


OM NAMO VENKATESAYA



16-12-2025
Total pilgrims: 63,738
Tonsures: 19,746
Hundi kanukalu: 4.79 CR
Waiting Compartments: 12

Approx. Darsan Time for Sarvadarshanam (with out SSD Tokens) .8 H

TO BOOK YOUR ADS CALL

99484 80279, 73307 78889

NATION | NEWS

Road accident victims to get Rs. 1.5 lakh cashless treatment for first 7 days: Gadkari



WORLD | NEWS

Venezuela denounces Trump's order for ship blockade as 'warmongering threats'



SPORTS | NEWS

IPLAuction 2026: CSK "Missed A Trick," R Ashwin Shows Five-Time Champions The Mirror Over 'Generational Talent' Miss



INBRIF

Peak coldwave likely across Telangana...

HYDERABAD: The city and several parts of Telangana are likely to experience a peak cold-wave between December 18 and 21, with temperatures expected to dip further over the next four days, according to weather observers.

According to weather enthusiast T Balaji, parts of Hyderabad may witness 7-9 degrees Celsius making it one of the coldest spells of the season so far.

Minimum temperatures are forecast to fall below 6 degrees Celsius in parts of north and west TelanganaFor the last 10 days, Telangana has been reeling under intense coldwave conditions, especially during early morning and night hours. Residents have been advised to take precautions against the cold.

SIR in 3 states, 2 UTs: Over 1 cr electors left out of draft electoral rolls

NEW DELHI: As many as 12.32 crore electors have found their names in the draft electoral rolls of three states and two Union territories published on Tuesday as part of the ongoing special intensive revision as compared to the 13.36 crore people who were part of the voters' list on October 27. Election Commission officials said the names in the draft electoral rolls also include new voters who had filled up Form 6 to become part of the electorate.

In West Bengal, out of 7.66 crore electors as on October 27, as many as 7.08 crore were included in the draft electoral rolls, a net difference of 58 lakh. EC officials said the electors who did not return the enumeration forms have been included in the last of ASD -- absent, shifted, dead/duplicate electors.

Centre clears major boost for digital governance

NEW DELHI: The Union Cabinet on Tuesday approved a major initiative aimed at strengthening digital governance and improving public service delivery across the country. The decision is expected to enhance transparency, reduce administrative delays and make government services more accessible to citizens, especially in rural and remote areas.

According to officials, the initiative will integrate multiple platforms under a unified digital framework, allowing seamless access to essential services such as welfare schemes, documentation and grievance redressal. The move aligns with the government's broader push towards technology-driven governance and ease of living.



President Murmu arrives in Hyderabad for winter sojourn

HYDERABAD (TSIT): President Droupadi Murmu arrived in Hyderabad on Wednesday for a five-day winter sojourn. Telangana Governor Jishnu Dev Varma, Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, ministers D. Sridhar Babu, and Seethakka accorded a warm welcome to the President at Air Force Station, Hakeempet.

Chief Secretary K. Ramakrishna Rao, Director General of Police B. Shivadhar Reddy and senior civil and defence officials received the President. The President later left by road for Rashtrapati Nilayam at Bollaram, where she will stay till December 21 as part of her winter retreat.

Police had made tight security arrangements and diverted traffic at various points on the route to Rashtrapati Nilayam.

On December 19, the President will inaugurate the National Conference for the Chairpersons of Public Service Commissions, being organised by the Telangana Public Service Commission in Hyderabad. On December 20, she will address a conference on 'Timeless Wisdom of Bharat: Pathways of Peace and Progress', being organised by Brahma Kumaris Shanti Sarovar in Hyderabad. Central government and state government departments, as well as Rashtrapati Nilayam officials, made elaborate arrangements for the President.

The police and fire services department have deployed personnel and provided adequate fire safety arrangements and fire tenders. The medical and health department has also kept a medical team on standby at Rashtrapati Nilayam.

CS & DGP Review 3rd Phase Panchayat Polling Pattern with State Election Commissioner



HYDERABAD (TSIT): Chief Secretary Ramakrishna Rao and Director General of Police (DGP) Shivadhar Reddy on Wednesday reviewed the polling pattern of the third phase of Gram Panchayat elections being held across the State. The review was conducted through webcasting facilities at the State Election Office, along with State Election Commissioner Rani Kumudini.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Secretary said that the State government would make wider use of webcasting technology in future elections to ensure greater transparency in the polling process. He observed that the use of technology in elections helps reduce law and order issues in villages and enhances public confidence, which in turn is likely to improve voter turnout. The Chief Secretary noted that compared to the polling percentages recorded during the first and second phases, voter turnout in the third phase is expected to be higher. He congratulated district collectors, election officials and polling staff for ensuring the smooth and peaceful conduct of the elections.

Telangana Speaker dismisses petitions for disqualification of five BRS MLAs

HYDERABAD (TSIT): Telangana Assembly Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar on Wednesday dismissed the petitions to disqualify five BRS MLAs who allegedly shifted loyalties to the ruling Congress.

Pronouncing the orders on the petitions for disqualification of the MLAs, the Speaker said the petitioners failed to provide evidence that they defected to the Congress.

The Speaker ruled that the anti-defection law does not apply to the MLAs Tellam Venkat Rao, Bandla Krishna Mohan Reddy, T. Prakash Goud, Gudem Mahipal Reddy, and Arekapudi Gandhi.

He made it clear that the MLAs are technically still in Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS). The Speaker pronounced the orders on the petitions for the disqualification of five out of 10 BRS MLAs for allegedly switching loyalties to the ruling party. He had completed the hearing on the petitions for the disqualification of eight MLAs and reserved the orders. The Speaker is likely to pronounce on Thursday orders on the disqualification of three other MLAs - Kale Yadaiah, Sanjay Kumar, and Pocharam Srinivas Reddy.

The decision on the disqualification of two other MLAs, Danam Nagender and Kadiyam Srihari, is likely after they submit their replies to the notices served on them.

They sought more time to respond to the notice sent by the Speaker last month.

PM Modi arrives in Oman on final leg of his three-nation visit

Muscat, Dec 17: Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in Oman's Muscat on Wednesday for the third and final leg of his three-nation visit. Upon his arrival, Oman's Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq Al Said warmly received PM Modi at the airport.



The two leaders warmly greeted each other at the airport. A Guard of Honour was accorded to PM Modi as part of the ceremonial welcome. This will be Prime Minister Modi's second visit to Oman, underscoring the growing depth of the India-Oman strategic partnership. The visit assumes spe-

cial significance as it coincides with the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Oman. It also follows Sultan Haitham bin Tariq's state visit to India in December 2023, reflecting the high-level political engagement between the two countries.

Andhra Pradesh's overall growth rate shows upward trend



AMARAVATI, (TSIT) : Andhra Pradesh's overall economic growth rate is showing a strong upward trend, with

strong growth momentum during the first half of the year, a top official said on Wednesday.

Peeyush Kumar, Principal Secretary, Planning, presented a comprehensive overview of Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP), Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the 5th Collectors' conference here.

NIGHTCLUB FIRE: Luthra brothers brought to Goa from Delhi

PANAJI (TSIT): Gaurav and Saurabh Luthra, co-owners of the Birch by Romeo Lane nightclub, were brought to Goa from Delhi on Wednesday after being deported from Thailand in connection with the December 6 fire incident that killed 25 persons. They will be interrogated by the Goa Police in connection with the devastating fire at the nightclub in Arpora, North Goa, an official said.

Air pollution: SC asks NHAI, MCD to consider shifting or closing 9 toll plazas at Delhi borders

NEW DELHI (TSIT): Taking a serious note of the severe air pollution levels in Delhi-NCR, the Supreme Court on Wednesday issued a slew of directions and asked the NHAI and the MCD to consider either temporary closing or relocating the nine toll plazas of the civic body at borders of the national capital to ease usual massive traffic congestion.

The top court described the pollution



crisis as an "annual feature" and called for pragmatic and practical solutions to tackle the menace and modified its own interim order of August 12 and permitted the authorities to take

coercive action against older vehicles that do not meet Bharat Stage-IV (BS-IV) emission standards.

It, however, refused to interfere with Delhi government's decision to stop physical classes for students of nursery to Class 5, holding that no further tinkering was required as the winter break was already approaching. In an effort to ease vehicular congestion at Delhi's borders.

K'taka Congress protest over MGNREGA row, 'hate politics' in National Herald case

Alleging misuse of power by the Modi-led BJP government, Siddaramaiah accused the BJP of indulging in politics of hatred and carrying out a malicious campaign by foisting cases on Congress leaders.

BELAGAVI (TSIT): The ruling Congress in Karnataka on Wednesday staged a protest against the Centre's move to replace the existing rural employment law MGNREGA, challenging the BJP to remove the picture of Mahatma Gandhi from currency notes as well.

The agitation led by chief minister Siddaramaiah and his deputy D K Shivakumar in front of the Gandhi statue at Suvarna Vidhana Soudha here also pro-



tested the alleged "hate politics" against the party leadership in the National Herald case. The protest witnessed the participation of ministers, Congress MLAs and MLCs.

Alleging misuse of power by

the Modi-led BJP government, Siddaramaiah accused the BJP of indulging in politics of hatred and carrying out a malicious campaign by foisting cases on Congress leaders, including Sonia Gandhi and Leader of

Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi.

"The trial court's rejection of the ED chargesheet in the National Herald case once again exposes how the Modi Government has misused power to harass political opponents.

In this context, we protested today at the Gandhi statue in Suvarna Soudha, Belagavi, and strongly condemned the Union Government's politics of vendetta. We stand in firm moral solidarity with Sonia Gandhi and her family in the face of the intimidation unleashed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah," he said. He further accused BJP of engaging in renaming exercises instead of focusing on work to benefit the poor.

Proactive measures guard TN from climate vagaries: CM Stalin

CHENNAI (TSIT): Acknowledging that the impacts of climate change are clearly visible, Chief Minister MK Stalin stressed that Tamil Nadu has been able to effectively protect itself from major damage due to proactive preparedness measures taken by the State government.

Speaking in the third meeting of Tamil Nadu Governing Council on Climate Change, Stalin further recalled that Cyclone Ditwah severely impacted Sri Lanka but Tamil Nadu was spared from heavy damage because the government had anticipated risks and strengthened disaster prevention and infor-



mation infrastructure three years ago.

"Cool roof project has been included in the action plan of Tamil Nadu Climate Change Mission. A pilot project implemented at the Perunthalaivar Kamarajar Government Girls Higher Secondary School in Ambattur has reduced classroom temperatures by 1.5 to 3 degrees Celsius. Based on this success, the project will be extended to 297 green schools across the State," he added.

NIA to have dedicated court in each state, UT; Delhi to have 16 special courts: Centre to SC

NEW DELHI: The Centre on Tuesday told the Supreme Court that to ensure speedy trial, it has decided to set up a dedicated NIA court in each state and Union territory and more than one court at places where there are over 10 cases under anti-terror law. A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi was also told by the Delhi government that 16 special courts are being created in the national capital to deal with organised crime and terror cases. The top court asked the Centre and the Delhi government to explore the possibility of enacting a stringent anti-organised crime law like MCOCA for the entire National Capital Region, to avoid any jurisdictional conflict between different law enforcement agencies. Taking note of gangster Mahesh Khatri, who has multiple cases registered against him in different areas of the NCR and is before the court seeking bail on the ground of delayed trial, CJI Kant

said hardened criminals involved in organised crime take undue advantage of the jurisdictional issues in NCR and evade the law. "Sometimes the offence is generated in say A state, and the offender moves to B state. But which court or agency should take cognisance of the matter for prompt investigation, or which courts shall have the competent jurisdiction itself becomes an issue in the criminal trial," the bench said. The top court was hearing bail pleas of Khatri and of Kailash Ramchandani, a Naxal sympathiser from Gadchiroli in Maharashtra, who was booked after 15 policemen of a quick response team were killed in an IED blast in 2019. The CJI said the eventual benefit goes to the hardened criminals, which may not be in the interest of society or the nation. "It seems that the issue requires consideration, including the desirability of formulation of effective laws for the effective utilisation



of existing legal architecture in the NCR region," he said. While pointing to the multiple FIR in the case of Khatri, Justice Bagchi told Additional Solicitor Generals Aishwarya Bhati (Centre) and SD Sanjay (Delhi government) that they can explore the possibility of invoking of NIA

Act in such cases, where there are multiple FIRs in different states. He said NIA has the supervening power of taking over all the investigation, particularly in respect of these organised crime brackets. Bhati pointed to the status report of the Centre and said that a virtual meeting of the union home secretary was held with his counterparts of different states and it was agreed that additional infrastructure and post of judicial officers will be created to deal with NIA cases and for this funds will be allocated. She submitted that the Centre has decided to set up NIA courts in each state and union territories and where there are more than 10 cases like in Kerala due to banned PFI-related cases, more than one NIA court will be there. "I can say that Rs one crore for recurring and non-recurring expenditure has been proposed by the Centre for setting up additional NIA courts," she submitted. Sanjay on other hand submitted that the 16 special courts which have been committed for trial of gangster and terror related cases, will start functioning in three months. The bench said, "We want these dedicated courts to conduct day-to-day trials in NIA and special

statute cases and would not hold trials for any other case. It is only when they are idle, they will look into other cases." CJI Kant said it should not be a case that existing courts are designated as special courts and burden the existing judicial machinery by entrusting special enactment cases. Both Bhati and Sanjay assured the bench that it was not the case and additional infrastructure is being created. The top court directed both the law officers to file an action taken report and posted the matter for further hearing in January, 2026. Earlier, in July the top court had pulled up the Centre and Maharashtra government for designating existing courts as special courts as it asked for the creation of newer ones meant for special cases. It had said if existing courts were designated as special courts for trials under the NIA Act, cases of undertrials languishing in jail

for years, senior citizens, people from marginalised sections and matrimonial disputes would be delayed. The top court had underscored the need of the hour to be the creation of more infrastructure, appointment of judges and staff and the government sanctioning the posts. On May 23, the top court underlined the need for dedicated courts for NIA cases while calling for a "judicial audit" of laws enacted by the Centre and the prospective ones by the states. It said the cases entrusted to the NIA were heinous cases, having pan India ramifications and each such case contained hundreds of witnesses and the trial did not progress with the required pace as the presiding officers of the court were busy with other cases. The top court further said the only appropriate course meant setting up special courts where trial of cases only related to special statutes could be carried out with a day-to-day hearing.

