

OM NAMO VENKATESAYA

27-12-2025

Total pilgrims: 91,147

Tonsures: 29,400

Hundi kanukulu: 4.3ICR

Waiting Compartments: 36

Approx. Darsan Time for Sarvadarshanam (with out SSD Tokens)... 10-12 H

Sadhguru urges Centre to amend British-era farm laws

Bengaluru, Dec 28 (UNI) Spiritual leader and environmentalist Sadhguru has urged the union Government to amend British-era laws governing agricultural land, asserting that everything grown on farmland must belong to farmers, including trees. Addressing a large gathering of farmers at an agricultural seminar organised by Isha Outreach's Cauvery Calling initiative in Hosur, Sadhguru called for liberating agriculture from excessive government controls and removing policy hurdles that restrict farmers from freely selling trees grown on their own land.

"Whatever the farmer grows on his land should belong to the farmer," Sadhguru said, emphasising the need to clearly differentiate between forest produce and crops grown on agricultural land. He urged union Agriculture and Farmers



Welfare Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan to remove roadblocks that require farmers to seek permissions to cut or sell trees cultivated on their farms. Referring to colonial-era regulations, Sadhguru said the law that claims ownership of anything found below eight feet of soil by the government must be amended.

"Farmers should be liberated from all rules. Market rules are the best rules. Let farmers grow what is profitable for them and sell it wherever they want in the world," he said.

The event, held at Adhiyamaan College of Engineering in Krishnagiri district, witnessed participation from political representatives cutting across party lines, including Members of Parliament Thambidurai (AIADMK) and Gopinath (Congress), MLA Prakash (DMK), Hosur Mayor Sathya, former MLA Manoharan, and leaders from the BJP, Congress, AIADMK and DMK.

Highlighting the rare political unity at the event, Sadhguru said the presence of leaders from all parties

reflected a shared commitment to farmers' welfare.

"The purpose of politics is to serve people. When it comes to the source of our life, we all should not be differently opinionated. Now all of us are on one stage, on the same page. It is very fortunate," he said.

Over 10,000 farmers from Tamil Nadu and neighbouring states attended the seminar to learn about sustainable income generation through tree-based agriculture. The Cauvery Calling initiative, which aims to rejuvenate the Cauvery river, has enabled the plantation of over 12.8 crore trees so far. Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, addressing the gathering, praised Sadhguru for launching the Cauvery Calling movement and said it had grown into a mass movement with far-reaching impact.

CM, DCM functioning as puppet rulers: Karnataka BJP chief

Bengaluru, Dec 28 (UNI) Karnataka BJP president Vijayendra Yediyurappa on Sunday accused the Congress-led government in the state of reducing governance to what he termed remote-control rule, alleging that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar were functioning as puppet rulers under the directions of the party high command in Delhi.

Launching a sharp attack on the ruling dispensation, Vijayendra questioned who actually wielded power in Karnataka, asserting that the people had elected a government in Bengaluru and not an "invisible authority" operating from the national capital.

Referring to the controversy over the demolition of unauthorised constructions in Kogilu village, the BJP leader said the Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister had initially defended the government's actions with conviction, even as the episode drew wider political debate over what he described as the emerging "bulldozer culture" in governance.

Vijayendra's remarks came in the backdrop of AICC general secretary KC Venugopal's intervention in the Kogilu demolition issue.

Venugopal said he had spoken to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister Shivakumar and conveyed the AICC's serious concern that the demolitions should have been carried out with greater caution, sensitivity and compassion, keeping



the human impact at the centre.

According to Venugopal, the Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister assured him that they would personally engage with the affected families, put in place an appropriate grievance redressal mechanism, and ensure rehabilitation and relief for those impacted. Citing this development, Vijayendra posed a direct question to Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar, asking whether they would show the same courage towards their AICC leadership as they had displayed while defending the demolitions and offering advice to Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan a day earlier, or whether their stand had "conveniently changed after a call from Delhi".

He said the issue went beyond political hypocrisy and amounted to a serious affront to the democratic mandate of the people of Karnataka. Vijayendra alleged that the state was being governed at the pleasure of an unelected authority, with key decisions being shaped outside Bengaluru. The BJP leader further claimed

that the Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister were locked in an intense power struggle over the CM's chair, creating a situation in which the Congress high command had emerged as the final arbiter on major decisions.

"When elected leaders function under an unseen authority, governance collapses and democracy is reduced to remote-control administration," Vijayendra said, adding that such a system stripped the state of accountability and transparency.

He asserted that Karnataka deserved strong and accountable leadership rooted in the state, and not "puppet rulers dancing to the tunes of an invisible and unelected high command".

The BJP cited the high command's intervention in the Kogilu issue as evidence of what it described as "puppet governance", alleging that elected leaders in Karnataka were compelled to recalibrate decisions only after directions from Delhi, raising serious questions over the autonomy of the state government.

Karnataka govt assures relief for demolition-affected families

Bengaluru: The Karnataka government on Sunday assured direct intervention, rehabilitation and relief for families affected by the demolition of unauthorised constructions in Kogilu village, a development that comes shortly after Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's remarks criticising the prevailing "bulldozer culture".

AICC General Secretary KC

Venugopal said he spoke to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar, who assured him that they would personally engage with the affected families and put in place a grievance redressal mechanism. "The Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister have assured that they will personally engage with the affected families," he said. Vijayan flayed

what he described as a growing "bulldozer culture" in the country, underscoring the political sensitivity surrounding demolition drives and their human impact. According to Venugopal, the state leadership acknowledged the need for sensitivity in such actions and committed to ensuring that those impacted by the demolitions receive appropriate rehabilitation and relief.

Top rankers of IIT JEE & NEET UG felicitated at ALLEN Sopan-Victory Celebration 2025

Bengaluru: The ALLEN Bengaluru (Karnataka) celebrated the success of its students in the IIT-JEE and NEET UG 2025 at the ALLEN Sopan - Victory Celebration held at Bengaluru on Sunday, 28 December 2025. ALLEN Bengaluru felicitated its top rankers and successful aspirants with cash awards and medals.

Students' felicitation & Award ceremony At the SOPAN Victory Celebration, 161 students from Bengaluru were felicitated with cash awards worth Rs 29.76 lakh, while 1,256 students were honoured with mementos and Silver medals. Shri Kollu Ravindra, Cabinet Minister for Mines, Excise, and Geology,



Government of Andhra Pradesh, was the chief guest and Smt. Aishwarya DKS Hegde, Trustee Secretary, National Education Foundation, was the Guest of Honor at the ALLEN Sopan, while Shri A. S. Kiran Kumar (Padma Shri), Former Chairman, ISRO, Government of India, and Shri S. Vidyashankar, Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor,

Visvesvaraya Technological University, Government of Karnataka, Shri Dr. R. V. Nadagouda, Distinguished Scientist & Associate Director - Projects, U R Rao Satellite Centre (URSC), ISRO, Government of India, graced the occasion as Special Guests. 105 ALLEN Bengaluru

employees who completed 10 years or more of dedicated service were felicitated for their unwavering dedication, integrity, and commitment. Nine top achievers (Navratnas) from this year's major entrance examinations conducted an inspiring and informative interaction at the Toppers' Talk session, where they shared their success stories, learning strategies, and disciplined habits. In addition, four outstanding achievers from the 2019-2024 batches proudly represented ALLEN and participated in the nostalgic "Achievers Speak" session in which they reflected on their journey at ALLEN. These students shared insights on

their values, personal growth, and evolution from being ALLEN students to completing their undergraduate education. Speaking on the occasion, Vice President - ALLEN South India Centres, Mahesh Yadav, said, "The journey of ALLEN South India has been truly memorable. It gives me immense pleasure to be a part of the lives of these inspiring students. As an academician, I speak from the bottom of my heart—our contribution to nation-building lies in shaping the success of the next generation. Congratulations to all the successful students, and sincerely thank their parents and my fellow team members".

Eligible Kogilu evictees to be rehabilitated under Rajiv Gandhi Housing Scheme: Shivakumar

Bengaluru: Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Monday said that locals and eligible evictees affected by the Kogilu encroachment incident will be rehabilitated under the Rajiv Gandhi Housing Scheme. Speaking to reporters at his Sadashivanagar residence, Shivakumar clarified that AICC General Secretary K C Venugopal has not interfered in the governance of Karnataka. "Venugopal is the General Secretary of our party and has only offered suggestions. Don't BJP national leaders also advise their state units?" he asked, responding to the BJP's criticism over Venugopal's tweet on the issue. The Deputy Chief Minister said he had



obtained complete details of the evictees and stressed that the law is the same for all communities. He added that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has called for a meeting on the matter on Tuesday. Shivakumar also alleged that one individual had taken money and encouraged people to put up sheds on government land, leading to the encroachment issue.

