



Heavy rush of passengers to catch a train for Mahakumbh, at the New Delhi railway station. A stampede-like situation occurred at the station, injuring many.

10 passengers injured in stampede at New Delhi railway station

New Delhi, Feb 15 (UNI) At least 10 passengers were injured in a stampede at the New Delhi railway station on Saturday night, an official said. According to official sources, at around 10 pm, there was a stampede among a large number of passengers who had come to platform number 14 and 15 due to some reason, in which many passengers were injured.

The Delhi Police put the number of injured at 10. It is reported that when

the Prayagraj Express was standing on platform number 14, there were many people present on the platform.

Swatantrata Senani Express and Bhubaneswar Rajdhani were delayed, and passengers of these trains were also present at platforms 12, 13 and 14.

According to Delhi Police, 1,500 general tickets were sold by the railways every hour. That is why the crowd became uncontrollable. There were reports of stampede at

platform number 14 and near escalators near platform number 16.

According to sources, the Railway Protection Force and Delhi Police reached the spot as soon as the incident was reported and the injured were immediately taken to the hospital.

Sources said that in view of the sudden rush, the Railways has announced to run four special trains for Prayagraj Mahakumbh in a bid to reduce congestion.

Prez rule in strife-torn Manipur belated: Stalin

Chennai, Feb 15 (UNI) Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK President M K Stalin on Saturday said the Centre's decision to impose President's rule in strife-torn Manipur was "very belated."

Replying to questions from public as part of his "Ungalil Oruvan" series (One among you) programme via video-conferencing, he said Manipur Chief Minister Biren Singh has not resigned on its own.

"Biren Singh had to quit as he had no other choice as Manipur has been burning for the last two years", he said.

Mr Stalin said more than 200 people had lost their lives in that state and the Chief Minister had not taken any action on this and was instead protected by the BJP Government at the Centre.

Pointing out that videos revealing that the Chief Minister himself was linked to the violence in Manipur has come out, Mr Stalin said the Supreme Court had ruled that it should be probed in detail and the allies of the BJP and BJP MLAs have now turned against the Saffron party.

"It was in this stage, the Chief Minister was forced to resign as he had no other choice and the President's rule was imposed", he added.

"Whether it is the BJP-ruled Maipur or Uttar Pradesh, this is the status of the law and order situation. But they are speaking about other states", Mr Stalin said, adding, the DMK's stand was that peace and normalcy should soon return to Manipur and a government wished by the people and that protects them should be installed.

Asked about the benefits for Tamil Nadu in the Union Budget, Mr Stalin said TN has been completely neglected in the Budget and there was no funds for the State for the last few years.

"What's more then there was no mention of the name Tamil Nadu in it", he charged.

The Centre has been releasing reports that Tamil Nadu is the leading State in the country in all parameters, but was adamant in not releasing any funds to the State, he said.

Two youths, including engineering student murdered

Mayiladuthurai (Tamil Nadu), Feb 15 (UNI) In a gruesome incident, two youths, including an engineering student, were brutally murdered by a gang of bootleggers when they questioned the sale of illicit arrack at Muttam village under Perambur police limits in Mayiladuthurai district of Tamil Nadu late on Friday night. Police said the deceased were identified as K Harish (25) and Harisakthi (22), a 3rd-year engineering student. The accused, Raj Kumar (30), his kin Thangadurai (28), and Moovendan (34), all habitual bootleggers, were selling illicit arrack in the village. There was a feud between the bootleggers and the two youths over the issue. The trouble started when Dinesh (24) and his friends Harish and Harisakthi questioned them for selling arrack. The enraged bootleggers assaulted Dinesh severely. When Harish and Harisakthi attempted to resist the attack, the bootleggers stabbed them with knives multiple times in a violent attack and escaped from the spot.



India poised for 6-8% growth amid global uncertainty:

Bengaluru, Feb 15 (UNI) India is set to sustain a growth rate of 6-8% in the coming years while keeping inflation under control, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said, attributing the country's economic resilience to structural reforms and strong policymaking. (See on page 2)

Kashi Tamil Sangamam to take tradition of thousands of years ...



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EAM meets with counterparts from Austria, Romania, Denmark, Argentina in Munich

Munich/New Delhi, Feb 15 (UNI) ; External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar met with the Federal Chancellor and Foreign Minister of Austria Alexander Schallenberg, FM Emil Hurezeanu of Romania, FM Lars Rasmussen of Denmark, FM Gerardo Werthein of Argentina and Norwegian Finance Minister Jens Stoltenberg, on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference. In posts on X, the EAM posted:

"Delighted to meet with Federal Chancellor and FM @a_schallenberg Alexander Schallenberg of Austria. "His insights on the region are always valuable."

The Austrian FM Schallenberg posted on X: "Always a delight to meet my dear colleague @DrSJaishankar and discuss how to jointly tackle global challenges. Proud to see Austrian-Indian relations at an all-time high!"

The EAM posted on his meeting with the Foreign Minister of Romania:

"Welcomed the meeting with FM @emilhurezeanu Emil Hurezeanu of Romania.

"Discussed advancing our bilateral cooperation in trade, connectivity, and mobility."

During his meeting with the FM of Denmark, the two discussed the challenges of European security.

"Glad to catch up with FM @larsloekke Lars Løkke Rasmussen of Denmark.

"Discussed the complex challenges of European security."

On his meeting with the FM of Argentina, he posted: "A good meeting with Foreign and Trade Minister Gerardo Werthein of Argentina.

"Discussed further expansion in our trade and investment. Shared perspectives on global affairs."

He met with Jens Stoltenberg, Norwegian Finance Minister and incoming chair of the Munich Security Conference:

"Started the day today meeting Norwegian Finance Minister and incoming chair of @MunSecConf @jensstoltenberg Jens Stoltenberg.

"A useful exchange on the evolving global security architecture."



In this image posted by @KirenRijiju via X, Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs and Minority Affairs Kiren Rijiju during his visit to the Dargah Hazratbal Shrine, in Srinagar.

India poised for 6-8% growth amid global uncertainty: Vaishnaw

Bengaluru, Feb 15 (UN) : India is set to sustain a growth rate of 6-8% in the coming years while keeping inflation under control, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said, attributing the country's economic resilience to structural reforms and strong policymaking.

Speaking on reporters here on Saturday, Vaishnaw stressed on India's economic trajectory, highlighting how the country has transformed from being part of the Fragile Five a decade ago to becoming the world's fastest-growing major economy today.

Vaishnaw noted that

between 2004 and 2014, India's economy had deteriorated, with investors losing confidence in its financial stability. However, since 2014, the government has focused on rebuilding institutions, strengthening the banking sector, and driving large-scale infrastructure development.

He pointed out that the banking sector, which was in distress a decade ago, is now among the strongest globally, thanks to reforms such as the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) that have addressed non-performing assets and improved financial discipline. Infrastructure

growth has played a critical role in sustaining economic expansion. Vaishnaw said that highway construction has more than doubled, railway modernisation has gained momentum, and new airports are being built at an unprecedented pace. He added that these developments have not only boosted connectivity but also created employment opportunities and enhanced the ease of doing business.

The digital revolution has further strengthened India's economic position. The minister recalled how, a decade ago, call drops were a major issue and getting a mobile

connection was a challenge. Today, India has one of the world's best 5G networks, with data rates lower than those in Europe and the United States. The fintech sector has also witnessed extraordinary growth, with the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) handling record transaction volumes, making India a global leader in digital payments. Addressing social welfare initiatives, Vaishnaw said that the government's policies have focused on ensuring economic benefits reach all sections of society. He highlighted the impact of the PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi, which has tripled

Minimum Support Price (MSP) payouts for farmers, helping to reduce agrarian distress. He also noted that the number of IITs, IIMs, and AIIMS institutions has doubled, strengthening India's education and healthcare systems. The MSME sector, a crucial component of the economy, has received better credit access and protection from delayed payments by large corporations, ensuring financial stability and business growth.

Despite global headwinds such as geopolitical tensions and supply chain disruptions, India remains well-

positioned to sustain its economic momentum. Vaishnaw asserted that with inflation under control, strong policy measures in place, and a focus on inclusive growth, the country is on track to maintain its high growth trajectory. He added that rising foreign investments, booming stock markets, and rapid advancements in digital and manufacturing sectors indicate a bright future for India's economy.

The minister concluded by stating that the upcoming budget would further strengthen this foundation, ensuring long-term economic stability and inclusive development.

India, Chad discuss trade, investment, health and pharma during FOC

New Delhi, Feb 15 (UNI) India and Chad held the first round of Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) on Thursday in N'Djamena, Chad, during which they discussed bilateral relations, including trade, investment, health and pharmaceuticals, defence, Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI).

The FOC was Co-Chaired by Sevala Naik Mude, Additional Secretary (Central and West Africa), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India and Fatime Aldjineh Garfa, Minister delegate for Foreign Affairs, Republic of Chad, a statement said.

During the FOC, both sides undertook a comprehensive review of the entire gamut of India-Chad relations encompassing key areas of bilateral cooperation including trade, investment, health & pharmaceuticals, education, capacity building, defence, Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), Agriculture, people-to-people and cultural exchanges. Both sides agreed to further deepen bilateral ties in key areas to enhance cooperation in the

multilateral fora.

The two sides also held in-depth discussions and exchanged perspectives on key issues of regional and global importance. Fatime Aldjineh Garfa, Minister delegate for Foreign Affairs expressed deep appreciation for India's efforts in making the African Union a permanent member of the G20 and recognized that membership of the G20 for the Africa Union will reinforce the Global South's standing at the forum.

During the visit, Mude also called on Chadian Prime Minister and Head of Government Ambassador Allah Maye Halina; Minister of Public Health Abdelmadjid Abdelkerim; Minister of Telecommunication, Digital Economy and Digitization Boukar Michel; Minister of Agricultural Production and Industrialisation Kedha Balla; Ministers of Commerce and Industry Guibolo Fanga Mathieu; and Minister of Mines, Petroleum and Geology Ndolenodji Alix Naimbai.

India and Chad have warm and cordial relations based on mutual respect and shared values. Over the years, both the countries have regular

interactions at various levels. Both sides have identified new areas for cooperation including agriculture, pharmaceuticals including pharmacopeia, oil, renewable energy, and defence.

Bilateral trade had peaked in 2018-19 to USD 513.59 million, but it has decreased to USD 83.48 million due to decline in import of crude oil by India. There are about 45 Indian companies in Chad working mostly in oil projects, international organizations, and many are engaged in trade in Chad. Bharati Airtel, which is the largest mobile network provider in the country has so far invested over USD 1.5 billion.

Chad has also been an active participant at Minister level in all three editions of Voice of Global South Summits (VoGSS) hosted by India, and also other multilateral Summits held from time to time. Chad is a member of the International Solar Alliance.

The FOC was held in a cordial and friendly atmosphere. Both sides agreed to hold the next round of Foreign Office Consultations in New Delhi at a mutually convenient date.

Youth Congress protest against BJP govt

Pune, Feb 15 (UNI) The activists of Youth Congress staged a protest here on Saturday against the BJP-led government, both at the Centre and in the state, for not being serious about tackling growing unemployment in the country.