Over 1,100 infiltration attempts, 2500 arrests on India-Bangladesh border in 2025: Govt

NEW DELHI: The India-Bangladesh border witnessed the highest 1,100 infiltration attempts and over 2,500 arrests between January and November 2025, according to data provided by the government in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday. Also, 79.08 per cent of the border with Bangladesh and 93.25 per cent of the border with Pakistan have been fenced. In a written reply, Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai gave the data on infiltration attempts and arrests of infiltrators across the Indian borders with Bangladesh, China, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar. The data showed 1,104 infiltration attempts were detected along the India-Bangladesh border during the first 11 months of 2025, while 2,556 infiltrators were arrested during the same period, the highest among all borders. No infiltration cases were re-

ported along the India-China border, the minister said. Giving a broader picture, Rai said that since 2014, more than 8,500 infiltration attempts have been detected across India's borders, while over 20,800 infiltrators have been arrested. The India-Bangladesh border, which is 4,096.70 km long, accounted for the bulk of these cases, with over 7,500 infiltration attempts and more than 18,800 arrests recorded between 2014 and 2024. Providing year-wise details for the India-Bangladesh border, the minister said 855 infiltration attempts were detected in 2014 with 2,160 arrests. In 2019, 500 attempts were recorded and 1,109 infiltrators were apprehended. In 2022, agencies detected 857 attempts and arrested 2,076 infiltrators, while 2024 saw 977 infiltration attempts and 2,525 arrests. Along the 2,289.66-km-

long India-Pakistan border, around 420 infiltration attempts were detected since 2014, with about 560 arrests reported. The 1,643-km India-Myanmar border recorded over 290 infiltration attempts and nearly 1,150 arrests during the same period. The India-Nepal and India-Bhutan borders together saw close to 160 infiltration attempts and around 260 arrests, the reply said. On border infrastructure, Rai said 79.08 per cent of the India-Bangladesh border has been physically fenced, covering 3,239.92 km, while 856.78 km remains unfenced. Along the India-Pakistan border, 93.25 per cent has been fenced, with 2,135.14 km covered and 154.52 km still unfenced. The minister added that 9.21 km of physical fencing has also been completed along the 1,643 km-long India-Myanmar border.

Goa nightclub fire: Luthra brothers deported from Thailand, taken into police custody

NEW DELHI: Gaurav Luthra and Saurabh Luthra, co-owners of the Birch by Romeo Lane nightclub in Goa where a massive fire killed 25 people, were arrested on Tuesday as soon as they landed in Delhi after being deported from Thailand. The brothers arrived in the Indian capital in an Indigo flight and were immediately handed over to authorities for further legal proceedings, 10 days after a blaze tore through the Birch by Romeo Lane nightclub in Arpora in North Goa. Gaurav, 44, and Saurabh, 40, will be produced before a Delhi court where the Goa police will seek their transit remand. They were questioned at the airport, the formalities taking several hours. Several reporters and camerapersons were travelling on the flight. As the plane landed in Delhi, a TV reporter attempted to record the Luthra brothers inside the aircraft, prompting accompanying officials to tighten security around the two men and prevent them from talking to



anybody. The Luthra brothers are facing a case of culpable homicide and negligence following the December 6 tragedy, which investigators allege was compounded by the nightclub operating in violation of mandatory fire safety norms. The incident raised serious questions over alleged fire

safety violations and lapses by the management. Gaurav and Saurabh fled to Phuket in the early hours of December 7, hours after the fire at their nightclub, prompting the authorities to issue an Interpol Blue Corner Notice and cancel their passports. The duo was detained by Thai

authorities at Phuket on December 11 following a request from the Indian government which later coordinated with officials in Thailand to deport them under legal treaties between the two nations. On December 11, a Delhi court rejected the transit anticipatory bail pleas. Additional Sessions Judge Vandana termed the allegations against the brothers "prima facie grave and serious" and severely criticised their "conduct." The court took note of the police investigation that the brothers had booked tickets to Phuket one hour after the fire, a fact their counsel had initially "concealed" while seeking protection from immediate arrest. The judge said that leaving immediately after the tragedy was a clear attempt to "evade the legal process". Observing that "someone has to be held accountable" for the tragedy, the Goa bench of the Bombay High Court on Monday converted a civil suit against the nightclub into a public interest litigation (PIL).

LS nod to bill for repealing or amending 71 laws

NEW DELHI: The Lok Sabha on Tuesday passed a bill for repealing or amending 71 obsolete and outdated laws, with Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal asserting that the progressive legislation would contribute to ease of living for citizens. Replying to a brief discussion on the Repealing and Amending Bill-2025, Meghwal said the proposed legislation was aimed at removing outdated laws, correcting errors that had crept in during the law-making process and removing discriminatory aspects of certain laws. The bill was passed by a voice vote. "Under the Narendra Modi government, no discrimination can exist in the statute books," Meghwal said, referring to the Indian Succession Act. The Minister said that under the Indian Succession Act, 1925, if a Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Jain or Parsi makes a will, it has to be probated, while a similar provision does



not apply to any other community. The Bill seeks to repeal 71 Acts, including The Indian Tramways Act, 1886, the Levy Sugar Price Equalisation Fund Act, 1976, and the Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (Determination of Conditions of Service of Employees) Act, 1988. The Bill also seeks to amend four Acts, including the General Clauses Act, 1897, the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, to update terminologies for registered posts, and The Indian Succession Act, 1925, to

remove the requirement to obtain validation of wills by Courts in certain cases. The Bill also amends the Disaster Management Act, 2005, to rectify a drafting error. So far, 1,562 old archaic laws have been repealed. Once the proposed Bill gets Parliament's nod, the total number of laws to be repealed will stand at 1,633. Since May 2014, the Modi government has been consistently repealing colonial era, archaic and obsolete laws to declutter statute books, Meghwal said. "These reforms are a step

towards liberation from a colonial mindset. Such laws that bore the imprint of colonialism... are being abolished during the tenure of Prime Minister Modi," Meghwal said. Meghwal said several members had raised issues that were not related to the Bill and he would not respond to them. Participating in the debate, Congress member Ummada Ram Beniwal said the Bill does not seem to make any amendments to benefit the people. "This seems aimed more at rectifying the Centre's own legislative adventures," said Beniwal. Congress member Dean Kuriakose expressed strong reservations on the Repealing and Amending Bill, 2025. "While the government claims this is a routine housekeeping exercise to remove obsolete laws, a closer look at the Second Schedule reveals amendments that are not merely formal but have serious substantive implications for the common man and our disaster

resilience," he said. "How, then, can we so casually and lightly pass these amendments without any detailed discussion," he said. BJP's Manoj Tiwari said that through this amendment, they are going to amend or repeal some laws that are from as far back as 1886, and this should have been done within 20 to 25 years of the country's independence. He said that most of the 71 laws have been incorporated into the main articles after amendment, and once they have been incorporated, there is no need to retain them in their old form. Tiwari said that only four of these laws are being amended, while the rest are being repealed. Samajwadi Party's Lalji Verma expressed concern over the introduction and passage of important bills on the same day, saying that the current government has rushed through many laws, which is why the need for such a bill has arisen today.

Army celebrates Vijay Diwas in remote Mechuka in Arunachal

ITANAGAR: The Indian Army on Tuesday commemorated Vijay Diwas in the remote border village of Mechuka in Arunachal Pradesh's Shi-Yomi district. The Army organised a special screening of a documentary on the 1971 war for school students, highlighting military operations, strategic leadership and bravery of Indian soldiers, defence spokesperson Lt Col Mahendra Rawat said. The screening was followed by an interactive session in which Army personnel spoke on the historical importance of the 1971 war and the enduring role of the armed forces in safeguarding the nation's unity and integrity. The programme also focused on fostering patriotism and national pride

among the younger generation, while strengthening the bond between the Indian Army and students in the border region. Emphasis was laid on values such as courage, discipline and selfless service exemplified by the soldiers, the official said. The Army also felicitated veterans with officers visiting their residences, acknowledging their immense courage, sacrifices and invaluable contribution to the nation. Army personnel interacted with the war heroes and their families, reaffirming their commitment to honouring those who laid down their lives in the service of the country. The state's leaders also paid rich tributes to the valour and sacrifice of the armed forces on the occasion. Deputy Chief Minister

Chowna Mein led the tributes, recalling the courage and selfless service of the soldiers who upheld the nation's honour and secured peace and freedom for future generations. Mein said Vijay Diwas is a solemn reminder of the "unmatched courage, sacrifice and valour of the Indian Armed Forces who secured a historic victory in 1971 and upheld the honour of our nation". He said their dedication and selfless service continue to ensure India's sovereignty, peace and freedom. Home Minister Mama Nantung also paid homage to the soldiers, stating that the "brave hearts fought with courage and compassion to protect justice and humanity". He said their sacrifices are etched forever in India's history and in the hearts of every Indian.

34 Naxalites surrender in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur; 26 of them carry total Rs 84 lakh reward

BIJAPUR: Thirty-four Naxalites, 26 of them collectively carrying a reward of Rs 84 lakh, surrendered in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district on Tuesday, police said. The cadres, including seven women, turned themselves in before senior police and CRPF officials here under the "Poona Margem (from rehabilitation to social reintegration) rehabilitation initiative, Bijapur Superintendent of Police Jitendra Yadav said. The cadres were active in Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee (DKSZC), Telangana State Committee and Andhra Odisha Border division of Maoists, he said. The key cadres include Pandru Punem (45), Rukni

Hemla (25), Deva Uika (22), Ramlal Poyam (27) and Motu Punem (21), all carrying a reward of Rs 8 lakh each, he said. Under the rehabilitation policy, surrendered cadres will be provided an instant assistance of Rs 50,000 each along with other facilities provided by the Chhattisgarh government, like training for skill development and other facilities, he said. The state government's rehabilitation policy has been attracting Maoists to abandon violence. The families of those who have surrendered also want them to lead normal lives and walk hand in hand with society, Yadav said.

National Herald case: ED to file fresh charge sheet against Gandhis, takes cognisance of Delhi Police FIR

NEW DELHI: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) will file a fresh charge sheet against Congress leaders Sonia and Rahul Gandhi apart from others as it has taken cognisance of the latest Delhi Police FIR filed in the National Herald money laundering case, officials said Tuesday. Earlier in the day, a trial court here refused to take cognisance of a charge sheet filed by the federal probe agency in April against the mother-son duo apart from some others. The court said the rejection was made on the grounds that the ED charge sheet was based on a private complaint and a subsequent cognisance taken by a Metropolitan Magistrate and not on an FIR as stipulated under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

The ED may file an appeal against the order of Special Judge Vishal Gogne after taking opinion from the Solicitor General (SG) or an Additional Solicitor General (ASG), the officials told PTI. Reacting to the court order, the Congress claimed victory alleging that the "illegality" of the Narendra Modi government and its "politically motivated prosecution stood fully exposed". Officials said the court has not quashed the ED ECIR (enforcement case information report), the police equivalent of FIR in PMLA, that was filed on May 30, 2021 and on which the entire case is based. It was on this ECIR that the ED filed the charge sheet alleging the Gandhi family "abused" their position for personal gains and Young Indian (YI), a private company



"beneficially owned" by the mother-son duo, "acquired" Associated Journals Ltd. (AJL) properties worth Rs 2,000 crore for a mere Rs 50 lakh, significantly undervaluing its worth. AJL is the publisher of the National Herald news platform (newspaper and web portal) and it is owned by Young Indian Private Lim-

ited. The ED ECIR (FIR) of 2021 in the National Herald case stands. The court has only said that the cognisance of the charge sheet is impermissible. The agency has merged the EOW FIR of October 3 to its existing ECIR to ensure that its case and investigation remain on a strong legal ground, the officials said. Officials told PTI

the agency has shared a good amount of documentary "evidence", collected by it in this case during the course of investigation, with the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) in September which became the basis for the police to file a criminal complaint on October 3. Once the police files its charge sheet in the case, a fresh ED charge sheet will follow, they said. The ED may choose to put up some questionnaires to the accused again before filing its fresh charge sheet, they said. The Gandhis, the majority shareholders of Young Indian with 38 per cent shares held by each one of them, apart from some others, were questioned for hours by the ED in this case a few years ago. The agency has also not executed the action for taking possession of the

Rs 751.91 crore worth assets of AJL attached by it as part of this probe under the anti-money laundering law. The adjudicating authority of the PMLA has upheld this provisional attachment order and it is understood that the ED will initiate the process of taking the possession of assets after the two charge sheets (EOW and ED) are filed. The police (EOW) has pressed charges under sections 120B (criminal conspiracy), 403 (dishonest misappropriation of property), 406 (punishment for criminal breach of trust) and 420 (cheating) of the IPC in its FIR that names the Gandhis, Congress leaders Suman Dubey and Sam Pitroda, entities like the Young Indian and Dotex Merchandise Ltd, Dotex promoter Sunil Bhandari, AJL and unknown others.

Tamil Nadu: ED alleges corruption in MAWS, Government, police to reply to petition

K Athinarayanan, president, Maruthu Senai Society of Madurai, filed a petition before the Madras High Court, based on the letter, seeking directions to the Tamil Nadu DGP to obtain the necessary approval from the Chief Secretary and register a case.

CHENNAI: The Madras High Court has directed the state government and the Directorate of Enforcement (ED) to file their responses to a petition seeking the registration of a case in connection with allegations of bribery in appointments in the Municipal Administration and Water Supply (MAWS) department, based on a letter sent by the ED to the police.