Reacting to BJP leader C N Ashwath Narayan's statement that K C Venugopal should not interfere in state affairs, Shivakumar said such remarks were being made only to remain relevant within the party. "They give statements because you carry them. I am not bothered about such comments," he said, dismissing the BJP's criticism.

Mann Ki Baat unites people, builds nation through public participation: Basavaraj Bommai

Gadag (Lakshmeshwar): Former Chief Minister and MP Basavaraj Bommai on Sunday said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi, through the Mann Ki Baat programme, is uniting people across the country and building the nation by encouraging public participation. Bommai was speaking after watching the Prime Minister's Mann Ki Baat programme organised by the BJP District Kisan Morcha at a hall near the residence of Basavaraj Itagi at Booth No. 192 in Suranagi village of Lakshmeshwar taluk in Gadag district. He described Mann Ki Baat as a unique initiative unlike any undertaken by previous Prime Ministers, noting that it enables direct communication with citizens and highlights positive and inspiring work being carried out across the country. The monthly programme, he said, showcases extraordinary achievements of ordinary people from various states, including Karnataka, Jammu and Kashmir, and Manipur. Citing examples, Bommai referred to the establishment of a Kannada school in Dubai and students in Manipur continuing their education using solar power in areas without electricity. He said the programme has also inspired farmers to form Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), helping them reduce dependency on middlemen and increase their income. Bommai pointed out that an FPO in Suranagi is currently doing business worth 3.5 crore, while similar organisations in Raichur have achieved turnovers of nearly 200 crore. He stressed the need to increase the number of such institutions to ensure better income for farmers. He further noted that earlier farmers had to travel to Hukoti for soil testing, but now Suranagi has its own soil and water testing centres, demonstrating how small institutions can bring significant change. Regularly listening to Mann Ki Baat, he said, generates new ideas and aligns with the vision of a developed India. He added that India currently ranks fourth globally in economic terms and is expected to move to third place in the coming years due to the efforts of farmers and labourers. Criticising the present government, Bommai alleged that assistance to FPOs, diesel subsidy, Vidyanidhi for farmers' children, and schemes like Yashasvini were discontinued.

let us all begin the struggle against the cowardly central BJP government : S.Manohar

Bengaluru: KPCC General Secretary and President of the MEI Institution, S. Manohar; said to Follow the path of non-violence shown by Mahatma Gandhi, let us all begin the struggle against the cowardly central BJP government which has removed name from the panchayat level and insulted Mahatma Gandhi.

Speaking at the Indian National Congress Foundation day celebrated at visually impaired children's school he told All the workers who participated in programme to take pledge that

Let all of us stand with them and fight against the corrupt Central Government for the progress of the nation and the protection of democracy.

The Indian National Congress, which was established in 1885 for the nation and for India's freedom, has today completed 140 years. Even today, the Congress party continues to work tirelessly for the progress



and development of the country, and for the protection of the Constitution and democracy, he said. Founded before independence and continuing as a political party after independence, the Congress party has provided exemplary governance, strengthened and empowered constitutional democracy, delivered justice to the people through the democratic constitutional

framework, and worked for national development and the upliftment of the people with equality. The Congress is the only party that has consistently upheld these values, he said.

The great leaders who participated in India's freedom struggle are today being insulted by the anti-national party that is currently ruling at the Centre, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the

for the freedom of the nation and for the people, continues even today to serve the people and work relentlessly for their welfare, he said. President of the Bengaluru Central Congress Campaign Committee, G. Prakash; Congress leaders L. Jayasimha, Puttaraju, Ranjith Kumar, Naveen, Nagaraju, and other party workers attended the programme.

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Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower / Co-Borrower/ Mortgagee (s) that the below described immovable properties mortgaged to the Secured Creditor, the Symbolic Possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Protium Finance Ltd. the same shall be referred hereafter as Protium Finance Ltd. The Secured Assets will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" basis through E-Auction.	
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3. Date of Demand Notice U/s 13(2)	10 Jun 2025
4. Amount as per Demand Notice U/s 13(2)	Rs. 56,763.66 /- (Rupees Eighty Six Lakh Fifty Six Thousand Seven Hundred Thirty Three And Sixty Six Paise Only) as on 06th Jun, 2025 with further interest 18% from 06th Jun, 2025 until payment in full amount along with other charges as demanded in our notice, within the statutory period of 60 days from the date of this notice.
5. Date of Symbolic Possession	18th Aug-2025
6. Amount as on date	Rs. 86,77,905/- (Rupees Eighty Six Lakh Seventy Seven Thousand Nine Hundred Fifty Only) as on date 27th Dec-2025
7. Description Of The Property: Schedule "A" Property	All That Piece And Parcel Of The Flat No. F101 (2bhk) in First Floor, North Facing, New Municipal No. 29/2, Having Pld No. 54-288-29/2 In The Residential Apartment Building Known As "Ruchitha Paradise" Having Super Built Up Area Of 1300 Square Feet, Together With One Car Parking Place In Silt/Basement Floor, Constructed With Rcc Roofing, Vitrified Flooring, Main Door And Frame Teak Wood And All Other Doors Frames In Sal Wood And Flush Door Shutter And Windows Are Aluminium Windows With Safety Grills With All Civic Amenities Like Electricity, Water And Sanitary Connections, Together With Proportionate Share In Common Areas, Passages, Lobbies, Staircases, Ducts, One Entrance Foyer, Lift And Other Areas, Of Common Use In Schedule "A" Property And The Said Flat is Bounded On The - East By: Open Space, West By: Flat No. F1-02 And Open Space, North By: Passage/Open Space, South By: Open Space/ Set-Back
8. Reserve Price	Rs. 85,72,500/- (Rupees Eighty Five Lakh Seventy Two Thousand Five Hundred Fifty Only)
9. Earnest Money Deposit	Rs. 8,57,250/- (Rupees Eight Lakh Fifty Seven Thousand Two Hundred Fifty Only)
10. Bid Increment Amount (In Rs.)	(Bid Incremental Value: Rs. 5,000/-)
11. E-Auction Date and Time	16-Jan-26 at 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM (with unlimited extension of 5 min each)
12. EMD Submission Last Date	15-Jan-26 up to 5:00 PM.
13. Inspection Date	05-Jan-26 Between 11:00 AM To 5:00 PM
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3. Important Information: This auction is published basis possession vide Sec 13(4) of SARFAESI Act. Physical Possession will be offered post receiving Section 14 Orders as per process laid down under SARFAESI Act and as and when physical possession will be taken. Bidder shall do necessary due diligence in respect of documents and legality before participating in the auction process.	
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EDITORIAL

Manufactured Traditions

In the landscape of modern Indian socio-politics, if there is such a word, December 25 has become a date of peculiar botanical urgency. Suddenly, the air is thick with the smell of incense and the aggressive rustle of holy basil. We are told, via high-resolution WhatsApp forwards and saffron-tinted infographics, that it is "Tulsi Pujan Diwas". To the uninitiated, it looks like a quaint revival of Vedic piety. To anyone with a history book and a functioning memory, however, it is a masterclass in the "invention of tradition" - a duplicitous branding exercise designed to turn a plant of peace into a picket line of cultural intolerance. Let us be clear: the Tulsi plant is, and has always been, a cornerstone of the Hindu household. For centuries, it has sat in the Vrindavan of the courtyard, a biological deity representing Lakshmi's grace and the medicinal wisdom of Ayurveda. We have Tulsi Vivah, an ancient, structurally complex festival tied to the lunar cycle of the Hindu calendar. But "Tulsi Pujan Diwas", fixed stubbornly to the Gregorian calendar date of December 25 (a most unVedic practice), is not an ancient ritual. It is a 2014 startup. It has the same historical depth as a seasonal discount sale.