Addressing a press

conference at the party office, Youth Congress president Saurabh Amrale alleged that due to inaction by the central and state governments, unemployment in the country and mainly in Maharashtra, was rising.

He further alleged

that various types of narcotic drugs are being sold openly in Maharashtra, mainly in Pune.

Due to rising inflation, unemployment, addiction and uncertainty of the future, many youths are turning to crime, and many families are being destroyed, he added.

Centre provides 'Y' category security for TVK Founder-actor Vijay, AIADMK, BJP reacts

Chennai, Feb 15 (UNI) : In a surprise development, the BJP-led Government at the Centre headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has accorded 'Y' category security to actor-politician and Founder of the nascent Tamilaga

Vetri Kazhagam (TVK) Vijay, triggering mixed reactions from the AIADMK and the BJP. Orders to this effect were issued by the Union Home Ministry yesterday, reports received here said.

The security cover with a Central Reserve Police Force component would mean that the 50-year-old actor-turned-politician would have personal security officials guarding him round-the-clock, along with an armed guard at his residence and place of stay, police sources said.

The Centre according 'Y' category security to the Kollywood youth icon, who had termed BJP as his party's 'ideological enemy' and the ruling DMK as 'political enemy', has raised political hackles in Tamil Nadu, with the main

Opposition AIADMK terming it as a possible 'bait' to rope TVK into the NDA fold, ahead of the 2026 Assembly polls.

However, the BJP dismissed it and said there was nothing political in it as Vijay, who had ventured into public life was provided the security by the Centre considering that there could be threat perception to him.

Reacting to the Centre's move, former Minister and AIADMK Deputy General Secretary

KP Munusamy, talking to reporters on the sidelines of a function at Krishnagiri district last evening, said it was not clear on what basis the Modi government has accorded the 'Y' category security to Vijay.

It could be justified considering his popularity. But if one goes by the BJP's history, it could be an attempt to rope him into the NDA fold.

"If it is in view of Vijay being a hugely popular actor and crowds swarming him wherever he goes, it can be seen justified. If not, it could be a bait to get him onboard in the NDA", the senior leader of the AIADMK, which had severed its ties with the BJP, walked out of the NDA and vowed not to have any truck with the saffron party in future polls, said.

Meanwhile, BJP State President K Annamalai told reporters here on Saturday that based on reports that there was some threat perception, the Centre has accorded 'Y' category security to the actor-politician as he had ventured into public life.

Mr Annamalai also said that in the past similar security status has been provided to leaders like Mr M Karunanidhi, Mr M K Stalin--now Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK President--while they were in the opposition.

"Now a similar security has been provided to the Leader of the Opposition and AIADMK General Secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami", Mr

Annamalai reasoned.

"Like other political party leaders, Vijay was also accorded 'Y' category security", he added.

Questioning as to why the State government has not provided security to Vijay, the BJP State Chief said the Centre would provide adequate security cover if there is any threat perception to those involved in public life. "There is no politics in it", he asserted.

It may be noted that Vijay, while addressing TVK's maiden political conference recently, had launched a blistering attack on the 'corrupt' and 'dynastic' DMK rule in the State and the 'fascist' BJP, while remaining silent on AIADMK, which has been working to cobble up a strong alliance to unseat the DMK and return to power in the 2026 polls.

Vijay's announcement in the conference that his party was open for alliance and was also ready to share power--a concept never seen in Tamil Nadu political history--has triggered a debate in the political circles.

The Centre's move comes a couple of days after Vijay and TVK senior leaders holding discussions with renowned poll strategist Prashant Kishor to devise the strategy for the 2026 polls, which the TVK was keen to win by a massive mandate with the support of the people and unseat the DMK.

During the two-day meeting, Prashant Kishor was believed to have given a detailed report

stating that the TVK could garner a vote share of 15 to 20 per cent and the

The TVK is eyeing to win by a massive mandate in its maiden electoral venture by banking on its ideology unveiled by Vijay at its maiden political conference recently. During the meeting with Vijay and also with TVK General Secretary N Anand, Party's newly appointed General Secretary for Election Campaign Management Aadhav

Arjuna and TVK Election Campaign Strategist John Arokiasamy, Prashant Kishor in his report gave inputs on how to approach the Assembly polls and the alliance strategy to be adopted by identifying potential allies. Prashant, who also discussed the prevailing political situation in Tamil Nadu and the existing vote share gained by leading political parties, was believed to have told the

TVK leaders that the party could garner 15 to 20 per cent vote share and also seems to have told them on how to increase this vote share, the possible voter group who could favour TVK in the polls, those who would not, the age group to be targeted to maximise the vote share during the elections.

Though no formal agreement was signed between them to engage him as the key poll strategist, reports indicated that Prashant could act as a political advisor to TVK.

Shiv Sena (UBT) expels its top 3 office-bearers in Ratnagiri

Kolhapur / Ratnagiri, Feb 15 (UNI) In the wake of former Shiv Sena (UBT) MLA from Ratnagiri Rajan Salvi along with his supporters joining the rival Shiv Sena (Shinde) group, Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray on Saturday expelled top three senior office-bearers from the Ratnagiri district for their alleged role in anti-party activities.

A copy of the letter to this effect with signature of former MP and Shiv Sena (UBT) secretary Vinayak Raut was distributed to media in Kolhapur today.

The expelled leaders are Ratnagiri district deputy in-charge Rajendra Mahadik, Ratnagiri district chief Vilas Chalke and Chiplun assembly constituency in-charge Rohan Bane.

Meanwhile, two former MLAs, former Ratnagiri ZP president, five former civic members of Dapoli and many Shiv Sena (UBT) office-bearers are likely to join rival Shiv Sena (Shinde) group in the presence of Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde during his visit.

Former teachers of IGNOU, Jamia criticise police action on students

New Delhi, Feb 15 (UNI) : Former Pro Vice-Chancellor of Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) Prof Basir Ahmad Khan and former Registrar of Jamia Millia Islamia Hasib Ahmad have criticised the police action in Jamia Millia Islamia and detention of students' activists.

In a joint statement issued here on Saturday, Prof Khan and Prof Ahmad took a strong exception to the earlier issued notification of Jamia authorities stating that no protests, dharnas and raising slogans against constitutional dignitaries shall be allowed on any part of the university campus and warning of disciplinary action given to students.

They said, "Such a notification is totally undemocratic. Similarly, organising dissent is basic to democracy."

They asserted that organising peaceful protest was also their democratic right.

"Threatening student with disciplinary action was, therefore, uncalled for and the excessive show of power by the administration was in a bad taste, particularly detaining students including women students at 5 am was unnecessary," they said.

They attributed this situation to non-existence of university students' union. "It is not understood as to why Jamia students are denied their union when all other universities in Delhi are having student union," they said.

Divyang Employment Fair to be held in Pune on Feb 17

Pune, Feb 15 (UNI) Skill Development, Employment & Entrepreneurship Department, Pune and American India Foundation Trust, Bangalore will jointly organise Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Divyang Employment Fair on Monday at Infotech Park, Hinjewadi, here, said S B Mohite, assistant commissioner of Skill Development Department, on Saturday. More than 20 renowned entrepreneurs from the district will participate in this Fair and will fill more than 900 vacancies with Divyang candidates, he added.

One fireman injured during fire in Mumbai heritage building

Mumbai, Feb 15 (UNI) A fire-fighter was injured during a rescue operation after a minor fire broke out in a three-storey heritage building in Fort area of south Mumbai on Saturday.

According to fire officers of Mumbai Fire Brigade (MFB), the incident occurred at 2:20 pm at Freemasons Hall building where during the rescue operation fireman Pankaj Bohir sustained injury to his right hand. He was immediately admitted to G T hospital for medical treatment.

The fire was declared 'level 1' (minor) which was confined to the second floor of the building that is situated opposite Sterling Cinema.

Kashi Tamil Sangamam to take tradition of thousands of years to new heights: Yogi

Varanasi, Feb 15 (UNI) :Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday said that in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision the initiative undertaken by the state government has led to nearly 51 crore devotees taking a holy dip in the Triveni Sangam of Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati during Maha Kumbh Prayagraj, sending a powerful message of unity and strengthening India's faith. Speaking at the inauguration of the third edition of Kashi Tamil Sangamam at Namu Ghat, alongside Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and Minister of State Dr L Murugan, the CM said, "Here, there are no divisions of caste, creed or region. Instead, in the spirit of 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat', devotees from across the country are immersing themselves in faith, chanting the name of Ganga, and seeking the blessings of Maa Ganga. This is the largest event of its kind." He said that this year's Kashi Tamil Sangamam is also being integrated into the grand Maha Kumbh celebrations. "The event will elevate the centuries-old tradition to new heights," he said.

Welcoming guests in Tamil, Yogi engaged with Union Ministers and



In this image provided by the OM Birla office, Lok Sabha speaker Om Birla takes a holy dip at the Sangam during the ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela 2025, in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh.

Congress leader Patole lashes out at Minister

Mumbai, Feb 15 (UNI) Senior Congress leader Nana Patole on Saturday strongly criticised Maharashtra Agriculture Minister Manikrao Kokate over his statement on farmers, arguing that farmers are the backbone of the world and insulting them is nothing but a perverse mindset.

The BJP-alliance government is anti-farmer and works solely for the wealthy, he charged in a statement issued here.

"It has repeatedly been

proven that the BJP-alliance government is anti-farmer. Farmers have been insulted by being labelled as extremists, Naxalites and agitators. Now, the state's Agriculture Minister Kokate has crossed the line by calling farmers beggars," he said. His (Kokate's) statement reflects his arrogance due to power, he said in a jab.

"Farmers are not beggars, rather it is the BJP-alliance government who is a beggar as it exploits the common people through

GST," said Patole.

The government has failed to provide fair prices for farm produce and does not grant loan waivers, he charged.

"During elections, the BJP-alliance begged for votes by making extravagant promises to farmers. By imposing an 18 percent GST on agricultural equipment needed for farming, the government essentially begs from farmers while shamelessly calling them beggars," he retorted. "We have recently

exposed how the Agriculture Ministry misuses funds under various schemes in the name of farmers. Corruption in the crop insurance scheme has also come to light," he said.

Patole demanded that Agriculture Minister Kokate should offer public apology to farmers. Additionally, he called on Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar to remove Kokate from his position.

BSP demands to register case under Atrocity Act against actor Rahul Solapurkar

Pune, Feb 15 (UNI) Bhahujan Samaj Party (BSP) state general secretary and West Maharashtra in-charge, Dr Hulghes Chalwadi, on Saturday demanded to register a case under Atrocity Act against actor Rahul Solapurkar, who is allegedly working to create ideological confusion in the society and implement a 'hidden agenda'.

The statement made by him about Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar is a symbol of his intellectual bankruptcy, he said in a press statement here.

It is also necessary to investigate from whom

Solapurkar is taking a 'bribe' and making such objectionable statements, he alleged and demanded to bring to the fore the forces working to create confusion and division in the society by making such statements.