During 2024-25, a total of 2,538 appointments, including assistant engineers, junior engineers, and sanitary inspectors, were made in the MAWS department. It has been alleged that bribes ranging from Rs 25 lakh to Rs 35 lakh per post were collected, amounting to Rs



34 crore. In this regard, the Enforcement Directorate had sent a letter to the Tamil Nadu Director General of Police (DGP) in October, seeking registration of a case. K Athinarayanan, president, Maruthu Senai Society of

Madurai, filed a petition before the Madras High Court, based on the letter, seeking directions to the Tamil Nadu DGP to obtain the necessary approval from the Chief Secretary and register a case. He stated that the ED had sent a 232-page

letter with supporting evidence. If credible information indicating the commission of a cognisable offence is received, it is the duty of the police to register a case. As the Enforcement Directorate does not have direct jurisdiction

to register corruption cases, it had sent the letter to the DGP requesting registration of a case. As no case has been registered, the ED has been unable to proceed with its investigation, the petition said.

It was further stated that despite sending a letter to the DGP in November seeking registration of a case to ensure transparent governance, no action had been taken.

After hearing the petition, the bench comprising Chief Justice Manindra Mohan Shrivastava and Justice G Arul Murugan, directed the State government, the DGP and the Enforcement Directorate to file their counter-affidavit by January 23.

MP Kanimozhi to head DMK committee to prepare election manifesto

CHENNAI: The ruling DMK has constituted a committee to prepare its election manifesto for the upcoming Assembly elections. The committee will be headed by MP and party Deputy General Secretary Kanimozhi.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, DMK General Secretary Duraimurugan said that Cabinet Ministers Govi Chezhaian, Palanivel Thiaga Rajan, and TRB Rajaa have been appointed as members of the committee. They are also in charge of various wings of the party.

Former MPs TKS Elangovan and MM Abdullah; MLAs Ezhilan Naganathan and MLA Tamilarasi Ravikumar; former MLA Constantine Ravindran; Environment Secretary



Karthikeya Sivasenathipathi; retired IAS officer G Santhanam; and Dream Tamil Nadu convener Suresh Sambandam are among the other members of the committee. The commit-

tee will hold consultations with various welfare associations, including those representing farmers, traders, and residents, to gather inputs for the preparation of the election manifesto.

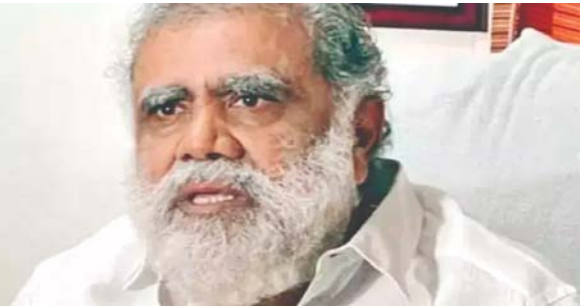


Honble Chief Minister released Key Technical Reports on Tamil Nadu's Blue Carbon Wealth and Marine Litter Management during the Third Meeting of the Tamil Nadu Climate Change Governing Council

TN Minister Periyasamy moves Madras HC against ED probe, summons; agency told to respond

CHENNAI: Hearing a petition filed by Rural Development Minister and senior DMK leader I Periyasamy challenging the Directorate of Enforcement (ED) investigation against him and family members, the Madras High Court directed the Directorate of Enforcement (ED) to file its response.

Earlier, after the AIADMK ousted the DMK and came to power, the Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption (DVAC) had registered a case alleging that during his tenure as Housing Minister between 2006 and 2011, Periyasamy had amassed assets worth Rs 2.35 crore disproportionate to his known sources of income. His wife P



Suseela, and sons IP Senthilkumar and IP Prabhu, were also named as accused. When the DMK returned to power, the Dindigul court had discharged the Minister and others from the case. However, the Madras High Court set aside that order on April 28. An appeal challenging this order is presently pending before the Supreme Court. In the meantime, the Enforcement

Directorate registered a case under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act in connection with the matter and conducted searches in August at the residences of Periyasamy, his sons Prabhu and Palani constituency DMK MLA Senthilkumar, his daughter Indira, as well as at the offices of the Minister and the MLA. During the searches, the officials

seized property documents, investment details, mobile phones, and bank account details of companies, among other materials. Subsequently, the central agency issued notices to Periyasamy and his family members seeking their explanation regarding the proposed attachment of properties.

Challenging these notices as well as the ED investigation, Periyasamy and his family members filed petitions before the Madras High Court. MP Kanimozhi to head DMK committee to prepare election manifesto

When the petitions came up for hearing before a Division Bench comprising Chief Justice Manindra Mohan

Shrivastava and G Arul Murugan, the petitioners' advocate, senior counsel John Sathyan, argued that since the Supreme Court has stayed the trial in the disproportionate assets case against Periyasamy, the ED investigation should also be stayed.

He further submitted that after the filing of the petition, the agency had issued a summons directing the Minister to appear for inquiry on Thursday. The advocate representing the central agency sought time to file a reply to the petitions.

After hearing both sides, the bench directed the Enforcement Directorate to file its counter affidavit by January 5 and adjourned the hearing.

Surprising Reasons You're Gaining Weight

WHAT'S WITH THE WEIGHT GAIN?
If you started taking in more calories than usual or cutting back on exercise, you wouldn't be surprised if the numbers on the scale crept higher. But what if you're doing everything the same as you always do, and your weight still goes up? It's time to delve a little deeper into what else might be going on.

LACK OF SLEEP
There are two issues at work with sleep and weight gain. First, if you're up late, the odds are greater that you're doing some late-night snacking, which means more calories. The other reason involves what's going on in your body when you're sleep-deprived. Changes in hormone levels increase hunger and appetite and also make you feel not as full after eating.

STRESS
When life's demands get too intense, our bodies go into survival mode. Cortisol, the "stress hormone," is secreted, which causes an increase in appetite. And of course, we may reach for high-calorie comfort foods in times of stress as well. This combination is a perfect breeding ground for weight gain.

ANTIDEPRESSANTS
An unfortunate side effect from some antidepressants is weight gain. Talk to your doctor about making changes to your treatment plan if you think your antidepressant is causing weight gain. But never stop or change your medication on your own. Realize that some people experience weight gain after beginning drug treatment simply because they're feeling better, which leads to a better appetite. Also, depression itself can cause changes in weight.

STERIODS
Anti-inflammatory steroid medi-



cations like prednisone are notorious for causing weight gain. Fluid retention and increased appetite are the main reasons. Some people may also see a temporary change in where their body holds fat while taking steroids -- to places like the face, the belly, or the back of the neck. If you've taken steroids for more than a week, don't stop them abruptly. That can lead to serious problems. Check with your doctor first.

DRUGS THAT MAY CAUSE WEIGHT GAIN
Several other prescription drugs are linked to weight gain. The list includes antipsychotic drugs (used to treat disorders like schizophrenia and bipolar disorder), along with medications to treat migraines, seizures, high blood pressure, and diabetes. Work with your doctor to find a medication that treats your symptoms and lessens side effects.

DON'T JUMP TO BLAME THE PILL
Contrary to popular belief, combination birth control pills (estrogen and progestin) aren't proven to cause lasting weight gain. It is

thought that some women taking the combination pill may experience some weight gain related to fluid retention, but this is usually short-term. If you're still concerned about possible weight gain, talk to your doctor.

HYPOTHYROIDISM
If your thyroid (the butterfly-shaped gland in the front of your neck) is not making enough thyroid hormone, you're probably feeling tired, weak, and cold, and gaining weight. Without enough thyroid hormone, your metabolism slows, making weight gain more likely. Even a thyroid functioning at the lower end of the normal range might cause weight gain. Treating hypothyroidism with medication may reverse some of the weight gain.

DON'T BLAME MENOPAUSE
Most women do gain some weight around the time of menopause, but hormones probably aren't the only cause. Aging slows your metabolism, so you burn fewer calories. And changes in lifestyle (such as exercis-

ing less) play a role. But where you gain weight may be related to menopause, with fat accumulating around your waist more than your hips and thighs.

CUSHING'S SYNDROME
Weight gain is a common symptom of Cushing's syndrome, a condition in which you are exposed to too much of the stress hormone cortisol, which in turn causes weight gain and other abnormalities. You can get Cushing's syndrome if you take steroids for asthma, arthritis, or lupus. It can also happen when your adrenal glands make too much cortisol, or it could be related to a tumor. The weight gain may be most prominent around the face, neck, upper back, or waist.

POLYCYSTIC OVARY SYNDROME (PCOS)
PCOS is a common hormonal problem in women of childbearing age. Most women with PCOS grow many small cysts on their ovaries. The condition leads to hormone imbalances that affect a woman's menstrual cycle and can lead to extra body hair and acne. Women with this condition are resistant to insulin (the hormone that controls blood sugar), so it may cause weight gain. The weight tends to collect around the belly, putting these women at greater risk for heart disease.

QUITTING SMOKING
Quitting smoking is one of the best things you can do for your health. When you quit, you may gain some weight, but perhaps less than you think. On average, people who stop smoking gain less than 10 pounds. You should stop feeling hungrier after several weeks, which will make it easier to help lose any weight you gained.

CPM opposes changes to MGNREGS, condemns 'majoritarian' law-making



CHENNAI: CPM State Secretary P Shanmugam on Tuesday strongly opposed the Union government's proposed amendments to the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, alleging that the changes would effectively dismantle the 100-day employment scheme that supports crores of rural households.

In a video message posted on social media, Shanmugam said the Union Cabinet had approved a move to replace the existing Act with a new scheme under a different name, which he described as unacceptable. He recalled that the Employment Guarantee

Calling for nationwide protests, he urged rural workers and beneficiaries to unite, drawing parallels with the agitation that led to the repeal of the farm laws

Law was enacted in 2005 during the UPA regime, with the support of Left parties, and had since become a crucial livelihood and poverty-alleviation measure in rural India. He accused the BJP-led Union government of weakening the scheme over the past decade by cutting alloca-

tions, reducing work-days, delaying wage payments and shrinking beneficiary coverage, forcing many rural workers to drop out. In several villages, he said, employment had fallen from the assured 100 days to barely 10 or 20 days a year.

Shanmugam criticised the proposal to remove Mahatma Gandhi's name from the scheme and to alter the funding pattern by reducing the Centre's share to 60 per cent and increasing the States' burden to 40 per cent, while retaining decision-making powers with the Union government. He warned that this would place severe financial strain on States, particularly non-BJP-ruled States, and ultimately hurt rural workers.

He also objected to provisions that, he said, diluted the legal guarantee of employment by making work subject to official discretion, thereby denying workers the right to demand jobs or unemployment allowance. Calling for nationwide protests, he urged rural workers and beneficiaries to unite, drawing parallels with the agitation that led to the repeal of the farm laws. He said the CPM would lead sustained protests until the proposed amendments were withdrawn.

EDITORIAL

"It Was A Shell From My Tank": When A Father Met The Pak Soldier Who Killed His Son

Reality can hit you harder than any fiction that appears on the big screen. That's true for the film Ikkis, which tells the story of 2nd Lt. Arun Khetarpal, who was just 21 years old (hence the film's name) when he laid down his life on December 16, 1971.

That Fateful Trip To Lahore

Ikkis has an additional plot point that unfolds a full 30 years after the martyrdom of one of India's youngest Param Vir Chakra awardees. This is how it unfolds... At the fabled Battle of Basantar - said to be the second biggest tank battle since World War 2 - fought on the Indo-Pak border on December 16, 1971, in the Shakargarh-Samba sector between Pathankot and Jammu, Arun Khetarpal, who was serving in 17 Poona Horse tank regiment, destroyed 10 Pakistani tanks before a shell fired from one claimed his life. Of course, Khetarpal's parents - mother Maheshwari, and father, retired Brigadier Madan Lal Khetarpal, himself a WWII veteran who also fought in the 1948 and 1965 Indo-Pak wars - were proud of Arun's courage on the battlefield, but they struggled with the pain of losing a son so early. Madan Lal Khetarpal, like many others of his generation, hailed from across the border. His roots lay in the town of Sargodha, which is in present-day Pakistan, not far from Lahore. He had studied at Lahore's well-known Government College before joining the army. "Papa always wanted to go back to Sargodha, the place of his birth, his 'watan'. He doubted he would get a visa, as he was ex-Army. But in 2001, when he was 81, he and four others were invited to a Lahore Govt College Students' Reunion. When he got his visa, he was very excited," recalls Mukesh Khetarpal. Upon reaching Lahore, Madan Lal accepted the request of retired Pakistan Army Brigadier, Khawaja Mohammad Naser, to stay at his home during the reunion. Naser was also an alumnus of the Government College in Lahore. "Brigadier Naser was a good host. He even organised my father's visit to Sargodha on the second day of his stay. Papa was very touched. On the third and last morning, Brigadier Naser took him for a walk, saying he had something to share with him," Mukesh recounts. "Papa was just not prepared for what Brigadier Naser said next. He said, 'Sir, I am from the 13 Lancers tank regiment, and on 16th December 1971, I was a Major, commanding a squadron of tanks that was confronted by the tanks of 17 Poona Horse.'" My father's immediate response was, "Mera beta Arun bhi 17 Poona Horse mein tha..." ("my son, Arun, was also in 17 Poona Horse." Then came the shock: "I know, sir. It was a shell from my tank that killed Lt Arun." "My father was stunned by the revelation. For a few moments, he said nothing. Brig. Naser went on - 'Sir, at the Battle of Bade Pind [that's what the Pakistan Army calls the battle], Lt. Arun stood like a rock before our Patton tanks. He was a brave soldier and the main reason for our defeat that day..." "Recovering some composure, my father asked Brig. Naser, 'How did you find out Arun's name? How did you know it was his tank?'" Mukesh Khetarpal, now well into his 70s, recounts the story thus: "16th December was the last day of the 1971 war; the Pakistan Army surrendered in Dhaka that day. Brig. Naser told my father that by the 17th, the ceasefire was in force, and as he was recovering the bodies of Pakistani soldiers, he saw Indian soldiers around Arun's tank. "Naser added: 'Sir, I asked the Indian soldiers about the officer who had fought bravely commanding this tank. The soldiers told me, 'Sahab shaheed ho gaye' [he has been martyred]. When I asked them his name, they said he was Arun Khetarpal. I have never forgotten his name, sir."