Colonising The Calendar

The manufacture of this "Diwas" is a classic example of what historian Eric Hobsbawm called "Invented Tradition". These are practices that appear old but are actually quite new, designed to instil certain values through repetition and a false sense of continuity with a "glorious past". By pinning Tulsi worship to Christmas Day, the architects of this movement aren't trying to honour the plant or our culture; they are trying to colonise the calendar. The logic is transparently reactive. It stems from a profound cultural insecurity that views the celebration of Christmas - or even the mere acknowledgment of it - as a zero-sum game. If a neighbour puts up a star, one must counter with a shrub. If they sing a carol, we must chant a shloka, not out of devotion, but out of a desperate need to "reclaim" a space that was never actually lost. It is "spirituality" as a contact sport, kabaddi with chanting rather than panting. The duplicity lies in the justification. Proponents argue that they are protecting "Indian values" from the "onslaught of Westernisation". This creates a false binary: you are either a "Sattvic" Tulsi-worshipper or a "corrupted" consumer of cake and tinsel. By framing a modern creation as an ancient necessity, they provide a theological shield for contemporary xenophobia. It allows the practitioner to say, "I am not being intolerant of your holiday; I am simply being observant of my own (one-decade-old) tradition."

A Trojan Horse For Intolerance

This is how "manufactured tradition" serves as a Trojan Horse for intolerance. It rewrites history to suggest that Indian culture is a fragile thing that can only survive if it is constantly positioned against an imagined enemy. It replaces the expansive, pluralistic heart of Hinduism - which historically had no trouble assimilating various influences - with a brittle, reactionary mimicry. Furthermore, there is a profound irony in using the Tulsi plant for this purpose. In the Puranas, Tulsi is a symbol of bhakti (devotion), a quality that is internal, quiet, and deeply personal. To turn her into a tool for a "Cultural Cold War" is a form of spiritual malpractice. When worship is motivated by the desire to "cancel out" another person's joy, it ceases to be prayer and becomes a political weapon of intolerance. We see this pattern everywhere: the sudden "discovery" of ancient reasons to do modern, exclusionary things. Whether it is the rebranding of Valentine's Day as "Parents' Worship Day" (why not Kamadeva Diwas, I ask you?) or the fixating of festivals onto specific Western holidays, the goal is the same: to create a psychological ghetto where the "Other" is always an intruder.

Let Tulsi Be Sacred

By pretending that "Tulsi Pujan Diwas" has always existed in this specific, reactionary form, its promoters are gaslighting the public. They are erasing the genuine, organic history of Indian festivals, which are diverse, regional, and tied to the earth's own rhythms, and replacing them with a standardised, "Vedic-flavoured" version of modern "cultural nationalism".

Edit

HONOURING THE PUNJAB BOY,
SHARVAN SINGH, IS HONOURING THE
MANKIND, VELOUR AND PATRIOTISM

Jag Mohan Thaken

History repeats itself; but a few are fortunate to get the recognition. The spiritual world, especially the Sikh world, is proud of the act of kindness, humility and service to mankind exemplified by Bhai Kanhaiya Ji, who is widely known for his water seva during Sri Guru Gobind Singh Maharaj Ji's time in the battlefield. Once again in the History, a 10-year-old Sikh boy, Sharvan Singh, resident of a village hardly 2 kilometres from India-Pakistan border in Punjab's Ferozepur District, has earned national recognition for his act of compassion, exceptional courage and sense of patriotism by serving 'Milk-Lassi and Water' to the Military Persons deployed near his village during operation Sindoor. Akal Takht's former Jathedar, Giani Harpreet Singh, in a tweet on 26th December, 2025, said, "Even on the battlefield, the spirit of selfless service and fearless courage, as exemplified by Bhai Kanhaiya Ji and Sikh history, has always continued to inspire our younger generations. During the war-like situation with Pakistan, 10-year-old Sharvan Singh from Firozpur, Punjab, displayed remarkable selfless service by providing tea, water, and ice to our soldiers. In recognition of this noble act, he has been honoured with the 'National Child Award' by the Honourable President of India, Mrs. Droupadi Murmu. I commend Sharvan Singh and, while appreciating his spirit of service, courage, and humanity, appeal to the people of Punjab to connect their children with the teachings of Sikh history—values of service, compassion, and bravery". While presenting the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar to Sharvan Singh and other children for their exceptional achievements in the fields of Bravery, Social Service, Environment, Sports, Art & Culture and Science & Technology at a ceremony held in New Delhi on December 26, 2025, on the occasion of 'Veer Baal Diwas', the President of India, Smt Droupadi Murmu, said that about 320 years ago, Guru Gobind Singh Ji—the tenth Guru of the Sikh faith and



revered by all Indians—and his four sons made supreme sacrifices while fighting in support of truth and justice. She said that the bravery of the two youngest Sahibzadas, is honoured and respected both in India and abroad. She remembered with reverence the great child heroes who laid down their lives with pride for truth and justice. Terror of Mughal Rulers was on such a dreadful, scary, spooky and fearsome pitch that after the martyrdom of the younger Sahibzadas and Mata Ji, when no one dared to perform their last rites due to fear of the tyrannical government, Diwan Todar Mal Ji bought the holy bodies of the Sahibzadas and Mata Ji. In this way, Diwan Todar Mal Ji became the hero of Saka Sirhind, due to this unique act, his name was recorded among the respected personalities of the Sikh Panth. Still the people bow to the good-hearted personality of Diwan Todar Mal Ji, who had immense devotion towards the Guru Ghar. It is pertinent to mention here that Sikhism is the religion which always keeps humanity as its serving motto. It had not only given the religious Gurus, who preached equality without any discrimination of caste and creed, service to humanity, compassion and a deep sense of

spirituality, but also gave the brave heroes, who martyred their lives for protection of religious freedom and the rights of the oppressed. History can never forget the unparalleled, supreme and extraordinary sacrifice of Guru Arjan Dev Ji, Guru Teg Bahadur Ji, Mata Gujri Ji and the younger Sahibzadas -- Baba Zorawar Singh Ji and Baba Fateh Singh Ji. The brave heroes like Sardar Bhagat Singh, Sardar Uddham Singh and others, who fought against the tyranny of the English rulers for the sake of the country, are and will also remain the lighthouse for the present and coming generations. Bravery, humanity, kindness and fearless actions are the main elements in Sikhism. Presently also these elements can be noticed even in the children of the sect. The story of Ten-year-old Shraavan Singh, amidst the risks associated with war during Operation Sindoor, who regularly delivered water, milk, and lassi to the Indian soldiers stationed at the border near his home, reflects the 'Bravery, Humanity, Kindness and Fearless actions'. President Murmu said that the greatness of a country is certain when its children are filled with patriotism and high ideals. Ten-year-old Shraavan Singh, amidst the risks associated with war during Operation

Sindoor, regularly delivered water, milk, and lassi to the Indian soldiers stationed at the border near his home. Smt. Murmu was happy to note that the children have showcased their exceptional talent in various fields such as bravery, art and culture, environment, innovation, science and technology, social service, and sports. She said that it is because of talented children such as the seven-year-old Vaka Lakshmi Pragnika that India is considered a chess powerhouse on the world stage. Ajay Raj and Mohammed Sidan P, who saved the lives of others with their bravery and intelligence, deserve all the praise they receive. Nine-year-old daughter Vyoma Priya and eleven-year-old brave son Kamlesh Kumar lost their lives while saving the lives of others with their courage. Whereas, the differently-abled daughter Shivani Hosuru Uppara has achieved extraordinary accomplishments in the world of sports, overcoming economic and physical limitations. Vaibhav Suryavanshi has made a name for himself in the highly competitive and talent-filled world of cricket and has set many records. She expressed confidence that brave and talented children like them will continue to do good work and make India's future bright.

Congress Meltdown: In Digvijaya Singh's 'RSS' Post, A Reckoning For Rahul

"Multiple Chanakyas are advising the prince. The trouble is, there is only one prince. A problem that Machiavelli and Kautilya never faced. Plus, their respective Princes were able," says a senior Congress leader about the meltdown set off by Digvijaya Singh, 78, the former Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh. Singh, a master politician, recently threw a gauntlet at Rahul Gandhi through a social media post, in which he praised the organisational strength of the RSS and even tagged everyone from Rahul, Priyanka Gandhi, Mallikarjun Kharge and Jairam Ramesh to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Singh then attended the last Congress Working Committee meeting and made the same point in person. There, he was heard in utter silence, with his intervention espousing no comments from the audience. I spoke to a cross-section of Congress leaders before writing this column - both the rebels who want change in the party and the coterie to Rahul Gandhi who want status quo. The biggest takeaway is that Rahul cannot avoid a change if he continues to be unavailable and elusive. The last five days of the



winter session, Rahul, despite being the leader of opposition, chose to be in Germany to address the diaspora instead of taking up pressing issues such as the air pollution in Delhi, a state the Congress once ruled and where it has now been reduced to zero. The decentralisation and the lack of organisation that Singh underlined in his CWC address is unexceptionable. It is a point that any objective observer would agree with. A Warning For Venugopal? This also points to KC Venugopal, the General Secretary in charge of organisation, who has reduced the Congress party organisation to a hollow shell with state units almost out of business. Many say that is because Venugopal doesn't allow state

leaders to make decisions while endlessly dithering on decisions himself. In fact, the chorus for his ouster is only growing. Venugopal survives on Gandhi's patronage as his chief palace courtier. But he's no Ahmed Patel, who performed a similar role for Sonia Gandhi and was indispensable for the party. The question now is what lies in store for Venugopal. Will he get his dream job as the Congress face in the upcoming Kerala elections, or will he be kicked upstairs to some meaningless office? It may not be a stretch to say that Singh, in fact, was basically targeting Venugopal through his social media post, and by tagging Priyanka Gandhi Vadra publicly, he was seeking her intervention in the party's sorry state of affairs.