After the actor's statement, the state government has rubbed salt in the wounds of Shiv devotees and Dr Ambedkar followers by providing police protection at Solapurkar's house.

It is the government's failure to provide police protection to such people, whose place is in jail, Dr Chalwadi added.

visitors, visited the exhibition, released books and enjoyed the cultural performances at the event. He emphasised that Kashi Tamil Sangamam, being hosted for the third time on the sacred land of Baba Vishwanath, is inspired and guided by PM Modi's vision. "This is a part of the grand spiritual and cultural initiative to advance the vision of 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat'. The first two editions, held in the month of Kartik, had their own significance, but the third edition holds special importance as it coincides with the world's largest spiritual and cultural gathering, Maha Kumbh," he said. Emphasising that this year's Kashi Tamil Sangamam is centred around the theme of 4S, the CM said, "This event is being organised with a vision that unites India's saint tradition, scientists, social reformers and students, drawing inspiration from Maharishi Agastya. It is believed that Maharishi Agastya is the sage who bridges North and South India."

He said that Maharishi Agastya's wisdom and influence were so immense that if placed on one side of a scale, balanced against the entire knowledge heritage of North India, his stature would still appear

grander. Yogi emphasised that Maharishi Agastya played a crucial role in connecting North and South India, fostering a deep bond between Sanskrit and Tamil, two ancient linguistic traditions, through the cultural and spiritual legacies of Kashi and Tamil Nadu. He highlighted Maharishi Agastya's remarkable journey from North to South thousands of years ago, underscoring his contribution to India's spiritual and historical fabric. He recalled how Maharishi Agastya guided Lord Rama in his quest to find Mata Sita and imparted the powerful 'Adityahridaya Stotra' during the epic battle between Lord Rama and Ravana.

The CM said that the reverence for Maharishi Agastya, deeply rooted in every Tamil household for centuries, is equally profound in Kashi and Uttarakhand. He pointed out that Uttarakhand has a sacred place named after Agastya Muni and several temples dedicated to Maharishi Agastya in Kashi continue to inspire generations.

He said that people from diverse backgrounds will participate in Kashi Tamil Sangamam from today until February 24. "Along with experiencing the spiritual

grandeur of 'Maha Kashi', they will have the privilege of taking a Maha Snan' in the Triveni Sangam at Prayagraj and seeking the darshan of Ram Lalla in Ayodhya.

Yogi said, "Students, teachers, craftsmen, litterateurs, saints, and individuals from industries, business, temples, innovation, rural economy, and cultural fields will also be part of this grand event."

Describing Kashi as the sacred land of Baba Vishwanath, he highlighted the city's spiritual essence. "Kaal Bhairav is the guardian deity here, and devotees will witness the divine presence of Maa Annapurna, Maa Vishalakshi, the holy ghaats of Maa Ganga, the grandeur of Ganga Aarti, Hanuman Ghat, and sacred sites associated with Subramania Bharati," he said.

He emphasised that Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, India's second President, had shaped his public life as the Chancellor of Banaras Hindu University (BHU). Referring to the long-standing efforts of Adi Shankaracharya, who centuries ago initiated the spiritual and cultural unification of India by connecting Baba Vishwanath Dham to the holy Jyotirlinga of Rameswaram, the CM said,

"The vision of uniting North and South, East and West and strengthening 'Ek Bharat-Shreshtha Bharat' is being carried forward today through Kashi Tamil Sangamam under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi."

He reiterated Kashi's historical significance as a center of spirituality, knowledge and India's cultural heritage since ancient times. He also highlighted the profound legacy of Tamil literature, one of the world's oldest literary traditions and the pivotal role of Maharishi Agastya in shaping Tamil grammar alongside Sanskrit. He said, "Organising this Kashi Tamil Sangamam reconnects us with this invaluable heritage, aligning with PM Modi's vision of 'Ek Bharat-Shreshtha Bharat'."

Besides, Yogi underlined the importance of the Siddha system of medicine, which is deeply linked to Maharishi Agastya's contributions to traditional healing under the AYUSH system. "For the first time in history, traditional medicine has received the recognition it deserves within the past ten years and numerous initiatives are now underway to promote it. This programme is an integral part of that movement," he said.

Handover site for planned Chitranagari at Ramtek: Minister

Nagpur, Feb 15 (UNI) Maharashtra Cultural Affairs Minister Advocate Ashish Shelar on Saturday directed the Revenue department to immediately hand over the site to the Cultural Department for the planned Chitranagari (film city) project at Ramtek.

Speaking while taking stock of Chitranagari project at the collector's office here, he said that this Chitranagari is being created on the initiative of Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Guardian Minister Chandrashekhar Bawankule and the Cultural department has given an in-principle approval for this project. "Chitranagari will be built near Khindsi lake in Ramtek. This place is suitable for filming and other purposes and as this place is connected to the forest area, there is a lot of scope for tourism. This will create employment," he said. "It is located just 40 km from Nagpur airport. There are many resorts in this area. All these matters will benefit producers," he stated.

Adv Shelar further said that a training centre will be set up here to prepare trained manpower for Chitranagari. All facilities will be made available to people for filming, he added.

One dies, 3 injured as speeding motorbike falls into ravine in Kannada Ghat

Jalgaon, Feb 15 (UNI) A young man died on the spot and three others were injured after a speeding motorbike fell into a ravine in the Kannada Ghat near Chalisgaon in the district on Saturday. According to police, Mukesh Mahajan (36, resident of Nashik) along with his friends Vijay Mahajan, Jitendra Mahajan and Deepak Borade (residents of Nhavi, Taluka Yaval, Jalgaon), were going from Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar to Chalisgaon on a motorbike this evening, when the rider suddenly lost control of the wheel near Jai Malhar fort and the motorbike fell into a deep ravine.

In this severe accident, Mukesh Mahajan, who was riding the motorbike, died on the spot. After being informed about the accident, a team of Chalisgaon Rural Police Station immediately visited the spot and started relief work. The body of the deceased was sent for post-mortem while the injured were admitted to a hospital at Chalisgaon for medical treatment, sources added.

WESTERN RAILWAY REPAIR WORKS

Divisional Railway Manager (WA), Western Railway, 6th floor, Engg. Dept., Mumbai Central, Mumbai - 400008, invites E-tender Notice No.: BCT724-25/284 dt. 13.02.2025. Work and location: Churchgate - Station building - Repairs & renovation of 4th floor's South and North side lift lobby, Staircase, Officer's chamber, Store department, 5th floor Conference Hall and out side the Officer's chamber of electric department. Approx. Cost of work: ₹ 9810806.36. EMD: ₹ 196200/-. Date & Time of Submission: Till 11.03.2025, 15:00 hrs. Date & Time of Opening: On 11.03.2025 at 15:30 hrs. For further details please visit our website www.reps.gov.in Manual offers will not be considered. 1084

Like us on: [facebook.com/WesternRly](https://www.facebook.com/WesternRly)

Police register FIR against Mumbai Bank manager in Rs 122 Cr fraud case

Mumbai, Feb 15 (UNI) The city police on Saturday registered a Rs 122 crore fraud case against the general manager of city-based New India Cooperative Bank, two days after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed restrictions on the bank over alleged financial irregularities.

General manager Hitesh Mehta, who is also head of accounts of the bank, was booked under sections 316(5) and 61(2) of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) by Dadar police station on a complaint filed by Devarshi Shishir Kumar Ghosh, the bank's chief executive officer, police said. The offence which was registered at Dadar police station was later transferred to the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Mumbai police.

Mehta, who oversaw the Dadar and Goregaon branches, is accused of misusing his position to commit fraud between 2020 and 2025.

This scandal has caused significant distress for the panicky account holders, especially after the RBI imposed a ban on the bank. Customers are facing difficulties in accessing their funds. The RBI has allowed withdrawals of up to Rs five lakh per account, but many customers are still struggling to manage their financial needs, including paying bills and school fees.

The RBI has posted notices at the bank branches informing customers about the withdrawal limits, with a 90-day period for these restrictions to be in place.

Following the embezzlement scandal, there is growing concern among customers about the future of the bank and whether they will receive relief. The investigation is ongoing, and the EOW continues to gather evidence as part of their inquiry into the Rs 122 crore fraud.

CM pays tribute to Kesaribhau Patil of Kesari Tour

Mumbai, Feb 15 (UNI) Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Saturday paid tribute to Kesaribhau Patil, founder and chairman of Kesari Tours, saying the name of enterprising Kesaribhau Patil will always be remembered as an entrepreneur who introduced opportunities in the tourism sector and took the name of Maharashtra to the international level.

In his condolence

message, Fadnavis he said that Kesaribhau Patil proved his ability to enter into a new field of business, earn a name in it and take it to the international level with the strength of his management and entrepreneurial skills.

Through Kesari Tours, the entrepreneurship of Maharashtra was brought to the world. "Due to his demise, we have lost a bold and enterprising personality," he added.

One college student dies, in bees attack in Karnala sanctuary

Kolhapur / Raigad, Feb 15 (UNI) One student died, and eight others were injured after being attacked by a swarm of bees at Karnala sanctuary in Panvel tehsil of coastal Raigad district in Maharashtra on Saturday.

According to an officer at Karnala sanctuary, a group of students of V J T I College in Matunga of Mumbai had come for trekking on Karnala fort, when the swarm of bees attacked them. In this incident, one student died of severe injuries while eight others were injured.

CENTRAL RAILWAY	
MUMBAI DIVISION	
Fitment of Stainless-Steel Metal in AC Coaches	
E-Tender Notice No. - RR/PRWC/1998/24-25/104	
Name of Work - Fitment of Stainless-Steel Metal Trough below RMPU in place of FRP Trough in LHB AC coaches, Quantity - 350 Coaches, Date of Tender Closing / Opening & Time - Up to 07.03.2025, 12:00 hrs. Tender details & Tender document is available on the website www.reps.gov.in . Tenders shall be accepted only in E-tendering format through the website.	
SUN/777	Dy. Chief Mechanical Engineer (III)
DOWNLOAD UTS APP FOR TICKETS	

CENTRAL RAILWAY	
MUMBAI DIVISION	
For Calling of quotation from various parties for Pest & Rodent/Cockroaches/ Insect control for 18 months in CCM (PM) office on monthly basis.	
Name of work : Calling of quotation from various parties after survey of area for assessment of Pest & Rodent/ Cockroaches/Insects control in CCM (PM) office for further entering into contract through open tendering process. Notice No. - C/CRS/BB-64/Pest control/Pt. II, Address of the office where the application to be submitted - Office of the Chief Commercial Manager (PM), New Annex Building (Court) Building, 3rd Floor, Mumbai, CSMT, Pin-400001. Last date of submission of application along with sign & stamp - 20/02/2025 till 16:00 hrs. Opening date of application - 20/02/2025 till 16:30 hrs. Completion period/duration - 18 months on monthly basis from the date of commencement.	
SUN/779	Chief Commercial Manager (PM)
DOWNLOAD UTS APP FOR TICKETS	

