assumed far greater significance in most modern warfare that is fought from the sky with airborne projectiles precluding the need to cross borders, the India-France ties are set to fly further thanks, of course, to the churn in global geopolitics triggered by the dawning realisation that the USA is no more the reliable ally that the West and others thought they had after World War II.

The leaders' joint call for a new world order without hegemony in the wake of the huge roiling caused by the capricious handling of global trade with the US makes perfect sense even if all nations need to trade with the world's largest economy though the old ways of doing so on the best possible terms may have disappeared with a change in the occupant of the White House.

In a quirky sort of way, India may even have to thank Mr Trump's tariff tantrums for opening its eyes to trying to make deals with the rest of the world, as it has with various countries from New Zealand to Europe, where France is one of its most important partners. And not only in trade but now also in strategic areas in defence, science & technology and nuclear power, besides high speed rail networks in which France was an early world leader.

A French helicopter being made in an assembly line in Karnataka is said to be capable of flying at great heights to serve on India's hilly northern borders, hence leading to the catchphrase that India-France ties can "reach from deep oceans to the tallest mountains". The durability of those ties has never been in doubt as, even at the height of a global backlash over India's first nuclear tests, France never followed the US and UK in censorious reprimand.

At a particularly busy time as India's Prime Minister is engaging with multiple national leaders during the days of the AI summit in New Delhi, India's diplomatic thrust has been in elevated mode. Even so, India would do well to thrash out the minute details of the trade deal with the US and ensure that the right to strategic autonomy which has brought the nation this far in a world buffeted by strong winds that are threatening to shake the old rules-based order is intact as are the crucially protected sectors of the Indian economy.

Peace in Manipur still fragile

The fragile nature of peace that prevails in the multi-ethnic Manipuri society has come to be demonstrated once again with the untoward incidents in the Naga-majority Ukhrul district in the last few days. The latest is the decision of the authorities to evacuate and transfer 51 students from the Kuki tribal community from the Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya there to Kuki-dominated Kangpokpi district following clashes between the two communities.

The apparent cause of violence is traced to a drunken brawl between two groups on February 7. If such incidents can lead to violence, which has already resulted in razing or burning down about 30 residential places, then every village in India could face it every single day, but that is not the case. There must be deeper, unresolved issues that are waiting for just solutions.

Most Indian villages are made of people with vastly different identities but they have chosen to trust humanity and found common ground to work on and move forward. They also trust the rule of law and have created mechanisms to enforce it. A fair-minded administration which commands the confidence of the people of all groups can bring a violent situation under control in a few hours. Manipur, unfortunately, has deviated from this path for the last three years when the N. Biren Singh administration openly sided with the majority Meitei community as they took on the Kuki tribal community. It has practically destroyed people's trust in the administration. His replacement, Yumnam Khechhand Singh, however, has a reputation of being fair-minded and has demonstrated the will to walk the extra mile to bring peace to a strife-torn state. The CM who assumed power only on February 4 has a tough task to perform, should he want to put his state back on the rails of peace and progress. The use of the law and its tools to suppress violence and punish those who are behind it is one; an honest attempt to understand the root cause of tension that has prevailed there and efforts to solve them is the next. Uneasy peace is no recipe for progress, but justice and fairness are.

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AI: US hubris contrasts with India's chutzpah



It is quite ironic that even as coal miners hail US President Donald Trump as the "champion of coal" in Washington, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi is convening the fourth global summit on Artificial Intelligence since 2023 in New Delhi. Could this curious inversion of core business interests between these two friendly countries be the result of hubris afflicting the world's premier power, whilst aspiration and hope drives developing minnows, like India, to face technology development issues up front.

Even as America seeks comfort in turning the clock back to trade protectionism and revisits a colonial paradigm of natural resources being key to retain global power, India embraces the future, even though it comes with potential disruptions. Some of this is because we, unlike America, do not have the economic margins to plough a risky and lonely furrow into the past. But it is equally about an alternative world view, focusing on India's demographic potential to harness global opportunities for growth. Growth remains central to the India story and takes precedence over preserving the existing status quo, which is cozy for the "creamy layer" and their associates but grossly inequitable in not affording similar opportunities to the bottom half of the population.

It all began in 2023 at Bletchley Park in the UK, where the AI Summit focused on shared responsibility for safe development of frontier models. Seoul in 2024 moved from awareness to the nuts and bolts of global coordination and cooperation. Paris in 2025, co-chaired by India, was about risk awareness and policy action. The New Delhi summit is likely to focus on unpacking economic and business opportunities and managing the impact on legacy IT businesses, jobs and growth.

The perceived business opportunity in AI is its ability to improve work efficiency by a possible factor of 10X to an ambitious 30X, within a short period of five to ten years. Aspirational economies, like India, are betting that the benefits of anticipated productivity gains in business and government, leading to higher GDP growth, can outpace the scale and the cost of job disruptions and improve the quality of social services provided to the bottom half of the population. A 10 to 12 per cent increase in annual productivity in the IT sector translates into a one per cent increase in GDP per year, assuming the IT sector has a GDP share of eight per cent. Productivity increase in IT can also translate into higher levels of competitively priced export bridging some of the current account deficit. In the medium term, as AI is embedded into enterprise workflows more widely, it would make manufacturing and even agriculture more cost competitive because of direct productivity gains in these work areas, thereby enhancing their capacity to withstand imported competition in free trade regimes and to export.

Versus China, we are strongest in data, courtesy our digital public infrastructure (Aadhaar and UPI). Our compute capacity is emerging, as are LLMs with an emphasis initially on enterprise applications in the services sector.

spend by 23 per cent without adding any additional debt. Clearly, the additional leverage and resilience attained by any of these actions, or any combination thereof, is considerable.

Similarly, in productive sectors like agriculture, phone-in services and remote sensing can lower cost and risk by advising weather dependent farmers on just in time sowing or cropping and online advice for timely and least cost pest management. Tellingly, domestic application models which translate one Indian languages into another are already available to enable conversations across regions and cultures in real time. History buffs might remember that many of India's states were demarcated based on language. India has tussled with a universally acceptable common language, though Bollywood has played a stellar role in popularising Hindi across the country and abroad. Sarvam AI, a public interest initiative out of Chennai, now supported by the Government of India, seeks to bridge the language divide digitally and eventually to bridge the cultural gaps across communities.

To be sure, new jobs will be created as AI becomes pervasive across enterprises and represents. The Western countries perceive Brics as an anti-West group. India has been at pains to state that Brics may be "non-West", as it does not have any OECD country as member, but it is not "anti-West". However, including Iran as a member does send a signal of the "anti-West" orientation of some of its members. On any new members, India has rightly stated it is the time for consolidation of the enhanced membership of Brics and no new members are being considered during India's presidency. Conscious of this drift and the lack of focus in Brics, Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his address at the Rio summit in July, while accepting the presidency for 2026, had said: "Our goal will be to redefine Brics as 'Building Resilience and Innovation for Cooperation and Sustainability'." In a press conference on January 13, 2026, external affairs minister S. Jaishankar had further outlined Mr Modi's vision for Brics as "Humanity First and People Centric". He said that Brics was for "dialogue and cooperation" and aims for cooperation among emerging economies and the developed world.

AI applications need to be supervised, for now, and humans would continue to be in these roles whilst machines do most of the grunt work. In tech parlance, such collaboration between machines and humans is called "humans in the loop". Those who are uninterested or incapable in reskilling themselves shall lose out. The extent of new jobs available will depend on the spread and the depth of implementation of AI within enterprises. But clearly, adaptation finance would be necessary as would guidance, particularly for smaller firms. This is where hand-holding by the government, industry associations and large corporates (of smaller ancillary suppliers) will be critical for assuring a smooth transition over a decade.

Sam Altman is being generous when he calls India a "full stack" player across all five layers of compute, data, Large Language Models, Applications and Governance.

Versus China, for instance, we are strongest in data, courtesy our digital public infrastructure (Aadhaar and UPI) and in governance arrangements, courtesy our democratic institutional arrangements, which ensure stability. Our compute capacity is emerging, as are LLMs with an emphasis initially on enterprise applications in the services sector, with manufacturing to follow. The India AI summit aligns well with the liberalised trade arrangements India is navigating, at a time when becoming globally competitive is the key to growth and survival. It is surely not a bad bargain to import coal and oil from America, as President Trump wants, and pay for it by exporting AI enterprise models embedding AI into American services and industry to replace or update the legacy software Indian engineers installed in the first place.

The writer is Distinguished Fellow, Chintan Research Foundation, and was earlier with the IAS and the World Bank

LETTERS

REVANTH'S INSPECTION

Hope Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy begins his inspection tour from Secunderabad Oliphant Bridge so that he can personally watch the perennial problem of overflowing drains and potholed roads (CM to go on inspection spree in city, Feb. 18).

Wasim Ahmed Khan Secunderabad

Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy can plan a surprise visit to Vayupuri to see how a peaceful and clean society has degenerated into a noisy overcrowded place with no safe way for senior veterans to take a walk or even drive.

Gp Capt. G.S. Reddy (Retd) Hyderabad

AFFORDABLE HOUSES

For years, home ownership has remained a distant dream for many salaried and lower middle-income households struggling with soaring real estate prices (Middle class to get houses at affordable rates: Ponguleti, Feb. 18).

Jasti Samson Hyderabad

KEEP WATCH ON GHMC

While vehicles with mounted cameras to punish offenders who litter public areas is welcome, why can't we have an audit to check if our present garbage collection mechanism is working effectively? (Garbage baggers, Feb. 18). Why is GHMC not making payment to garbage collectors digitally, for example via UPI. It's an open secret how erratic our door to door garbage collectors are and how they demand extra money.

Arnold K.G.J. Hyderabad

AI DRAFTED PETITIONS

The Supreme Court has rightly expressed its concern of the growing trend of filing petitions by the lawyers drafted with AI tools (AI Verdicts in pleas draw SC ire, Feb. 18). It is safe to cross check the contents of the concerned topic in AI tools before drafting. After all, AI tools exist to assist human intelligence but not to overpower it. The traditional mode of referring law books and journals for legal inputs and references imparts comprehensive and deep insight in its relevant and specific subject matter.

Yogeshwar Raj Saxena Hyderabad

Email your letters to info@deccanmail.com, editor@deccanmail.com.



Brics at crossroads: At 2026 summit in Delhi, keep focus on its core agenda

With the Brics' sherpas' meeting in New Delhi on February 10 and 11, India has kickstarted the preparations for the Brics annual summit later this year. India is the rotational president of Brics for 2026 in a deteriorating international environment which is more uncertain, more unpredictable and more fraught than in previous years. The rules-based international order is under strain, there is talk of a G-2 or a G-3 dominated world and the voice of the rising powers needs to be articulated and asserted.

What are the objectives of Brics as a group? The acronym "Bric" was coined by Goldman Sach's chief economist Jim O'Neill in 2001, identifying the then fastest-growing major economies - Brazil, Russia, India and China. In the wake of the global financial crisis of 2008, the first summit of 20 major economies G-20 was convened by President Barack Obama in Washington in November 2008. There it was realised that the G-7 countries spoke with one voice, whereas the rest of the members had no common agenda or views. To harmonise positions, Russia hosted a summit meeting with the leaders of Brazil, India and China in Yekaterinburg in June 2009, before the second G-20 summit in Pittsburgh in September 2009. A brief one-page joint statement stated the objectives as: (i) coordinate positions on global financial and economic issues; (ii) reform of international financial institutions and (iii) improvement in the international trade and investment environment. Thus "Bric" as a group was born, and its agenda was purely economic.

For making the group more representative, South Africa was invited to join to represent African nations, and in 2011 the group was renamed as "Brics".

Over time, gradually the agenda of Brics grew bigger. China rose as the second largest economy. The Russia-Ukraine war since 2022, the Israel-Palestine conflict since 2023 and US President Donald Trump's unconventional foreign policy further transformed both global geopolitics and geoeconomics.

Strangely, South Africa, during its 2023 presidency of Brics, unilaterally embarked on a mission to increase the group's membership. South Africa approached over 40 countries to ascertain their interest in joining Brics, and more than 20 responded positively. India's plea to first agree on some criteria for future Brics' membership was unfortunately seen as obstructionist by the host. Seven countries - Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, the UAE and Saudi Arabia - were admitted as new members at the Johannesburg summit, of which all except Argentina have joined.

The theme of the 17th Brics summit in Brazil in 2025 was "Strengthening Global South Cooperation for a more Inclusive and Sustainable Development". The question arises whether Brics is a bloc representing the "Global South" or the "Fast Rising Major Economies"?

It must be noted that China and Russia do not belong to the Global South. There is a need, under India's presidency, for the members to ponder whose interests and concerns the group primarily

represents. The Western countries perceive Brics as an anti-West group. India has been at pains to state that Brics may be "non-West", as it does not have any OECD country as member, but it is not "anti-West". However, including Iran as a member does send a signal of the "anti-West" orientation of some of its members.

On any new members, India has rightly stated it is the time for consolidation of the enhanced membership of Brics and no new members are being considered during India's presidency.

Conscious of this drift and the lack of focus in Brics, Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his address at the Rio summit in July, while accepting the presidency for 2026, had said: "Our goal will be to redefine Brics as 'Building Resilience and Innovation for Cooperation and Sustainability'." In a press conference on January 13, 2026, external affairs minister S. Jaishankar had further outlined Mr Modi's vision for Brics as "Humanity First and People Centric". He said that Brics was for "dialogue and cooperation" and aims for cooperation among emerging economies and the developed world.

The message of cooperation with the West is important. It would be prudent for the members not to push for the Brics currency "UNIT". In December 2025 a prototype gold-backed currency UNIT was launched, composed of 40 per cent physical gold and 60 per cent national currencies of Brics member states. During the Rio summit on July 6, 2025, US President Donald Trump had warned on Truth Social: "Any country aligning themselves with the anti-American policies of

Brics will be charged an additional 10 per cent tariff. There will be no exceptions to this policy." On July 8, he reportedly said that Brics was set up to "degenerate the US dollar... and any country that was part of it will face consequences".

India is wisely steering clear of any controversy and there is no talk of "de-dollarisation".

The sherpas' meeting emphasised cooperation in health, agriculture, labour, employment, disaster risk reduction, environment, climate change, energy, innovation, ICT, security and counter-terrorism and economic and financial domains. People-centric activities would be related to sports, youth connect, cultural engagements, Academic Forum, Think Tank Council and Brics Civil Forum. The Brics Business Council and Brics Women's Business Alliance would also be active. As seven members of the current eleven members are also members of G-20, the Brics summit in New Delhi will be an opportunity for the seven to coordinate their positions on important issues prior to the 21st G-20 summit to be hosted by President Donald Trump in Miami in December this year.

It is important that Brics remains a compact group of fast-growing developing economies with a clear criteria for membership and a manageable economic agenda. Any uncontrolled increase in membership and pursuit of an all-encompassing agenda would lead to lack of coherence and open the door for its future irrelevance like the G-77 and the Nonaligned Movement.

The writer is a retired Indian diplomat

SHORT TAKE

HYDRAA STARTS YUVA AAPDA MITRA PROJECT

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

Hyderabad Disaster Response and Asset Protection Agency (HYDRAA) has launched its third batch of Yuva Aapda Mitra training programme on Wednesday.

A total of 105 youth volunteers from Rangareddy and Hyderabad districts will undergo week-long training at HYDRAA training centre under the programme.

During the inauguration, HYDRAA additional director Varla Papayya urged the volunteers to play a key role in protecting people during natural calamities and providing immediate assistance and coordinate with rescue teams from various government departments.

The additional director encouraged the volunteers to prepare at least 10 more people each and assure the community about the support readily available.

The volunteers will undergo training on various rescue techniques and emergency response skills as part of the programme.

Buddhist monks' yatra gets a warm welcome

Barefoot rally began in Maharashtra and will end in AP

DEEPIKA PASHAM | DC AND ADITYA KUMAR SINGH HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

Dance troupes performing Gussadi, Oggu Dhol, Telangana Dhol and Banjara dances greeted monks as women from Mahila Mandals, dressed in Kerala-style sarees, showered rose petals during the 3rd Dhamma Padayatra. The walk concluded at Buddhavanam on March 3 after a visit to the Dr B.R. Ambedkar statue.

Flower spray machines lined the pathway, which was decorated with Buddhist flags.

