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## RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra Calls on CM Revanth Reddy



Hyderabad (TSIT): Reserve Bank of India Governor Sanjay Malhotra paid a courtesy visit to Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Thursday during his visit to Hyderabad to attend an RBI Board meeting. During the meeting, Malhotra appreciated the economic policies

being pursued by the Telangana Government. Chief Minister briefed the RBI Governor on the reforms introduced by the State, including power sector reforms, the proposal to establish a third DISCOM, and measures taken to promote solar power usage.

RBI Governor requested the Chief Minister to notify the BUDS Act and expressed optimism that the State would continue to move forward with more reforms and innovative plans. He also explained the RBI's initiatives related to the Unified Lending Interface (ULI) and the ongoing government and private deposits claim campaign. The meeting was attended by Chief Secretary Ramakrishna Rao, CM Principal Secretary Seshadri, Finance Secretary Sandeep Kumar Sultania, RBI Hyderabad Regional Director Chinmoy Kumar, and RBI General Managers Major Yashpal Charan and S. Panigrahi, among others.

## Women's Liberation Central to India's Democratic Evolution Meenakshi Natarajan



Hyderabad: Meenakshi Natarajan, former Member of Parliament and Member of the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress, delivered the 22nd C. D. Deshmukh Memorial Lecture in Hyderabad on Tuesday, asserting that women's liberation remains central to India's democratic and constitutional evolution.

Chairperson of the Managing Committee, CSD. The event witnessed participation from scholars, students, civil society members, and representatives of the press and digital media. Prominent dignitaries present on the occasion included Gaddam Vivek Venkat Swamy, Minister for Labour, Employment, Training and Factories, Mines and Geology, Government of Telangana; Akunuri Murali (Retired IAS), Chairman, Telangana Education Commission; Prof. Kodandaram, former MLC; and Prof. D.

Narasimha Reddy, former Dean, School of Social Sciences, University of Hyderabad.

In her lecture titled "The Time Has Come We Will Speak Out," Ms. Natarajan highlighted the historical construction of gender and power, challenging the notion that sexuality and gender roles are biologically fixed. Drawing from ancient spiritual traditions, medieval devotional movements, anti-colonial struggles, and constitutional debates, she underlined how women have consistently resisted patriarchal control across history.

Referring to the Therigatha, composed by Buddhist nuns nearly 2,500 years ago, and medieval women saints and poets such as Andal, Akkamahadevi, Lal Ded, Meera, Soya Rabai, and Kanho Patra, she noted that women used spirituality as a radical tool to challenge social, religious, and bodily constraints, thereby creating transformative interventions in deeply patriarchal societies.

## Be a Public Servant Not Just an Officer Deputy CM Bhatti

Hyderabad: Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu on Thursday urged civil servants to strive to be remembered as public servants rather than merely officials, stating that true success lies in bringing positive change and dignity into people's lives. Addressing the



valedictory programme of a 10-week training course for All India Services and Central Services officers at the Marri Channa Reddy Human Resource Development (MCRHRD) Centre, the Deputy Chief Minister said civil servants do justice to their positions only when peo-

ple recall them for their service to society. He advised officers to introspect daily on whether their work had made a meaningful difference in anyone's life. "If your actions bring change and respect, you are successful, even if the circumstances are difficult," he said.

## Proposals Sought Within Three Days for Modernisation of Sadashivpet Gangakathwa Canal

Hyderabad: Irrigation and Civil Supplies Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy has directed officials to prepare detailed proposals within three days for the modernisation of the 15-kilometre-long Gangakathwa Canal at Sadashivpet.

The directions were issued during a high-level review meeting held at the Secretariat on Thursday, chaired by the Minister in the presence of TPCC Working President Jagga Reddy. The meeting reviewed proposals for canal modernisation, repairs to tanks and construction of check dams in the Sangareddy Assembly constituency with a total estimated outlay of 101 crore. As per the proposed plan, 37 crore has been earmarked for the modernisation of the Gangakathwa Canal. Repairs to tanks include 30 tanks in Sadashivpet mandal (10.72 crore), 18 tanks in Sangareddy mandal (9.15 crore), 15 tanks in Kandi mandal (Rs.8.07 crore) and 4 tanks in Kondapur mandal (Rs.4.16 crore). An amount of 32 crore has been proposed for the construction of check dams on Nandi Vagu and Gangakathwa Vagu



in Sadashivpet mandal. TPCC Working President Jagga Reddy informed the Minister that once the canal modernisation works are completed, water supply can be ensured to 33 tanks in the constituency, benefiting nearly 1,500 acres of ayacut. The initiative to revive the Nizam-era Gangakathwa Canal has gained momentum due to the efforts of Jagga Reddy and TGIIC Chairperson Nirmala Jaggareddy with the support of Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy.