EAST COAST RAILWAY	
(1) Notice No.: eT-North-WAT-01-2025 Dt. 07.02.2025	
NAME OF THE WORK : CONSTRUCTION OF LIMITED HEIGHT SUBWAY IN LIEU OF LEVEL CROSSING AT RV-266 AT KM.368/11-13 AND AT RV-267 AT KM.369/17-19 BETWEEN KUNERU - GUMADA SECTION ON RAIPUR-VIZIANAGARAM LINE UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF ASSISTANT DIVISIONAL ENGINEER/RAYAGADA OF WALTAIR DIVISION.	
Approx. Cost of the Work : ₹ 8,74,08,926.96, EMD: ₹ 5,87,100/-	
(2) Notice No.: eT-North-WAT-02-2025 Dt. 07.02.2025	
NAME OF THE WORK : REPAIRS TO SIDE DRAINS AND RAISING OF DRAIN WALL BETWEEN SINGAPUR ROAD-DONKANAVALSA SECTION UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF ASSISTANT DIVISIONAL ENGINEER/RAYAGADA OF WALTAIR DIVISION.	
Approx. Cost of the Work : ₹ 1,65,33,070.33, Bid Security: ₹ 2,32,700/-	
Completion Period of the Work : 12 (Twelve) Months (for both SI. Nos.).	
Tender Closing Date and Time : 04.03.2025 at 15:00 Hrs. (for both Tenders)	
No manual offers sent by Post / Courier / Fax or in person accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.	
Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website : www.reps.gov.in	
Note : The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website 15 (Fifteen) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / corrigendum issued for this tender.	
Divisional Railway Manager (Engg.), PR-979/P/24-25 Waltair	

STANDARD POST

Maternal paracetamol use may raise ADHD risk in kids by age 10

Children, especially females, born to women who took acetaminophen (paracetamol) during pregnancy may be at a higher risk of developing childhood attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) by the time they age 10, claimed a study.

The study, published in the journal *Nature Mental Health*, showed that children whose mothers had biomarkers of acetaminophen present in their plasma had a 3.15 times higher likelihood of an ADHD diagnosis.

The findings showed that the link was stronger among females than males. Girls of APAP-exposed mothers showed a 6.16 times higher likelihood of ADHD. However, the association was found to be weaker and nonsignificant in males.

Paracetamol is widely used during pregnancy, accounting for an estimated 70 per cent of pregnant individuals in the US, Europe, and Asia.

Even though paracetamol has been classified as a low-risk medication by regulatory agencies such as the US Food and Drug Administration and the European Medicines Agency, evidence is mounting to suggest that it can potentially increase the risk of adverse neurodevelopmental outcomes, including ADHD and autism spectrum disorder.

For the new study, researchers from the University of Washington, US, analysed plasma biomarkers of acetaminophen (APAP) exposure in a cohort of 307 African American mother-child pairs.

Detection of APAP in second-trimester maternal blood samples correlated with increased odds of ADHD diagnosis in children by age 8-10, they said in the paper. In the study, APAP metabolites were detected in 20.2 per cent of maternal plasma samples. Placental gene expression analysis of a subset of 174 participants indicated sex-specific transcriptional changes. In females, APAP exposure was associated with upregulation of immune-related pathways, including increased expression of immunoglobulin heavy constant gamma 1 (IGHG1). Increased IGHG1 expression was statistically linked to ADHD diagnoses, with mediation analysis suggesting that APAP's effect on ADHD was partly mediated through this gene's placental expression, the researchers said. The findings align with prior epidemiological studies and experimental animal research linking prenatal APAP exposure to neurodevelopmental disruptions. The current study eliminated the bias concerns raised in previous studies where APAP use was self-reported by using objective biomarker measurements, they said, while calling for further studies.

The Bangkok Art Biennale 2024's Challenge to Address Our Fragile Planet by Prabuddha Ghosh

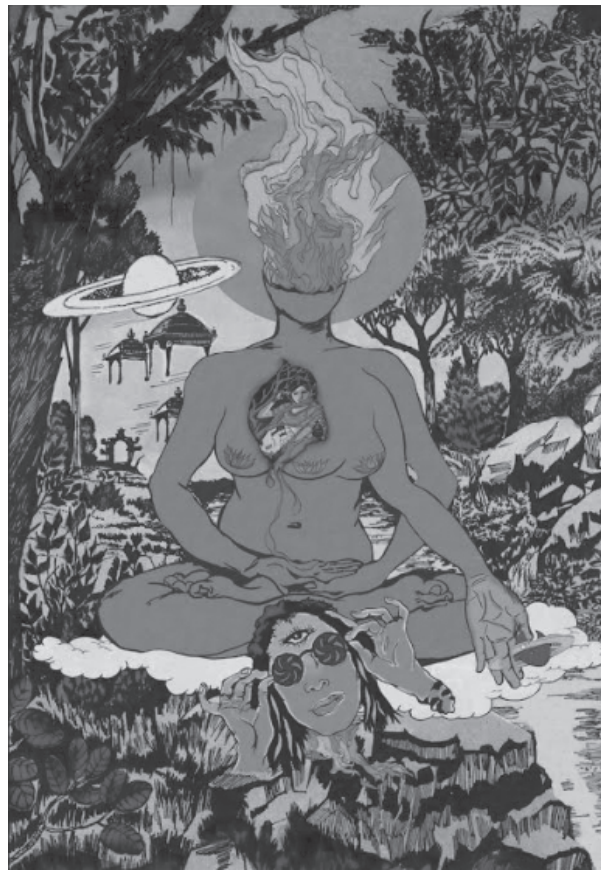
(By Prabuddha Ghosh)

The fourth edition of the Bangkok Art Biennale (BAB) is running across Bangkok from now until February 25th, 2025, under the theme "Nurture Gaia" or "Raksa Gaya" in Thai, which emphasizes Mother Earth as a nurturing life force. Drawing on the concept that Earth functions as a living organism supporting life through organic and inorganic matter, this Biennale focuses on the urgent challenges humanity faces, including climate change, pandemics, war, and environmental degradation, emphasizing our role in addressing these crises.

This year's BAB features 76 prominent artists from 39 countries, with exhibits spread across 11 venues along two primary routes: the River Route and the City Route. The River Route includes historical and cultural sites such as Wat Arun (Temple of Dawn), Wat Pho (Temple of the Reclining Buddha), Wat Prayoon, Wat Bowonniwetwiharn, Museum Siam, the National Gallery of Thailand, and more. The City Route encompasses venues like the Bangkok Art and Culture Centre (BACC), One Bangkok, Queen Sirikit National Convention Center, and CentralWorld.

The Biennale showcases a wide range of art forms, including performance art, photography, installations, and sculptures. Themes addressed span from ethnic identity, societal marginalization, and labor conditions, to human adaptation, motherhood, and the human psyche. These works explore the tensions between contemporary art and traditional practices, offering new perspectives on vanishing knowledge and cultural heritage.

Professor Dr. Apinan Poshyananda, the Chief Executive and Artistic Director of BAB, explains that this year's theme,



"Nurture Gaia," is inspired by the Greek goddess Gaia, representing healing and care, aligning with the previous Biennale's theme of "Chaos Calm." Highlights include Siwamokkaphiman Hall, where approximately 100 artifacts from Thailand's National Museum are exhibited alongside international contemporary works, thanks to collaboration with the Department of Fine Arts.

Prominent artists featured include Joseph Beuys, whose works are displayed at the National Gallery with Ban Chiang-era artifacts, providing a connection between historical and contemporary art. The gallery also features Agnes Arellano, Chitra Ganesh, Guerreiro do Divino Amor, and Indian sculptor Ravinder Reddy, who will present his reinterpreted sculpture that was



damaged during political unrest in 2010.

New to this year's Biennale is the venue One Bangkok, which will permanently house a Tony Cragg stainless-steel sculpture. The Biennale also features a focus on artists exploring environmental issues, curated by Irish curator Brian Curtin and Thai curator Paramaporn Sirikulchayanont. These curators bring attention to

artists like Som Supaparinya, whose work examines how politics and business transform landscapes.

BAB 2024 promotes accessibility and inclusivity, with events such as Amanda Coogan's performance for the hearing impaired and Mutmee Pimdao Panichsamai's art collaboration with children with Down Syndrome. The Biennale invites audiences to engage deeply with its

diverse exhibits, encouraging repeated visits and personal reflections.

The Biennale also serves as a platform for exploring Asian LGBTQ+ art, addressing gender and social challenges through creative expressions that highlight third and fourth genders and challenge conventional norms. Interactive installations and performances encourage fresh perspectives on gender identity and social norms, fostering dialogue on identity, rebellion, and liberation.

Among the Indian-origin artists featured are Anish Kapoor, Chitra Ganesh, and Ravinder Reddy. Anish Kapoor's "S-Curve," displayed at One Bangkok's Plaza, captivates viewers with its reflective stainless-steel surface, creating dynamic optical illusions and transforming public art engagement. Chitra Ganesh's work explores fragmentation, power dynamics, and female agency using mythological motifs. Her "She the Question: Head in Flames" provokes reflection on contemporary conflicts and is on display at the National Gallery. Ravinder Reddy's "Parvati," a striking gold-and-blue sculpture, symbolizes strength, confidence, and future-oriented vision, embodying Reddy's signature style and commitment to cultural narratives. Overall, the Bangkok Art Biennale 2024 provides a transformative and thought-provoking experience through a diverse array of artworks addressing global issues such as climate change, social justice, and LGBTQIA+ representation. By centering the theme "Nurture Gaia," the Biennale encourages viewers to reflect on humanity's connection to nature and society, fostering a space for dialogue, creativity, and inclusivity across diverse cultural and artistic perspectives.

Massive fire ravages Arunachal's Tenga market, relief efforts in full swing

Itanagar, Feb 15 (UNI) : A devastating fire broke out at Tenga Market in Arunachal Pradesh's West Kameng district in the early hours of Saturday, reducing around 47 shops and about a dozen houses to ashes.

The inferno caused widespread destruction, leaving numerous families displaced. Though there were no reports of any casualties, some individuals sustained minor injuries in the process of firefighting and were provided immediate medical assistance.

Assessing the severity of the fire, West Kameng Deputy Commissioner Akriti Sagar immediately arranged additional water tankers from the Indian Army to aid in firefighting efforts.

After relentless efforts, the District Fire Brigade, with support from the

Indian Army, successfully brought the blaze under control.

Singchung ADC Murnya Kalki and District Disaster Management Officer (DDMO) in-charge Phuntso Tashi also rushed to the site to personally oversee the firefighting efforts.

In immediate response, the District Administration, along with essential departments, set up a relief camp at the Upper Primary School, Tenga, to provide shelter, food, and medical assistance to those affected.

The district Agriculture Department donated vegetables and essential items to support the victims. The DC also visited the affected families and assured them of full support and assistance from the government.

Thrizino-Buragaon

MLA Tenzin Nima Glow visited the site and extended generous support to the victims, assuring them of all possible help in their rehabilitation.

Additionally, the members of the Tenga Market Association, and the Bomdila Taxi Association also came forward extending their helping hands to the fire victims, officials said.

The Indian Army played a crucial role in controlling the fire. Troops reached the scene swiftly, assisting in firefighting operations and providing urgent relief, medical aid, and humanitarian assistance to the affected families.