Editorial

Hansi: From the centre of history to the margins and then to the district's threshold



PRIYANKA SAURABH

(Hansi: History snatched the district, time returned it)

Hansi was once the capital of the Haryana region. During the reign of George Thomas, it served as an administrative and commercial center. During the Mughal period, a mint and a military cantonment were established here. Due to intense resistance against the British in the 1857 rebellion, Hansi was stripped of its district status, and Hisar was created around 1870-1880. Following the formation of Haryana in 1966, Hisar was reorganized several times. In 2025, Hansi was announced as a district, a move seen as historical justice. History never changes suddenly; it takes a gradual turn. The ancient city of Hansi in Haryana is a living example of this. Once considered one of the most important centers of power, administration, trade, and strategic importance in northern India, this same city was a significant center of governance for centuries. Today, after enduring years of administrative neglect, Hansi is once again moving towards regaining its identity as a district. The announcement of Hansi's new district status in 2025 is being seen not just as an administrative decision, but as an attempt to complete an unfinished chapter of history. Hansi's glory was at its peak long before the British arrived in India. During the reign of George Thomas, Hansi served as the capital of the Haryana region. At that time, the city was one of the major trading centers of northern India under the Delhi Pargana. Administrative orders

were issued from Hansi, and the surrounding area was governed. This city was not only a center of power but also a major hub of trade, cultural exchange, and military strategies. Hansi's importance remained undiminished even during the Mughal period. Historical documents and maps from Akbar's reign depict Hansi as an important Mughal center. A mint was established here, where coins were minted. The presence of a mint in any city was considered a symbol of its economic and administrative strength. This clearly demonstrates that Hansi was not just a town, but a vital pillar of the economy of that era. Hansi's geographical location also made it extremely strategically important. Located on the routes leading to Delhi, Punjab, and Rajasthan, the Mughals established a military cantonment here. Later, the British, recognizing this strategic importance, maintained a military presence here. Hansi's fortifications, administrative structure, and military system made it one of the safe and organized cities of northern India. But the course of history changed with the First War of Independence of 1857. Hansi and the surrounding areas openly revolted against British rule. This region was among the areas where the British faced the most intense resistance. Local people, soldiers, and landlords challenged British authority. This rebellion was not just a law and order problem for the British, but a direct challenge to their authority. Following the 1857 rebellion, the British adopted a policy of retaliation. Areas that offered the most resistance were administratively weakened. Hansi also fell victim to this policy. Although there is no precise and authentic date for Hansi's district status, historians believe that between 1870 and 1880, the British shifted the district headquarters from Hansi to Hisar, establishing a new district. This virtually eliminated Hansi's administrative importance. By making Hisar a district, the

British not only altered the administrative structure but also marginalized Hansi's historical role. Areas like Fatehabad and Sirsa were governed from Hisar. This change was not merely a matter of convenience, but a strategy to control a region that had dared to rebel against British rule. Historians also point out that around 1700 AD, Haryana existed on maps with a distinct geopolitical identity separate from Punjab. Many maps from that period are still available, showing Hansi as the capital of Haryana. George Thomas ruled the entire region with Hansi as his primary center. This clearly demonstrates that Hansi's importance was not limited to a single ruler or period; rather, it remained a center of power for a long time. After independence, when the state of Haryana was formed in 1966, Hisar was the largest district in the state. At that time, Hansi was hoping to regain its historical status. However, administrative priorities and political balances prevented this from happening. Instead, Hisar district was periodically reorganized. Bhiwani was made a separate district in 1972. Sirsa was followed by district status in 1975 and Fatehabad in 1997. Charkhi Dadri became a new district in 2016, splitting from Bhiwani. All these divisions have continually altered and reduced the administrative map of Hisar, but Hansi has remained excluded from the district list each time. This neglect gradually led to discontent in Hansi. People began to feel that this was not merely administrative neglect, but rather an extension of historical injustice. Over the past ten years, the demand for Hansi to become a district began to gain momentum. Local social organizations, trade associations, and political representatives consistently raised the issue. This demand gradually took the form of a mass movement. The people of Hansi argued that the city met all the criteria for becoming a district—historically, geographi-

cally, and administratively. Several administrative offices already existed here. Considering the distance from surrounding areas and population pressure, becoming a district was considered logical. But above all these arguments, there was also an emotional aspect—the desire to restore Hansi's lost prestige. When Hansi was announced as a new district in 2025, it wasn't just seen as an administrative news. This announcement was seen as the culmination of Hansi's history, struggle, and wait. People saw it as a partial rectification of the injustices inflicted by the British after 1857, which had long been ignored in independent India. The creation of Hansi as a district is also an important step towards administrative decentralization. This will not only provide better administrative facilities to the local people but will also accelerate regional development. New opportunities are likely to arise in areas such as education, health, roads, and employment. This decision will also strengthen regional balance. History shows that cities removed from the center of power are marginalized not only geographically but also psychologically. Hansi suffered this fate for a long time. But now, with the creation of a district, the city is poised to return to the center of attention. The story of Hansi also teaches us that history isn't just a collection of events recorded in books, but it also influences current policies and decisions. The establishment of Hansi as a district is proof that history, even if delayed, always finds its rightful course. Today, as Hansi stands on the threshold of districthood, it marks not just the expansion of an administrative unit, but the restoration of the soul of a city that once provided Haryana with its capital, that defied authority, and that endured long periods of neglect, yet remained true to its identity. This new chapter for Hansi connects with the same old glory of history from which its journey began.

Redefining Aravali, The Oldest Hills Chain: Why A Matter Of Concern?



JAG MOHAN THAKEN

The coming generations will hardly believe that there was a chain of the oldest mountains, namely the Aravali hills, on Indian earth and they will read only in the books that the hills spread over 800 km from Gujarat to Delhi, through Rajasthan and Haryana, ever actually existed. Reason: The recent Supreme Court decision. On November 20, 2025, a Supreme Court bench passed a vital judgement over the definition of the Aravalli Hills, India's oldest mountain range, accepting the recommendations made by a committee spearheaded by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC). The Court ruling has narrowed the new definition of the Aravalli hills to the extent of 100 metre elevation threshold, resulting in the outage of hills parts below 100 meters height from the definition of mountains category, which will exclude over 90% of the range from protection, allowing large-scale mining. The former Chief Minister of Rajasthan, Ashok Gehlot warns that this decision is not about environmental protection; it is a 'red carpet' for mining mafias. History will never forgive the injustice the government is inflicting upon future generations by inviting the Thar Desert right up to Delhi's doorstep. This recent controversial redefinition will have severe negative effects on the environment and public health in North-West India, particularly the Delhi-NCR region. Ashok Gehlot tweeted on December 16, 2025, "The Aravalli range is not just a mountain for Rajasthan; it is our 'protective

shield.' Limiting it to a '100-meter' scope based on the Union Government's recommendation is tantamount to signing a 'death certificate' for 90% of the state's Aravallis. The most alarming fact is that 90% of the Aravalli hills in Rajasthan are lower than 100 meters in height. If these are excluded from the definition, it is not merely a change of name, but the removal of a legal shield. This directly implies that the Forest Conservation Act will no longer apply in these areas, allowing for unfettered mining." Supporting his point, Gehlot states that a mountain is defined not by its height, but by its Geological Structure. A small rock is part of the same tectonic plate and mountain range as a towering peak. Separating the two is scientifically irrational. How will the vanishing Aravali chain affect the environment and ecological balance? Mr. Gehlot explains that the Aravalli is a wall that prevents the Thar Desert from expanding. Experts warn that even smaller hills (ridges) of 10 to 30 meters are equally effective in blocking dust storms. Opening these small hills to mining is akin to personally inviting the desert to expand into Delhi and Eastern Rajasthan. The rocky structure of the Aravallis intercepts rainwater and channels it underground. These hills act as groundwater recharge zones for the entire region. Removing them is an invitation to drought in North-West India, a region already grappling with water scarcity. The Aravalli is the barrier that stops the deadly heat waves from the west and prevents the Thar Desert from encroaching upon the fertile plains of Eastern Rajasthan, Delhi, and Uttar Pradesh. Kumari Selja, a former Union Minister, and Sirsa MP, in a press statement on 3rd December, criticizing the decision to remove hills below 100 metres in height from mining restrictions in the Aravalli mountain range, calling it a reckless assault on India's environment and the future of generations to come, said the decision is anti-environment, destructive, and a result of the government's misguided policies that are pushing natural resources towards a crisis. Kumari

Selja said the Aravalli is not merely a mountain range-it is the ecological lifeline of North India. It protects the Rajasthan-Haryana-Delhi region from desertification, plays a critical role in water conservation, and safeguards the livelihood and lives of millions of people. In such a situation, giving mining mafias a free hand is utterly irresponsible. She added that the government's move is a dangerous step towards legalising illegal mining and destroying the environment. The destruction of Aravalli hills will directly and severely impact water sources, greenery, groundwater levels, and public health. Kumari Selja warned that Haryana and Delhi-NCR are already facing severe pollution and water scarcity. Weakening the Aravalli range could trigger an environmental disaster for the entire region. It is a well-established fact that the Aravalli hills chain is the oldest mountain on Earth. It spans over 800km from Gujarat to Delhi (through Rajasthan and Haryana). The highest peak in the Aravalli Range is Guru Peak on Mount Abu. The Forest cover in Aravali chains not only preserves humidity in the atmosphere, but it also modulates wind direction and its flow, regulating rainfall patterns and checks drought across some northern states. It also serves as pollution barricades to the Delhi-NCR areas, which are even presently facing higher AQI despite this Hills chain's role in trapping pollutants. What shall be the position of Delhi-NCR pollution, when there will be no Aravali to give protection? Concludingly we can say that the Aravallis act as a crucial natural barrier, blocking dust and sand storms from the Thar Desert from spreading into the fertile Indo-Gangetic plains. Their disappearance would allow the desert to expand eastward, impacting agriculture and quality of life for millions. The hills serve as natural wind regulators and "lungs" that filter the air. Losing this natural shield would significantly worsen air quality in the Delhi-NCR region, leading to increased respiratory illnesses like asthma and bronchitis, and other health problems.

The Dangerous Logic Behind America's \$1.25 Billion 'Mining' Deal With Pakistan

When Pakistan's Field Marshal, General Asim Munir, presented a box of lustrous mineral samples to US President Donald Trump during his September visit to the White House, it became quite a spectacle - a token of shifting geopolitical directions. Munir's display of Pakistan's alleged mineral wealth has now been quickly followed by a commitment, with the Export-Import Bank of the United States (EXIM Bank) approving \$1.25 billion in financing for the Reko Diq copper-gold mining project in Balochistan on December 10. This move crucially demonstrates one of America's most substantial economic engagements in Pakistan's critical mineral sector, a pivotal shift from its security-centric ties in the past. Donald Trump's sudden - and to many, surprising - embrace of Pakistan comes at a time when the India-US relationship remains fraught. While multiple factors have contributed to this shift, two stand out - Trump's increasingly transactional approach to India and Pakistan's well-timed lobbying efforts in Washington. A 'Personal' Interest In Pak Beyond the official strategic narrative, Trump's personal interest in Pakistan's minerals appears to be augmented by his close associates and family's direct involvement in related private sector ventures. Trump's instinct to treat diplomacy as business deals is, after all, widely established. The conversation around Pakistan's mineral potential is often inflated by domestic and diplomatic rhetoric. For years, Pakistani leaders have cited the figure of \$6 trillion in untapped critical mineral assets. However, this oft-repeated claim remains uncorroborated by internationally certified assessments, those required by global financial markets to determine a mine's economic viability. Much of Pakistan's resource base also faces significant infrastructural challenges and remains underdeveloped. The substantial mineral wealth in Pakistan lies in gold and copper deposits, especially within the Reko Diq and Saindak mines in



Chagai district of the largest Balochistan Province. Reko Diq, operated by Barrick Gold, is reported to contain billions of pounds of copper and millions of ounces of gold. While the company has reported plans to begin production by 2028, the timeline has been subjected to previous delays. This signals the complicated political and technical environment in which projects operate in Pakistan. As the project progresses, the current excitement over the Reko Diq project will likely be dampened by the grim security realities of the location where the US intends to operate. Chagai, a district bordering Afghanistan and Iran, while less affected by insurgency compared to the southern coastal areas near Gwadar, does not remain immune to violence. China's Not-So-Pretty Experience The most lethal insurgent groups in the province, particularly the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and the Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF), have an extensive operational presence in the province. The insurgency is rooted in deep grievances of political and economic marginalisation, compounded by resentment toward foreign-led economic projects. Chinese economic projects, in particular, are perceived by Baloch militants as tools of resource extraction benefiting the Punjabi-dominated Pakistani state. In that light, foreign projects and person-

nel have often been singled out as prime targets. More recently, the security threat manifested in a suicide attack in Nokundi town of Chagai District in late November. The blast, carried out by a female suicide operative targeting the headquarters of a paramilitary force, occurred less than 50 kilometres from the Reko Diq and Saindak sites. The increasing use of female operatives in suicide blasts, a tactic previously employed by the BLA's Majeed Brigade, notably in the Karachi University bombing in 2022 that killed Chinese nationals, informs the expansion of the insurgency's operational scope. The timing and location of the incident should, therefore, be seen as a deliberate signal of the security challenges inherent in operating in the volatile province. A Double Whammy For Pakistan For Pakistan, its renewed relationship with the US presents a pleasant opening, at the moment. The primary benefit is, of course, the economic investment and securing a Western financial partner. Secondly, a critical gain for Pakistan lies in the potential for security support or grants to address militancy in the area; both Baloch groups and Islamist factions such as the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) are known to operate in the restive province. In the past, the US has been reluctant to support Islamabad against anti-Pakistan groups.