Sources close to Singh say that speculation, especially from within the Congress, that Singh is leaning towards the BJP-RSS is laughable. Sure he has been provocative, but his praise, they say, was nuanced and limited to the organisational discipline of the RSS. "They have created the largest political party in the world. The most formidable election winning machine and the biggest war chest. Only a blind person would not seek to emulate it in politics," said a source. This is a valid point. In contrast to such a robust organisation, Gandhi comes across as a leader who has romanticised electoral defeat with his constant pitch of "vote chori". Sources close to Singh also scoff at suggestions that the provocation for the tweet was the fact that he wants a new term in the Rajya Sabha. "Singh was a mass leader. He literally poisoned his own roots to come to Delhi and became Gandhi's counsellor. Yet, Gandhi, for reasons unknown, discarded him and fell for the comfort of his palace courtiers. Singh proved with his Narmada Yatra that he still has it in him to do mass politics, touching every district in Madhya Pradesh. He wants a say in the state and a bright future for his son Jaivardhan

Singh. Is that a crime? It can only happen when the Congress does well." Take Responsibility From the row between Siddaramaiah and DK Shivakumar in Karnataka, to the sidelining of leaders like Shashi Tharoor and Manish Tewari, to replacing the leadership in Rajasthan, Gandhi can no longer continue evading responsibility. Against this background, the public praise for Priyanka Gandhi Vadra can be seen as a cry for help from the party. Party leaders want Rahul to go back to bread and butter issues to take on the BJP. Instead, the issues he has taken up so far, such as "vote chori", "surrender Modi", have failed to get any traction. "The Trinamool Congress protested the removal of MGNREGA, the Congress' flagship scheme, much more than the Congress in Parliament. They held an all-night dharna. What did we do?" a Congress leader said. For now, all eyes are on the Rajya Sabha picks to see whether Rahul Gandhi has paid any heed to the discontent brewing within his party. If the usual palace guard makes the cut and there is no organisational overhaul, expect a mega meltdown. Evasion of responsibility isn't an option for the Congress top brass anymore.

Faith vs. Breath: Pigeons, Laws, and Our Collective Irresponsibility

— Dr. Satyawan Saurabh

In India, faith often trumps reason. That's why the sound of temple bells sometimes feels more suffocating than the sound of a suffocating sound, but we don't want to listen. A recent Mumbai court ruling—imposing a fine of ₹5,000 for feeding pigeons in a public place—is a clear and bold example of this confrontation. This decision is not against pigeons, but against the mindset that tramples on science, law, and public health in the name of sentimentality. In our society, feeding pigeons is considered a "virtuous act." Early in the morning, we find a sense of satisfaction in throwing a handful of grains onto our balcony, terrace, or park—as if we've served humanity in a significant way. But the question is: can an act performed without considering the consequences truly be considered compassion? Medical science has consistently warned that dried pigeon droppings can spread into the air and spread deadly diseases like cryptococcosis, histoplasmosis, hypersensitivity pneumonitis, and salmonella. These diseases are not imaginary fears, but true

stories from real patients admitted to hospitals. Asthmatics, lung patients, the elderly, and children—their lives are at risk first. The Mumbai court did not limit this case to a mere violation of a municipal corporation order, but considered it a direct threat to public health. The punishment under sections of the IPC indicates that the state now seeks not only to treat diseases but also to prevent social habits that cause disease. This is the first time in the country that a socially acceptable act like feeding pigeons has been criminalized. This decision demonstrates that the law will now be guided by its impact, not by emotions. The most uncomfortable question in this entire controversy concerns religion and tradition. Some are calling it an attack on faith, but does religion ever condone the spread of disease? Does any religious text ever prescribe risking the lives of others to earn merit? The government and health agencies themselves have clearly stated that feeding pigeons is not a religious obligation, yet protests continue. In reality, this protest is not about faith, but stubbornness—a stubborn refusal to change one's

habits. Cities are no longer villages. With dense populations, tall buildings, limited air, and shared spaces, even small negligence can turn into a major crisis. Grain left on a balcony not only attracts pigeons, but also brings with it a whole chain of disease, filth, and infection. Ironically, the same people who question masks, vaccines, and scientific warnings are, in the name of virtue, turning cities into a cesspool of biological waste. In this debate, it's important to clarify that the pigeons aren't at fault. They're simply living their lives according to their natural instincts. We are to blame—our unscientific sentimentality, our belief in convenience, and our collective irresponsibility. If you truly want to show compassion, do so in controlled, safe, and scientific ways—through animal welfare organizations, not in open public spaces. This decision by the Mumbai court sends a clear message that faith may be private, but its impact cannot harm public life. Compassion does not necessarily mean harm, and the law is now recognizing this distinction.



Zelensky says Russia 'doesn't want peace' ahead of meeting Trump in Florida

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky will meet his US counterpart Donald Trump in Florida on Sunday, for the latest round of talks aimed at ending nearly four years of war with Russia. The pair will discuss an updated version of a US-brokered peace plan, which Moscow has yet to support, as well as separate proposals for US security guarantees. Their meeting at the US president's Mar-a-Lago home follows intense Russian bombardment of Kyiv over the weekend, which Zelensky said was evidence that Moscow "doesn't want peace". On Friday night, a 10-hour missile and drone barrage targeting Ukraine's capital killed two people and left 32 others injured, local authorities said. There were further Russian strikes on Saturday night. At the meeting in Florida, Zelensky is expected to raise security guarantees for Ukraine and



territorial concessions, both issues that Russia has previously been unwilling to compromise on. They will also discuss the new 20-point peace plan, a revised version of an earlier 28-point plan drafted by US special envoy Steve Witkoff that was widely seen as being too favourable to Russia. Control of Ukraine's eastern Donbas region has

been a major sticking point so far, but Zelensky has now said a "free economic zone" could be an option. Moscow currently controls about 75% of the Donetsk region, and around 99% of the neighbouring Luhansk. The regions are collectively known as the Donbas. The Kremlin has not commented on Zelensky's offer to withdraw troops from the

Donbas if Russia pulls back too. But on Saturday, Russian President Vladimir Putin said Ukraine was "in no hurry to resolve this conflict peacefully", according to state-owned news agency Tass. Putin added that if Kyiv did not want to resolve the conflict peacefully, Russia would accomplish its objectives militarily. The Ukrainian president has

voiced optimism about the new peace plan draft, describing it as "a foundational document on ending the war". On Friday, he told reporters that it was 90% complete: "Our task is to make sure everything is 100% ready." But Trump warned in an interview with Politico that Zelensky "doesn't have anything until I approve it". Trump added that he was expecting to see the new draft on Sunday. "I think it's going to go good with him. I think it's going to go good with Putin," he said in the interview, adding that he expects to speak to Russia's president "soon". Following meetings with Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, Zelensky said Moscow's latest attack on Kyiv was "Russia's answer [to] our peace efforts and this really shows that Putin doesn't want peace". Zelensky also took a call with European leaders to

discuss diplomatic "priorities" ahead of his meeting with Trump, adding that "strong positions are needed" to move forward with the plan. Kyiv has the "full support" of European and Nato leaders, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said. Russia launched attacks on Ukraine over the weekend - the most destructive of which happened Friday night into Saturday morning. Ukrainian officials said Russia's attacks on Kyiv caused significant damage to energy infrastructure, with 40% of residential buildings in Kyiv and nearby districts left without heating. Russia's defence ministry said long-range precision weapons were used to target energy facilities, which it claimed were being used "in the interests of the Ukrainian Armed Forces and enterprises of the Ukrainian military-industrial complex".