"Their swift response and coordinated efforts not only contained the fire but also provided immediate humanitarian support to the distressed residents," a Defence official said.

Bihar, troubled by duopoly between Modi & Nitish: Cong president

Patna, Feb 15 (UNI) Bihar Congress President Akhilesh Prasad Singh alleged on Saturday that the state is suffering due to the duopoly between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Nitish Kumar. Singh told news persons here that the aspirations of people become high when Nitish enters into an alliance with BJP, but they are disappointed as they did not get any benefit, whether it is special status or special package.

Commenting upon the proposed visit of the Prime Minister to Bihar, Singh remarked that he would again deceive the people of the state. He said all opposition parties, including Congress, were demanding special packages and special state category to Bihar but the Centre ignored.

Manipur Governor presents citations to security personnel

Imphal, Feb 15 (UNI) Annual Investiture Ceremony for the Governor's Unit Citation 2025 was held on Saturday at the Durbar Hall of Raj Bhavan, Imphal.

Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Balla distributed Governor's Citations to the outstanding Army, Assam Rifles, CRPF, BSF Units, and District Police Units Manipur who have contributed exemplary services to the state.

Speaking at the ceremony, the Governor appreciated the services rendered by the brave men and women in uniform in protecting security, maintaining peace, and ensuring the safety of the citizens.

He said the event serves as a tribute to the unwavering dedication, courage, and exemplary service displayed by the units of forces in their duty to the nation and the people of Manipur.

Governor continued that forces have played a great role in safeguarding sovereignty, maintaining peace and harmony, and ensuring the security of citizens. Their valour, professionalism, and commitment to duty have earned them the admiration and gratitude of the people.

Governor continued that we recognize and honour those units that have demonstrated outstanding bravery, selfless service, and unwavering resolve in the face of adversity. Whether it is counter-insurgency operations, humanitarian efforts, disaster response, or ensuring internal security, these units have displayed exceptional dedication and commitment to their duty. As we present the Governor's Unit Citation today, let it be a symbol of our deep appreciation and recognition of the sacrifices made by our forces, he added.

Death toll from heavy rains rises to 28 in Bolivia

La Paz, Feb 15 (UNI) The death toll due to intense rains in Bolivia since November last year has risen to 28, said Juan Carlos Calvimontes, vice civil defense minister, on Friday. The rains have affected eight of the country's nine departments. "We are talking about 83 municipalities affected and I am sure that within a week many of them will declare themselves in disaster," the official told a press conference.

So far, 27 municipalities have declared themselves in a state of emergency, of which 22 belong to La Paz, the department hardest hit by the climate.

The deaths were caused by floods in the departments of Chuquisaca (south), La Paz (west), Tarija (south), Cochabamba (center), Santa Cruz (east) and Potosi (southwest), according to the government.

In addition, four people remain missing, three of them in the north of La Paz and one in the department of Chuquisaca.

The National Meteorology and Hydrology Service predicted that the rains will persist in the coming weeks, with the possibility of extending until March and April.

Mpox cases rise to 41

Nairobi, Feb 15 (UNI) Kenya has confirmed 41 cases of mpox across 12 counties, with one fatality reported since the outbreak began in July 2024, a government official confirmed on Friday. Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Health Mary Muthoni said a total of 271 contacts of the 41 cases have been identified, with half of the confirmed cases having a travel history to mpox-affected countries, including Uganda and Rwanda. The ministry, in collaboration with county governments and partners, has intensified surveillance efforts in all high-risk counties to sustain the spread of the mpox virus, Muthoni said in a statement issued in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya.

"Rapid response teams have been deployed to conduct active case searches, contact tracing, and case management, including mental health and psychosocial support for those affected," she said.

The official noted that over 3.3 million travelers have been screened at the points of entry and 419 samples from suspected cases have undergone testing at the National Public Health Laboratory and partner laboratories. She said the ministry has been working closely with the Ministry of Education to strengthen infection prevention, control, and other public health measures to prevent the spread of cases in learning institutions. Muthoni revealed that other threats have also emerged, posing significant risks to public health and safety. In December 2024, Rwanda announced the end of the Marburg virus outbreak, initially declared in September 2024, but in January 2025, Tanzania declared a new Marburg virus outbreak, which has already claimed 10 lives.

"Given our proximity and frequent cross-border movement, Kenya remains at high risk of importation, requiring urgent and coordinated action to mitigate the spread of these diseases," Muthoni said. She urged the public to remain vigilant and adhere to recommended public health guidelines, noting that all travelers shall observe routine hand hygiene practices, including regular handwashing and the use of alcohol-based sanitizers.

29 arrested in eastern Myanmar for illegal online gambling, fraud

Yangon, Feb 15 (UNI) Authorities arrested 29 suspects in eastern Myanmar's Tachileik township for illegal online gambling and financial fraud on Feb. 12 and Feb. 13, according to a statement from the State Administration Council's Information Team late Friday.

The group included seven Thai nationals and 22 Myanmar nationals. Along with the suspects, officials seized 440 computers, 390 mobile phones, two undocumented vehicles, and drug-related items, the statement said.

According to the suspects, the Thai nationals had entered Myanmar via the Thai-Myanmar Friendship Bridge No. 1 for work and travel. They were later recruited by individuals involved in illegal online gambling and financial fraud, it said. Authorities are taking necessary security measures to quickly apprehend other suspects involved. The arrested individuals will be prosecuted according to the law, it added.

Iran targets 2 bln USD in annual free trade zone exports

Tehran, Feb. 15 (UNI) : Iran plans to increase exports from its free trade zones to 2 billion U.S. dollars by March 2026, a senior Iranian economic official said on Saturday. Secretary of Iran's Free Zones High Council, Reza Masrou, made the remarks at a press conference in the Iranian capital Tehran while elaborating on the plans drawn up by the government and council to boost exports from the county's free zones in the next Iranian calendar year, which will start on March 21, 2025. He put the value of exports from the Iranian free zones during the past 10 months at nearly 1 billion dollars, noting that this came as overseas sales from the country's special economic zones reached 10 billion dollars in the same period.

To further boost exports, the government has introduced new incentives for production units in free zones and is working on establishing export management companies in these areas, he said.

The foreign investments stood at 125 and 131 million euros (about 131 and 137 million dollars) in the country's free zones and special economic zones respectively during the past 10 months, said Masrou, emphasizing that regulatory reforms and new investment incentives are being prioritized to attract more foreign capital in the next Iranian calendar year.

Senior UN peacekeeping officer injured, vehicles torched in Beirut

Beirut, Feb 15 (UNI) A senior officer from the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was injured and three UN vehicles were set on fire on Friday during clashes near Beirut's airport road, local media and officials said.

Violence broke out when a group of young men attacked a UN-marked vehicle, assaulted its occupants, and torched three UNIFIL cars, Lebanon's National News Agency reported. The Lebanese army intervened.

Hezbollah-affiliated Al-Manar TV said masked individuals carried out "suspicious movements" to provoke unrest.

UNIFIL said its deputy commander was injured and demanded a "full investigation" by Lebanese authorities.

Acting Army Commander Major Hassan Odeh told the UNIFIL commander the army opposed any attack on peacekeepers and vowed to arrest those responsible. Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam condemned the "criminal attack" and expressed Lebanon's appreciation for UNIFIL's role.

Lebanese aviation authorities barred on Thursday an Iranian passenger flight from landing at Beirut's Rafic Hariri International Airport, the only operational international airport in Lebanon, following an Israeli claim that Iran had been using the airport to "smuggle funds to Hezbollah."

Iran slammed the claim, accusing Israel of continuing its "flagrant and constant violations" of international principles and regulations and Lebanon's national sovereignty. Iran also said it would not allow Lebanese flights to land until its flights were cleared to land in Beirut. Lebanon's Public Works Ministry stated it was coordinating with Middle East Airlines and foreign counterparts to resolve the issue.

Moscow welcomes release of Russian citizen Trufanov from Gaza Strip : Kremlin

Moscow, Feb 15 (UNI) Moscow welcomes the release of Russian citizen Alexander Trufanov, who had been held hostage in the Gaza Strip since October 7, 2023, and expresses its gratitude to the leadership of Palestinian movement Hamas for the decision to free him, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Saturday.

Earlier in the day, dual Russian-Israeli citizen Trufanov and two other Israeli hostages were released after 500 days in captivity in the Gaza Strip. Russian Ambassador to Israel Anatoly Viktorov welcomed the release of the hostages and said that the issue of releasing Trufanov was a priority for Russian diplomats.

3 Israeli hostages released in Gaza arrive in Israel

Jerusalem, Feb. 15 (UNI) : Three Israeli hostages previously held by the Palestinian groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad were transferred to Israeli authorities and crossed the border into Israel on Saturday as part of an ongoing ceasefire exchange, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) announced.

The freed hostages -- Alexandre Sasha Troufanov, a 29-year-old Israeli-Russian citizen; Sagui Dekel-Chen, a 36-year-old Israeli-American citizen; and Iair Horn, a 46-year-old Israeli-Argentine citizen -- were kidnapped in the Hamas-led attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023.

Troufanov was kidnapped along with his mother, grandmother, and partner, and the three women were released in a previous hostage deal in November 2023. His father was killed on the day of the



kidnapping. Dekel-Chen, a father of three, had a daughter born after his abduction. Horn's brother, Eitan, remains in captivity in Gaza.

"Thanks to the concentration of our forces in and around the Gaza Strip, and thanks to the clear and unequivocal statement of U.S. President Donald Trump, Hamas has withdrawn and the release of the hostages continues,"

said a statement from the office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Trump warned on Monday that if "all of the hostages" in Gaza were not freed by noon on Saturday, the truce would be called off, and he would "let hell break out."

Hamas had initially intended to delay the scheduled hostage release, citing Israeli violations of

the agreement. However, by Thursday, the group confirmed it would proceed with the swap of Palestinian prisoners for Israeli hostages. The three were the sixth group of hostages freed as part of a swap deal between Palestinian militants and Israel under the first phase of the ceasefire agreement, with Israel expected to begin releasing 369 Palestinian prisoners later on Saturday.

Flood warnings issued after tropical cyclone hits northwest Australia

Sydney, Feb 15 (UNI) Flood warnings have been issued for northwest Australia after a tropical cyclone made landfall on Friday, bringing intense rainfall and strong winds.

Tropical cyclone Zelia crossed the coast of Western Australia (WA) near the small town of De Grey in the state's northwest Pilbara region as a category four storm shortly after midday local time on Friday, hours earlier than expected. It was

forecast to reach the coast in the evening as a category five storm.

Wind gusts of up to 220 km per hour and over 500 millimeters of rain were recorded in De Grey before the storm quickly weakened.

Authorities on Saturday morning downgraded it to an ex-tropical cyclone but warned that heavy rain is expected to persist and could lead to flash flooding.

Angus Hines from the

Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) said that record rainfall has been reported across parts of the Pilbara coast. "There will be significant flooding impacts for the next several days and widespread road closures are expected to continue for the next several days as the clean-up continues," he told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

The strong winds downed trees across the region but as of Saturday

morning no major damage or injuries had been reported.