AM/NS INDIA WINS TOP INNOVATION AWARD AT NECA 2025, SHOWCASING COMMITMENT TO DECARBONISATION AND ENERGY LEADERSHIP

New Delhi/ Hazira, 17 December 2025: ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India (AM/NS India) has been awarded the prestigious Best Innovator Award at the National Energy Conservation Awards (NECA) 2025, organised by the Ministry of Power and implemented by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE). The award was jointly presented by the Hon'ble President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu, and the Hon'ble Minister of Power, Shri Manohar Lal Khattar at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi on Sunday. On behalf of AM/NS India, the award was received by Mr. Baiju Masrani, Chief of Hot Metal Delivery at Hazira plant in Gujarat. The event also marked National Energy Conservation Day 2025 celebrations. The NECA is among India's highest recognitions for energy efficiency; it recognises achievements across seven categories, including innovation. AM/NS India was selected in the Energy Efficiency Innovation – Industry category for its Steel Making Plant-2 project (SMP-2) at the Hazira plant. The award is a tribute to



AM/NS India's leadership in decarbonising steelmaking and setting benchmarks through operational innovation. It demonstrates the company's commitment to its promise: 'Smarter Steels, Brighter Futures', delivering sustainable solutions. About the Award-Winning Project: Steel Making Plant-2 SMP-2 focuses on optimising the CONARC (Converter + Arc) furnace – an advanced hybrid of Electric Arc Furnace (EAF) and Basic Oxygen Furnace (BOF) technologies. This system is used in steelmaking with hot metal, Direct

Reduced Iron (DRI) and scrap. The process is highly energy-intensive, requiring sustained electrical input to maintain the arc. AM/NS India enhanced the Electrode Regulation System (ERS) by integrating advanced Programmable Logic Controller (PLC) and Auto Arc Length control, allowing for real-time adjustment of arc length and improved electrode positioning. This resulted in stable furnace operation and a 10% reduction in furnace electrical energy use, significantly lowering energy consumption

and CO2 emissions. The project has delivered measurable impact: o Power savings of over 56,400 megawatt-hours/year – enough to power thousands of households annually o Annual CO2 emissions reduction of 41,700 tonnes – equivalent to the emissions from 10,000 cars in a year o 2% increase in furnace productivity by reducing turn-around time This milestone aligns with AM/NS India's long-term decarbonisation goals and India's national target of net-zero emissions by 2070. By reducing CO2 emissions, optimising energy

consumption, and embracing sustainable practices, the company is not only contributing to India's climate goals but also aligning itself with the global mission to combat climate change and secure a low-carbon future. The recognition of the project as the Best Innovator Award 2025 stands as a proud milestone in the company's journey, reinforcing dedication to environmental responsibility, technological advancement, and sustainable growth. This remarkable achievement also serves as a powerful inspiration for the entire AM/NS India team to intensify efforts toward energy efficiency and innovation. ABOUT ARCELORMITTAL NIPPON STEEL INDIA (AM/NS India): ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India (AM/NS India) is a joint venture between ArcelorMittal and Nippon Steel, two of the world's leading steel manufacturing organisations. A leading integrated flat carbon steel producer in India, the company has a crude steel capacity of 9 million tonnes per annum with state-of-the-art downstream facilities.

ASN Bank signs a contract with HCLTech to accelerate digital transformation and enhance customer experience



NOIDA, India, Dec 17, 2025— HCLTech, a leading global technology company, today announced that it has been selected as a strategic partner by ASN Bank (formerly de Volksbank), the fourth-largest retail bank in the Netherlands. As part of its new strategy 'Simplify and Grow', ASN Bank aims to modernise and standardise its IT architecture, which will involve consolidating IT services, simplifying the vendor landscape and building a future-ready organisation. Under the multi-year agreement, HCLTech will support ASN Bank's enterprise applications, and streamline services through a distributed delivery model to enhance efficiency and customer experience. Michel Ruijterman, Chief Information Officer, ASN Bank: "By signing this agreement, HCLTech's proven track record in delivering scalable, innovative solutions tailored to

the financial services sector means we can now confidently press on with streamlining our business by reducing the number of existing products and aligning the underlying processes and systems under our new strategy. Standardising and further automating our systems will enable us to organise our business operations more efficiently and effectively." Sudip Lahiri, Executive Vice President and Head of Financial Services for Europe, HCLTech: "By aligning our engineering mindset and scalable, domain-led solutions with ASN Bank's strategic goals, we are set to deliver tangible impact and long-term value, laying the foundation for future-ready operations. Collaborating with ASN Bank marks a major step forward for HCLTech as we grow our presence in the Dutch banking sector."

About ASN Bank

ASN Bank is an accessible and forward-looking bank with an eye for people, society and the future. We sustainably contribute to financial solutions for our customers while addressing Dutch societal issues. We pay particular attention to sustainability, financial wellbeing and good and affordable housing. Our services focus mainly on payments, savings and mortgages – always with an eye for both the interests of the customer and social impact. As a bank, we combine the convenience of secure mobile banking with the power of personal advice. Thanks to our nationwide network of branches, we are also physically close by when it matters. Through this approach, ASN Bank occupies a distinctive position in the Dutch banking landscape. We now serve three million customers, making us the fourth-largest retail bank in the Netherlands.

Indian Equities Hit Record Highs as Inflation Tumbles and Valuations Reset: PL Asset Management

Mumbai, December 17, 2025: PL Asset Management, the asset management division of PL Capital Group (Prabhudas Lilladher), in their recent report 'PMS Strategy Updates and Insights', cited that Indian equity markets scaled fresh all-time highs in November, decisively outperforming global peers as a powerful combination of record-low inflation, resilient domestic growth and normalized valuations improved the risk-reward profile for investors. While global markets remained uneven – pressured by weakness in technology stocks, a cooling AI-led rally and soft macro data from China – India stood out as a relative bright spot, supported by strong domestic fundamentals and steady liquidity conditions. Headline inflation emerged as a key driver of sentiment during the month. Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation fell sharply to 0.25%, the lowest level on record and well below the Reserve Bank of India's medium-term target of 4%. The sharp disinflation reinforced expectations of additional policy easing, providing meaningful support to equity valuations. Reflecting



confidence in the domestic growth outlook, the RBI revised its FY26 GDP growth forecast upwards to 7.3%, while India posted 8.2% GDP growth in Q2FY26, reaffirming its status as the fastest-growing major economy globally. Domestic activity indicators remained supportive despite global headwinds. Manufacturing PMI moderated to 56.6 amid tariff-related export softness but continued to signal healthy expansion. GST collections remained robust at ₹1.70 lakh crore, underlining the strength of domestic demand, while strong festive consumption further cushioned growth. Importantly, India's current account deficit improved to 1.3% of GDP, helping maintain

macro stability despite currency pressures and volatile global capital flows. In contrast, global markets displayed growing signs of fatigue. The Nasdaq 100 declined during the month amid profit-taking in AI-linked stocks, while China and Hong Kong equities weakened on sluggish macro data and muted policy traction. Precious metals outperformed as investors sought safety, and crude oil prices softened ahead of expected rate cuts by the US Federal Reserve. Against this backdrop, India's relative stability, predictable policy environment and domestic flow resilience helped it extend its outperformance. Despite the strong rally in headline indices, PL Asset

Management cautions that market participation remains narrow, an important theme highlighted in its quantitative indicators. Only 22% of stocks are outperforming the Nifty 50 on a 12-month basis, while just 28% of stocks are trading above their 50-day exponential moving average – both metrics sitting near historically depressed levels. Additionally, only 23% of stocks are generating positive rolling alpha, compared with a long-term average of 46%. Historically, such extreme narrowness in participation has often preceded phases of mean reversion and broader market recovery. The Nifty-Gold one-year return spread has moved into deeply negative territory – a signal that has, in the past, marked inflection points where investor preference begins to shift from safe-haven assets toward growth-oriented equities. Mr. Siddharth Vora, Head - Quant Investment Strategies & Fund Manager, PL Asset Management, said, "Indian markets continue to demonstrate relative resilience at a time when global risk assets are undergoing a phase of recalibration.

Oasis Fertility's Janani Yatra Reaches Vemulawada to Educate Communities and Spread Fertility Awareness

Karimnagar, 17 December 2025: Oasis Fertility, India's trusted name in reproductive medicine, continues its nationwide fertility awareness movement, Oasis Janani Yatra, with its next stop at Vemulawada. This initiative aims to take fertility awareness, expert guidance, and early screening directly into communities across Tier I, II, and III regions. The event was graced by Chief Guests – Sri Chinthakunta Vijaya Ramana Rao, MLA, Peddapalli, Vyavasaaya Committee Vice-chairman, Sri Rakesh, Vemulawada Congress Zilla Vice-President Komraiah, Congress block president Sri Venkataswamy and Market committee directors, Sri Vastad Krishna, Sri Daitha Kumar, Sri Vidyasagar who appreciated Oasis Fertility's efforts in bringing essential reproductive health education closer to families and strengthening community-level health awareness. As fertility challenges continue to rise due to lifestyle changes, delayed parenthood, and lack of scientific knowledge, the Oasis



Janani Yatra bus provides free fertility consultations and tests for couples that include free AMH, free semen analysis and haemoglobin tests in safe, hygienic sample collection zones, ensuring that couples receive early, accurate, and compassionate guidance. From Vemulawada, the Oasis Janani Yatra will move to Peddapalli, Gunthakal, and Yemmiganur in the coming days, taking this awareness and early screening support to more communities. Shri Chinthakunta Vijaya Ramana Rao, MLA, Peddapalli appreciated the

initiative, "I appreciate Oasis Fertility for launching an initiative that promotes much-needed reproductive health awareness. When scientific information reaches the community, it empowers families, eliminates fear, and encourages healthier decisions. Programs like Janani Yatra play an important role in building a healthier future." Dr. Durga G. Rao, Medical Director & Co-founder, Oasis Fertility, speaking on the occasion said, "As science continues to transform the way we treat fertility, the Oasis Janani Yatra takes informa-

tion about advanced, evidence-based reproductive care to the core of communities, providing early medical guidance to couples embarking on their journey towards parenthood." Mr. Pushkaraj Shenai, CEO, Oasis Fertility, asserted, "As India's fertility rate continues to fall, accessible, timely reproductive care is more important than ever. We are strengthening the reach of the Good Hands of Science with expert counselling, early diagnostics, and guided support at the grassroots level, so that aspiring couples can make informed decisions about their next steps." Dr. Jigna Tamagond, Clinical Head & Fertility Specialist added, "The overwhelming response to our previous edition of Oasis Janani Yatra showed that couples deeply value the right guidance. Through this initiative, we aim to ensure timely information and compassionate support to the local community, which still faces challenges in understanding fertility issues and available advanced treatments."

Stock markets rebound in early trade after two days of decline

Mumbai: Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty rebounded in early trade on Wednesday driven by value buying at lower levels and a positive trend in Asian markets. Steady buying activity by domestic institutional investors also brought comfort to the markets, according to experts. The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 201.23 points to 84,881.09 in early trade. The 50-share NSE Nifty went up by 64.8 points to 25,924.90. From the Sensex firms, Eternal, State Bank of India, Bajaj Finance, Axis Bank, Tata Consultancy Services and Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles were among the major gainers. However, ICICI Bank, Trent, HDFC Bank and Sun Pharma were among the laggards. In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225 index, Shanghai's SSE Composite index, and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index quoted in positive territory. US mar-



kets ended mostly lower on Tuesday. " Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 2,381.92 crore on Tuesday, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought stocks worth Rs 1,077.48 crore, according to exchange data. Steady domestic inflows through SIPs and insurance channels continue to provide a strong structural buffer, helping to limit downside

risks, Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, jumped 1.19 per cent to USD 59.62 per barrel. On Tuesday, the Sensex tanked 533.50 points or 0.63 per cent to settle at 84,679.86. The Nifty dropped 167.20 points or 0.64 per cent to 25,860.10. The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 201.23 points to 84,881.09 in early trade.

Rupee recovers 55 paise from all-time low level to close at 90.38 against US dollar

Mumbai: The rupee recovered 55 paise from its all-time low level to close at 90.38 (provisional) against the US dollar after a volatile trade on Wednesday, amid suspected aggressive central bank intervention. Analysts said the rupee's recent fall against the US dollar was primarily driven by external factors, not domestic economic weakness, and the high volatility in the forex market is expected to persist amid shifting economic and geopolitical cues. The lack of progress in the US-India trade negotiations and extended selling by foreign portfolio investors have weighed on the sentiment, while Brent crude oil prices hovering near USD 60 per barrel supported the domestic unit at lower levels. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 91.05 against the US dollar, then recovered some lost ground to touch an intra-day high of 89.96, registering a 97 paise gain from



its previous close. At the end of trade on Wednesday, the rupee was quoted at 90.38 (provisional), up 55 paise over its last close. On Tuesday, the rupee tanked below 91 per dollar, hitting a low of 91.14. It finally settled at an all-time low of 90.93 against the American currency. "The Indian rupee appreciated after a five-day losing streak, bolstered by suspected aggressive intervention from the central bank," Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities, said. Parmar further added that

high volatility is expected to persist in the forex market amid shifting economic and geopolitical headlines. "Technically, USD/INR has immediate resistance at 90.60 and support at 89.70," he said. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.42 per cent higher at 98.56. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading 2.09 per cent higher at USD 60.16 per barrel in futures trade. "The rupee's record low against the US dollar

Highlights

■ The rupee recovered 55 paise from its all-time low level to close at 90.38 (provisional) against the US dollar after a volatile trade on Wednesday, amid suspected aggressive central bank intervention.

was primarily driven by external factors, not domestic economic weakness. Key reasons, apart from the imposition of steep US tariffs (50 per cent) on Indian exports, include persistent capital outflows and dollar demand linked to non-deliverable forward maturities. "These factors have led to a roughly 6 per cent year-to-date depreciation, making the rupee Asia's most negatively impacted currency in 2025," said Deepak Agrawal,

Chief Investment Officer – Debt and Product Head, Kotak Mutual Fund. Agrawal said despite India's strong GDP growth, robust forex reserves, and a manageable current account deficit, the lack of progress in the US-India trade negotiations and extended selling by foreign portfolio investors have weighed on the sentiment. "The RBI remains focused on curbing volatility rather than defending a specific level, supporting a market-driven approach. Looking ahead to 2026, the rupee is expected to relatively appreciate if the India-US trade deal is finalised and capital flows improve," Agrawal said. On the domestic equity market front, Sensex declined 120.21 points to settle at 84,559.65, while the Nifty dropped 41.55 points to 25,818.55. Foreign Institutional Investors sold equities worth Rs 2,381.92 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data.