The monks entered barefoot in a single line, some with bandaged feet, accompanied by nuns who prepared their meals. Each monk carried a small bag with clothes, food and utensils. The group included students of Buddhist teachings and elderly participants, with



Monks including students and elders visit 125ft Dr Ambedkar statue and Buddha statue in Hussainsagar lake as part of 3rd Dhamma Padayatra. — S. SURENDER REDDY

organisers noting that family consent is required before formally joining the order. A dog named Saathi, which joined during an earlier walk, continues to travel with them. Inside the premises, monks viewed displays on Ambedkar's life and work. Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, Minister Vivek Venkat-

aswamy, officials from the department of culture and representatives of the Gagan Malik Foundation welcomed them. Actor and Buddhist activist Gagan Malik highlighted the monks' barefoot journey to spread peace and compassion. The padayatra began in Maharashtra, passed through the Himalayas,

Karnataka and Telangana, and will later proceed to Andhra Pradesh. Monk Buddhavamso urged families to dedicate at least one child to the Dhamma, saying it teaches values that help overcome suffering. Participants, ranging from teenagers to elders, said they were welcomed by people of all faiths.

HC directs amicus to verify afforestation for ELF radar

VUJJINI VAMSHIDHAR | DC HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

The Telangana High Court on Wednesday directed the government pleader, forest department, to file a detailed affidavit on the extent of afforestation carried out in connection with the proposed Extremely Low Frequency (ELF) Radar Project in the Damagundam Reserve Forest.

A Division Bench comprising Chief Justice Aparish Kumar Singh and Justice G.M. Mohiuddin also directed the Amicus Curiae to inspect the identified land, assess the afforestation undertaken, verify the survival rate of the saplings and submit a report. The amicus was asked to inform the Government Pleader of the proposed inspection date to facilitate arrangements. The matter was adjourned to April 2, 2026.

The Bench was hearing a public interest litigation filed by the Damagundam Forest Protection JAC challenging the project. The



THE PETITION sought cancellation of a 2014 Government Order, conduct of a comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment and a public hearing with affected communities.

petitioner contended that the proposed ELF Radar Project was arbitrary and detrimental to the forest ecosystem, biodiversity and local livelihoods, and alleged that information furnished by the Centre was inadequate.

The petition sought cancellation of a 2014 Government Order, conduct of a comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment and a public hearing with affected communities. It also sought preparation of a People's

Biodiversity Register, recognition of rights of local gram panchayats over medicinal plants and protection of religious sites in the forest area.

The Additional Solicitor General submitted that the Navy had deposited over ₹300 crore towards afforestation and that stage-wise compliance was under way. He informed the court that over nine lakh saplings had been planted against a target of 11.74 lakh, including about 3.5 lakh at Vikarabad and 5.5 lakh at Aamangal, and that 8,067 plants had been relocated. As of December 2025, around 25,000 additional saplings had been planted, he said.

The ASG submitted the project related to national defence and could not be stalled, and added that further funding was pending in view of the PIL.

After hearing the parties, the Bench directed filing of the affidavit and submission of the Amicus report and posted the matter for further hearing on April 2, 2026.

ISB MBA gets 12th in global rankings

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

The Indian School of Business (ISB), Hyderabad, has climbed 15 places to secure the 12th position in the Financial Times global MBA rankings 2026, up from 27th last year. It continues to be ranked as the top MBA programme in India for the third consecutive year.

ISB's postgraduate programme in management is placed 1st in India and 2nd in Asia. Globally, ISB graduates rank 1st for percentage salary increase between pre and post-MBA, and 6th for alumni network strength. The school has a network of over 20,000 alumni across 65 countries.

The Financial Times rankings evaluate business

schools on parameters such as salary outcomes, career progress, international mobility, diversity, and alumni engagement.

Other Indian institutions in the 2026 top-100 list include IIM Ahmedabad (27th), IIM Bangalore (34th), IIM Calcutta (53rd), IIM Lucknow (58th), IIM Indore (62nd), IIM Kozhikode (65th), SP Jain Institute of Management and Research (74th), and XLRI - Xavier School of Management (82nd).

Now in its 25th year, ISB operates campuses in Hyderabad and Mohali and admits one of the largest MBA cohorts globally. The latest rankings place ISB among the strongest performers from India on the international stage.

GHMC LAUNCHES MYCURE APP FOR CIVIC SERVICES

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

In a step towards digitised and citizen-centric urban governance, the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) has launched the MyCURE App, a one-stop digital platform for civic services. The app aims to make grievance redressal faster and eliminate the need for multiple platforms or visits to municipal offices.

The new application replaces MyGHMC App and brings all civic grievance services under a single interface. Residents can lodge complaints related to sanitation, streetlights, roads, drainage, town planning and other civic issues, and track their status in real time.

Officials said the app has been developed under the CURE framework, focusing on responsive service delivery and digital efficiency. It is expected to promote transparency and accountability in municipal administration. Citizens have been encouraged to download the app and participate in strengthening urban governance.

ACTION AGAINST COVERTS, SAYS BHONGIR MP

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

Bhongir MP Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy on Wednesday said disciplinary action would be initiated against 'coverts' allegedly responsible for the Congress defeat in Cherial and Tirumalagiri municipalities.

Addressing the media at Gandhi Bhavan, the MP acknowledged the party's loss in the two civic bodies under the Bhongir Parliamentary constituency and cited a communication gap between leaders and party workers as a contributing factor. "Some leaders there have acted as covert operators. We will seek the permission of PCC chief B. Mahesh Kumar Goud and state in-charge Meenakshi Natarajan to conduct a detailed review of the losses," he said.

A comprehensive report will be prepared to ascertain the facts. Those found responsible for the Congress party's defeat must face appropriate action. The party's prospects will improve only if firm steps are taken against such elements," he said.

RIMC entrance test to Class 8 on June 7

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

The State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), Telangana, has announced that the entrance examination for admission to Class VIII at the Rashtriya Indian Military College (RIMC), Dehradun, for the January 2027 term will be held on June 7 in Hyderabad.

The exam, carrying 400 marks, will comprise three papers — mathematics, general knowledge and English. Successful candidates will be called for a viva-voce of 50 marks, followed by a medical

examination at designated Military Hospitals. Only those found medically fit will be considered for admission. Applicants must be between 11½ and 13 years of age as on January 1, 2027, with birth dates falling between January 2, 2014, and July 1, 2015. They should be studying in Class VII or have passed Class VII from a recognised school at the time of admission.

The examination for Telangana candidates will be conducted only in Hyderabad. Eligibility is restricted to children whose parents or guardians are domiciled in Telangana.

INDIAN ARMY
www.joinindianarmy.nic.in
INFORMATION FOR RECRUITMENT OF AGNIVEERS INTO THE ARMY UNDER AGNIPATH SCHEME
(REGISTRATION FOR RECRUITING YEAR 27 STARTED FROM 14FEB 2026 TO 01 APRIL 2026)

HIGHLIGHTS
(Information given below is for general awareness only and legally invalid.)
(Course notification published on – www.joinindianarmy.nic.in – should be refereed for detailed information about the entry)

Category	Description	Detailed Notification Paragraph No																														
Type of Entry	1. Agniveer General Duty 2. Agniveer Technical 3. Agniveer Clerk /Store Keeper Technical 4. Agniveer Tradesman (Class 10 th Pass & 8 th Pass) 5. Agniveer Women General Duty in Corps of Military Police Note- Agniveer candidates can apply for any TWO Categories (as given above) based on their eligibility	Para-1																														
Age	17½-22 Years (Minimum and Maximum age will be calculated as on 01 Jan & 01 Jul respectively of Recruiting year i.e 2027). For Women only Upper Age limit will be relaxable upto 30 years of age (as on date of joining training) in respect of widows of Defence personnel who have died in harness.	Para-1																														
Education Qualification	Candidate must have passed from the Boards of School Education recognized by Ministry of Education, Government of India as per list of Boards provided on www.joinindianarmy.nic.in website.	Para-5																														
Physical Measurement Standards (PMT : Height, Weight & Chest Expansion)	As per region and special relaxations	Para-5																														
Physical Fitness Tests (PFT)	Qualifying in Physical Fitness Test (PFT) is mandatory for selection:- For Male: 1.6 Km Run, Beam (Pull Ups) and need to qualify in 9 feet ditch and ZigZag balance. For Female: 1.6 Km Run, Beam (Pull Ups) and need to qualify in 7 feet ditch and ZigZag balance. Note Candidates appearing for Agniveer Technical and Agniveer Clerk /Store Keeper Technical need to only qualify in all physical tests.	Para-24																														
Marital Status	Male - Unmarried only. Women - Unmarried, widowed, divorced or legally separated having no children subject to fulfilling all other eligibility criteria.	Para-18 Para 18 & Para 1																														
Recruitment Process	Online Registration/Application > Online Common Entrance Exam (CEE) > Recruitment Rally (PFT&PMT) > Medical > Documentation	Para-19																														
Date of Entrance Exam	Tentatively scheduled from 01 to 15 Jun 2027 (Final dates will be intimated separately)																															
Common Entrance Exam (CEE)	Online Common Entrance Examination (CEE) will be conducted in 13 languages (ie English, Hindi, Malayalam, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Punjabi, Odiya, Bengali, Urdu, Gujarati, Marathi and Assamese).	Para-21.6																														
Training Duration	24 Weeks																															
Leave	30 days leave per year shall be applicable for Agniveers. Additionally, sick leave would be applicable based on medical advice of competent medical authority.	Para-11																														
Pay, Allowances and Allied Benefits	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Customised Package (monthly)</th> <th>In Hand (70%)</th> <th>Contribution to Agniveers Corpus Fund (30%)</th> <th>Contribution to Corpus fund by Government of India</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td colspan="5">All Figures in Rs (Monthly Contribution) (Approximately)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1st Year</td> <td>30,000/-</td> <td>21,000/-</td> <td>9,000/-</td> <td>9,000/-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2nd Year</td> <td>33,000/-</td> <td>23,100/-</td> <td>9,900/-</td> <td>9,900/-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3rd Year</td> <td>36,500/-</td> <td>25,550/-</td> <td>10,950/-</td> <td>10,950/-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4th Year</td> <td>40,000/-</td> <td>28,000/-</td> <td>12,000/-</td> <td>12,000/-</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	Customised Package (monthly)	In Hand (70%)	Contribution to Agniveers Corpus Fund (30%)	Contribution to Corpus fund by Government of India	All Figures in Rs (Monthly Contribution) (Approximately)					1 st Year	30,000/-	21,000/-	9,000/-	9,000/-	2 nd Year	33,000/-	23,100/-	9,900/-	9,900/-	3 rd Year	36,500/-	25,550/-	10,950/-	10,950/-	4 th Year	40,000/-	28,000/-	12,000/-	12,000/-	Para-13 & 14
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2 nd Year	33,000/-	23,100/-	9,900/-	9,900/-																												
3 rd Year	36,500/-	25,550/-	10,950/-	10,950/-																												
4 th Year	40,000/-	28,000/-	12,000/-	12,000/-																												
SevaNidhi	Total Contribution in Agniveers Corpus Fund after Four years Rs. 5.02 Lakh Exit after 4 Year Approximately Rs. 10.04 Lakh as SevaNidhi Package (Absolute amount excluding Interest)	Para-14																														
Life Insurance Cover	Agniveer will be provided non contributory Life Insurance Cover of Rs 48 lakh for the duration of their engagement period	Para-15																														
Death Compensation	In addition to insurance cover of Rs 48 lakh, one time ex-gratia of Rs 44 lakh for death attributable to service, will be provided to the Next of Kin (NOK).	Para-15																														
Medical and CSD Facility	For the duration of their engagement period in the Indian Army Agniveers will be entitled for Medical facilities at service hospitals as well as CSD provisions.	Para-12																														
Engagement Period of Agniveers	04 Years. Indian Army is not obliged to retain the Agniveers beyond the engagement period of four years	Para-8																														
Enrolment as Soldier (Regular Cadre)	On completion of four years of service, based on organization's requirements and policies promulgated, upto 25% of each specific batch of Agniveers will be enrolled in Indian Army as regular cadre.	Para-8																														

DISCLAIMER
The terms and conditions given in the advertisement are guidelines only and orders issued by the Government, as amended from time to time, will apply for the selected candidates. Indian Army reserves the right to cancel/amend entire selection process or part of process at any stage without assigning any reasons. Candidates found indulging in any type of malpractices/unfair means during the examination shall be debarred permanently. The data entered during registration will be final and no changes will be permitted later. Entry of wrong data will disqualify candidature.

CBC 10601/11/0082/2526



SHORT TAKES

MAHA CONGRESS CHIEF APOLOGISES OVER COMMENTS

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, FEB. 18

Maharashtra Congress chief Harshwardhan Sapkal on Tuesday issued an apology after facing backlash for comments allegedly drawing parallels between Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Tipu Sultan. The Congress leader claimed his remarks were misrepresented as part of a BJP-driven effort to incite social tension.

Sapkal explained that his original comments aimed to promote unity by suggesting the display of portraits of various national icons together. He insisted his remarks were taken out of context and shared on social media to mislead the public into thinking he directly compared the two historical figures. This controversy arose when a portrait of Tipu Sultan reportedly appeared in the office of a deputy mayor in Malegaon, sparking outrage from the BJP and Hindu groups. While addressing the controversy surrounding a portrait of Tipu Sultan displayed in the office of the Malegaon deputy mayor, Sapkal had said, "After Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Tipu Sultan belongs to the same lineage of valor."

WOMAN ENDS LIFE OVER S.I.R. FEAR IN WB

Berhampore, Feb. 18: An aged woman killed herself in panic of losing her voting rights in the special intensive revision (SIR) in Murshidabad of West Bengal. The deceased, Miratunnessa Bibi (65), was from North Faridpur village at Jalangi.

She was found hanging in a room of her house on Wednesday morning. Her neighbours recovered the body and took it to Domkal Hospital where she was declared dead. Police later sent the body for post mortem.

According to the woman's family members, she looked disturbed and restless for the last few days as she was summoned to face a SIR hearing which prompted her to anticipate that her name might be deleted from the final voters' list and she would be forcibly deported to Bangladesh.

SC ADJOURNS ED PLEA AGAINST MAMATA

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 18

The Supreme Court on Tuesday adjourned to March 18 the hearing on a plea moved by the ED alleging obstruction by the West Bengal government, including by chief minister Mamata Banerjee, in its search operation at the political consultancy I-PAC's office and the premises of its director in connection with money laundering probe linked to coal pilferage "scam".

A two-judge bench of Justices Prashant Kumar Mishra and KV Viswanathan deferred the matter after Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told the court that a rejoinder will be filed during the day. On January 15, the apex court said the West Bengal chief minister's alleged "obstruction" in ED's probe is "very serious" and agreed to examine if a state's law-enforcing agencies can interfere with any probe into any serious offence.

RETIRED ISRO EMPLOYEE STRANGLES WIFE

Bengaluru, Feb. 18: A 65-year-old retired ISRO employee allegedly strangled his wife to death with a towel at their residence on Wednesday, police said.

The incident was reported at around 11 am within the Avalahalli police station limits.

The accused, Nageshwar Rao, has been taken into police custody, authorities added.

Citing the preliminary investigation, a senior police officer said Rao was reportedly undergoing treatment for depression.

Rao allegedly wanted to end his life after killing his wife, police added.

After the alleged attack on his wife, Sandya Sri, Rao reportedly remained at the spot. He then contacted an acquaintance, who alerted the police.

A police team arrived at the residence and took Rao into custody.

Maharashtra scraps 5% reservation for Muslims

Ends 12-yr-old ordinance; Cong. calls it anti-backward class move

DC CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, FEB. 18

The Maharashtra government has formally scrapped the 5 per cent reservation for Muslims in government jobs and educational institutions, a quota initially introduced by the Congress-NCP dispensation in 2014 under the Special Backward Category-A (SBC-A). The decision ends the long-standing legal limbo surrounding the ordinance, which had lapsed years ago and was never converted into law.

The cancellation, issued through a Government Resolution (GR) by the Social Justice and Special Assistance Department on Tuesday, nullifies all previous orders and circulars related to caste and non-creamy layer certificates for Muslims under SBC-A. As a result, no recruitment or admissions can now be carried out under the five per cent quota. Officials described the move as largely procedural, since the reservation had not been in force for years following judicial

RESERVATION DEBATE



Devendra Fadnis

2014 ordinance never became law, lapsed automatically.