Some towns have been isolated after roads were cut off.

Hines said that significant road closures should be expected as water levels rise.

The WA Department of Fire and Emergency Services has urged Pilbara residents to exercise caution around damaged buildings, floodwaters and fallen powerlines and trees.

Russian drone attack hits Chernobyl nuclear plant: Reports

Moscow, Feb 15 (UNI) : Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said that a Russian drone struck the former nuclear power plant at Chernobyl in an attack overnight into Friday, media reports said on Saturday.

A strike hit a concrete shelter covering the plant's destroyed fourth power unit, igniting a fire that was later extinguished, he said. Chernobyl was the site of the 1986 disaster that spread radioactivity across parts of the Soviet Union and Europe, the CNN reported. According to the media reports, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the UN's nuclear watchdog, said that its team at the site heard a large explosion shortly before 2 a.m. local time Friday (7 p.m. ET Thursday). The IAEA said

its team responded to the explosion within minutes and that no casualties were reported.

Ukraine's military reported that Russia launched 133 drones across the country in its overnight attack, 73 of which were shot down and 58 of which did not reach their target. The numbers are broadly in line with the recent average of drone attacks, the report said. The military said drones were shot down in 11 regions, covering much of the country.

The incident came hours before the beginning of the high-level Munich Security Conference, where Vance is set to meet with Zelensky, the report said.

Zelensky and Ukraine's State Emergency Service maintain that radiation levels in the area remain within normal limits, despite

significant damage to the shelter. Chernobyl's chief engineer, Oleksandr Tytarchuk, on Friday said that the shelter's function has been compromised due to the damage, according to Ukrainian state media Ukrinform.

"There is a potential risk of radioactive substances being released due to certain actions that may occur at the old shelter facility," the CNN quoted Tytarchuk. While Tytarchuk also emphasised that the situation is currently under control, he added that repairs may require significant time and effort.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said Friday that Moscow was not behind the attack.

"Most likely, this is yet another provocation," Peskov told reporters. "This is exactly the kind of

thing the Kyiv regime is known for and sometimes does not hesitate to do."

According to reports, Russia has repeatedly been accused by Ukrainian and IAEA officials of risking a major nuclear incident during the conflict. During intense fighting near the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) in early 2022, IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi said "every principle of nuclear safety" had been "violated."

Friday's reported attack comes two days after Russian President Vladimir Putin and US counterpart Donald Trump held what Trump described as a "lengthy and highly productive" telephone call ahead of potential peace talks aimed at bringing Moscow's invasion of Ukraine to an end after nearly three years of

Quake measuring 6.4 hits Altai region

Viladivostok, Feb 15 (UNI) A 6.4 magnitude earthquake struck Russia's southern region of Altai early Saturday morning, said local authorities, adding that there were no immediate reports of casualties or damage.

The quake was recorded at 04:48 a.m. local time (0148 GMT). The epicenter is located approximately 282 km southeast of the capital of the Altai Republic, about 28 km west of the village of Kosh-Agach, according to the Russian Academy of Sciences.

The Russian Ministry of Emergency Situations in the Altai Republic noted that the quake was felt throughout the Altai Republic.

Bridge collapse leaves at least 2 dead in Peru

Lima, Feb 15 (UNI) : At least two people died and more than 30 were injured following the collapse of a bridge on the north Pan-American highway in the western Peruvian region of Lima, said the National Institute of Civil Defence (Indeci) on Friday.

Luis Sotomayor, the head of Indeci's decentralized directorate, told the private radio station Radio Programas del Peru that the accident around midnight on Thursday was apparently due to a structural failure and not as a result of the rains.

Sotomayor specified that a private car with two people inside fell into the tributary of the Chancay River and was carried away by strong currents when the accident occurred.

gruelling war.

According to reports, Unit 4 at Chernobyl near Ukraine's border with Belarus exploded in 1986, sparking a radioactive disaster. The reactor was later encased in a concrete and steel sarcophagus.

The sarcophagus was the work of an international coalition and took decades to build. It was finally finished in 2017 and weighs 35,000 tonnes. Andriy Yermak, Zelensky's chief of staff, noted that the US "invested a lot of money and effort" in the sarcophagus, which was completed during Trump's first term. Trump's unexpected phone call with Putin on Wednesday also sparked fears in Europe of a "dirty deal" being struck to end the war in Ukraine on terms favourable to Moscow without Kyiv's involvement.

Palestinian armed groups prepare for Israeli hostage handover

Gaza, Feb 15 (UNI) : Armed members of al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, and al-Quds Brigades, the armed wing of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) movement, were deployed Saturday in the city of Khan Younis in southern Gaza Strip in preparation to hand over three Israeli hostages.

The Palestinian militants from Hamas and the PIJ were expected to deliver the Israeli hostages to the International Committee of Red Cross in Khan Younis, Xinhua correspondent in Gaza learned.

The hostage handover came in the sixth batch of the first phase of the ceasefire, which took

effect on Jan. 19.

As part of the deal, Israel is set to release 369 Palestinian detainees on Saturday, according to the Hamas-linked Prisoners' Information Office.

The office confirmed that among those to be freed are 36 individuals serving life sentences and 333 Gazan detainees taken into Israeli custody after Oct. 7, 2023.

Food&Kids

Hot wedding Food trends

Culinary trends take a sophisticated turn at the Great Indian Wedding with tasting stations, vegan, sushi platters and push pops for dessert.

Alavish spread is a thing of the past. This season, you'll dig into larger dessert stations, sit in for a family-style dining experience, or get your culinary fix from food trucks to sushi carts and personalised cocktails at weddings. Modern couples and experimental chefs are coming together to make wedding food fare the most exciting part of D-Day. Here are a few ideas for your nuptials that'll get everyone talking about your wedding day.

GET BRUNCHY

Brunch spreads are perfect for morning weddings. Wedding planner Sonali Thakore says, "Earlier, morning weddings began with breakfast and moved to lunch. These days, brunches are taking over. They are classier, have far more options and are economical since you are cutting one meal out." From pancakes to egg stations, truffle burgers to pancakes, omelette stations to croissants, there's a bevy of options to choose from. And these foods can be enjoyed at any time of the day.

FAMILY STYLE DINING

Buffet is out. Classy family-style dining is in. Cosy, comfortable and more intimate, this dining style echoes a more inclusive atmosphere. No more queues. Your guests have a sit-down comfortable meal. Says chef Michael Swamy, "Fine dining

plating is when a prominent chef's menu is created and exclusively used for the family dinner at weddings. Usually caterers want to put all cuisines on the menu and make a mess of everything. But this season, less is more classy."

TASTING STATIONS

Tasting stations are perfect for creative couples who want to give a different food experience to their guests. A popsicle cocktail station instantly cools you down at a summer wedding. You can have a tandoori tasting station, cheese on

wheels, or a soup shooter station.

THINK FRESH

Farm-to-table is the new slogan. If you haven't gone totally regional and organic, you haven't got it right. The menus include bajra, ragi and jowar and makki-ki-roti served with brown rice and rajma. Says chef Michael Swamy, "You can win the guests' hearts instantly by putting light and 'good-for-stomach' options on the menu, like a green salad or dal-rice. With more people choosing vegan and gluten-free options, wedding food fares are also becoming health-conscious affairs. No more popping antacids before attending a wedding.

SHRINK IT DOWN

Miniature is the buzzword. Mini versions of your favourite meals are making a huge statement. A single meatball topped with spaghetti, a bite-sized pizza or a bite of Amritsari fish, dipped in chutney, are just some of the one-bite options that guests are being served. Says chef Bharat, "Indian weddings now have one or two classy dishes being served rather than 10 usual dishes that people anticipate."

DIM SUM, SUSHI DELIGHTS

Dim sum allows guests to sample different fillings without filling up. Carts of dumplings and sushi can be wheeled around from one corner to the other. Ask your caterer to pair the dim sums with mini sake shots. Food blogger Nikhil Merchant says, "Gone are the days of flash stirfrys and curries. Now, we have steamed

disappointed anyone. Invite a dessert chef to whip up flambe to impress everyone. There's also an option to tell the caterers to create a 'tea party' room, where different flavours of tea (ange pekoe, black tea or green tea) can be served with lemon cakes. Chef Bharat says, "Coffee and tea spaces are getting priority at weddings. Right now, we see top coffee chains of the country put up their stalls at big weddings."

That apart, you can also see a line-up of top dhabas, say from Delhi to Amritsar, created with the same ambience to give an authentic experience. So, you have dancers, the traditional chulha, charpais etc.

GOING RUSTIC

The food served here is usually family style, depending on the region the couple belongs to.

If the bride and the groom belong to different regions, the wedding is the perfect occasion to display their culinary heritage with aplomb. From homemade jams and honey to tribal food, the humble regional dishes get a classy make-over and the guests get a lesson in India's rich history of food.

FOOD WITH DRAMA

A little bit of flamboyance has never



As the temperature steadily escalates in Nashik and across India, one of the few delightful consolations of this season is the arrival of the king of fruits — mango.

Mango obsession has just begun

From a mango flavoured drink to the modest amras prepared at home — Nashik is already drooling over the mangoes available in the market. Here's a lowdown on what can be done with this royal fruit.

Mango Silk

40 Mango silk is a unique dessert and has recently been discovered by Nashikites. It

is an impeccable combination of condensed milk, cream and mangoes with a topping of melted chocolate. Doesn't this sound mouth-watering?

Mango Mastani

100

The mastani is a famous drink available in the city during summers. Pallavi Pandit, a housewife, said, "I was mesmerised with the dessert-drink because I had never imagined of having something so delicious made up of mangoes. It is so filling that we generally skip our dinner after having it and it is also heavenly to relish the taste before going to bed. I even prepare the same at home with a topping of cashews, cream and strawberry pieces."

Mango Milkshake

30

Mango milkshake is one of the most sought after milkshake recipe in India. When you are looking to beat the summer heat, mango milkshake with lots of ice is the best anyone can offer you.

Mango Mousse

45

Mango mousse is made using a quick recipe of mangoes and cream blended together to give a creamy, light and airy texture to it. Mousse can be served with freshly cut pieces of mango to make a delightful dessert using this king of fruits.

Ice-cream

40

Dig into a scoop of mango ice-cream to regularise your body temperature in the scorching heat of summer. Though mango ice-cream is available throughout the year but it is the most relished during this season.

Aamras

The most famous and mouth-watering delicacy of mangoes is amras, prepared entirely with mango pulps and with no preservatives so as to improve on the taste. Indulge in the most loved combination of amras and pooris this summers to take your tastebuds on a delightful journey. Tina Pavan Narang, a homemaker, says "This is quintessentially the most desired delicacy that our guests love. So when summers arrive, this is a must-have item on our food menu."

Panna 10 per glass

Panna is a refreshing raw mango drink renowned for its heat resistant properties. It has a wonderful balance of flavours - sweet, sour and savoury. Poonam Saraf, an architect from the city, says, "It is one of the most delicious drinks I relish during summer. With a dash of cardamom powder, it has the most extraordinary taste. Panna should be served chilled as its coolness adds on to its rich flavour."