Venezuela denounces Trump's order for ship blockade as 'warmongering threats'

US President Donald Trump has ordered "a total and complete" blockade of all sanctioned oil tankers entering and leaving Venezuela - a move that Caracas has denounced as "warmongering threats". Trump wrote that Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro's government had been designated a foreign terrorist organisation (FTO), which had also engaged in "Drug Smuggling, and Human Trafficking". His remarks come after the US seized an oil tanker off the coast of Venezuela last week - a move that was seen as significant given Venezuela's reliance on oil. The US has also recently conducted deadly strikes on alleged Venezuelan drug-smuggling boats, and has significantly built up its naval presence nearby. Trump's post did not give further detail of how the wide-ranging blockade on sanctioned oil tankers would be enforced. As of last week,

more than 30 of the 80 ships in Venezuelan waters or approaching the country were under US sanctions, according to data compiled by TankerTrackers.com. Multiple new US sanctions on ships said to be carrying Venezuelan oil were issued after the tanker was seized. Sanctions were also placed on some of President Maduro's relatives and on businesses associated with what the US called his illegitimate regime. In his Truth Social post on Tuesday, Trump wrote that Venezuela was "completely surrounded by the largest Armada ever assembled in the History of South America". He added that it would "only get bigger" and "be like nothing they have ever seen before". Trump also accused Maduro's government of using "stolen" oil to "finance themselves, Drug Terrorism, Human Trafficking, Murder, and Kidnapping". The president



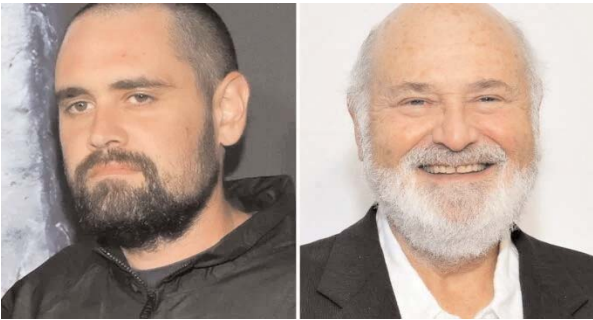
has repeatedly accused Venezuela of drug smuggling, and since September the US military has killed at least 90 people with its strikes on boats that were allegedly carrying fentanyl and other illegal drugs to the US. However, it has provided no public evidence that these vessels were carrying drugs, be it fentanyl - which is mainly produced in Mexico - or cocaine. Tuesday's post from Trump

suggested that a label the US had previously applied only to Maduro was now being widened to his whole government. Last month, the US formally alleged that the Venezuelan Cartel de los Soles group was an FTO. The designation meant that Maduro was effectively designated as terrorist as well, because he was alleged to be group's leader - which he denies. In response to the recent US actions,

Venezuela - home to the world's largest proven oil reserves - has accused Washington of seeking to steal its resources. Venezuela's economy is heavily dependent on oil exports, even though the amount of oil it actually produces is relatively small given that the country is home to the world's largest proven reserves. When announcing the tanker seizure off Venezuela's coast last week, the White House said the vessel in question, called the Skipper, had been involved in "illicit oil shipping" and would be taken to a US port. Venezuela's government decried the move, with Maduro saying the US "kidnapped the crew" and "stole" the ship. The US had been building up its military presence in the Caribbean Sea, which borders Venezuela to the north, in the weeks and months before the raid. The build-up has involved thousands of

troops and the USS Gerald Ford - the world's largest aircraft carrier - being positioned within striking distance of Venezuela. Congressman Joaquín Castro, a Democrat representing Texas, said Trump's "naval blockade is unquestionably an act of war". He added that US lawmakers would on Thursday vote on a resolution "directing the president to end hostilities with Venezuela". The US, under both Trump and former President Joe Biden, has opposed the Maduro government for years and pressed for him to be removed by imposing stringent sanctions. Maduro's government has been accused of rights abuses by the wider international community for many years. Venezuela's opposition, as well as many nations including the US, denounced last year's election as rigged and say his rule is therefore illegitimate.

Nick Reiner charged with murder of his parents Rob and Michele



Prosecutors in Los Angeles have filed murder charges against Nick Reiner over the deaths of his parents, Hollywood director Rob Reiner and his wife Michele. Nick Reiner is facing two counts of first-degree murder with a special circumstance alleging multiple murders, district attorney Nathan Hochman said. He could be sentenced to life without the possibility of parole or the death penalty if found guilty. He will be brought to court to formally face charges and enter a plea after he is medically cleared by prison officials, Mr Hochman said. US media report that could happen on Wednesday. The couple

were found dead on Sunday in their home in Brentwood, Los Angeles, with multiple stab wounds. The charges also include a "special allegation" that Reiner used a knife. During a news conference on Tuesday, Mr Hochman said no decision had been made about whether prosecutors would seek the death penalty. The suspect, 32, was also accused of using a "dangerous and deadly weapon, that being a knife". He was initially expected to appear before a judge later on Tuesday for an arraignment hearing, though this was rescheduled. Rob Reiner directed a handful of iconic films in a variety of genres.

Nato spending pledge is Trump's biggest foreign policy success, Rutte tells



Nato countries' pledge to spend 5% of their economic output on defence is Donald Trump's "biggest foreign policy success," the alliance's chief has said. In an interview with the BBC, Mark Rutte said it was thanks to Donald Trump that Nato was "stronger than it ever was", adding that Trump "is good news for collective defence, for Nato and for Ukraine". The US leader has harshly criticised European allies for spending very little on defence - even threatening to withdraw US protection if they fail to do so. The Nato chief has warned that Russia could attack allies within the next five years. Russia's President Vladimir Putin dismissed such talk as "hysteria" on Wednesday. "I've said it repeatedly - it's a lie, nonsense, pure nonsense, about some imaginary Russian threat to European countries," Putin told defence officials in Moscow. After Putin launched Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February

2022, he announced the annexation of four Ukrainian regions - Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson. Russia had already annexed Crimea in 2014. It now occupies most of Luhansk, and is understood to demand Ukraine's withdrawal from all of Donetsk, too, even though Ukraine still controls up to 23% of the eastern region. Putin said the goals of what he calls "the special military operation" would be achieved. He said he preferred to do it through diplomacy, before warning that, "if the opposing side and their foreign patrons refuse to engage in substantive discussions, Russia will achieve the liberation of its historical lands by military means". In his interview with the BBC Radio 4's PM programme, the Nato secretary general said it was "insane" that Putin's pursuit of his "historical idea that you want to regain access to Ukraine" - or over the entire territory that used to constitute the former Soviet Union - had caused the death or serious injury to 1.1m of his people. Mark Rutte praised Trump's efforts to find an end to the war. US envoys have been conducting intense negotiations with Ukrainian officials over a Trump-proposed peace plan whose initial draft was seen as favouring Russia.

Shock as popular South African DJ shot dead in Johannesburg



A popular South African radio and club DJ has been shot dead in the country's largest city, Johannesburg, sending shockwaves across the nation grappling with entrenched crime. Warrick Stock, popularly known as DJ Warras, was gunned down in the city centre on Tuesday afternoon. Police said the 40-year-old media personality was approached by three suspects, one of whom opened fire on him before fleeing on foot. The motive of the shooting is

unknown and no arrests have been made, police said. Stock was a well-known radio and TV presenter and a podcaster in South Africa. Fred Kekana, a local police chief, said Stock was attacked outside Zambesi House near Carlton Centre. Stock spent several hours at the building overseeing the installation of security systems at the premises, which had been controversially occupied by unknown people, reports the state-run SABC.

NAVEED AKRAM CHARGED WITH 15 COUNTS OF MURDER OVER BONDI SHOOTING

Naveed Akram, the surviving suspect in Sunday's mass shooting at Bondi Beach in Sydney, has been charged with 59 offences, including 15 counts of murder and one of committing a terrorist act, the New South Wales police say. Akram, 24, was critically injured during the incident. His father Sajid Akram, 50, was killed in an exchange of fire with police at the scene. Fifteen people were killed and dozens of others were injured in the attack, which targeted Australia's Jewish community at an event celebrating the first night of Hanukkah. It was the country's deadliest shooting since 1996. Akram also faces 40 charges of causing grievous bodily harm with intent to murder, as well as one charge of causing a public display of a prohibit-



ed terrorist organisation symbol. Akram had his first hearing from his hospital bedside, the local New South Wales court said. The case has been adjourned until April 2026, the court added. Earlier on Wednesday, New South Wales Police Commissioner Mal Lanyon said they were waiting for medication to wear off before formally questioning Akram. "For his fairness, we

been "motivated by Islamic State" group ideology. On Tuesday, it emerged that the father and son had travelled to the Philippines in November. The Philippine immigration bureau told the BBC that they were in the country from 1 November to 28 November. Their final destination was the southern city of Davao, an immigration spokesperson said. Naveed Akram travelled to the Philippines using an Australian passport, while his father Sajid used an Indian passport, border authorities in Manila told the BBC. Sajid Akram was originally from the southern Indian city of Hyderabad, but had "limited contact" with his family there, a police official from the Indian state of Telangana said.

US ACCUSED OF USING ILLEGAL WORKERS AT CENTRE PROCESSING REFUGEE CLAIMS IN SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa has accused the US of using Kenyan nationals who did not have work permits at a facility processing applications by white South Africans for refugee status. Seven Kenyans were arrested after intelligence reports revealed that people "had recently entered South Africa on tourist visas and had illegally taken up work" at the centre, said a statement from South Africa's department of home affairs. The BBC has approached the US State Department for comment. While the US is trying to reduce overall levels of migration, it says that members of South Africa's white Afrikaner community can get asylum because they face persecution - a claim South Africa's government

strongly rejects. The US has reduced its yearly intake of refugees from around the world from 125,000 to 7,500, but says it will prioritise Afrikaners, who are mostly descendants of Dutch and French settlers. This is one of the issues that have caused a sharp deterioration in relations between South Africa and the Trump administration. South Africa says the Kenyan nationals arrested in Tuesday's raid will now be deported and will be banned from entering the country for five years. They had previously been denied work visas but were found "engaging in work despite only being in possession of tourist visas, in clear violation of their conditions of entry into the country", the statement said.



South Africa also expressed concern that foreign officials appeared to have coordinated with undocumented workers and said it had reached out to the US and Kenya to resolve the matter. The home affairs department said the raid showcased the commitment that South Africa shared "with the United States to combating illegal

immigration and visa abuse in all its forms". No US officials were arrested and the operation was not at a diplomatic site, it said. While the State Department is yet to respond to the BBC's request for comment, in a statement issued to US publications, Tommy Pigott, principal deputy spokesperson for the State Department, said the

department was "seeking immediate clarification from the South African government" on the issue and expected "full cooperation and accountability". "Interfering in our refugee operations is unacceptable," US publication The Hill quoted Pigott saying. The processing of applications by white South Africans is being done by RSC Africa, according to the US embassy in South Africa. RSC Africa is a Kenyan-based refugee support centre operated by Church World Service (CWS). The BBC has asked RSC Africa for comment. US President Donald Trump has repeatedly claimed that Afrikaners are being subjected to a "genocide" in South Africa, even though there is

no evidence that white farmers are more likely to be the victims of crime than their black counterparts. He offered Afrikaners refugee status earlier this year after South African President Cyril Ramaphosa signed a law allowing the government to seize land without compensation in rare instances. A first group of about 50 people flew to the US on a chartered plane - it is not clear how many others have moved, or are in the process of applying. Because of the legacy of the racist apartheid system, the majority of privately owned farmland in South Africa is owned by the white community and South Africa's government is under pressure to provide more land to black farmers.

Miss Finland's viral 'slanted-eyes' photo stirs racism firestorm



Finland's delegate to last month's Miss Universe pageant held in Thailand has sparked controversy and outrage after a photo of her pulling the corners of her eyes went viral. Sarah Dzafce, who has been stripped of her Miss Finland crown, uploaded the photo with the caption "eating with a Chinese". The slanted-eyes pose is often seen as disrespectful to East Asians. The post drew backlash in Japan, South Korea and China against the 22-year-old and even against her country's flag carrier, Finnair. Finland's prime minister weighed in on Monday, saying that making such gestures was "thoughtless and stupid" and that the controversy that ensued was "damaging" to the country. Ms Dzafce claimed the gesture was her reaction to a headache during dinner. She said a friend added the offensive caption to the 11 December post without her consent, according to local tabloid Ilta-Sanomat. Ms Dzafce has apologised for the

photo, noting it has "caused ill will in many people". "That was not my intention in any way... One of the most important things for me is respect for people, their backgrounds and differences," she wrote on an Instagram post. The apology still drew criticism, with some calling it "insincere" given it was written in Finnish. One person wrote: "That was uncalled for, Asian people didn't do anything to you... We [are] still disappointed in you." Two right-wing MPs in Finland, Juho Eerola and Kaisa Garedew, posted photos of themselves mimicking Ms Dzafce's gesture to show their support for the beauty queen. The posts were taken down after backlash. Eerola apologised adding he felt Ms Dzafce was given "disproportionately harsh punishment". Finnish Prime Minister Petteri Orpo condemned the MPs' actions as "childish", adding that lawmakers should set an example of proper conduct.