BOMBAY High Court allowed education, stayed job quota.

SUPREME Court later invalidated reservation under legal petition.

NEW GRs cancels all previous Muslim quota orders.

ISSUANCE of caste certificates for Muslims stopped.

Reservation not enforced for years due to ordinance expiry.

BJP doesn't value Muslim leaders; justice unlikely for community.

CLYDE CRASTO, NCP, Spokesperson.

BJP aims to restrict Muslim youths to menial jobs, block IAS/IPS opportunities.

IMTIAZ JALEEL, AIMIM leader.

Anti-backward class and anti-minority, blow to democracy

VARSHA GAIKWAD, Mumbai Cong. president.

intervention and the expiry of the ordinance.

The Congress and other opposition parties sharply criticised the government. Congress leader Nasim Khan said the decision amounted to a denial of justice for minorities and labelled it "anti-backward class and anti-minority." Mumbai Congress president Varsha Gaikwad called the move a "blow to democracy," highlighting

that the Bombay High Court had upheld the quota in educational institutions. She accused the BJP government of hypocrisy, citing its "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas" slogan, and demanded clarity from Shiv Sena and NCP leaders on their stance. The NCP echoed the criticism, with spokesperson Clyde Crasto asserting that the decision demonstrated

that the BJP did not value Muslim leaders within its coalition and was unlikely to provide justice to the community. Samajwadi Party leader Abu Asim Azmi questioned the rationale of formally withdrawing an ordinance that had already lapsed, calling it an incomplete and politically motivated approach to social justice. He suggested that sub-classification within SEBC.

IED neutralised



Security personnel stand guard after neutralising Improvised Explosive Device (IED) planted by terrorists on the Srinagar-Baramulla highway in J&K.

37 Rajya Sabha seats go polling on March 16: EC

SANJAY KAW | DC NEW DELHI, FEB. 18

The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Wednesday issued a notification for elections to 37 Rajya Sabha seats across 10 states, with polling and counting scheduled for March 16.

The terms of 37 members of the Upper House are set to expire in April. The ECI said adequate measures, including appointment of observers, would be taken to ensure a free and fair election. It also directed that only integrated violet colour sketch pens be used for marking preferences on ballot papers. The seats falling vacant are in Maharashtra (7), Odisha (4), Telangana (2), Tamil Nadu (6), Chhattisgarh (2), West Bengal (5), Assam (3), Haryana (2), Himachal Pradesh (1) and Bihar (5). The seats will fall vacant on April 2 and 9. Notifications for the polls will be issued on February 26. The last date for filing nominations is March 5, scrutiny will

UPPER HOUSE POLLS	
Maharashtra -	7 seats falling vacant.
Odisha -	4 seats falling vacant.
Telangana -	2 seats falling vacant.
Tamil Nadu -	6 seats falling vacant.
Chhattisgarh -	2 seats falling vacant.
West Bengal -	5 seats falling vacant.
Assam -	3 seats falling vacant.
Haryana -	2 seats falling vacant.
Himachal Pradesh -	1 seat falling vacant.
Bihar -	5 seats falling vacant.

take place on March 6, and the last date for withdrawal is March 9. Polling will be held between 9 am and 4 pm on March 16, with counting from 5 pm the same day. Among prominent members completing their terms are Sharad Pawar (NCP-SP), Abhishek Singhvi (Congress), Saket Gokhale (TMC), Priyanka Chaturvedi (Shiv Sena-UBT), Ramdas Athawale (RPI-A), M. Thambidurai (AIADMK) and Tiruchi Siva (DMK). The biennial elections are expected to impact the strength of

parties in the Upper House, with the BJP currently in government or in alliance in six of the 10 states where seats are falling vacant. Opposition parties govern Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and West Bengal. In Maharashtra, the opposition MVA could send one candidate if it contests unitedly. Haryana and Assam. In Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and West Bengal, opposition parties run the respective state governments.

Himanta confirms: Borah to join BJP

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, FEB. 18



Former APCC President Bhupen Bora, following his resignation from Congress, addressed a PC with Assam CM in Guwahati.

Former Assam Congress chief Bhupen Kumar Borah has decided to quit the party and join the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on February 22, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced on Tuesday. Borah had initially sent his resignation to the Congress high command on Monday but withdrew it after a call from Lok Sabha leader Rahul Gandhi.

Later, Sarma met Borah at his residence and reportedly convinced him to proceed with joining the BJP. Borah, who led the Assam Congress from 2021 until being replaced by Gaurav Gogoi in May 2025, cited "humiliation" and being sidelined by senior leaders as reasons for leaving. Sarma, who himself moved from Congress to BJP years ago, said Borah had decided to stand by his choice despite "considerable fire-fighting" by Congress leadership. Reacting to

Borah's move, Assam Congress president Gaurav Gogoi described those who joined the BJP as "insignificant" in their political journey, claiming Borah would meet the same fate.

He accused Sarma of trying to overshadow Congress's campaign on the alleged 12,000-bigha land grab by his family. Gogoi also challenged Sarma to a face-to-face debate on Hinduism to prove who is better versed in the religion's ethos. Ahead of the upcoming Assam Assembly elections for 126 seats in March-April, Gogoi

claimed the contest will be between the "real Congress" and "fake Congress," criticizing the BJP for filling its ranks with former Congress leaders.

He also questioned the trustworthiness of Borah, recalling his earlier vow never to join the BJP. Sarma maintained that Borah's decision is final and that Congress pressure could not reverse it. Borah's switch is seen as a significant development ahead of Assam's state elections, intensifying the political battle between the ruling BJP and Congress.

SC rules groping, pyjama pulling 'attempt to rape'

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 18

The Supreme Court has ruled that grabbing of breasts and pulling the pyjama string amount to "attempt to rape", setting aside a controversial Allahabad High Court order which said these were only "preparation to commit rape".

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and N V Anjaria said the impugned order was liable to be set aside on account of the "patently erroneous application of the settled principles of criminal jurisprudence".

The court passed the order on February 10 on a suo motu plea in which it had taken cognisance of the Allahabad High Court order, which stated that mere grabbing of the breasts and pulling the string of a pyjama did not amount to the offence of rape. While setting aside the HC judgement, the top court restored the original stringent charge of attempt to rape against two accused under the Protection of Children

Court seeks reply on tribal exhumations

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 18

The Supreme Court on Wednesday sought a response from the Chhattisgarh government on a plea alleging exhumation and forced reburial of bodies of tribal Christians in villages in the state, and restrained any further exhumation in the interim. A three-judge Bench passed the order while hearing a petition filed under Article 32 of the Constitution by the Chhattisgarh Association for Justice and Equality and others through advocate Satya Mitra.

SC flags need for judicial sensitivity

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 18

Observing that there is a need to inculcate sensitivity in the judicial approach, the Supreme Court has asked the National Judicial Academy to constitute a committee of experts to draft guidelines for approach of judges when dealing with cases of sexual offences. The top court asked the Bhopal-based academy through its Director, Justice (retired) Aniruddha Bose to prepare a comprehensive report on the matter of 'Developing Guidelines to Inculcate Sensitivity.

from Sexual Offences Act. "The facts alleged being so, we cannot agree with the finding of the High Court that the allegations only amount to prepara-

tion, but not an attempt, towards the commission of the offence of rape. "The attempt made by the accused persons appears clearly."

Sidda loyalists leave on private Oz tour

M.B. GIRISH | DC BENGALURU, FEB. 18

Some of the Congress MLAs and MLCs, said to be loyal to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah flock together to embark upon a fortnight 'private' tour to Australia and New Zealand while the second batch of legislators are all set to join them. However, the exact number of legislators who went on a tour remains unclear. Sources said 15 legislators left for Australia and New Zealand.

Sources said the team backing Siddaramaiah to continue as Chief Minister, plans to stall the process of power-sharing between him and Deputy

Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, by going on a tour. One among the team is former minister and Chamarajanagar MLA Puttaranga Shetty, prior to departure, told reporters "There is no need to take permission from high command to go on a private tour." Shetty stated, However, first-time MLA representing Chikkamagaluru seat Thammaiah left for Australia but stated he was taking his family members along with him. MLA Hampanagouda Badarli said he is joined by 3 MLAs on his trip to Australia and New Zealand and claimed the 'private' tour of MLAs was planned about months ago.

MINISTER'S DELETED POST FUELS ROBOT ROW

FROM PAGE 1

Sources said the organisers directed the university to vacate the exhibition space after the controversy escalated. By Wednesday, the university's stall reportedly had no display.

The issue gained traction after Union IT minister Ashwini Vaishnaw shared a video clip of the robotic display on his official social media account. The post was later deleted.

In a statement, the university said the robotic programming exercise was aimed at imparting hands-on AI skills using globally available tools and platforms. "Our faculty and students are deeply distressed by the propaganda campaign against the institution. Our focus remains firmly on student learning and innovation, ensuring access to modern technologies that provide practical exposure and prepare them for the future. Spreading negativity undermines the morale of students who are striving to innovate, learn and build their skills using global technologies," it said. Professor Neha Singh of the university said "Regarding the robot dog, we have never claimed that it was manufactured by us. It was introduced to students as a learning tool."

ROARING SUCCESS The birth marks the ninth successful litter on Indian soil

Kuno cheetah Gamini gives birth to 3 cubs

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, FEB. 18

Three cubs were on Wednesday born to South African female cheetah Gamini in Madhya Pradesh's Kuno National Park, taking the population of big cats in India to 38.

This was the second time Gamini, brought along with 11 other cheetahs from South Africa on February 18, 2023 to the Kuno National Park under

the cheetah reintroduction project, mothered cubs on Indian soil.

Coincidentally, the birth of three cubs to the South African female cheetah marks completion of the third year of the arrival of the big cats from that country to Kuno National Park. In her first litter delivered in March 2024, Gamini had given birth to three cubs.

Six female cheetahs in the Kuno National Park have become moms nine times, giving birth to a



Gamini with her three newborn cubs in Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh.

total 39 cubs on Indian soil. Out of them, 27 are now thriving. Significantly, Mukh, the

lone female cheetah among them, was born on Indian soil. "Three years on, the establishment of

breeding females and survival of second-generation cubs marks an important consolidation phase in India's cheetah reintroduction programme", field director of Kuno National Park, Uttam Kumar Sharma, who played a key role in the success of the project on the ground, told this newspaper. Breaking the news of Gamini's second motherhood, Union forest and environment minister Bhupendra Yadav described it as a 'roaring' success.



WIND DOES not blow always and sun does not shine the entire 24 hours. Keeping that in mind, so when more generation is happening, when less generation is happening, and how we should manage our grid. For this technology, this AI-driven technology, a digital twin can be of help,
- PRALHAD JOSHI,
Union minister

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) is a responsible enabler designed to augment human capability and not a replacement for expertise”
- JURGEN WESTERMEIER
Airbus India chief

SHORT TAKES

CEA CALLS FOR FASTER AI IN POWER SECTOR

New Delhi, Feb. 18: Artificial Intelligence can improve quality as well reliability of power supply in the country by optimising resources but there is a need to speed up adoption, Central Electricity Authority Chairman Ghanshyam Prasad said on Wednesday.

He was speaking at a session of AI Impact Summit here. “Power sector is opening up and huge amount of opportunities, use cases are waiting for these kind of innovative solutions and I think we need to speed up so that at least we don’t fall behind anybody else,” he added.

Prasad said a number of things need to be optimised using AI in the power sector, including in planning — resource adequacy, transmission, distribution network distribution power purchase.

SKYE AIR DEMOS END-TO-END DRONE DELIVERY

New Delhi, Feb. 18: Hyperlocal drone delivery platform Skye Air Mobility, in partnership with Arrive AI and Ottonomy, on Wednesday demonstrated the end-to-end autonomous commerce delivery system at the India AI Impact Summit here.

The solution integrates Skye Air’s aerial drones with smart infrastructure and ground robotics to deliver packages directly to customers’ doorsteps without any human intervention. Skye Air Mobility brings operational experience to the partnership, having successfully completed 3.6 million deliveries over the past two years, underscoring the company’s operational excellence and the maturity of its drone delivery technology in real-world conditions, the company said.

The company’s drone delivery network has also made a significant environmental impact, saving over 1,000 tonnes of CO2 emissions compared to traditional delivery methods by replacing road-based courier vehicles with electric aerial drones.

RAHUL SLAMS AI SUMMIT AS ‘PR SPECTACLE’

DC CORRESPONDENT
 NEW DELHI, FEB. 18

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday mounted a sharp attack on the government over the ongoing AI Summit, calling it a “disorganised PR spectacle” and alleging that Chinese products were being showcased as Indian innovations.

In a post on X, Gandhi said the summit had failed to make use of India’s real strengths in artificial intelligence. “Instead of leveraging India’s talent and data, the AI summit is a disorganised PR spectacle — with Indian data up for sale and Chinese products showcased,” he said, accusing the government of focusing more on publicity than substance.

AI TO DRIVE STEEL GROWTH: SECRETARY

New Delhi, Feb. 18: Intelligent automation, digital twins, advanced analytics, and AI-driven process control systems will be critical to ensuring that India’s steel growth remains globally competitive and environmentally responsible, Steel Secretary Sandeep Poundrik said on Wednesday.

Speaking at the inauguration of the Steel Pavilion at the ongoing India AI Impact Summit 2026 here, Poundrik said the country’s crude steel capacity is targeted to increase from the current level of 200 million tonnes to 300 million tonnes by 2030-2031 and further to 400 million tonnes by 2035-2036.

This expansion will be supported by parallel growth in mining output, logistics networks, beneficiation capacity, and downstream value addition. Such rapid scaling requires intelligent capacity utilisation, real-time monitoring, efficient energy management, decarbonisation strategies, and optimised capital deployment.

AI is therefore positioned as a strategic enabler rather than a peripheral tool, he said.

India adopts UPI model for AI

Vaishnav says framework will enable interoperable AI models, NPCI-NVIDIA boost sovereign AI

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO
 NEW DELHI, FEB. 18

Information & broadcasting and electronics & information technology minister Ashwini Vaishnav on Wednesday said the government is working on creating a UPI-like public digital infrastructure for artificial intelligence as part of the India AI Mission.

“The proposed framework would allow multiple AI models to operate on a common structure, similar to how interoperable systems underpin India’s digital payments ecosystem,” Vaishnav said while speaking at the India AI Impact Summit 2026.

Highlighting the India AI Mission, the minister said some solutions developed under the mission would be made accessible free of cost to a large segment of the population. “The government sees significant potential for AI-led applications in agriculture, MSMEs and personalised education tools, with a strong emphasis on affordability,” he said.

Vaishnav further said that several companies have expressed interest in setting up AI server manufacturing facilities in India. “India is positioning itself as a major processing hub, with a large amount of the world’s data expected to be processed in the country in the coming years,” he added.

Meanwhile, the country’s biggest payment platform, the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), which operates the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), announced a collaboration with NVIDIA to scale sovereign AI capabilities for India’s digital payments ecosystem.

“The partnership will combine NPCI’s experience in running population-scale, real-time payment systems with NVIDIA’s accelerated computing and AI platforms, with a focus on trust, resilience and security,” NPCI said.

The minister also focused on India’s practical applications of AI, including enterprise productivity and solutions for population-scale challenges such as healthcare, agriculture and climate change. He expressed happiness over the strong participation and optimism shown by young people at the AI Expo on Tuesday.

He informed that about 2.5 lakh attendees, mostly under the age of 30, took part across the exhibition area. “It was a phenomenal response when I interacted with the young minds. I was pleasantly surprised by the optimism that most of the young people expressed towards this opportunity coming their way,” he said.



Left: Prime Minister Narendra Modi exchanges a handshake with Sri Lanka President Anura Kumara Dissanayake. Right: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with CEO of Google Sundar Pichai during a meeting, in New Delhi on Wednesday.



Pichai sees ‘extraordinary trajectory’ for India in AI

FC CORRESPONDENT
 NEW DELHI, FEB. 18

Underscoring India’s adoption of artificial intelligence (AI), Google CEO Sundar Pichai on Wednesday said that India is poised for an “extraordinary trajectory” in the AI space and emphasised the company’s commitment to partnering in the country’s AI transformation.