Ambadi

650 per kilo

Ambadi is a mango barfi that is easily available in city markets. It can also be prepared at home with mangoes and coconut to attain the most desirable taste of it.

Mango cakes 450

Mango flavoured cakes are a big hit in the summer season and are easily available now. The subtle taste of this cake is what makes people obsess over this dessert in these hot months.

Mango Kulfi 30

Kulfi in Nashik is not all about malai and gulkand. Come summer and the markets are flooded with the all-time favourite mango kulfi. All the goodness of the juicy alphonso mangoes in a sinfully rich and creamy kulfi gives your tastebuds a treat. Shops even add nuts to give it a fancy look.

Mango Flavoured Drink

20 per bottle

This drink, manufactured in Nashik, is made of mango. It is as refreshing as it gets. From being a thirst quenching drink on a summery afternoon to the ideal sipper in parties, the drink has many takers.

Amrakhand

240 per kilo

A popular variation of the mango flavoured shrikhand is the amrakhand. It is one of the easiest mango desserts that can be prepared in no time. It is thick, creamy soft, supple, delicious and a total melt-in-your-mouth delicacy.

Mango Juice

30

Home-made mango juice prepared from organic alphonso mangoes tastes incredibly good. It is most preferred over mango pieces because it naturally gives the factual taste of mangoes.

3 must-try burger recipes

Easy burger recipes you must try!

PESTO BURGER

Ingredients

- Ground meat - 1 kilo
- Salt - 1/2 tsp
- Pepper - 1/2 tsp
- Mozzarella cheese - 3 slices
- Pesto - 1/2 cup
- Lettuce - few crispy leaves
- Roasted red peppers - 1/2 cup
- Burger buns - 4

Method

Pound the meat, season with salt and pepper and shape it into rounds. Fry them in hot oil until each side cooks really well. Take a bun add the burger to it, along with a leaf, the cheese. Spread some pesto onto it. Add it to the hot pan and simmer for a minute until the meat is reheated and the cheese gets melted.

Pizza burger

Ingredients

- Ground meat - 1/2 kilo
- Pizza puree - 2 cups
- Onion - 1/2, diced
- Capsicum - 1/2, diced
- Mozzarella cheese - 1/4 cup
- Mushrooms, roasted - 1/2 cup
- Oregano - 1 tsp
- Lettuce - few crispy leaves
- Buns - 4

Method

Heat a skillet and add some oil to it. Cook the meat till it is well done. Add the pizza puree and cook. Add the oregano as well. Also stir fry the

peppers and onion and add it to the meat mixture. Take a bun, add the lettuce leaves to it as well as the cooked meat mixture.

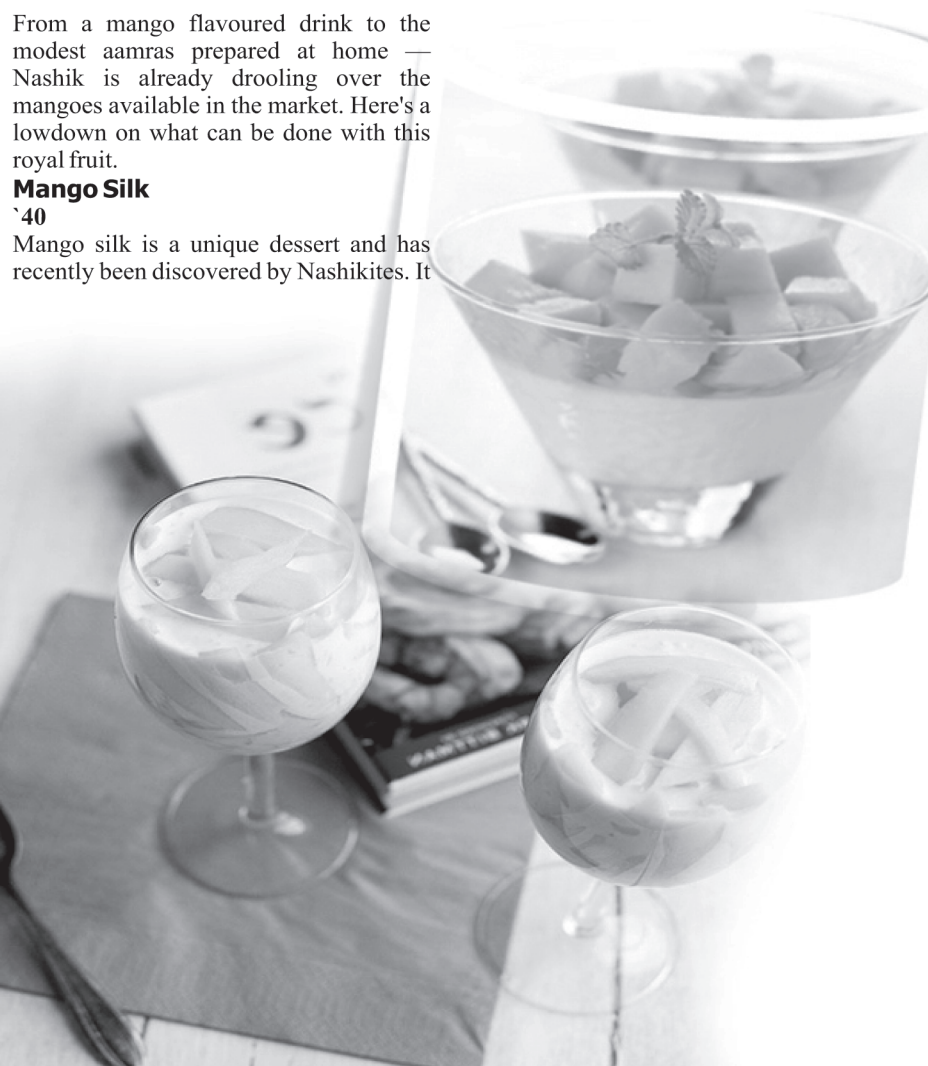
RED BEAN BURGER

Ingredients

- Red beans (rajma), cooked - 1 cup
- Ground zeera - 1 1/2 tsp
- Garam masala - a pinch
- Onions - 1, sliced
- Mayonnaise - 3 tbsp
- Dry bread crumbs - 1/2 cup
- Oregano - 1/2 tsp
- Pepper - 1/2 tsp
- Mint leaves - a few, chopped
- Vegetable oil - 2tbsp
- Buns - 4

Method

Heat oil and saute the onion. Add the garam masala and zeera to it. Add the boiled rajma beans to this and saute. Now blend together the bread crumbs, mayonnaise, pepper and oregano to it. Spoon the mixture into the buns and place the burgers in a skillet. Serve with salsa sauce.



Niki Prasad stars as DCW edge past MIW in thriller

Vadodara, Feb 15 (UNI) : Niki Prasad emerged as the match-winner for Delhi Capitals Women (DCW), guiding her side to a thrilling two-wicket victory over Mumbai Indians Women (MIW) in their Women's Premier League (WPL) encounter here on Saturday.

Niki's composed 35 off 33 balls, combined with a crucial 33-run stand with Alice Capsey, proved vital in DCW's successful chase of 165.

Chasing what appeared to be a par total, DCW got off to a blazing start, compiling 60 runs in the powerplay. Shafali Verma single-handedly mauled the Mumbai bowlers during her explosive 18-ball 43, which included seven fours and two sixes.

However, her dismissal on the final ball of the powerplay, followed by



skipper Meg Lanning who scored 15 off 19, tilted the momentum in MIW's favour. The next two overs saw Delhi losing Jemimah Rodrigues (2) and Annabel Sutherland (13) cheaply, reducing them to 76/4. The sudden collapse saw DCW add only 23 runs for the loss of three wickets in the

four overs after the powerplay.

With pressure mounting, Niki and Capsey steadied the innings with their crucial partnership, ensuring Delhi remained in the hunt. Sarah Bryce's quickfire 21 off 10 balls and Radha Yadav's late blitz of 9 off 4 balls added to the

drama in the final overs, setting up a nerve-wracking finish. DCW ultimately got over the line with just two wickets in hand, sealing a remarkable victory.

Earlier, Nat Sciver-Brunt's fighting unbeaten 80 off 59 balls was the lone bright spot in an otherwise underwhelming batting

display by MIW, who were bowled out for 164 in 19.1 overs.

Sciver-Brunt anchored the innings with 13 crisp boundaries, keeping MIW afloat as wickets tumbled around her. Skipper Harmanpreet Kaur's brisk 42 off 22 balls injected much-needed momentum, but her dismissal proved to be the turning point, as the lower order failed to capitalise on the platform.

DCW's bowlers seized control at the right moments, with Sutherland (3/34) recovering from an expensive start to claim key scalps, while the ever-reliable Shikha Pandey (2/14) applied the brakes with precision.

The victory cements DCW's position as one of the strongest sides in the tournament, while MIW will have to reassess their batting approach.

Scheffler & McIlroy in contention in San Diego

San Diego, Feb 15 (UNI) : World number one Scottie Scheffler and Northern Ireland's Rory McIlroy are in touch with leader Davis Thompson at the halfway stage of the Genesis International here.

American Scheffler hit a five-under 67 to lie one shot behind Thompson, who birdied the final hole as he signed for a 66 to set the pace on eight under.

McIlroy also shot a 67, with five birdies in eight holes from the third moving him into contention at Torrey Pines, the BBC reported.

But the Northern Irishman followed that with bogeys at the 12th and 14th before picking up shots at the 15th and the 17th. He was unable to take advantage of the par-five 18th and is three shots off the lead.

"I hit a lot of really good shots. I played well for the most part. I scrambled well," said the 35-year-old.

"I just didn't take advantage of the par fives. I made up for it in other places, which was nice. But I know going into the weekend I'm going to have to play the par fives better."

Scheffler, who won last year's Masters, hit only five fairways on Friday and also knows he will have to do better to challenge over the weekend.

"I'm definitely going to try to be in the fairway a bit more," he said.

"I felt I survived without driving the ball very well and I'm going to need to drive it better over the last couple of days."

Thompson, 25, claimed his first PGA Tour win last year and had six birdies in his first 13 holes before dropping shots at his next two holes.

However, he recovered with a birdie at 16 and then a short-range putt at the last ensured he finished on a high.

The Genesis is usually held at Riviera Country Club but was relocated to Torrey Pines because of the Los Angeles wildfires.

World number one Sinner banned for three months

Rome, Feb 15 (UNI) World number one Jannik Sinner has accepted an immediate three-month ban from tennis after reaching a settlement with the World Anti-Doping Agency over his two positive drugs test last year. The 23-year-old Italian, who last month won the Australian Open, is suspended from February 9 until May 4, the BBC reported.

He will be eligible to play in the year's next Grand Slam event, the French Open, which starts on May 19. Wada had launched an appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (Cas) over the 2024 decision by the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) not to suspend Sinner.

Wada wanted a ban of up to two years but on Saturday said it accepts his explanation that he was inadvertently contaminated with the banned substance clostebol by his physiotherapist, and the case will now not take place.