THREE KILLED IN SWEDEN AS MAJOR STORM SWEEPS ACROSS NORDIC COUNTRIES



A third person has died in Sweden after a powerful winter storm swept across Nordic countries, causing travel disruption and power outages. Sweden's meteorological agency issued alerts for strong winds for large parts of the northern half of the country as Storm Johannes hit. One man in his 50s died after being struck by a tree at the Kungsberget ski resort in the country's south, local media and police reported. Further north, regional utility company Hemab said one of its employees died in an accident while out working. Police also said a man in his 60s was

taken to hospital after being hit by a tree while working in a forest in Hofors, east-central Sweden, and later died of his injuries. Tens of thousands of homes in Sweden, Norway and Finland have been left without power as a result of the storm. In Sweden, more than 40,000 homes were affected by power outages and numerous rail services were cancelled, Swedish news agency TT reported. Several flights, rail and ferry services across parts of the Nordic nations have been cancelled. Roads and rail services have also been disrupted due to the storm conditions.

Cruise ship hits reef on first trip since leaving passenger on island



A cruise ship has run aground in Papua New Guinea (PNG) on its first trip since the death of an elderly passenger in late October. The Coral Adventurer is currently under investigation over the death of Suzanne Rees, 80, who died on a remote Australian island after being left behind by the ship. On Saturday, the vessel suffered a "grounding incident" off the eastern coast of PNG, around 30km (18 miles) from the city of Lae, a spokesperson for the ship said. All passengers and crew aboard the cruise ship have been reported safe, and initial inspections have not revealed any damage to the hull. Further inspections will take place on Sunday. A spokesperson for the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (Amsa) told the BBC in a statement that it had not received a distress call from the Coral Adventurer. It added it was monitoring the situation and would support PNG authorities if necessary. No decisions have

been made about the current 12-day voyage, which was due to finish on 30 December. There were 80 passengers and 43 crew members aboard the ship at the time of the incident. The Coral Adventurer is currently the subject of a joint investigation by Amsa and Queensland Police, Ms Rees was found dead on Lizard Island on 26 October. She had been hiking on the island with fellow passengers, but broke off from the group for a rest. The ship left without her and returned several hours later after the crew realised the woman was missing. A major search operation found her body the following day. The ship was just two days into a 60-day voyage at the time of Ms Rees's death. The remainder of the cruise was cancelled with full refunds offered to all passengers. The CEO of Coral Expeditions, Mark Fifield, said that the company was "deeply sorry that this has occurred" and had offered its full support to the Rees family.

Fearing deportation, Hondurans in the US send more cash home than ever before



For over a year, Elias Padilla had been saving up to make the journey from Honduras to the United States as an undocumented immigrant. As an Uber driver in the snarled streets of the capital, Tegucigalpa, it hasn't been easy for him to put money aside. On bad days he makes as little as \$12 (£9) in 12 hours. Now, though, his plans are on

hold. The images of undocumented immigrants in major US cities being dragged away by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents, their wrists in zip-ties, have deterred at least one would-be immigrant in Central America from travelling north. "I want to improve my life conditions because we earn very little here," Elias explains as we drive around the city. "Take this line of work, for example: an Uber driver in the US makes in an hour what I'd make in a day." Like most Honduran immigrants, Elias says the main aim of reaching the US would be to send remittances home. "But I see what Trump is doing, and it's made me think twice," he admits.

FRENCH CINEMA ACTRESS BRIGITTE BARDOT DIES AGED 91

French actress Brigitte Bardot, who revolutionised 1950s French cinema and became a symbol of sexual liberation, has died age 91. The cinema icon - BB as she was known in her home country - acted in almost 50 films, including And God Created Woman, but retired in 1973 to devote her life to animal welfare. French President Emmanuel Macron said the nation was mourning "a legend of the century", while the Brigitte Bardot Foundation remembered her as a "world-renowned actress". Later in life, Bardot's reputation was damaged after she made homophobic slurs and was fined multiple times for inciting racial hatred. The animal welfare foundation she established said in a



statement that it was announcing her death with "immense sadness". The Brigitte Bardot Foundation said she was "a world-renowned actress and singer, who chose to abandon her prestigious career to dedicate her life and energy to animal welfare and her foundation." It did not specify where or when Bardot died. Paying tribute, Macron

wrote: "Her films, her voice, her dazzling glory, her initials, her sorrows, her generous passion for animals, her face that became Marianne, Brigitte Bardot embodied a life of freedom. "French existence, universal brilliance. She touched us. We mourn a legend of the century." Meanwhile, French far-right politician Marine Le Pen said France had lost "an

exceptional woman, through her talent, her courage, her frankness, her beauty". Bardot's husband, whom she married in 1992, was Bernard d'Ormale, a former adviser to the late far-right politician Jean-Marie Le Pen - the father of Marine. Brigitte Anne-Marie Bardot was born in Paris in 1934 to a wealthy family, who wanted her to become a ballerina. She was discovered in her teens after posing on the cover of Elle magazine, swiftly becoming a sensation in her home country, and was persuaded to enter the cinema world. She played iconic roles, the most notable in the 1956 film And God Created Woman, directed by her then-husband Roger Vadim, in which she played a sexually liberated woman.

POLLS CLOSE ON FIRST DAY OF MYANMAR'S WIDELY CRITICISED 'SHAM' ELECTION

The first of three phases of voting has finished in Myanmar in an election widely dismissed as a "sham", with major political parties dissolved, leaders jailed and as much as half the country not expected to vote due to an ongoing civil war. The military government is holding a phased ballot nearly five years after it seized power in a coup, prompting widespread opposition and spiralling into civil war. Observers say the junta, with China's support, is seeking to legitimise its power as it seeks a way out of the devastating stalemate. More than 200 people have been charged for dis-



rupting or opposing the polls under a new law which carries severe punishments, including the death penalty. There were reports of explosions and airstrikes across multiple regions as the first round of voting took place on Sunday. A rocket attack on

an uninhabited house in the Mandalay region in the early hours of the morning injured three people, the region's chief minister told the BBC. Separately, a series of explosions damaged more than ten houses in the Myawaddy township, near the border with

Thailand, late on Saturday. A resident told the BBC that a child was killed and three others were taken to hospital. Voters have told the BBC that the election feels more "disciplined and systematic" than previous polls. "The experience of voting has changed a lot," said Ma Su ZarChi, who lives in the Mandalay region. "Before I voted, I was afraid. Now that I have voted, I feel relieved. I cast my ballot as someone who has tried their best for the country." First-time voter Ei Pyay Phyto Maung, 22, said she was voting because she believed it is "the responsibility of every citizen".

Nine arrested in Italy for allegedly raising millions for Hamas

Italian police have arrested nine people accused of raising around 7m (£6m) for Hamas over more than two years. The money was ostensibly collected as humanitarian aid for Palestinian civilians, a police statement said, but was instead sent to the militant group via a "complex fundraising system". Alongside the arrests, police say they have seized more than 8m (£7m) in assets as part of the investigation. Police say the suspects are "specifically accused of carrying out financing operations believed to have contributed to terrorist activities". The arrests were made as part of a joint initiative between Italy's counter-terror police and financial police. The investigation



began after the 7 October 2023 Hamas attack in southern Israel. Police say they analysed "a series of reports of suspicious financial transactions" involving some of the suspects in the lead up to the attack. Investigators uncovered a "complex" system of fundraising, which was headquartered in Genoa with branches in Milan, the

statement adds. "The suspects collected donations intended for the civilian population of Gaza, however, it emerged that over 71% of these funds were diverted to Hamas's coffers to finance its military wing and support the families of suicide bombers or those detained for terrorism," the police statement says.

IRANIAN CINEMA GIANT, BAHRAM BEYZAI, DIES AGED 87

Widespread tributes have been shared for Bahram Beyzai, a giant of Iranian cinema and theatre, who has died aged 87 in the US. The front pages of Iranian newspapers mourn his loss, with opposition voices and those who look back fondly on the Shah era also paying homage to Beyzai. Prince Reza Pahlavi, the exiled son of the last Shah of Iran, described his passing as "a great loss for the art and culture of our country". Although Beyzai's later films were banned in the 1980s by the Islamic regime that toppled the Shah, a number of senior figures in the current government have also paid tribute to his contribution to Iranian culture. Several of the current crop of



Iranian filmmakers have acknowledged their debt to him, with Jaafar Panahi - whose latest film won the top prize at this year's Cannes Film Festival - saying that he taught them "how to stand up to oblivion". Beyzai avoided direct political references in his work, both as a playwright and a film director, and always said he tried not to

trade in overt messages. But his work over many decades sets historical, even mythic figures in conflict with oppressive religious and political systems. From a family of celebrated poets, Beyzai was imbued in the deepest traditions of Persian culture from birth. He first found fame as a playwright, drawing on Persian legend and ritual.