Pichai highlighted India’s potential to address challenges at scale, from improving healthcare diagnostics to supporting farmers with real-time alerts. “AI is the biggest platform shift of

our lifetime. India’s diversity, language ecosystem and robust digital public infrastructure make it a powerful foundation for innovation and a blueprint for democratising AI globally,” he said.

Earlier in the day, Pichai met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and discussed Google’s parent company, Alphabet Inc. He is in the capital to attend the ongoing India AI Impact Summit at Bharat Mandapam, alongside an expo.

He praised India’s work in the AI space and outlined how the technology giant could collaborate with Indian students and

professionals. The Google CEO underscored that AI adoption must prioritise trust, safety and inclusivity. “AI must work across languages and local contexts. It must deliver real-world benefits people can rely on. Trust grows when technology is transparent, responsible and grounded in outcomes,” he said.

Later, Pichai announced the India-America Connect Initiative, a project to deploy new submarine routes to enhance AI connectivity between the United States, India and several locations across the Southern Hemisphere.



Make AI easy to use: Bawa

New Delhi, Feb. 18: People in India are willing to adopt new technologies, and companies here should focus on making their products easy to use, Zoom Chief Operating Officer Aparna Bawa said on Wednesday. This will help make AI accessible to more people and reduce the technology gap, she said.

“In India people are willing to embrace new technologies and new things. Cell phones are there in the remote corners, so why should India not embrace AI? If you can make things easy to use, you are capable of doing that. I would not think of it as the race. The world is for you,” she said.

Sarvam-HMD deal for devices

New Delhi, Feb. 18: Sovereign AI model developer Sarvam plans to launch its made-in-India smart eyewear by May this year, a senior company official said on Wednesday. While speaking at India AI Impact Summit 2026, Sarvam Co-Founder Pratyush Kumar announced a partnership with multiple technology and mobile phone maker HMD to bring artificial intelligence technology to feature phones.

He said there is a need to build sovereignty across all layers of technology, including devices that serve as an experience layer for AI models.

“We are delighted to be working together,” Kumar said.

Qualcomm’s \$150M AI Bet

New Delhi, Feb. 18: Global chip major Qualcomm Incorporated plans to invest up to \$150 million, or about ₹1,360 crore, to support India’s rapidly expanding technology and AI startup ecosystem, the company said on Wednesday. The investments will be deployed through Qualcomm Ventures and will be made in startups across all stages, with a particular focus on AI for automotive, IoT, robotics, and mobile, the company said in a statement.

“Qualcomm Incorporated... announced its intention to invest up to \$150 million to support India’s rapidly expanding technology and AI startup ecosystem,” the statement said.

AI’s next leap: Machine voice

New Delhi, Feb. 18: The artificial intelligence landscape is rapidly evolving, with Agentic AI emerging as the latest frontier and machine voice expected to be the next, according to a report released here. Since 2024, Agentic AI has been a leading force in the AI space. It leverages GenAI, enabling systems to respond to environments, including prompts, to plan and auto-execute tasks.

However, the next phase in this evolving landscape will be machine voice. Report by Prosus and BCG, in the current and coming year, audio input/output models using speech-to-text and back are expected to reduce latency and enhance emotional maturity.

UN not AI regulator: Guterres

United Nations, Feb. 18: It is not the UN’s role to regulate AI, Secretary General Antonio Guterres has emphasised as he pointed to an annual global dialogue being planned at the international organisation on AI with participation from all countries, governments, private sector as well as civil society.

Guterres will soon be arriving in New Delhi to attend the India AI Impact Summit, the first-ever summit on Artificial Intelligence hosted in the Global South.

In an exclusive interview to PTI ahead of his visit to India for the Summit, Guterres outlined efforts by the international organisation aimed at global cooperation on Artificial Intelligence (AI), emphasising that these are “perfectly in line” with the strategy demonstrated by India in its leadership of the AI summit.

Guterres highlighted three key areas under the Global Digital Compact initiated at the UN to contribute towards the global AI architecture.

The first is the creation of a new high-level Independent International Scientific Panel on AI comprising 40 experts from around the world.

DIGITAL ALLIANCE EU lawmaker calls for cooperative, use-case driven AI collaboration

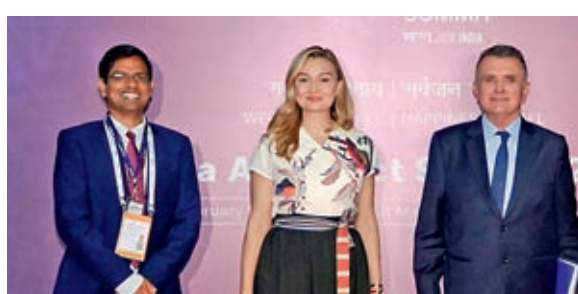
EU, India can forge strong AI partnership

New Delhi, Feb. 18: Europe and India can build a strong partnership in artificial intelligence (AI) by focusing on real-world deployment rather than engaging in a technological arms race, Brando Benifei, Member of the European Parliament, said on Wednesday.

“The EU and India can have a strong partnership on AI. Why? Because we both concentrate on use cases of AI, on deployment of AI,” Benifei said at the India AI Impact Summit 2026.

He said both sides share a similar perspective that prioritises practical applications over competing to build the most powerful models.

Benifei emphasised the need for a cooperative, experience-based approach to AI development. “We have probably together a different approach, which is to build a more cooperative and experience-based development of AI,” he said, adding that such collaboration could help move the debate beyond



Sweden’s Deputy Prime Minister Ebba Busch, centre, upon her arrival for the India AI Impact Summit 2026, in New Delhi on Wednesday.

geopolitical competition. He called on “middle

powers” like Europe and India to create a network

of cooperation aimed at ensuring trustworthy AI deployment that boosts productivity, expands opportunities and reduces dependence on dominant global players.

“How can the so-called middle powers build a network of cooperation for a trustworthy deployment of AI that will boost productivity, increase opportunity and build more autonomy from the risk of pressure coming from other actors? This will be a challenge, but I think it’s a space of strong coopera-

tion for Europe and India,” he said.

Addressing the debate around innovation versus regulation, Benifei cautioned against delaying safeguards for emerging technologies.

He pointed to social media as an example of under-regulation. “We didn’t regulate social media very much in the last decade. Now we are talking a lot about children protection and fighting misinformation, but we are doing it quite late,” he said.

GRAND RELEASE TOMORROW

నావల్ కేస్

IN CINEMAS FEB 20 2026

A STORY OF CHAI WALA

ANJALI 7.00, 11.15, 2.15, 6.15, 9.15PM

MAHALAXMI COMPLEX-2.30, 9.45

SREERAMAN COMPLEX-2.00, 9.00

ASIAN CINEMAS ASIAN LAXMIKALA-6.30PM

AAA-4.35PM OAMB ART-4.35PM

PRASAD'S-10.25, 3.00PM

ART CINEMAS-4.35PM

RADHIKA | MCUBE-4.30PM

JP MALL-10.40PM | MJR-4.30PM | SHA | CINEPLANET-4.45PM | CINEMART-4.30PM

FORUM MALL | INORBIT MALL | RK MALL | IRRUMMANZIL | MUSARAMBAGH | PRISM GALLERIA | ICON HITECH | ATRIUM MALL | PRESTONE | SMR MALL | CENTRAL MALL

PVR CINEMAS

INNOX GVK MALL | GSM MALL | MP MALL | NECKLACE MALL | ASHOKA ONE

BALANAGAR | CHANDANAGAR | SHALINI MIYAPUR | NARSINGI | MALKAJGIRI

LULU-7.40PM | CCPL-2.30, 8.00PM

MANTRA-7.50PM

DSL-10.55PM | SUDHA-5.40PM

TNR NORTH-1.10, 7.00PM

4.50PM

SKY MALL-SANATH NAGAR PLATINUM-GACHIBOWLI

MPM MALL BANJARA HILLS

ROONGTA CINEMAS

GLOBAL CINEMAS LLP RELEASE

SUPER HIT 2nd WEEK

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OAMB 10.40, 1.15, 7.10, 10.20

BRAMARAMBA 7.00M

11.30, 6.30, 9.45PM

1.25, 4.20, 7.45, 10.35PM

ART-10.45, 1.40, 4.55, 10.45PM

3.00PM GACHIBOWLI-7.00PM

LAXMIKALA-2.40PM

MJR SQUARE-4.30PM

MCUBE MALL-10.40PM

CINEMART-10.45, 1.50, 4.40, 7.25, 10.30PM

GPR MALL 4.30PM

APARNA MALL 11.00, 1.45PM

L&T ICON-10.35AM | RK PLEX-2.20PM

MOOSARAMBAGH-12.45PM

FORUM MALL-1.45, 7.35PM

L&T NEXT GALLERIA-10.20PM

INOX LAKESHORE-4.35, 10.40PM

L&T ICON-1.45PM | PRESTONE-4.45PM

SMR MALL-2.05PM | ATRIUM MALL-7.55PM

PVR ODEAN MALL-10.05, 1.00, 7.55, 10.50PM

IRRUMMANZIL-10.05AM | INORBIT MALL-5.15PM

DLS MALL-5.05PM

LULU-10.50, 7.50PM

GVK-10.20AM

GSM MALL-2.30PM

NECKLACE-10.05AM, 10.30PM

ASHOKA ONE-1.55PM

GLOBAL CINEMAS RELEASE

Enjoy Coffee Break EVERYDAY IN

HYDERABAD CHRONICLE

NOW SHOWING SEESH MAHAL

7.00M-AMEERPET

11.00, 1.15, 3.15, 6.00, 9.00

#69

#69 SANSKAR COLONY

GOOD LUCK HAVE FUN DON'T DIE

IN CINEMAS TOMORROW

GRAND RELEASE TOMORROW

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MALLIKARJUNA 7.00M

11.30, 2.30, 6.30, 9.30

MAHALAXMI COMPLEX-11.30, 6.30

SREERAMANA 7.00 AARADHANA 7.00M

AAA CINEMAS OAMB AMB CINEMAS

PRASAD'S-NTR GARDENS

ART CINEMAS-VANASTALIPURAM

RADHIKA | MCUBE

JP-7.20PM | MJR-10.50AM | SHA | CINEPLANET | CINEMART | LAXMIKALA

FORUM MALL | INORBIT MALL | RK MALL | IRRUMMANZIL | MUSARAMBAGH | PRISM GALLERIA | ICON HITECH | ATRIUM MALL | PRESTONE | SMR MALL | CENTRAL MALL

PVR CINEMAS

INNOX GVK MALL | GSM MALL | MP MALL | NECKLACE MALL | ASHOKA ONE

BALANAGAR | CHANDANAGAR | SHALINI MIYAPUR | NARSINGI | MALKAJGIRI

LULU-5.50PM | MANTRA-6.55PM | DSL-5.10PM

CCPL-12.00PM | TNR-6.55, 9.45PM

GPR MALL

SKY MALL-SANATH NAGAR PLATINUM-GACHIBOWLI

MPM MALL BANJARA HILLS

ROONGTA CINEMAS

GLOBAL CINEMAS RELEASE

FEEL GOOD EMOTIONAL ENTERTAINER

కౌప్త ఫ్రెండ్లీ

SANDHYA 7.00

RTC X ROADS

Enjoy 4k laser projection & Dolby atmos surround system

ARJUN 7.00M-KUKATPALLY

ASIAN KONARK 7.00M

RAMAKRISHNA 7.00M

SAMPOORNA 7.00	SRIKRISHNA 7.00M
VANASTALIPURAM	UPPAL
SRSAIRAM 7.00M	PRASANTH 7.00M
MALKAJGIRI	SEC'BAD
SVC SANGEETH 7.00	SRRAMANA 35MM
RC PURAM	AMBERPETA
GOKUL 7.00M	ALANKAR 7.00M
ERRAGADDA	LUNGERHOUSE
MYTHRI VIMAL	TALLURI 7.00M
BALANAGAR	ECIL X ROADS
JAGADAMBA 7.00	GANESH 7.00M
GHATKESAR	SHAMSHABAD

AAA CINEMAS OAMB AMB CINEMAS

PRASAD'S ART CINEMAS

RADHIKA | MCUBE

JP MALL | MJR SQUARE | SHA | CINEPLANET | CINEMART | LAXMIKALA

FORUM MALL | INORBIT MALL | RK MALL | IRRUMMANZIL | MUSARAMBAGH | PRISM GALLERIA | ICON HITECH | ATRIUM MALL | PRESTONE | SMR MALL | CENTRAL MALL | LAKESHORE MALL | ODEON MALL

INOX GVK MALL | GSM MALL | MP MALL | NECKLACE MALL | ASHOKA ONE

BALANAGAR | CHANDANAGAR | SHALINI MIYAPUR | NARSINGI | MALKAJGIRI

LULU MALL | SUDHA | DSL MALL

CCPL | TNR NORTH | MANTRA MALL

GPR MALL

SKY MALL-SANATH NAGAR PLATINUM-GACHIBOWLI

MPM MALL BANJARA HILLS

ROONGTA CINEMAS

DHEERAJ MOGILINENI ENTERTAINMENT

FUNTASTIC BLOCKBUSTER

ఫంకీ

DEVII 7.00M

Enjoy 4k laser projection & Dolby atmos surround system

MALLIKARJUNA 7.00M

RAJADHANDELUXE-DSNR

SREERAMULU 7.00M

ASIAN TARAKAMA 7.00M

VENKATARAMANA/PADMAVATHI

SVC SRILAXMI INDRA/NAGENDRA 7.00M

PRASANTH 7.00M	MAHALAXMI COMPLEX
SEC'BAD	KOTHAPETA
MYTHRI VIMAL 7.00	TALLURI 7.00M
BALANAGAR	ECIL X ROADS
SUSHMA 7.00M	SAIRAM 7.00M
VANASTALIPURAM	MALKAJGIRI
ASIAN JYOTHI 7.00	RAJYALAXMI 7.00M
R.C.PURAM	UPPAL
SIVASAKTHI 7.00M	VYJAYANTHI 7.00M
KAPRA	NACHARAM
BHUJANGA 7.00M	SAIRANGA 7.00M
JEDIMETLA	MIYAPUR
BR HITECH 7.00M	SVC EESHWAR 7.00
MADHAPUR	ATTAPUR
VLS SRIDEVI 7.00M	ASIAN MUKUND
CHILAKALGUDA	7.00M-MEDCHAL
SRRAMANA 7.00M	LAXMI 7.00M
AMBERPET	SHAMSHABAD
SUPER 7.00M	NARTHAKI 7.00M
BALAPUR	ALWAL
SAIPOOJA 7.00M	ASIAN SENSATION
SOORARAM	KAIRATABAD
SANTOSH 7.00M	JAGADAMBA 7.00M
IBRAHIMPATNAM	GHATKESAR
SRIKRISHNA 7.00	SREEPREMA 7.00M
ALIYABAD	TUKKUGUDA

AAA CINEMAS OAMB AMB CINEMAS

PRASAD'S ART CINEMAS

RADHIKA | MCUBE

JP MALL | MJR SQUARE | SHA | CINEPLANET | CINEMART | LAXMIKALA

FORUM MALL | INORBIT MALL | RK MALL | IRRUMMANZIL | MUSARAMBAGH | PRISM GALLERIA | ICON HITECH | ATRIUM MALL | PRESTONE | SMR MALL | CENTRAL MALL

INOX GVK MALL | GSM MALL | MP MALL | NECKLACE MALL | ASHOKA ONE

BALANAGAR | CHANDANAGAR | SHALINI MIYAPUR | NARSINGI | MALKAJGIRI

LULU MALL | SUDHA | DSL MALL

CCPL | TNR NORTH | MANTRA MALL

GPR MALL

SKY MALL-SANATH NAGAR PLATINUM-GACHIBOWLI

MPM MALL BANJARA HILLS

ROONGTA CINEMAS

ANNAPURNA STUDIOS RELEASE

SAPTHAGIRI 7.00

11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00PM

MAHALAXMI COMPLEX-KOTHAPET

11.15, 2.30, 6.15, 9.45PM

VENKATASAI 7.00M-KEESARA

11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00PM

VENKATESWARA 7.00-GUMMADIDHALA

11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00PM

FORUM MALL-10.40PM

INORBIT MALL-4.40PM

GSM MALL-10.40PM

ASHOKA ONE-4.20PM

LAKESHORE MALL-11.10AM

ODEAN MALL-10.30PM

PRISM MALL-4.45PM | SMR MALL-10.40PM

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FEEL GOOD MOVIE

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INOX ODEON MALL

10.30, 1.25, 7.40PM

TALLURI 7.00M	MAHALAXMI COM
11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00	11.15, 6.45PM
SRIRAMANA 35	AARADHANA 7.00
11.15, 6.15PM	11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00
VIJETHA 7.00M	ANJALI 7.00M
11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00	11.15, 2.15, 6.15, 9.15
S VENKATESWARA	LAXMIKALAMANDIR
11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00	6.30, 9.30PM