## Mayor Gundu Sudharani inspects public toilets, urges proper maintenance

Warangal, December 18: Warangal Mayor Gundu Sudharani on Thursday inspected public toilets near the Warangal Fire Station and directed officials to ensure proper upkeep. She expressed concern over the current management and provided suggestions for effective maintenance.

The Mayor emphasized that toilet managers should be present round the clock, carry out regular maintenance, and that bills would be paid for proper management. Notices will be issued to operators failing to maintain facilities.

She also visited the Potana Nagar transfer



station, checking the functionality of containers and instructing immediate repairs where needed. Mayor Sudharani urged horticulturists to plant saplings to maintain cleanliness and greenery around the premises.

Officials including MHO Dr. Rajesh, Sanitary Supervisor Pasunuri Bhaskar, and Golkonda Srinu participated in the inspection.

## Technology Driven Empowerment of Divyangjan Telangana Becomes Role Model

Hyderabad, December 18: Social Welfare, SC, ST, Divyangjan and Senior Citizens Welfare Minister Adluri Laxman Kumar on Thursday said that Telangana has emerged as a role model for the country by effectively using technology to empower persons with disabilities.

Speaking as the chief guest at an Assistive Technology programme for Divyangjan organised at the Alien Innovations office in Hyderabad, the Minister stated that the Telangana Government's objective is not limited to welfare measures alone, but to ensure that persons with disabilities lead independent, dignified and self-reliant lives. He said Divyangjan should not be seen merely as recipients of aid, but as capable citizens who can build their own future when given appropriate opportunities. This approach, he noted, reflects the clear vision of Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, under whose leadership the State is implementing an integrated policy framework covering education, employment, reservations in jobs, technology and self-employment.

Minister said the government has taken steps to ensure timely disbursement of disability pensions without hurdles, while also implementing scholarship and fee reimbursement schemes so that students with disabilities do



not discontinue their education. He recalled that the Chief Minister has directed officials to ensure that job reservations for persons with disabilities are reflected in actual appointments.

Highlighting the importance of innovation, Shri Adluri Laxman Kumar said technology-based solutions play a key role in empowerment, and appreciated the Telangana Innovation Cell (TGIC) for guiding young innovators and supporting startups. He said organisations such as Alien Innovations, nurtured with TGIC support, are creating products that bring meaningful change in the lives of persons with disabilities.

As part of the programme, the Minister distributed "Navinaut" assistive technology devices developed by Alien Innovations to over 20 visually impaired persons. He said the devices help working professionals with visual impairment perform their duties independently and with

dignity, terming them examples of socially responsible innovation.

Minister called upon more corporate organisations to partner through CSR initiatives to support Divyangjan empowerment, stating that CSR funds should be invested in enabling self-reliant living. He said Telangana is the first State in the country to initiate an innovation programme for persons with disabilities through a Government-CSR-Startup partnership, setting a national benchmark. He also congratulated Ravi Kiran, founder of Alien Innovations, for becoming the first Indian to win the Global IMAGEN Venture Winner Award at the age of 21, and lauded his efforts to expand opportunities for the visually impaired. TGIC CEO Miraj, UNICEF (AP & Telangana) Field Officer Jelamiali, representatives of L. V. Prasad Eye Institute, and other stakeholders were present at the programme.

## Dr.Pallepadu Damodar Announces Bharat Yatra for Consumer Awareness



H a n a m k o n d a : Dr. Pallepadu Damodar, National Senior Secretary of the Consumer Confederation of India (CCI), has announced that a Consumer Awareness Bharat Yatra will be organised across the country to promote consumer consciousness, in connection with National Consumer Rights Day on December 24. Addressing a Consumer Awareness Seminar organised by the District Consumer Advisory Council at Ramnagar in Hanamkonda on Thursday, Dr. Damodar said the yatra is being jointly organised by the Department of Consumer Affairs and the Consumer Confederation of India (CCI), with the cooperation of other related departments. He said the yatra aims

to educate consumers on the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, prevention of fraud in weights and measures, control of food adulteration, and the procedures for obtaining compensation for deficiency in paid services through legal remedies.