Executions in Iran estimated to have doubled in 2025, report says



The number of executions in Iran in 2025 is estimated to have more than doubled compared to the number that took place across the country in 2024. Norwegian-based Iran Human Rights (IHR) group told the BBC it had verified at least 1,500 executions up until the start of December, adding that many more have taken place since. Last year, IHR was able to verify 975 executions - although the exact number is never completely clear as Iranian authorities do not give official figures. However, the analysis shows another significant annual rise, and the figures chime with those provided by other monitoring groups. Iran's government has previously defended its use of the death penalty, saying it is limited to only "the most severe crimes". Execution figures were already on the rise before mass demonstrations broke out across the country in 2022 following the death in custody of Mahsa Amini. The 22-year-old Kurdish woman was

detained by morality police in Tehran for allegedly wearing her hijab "improperly". That protest movement represented the biggest challenge to the legitimacy of Iran's theocratic leadership for many years. In response, authorities intensified the rate of executions from around 520 in 2022 to 832 the following year - according to the figures verified by IHR. There have been some executions for protesters or alleged spies - but 99% of those executed have been for murder or drug offences - a ratio which has remained constant. Activists have said that the rate of executions in Iran increases when the regime feels under threat and that the aim is to forestall internal opposition by instilling fear in the population. It seems to be borne out by the fact that since the 12-day war with Israel in June, as well as major setbacks for Iran's proxy forces across the region, there's been another big surge.

POUND-FOR-POUND STAR INOUE CRUISES PAST PICASSO

Japanese superstar Naoya Inoue outpointed Alan David Picasso Romero with a classy display to retain his undisputed super-bantamweight title in Saudi Arabia. Widely regarded as one of boxing's leading pound-for-pound fighters, Inoue, 32, showcased his ring intelligence, fast hands and sharp combinations over 12 dominant rounds. Picasso, 25, was unable to live with Inoue's speed and body shots in Riyadh as the judges scored the contest 119-109, 120-108 and 117-111 in favour of the champion. Despite the one-sided nature of the victory, Inoue - a four-division world champion and undisputed in two weight classes - said he was disappointed with his display. "My performance tonight is not good enough - I should have done better," he said. The win extended Inoue's perfect record to 32 victories, including 27 by knockout, and sets up a potential showdown in 2026



with compatriot Junto Nakatani. Nakatani outpointed Mexico's Sebastian Hernandez Reyes on the undercard in a close contest marred by a controversial scorecard. In a fight where a case could be made for either boxer, two judges scored it 115-113, with the third returning an inexplicable 118-110 card. Following Terence Crawford's retirement, Inoue can be considered among boxing's leading fighters, alongside heavy-weight champion Oleksandr

Usyk, who was ringside. After assessing Picasso in the opening rounds, Inoue moved smoothly through the gears. The taller, rangier Picasso enjoyed some single-punch success in the first half, but Inoue appeared largely untroubled by his opponent's power. Former middleweight world champion Gennady Golovkin, now president of World Boxing, watched from close quarters as Inoue upped the

tempo, throwing fluent combinations and pressing forward with confidence. Heavy right hands in the fifth and sixth rounds, coupled with repeated hooks to the body, slowed Picasso, whose movement began to fade as the outcome became increasingly clear. A thudding left hook in the 12th represented a valiant, last-ditch attempt at an unlikely upset, but the bout had long since become a masterclass. Making a fourth defence of his undisputed crown in 2025, Inoue continues to set the standard for activity at the elite level and places himself firmly in the conversation for fighter of the year. Inoue said in the build-up that his time in the sport is "running out" - but he has options. There has been speculation about a move up to feather-

weight to face Liverpool's WBA world champion Nick Ball, while he has also welcomed the challenge of hard-hitting unified super-fly-weight champion Jesse 'Bam' Rodriguez. The bout many fans - and influential Saudi Arabian boxing figure Turki Alalshikh - are most keen to see, however, is against Nakatani. Nakatani, who vacated his WBC and IBF bantamweight titles to move up in weight, was a heavy favourite against Hernandez and controlled the early rounds with sharp uppercuts and effective body work. Hernandez refused to fade, coming on strongly in the second half as he pressed forward relentlessly and landed telling shots. The controversial 118-110 scorecard underlined familiar judging concerns within the sport. Despite the controversy, the unbeaten Nakatani - a three-weight world champion - extended his record to 32 wins, 24 of them by stoppage.

Smriti Mandhana Breaks Mithali Raj's World Record During 4th T20I vs Sri Lanka

India batter Smriti Mandhana on Sunday achieved a massive world record during the 4th T20I against Sri Lanka in Thiruvananthapuram. The 29-year-old registered 10,000 runs in international women's cricket, becoming the fastest woman to achieve the milestone. She went past former India captain Mithali Raj on the elite list, reaching the milestone in just 280 innings. Mithali, on the other hand, took 291 innings to do so. Prior to this contest, Mandhana had scored 9,973 runs in international cricket. Fastest to 10,000 Women International runs (By Innings) 281 - Smriti Mandhana* 291 - Mithali Raj 308 - Charlotte Edwards 314 - Suzie Bates On Sunday, Mandhana slammed a half-century after India were put into bat by Sri Lanka. During the 1st T20I, Mandhana scripted history as she became the first Indian to hit 4000 runs in Women's T20I cricket. Mandhana, who scored 25 runs during



the opening T20I of the five-match series, also became the second woman to reach the landmark of 4000 runs in T20Is after New Zealand's Suzie Bates (4716 runs). Additionally, Mandhana was also the

quickest to do so in terms of balls taken (3227) than Bates, who took 3675 balls to reach the 4000 runs milestone. India came into the contest with an unassailable 3-0 lead in the five-match series.

Shubman Gill's T20 World Cup 2026 Snub Causing Disarray In Team India? Report's Big Claim

The decision by the BCCI selectors to drop star batter Shubman Gill from the squad for the 2026 T20 World Cup has left many fans and experts stunned. Gill, currently India's Test and ODI captain, was also the T20I vice-captain. However, with his recent struggles in the shortest format, he has been left out of the World Cup squad. According to a PTI report, the move has sparked uncertainty among players regarding their place in the side under Gautam Gambhir's coaching. The report claimed that the decision to drop Gill from the squad "had Gambhir's

footprints written all over it." It further stated that the decision has created unease among several players, who now believe that "if Indian cricket's next poster boy could be dumped by the wayside, the next omission could have anyone's name written on it." Gautam Gambhir's record as India's white-ball coach has been impressive, with an ICC and ACC trophy in each of the two formats. However, with 10 Test defeats against SENA countries, the same cannot be said for his performance in Test cricket. According to PTI, right after India's abject surren-

der against South Africa in the two-Test series at home last month, someone influential in the cricket board informally approached VVS Laxman to check if he would be interested in coaching the red-ball team.



Rohit Sharma Reunites With Ex-Mumbai Indians Teammate During Vijay Hazare Trophy

The Vijay Hazare Trophy 2025-26 turned out to be a grand spectacle for fans as India stalwarts Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli featured in two matches. While Rohit represented Mumbai, Kohli strengthened Delhi's playing XI with his presence. Interestingly, both batters scored centuries in their respective opening games (Rohit against Sikkim and



Kohli against Andhra Pradesh). Apart from the fans, it was also a special moment for former India pacer Dhawal Kulkarni, who reunited with his old Mumbai teammate Rohit. In a video going viral on social media, Rohit was seen meeting Kulkarni in the dressing room, where

the latter requested an autograph on his glove. Rohit obliged and signed the glove, leaving fans touched and emotional. Notably, both Rohit and Kulkarni played several domestic games for Mumbai together. Later, they were also teammates for Mumbai Indians in the

IPL. Talking about the first game, Rohit made a mockery of an inexperienced Sikkim bowling attack with a 94-ball 155 on his return to List A cricket, as Mumbai cruised to an eight-wicket victory in their opening Group C match of the Vijay Hazare Trophy in Jaipur. A near-capacity crowd of around 20,000 fans celebrated Christmas Eve witnessing the 'Hitman' carnage, which included 18 fours and nine sixes, as Mumbai chased down a target of 237 in just 30.3 overs. However, the former India skipper failed to replicate his heroics in the next game against Uttarakhand, as he was dismissed for a golden duck.