1.15, 4.15PM OAMB 12.15, 7.20PM

12.30, 6.00PM OAMB 10.15, 1.05, 7.15PM

SHA-2.45PM | MCUBE-1.15, 10.25PM

RADHIKA-1.50, 4.30PM

CINEMART-10.30, 4.15, 10.20PM

JP MALL-10.30, 4.15, 10.20PM

MJR-1.30, 7.30PM | CINEPLANET-1.50, 7.50PM

LAXMIKALA CINEPRIDE-6.15PM

GVK MALL-11.30AM, 10.40PM

MP MALL-10.20PM

GSM MALL-4.30, 10.30PM

ASHOKA ONE-10.45, 7.40, 10.50PM

NECKLACE MALL-1.10, 7.20PM

CCPL-10.40, 4.40PM

MANTRA-11.00, 7.30PM

DLS MALL-11.00, 8.10PM

TNR NORTH-11.00, 4.45, 10.55PM

SUDHA-5.25PM | LULU-11.00AM, 11.10PM

SHALINI / SHIVANI-2.00, 7.30PM

BALANAGAR-4.00, 10.00PM

CHANDANAGAR-12.45, 6.45PM

MIYAPUR-4.45PM | NARSINGI-2.00, 7.30PM

MALKAJGIRI-11.30, 7.45PM

FORUM MALL-1.40, 10.20PM

INORBIT MALL-4.30, 10.30PM

L&T ICON-1.30, 7.50PM

SMR MALL-11.10, 7.40PM | PRISM-4.30PM

L&T NEXT GALLERIA-12.00, 6.40PM

MOOSARAMBAGH-4.30, 10.30PM

RK PLEX-3.30PM | CENTRAL-12.00, 10.00

IRRUMMANZIL-1.00, 7.10 | PRESTONE-5.00, 10.40

ATRIUM MALL-12.00, 7.30PM

LAKESHORE MALL-1.30, 7.30PM

MPM MALL 4.00, 9.00 GPR KUKATPALLY 10.45, 4.45PM

SEC'BAD 1.50, 7.40PM NACHARAM 1.15, 7.30, 11.00PM

GACHIBOWLI-5.00, 10.30PM

SANATH NAGAR-3.30, 9.30PM

GLOBAL CINEMAS RELEASE

FROM TOMORROW

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ప్రేమ లవ్ వెంజెన్స్

OAMB 10.35, 7.15PM OAMB 2.00, 7.25PM

PRASAD'S-NTR GARDENS

ART CINEMAS-1.25, 7.20PM

INDRA/NAGENDRA 7.00M-11.00, 6.00PM

ASIAN LAXMIKALA-2.30PM

JP CINEMAS-1.20, 7.00PM

RADHIKA-1.40, 7.30PM

SHA-11.30AM | MCUBE-7.30PM

CINEMART-1.35, 7.35PM

CINEPLANET-10.30, 1.45, 7.35PM

FORUM MALL | INORBIT MALL | RK MALL | IRRUMMANZIL | MUSARAMBAGH | PRISM GALLERIA | ICON HITECH | ATRIUM MALL

INOX GVK MALL | GSM MALL | MP MALL | NECKLACE MALL | ASHOKA ONE

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INOX ODEON MALL

11.20, 5.05, 7.55PM

CINEMART-10.50PM

INORBIT MALL-9.50, 7.45PM

NEXUS-5.00, 7.30, 7.45, 10.40PM

ATRIUM-1.30PM | PRISM-1.35PM

RK-5.15PM | CENTRAL-4.55, 7.45PM

GSM MALL-7.45PM, 10.50PM

LAKESHORE MALL-7.20PM

TNR NORTH-4.30PM

DSL-11.00, 1.45, 5.20, 8.05, 11.10

BALANAGAR-3.40PM

CHANDANAGAR-4.30, 10.00PM

NARSINGI-4.00, 7.00PM

MALKAJGIRI-8.05PM | SHALINI-6.40PM

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GRAND RELEASE TOMORROW

శివశంకర్

SANDHYA 7.00M

Enjoy 4k laser projection & Dolby atmos

BRAMARAMBA 7.00M

ASIAN KONARK 7.00M

VENKATARAMANA/PADMAVATI

PRASANTH 7.00M	SUSHMA 7.00M
VIMAL 7.00M	SRIRAMULU 7.00M
BR HITECH 7.00M	SRISAIRAM 7.00M
SRILAXMI 7.00M	RAJYALAXMI 7.00M
SUPER 7.00M	SVC EESHWAR 7.00
SAIRANGA 7.00M	BHUJANGA 7.00M
SVC SANGEETH	TALLURI COMPLEX
SRIRAMANA 7.00M	NARTHAKI 7.00M
ASIAN MUKUND 7.00	JAGADAMBA 7.00M
GANESH 7.00M	SANTOSHIBPATNAM
SIVAGANGA 7.00M	INDRA/NAGENDRA

AAA CINEMAS OAMB AMB CINEMAS

PRASAD'S-NTR GARDENS

ART CINEMAS-VANASTALIPURAM

RADHIKA | MCUBE

JP MALL | MJR SQUARE | SHA | CINEPLANET | CINEMART | LAXMIKALA

FORUM MALL | INORBIT MALL | RK MALL | IRRUMMANZIL | MUSARAMBAGH | PRISM GALLERIA | ICON HITECH | ATRIUM MALL | PRESTONE | SMR MALL | CENTRAL MALL

INOX GVK MALL | GSM MALL | MP MALL | NECKLACE MALL | ASHOKA ONE

BALANAGAR | CHANDANAGAR | SHALINI MIYAPUR | NARSINGI | MALKAJGIRI

LULU MALL | SUDHA | DSL MALL

CCPL | TNR NORTH | MANTRA MALL

GPR MALL

SKY MALL-SANATH NAGAR PLATINUM-GACHIBOWLI

MPM MALL BANJARA HILLS

APARNA MALL

GEETHA FILM DISTRIBUTORS RELEASE

Hyderabad

IMAGES AND MEMORIES

At Deccan Chronicle Office

SHORT TAKES

FIREWORKS SHOP EXPLOSION IN CHINA KILLS 12

Beijing, Feb. 18: An explosion at a fireworks shop in China's Hubei province on Wednesday killed 12 people, state media reported, the second such explosion as the country celebrates the Lunar New Year.

Emergency responders put out the blaze at the fireworks shop in the town of Xiangyang, in central Hubei province, on Wednesday afternoon, according to the official Xinhua News Agency.

Investigators are now looking into the cause of the explosion, the report said without giving further details.

PHILIPPINE V-P DUTERTE TO RUN FOR PREZ IN '28

Manila, Feb. 18: Philippine Vice-President Sara Duterte said on Wednesday that she will run for president in the 2028 polls while blaming incumbent leader Ferdinand Marcos Jr for the country's problems, including corruption.

The daughter of detained former leader Rodrigo Duterte is considered among the strongest potential contenders with analysts saying her government could turn the major US ally away from Washington in favour of Beijing. She apologised for helping Marcos win the 2022 election when she ran as his V-P running mate.

PERU'S CONGRESS REMOVES INTERIM PRESIDENT JERI

Lima, Feb. 18: Peru's Congress on Tuesday voted to remove interim President Jose Jeri from office as he faces corruption allegations, triggering a fresh wave of political instability just weeks before the nation's April presidential election. Jeri is under a preliminary investigation into corruption and influence peddling, stemming from a series of undisclosed meetings with two Chinese executives. With 75 votes in favour, 24 against and three abstentions, Peru's legislature voted to remove Jeri from the position he had assumed on October 10.

BULGARIA TO HOLD SNAP VOTE ON APRIL 19

Sofia, Feb. 18: Bulgaria will hold a snap vote on April 19, its president announced on Wednesday, the eighth in five years following massive anti-corruption protests late last year.

The protests swept a conservative-led government from office in mid-December, sparking fresh political uncertainty in the Balkan EU member.

"I will sign the decree setting the date of the parliamentary elections for 19 April 2026," President Iliana Iotova said.

Last week, Iotova chose senior central bank official Andrey Gyurov to form an interim government.

DATA LEAK AT ABU DHABI FINANCE SUMMIT

Abu Dhabi, Feb. 18: Former British Prime Minister David Cameron and hedge fund billionaire Alan Howard were among the hundreds whose passports and other identification papers were leaked online after they attended an Abu Dhabi conference, the *Financial Times* reported on Tuesday.

The *FT* said scans of more than 700 passports and state identity cards were discovered on an unprotected cloud storage server.

Zelensky says Russia stalling, talks conclude

Ukraine imposes sanctions against Belarus' Lukashenko

Geneva, Kyiv, Feb. 18: Peace talks between Ukraine and Russia in Geneva ended on Wednesday after only two hours, with President Volodymyr Zelensky describing them as "difficult" and accusing Russia of deliberately delaying progress toward a deal to end the war.

The two days of US-mediated peace talks in Switzerland took place as US President Donald Trump has twice in recent days suggested it was up to Ukraine and Zelensky to ensure the talks were successful.

"We can see that progress has been made, but for now, positions differ because the negotiations were difficult," he told reporters in a WhatsApp chat shortly after talks concluded.

Rustem Umerov, the head of Kyiv's negotiating team, said separately that the second day had been "intensive and substantive". Both sides were working toward decisions that can be sent to their presidents, he said.

Russia's chief negotiator, former culture minister Vladimir Medinsky, told reporters that further negotiations would be held soon, without specifying a date. Earlier on Wednesday, Zelensky had accused Russia of



People attend a memorial service honouring the victims of the peaceful march to the Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada, during the mass Euromaidan protests, in Kyiv on Wednesday. — AFP

RUSSIA IS DEMANDING that European countries who accused Moscow of poisoning Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny with a dart frog toxin provide concrete data to support their allegation, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said on Wednesday.

UKRAINE SLAMMED the move to allow Russian and Belarusian athletes to compete under their own national flags at the 2026 Paralympics and overturn the ban imposed after Russia's invasion.

KREMLIN SPOKESMAN Dmitry Peskov said that neither China nor Russia have carried out secret nuclear tests, noting Beijing had denied US accusations that it had done so.

President Alexander Lukashenko on Wednesday, vowing to "increase countermeasures" against Minsk for its wartime assistance to Russia, Belarus, one of Russia's closest allies, served as a staging ground for Moscow to launch its 2022 invasion. — Reuters

Mob culture will not be tolerated: B'desh govt
B'desh will be a safe nation now: Rahman

Dhaka, Feb. 18: Bangladesh's newly elected Prime Minister Tarique Rahman on Wednesday vowed to strengthen the rule of law and said his government will turn the country into a safe land for people of all faiths, regardless of party, opinion, religion, or ethnicity.



Tarique Rahman

In his maiden televised address to the nation after assuming office, Rahman outlined his government's priorities and said that improving the law and order situation and strictly controlling corruption to restore peace and security are his top priorities.

"We want to turn this country into a safe land for every citizen. Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Christians — regardless of party, opinion, religion, or ethnicity — whether living in the hills or the plains, this country belongs to all of us," said the prime minister.

Under the interim government of Muhammad Yunus since August 2024, Bangladesh experienced a rise in mob violence, extrajudicial killings and attacks on minority communities, especially Hindus.

Rights group Manabdhikar Shongskriti Foundation (MSF) said that in January 2026 alone, they documented 21 incidents of lynching and 28 incidents of mob beatings.

Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council reported 522 communal attacks in 2025, including killings, rapes, and temple vandalism, with murders of 116 people of minority faiths, mostly Hindus, between June 2025 and January 2026.

Earlier, Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, the senior-most minister in the new government, said that the law and order issue was one of three priorities and the administration would take steps to end "mob violence".

Alamgir, who is also the party's secretary general and entrusted with the charge of the local government ministry, said, "This (mob violence) will be controlled."

"We must strive to improve the law and order situation, regardless of how much it has deteriorated," he added. — PTI

AIR FORCE ONE NEW PAINT HAS GOLD, RED, BLUE

Washington, Feb. 18: The US Air Force is rolling out a new paint scheme across its executive airlift fleet, including the next-generation Air Force One aircraft, in a color palette of red, white, dark blue, and gold, the service announced on Tuesday.

The new design marks a departure from the current white and two-tone blue livery dating to President John F. Kennedy's administration, and revives elements of former President Donald Trump's proposed red, white and blue scheme that was scrapped in 2022 after the Air Force determined darker colours could cause overheating issues.

The redesign will be applied to the VC-25B — the military designation for the Boeing 747-8i aircraft that will serve as Air Force One.

The Air Force One programme involves converting two 747-8 aircraft into specialised jets equipped with advanced communications and defence systems to serve as the next generation of US presidential air transport. That effort is four years behind schedule with delivery now expected in 2028.

As a stopgap, the US government has tapped defence contractor Lockheed Martin to overhaul a Boeing 747 formerly used by the Qatari government for use as an interim Air Force One.

In 2025, the United States accepted a luxury Boeing 747 jetliner as a gift from Qatar. The White House asked the Air Force to rapidly upgrade the gift for use as Air Force One. — Reuters

US renews IEA withdraw threat over climate action

Washington, Feb. 18: The US renewed threats to quit the International Energy Agency unless the organisation scales back climate advocacy and focuses on energy security.

"We're definitely not satisfied," US energy secretary Chris Wright said on Tuesday, ahead of an IEA ministerial meeting opening on Wednesday. The agency must complete reforms "for the US to remain a long-term member," he said. The Paris-based agency, which was established in response to the 1970s oil crisis, has faced criticism in recent years for the publication of long-term scenarios which factor in more active government policies to shift away from fossil fuels. Republican lawmakers last year sought to cut US funding and denounced the



Donald Trump

agency for politicising its projections. The IEA didn't immediately comment on the US official's remarks, though executive director Fatih Birol and Wright met on Tuesday to discuss energy issues, including a clean cooking fuel initiative. A flagship report published in November tempered the IEA's scenarios on an imminent peak in oil demand, and reintroduced a "Current Policies Scenario" after a five-year hiatus. — Bloomberg

DRIVER FLEEING ICE MEN CRASHES, KILLS TEACHER

Savannah (US), Feb. 18: A Guatemalan driver fleeing a Georgia traffic stop by federal immigration officers crashed into another vehicle, killing a teacher who was headed to work, authorities said. Oscar Vasquez Lopez, the driver accused of causing the Monday crash just outside of Savannah, remained jailed on Tuesday on charges including vehicular homicide, reckless driving and driving without a valid licence. Lopez, 38, is in the US illegally, according to Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Immigration officers were looking for Lopez. — AP

VICTIM TESTIFIES AGAINST NORWAY PRINCESS'S SON

Oslo, Feb. 18: A fourth woman at the centre of a rape case against the son of Norway's crown princess testified in an Oslo court on Wednesday over an alleged rape in 2024. Marius Borg Hoiby, Crown Princess Mette-Marit's 29-year-old son, faces 38 charges, including raping 4 women while they were asleep. — AFP

Rio revellers



A reveller of the Academicos do Salueiro samba school performs atop a float during the closing night of the Rio Carnival at Rio de Janeiro's Marquês de Sapucaí Sambadrome, on Wednesday. — AFP

TRUNK SNAPPED OFF BERNINI STATUE IN ROME

Rome, Feb. 18: A marble elephant designed by Baroque master Gian Lorenzo Bernini has been damaged, with its left tusk found snapped off and lying at the base of the monument in the heart of Rome.

The damage was uncovered on Monday night and police said they would review video footage from Piazza della Minerva to determine whether the tusk was vandalised or simply fell off following weeks of unusually heavy rains. — Reuters

Suit part of backlash against SM over children's mental health
Zuckerberg faces grilling at youth addiction trial

Los Angeles, Feb. 18: Meta Platforms CEO and billionaire Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg is set to be questioned for the first time in a US court about Instagram's effect on the mental health of young users, as a landmark trial over youth social media addiction continues.