The body explained it accepts the three-time Grand Slam champion "did not intend to cheat", that the drug "did not provide

any performance-enhancing benefit" and this happened "without his knowledge as the result of negligence of members of his entourage".

It added: "However, under the code and by virtue of Cas precedent, an athlete bears responsibility for the entourage's negligence. Based on the unique set of facts of this case, a three-month suspension is deemed to be an appropriate outcome."

In a statement released by his lawyers, Sinner said: "This case had been hanging over me for nearly a year and the process still had a long time to run with a decision maybe only at the end of the year.

"I have always accepted that I am responsible for my team and realise Wada's strict rules are an important protection for the sport I love. On that basis I have accepted Wada's offer to resolve these proceedings on the basis of a three-month sanction."

Tennis has seen some high-profile doping cases over the past six months, with leading female player

Iga Swiatek accepting a one-month suspension in November after testing positive for a banned substance when she was world number one.

Sinner had previously been cleared of any wrongdoing by an independent panel after testing positive for clostebol in March 2024.

It had accepted that he had been inadvertently contaminated by his physiotherapist, who was treating a cut on his hand with an over-the-counter spray, which was later found to contain the banned substance.

The ITIA said in August that the panel found Sinner bore "no fault or negligence" for testing positive for low levels of a metabolite of clostebol - a steroid that can be used to build muscle mass.

But Wada lodged an appeal with Cas last September, stating at the time that the finding of "no fault or negligence" was not correct under the applicable rules. It sought a ban of between one and two years, with a hearing scheduled for April 16-17.

East Bengal FC square off against Mohammedan SC

Kolkata, Feb 15 (UNI) East Bengal FC will play Mohammedan SC at the Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan (VYBK) in the Indian Super League (ISL) match here on Sunday.

East Bengal FC are currently placed 11th with 18 points from 19 games, having won once and lost thrice in their previous five matches. However, four goalless games in their last five fixtures has dented their progress and the Red & Gold Brigade would want to regain their scoring touch and solidify their position with 15 points still to play for them in the league.

At the bottom of the standings, Mohammedan SC have gone through a difficult debut campaign in the ISL, earning 11 points from 19 encounters. The team has scored just nine goals in the competition, conceding 34 and are coming into this game on the back of a three-game-long losing streak.

In the earlier fixture between the two sides in November, both sides had

settled for a goalless draw.

As of now, East Bengal FC are 13 points behind sixth-placed Mumbai City FC (31). Bridging that gap and entering the playoffs might be slightly difficult, but it is in their hands to continue to push for a strong finish to the season. After parting ways with Carles Cuadrat, the team went through a slight transition and their cause has not been bettered with a dry patch upfront, scoring the second-least goals (18) in the competition.

The star striking duo of Cleiton Silva and Dimitrios Diamantakos, who netted a combined total of 21 goals for their respective teams in ISL 2023-24, have scored just thrice so far - all of them coming from Diamantakos as Silva is yet to open his account for the campaign.

For both these sides, the key is to sign off positively from this season. With 19 games gone, each of them must have secured important takeaways that can enable them to ensure a better finish in the

standings. East Bengal FC have arguably consciously devised a strategy to catch opponents offside, having done so 51 times this season, which is the most by any side. This disrupts the other team's offensive patterns and gives the Red & Gold Brigade a stronger base to build their attacking moves from.

The Jordanian centre-back has been a powerhouse for East Bengal FC, making 17 blocks, winning 32 duels, rounding off 54 recoveries, 63 clearances, and also finding the back of the net twice in 13 appearances this season.

Mohammedan SC's defensive frailties have been palpable, since they have given away multiple goals in each of their last four games. This marks the second-longest such stretch by any team in their debut ISL season, only behind Hyderabad FC's six-game run between December 2019 and January 2020. Their goal difference of -25 is the worst in the

league. Mohammedan SC's attacking problems have been down to their inefficiency upfront, as they have converted just six of their 29 big chances this season. They have the lowest conversion rate (20.7%) among all teams. East Bengal FC (28) are the only team to have created fewer big chances than Mohammedan SC this season.

East Bengal FC head coach Oscar Bruzon said that his team has worked hard towards recovering their lost form.

"This was a long week. It was a week where we worked towards bringing our performances back to the level that we have displayed earlier against good and quality teams," he said. Mohammedan SC's assistant coach Mehrajuddin Wadoo expressed that his side understands the magnitude of this match.

"We know the importance of this game. We are going to play with all our heart and make sure

Ugandan defender Nankya joins NWSL side Washington Spirit in US

Kampala, Feb 15 (UNI) : Uganda Crested Cranes' defender Shadia Nankya has joined the National Women's Super League side in the United States, Washington Spirit FC.

Nankya who also played for the Uganda Crested Cranes at the TotalEnergies CAF Women's Africa Cup of Nations (WAFCON) 2023 in Morocco, confirmed the development on Friday.

The versatile defender joined Washington Spirit on a two-year contract from Egypt Women's Premier

League side, FC Masar.

"I am very happy that finally, I have joined a big team in the top League in the world. I am ready to work hard and help my team achieve its goals," Nankya said. The 24-year-old defender who featured in all matches for her former Egyptian team last season previously played for Uganda Christian University's Lady Cardinals in the Uganda Women's Premier League.

"Playing at the highest level in women's football at the Washington Spirit will

also serve as an inspiration to thousands of girls in primary and secondary schools in Uganda and the wider East African region," she added. Edgar Watson Suubi, the Chief Executive Officer of the Federation of Uganda Football Associations (FUFA), said that Nankya's move to the United States is a big achievement because it is the biggest Women's League in the world.

"Nankya's move will also open more doors for Ugandan players in the USA," added Suubi.

Chennaiyin FC edge past Punjab FC 2-1 in ISL

Chennai, Feb 15 (UNI) Chennaiyin FC registered their first home win in five games as they edged past Punjab FC by 2-1 at the Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium here in the Indian Super League (ISL) match on Saturday evening.

Coming off a morale-boosting win against East Bengal FC, Chennaiyin FC struck first with Wilmar Jordan Gil converting from the spot. Punjab FC retaliated early in the second half with Luka Majcen slotting home the equaliser.

However, the hosts left it late when Daniel Chima Chukwu scored the winner in the 84th minute to bag the maximum points. Despite this win, the Marina Machans, with 24 points from 21 games, are seven behind sixth-placed Mumbai City FC, who have 31 points from 20 games.

Punjab FC started the game with more momentum in their attacks. The visitors were moving the ball with more intensity in the final third. Asmir Suljic got the first opportunity of the match but his eventual effort was wayward as he failed to keep it in target from close range.

A couple of minutes later, Punjab FC had their best opportunity following Chennaiyin FC's throw-in. Ravi Kumar gathered the

ball and found Petros Giakoumakis with a long ball. The Greek forward held the ball up and released Mrzljak through on goal from the right flank. The Croatian had a clear look on goal but his shot was not vicious enough to beat Mohammed Nawaz, who was alert to the danger.

However, the missed opportunities came back to bite them when Melroy Assisi handled the ball in the penalty box, awarding a spot-kick for the hosts. Wilmar Jordan Gil stepped up to the spot and hammered it past Ravi in goal to hand Chennaiyin FC the lead in the 19th minute.

In the 37th minute, Punjab FC had a decent chance to get back into the game when Ricky Shabong stole possession from Lalrinliana Hnamte in the final third and played it to the Croatian. Mrzljak had a couple of options but he decided to go on his own, though the chance fizzled out as he failed to hit the target.

A minute later, Panagiotis Dilmeris decided to take a more attacking approach with a couple of changes as things were not working in his team's favour. He introduced Muhammad Suhail and

Luka Majcen replacing

Asish Pradhan and Mrzljak. The latter was also struggling with a knock near his hamstring.

Chennaiyin FC had a great chance to double their lead when Wilmar glided a header towards Irfan Yadwad in space and the winger made a surging run into the box. However, his eventual shot was brilliantly kept out by Ravi. Moments later, Punjab FC almost had an opening when Suhail delivered a telling cross across goal but none of his teammates attacked the ball in the box.

Just like the first half, Punjab FC started the second half strong with Suhail coming close to scoring. He just missed the target by a whisker. However, Majcen repaid his coach's faith when he found the equaliser in the 48th minute. It was a brilliant give-and-go between Ezequiel Vidal and Suljic in the penalty box before the Argentine passed it to Majcen, who made no mistake in registering his eighth goal of the campaign. In the 70th minute, Giakoumakis had a brilliant opportunity to put his team ahead in the game when Khaiminthang Lhungdim found the Greek forward in the box. However, Giakoumakis failed to control his header as it flew over the bar.

Cerundolo shocks Zverev to reach Argentina Open last four

Buenos Aires, Feb 15 (UNI) Local favorite Francisco Cerundolo recovered from a set down to beat German top seed Alexander Zverev and advance to the semifinals of the ATP 250 Argentina Open. Fifth-seed Cerundolo made 71% of his first serves and saved five of seven break points to prevail 3-6, 6-3, 6-2 on the outdoor clay of the Buenos Aires Lawn Tennis Club on Friday.

"To be able to beat him here in Buenos Aires, in my hometown, with my home crowd is amazing. It's probably one of the best feelings I've ever had," the 26-year-old said. The result made Cerundolo the first Argentine to beat a top-two player since Diego Schwartzman overcame Rafael Nadal at the 2020 Masters 1000 event in Rome.

The world No. 28 will face Spain's Pedro Martinez for a place in the final.

In other matches on Friday, Brazil's Joao Fonseca outlasted Argentine Mariano Navone 3-6, 6-4, 7-5 and Serb Laslo Djere defeated Thiago Wild, also of Brazil, 7-6 (3), 6-

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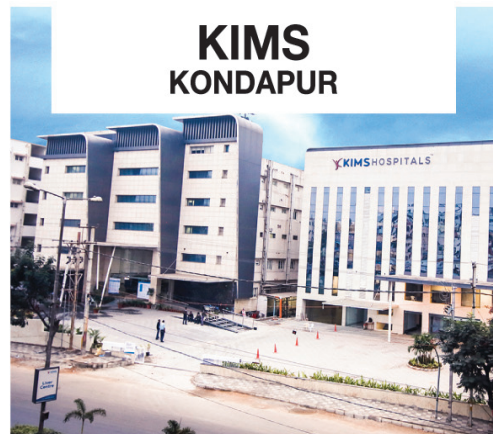
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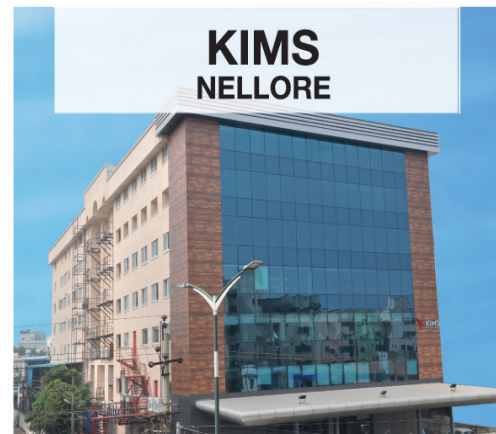
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