FREEMAN STARS AS NORTHAMPTON BEAT BATH TO GO TOP



Tommy Freeman scored a hat-trick of tries as Northampton leapfrogged Bath to go top of the Premiership with a stellar 41-21 victory in an enthralling clash at the Recreation Ground. Freeman's England teammate Henry Pollock scored two more of Saints' tries, with Archie MacParland getting another, as the visitors ended a run of 11 consecutive wins at home for the reigning Premiership champions. Saints, who saw two more potential tries chalked off by the television match official as they dominated in almost every area on the field, scored 27 unopposed points during the second-half. Bath, whose tries came via props Thomas du Toit (two) and Tom Dunn, drop to second in the table with their second loss this season. Both sides made 10 changes to their starting line-ups but Bath were at full strength while Saints had players such as Fin Smith, George Furbank and Alex Mitchell among those missing. Bath have not lost at the Rec in the Premiership since 5 October 2024 but were on the back foot imme-

diately as Freeman cut a fine diagonal line to open the scoring in the third minute. Edoardo Todaro thought he had Northampton's second shortly after, only for it to be pulled back before he touched the ball down for an earlier knock-on. Du Toit rolled over the line for Bath's first score and when Northampton saw Ed Prowse sent to the sin bin for head contact in a tackle, Dunn made it 14-7 to the hosts as Bath's maul powered him forward. McParland drew Saints level, slipping through a gap in the line to run over, before Todaro was denied again try by an excellent covering Sam Underhill tackle, as he cantered clear when Pollock intercepted. Callum Chick then had a try chalked off as Bath prop Beno Obano was judged to have been held in an earlier ruck during a TMO check, allowing the gap to open which led to the initial Saints line break, while a long ball out the back from Pollock went wide late in the first-half as another Saints opportunity went begging.

Magnus Carlsen Pushes Cameraman After Losing FIDE World Rapid Championship Match

World No. 1 and five-time World Rapid Champion Magnus Carlsen made headlines after suffering a shocking defeat against Russian Grandmaster Vladimir Artemiev in the FIDE World Rapid Championship on Saturday. In Round 7, Artemiev outplayed Carlsen in a game where the world's top-rated player committed a grave mistake on move 15, which proved costly. This victory propelled Artemiev to 6.5 points, a full point ahead of the field. Following the loss, Carlsen was visibly upset and stormed out of the playing hall. A video going viral on social media shows Carlsen being chased by a cameraman as he exited the venue. In a fit of rage, the Norwegian pushed the cameraperson away, expressing his frustration. After a strong start with 4.5/5 on Day 1, Carlsen's performance dipped on Day 2. In Round 6, he



played the Sicilian against Maxime Vachier-Lagrave but soon found himself saddled with tripled pawns on the e-file, spending considerable time searching for the right moves. After testing Carlsen for a few moves, Vachier-Lagrave agreed to split the

point. Carlsen bounced back in Round 8 with a win against Armenian GM Shant Sargsyan, and in the final round of the day, he held an advantage on time against US GM Ray Robson. With two straight victories, Carlsen joined a group of four players on seven points. < Meanwhile, reigning champion Koneru Humpy displayed her trademark composure and tenacity to remain in joint lead in the women's section, while Indian stars D. Gukesh and Arjun Erigaisi stayed in contention in the Open category on Day 2. With three more rounds to go in the women's section on Sunday, Humpy shared the lead with China's Zhu Jiner on 6.5 points out of a possible eight. The duo was closely followed by as many as 10 players on six points, including India's Dronavalli Harika.

MCG Pitch Curator Breaks Silence After 4th Ashes Test Ends Within 2 Days

The Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) chief curator Matt Page was left in a "state of shock" after the fourth Ashes Test between Australia and England ended within two days. Twenty wickets fell on Day 1, and a total of 36 wickets fell in the match, which lasted just two days. Following England's win, several former cricketers expressed their displeasure with the pace-friendly wicket that produced no fifties from the batters. "I was in a state of shock after the first day to see everything that happened," Page told SEN Cricket. "Twenty wickets in a day-I have never been involved in a Test match like it, and hopefully never will be again," he added. "It was a roller-coaster ride for two days



to see everything unfold. But we will learn from it, we will grow from it, we will get better at it, just like we have over the past years. I have no doubt we will come back bigger, better, and stronger than we have done," he further said. While Page was dis-

appointed that the Test ended within just two days, he explained the reason behind producing a bowler-friendly pitch. "This year, we have produced a pitch that has favoured the bowlers more than the batters. We had a lot of hot weather leading

into last year, which makes it easier for us to control our moisture leading in. We left more moisture in the top of the pitch last year to provide that contest early in the game," he said. "We felt that we had the balance really good leading into that game. This year we went in with 10 millimetres as we knew we were going to get a lot of hot weather at the back end of the game," he added. England ended an almost 15-year wait with a spirited victory on Australian soil in the fourth Ashes Test, defeating the hosts by four wickets in a frenetic Boxing Day contest. While the Ashes remain out of reach, Ben Stokes' side produced a statement performance, sealing the match in just 32.2 overs on Day 2.

SMALL HALLS IN CRISIS - BOXING'S LIFEblood IS STRUGGLING TO BREATHE



"I think it is an illness." Steve Wood, one of the country's most prominent small-hall promoters, has pondered why he stays involved in the sport when it is struggling to stay alive at the level he operates in. "You get involved and you can't get out," he added. Small-hall boxing is not in rude health. Ticket sales are down, the number of events is dropping, money is being lost and some fighters who fill these cards with dreams of bigger stages are retiring because of the lack of opportunities to earn enough. Many of the promoters who run what is considered the sport's grassroots are wondering why they continue to do it. What many consider the lifeblood of the sport is struggling to keep breathing. Small-hall boxing shows are the events without TV backing and big-name promoters which take place around the country in lesser-sized venues. They offer entertainment for punters but, more important-

ly for boxing, a pathway to the top for those boxers who may not be poached by the big-name promoters straight from the amateur scene or, in this modern world, the social media space. Think of Josh Warrington, the once dental technician from Leeds, who started on the small-hall circuit with Wood in the north of England and went on to become a world champion by winning the IBF featherweight title at Elland Road against Lee Selby. Without the scene, Warrington may never have had a career in the fight game at all, let alone reach the top. Wood has worked in the north of England for decades running boxing shows and managing fighters. It's a hobby, but an expensive one for the successful businessman. "It's not a struggle, it's impossible," said the VIP Promotions boss. "It's always been a struggle but it is more difficult now. I done it to start kids off on their careers and get them on to the TV shows.

Prabhas Hails Maruthi’s Climax, Wishes The Raja Saab a Sankranti Blockbuster

We made the film ‘The Raja Saab’ to give good entertainment to Darling’s fans. After watching this movie’s climax, I became a fan of Maruthi’s writing. Along with all the other Sankranti releases, I want ‘Tjr Raja Saab’ also to become a blockbuster” – Rebel Star Prabhas at the pre-release event

Rebel Star Prabhas is starring in the prestigious movie “Raja Saab”. Director Maruthi is making this film in such a way that it stands as an evergreen movie in the horror-comedy genre. Producers TG Vishwa Prasad and Krithi Prasad are producing “Raja Saab” on a grand scale with uncompromising production values. Malavika Mohanan, Nidhi Agerwal, and Riddhi Kumar are playing the female leads. To double the Sankranti festivities, “Raja Saab” is getting ready for a worldwide grand theatrical release on January 9. Today, the pre-release event of “Raja Saab” was held grandly in Hyderabad. At this event, Director Maruthi said, “The reason I am standing on this stage today is because of the



support you have given me. Two people stood strongly behind ‘The Raja Saab’: Prabhas garu and Vishwa Prasad garu. Vishwa Prasad garu and the entire People Media team put their lives into this film. When Prabhas garu was acting as Rama in ‘Adipurush’, I went to him with the ‘Raja Saab’ story. After listening to it, Prabhas garu laughed a lot. He did not need to do this

film. After ‘Baahubali’, Prabhas garu gained worldwide recognition. While we were shooting in a small town in South Africa, even the locals recognized Prabhas garu, which surprised us. The pan-India effort made by Rajamouli garu is benefiting all of us today. Directors like Sukumar, Sandeep Vanga, and I are doing pan-India films now. Many of our stars

have reached pan-India status. With Prabhas garu, we did not just make a film; we made a large-scale movie. This genre has great potential, and we are taking it to another level. Many people worked hard for ‘The Raja Saab’. I have made 11 films, and Prabhas garu gave me an opportunity at Rebel University, saying that I should become a director of a bigger range. I wrote and

directed this film, but the effort Prabhas garu put into it, his involvement, and the support he gave us cannot be expressed in words. Even though many films are coming this Sankranti, Vishwa Prasad garu is bravely bringing ‘Raja Saab’. The success ‘The Raja Saab’ will achieve in all languages will not be ordinary. I watch my films like an audience member.