While Zuckerberg has previously testified on the subject before Congress, the stakes are higher at the jury trial in Los Angeles, California.

Meta may have to pay damages if it loses the case, and the verdict could erode



Mark Zuckerberg

Big Tech's longstanding legal defence against claims of user harm. The lawsuit and others like it are part of a global backlash against social media platforms over children's mental health.

Australia and Spain have prohibited access to social media platforms for users under age 16, and other countries are considering similar curbs.

In the United States, Florida has prohibited co-

mpanies from allowing users under age 14. Tech industry trade groups are challenging the law in court.

The case involves a California woman who started using Meta's Instagram and Google's YouTube as a child. She alleges the companies sought to profit by hooking kids on their services despite knowing social media could harm their mental health.

She alleges the apps fuelled her depression and suicidal thoughts and is seeking to hold the companies liable. — Reuters

YOUTUBE RESTORES SERVICE AFTER BRIEF STREAMING DISRUPTION

California, Feb. 17: YouTube said on Tuesday it has resolved an issue that briefly affected access to the video-sharing platform, after outage-tracking website Downdetector reported widespread global disruptions.

YouTube said that an issue with its recommendation system had prevented videos from appearing across YouTube surfaces. "The issue with our rec-

ommendations system has been resolved, and all of our platforms (YouTube.com, the YouTube app, YouTube Music, Kids, and TV) are back to normal," YouTube said in an update.

At its peak, there were more than 3,20,000 user reports of YouTube issues in the US, according to Downdetector.

Downdetector's numbers are based on user-submitted reports. — Reuters

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S.No. Procurement Description

1	Fully Automated Hematology Analyzer
2	Fully Automated Urine Analyzer on Reagent Rental Basis
3	Fully Automated Coagulation Analyzer on Reagent Rental Basis
4	Flow Cytometer on Reagent Rental Basis
5	Re-Tender for Battery-operated drill machine
6	High Flow CO ₂ Insufflator 50L
7	NGS Analysis Workstation (NGS Sequencing Workstation)

Bidders are requested to visit the above website for complete tender specifications, amendments, corrigendum, pre-qualification criteria, due dates, regular updates and participation.

DIR/PR.O.No.: 1186-PP/CL-AGENCY/ADV/11/2025-26 Date: 18-02-2026 Sd/- Executive Registrar

Chhattisgarh State Industrial Development Corporation Limited
(A Government of Chhattisgarh Undertaking)
(ISO 9001:2015 Certified)
1st Floor, Udyog Bhawan, Ring Road No.1, Telibandha, Raipur(C.G.) - 492006
CIN : U45203CT19915G001853, PAN: AABCM6280N, GST Regn. No. 22AABCM6280N5ZY
Phone : 0771-6621000 Fax : 0771-2583794
Website : www.csidc.in, Email address: csidc.cg@nic.in, csidc_raipur@yahoo.com

NOTICE INVITING TENDER (2nd call)
(Through e-Procurement Portal Only)
No.: 35/CSIDC/E.E. Division-I/2025-26/ Raipur, dated 17/02/2026
Online tenders are invited in Form-B item rate basis, from Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM) or authorized service partner from OEM for the following works:

S.No.	Name of Work	Class of Contractor Eligible to Tender	Time allowed including rainy season	Estimated Cost (INR Lacs)	EMD (INR Rs.)	Cost of Tender Doc. (INR) including GST 18%
1	Comprehensive Annual Maintenance Contract Services (AMC) of Lifts installed at Various Premises of CSIDC Raipur, Nawa Raipur & Durg (C.G.).	Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM) or authorized channel partner	12 Months	20.24 Lacs	15,200/-	885/-

The tender document and other details can be downloaded from the web portal (<https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in>) from 17/02/2026 and shall be submitted online only. Amendment in tender, if any, will only be uploaded on the website and shall not be published in any newspaper.

NOTE: 1) The interested tenderers for online submission of tender may contact CG e-Proc Helpdesk, Operated by Mjunction Services Limited, they may reach Helpdesk using 18002526202 (from 9 AM to 11 PM) (therein press 2 for CG e-Proc) or you can email them at helpdesk.cg@cgswan.gov.in.
2) Tenderer may contact to E.E., Div-I, CSIDC, Udyog Bhawan in working hours to clear their doubt if any before online submission of the tender.

S-46935/4 Sd/- Executive Engineer, Division-I

Publications Division
Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
Government of India

APPEAL

The Publications Division is undertaking a nationwide Archival and Digitization Initiative to preserve rare and historically significant books published by DPD from 1941 to 1990. Many of these works are now out of print, rare, or unavailable, and an effort is being made to trace and consolidate them for archival purposes.

If you have any book of the Publications Division published before 1990, kindly do share the photo and description (publication year, page number, content, etc.) of that book on email (bm-dpd@gov.in).

CBC 22213/13/0007/2526

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	83,734.25	0.34
Nifty 50	25,819.35	0.37
S&P 500*	6,903.31	0.80
Dollar (₹)	90.65	-0.04
Pound Sterling (₹)	122.92	-0.26
Euro (₹)	107.30	-0.10
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	155,610.4	1.92
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	69.18	2.61
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.674	0.23
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	4.069	0.015

* As of 8:30 PM IST

French car parts maker Valeo to invest in India

French car parts maker firm Valeo on Wednesday said it plans to invest more than 200 million euros in India (₹2,146.18 crore) in coming years to significantly expand its industrial footprint in the country. The investments will enable Valeo to triple sales in India to around 700 million euro by 2028, it said. The company has commissioned a new plant and dedicated e-axle production lines at its Pune facility.



FedEx plans to invest ₹2,500 cr in cargo hub

FedEx on Wednesday said it will invest over ₹2,500 crore in setting up a 3 lakh sq ft fully automated cargo hub at Navi Mumbai International Airport. The facility to be developed in collaboration with Adani Airport Holdings, will be designed as a regional consolidation and redistribution hub and support trade flows across world, embedding global network connectivity directly within India's primary trade corridor, it said.

India generates 272 GW from non-fossil fuel

Union new and renewable energy minister Pralhad Joshi said India has over 272 GW non-fossil fuel-based electricity generation capacity, including 141 solar and 55 GW wind energy, at launch of 'India-UK Offshore Wind Taskforce'. Joshi said in FY26, India added 35 GW of solar and 4.61 GW of wind capacity. India achieved 50 per cent of its cumulative installed power capacity from non-fossil sources in last year, he said.

Firms inclined to hire freshers, says TeamLease

Around 73 per cent of employers interviewed intend to hire freshers during Jan.-June 2026, with recruitment decisions mainly driven by internships and real-world project experience rather than academic credentials alone, a report said on Wednesday. Nearly 3 in 4 employers (73 per cent) intend to hire freshers during January-June this year, marking a 3 per cent increase over the previous half-year, said TeamLease.

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Mkts regain after weak start on foreign buying

Defence, IT stocks in focus; value buying at lower levels aid recovery

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, FEB. 18

IT, defence stocks were in focus while the market made cautious moves on Wednesday amid overnight fall in tech stocks in US market reeling under AI impact and India-France signing several defence co-operation agreements. After low key volatility during the day, Sensex and Nifty-50 closed higher with gains towards market close on foreign investors buying.

Sensex made an intraday low of 83,163.62, falling 287 points from previous day close. Sensex gained 283.29 points or 0.34 per cent to close at 83,734.25 while Nifty-50 gained 94 points or 0.37 per cent to close at 25,819.35. Broader markets outperformed with BSE small-cap index up 0.82 per cent and BSE mid-cap index up 0.45 per cent.

"Recovery from the day's lows was also aided by value buying at lower levels. Sectoral performance was largely positive. Nifty PSU and metal indices led the gains, rising 1.3 per cent each, respectively, with metal stocks rebounding after the previous session's decline. On the downside, Nifty IT was the

VOLATILE PHASE

SENSEX JUMPS 283.29 pts to settle at 83,734.25, Nifty gains 93.95 pts to close at 25,819.35.

FPIs, DIs buy equities worth ₹1,154.34 cr, ₹440.34 cr respectively.

only laggard, falling 1.2 per cent amid broad-based selling pressure, as concerns around the AI sector persisted despite some relief in the previous session following the Infosys-Anthropoc collaboration," said Siddhartha Khemka, head, research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

Both foreign portfolio investors and domestic institutions were net buyers of equities worth

BENCHMARK EQUITY indices Sensex and Nifty rose for third straight session.

BROADER MARKETS outperformed with BSE small-cap index up 0.82%, BSE mid-cap index up 0.45%.

CIGARETTE STOCKS rebound after companies hike price to pass on recent tax increases.

BRENT CRUDE went up by 0.33% to \$67.64 per barrel.

NIFTY PSU and metal indices led the gains, rising 1.3% each, respectively, with metal stocks rebounding after the previous session's decline. On downside, Nifty IT was only laggard, falling 1.2% amid broad-based selling pressure.

— **SIDDHARTHA KHEMKA**, Head-Research, MOFS

1154.34 cr and 440.34 cr respectively.

Defence gainers included Bharat Electronics (0.17 per cent) and up more than 2 per cent in last five trading sessions, Bharat Dynamics (2.95 per cent), Larsen & Toubro (0.71 per cent), HAL (0.83 per cent), Bharat Forge (1.25 per cent), BEML (1.62 per cent). Nifty defence index gained 0.70 per cent. Among IT losers, were Infosys (-1.27 per cent),

TCS (-0.84 per cent), HCL Tech (-1.06 per cent), Wipro (-1.76 per cent) and Tech Mahindra (-1.34 per cent).

Cigarette stocks ITC, VST, Godfrey Phillips rallied. "Cigarette stocks rebounded after companies implemented price hikes to pass on the recent tax increases. The recovery comes after last month's sharp correction," Vinod Nair, head, research, Geojit Investments, said.

Grants to decline but states' capex set to rise

SANGEETHA G.
CHENNAI, FEB. 18

Grants-in-aid to state governments have been declining in FY25 and FY26 and are expected to further decline in FY27. However, capital expenditure is expected to grow 16.4 per cent in FY27, which would be supported by the Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI) scheme and states' own revenues.

Grants-in-aid to the states declined 15.8 per cent in FY25, and the decline continued in FY26 at 18 per cent, based on the assessment of provisional data for 24 states for April-December during FY26.

The decline in FY27 as the 16th Finance Commission has recommended discontinuation of post-devolution revenue deficit grants (RDGs) to states.



The 15th Finance Commission had recommended a gradual tapering of RDGs over FY22-FY26, beginning with 17 qualifying states in FY22 and reducing to six states in FY26. Based on 15FC recommendation, HP, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, and Uttarakhand, combined, qualify for RDGs of ₹13,705 crore in FY26. The discontinuation of RDGs effective FY27 would require these states to fund post-devolution revenue deficits from their own revenue. However, India Ratings

estimates capex to grow 16.4 per cent in FY27 and the capex/GDP ratio to improve to 2.9 per cent in FY27, against 2.7 per cent in FY26.

"The strong focus on capital expenditure is underpinned by the ₹1.85 lakh cr allocation under the SASCI scheme in the FY27. The continued focus on capital expenditure will bolster medium-term growth and support fiscal stability," said Anuradha Basumatari, director, public finance, Ind-Ra.

Ind-Ra expects aggregate revenue receipts to grow 9 per cent in FY27 against 6.8 per cent in FY26, supported by States' Own Tax Revenue (SOTR) performance and tax devolution.

The states' share in the net proceeds of union government taxes remains unchanged at 41 per cent. The Centre has allocated ₹15.3 L-cr as states' share in central taxes in its FY27 budget, up 9.6 per cent.

Meta agrees to deploy Nvidia processors

California, Feb. 18: Meta Platforms has agreed to deploy millions of Nvidia processors over the next few years, tightening an already close relationship between two of the biggest companies in the artificial intelligence (AI) industry.

Meta, which accounts for about 9 per cent of Nvidia's revenue, is committing to use more AI processors and networking equipment from the supplier, according to a statement. For the first

time, it also plans to rely on Nvidia's Grace central processing units (CPUs).

The rollout will include products based on Nvidia's current Blackwell generation and the forthcoming Vera Rubin design of AI accelerators. "The partnership with Nvidia to build leading-edge clusters using their Vera Rubin platform to deliver personal super-

intelligence to everyone in the world," Meta chief executive officer Mark Zuckerberg said.

Nvidia's systems are still considered the gold standard for AI infrastructure. But others are now offering alternatives, and Meta is working on building its own in-house components. Nvidia's AI accelerators, the chips that help develop and run AI mod-

els, fetch an average of \$16,061 apiece, according to a recent IDC estimate.

That means a million of the chips would cost more than \$16 billion — and that doesn't account for higher price of newer versions or other Nvidia equipment that Meta is buying.

Ian Buck, Nvidia's vice president of accelerated computing, said the two companies aren't putting a figure on latest commitment.

— **Bloomberg**

APSEZ inks deal with France's port to deepen trade, port innovation

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, FEB. 18

Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone (APSEZ) and the Port of Marseille Fos, France's leading port, have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to deepen cooperation on trade facilitation, port innovation, and energy transition.

This partnership proposes creation of an IMEC ports club to strengthen the coordination among major ports along the India-MiddleEast-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) route, reinforcing connectivity between India and the European

Union.

The IMEC is a 6,000-km multimodal connectivity initiative linking India and Europe through integrated maritime routes, road ways, rail networks.

APSEZ's ports at Mundra and Hazira form a multimodal logistics hub connecting South Asia to West Asia. Through this MoU, Marseille Fos strengthens western European gateway of the corridor, adding approximately 70 million tonnes of capacity and extending IMEC's reach deeper into Europe.

Co-founding an IMEC ports club to institutionalise dialogue among corridor ports.

Transaction limits needing PAN to be enhanced soon

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, FEB. 18

The government is proposing to significantly raise the transaction limits for quoting of PAN for cash deposits, withdrawals in banks, purchase of motor vehicles and property, payment of hotel bills and insurance premium.

For cash deposits at bank or post offices, under the proposed regulation, PAN will be required if total cash deposits or withdrawals from one or more accounts in a financial year exceed ₹10 lakh. Currently, cash deposits over ₹50,000 in a single transaction require PAN disclosure.

In the case of motor vehicles, the PAN requirement will be a must if the vehicle price exceeds ₹5 lakh (excluding tractors). Under the existing Income Tax Rules, quoting of PAN is mandatory for sale and purchase of all vehicles except two wheelers.

The draft norms have also proposed to increase threshold for quoting PAN if payment to restaurant bills exceeds ₹1 lakh. The

HIGHER THRESHOLD

PAN REQUIRED if cash deposits or withdrawals from accounts exceed ₹10 lakh in financial year.

IN CASE of vehicles, the PAN requirement will be a must if price exceeds ₹5 lakh.

DRAFT NORMS proposes to increase threshold for quoting PAN if payment to hotel bills exceeds ₹1 lakh.

PAN MANDATORY for starting an account-based relationship with an insurance company.

FOR IMMOVABLE property including sale, purchase, gift, or joint agreements, the limit will increase to ₹20 lakh.



existing limit is ₹50,000.

In the insurance segment, PAN will be mandatory for starting an account-based relationship with an insurance company. Under the old norms, payments aggregating to more than ₹50,000 in a financial year as life insurance premiums require a PAN.

For immovable property transactions, including sale, purchase, gift, or joint development agreements, the limit will increase from ₹10 lakh to ₹20 lakh, allowing smaller

real estate deals to proceed with less documentation.

These draft rules are open for public feedback until Feb.22. After this feedback, the CBDT is expected to notify the norms, which will replace the Income Tax Rules 1962.

The New Income Tax Act, 2025 as well as the proposed changes are set to take effect from April 1, implying the ITR-related changes will impact ITR filed in 2027 (for income earned in FY 2026-27).

BITCOIN EXTENDS 4-WEEK SLIDE AMID VOLATILITY

New York, Feb. 18: Bitcoin extended a four-week slide amid broader market volatility as investors fretted over the impact of artificial intelligence on the economy.

The token dropped as much as 3.2 per cent to \$66,604 on Tuesday in New York before paring the decline. Bitcoin, which has tended to move with fluctuations in tech stocks in recent months, mirrored an earlier move lower in US equities but failed to keep pace when they edged higher.