"BEFUDDLED BY UMPIRES' DECISION":

T20 World Cup Winner Fumes As India vs South Africa T20I Gets Delayed Due To Excessive Fog

The India vs South Africa 4th T20I in Lucknow on Wednesday could well have decided the result of the series, with the hosts needing a win to seal it. However, what the two teams and the thousands of spectators got was an endless wait. The toss, which was supposed to take place at 6:30 PM IST, was delayed again and again due to excessive fog. Umpires opted for pitch inspections at 6:50 PM, 7:30 PM, 8 PM, 8:30 PM, 9 PM, and 9:25 PM. On each occasion, play could not begin, frustrating everyone. India currently lead the series 2-1. 2007 T20 World Cup winner Robin Uthappa, who was commenting on the match, was visibly irritated. He wondered whether it was possible for the fog to clear as the evening progressed. "I am actually befuddled by the umpire's decision. This is not going to get better. I have played first-class cricket in much worse conditions



than this. This is way better," said Robin Uthappa. Ahead of the fourth T20I, Indian all-rounder Axar Patel was ruled out of the

remaining two matches of the five-match series against South Africa due to illness, the BCCI said on Monday. The BCCI stated

that the star all-rounder will remain with the Indian team in Lucknow and will undergo further medical assessment. In place of Axar

Patel, the BCCI Men's Selection Committee named Shahbaz Ahmed as his replacement for the remaining T20I matches against South Africa in Lucknow and Ahmedabad. The fifth and final T20I between the two countries will be played at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on December 19. Squads South Africa Squad: Reeza Hendricks, Quinton de Kock (w), Aiden Markram (c), Dewald Brevis, Tristan Stubbs, Donovan Ferreira, Marco Jansen, Corbin Bosch, Anrich Nortje, Lungi Ngidi, Ottneil Baartman, David Miller, Keshav Maharaj, George Linde, Tony de Zorzi, Lutho Sipamla, Kwena Maphaka, The India vs New Zealand ODI World Cup 2023 match at the Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association Stadium in Dharamsala was halted twice due to dense fog during the Indian innings.

Tata Group Felicitates ICC Women's World Cup 2025 Winning Team



Following their landmark victory at the ICC Women's World Cup 2025, the Indian Women's Cricket Team was formally felicitated by Tata Motors in recognition of their outstanding achievement. At a ceremony held at the Bombay House on 16th December 2025, the company announced a special gesture of appreciation under which each member of the world cup winning squad will be awarded a Tata Sierra, the recently unveiled model positioned as an icon reimaged. The event was attended by senior leadership from the

Tata Group, including Mr. N. Chandrasekaran, Chairman of Tata Sons and Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles Ltd., and Mr. Shailesh Chandra, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles Ltd. Their presence underscored the Group's commitment to celebrating excellence and supporting Indian sport. Mr. N. Chandrasekaran, Chairman of Tata Sons and Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles Ltd. commented, "Every child knew where they were when the world

changed for them in July 1983. One of those children who watched the men's cricket team's success became one of the world's great batsmen, and he dominated every kind of bowler for over two decades. Eventually, he won a world cup of his own, and it was only then that the bat finally left Sachin Tendulkar's hands. In the year 2025, on the 2nd of November, a date a new generation of children will always remember, the women's team finally did what their faithful followers knew they were capable of.

IPL Auction 2026: CSK "Missed A Trick," R Ashwin Shows Five-Time Champions The Mirror Over 'Generational Talent' Miss

Cameron Green, the tall Australian all-rounder, quite expectedly generated massive interest as Kolkata Knight Riders and Chennai Super Kings went head-to-head to acquire his services at the IPL 2026 auction. Ultimately, KKR roped him in for a whopping sum of Rs 25.20 crore at the Indian Premier League (IPL) auction. With that, he became the most expensive overseas player in the history of the tournament. As his bidding reached the Rs 25 crore mark, he surpassed the previous record set by his Australian teammate Mitchell Starc, who was bought by KKR for Rs 24.75 crore in the IPL 2024 auction. Overall, he became the third-costliest player in the history



of the IPL auction after Rishabh Pant (Rs 27 crore to Lucknow Super Giants in the IPL 2025 mega auction) and Punjab Kings skipper Shreyas Iyer (Rs 26.75 crore in the IPL 2025 auction). As KKR's bid crossed Rs 25 crore, CSK pulled out. Former CSK player Ravichandran Ashwin, however, opined that CSK had

missed a trick. "We conducted a mock auction, and that's when it became clear there was virtually no chance of him going over Rs 30 crore. In fact, had KKR been a little more patient - like some other franchises, Punjab for instance, who took their time while bidding - things might have played out differently," Ashwin said in a

video on Ash Ki Baat. "If that had happened, CSK would likely have let Cameron Green go much earlier. I had a sense that CSK were bidding more out of necessity than intent; it didn't feel like they were fully committed to acquiring him." Personally, I felt Cameron Green would have been a terrific addition to CSK, and in that sense, they may have missed a small trick. That said, this isn't about the price point. Cameron Green is a generational talent, and for KKR, he is an outstanding acquisition," Ashwin added. Green previously played for Mumbai Indians and Royal Challengers Bengaluru, the defending champions, before missing the 2025 season due to back surgery.

Alex Carey Breaks Silence After Snicko Controversy In Ashes Sees Him Gets Called A 'Cheater'

Alex Carey steered Australia to a dominant position on Day 1 of the third Ashes Test at Adelaide Oval on Wednesday. After a shaky start, which saw Australia slump to 94/4 soon after lunch, Carey, along with the last-minute inclusion of Usman Khawaja, added 91 runs for the fifth wicket to rescue Australia. Carey scored 106 off 143 balls. The South Australian, whose father Gordon died in September after a protracted battle with cancer, looked up to the sky after notching his third Test century. This achievement was significant for Carey, who looked skyward in tribute to his late father, who passed away in September from leukaemia. The 34-year-old also became Australia's leading run-scor-



er in Tests this year, surpassing Steve Smith's 618 runs to rank sixth in the world for runs in the format. However, the century didn't come without controversy. Carey survived an early chance in the innings when he flashed at the first ball of the 63rd over

from Josh Tongue. Wicketkeeper Jamie Smith and a fielder appealed and celebrated for a catch behind, but standing umpire Ahsan Raza turned it down as England reviewed the decision almost immediately. There was a spike shown on

the snickometer, but it appeared two to three frames before the ball passed the bat. Chris Gaffaney, the TV umpire, said the spike was "before the bat" and that the ball appeared to have "gone well under" the bat. "There's a clear gap, no spike." "I thought there was a bit of a feather or some sort of noise when it passed the bat. It looked a bit funny on the replay, didn't it, with the noise coming early? If I were given out, I think I would have reviewed it - probably not confidently, though. It was a nice sound as it passed the bat, yeah. "Snicko obviously didn't line up, did it? That's just the way cricket goes sometimes, isn't it? You have a bit of luck, and maybe it went my way today," said Carey.

'Felt like humiliation' - Egypt reacts to Salah's Liverpool row



What hits you most in Cairo, after the noise, is the sheer number of people. Egypt has a population of about 120 million. Its capital city is home to 23 million. For context, the population of Liverpool is just under one million. Come to appreciate that and only then do you begin to understand the scale of national fury that followed when Mohamed Salah gave his incendiary interview on 6 December, claiming Liverpool had "thrown him under the bus". "This interview was like a revolution in Egypt," says Diaa El-Sayed, the former Egypt assistant coach, who has known Salah since he was 16. "99% of Egypt supports Salah, and you can see from the reaction at Anfield that the Liverpool fans support him too." Across British media, Salah was criticised heavily for his actions. Former Liverpool defender Jamie Carragher branded the interview a "disgrace" and accused the 33-year-old of

throwing the club under the bus. Others insisted Salah was in the wrong for airing his grievances in public. Yet in Cairo, the 'Egyptian King' can do no wrong. "Before Salah, no-one supported Liverpool here," says Noura Essam, a Cairo local. "Before Salah, we didn't have a global figure, so we will always support him." During the 2018 presidential election, more than one million Egyptians crossed out the names of the listed candidates and cast their vote for Salah. He is an unofficial leader. In these parts, he is known as the 'Fourth Pyramid'. Around Ramses Square, the Cairo transport hub where Salah would change buses to reach training during his nine-hour round commute as a teenager, the cafe-goers describe their disbelief when he was named on the bench for three games in a row by Arne Slot and then left out of the squad for the Champions League trip to Inter Milan.

Anaya Bangar's Heartwarming Reaction As CSK Pick Up Sarfaraz Khan During IPL 2026 Auction

Anaya Bangar, child of former India batter Sanjay Bangar, was over the moon as her friend Sarfaraz Khan was bought by Chennai Super Kings (CSK) during Tuesday's IPL 2026 min-auction in Abu Dhabi. Sarfaraz, who last played in the IPL in 2023, was roped in at his base price of Rs 75 lakh. After years of being rejected, Sarfaraz thanked CSK for giving his career a new life. "Thank you so much, CSK for giving me new life," Sarfaraz captioned a video on his Instagram story. Reacting to a welcome post for Sarfaraz from CSK, Anaya dropped a 'fire' and a 'clap-



ping hands' emojis in the comment section. During IPL 2025, Anaya visited Sarfaraz's house to spend quality time with the batter and his family. She had taken to social media to

post a few pictures alongside Sarfaraz and his father Naushad Khan. In a video shared by Anaya, Sarfaraz revealed the two were meeting after a gap of two-three years. "We held bats before

we held phones. Friends since the beginning. Missed you @musheerkhan.97," Anaya captioned the post. Last year, Anaya shared a journey of transformation post a hormonal replacement therapy and gender reaffirming surgery. Anaya, who was formerly named Aryan, is an athlete and played age-group cricket following her father Sanjay Bangar's footsteps. Sarfaraz, on the other hand, has been in excellent form in this year's Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, amassing 256 runs from six innings at an average of 64.00 and a strike-rate of 182.85.

ACTIVE AERO AND OVERTAKE MODE - F1'S NEW TERMINOLOGY

Formula 1 has revealed the terminology the sport will use to refer to the technical complexities of the new 2026 rules. F1 is introducing arguably the biggest regulatory change in its history next season, with new chassis and engine rules, and the mandating of sustainable fuels. The new engines, which remain 1.6-litre V6 turbo hybrids, have significantly increased electrical capacity, which has required innovations in the cars' aerodynamics. Drivers will manage electrical energy throughout races - sometimes even on qualifying laps - to secure the best performance. F1 and governing body the FIA have consulted with what is described as a "wide range of new, casual and core fans to understand what kind of terminology would help them better



understand the key features of the new regulations". A statement said this involved "using third-party polling data and our 50,000 strong community 'Fan Voice', as well as consultation with the FIA, F1 teams and other technical experts to finalise and agree on the terms". The aim was to make a series of complex new areas of the sport as easy to understand

as possible to the widest audience. So previous terms for some of the devices - such as "x-mode" and "z-mode" for the active aerodynamics - have been dropped in favour of descriptions that give a more direct and straightforward indication of what the technology actually does. What's the new technology? Rule-makers say drivers will have more

power in their hands to make decisions over energy deployment, regeneration and conservation. The new rules mean cars will have a series of modes which will be indicated on television graphics to aid the audience's understanding of the action. Overtake mode: Replaces the current DRS overtaking aid. A burst of extra electrical energy available when drivers are within a second of the car in front to deploy power to assist with an overtake. Boost mode: Driver-operated energy deployment from the energy recovery system that can be used in attack or defence. Gives the driver maximum power from the engine and battery at the push of a button. Both these modes will have to be used with calculation as total energy is limited.

Bonmati named Fifa Best women's player of the year

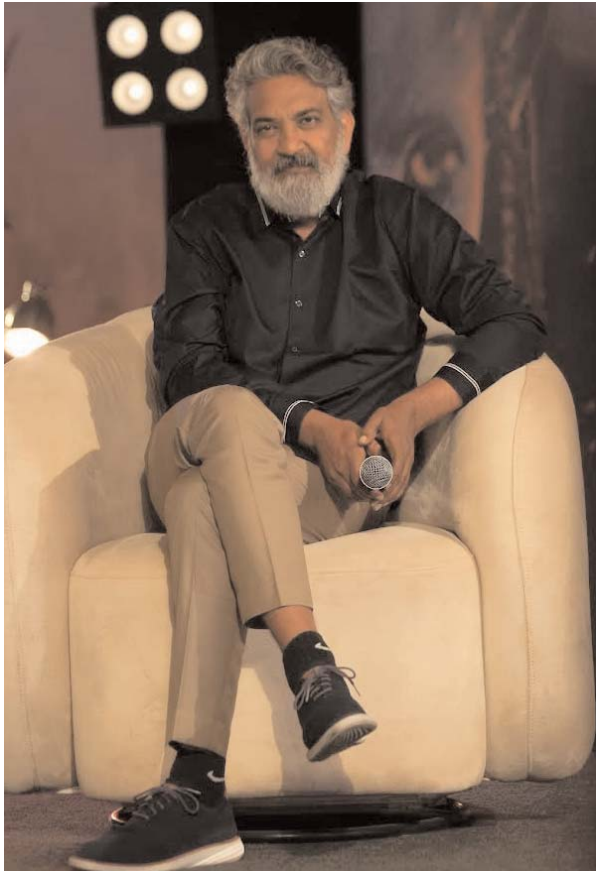


Barcelona midfielder Aitana Bonmati has been named the women's player of the year at the Fifa Best Awards for the third year in a row while England manager Sarina Wiegman is coach of the year for a fifth time. Bonmati, 27, was a key part of the Spain team who finished runners-up to England at Euro 2025, where she won the player of the tournament prize. The Spaniard won a domestic treble with Barcelona - scoring 12 and assisting six goals in La Liga F - but was a runner-up in the Champions League with her club, who lost to Arsenal in the final. Bonmati was named the competition's player of the season by Uefa, registering nine goal contributions in her 11 appearances and scoring in their 4-1 semi-final second-leg win at Chelsea. She said of her Fifa award: "I am grateful to have the honour. If it wasn't for all the play-

ers, coaches and the fans, I would not win it. [but] I will enjoy." Bonmati was also awarded the women's Ballon d'Or in September, becoming the first player to win it three times, having received it in 2023 and 2024. She earned the Fifa Best award in 2023 following a World Cup victory with Spain, and again in 2024 after winning a historic quadruple with Barcelona. Arsenal and Spain midfielder Mariona Caldentey and Barcelona forward Alexia Putellas were also nominated for this year's Fifa Best honour. Paris St-Germain and France forward Ousmane Dembele won the men's award at the ceremony in Qatar. Wiegman earns fifth coach of the year award Wiegman was honoured as the best women's coach of the year after guiding England to a second consecutive European title.