Eesha completes breakeven mark: Enters Profit Zone

The horror thriller Eesha has turned into a solid Christmas blockbuster despite facing stiff competition at the box office with multiple releases. The victorious duo Bunny Vas and Vamsi Nandipati have scored yet another blockbuster with this gripping horror thriller. With a unique twist, a strong story, and impressive performances, the film is creating a sensation in cinema halls. Every bone-chilling scene delivers goosebumps, instilling both fear and excitement among the audience. What began as a modest release quickly turned into a major sensation, fueled by heavy advance bookings and strong audience turnout in theaters, ultimately achieving blockbuster status. Eesha collected an impressive ₹4.8 crores gross within just three days, including premiere shows, marking a huge success for a small film. With consistently good occupancy, the film entered the profit zone within three days and comfortably crossed its breakeven point. This



success also gave Bunny Vas and Vamsi Nandipati a hat-trick of hits, following Little Hearts and Raju Weds Rambai. These collections and the strong occupancy clearly reflect the success of this small film. The movie features Thrigun and Hebah Patel in lead roles, with Akhil Raj and Siri Hanmanth

playing significant roles, earning the success they truly deserve. This small film is making a big impact everywhere, backed by solid reviews from both audiences and critics. Amid multiple releases slated for December 25th, this horror thriller truly stands out.

Due to objections raised by the censor board, the film originally titled Vanara has been renamed VanaVeera; gearing up for a grand worldwide theatrical release on January 1st

VanaVeera introduces Avinash Thiruveedhula as both hero and director. Simran Choudhary plays the female lead, while Nandu appears as the antagonist. The film is presented by Shanthanu Pathi and produced under the Silver Screen Cinemas banner by Avinash Buyani, Alapati Raja, and C. Ankit Reddy. Dialogues by Sai Madhav Burra and music by Vivek Sagar are major highlights. Made as a mythological rural drama, VanaVeera is ready to hit theatres worldwide on January 1 as a New Year release. The trailer launch event of the film was held grandly in Hyderabad today. Speaking at the event, actor Harsha said, “Like everyone else, we worked extremely hard for our film VanaVeera. You can understand what this film is all about just by watching the trailer. This is essentially a story about a son’s struggle for his father. I request



everyone to watch our film in theatres on January 1 and support us.” Actor Bobby said, “I really like the title VanaVeera. With this film, we are hoping to reach the audience about ten days ahead of the Sankranti season. This movie has all the elements required to satisfy family audiences as well as youth.” DOP Chota K. Prasad said, “We worked on this film with great effort for two years. Earlier, the audi-

ence took the title Vanara forward, and now you need to take VanaVeera to the people as well. I am very happy that our hero Kiran Abbavaram released the trailer. I sincerely request your support for VanaVeera, which is releasing on January 1.” Actress Simran Choudhary said, “VanaVeera is a very good family entertainer. This film has fun, mystery, thrilling moments, and romance -

everything audiences look for. We are going to start the coming year with a bang through this movie. Telugu audiences always support good films, and we have complete faith in them. I hope all of you will encourage and support VanaVeera.” Producer Shanthanu Pathi said, “Since the censor board did not approve our original title, we had to change it to VanaVeera. We registered the title with all proper permissions and spent a lot on promotions under that name. Now, media friends need to help us take the title VanaVeera to the audience. Our film is a complete family entertainer with all the elements audiences expect. When you watch it on screen, it will feel like a big film, not a small-budget one. I thank Kiran Abbavaram garu for releasing our trailer and producer Rajesh Danda garu for attending today’s

O Andala Rakshasi Arriving on January 2 promises Compelling Content: Hero & Director Sheraz Mehdi at Pre-Release Event

Sheraz Mehdi has been winning appreciation as a director, actor, music composer, and storyteller. He is now set to once again entertain as both hero and director with his upcoming film O Andala Rakshasi. The film stars Vihanshi Hegde and Kriti Verma as the female leads. Produced by Surinder Kaur under the Sky Is the Limit banner, O Andala Rakshasi is scheduled for a grand release on January 2. Ahead of the release, the film’s team held a pre-release event. Speaking at the event, Sheraz Mehdi said: “We are releasing O Andala Rakshasi on January 2 on a large scale. Once in a year, a truly good film comes along and our O Andala Rakshasi is one such film. Vihanshi Hegde, Kriti verma, Neha Deshpande, Akhila, Geetha Reddy, Sneha, Priya Deshpande, Suman garu, Thammareddy Bharadwaj garu, and many others have delivered wonderful performances in



remarkable roles. This is a good film backed by excellent content. The audience won’t feel bored even for a minute. It is entertaining while also carrying a strong message. The twists are outstanding, and it will especially appeal to women.” Story and dialogue writer Bhashya Sree said: “I wrote the story and dialogues for O Andala Rakshasi. Audiences will walk out of the theatre with a very positive feeling. We made this

film around the concept of how today’s young women should be. Our hero Sheraz garu has performed brilliantly. As a director, music director, and hero, he has created pure magic. Kriti Verma is very famous in Bollywood, and Vihanshi has acted wonderfully. This film will be liked by everyone. Do watch it in theatres on January 2.” Kriti Verma shared: “Many thanks to Sheraz garu for giving me this opportunity in O

Andala Rakshasi. We are coming before the audience on January 2. With God’s blessings and the support of the audience, I believe our film will become a big hit.” Vihanshi Hegde said: “When girls are cheated, their beauty turns into a demon—that is O Andala Rakshasi. I really loved this film and its story. I hope the audience will love it too. Many thanks to Sheraz garu, Bhashya Sree, and producer Surinder garu for giving me

Huma Qureshi Stuns as Elizabeth in Yash–Geetu Mohandas’ Toxic

“I was bowled over by the sheer audacity and magnitude of what we were going to attempt,” Huma Qureshi on collaborating with Geetu Mohandas and Yash on Toxic: A Fairytale for Grown-Ups The makers of Rocking Star Yash’s Toxic: A Fairytale for Grown-Ups have unveiled the first look of Huma Qureshi as Elizabeth, adding to the growing buzz around one of the most awaited films of 2026. Known for choosing unconventional roles, Huma’s entry into the world of Toxic hints at a character with mystery and intensity. In the first look, Huma is seen standing in a graveyard setting, surrounded by weathered tombstones and stone angels. She is positioned beside a vintage black car and dressed in an off-shoulder black outfit with dramatic sleeves, bringing in old-world elegance. The dark, gothic backdrop adds a foreboding tone,



offering a glimpse into the film’s intense world. Sharing her thoughts on casting Huma, director

Geetu Mohandas took to Instagram and wrote, “Casting for this role was perhaps the trickiest.



Mumbai: Global sensation Priyanka Chopra seems to be making the most of the Holiday season with her loved ones in the

Priyanka Chopra shares cozy snowtime glimpses of Malti Marie

U.S. Taking a short break from her work commitments, she is spending time with daughter Malti Marie Chopra Jonas and husband Nick Jonas. In her latest post, PeeCee was seen capturing her little bundle of joy enjoying the snow season. Priyanka uploaded a video on her Instagram handle, where she and Malti were seen taking a stroll around the snow-clad city. Dressed in a white coat and pants, the little munchkin looked adorable as she twinned with her mom, who looked as stylish as ever in a beanie. Seeing snow, Malti was unable to contain her excitement and was seen running on the snow-covered path while holding her mother’s hand. “0 visibility but...joy at a 100% (sic),” Priyanka captioned the

post. PeeCee dropped another post sharing a couple of happy moments with Malti and her mother, M a d h u Chopra. F r o m posing with her mom, t o going on a drive in the snow, to little Malti sitting next to the fire to tackle the cold, Priyanka’s post gave out wholesome holiday vibes. PeeCee further dropped a clip of Malti getting delighted

after seeing her footsteps on the snow-clad path. Priyanka captioned the post, “Proof that sometimes happiness falls from the sky.”