"Sentiment is clearly bleak in crypto markets," said Noelle Acheson, author of Crypto is Macro Now newsletter. "There is strong progress in adoption by traditional institutions, but this is not reflected in overall prices, which depresses sentiment even more."

Traders struggling to assess the outlook for AI whipsawed stocks in another volatile session on Wall Street. There's uncertainty over the technology's potential to disrupt some segments and skepticism that big AI spending will pay off soon.

— **Bloomberg**

Equipment buying from China easing

New Delhi, Feb. 18: India has begun easing its restrictions on buying Chinese equipment after 2020 border clash, allowing state-run power and coal companies to start limited imports as shortages and project delays mount, two government officials said.

This is the first easing of five-year-old curbs that have largely shut Chinese firms out of India's \$700 billion-\$750 billion government contract market.

It was reported in January that India is examining broader relaxations on Chinese bidders for government contracts as border tensions ease.

Since 2020 clash, India has required Chinese bidders to register with a government panel and secure political and security clearances before competing for any state contract.

The government now allowed state-run entities to procure a power-transmission component from China without any approvals. It is weighing a similar, time-bound exemption for key coal-sector equipment.

The exemption was granted in national interest, as blocking Chinese imports would hurt India's manufacturing capability, one of two officials said.

A panel of bureaucrats has approved waiver, with a formal order expected soon, two officials said.

The easing follows repeated requests from government departments facing shortages and project delays under the 2020 restrictions, officials said.

India may allow case-by-case imports of critical Chinese equipment rather than fully reopen procurement, the two officials said.

— **Reuters**



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— **Reuters**

Govt to decide on oil tanker cover

New Delhi, Feb. 18: The government must decide in next few days whether to keep allowing a handful of Russian companies to insure tankers when they deliver oil to the country.

The process comes at a time when India is under pressure from the Trump administration to scale back Russian oil buying. Allowing the insurers to continue covering against oil spills when sailing to India could help to underpin those trade flows.

India's directorate gen-

eral of shipping (DGS) has until Friday to extend the approvals of four Russian insurers, its website shows. The four other Russian ones don't need to renew their approvals until 2029 and 2030.

People with knowledge of matter said that they expect the DGS to agree on an extension of their approvals at a meeting on Thursday. After that, India's ministry of shipping will then need to give final sign-off, the people said.

— **Bloomberg**

NEW | WAVE Sustainability ambitions measurable, capital-backed

India Inc makes ESG priority

RESHMI A.R.
HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

India Inc's sustainability ambitions are now measurable, capital-backed and increasingly visible across sectors, said the Perpetual Capital Hurun India Impact 50 report.

India, captures this shift, ranking 50 listed companies for their alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

"The 2026 edition marks the moment sustainability stopped being a reporting exercise and became corporate strategy," said Anas Rahman Junaid, founder



and chief researcher of Hurun India.

Topping the 2026 list is Hindustan Unilever with a score of 53.9, reflecting balanced progress across climate action, water stewardship, circularity and gender inclusion. Close behind is HCL Tech at 53.8, recognised for reducing

operational emissions and employing over 67,000 women, one of the highest female workforces in India's technology sector. Grasim Industries, Tata Motors and Dabur India complete the top five.

Collectively, the Impact 50 companies generated revenue of ₹48.5 lakh crore in FY25, while delivering a combined net profit of ₹4.95 lakh crore. Beyond financial performance, the group spent over ₹8,000 crore on CSR initiatives, reaching more than 200 million beneficiaries across India.

Climate Action emerged as the priority, with 48

companies setting measurable, time-bound targets. JSW Energy achieved a perfect 10 score in this category, highlighting the company's strong push toward expanding renewable capacity and cutting emissions. Responsible Consumption and Production and Affordable and Clean Energy followed as the next most addressed goals.

Mumbai dominates the list geographically, hosting 26 of the 50 companies. Sectorally, metals and mining leads with seven firms, signalling that carbon-intensive industries are recalibrating strategies.

SHORT TAKES

Lanka, Zim to battle for top spot

Colombo: Surprise package Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka will battle for bragging rights when they clash in a compelling T20 World Cup fixture here on Thursday, with both teams having already secured their spots in the Super 8s. The outcome of this match will determine the group topper. Sri Lanka have emerged as strong contenders, leveraging their knowledge of local conditions to defeat Oman and Ireland, while crushing Australia by eight wickets to establish themselves as a well-rounded side with the potential to go all the way. Zimbabwe, on the other hand, claimed their spot in the Super 8s thanks to their giant-killing win over Australia and the weather, as their match against Ireland was abandoned. By virtue of the shared points, they ended Australia's hopes of advancing, becoming the unlikely qualifiers. Sri Lanka are unlikely to relax despite already qualifying for the Super 8s, and will aim to maintain their winning momentum and top the group, which could give them a favourable match-up in the next stage. — PTI

Munsey handed one demerit point

Mumbai: Scotland opener George Munsey has been reprimanded and handed one demerit point for hurling his helmet onto the advertising boards during their Group 'C' T20 World Cup match against Nepal in Mumbai. Munsey was found to have breached Article 2.2 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which relates to "abuse of cricket equipment or clothing, ground equipment or fixtures and fittings during an International Match." In addition to this, one demerit point has also been added to Munsey's disciplinary record, and it was the first offence in a 24-month period for him. The episode occurred at the conclusion of the 10th over of Scotland's innings, when Munsey threw his helmet onto the advertising boards as he made his way back to the dressing room following his dismissal. Munsey admitted the offence and accepted the sanction proposed by David Gilbert of the ICC International Panel of Match Referees, so there was no need for a formal hearing. — PTI

Delhi HC orders fresh EFI elections

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court on Wednesday ordered fresh elections in the Equestrian Federation of India (EFI) and also called for the constitution of an independent ad-hoc administrative committee to oversee its functioning. The matter was listed at Item No. 4 before Court 14 presided over by Justice Kaurav, who was hearing an application filed by the Union of India seeking the appointment of an ad-hoc administrative committee to administer the affairs of the EFI. The court was informed that the existing Executive Committee had been re-instated in view of the Paris Olympics 2024 and that its tenure had since expired. The Rajasthan Equestrian Association submitted that elections to the EFI were long overdue. The court was also apprised through a brief note that the National Sports Governance Act, 2025 has come into force, providing a statutory framework for the governance of National Sports Federations (NSFs) in the country. — PTI

Salvi bats for pacer Arundhati

Canberra: Pacer Arundhati Reddy's four-wicket haul in India's win in the first women's T20I against Australia was a reflection of her preparedness, said bowling coach Aavishkar Salvi here on Wednesday. Arundhati claimed 4/22 to help India bowl Australia out for a mere 133 and win the contest by 21 runs via DLS Method in Sydney to take a 1-0 lead in the three-match series. "Arundhati is a very hard-working girl. She comes prepared for any of the tournaments that she comes into," Salvi said. "To pick up those four wickets in a very important game, it was actually a pleasing thing for all of us because we know how hardworking she is. (In) the World Cup, she didn't get a game, but was still preparing herself during the WPL. She got an opportunity and then came to Australia, she started off from where she left in the last Australia series," she added. — PTI

Proteas overpower UAE

DEEPIKA DAS | DC NEW DELHI, FEB. 18

Big-hitting youngster Dewald Brevis regained his form with a quick 36 as South Africa crushed struggling United Arab Emirates by six wickets to extend their unbeaten streak in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup match at the Arun Jaitley Stadium here on a gloomy Wednesday afternoon.

With this win, the Proteas completed their Group 'D' campaign unbeaten and now head to Ahmedabad to face defending champions India in their Super 8 opener on Sunday. It was a kind of heartbreak for associate nation UAE, who bowed out of the tournament with just one win this edition.

The 22-year-old Brevis, known as 'Baby AB' for batting similarities with the great AB de Villiers, is often termed 'X-factor' for the team and his form will be crucial for the side in the Super 8s.

Chasing a modest target of 123, Brevis top scored with 36 off 25 balls and Ryan Rickelton added 30 off 16 balls to guide South Africa home with 40 balls to spare despite a brief rain delay at the start of their innings. Ryan smashed two sixes and three fours while Brevis had a four and three towering sixes. Captain Aiden Markram set the tone with a blistering 28 off 11 balls (five fours, one six). He smashed three fours and a six in the third over before being stumped by Haider Ali on the last ball.

South Africa brought up their 50 in 5.1 overs as they sent the UAE bowlers on a leather hunt.

After putting UAE in to bat, South African bowlers restricted them



South Africa's Dewald Brevis plays a shot against the UAE during their T20 World Cup match in New Delhi on Wednesday. — PRITAM BANDYOPADHYAY

to 122/6 in their allotted overs as Corbin Bosch returned with impressive figures of 3/12. Anrich Nortje took two wickets while George Linde snapped one. Alishan Sharafu (45 off 28 balls) was the only one to put up some resistance with the bat.

UAE struggled against a lethal Proteas pace attack as they lost both their openers — Aryansh Sharma (22 off 12 balls) and Muhammad Waseem (13 off 17 balls) — within the Powerplay. Captain Muhammad Waseem was promoted to No. 2 for this match but bore no fruit

BRIEF SCORES

UAE 122/6 in 20 overs (Alishan Sharafu 45, Anrich Nortje 2/28, Corbin Bosch 3/12) lost to South Africa 123/4 in 12.3 overs (Dewald Brevis 36, Ryan Rickelton 30, Aiden Markram 28).

for the Emirates side. Linde trapped Waseem LBW in the fifth over before Aryansh was dismissed by Bosch.

Linde and Bosche bowled a tight spell as UAE mustered only 44/2 after six overs. Alishan was the lone

bright spot for the Emirates, fighting for a gritty knock which contained five fours and a maximum. Sharafu lived a charmed life, surviving three dropped catches — once by Nortje off Bosch at mid-on and another by Bosch off Kagiso Rabada. During his innings, he also required medical assistance after an inswinging delivery from Bosch struck his helmet at 145.8 kmph.

The UAE batting line-up crumbled under pressure. They huffed and puffed to the century mark in the 19th over before finishing at 122.

AFGHANS LOOK TO GIVE TROTT FINE FAREWELL

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR | DC CHENNAI, FEB. 18

Afghanistan's campaign may not have unfolded as they had hoped, but pride will be on the line when they face Canada in their final group match of the ICC T20 World Cup here at the M. A. Chidambaram Stadium on Thursday. Afghanistan, who scripted a stirring march to the semifinals in the previous edition, couldn't replicate that fairytale run and failed to get past New Zealand and South Africa in the 'Group of Death'. Head coach Jonathan Trott, who took charge in 2022 after replacing Graham Thorpe, will step down after Thursday's match.

Under Trott, Afghanistan performed admirably in the last two ICC World Cups.

Afghanistan skipper Rashid Khan wants to give Trott a fitting farewell. "We have had unbelievable games and tours with him. He is someone who has taken Afghanistan cricket to where it is now. He worked so hard with every single player. Everyone will miss him. He played a major role in putting this team on the right path," he said.

Afghanistan have already set their sights on the next big event — the 2027 ODI World Cup in South Africa.

There is also uncertainty surrounding senior allrounder Mohammad Nabi, whose future remains the subject of speculation.

JAMMU AND KASHMIR STORM INTO RANJI FINAL

Kalyani (West Bengal), Feb. 18: Sixty seven years after their maiden appearance, Jammu and Kashmir stormed into the Ranji Trophy finals for the first time on Wednesday, upstaging two-time former champions Bengal by six wickets in the semifinals here to add another historic chapter to a fairytale season so far. Aqib Nabi's stunning nine-wicket match haul and their IPL star Abdul Samad's fearless strokeplay ensured that the side once labelled "perennial underachievers" now stands one step away from the title.

Chasing a modest 126 at

the Bengal Cricket Academy ground, J&K rode on Samad's unbeaten 30 off 27 balls (3x6, 1x4) and rookie Vanshaj Sharma's composed 43 not out off 83 ball as the pair stitched an unbroken 55-run stand for the fourth wicket to seal history on the fourth and penultimate day of the semifinal.

J & K had played 334 Ranji matches before this season, winning only 45. It took them 44 years to register their first victory against Services in 1982-83. — PTI

SMARAN HITS CENTURY FOR KARNATAKA

Lucknow, Feb. 18: Ravichandran Smaran scored his second successive hundred as Karnataka continued to grind down Uttarakhand to reach 299 for 6 in their second innings for a whopping overall lead of 802 runs on the fourth day of the Ranji Trophy semifinal here on Wednesday. — PTI

Brief Scores: Karnataka 736 and 299/6 in 63.5 overs (R. Smaran 127, K. L. Rahul 70 batting, Kruthik Krishna 52) vs Uttarakhand 233 in 88.5 overs (Lakshya Raichandani 55, Aditya Rawat 45 n.o., Vyshak Vijayakumar 3/45, Vidyadhar Patil 3/40).



Players of Team India (from left) Salim Azmi, Chaitania Kumar, Arsalan Khan and Saif Attari pose with the Telangana Tourism International Arena Polo Championship trophy at the Hyderabad Polo & Riding Club on Wednesday.

India pip France for Cup

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

Team India won the Telangana Tourism International Arena Polo Championship trophy with a fine win over France in a charged final played at the Hyderabad Polo & Riding Club on Wednesday. The home team emerged 18-15 victors.

Arsalan Khan was the top scorer for the winners with 9 goals, while Salim Azmi and Chaitania Kumar contributed six and one goals respectively. For France, Romain

Darroux nailed nine goals while Pierre Hamelin chipped in five with the other coming from a handicap.

It was a match befitting a title round, in which Team India got off the blocks in a flash.

They went ahead 5-3 by the end of the first chukker as Arsalan and Salim struck and were aided by the handicap difference of 2. Romain got all of France's three goals in the round.

Arsalan then turned up the heat in the second chukker by scoring five goals. Salim chipped in one

while Romain and Pierre got one each for France.

The French did well in the third chukker via three goals from Romain and two from Pierre even as India hit back through Salim's three goals and Arsalan's one.

That set up an interesting fourth and final chukker, where France again gained the upperhand with three goals from Romain and two from Pierre.

India's goals in the period came from Arsalan (2) and Chaitania (1) but that was enough to see them through.

CITY CLIPS



Officials pose with the Hyderabad Open trophy at its launch at the Boulder Hills Golf & Country Club on Wednesday.

300 golfers for Hyderabad Open

The Hyderabad Open, conceived by the TGolf Foundation and hosted at Boulder Hills Golf & Country Club, kicked off with the launch of the crystal trophy, which is engraved with Hyderabad's iconic monuments like Buddha statue and Charminar, at the opening ceremony on Wednesday.

The qualifying rounds will be played on Thursday and Friday followed by the final on Saturday.

The event has drawn over 300 golfers from across India, marking a significant milestone in nurturing amateur golf talent nationwide. TGolf Foundation President & CEO Dr NRN Reddy unveiled the custom-made glass trophy, symbolising excellence in the sport. In his address, Dr Reddy emphasised: "At TGolf Foundation, we are proud to conceptualise, nurture, hone and execute golf tournaments to encourage all formats of golf in Hyderabad and beyond. The Hyderabad Open is one such avenue to inspire amateur golf talent across India to compete, show their mettle and excel in sport."

Officials from Zaggie, Mindspace Business Parks (REIT), Client Associates, Earthful, Greepark, Godrej, Karat, GolfTripz, SkinBae, Novotel, DrewKnot, Voila F9, Firstcut, Continental Hospitals, Golfbro, D5 Sports, Playroot Sports, Sports Diary and Pirates of Marketing were present on the occasion.

Pooja powers Hyd seniors to win

Hyderabad scored a three-wicket victory over Usha Saurashtra in the BCCI's Senior Women's One-Day Trophy Elite Group 'C' seventh round match played at Usha Martin Ground in Ranchi on Wednesday. Bowling first, Hyderabad restricted Saurashtra to a 213/6 in 50 overs. In reply, Hyderabad batter Vanka Pooja scored 60 to guide her team to victory.

BRIEF SCORES
BCCI Senior Women's One-Day Trophy Round-7, at Usha Martin Ground in Ranchi: Saurashtra 213/6 in 50 overs (Ridhi R 32, Ayushi P 53, N Chavda 33 n.o.) lost to Hyderabad 214/7 in 50 overs (Vanka Pooja 60, K. Nitesha 48, N. Chavda 3/25).