SS Rajamouli on watching Avatar: Fire and Ash, “I was like a child in the theatre” as James Cameron expresses his desire to visit Rajamouli’s film set!

A deep dive into Avatar: Fire and Ash and the art of filmmaking through the eyes of two cinematic ICONS - James Cameron and SS Rajamouli* A global cinematic moment was created when filmmaking titans James Cameron and SS Rajamouli came together to discuss the world's biggest franchise, Avatar and its upcoming instalment, Avatar: Fire and Ash. The two visionary directors spoke candidly about the nuances of large scale storytelling, their individual creative processes and the shared nervousness that accompanies the release of a film of such magnitude. Their conversation offered a rare insight into the mindset of filmmakers who continue to redefine the boundaries of cinema on a global stage. Reflecting on his experience of watching Avatar: Fire and Ash, SS Rajamouli described feeling “like a child in the theatre”, praising James Cameron's ability to continuously evolve cinematic spectacle while keeping emotion at the heart of storytelling. SS Rajamouli even shared that Avatar ran for a year in IMAX in



Hyderabad. The filmmaker highlighted how the Avatar franchise remains a benchmark for immersive, big screen experiences. James Cameron too expressed his admiration for SS Rajamouli's cinematic vision and shared

his desire to visit the Indian auteur's film set. _Avatar: Fire and Ash from 20th Century Studios releases in India on 19 December in 6 languages English, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, and Kannada._

Zamana releasing in theatres on Jan 30



The crime thriller Zamana is set to release in theatres on January 30. The film features Surya Srinivas and Sanjeev Kumar in the lead roles and marks the directorial debut of Bhaskar Jakkula. The movie is produced by Tejaswi Adapa, Boddula Lakshman and Shivakanth, Sashikanth. Recently, the trailer launch event of Zamana was held in a grand manner, with the entire film unit attending the program. Speaking at the event, director Bhaskar Jakkula said that Zamana is a different kind of crime thriller made with a strong and engaging subject. He added that the film will keep audiences entertained from start to finish and will surprise them with unexpected twists throughout the narra-

tive. Producer Shivakanth shared that the director handled the film with a very gripping screenplay. He expressed confidence that Zamana will surely entertain all sections of the audience and thanked the media for their continuous support to the film. Actors Surya Srinivas and Sanjeev Kumar stated that the team worked very hard on the film and expressed hope that the audience will enjoy it when it releases on January 30. Set against the backdrop of Hyderabad old city, Zamana reflects the mindset of today's youth. The film promises engaging entertainment with strong content that connects well with the younger generation. The cast also includes Swathi Kashyap and Zara.

Shambhala Locks Strong Pre-Release Business, Heads For Wide December 25 Release

Aadi Sai Kumar ventures into compelling new territory with Shambhala: A Mystical World, a supernatural thriller that has quickly grown into one of the most talked-about upcoming releases. Directed by Ugandhar Muni and produced by Rajasekhar Annabhimoju and Mahidhar Reddy under the Shining Pictures banner, the film has generated strong buzz across both trade circles and audiences. Riding on this mounting hype, the film has clocked impressive pre-release business. Both theatrical and non-theatrical rights have been closed at lucrative prices, ensuring table profits for the producers even before release. Notably, the theatrical rights have been picked up by prominent distributors, underlining the industry's confidence in the project. Usha Pictures acquired the Andhra and Ceded rights, while Mythri Distributors secured the Nizam territory. The overseas rights were bagged by Moonshine Cinemas, and Kumar Bangalore Films picked up the Karnataka rights. With such strong backing, Shambhala is gearing up for a wide and impactful release across India and overseas



markets. Another major strength of the film is its well-planned promotional strategy. From visually arresting concept posters and intriguing glimpses to a gripping teaser and a well-received theatrical trailer, every update has heightened the mystery surrounding the film. Adding to the momentum, the recently released first single Naa Peru Shambhala, sung by Geetha

Madhuri, has emerged as an instant chartbuster. The film's music is composed by Sricharan Pakala. The film also features a strong ensemble cast including Archana Iyer, Swasika, Ravi Varma, Madhunanandan, and Siva Karthik, promising a rich and layered narrative. The film with cinematography handled by Praveen K Bangari is all set to hit theatres on December 25.

Gurram Paapireddy” has a strong story at its core, and every scene moves forward in a fun zone, making the audience laugh: Hero Naresh Agastya

Starring Naresh Agastya and Faria Abdullah as the lead pair, “Gurram Paapireddy” is being presented by Dr. Sandhya Goli and produced by Venu Saddi, Amar Burra, and Jayakanth (Bobby). Directed by Murali Manohar, the film is a dark comedy based on a completely new concept that hasn't been seen on screen before. “Gurram Paapireddy” is set for a worldwide grand theatrical release on the 19th of this month. In an interview held today, Naresh Agastya spoke about the highlights of the film. “I have never done a film like this before. In my earlier movies, my characters were usually settled and calm. In ‘Gurram Paapireddy’, my character is more energetic and takes

the lead. I really liked the story when director Murali Manohar narrated it. After that, we traveled for nearly a year for the project work. During promotions, Tejaswini, the heroine of Raju Weds Rambai, accidentally called our film ‘Gedela Paapireddy’ instead of ‘Gurram Paapireddy’. Even though it was a wrong title, it went viral and helped more people get to know about our movie.” “In the film, I come with a specific purpose. To accomplish it, I need a few people I know who are not very intelligent. I select those who I can manage even if they question me. What exactly my mission is has not been revealed even in the trailer. We are on a hunt for a dead body. Whose body it is and why it matters is the main

point of the story.” “The storyline revolves around what happens when intelligent people behave foolishly, and when foolish people act intelligently, and how those situations affect their lives. We've had dark comedy films in the past, but they were never labeled as dark comedies. When someone is in trouble, they feel pain, but the same situation makes others laugh - that's dark comedy. In this film, the characters go through hardships, but those situations turn into entertainment for the audience. The entire movie moves in a fun zone. Though every scene has comedy, there is a strong story running underneath. The audience will be shocked at the interval.” “Our producers made this film without any compro-



mise. Especially Amar garu ensured that even when the budget increased, the quality was never reduced. We waited specifically for Yogi Babu. I don't have combination scenes with Brahmanandam garu, but I do share scenes with Yogi Babu. He is extremely friendly. He even took me around Ramoji Film City on

his bike and clicked selfies, saying these moments would be memories for him. That made me very happy.” “No matter how good the script is, you need the right artists to perform it. In our film, Faria Abdullah, Rajkumar Kasireddy, and Vamsidhar delivered excellent comedy timing. Acting alongside them was a great experience for me as well. We worked in a very friendly atmosphere, discussing scenes and performing together. Krishna Saurabh has composed very good songs for the film, and even the promotional song is receiving a strong response.” “A film must reach people through its trailer and teaser first; after that, the audience should carry it forward. Our trailer is getting a very good

response. Since I acted in it, I can't judge it myself, but everyone who watched it says it's good. People who worked on the film are confident it will be a hit. We are having premieres tomorrow. I haven't watched the full film yet, and I'm eagerly waiting to see the audience's response after the screening.” “I love traveling, and I also practice free diving. That means taking a single breath and diving as deep as possible into the sea. I once went down to a depth of 80 feet for 3 minutes and 40 seconds.” “In my view, a commercial film is one that can engage the audience even without songs or fights. It should have sensible elements and be appealing to viewers. None of my films so far have been purely commercial.

I request every social media user not to support AI-generated nonsense: Sreeleela



Hyderabad: Actress Sreeleela, who is one of the top stars in the Telugu and Tamil film industries, on Wednesday urged every social media user not to support AI-generated nonsense. Taking to her Instagram page to post an emotional appeal, the actress wrote, “I put my hands together and request every social media user not to support AI-generated nonsense. There is a difference between using and abusing technology. Advancements in technology are meant to simplify life, not complicate it, in my opinion.” Taking to her Instagram page to post an emotional appeal, the actress wrote, “I put my hands together and request every social media user not to support AI-generated nonsense. There is a difference between using and abusing technology. Advancements in technology are meant to simplify life, not complicate it, in my opinion.” Stating that she had been unaware of many things happening online due to her schedules, the actress said, “I thank my well-wishers for bringing this to my notice.

I have always taken things with a pinch of salt and lived in my own world, but this is deeply disturbing and devastating. I also see my fellow colleagues going through the same and am reaching out on behalf of everyone. With grace and dignity, and with trust in my audience, I ask you to please stand by us. The authorities will be taking it over from here.” It may be recalled that another top actress, Priyanka Arul Mohan, had raised concerns about the same issue in October this year. Actress Priyanka Arul Mohan, who is popular in both the Tamil and Telugu film industries, had said, “Some AI-generated images falsely depicting me have been circulating. Please stop sharing or spreading these fake visuals. AI should be used for ethical creativity and not misinformation. Let's be mindful of what we create and what we share. Thank you.” Stating that she had been unaware of many things happening online due to her schedules, the actress said, I thank my well-wishers for bringing this to my notice.

Vaishnavi Kokkura’s First Look Poster From Purushaha Catches Attention

Taking a film to the audience and building strong pre-release hype is no easy task. However, the Purushaha has managed to grab attention with just concept posters, taglines, and character introduction posters. Presented by Battula Saraswathi and produced by Battula Koteswara Rao under the Kalyan Productions banner, Purushaha marks the debut of Pavan Kalyan Battula as a hero. The film is directed by Veeru Ulavala and has already generated solid buzz among audiences. So far, posters introducing three major characters have been released. Now, the makers have unveiled the first look poster of heroine Vaishnavi Kokkura's character. The poster clearly hints at the nature of her role. It symbolically suggests conflict between husband and wife, echoing the idea that “two swords cannot fit in one sheath.” The dialogue featured on the poster—“Kanti Chooputho Kaadu, Kanneellatho Champestha. (I won't kill you with a glance, but with tears)”, offers a powerful insight into the intensity of her character. The serious face-off between the couple in the poster hints at the scale and depth of marital conflict that will be portrayed in the film. Along with Pavan Kalyan, the posters indicate that characters played by Kasireddy and Saptagiri will be special attractions. The first look poster of Vaishnavi Kokkura's role has certainly caught everyone's attention, and it remains to be seen how compelling the posters of the remaining characters will be. It is known that Vaishnavi Kokkura, Vishika, and Hasini Sudheer are playing the female leads in this film. The team also reveals that comedians like Vennela Kishore, VTV Ganesh, Ananth Sriram, Pammi Sai, and



Mirchi Kiran will provide ample laughter. Post-production work is currently progressing at a brisk pace, and the release date will be announced soon. Cast: Pavan Kalyan, Saptagiri, Kasireddy Rajkumar, Vaishnavi Kokkura, Vishika, Hasini Sudheer, Sri Sandhya, Gabi Rock, Anaira Gupta, Vennela Kishore, Rajeev Kanakala, Pammi Sai, VTV Ganesh, and others.

Jinn, Made with a New Concept, Will Scare & Captivate Everyone: Producer Nikhil M. Gowda

Produced by Nikhil M. Gowda under the banners of Sadalamma Film Productions and Bilva Studios, Jinn features Amit Rao, Parvez Simba, Prakash Tuminad, Ravi Bhatt, and Sangeetha in key roles. The film is directed by Chinmay Ram and is set for a grand release on December 19. The teaser and trailer have already generated strong buzz. As the release date approaches, producer Nikhil M. Gowda shared insights about the film with the media. Excerpts from his interaction: I'm from Bengaluru. I've loved films since childhood and mostly watched Telugu movies. That passion drew me to the industry. I came in with the dream of acting, but eventually became a producer. I met Chinmay Ram through my friends' circle. Knowing my passion for cinema, he narrated the story of Jinn. I really liked it—the concept felt fresh—so I decided to produce it. We shot Jinn along the Karnataka-Andhra border. With its different and new concept, the



film will captivate audiences. I've already watched it, and the feeling I had while listening to the story is exactly what came through on screen. It's designed to genuinely scare viewers. Alex's background score and Sunil Honnali's visuals are major highlights. The film offers a strong theatrical experience. Chinmay Ram has brought it to the screen beautifully, and thanks to the team's collective effort, Jinn has turned out wonderfully. Amit Rao, Parvez Simba, Prakash Tuminad, Ravi

Highlights
■ Produced by Nikhil M. Gowda under the banners of Sadalamma Film Productions and Bilva Studios, Jinn features Amit Rao, Parvez Simba, Prakash Tuminad, Ravi Bhatt, and Sangeetha in key roles. The film is directed by Chinmay Ram and is set for a grand release on December 19.

Bhatt, Sangeetha—everyone delivered excellent performances and were very supportive throughout the shoot. Jinn will give audiences a completely new experience. I hope they embrace this fresh attempt. The concept of a jinn isn't widely known, and through this film, we're introducing a new world. I'm currently listening to a few more stories, all in discussion stages. Going forward, I plan to continue producing films regularly in both Kannada and Telugu.