HCA 'B' DIVISION TWO-DAY LEAGUE
Day-2: HUCA 536/6 decl. in 84 overs bt Sri Chakra 120 in 31.2 overs (Rithik Reddy 42, D. Sri Charan Chowdary 4/39).

Pooja to lead women U-23 team

Vanka Pooja has been named captain of the Hyderabad cricket team for the upcoming BCCI Women's Under-23 One-Day Trophy for the first two matches to be played at Dehradun from March 3 to March 11. K. Nitesha is vice-captain.

The squad: Vanka Pooja (captain), K. Nitesha (vice-captain), G. Trisha, Sandhya Gora, S. Yashasri, M. Mamatha (wicket-keeper), Drihi Kesari, E. Srujana, Prathiksha Venkatesh, M. Sakshi Rao, E. Darshini (wicket-keeper), P. Akshaya Reddy (District), Akanksha Semwal, P. Sri Chandhana, B. Keerthana. Stand-bys: N. Kranthi Reddy, Jasmine Gill, P. Parvathi (District), S. Mithra (wicket-keeper), D. Pranavi Yadav.

PONTING CRITICISES OZ T20 TEAM

New Delhi, Feb. 18: Former captain Ricky Ponting says the current Australian side lacked the aura that defined its past teams at global events and termed the country's early exit from the men's T20 World Cup as a "really poor campaign". Ponting said the team on paper did not carry the same presence as previous Australian outfits that dominated ICC tournaments. — PTI

OFFICE OF THE ACHAMPET MUNICIPALITY
E-Procurement Notice
Lr.No.E1/ACPT-MPLTY/Nagarabhivrudhi/02/2 Date:18/02/2026

1. Name of the work : Construction of Major Interconnecting Roads, link Roads, slip Roads and Drains in Achampet Municipality Under Nagarabhivrudhi Grants.

Estimated Cost : 300.00 Lakhs

2. Name of the work : Development of Park in Achampet Municipality

Estimated Cost : 300.00 Lakhs

Bid Submission Start Date & Time : 19-02-2026 11:30 AM

Bid Submission Closing Date & Time : 27-02-2026 04:30 PM

Further details can be seen @ e-procurement market place i.e. <https://tender.telanganagov.in> Officer inviting bids Commissioner, Achampet Municipality, Nagarkurnool Dist., mscapt@gmail.com, Telangana.

Sd/- Commissioner
Achampet Municipality

DIPR RO No.: 15527-PP/CL/ADVT/12025-26

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY
E-TENDERING TENDER NOTICE

Divisional Railway Manager (Works) N.C. Railway, Jhansi for and behalf of President of India invites sealed "Open Tender" through on Line (E-Tendering) for the following work.

E-Tender No.	Approx Cost	Earnest Money
JHS-ENGG-E-2026-24	12117587.65	210900.00

Description of work: Civil engineering work for Provision of Interlocking of LC Gates No. 394,406,409,410 and S-46 having TVU greater than 10,000 & < 20000 of Jhansi Division.

Date of closing Tender: 11.03.2026 at 15:00 hrs.

Date of completion/period from issue acceptance letter : 10 Months

Tender online can be submitted up to 15:00 hrs on 11.03.2026. For full details and submission of bid please see the Indian Railways website www.ireps.gov.in. 354/26 (ADM)

North central railways www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in @ CPRONCR

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY
E-Tendering Notice No.: 2026-Feb-02 Dated: 16.02.2026

E-TENDER NOTICE

Divisional Railway Manager (Engineering), N. C. Rly Agra for and on behalf of the President of India invites "Open Tender" through on Line only (E-Tendering) for the following works. The details of the tender are as under:-

S.No.:	Tender No.:	Approx. Cost (Rs.):	Approx. Cost (Rs.):
1	2026-Feb-02-01	₹ 79826246.16	
2	2026-Feb-02-02	₹ 31854590.55	
3	2026-Feb-02-03	₹ 13225705.80	

Description of work: Provision of extension of Running Room (16 rooms, 32 Beds) in Mathura Jn station.

Description of work: Provision of extension of Running Room (16 rooms, 32 Beds) in Mathura Jn station.

Description of work: Construction of 40 bed RPF barrack at New Delhi under Agra Division/NCR.

For full details and submission of bid please see the Indian Railways website "www.ireps.gov.in". Tenders can only be submitted through web portal "www.ireps.gov.in" up to 15.00 hrs on 09.03.2026. 357/26 (A)

North central railways www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in @ CPRONCR

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY
E-Tender No. PRYJ-Sig-228-2025-26

E-Tender Notice

Senior Divisional Signal & Telecommunication Engineer/Coordination/North Central Railway/Prayagraj, for and on behalf of the President of India, invite E-TENDER on prescribed form for the following works up to 12:00 hrs. The details of the tender is as under:-

Tender No. : PRYJ-Sig-228-2025-26 Approx. Cost of work (₹) : 41271316.55/-

Name of Work : S&T work in connection with conversion of K-points into motor operated points at 8 stations under the section of Sr. DSTE/CNB of Prayagraj Division.

Bid Security (₹) : 356400/- Completion Period : 12 Months

Date of Opening of tender : 12.03.2026

Availability of tender form : Tender forms shall be available on www.ireps.gov.in

Time date & place of opening of tender : Tender will be opened through E-tender at office of Divisional Railway Manager, Prayagraj on or after pre determined date at 12:30 hours. 359/26 (C)

North central railways www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in @ CPRONCR

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE NO.04/2026 Dated: 16.02.2026

E-Tender Notice

Sr. DSTE/North Central Railway, Agra acting for and on behalf of the President of India invites "Open Tender" through Online only (E-Tendering) for the following work:

E-TENDER NO.: AGRA-ST-2026-13 Approx. Cost of work : ₹ 3,20,83,908.48

Name of work : Comprehensive Annual maintenance Contract of Frauscher Make Multi Section Digital Axle Counters AGC-BHA, BHA-JJ, U-MIA, MIA-DHO (AGC-DHO Section) of Agra Division for a period of three years.

Tender closing date: 12.03.2026

For full details and submission of bid please see the Indian Railway Website www.ireps.gov.in. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids through web portal www.ireps.gov.in up to 15.00 hrs on above mentioned date. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. 356/26 (DG)

North central railways www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in @ CPRONCR

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY
TENDER NOTICE NO. : AGC-ELG-T-12-2025-26 Date : 16.02.2026

E-Tender Notice

Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (General) N.C. Railway, Agra for and behalf of President of India invites "Open Tender" through on line only (E-Tendering) for the following works.

Tender No. : AGC-ELG-T-12-2025-26 Completion period : 09 months

Name of work with its location & Completion Period : Improvement of power factor with provision of capacitor bank for power supply systems over Agra division.

Approx. Cost of the work : Rs. 1260889.54/- (including GST)

For full details and submission of bid please see the Indian Railways website www.ireps.gov.in - Tenders can only be submitted through web portal www.ireps.gov.in up to 15:00 hrs. on 12.03.2026 355/26 (AS)

@ CPRONCR North central railways @ CPRONCR www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in

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IIITBPL/Adm/EOI/2026/450 Date:16.02.2026

Expression of Interest (EOI) inviting Industry Partners

The Indian Institute of Information Technology (IIIT) Bhopal invites Expressions of Interest (EOI) from eligible Industries / Organizations for enrolment as Industry Partners with IIIT Bhopal, as per the Provisions of the IIIT (PPP) Act 2017. The detailed notification, including eligibility criteria and terms & conditions, is available on the Institute website www.iiitbhopal.ac.in Interested parties are advised to visit the website regularly for updates.

Important Timeline:
Last date EOI submission: 09 March 2026 (5.00 P.M.)
Date & Time of EOI Opening: 12 March 2026 (4.00 P.M.)

Registrar(Officiating)

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY
E-Tender Notice

Deputy Chief Electrical Engineer, Gati Shakti, N.C. Railway, Jhansi for and behalf of President of India invites sealed "Open Tender" through on Line (E-Tendering) for the following work.

Description of work: JHS-GSU-2026-02: Electrical General Service Work Development of SHEOPUR KALAN Railway Station under Amrit Bharat Yojna in Jhansi Division of North Central Railway

E-Tender No. : JHS-GSU-ELG-2026-02 Approx Cost : ₹ 28891385.70

Earnest Money : ₹ 294500.00 Date of closing Tender: 12.03.2026

Date of Completion/period from issue acceptance letter: 12 Months

Tender online can be submitted up to 15:00 hrs on 12.03.2026. For full details and submission of bid please see the Indian Railways website www.ireps.gov.in 364/26 (DG)

North central railways www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in @ CPRONCR

Short takes

WI eye final tune-up before Super Eights

Two-time champions West Indies will look to fine-tune their combination and deliver yet another clinical performance when they take on spirited debutants Italy in their final Group 'C' match of the T20 World Cup in Kolkata, on Thursday. Though the Caribbean side has slumped since their second and last T20 World Cup triumph at this very venue a decade ago, it is beginning to peak at the right time in this edition of the global showpiece.

As the business end approaches, the Darren Sammy-coached outfit appears to be finding rhythm for a demanding Super Eights schedule.

West Indies will face Zimbabwe in Mumbai on February 23, South Africa in Ahmedabad on February 26, before returning here for a marquee clash against co-hosts and title favourites India on March 1.

With that decisive fixture also at Eden Gardens, the Caribbean side would be keen to stamp authority and build momentum at a venue that has historically been kind to it.

Skipper Shai Hope has rediscovered touch at the top just in time. After modest returns of 0 against England, and 19 versus Scotland, the opener responded with a fluent 44-ball 61 not out to steer a nine-wicket chase against Nepal in their previous outing. —PTI

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SHIWHAM!

Dube's allround show helps India ease past Oranje

MOSES KONDETY | DC
AHMEDABAD, FEB. 18

Shivam Dube turned in an allround show as confident India nailed Netherlands by a comfortable margin to march into the Super Eight stage of the T20 World Cup with an all-win record in Group games on Wednesday.

Chasing the hosts' mammoth total of 193 for 6, the Dutch fell 17 short at the Narendra Modi Stadium which proved intimidating with 68,510 spectators wearing Team India's blue and rooting for their favourites.

India's impressive total was built on a smashing 66 by Shivam Dube and useful contributions from skipper Suryakumar Yadav (34), Tilak Varma (31) and Hardik Pandya (30). Dube then starred with the ball as well, taking 2 for 35 with his medium-pace to go with Varun Chakravarthy's economical 3/14 that choked the Dutch.

Dube was the wrecker-in-chief. Batting at No.5, he played some strokes that dashed around the ground and kept the scoreboard moving. The Dutch were all at sea when the left-hander was at the crease as he thumped six sixes and four fours in his 31-ball whirlwind knock. The 32-year-old also brought up India's 100 in style, by



India's Shivam Dube en route to his 66 against the Netherlands during their T20 World Cup match in Ahmedabad on Wednesday. — DEBASISH DEY

launching off-spinner Colin Ackermann into the stands in the 13th over.

The hosts got off to a bad start. Explosive opener Abhishek Sharma played two dots before being bowled by off-spinner Aryan Dutt on the third ball of the innings for his third consecutive duck in the current World Cup, following zeroes against USA and Pakistan in earlier

games. The left-hander is yet to score in this tournament and has five noughts from eight innings.

New man Tilak Varma upped the ante by thumping Logan van Beek for a flat six on the first ball of the second over.

Ishan Kishan (18) too turned it up from the other end to get the crowd back on their feet. However, the latter was a

shade unlucky to get out, bowled by Dutt again as he missed a shot to see the ball hit his leg and arm before falling on to his wickets.

Surya played some pleasing, flowing drives that raced to the boundary. He had the good fortune of being let off while on 'lucky' 13 as Michael Levitt dropped a skier/ siter at deep square leg off van Beek with the team score reading 62 for 2 in the ninth over.

Three balls later, the Dutch got their wicket though as 41-year-old Roelof van der Merwe pulled off a stunning diving catch at long-off to terminate Tilak's innings, which came off 27 deliveries and contained three fours and a six.

Surya then built a fine stand of 41 for the fourth wicket with Dube before being caught by substitute fielder Timm van der Gugten at long-on as he tried to hit pacer Kyle Klein out of the ground.

That brought Dube and Pandya together, who put on a quickfire stand of 76 (in 35 balls) for the fifth wicket to power India close to the 200-run mark.

India rested allrounder Axar Patel, who made way for Washington Sundar while pacer Arshdeep Singh replaced wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav in the playing XI.

SCOREBOARD

India: Abhishek Sharma b Dutt 0, Ishan Kishan b Dutt 18, Tilak Varma c van der Merwe b van Beek 31, Suryakumar Yadav c sub (van der Gugten) b Klein 34, Shivam Dube c sub (van der Gugten) b van Beek 66, Hardik Pandya c van der Merwe b van Beek 30, Rinku Singh not out 6. Extras (b-1, w-7) 8. **Total (for 6 wickets in 20 overs) 193.**

Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-39, 3-69, 4-110, 5-186, 6-193.

Bowling: Aryan Dutt 4-0-19-2, Logan van Beek 4-0-56-3, Colin Ackermann 3-0-36-0, Kyle Klein 4-0-38-1, Bas de Leede 4-0-28-0, Roelof van der Merwe 1-0-15-0.

Netherlands: Michael Levitt c Sundar b Pandya 24, Max O'Dowd b Chakravarthy 20, Bas de Leede c Chakravarthy b Dube 33, Colin Ackermann c Rinku b Chakravarthy 23, Aryan Dutt b Chakravarthy 0, Scott Edwards b Bumrah 15, Zach Lion-Cachet c Sundar b Dube 26, Noah Croes not out 25, Logan van Beek not out 4. Extras (lb-2, w-4) 6. **Total (for 7 wicket in 20 overs) 176.**

Fall of wickets: 1-35, 2-51, 3-94, 4-94, 5-112, 6-125, 7-172.

Bowling: Arshdeep Singh 3-0-22-0, Jasprit Bumrah 3-0-17-1, Washington Sundar 4-0-36-0, Varun Chakravarthy 3-0-14-3, Hardik Pandya 3-0-40-1, Abhishek Sharma 1-0-10-0, Shivam Dube 3-0-35-2.

Sahibzada ton & bowlers take Pak into Super Eight

Colombo, Feb. 18: Pakistan rode on Sahibzada Farhan's scintillating, maiden hundred and their spinners' excellent display to beat Namibia by a handsome margin of 102 runs and enter the Super Eights of the T20 World Cup here on Wednesday.

Batting first, Pakistan posted a formidable 199 for 3 in their must-win game.

Farhan, who needed just 20 deliveries to move from 50 to 100, ended on 100 not out off 58 balls, becoming only the second player from Pakistan to score a century in the tournament after Ahmed Shehzad's ton against Bangladesh in 2014 at Mirpur.

In all, Farhan hit 11 boundaries and four sixes while adding 67 runs with skipper Salman Agha (38 off 23 balls) and 81 runs with Shadab Khan (36 not out off 22 balls).

In reply, Namibia were all out for 97 in 17.3 overs with mystery spinner Usman Tariq (4/16 in 3.3 overs) and leg-spinner Shadab Khan (3/19 in 4 overs) leading Pakistan's charge with the ball.

Salman Mirza and Mohammad Nawaz chipped in with a wicket each as Namibia fared miserably in the chase to finish their campaign winless after four outings.

With this win, Pakistan have also ensured their

BRIEF SCORES

Pakistan 199/3 in 20 overs (Sahibzada Farhan 100, Salman Agha 38, Shadab Khan 36, Jack Brassell 2/48) beat Namibia 97 in 17.3 overs (Louren Steenkamp 23, Usman Tariq 4/16, Shadab Khan 3/19).



Pakistan's Sahibzada Farhan celebrates his century against Namibia during their T20 World Cup match in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on Wednesday. — AP

qualification to the next edition of the T20 World Cup.

Earlier, Pakistan managed 47 runs in the powerplay for the loss of Saim Ayub's wicket.

Seeking to recover from the heavy defeat to traditional rivals India, Pakistan strengthened their batting with the inclusion of Khawaja Nafay in the middle order while leaving out the woefully out-of-sorts pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi. —PTI

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