Dr. Damodar informed that the yatra will begin in New Delhi on December 24 and will travel across all states of India till March 14, 2026, concluding in New Delhi on March 15, 2026, coinciding with World Consumer Rights Day.

He stated that consumer organisations, officials from the Civil Supplies Department, Weights and Measures Department, Drug Control Department, municipal authorities, and public organisations will participate in the

yatra. Activities such as rallies, seminars, meetings, and public interaction programmes at major junctions will be organised to create awareness among consumers.

Dr. Damodar also said that CCI Chairman Dr. Ananth Sharma, President Preeti Pandya, Working President Selvaraj, other committee members, and representatives of consumer organisations from various states will take part in the yatra. The Bharat Yatra is scheduled to reach Warangal city on January 29. Members of the District Consumer Advisory Council, including Malyala Manohar Rao, Kaviraj, Indira, Jyothsna, Satish, Vivek, Ramesh Pal, Philip, Rajender, Rufus, Devender, Vanitha, Manjula, Philip John, and a large number of women participated in the programme.

## Apollo University students land overseas jobs in Iraq



Chittoor (TSIT) : Two students from Apollo University's B.Sc. Imaging Technology programme have secured overseas employment at the Internal Security Forces Hospital in Baghdad, operated by Apollo Hospitals. Arun Kumar Suravarapu (Guntur) and Syed Imam Khaja (Srikakulam) were appointed as Radiology Technicians, benefiting from competitive salaries, accommodation, airfare, and visa support. Vice-Chancellor Dr. H. Vinod Bhat praised the achievement, highlighting the university's focus on global standard academics and clinical training.


## Free cancer screening held at Penumallam under SVIMS initiative



Penumallam, Yerpedu Mandal: A free mobile cancer screening camp was organised at the Village Health Centre in Penumallam on Thursday under the aegis of Sri Venkateswara Institute of Medical Sciences (SVIMS), Tirupati. The camp provided awareness on cancer symptoms and preventive measures and offered free screenings, including oral cancer checks, mammograms for women, Pap smears, and BP and sugar tests. The initiative, conducted through SVIMS Pink Buses twice a week in Tirupati district, is part of a state-directed programme in collaboration with the District Medical and Health Department. The event was supervised by SVIMS officials and attended by a large number of men and women.



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Codeine cough syrup scam started in UP, govt shielding culprits: Akhilesh



**Lucknow:** Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Thursday alleged that a massive scam involving the illegal supply of codeine-based cough syrups running into thousands of crores originated in Uttar Pradesh and accused the BJP government of shielding those involved.

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Trump in White House speech announces USD 1,776 bonus for US troops



SPORTS | NEWS

Shubman Gill reaches Ahmedabad with Team India for 5th T20I against South Africa



INBRIF

Gold inches up, silver crosses Rs 2 lakh mark

NEW DELHI : Gold and silver prices showed mixed trends on Thursday, with gold recording a marginal rise in the domestic spot market, while silver surged past the Rs 2 lakh per kilogram level.

Data from the India Bullion Jewellers Association (IBJA) showed that the price of 24-karat gold increased by Rs 157 to Rs 1,32,474 per 10 grams.

Similarly, 22-karat gold edged higher to Rs 1,21,346 per 10 grams, while 18-karat gold was priced at Rs 99,356 per 10 grams.

Silver prices witnessed a sharper uptick compared to gold. The precious metal climbed by Rs 1,479 to Rs 2,01,120 per kilogram, crossing the Rs 2 lakh milestone in the domestic market.

**TDP defends renaming of MNREGA**

AMARAVATI: Telugu Desam Party (TDP) defended renaming MGNREGA as VB-G RAM G, saying it reflects new economic realities.TDP MP Lavu Sri Krishna Devarayalu said that rural employment programmes have existed since 1969 in multiple forms and iterations, long before MNREGA was introduced in 2005.

He was speaking in Lok Sabha during the discussion on Viksit Bharat – Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Bill, 2025, which seeks to repeal the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005.The TDP parliamentary party leader said that over the decades, schemes such as the Rural Employment Programme, Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, and Jawahar Gram Samridhhi Yojana eventually culminated in MNREGA.

**Mehbooba Mufti objects to BSF land allotment**

SRINAGAR (TSIT): PDP president Mehbooba Mufti on Thursday asked Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah to reconsider allotting “fertile” land to the BSF for setting up a security camp in Pulwama district. “This is fertile land located in the middle of the village. It should not be given to the BSF for establishing a camp as the livelihoods of many people are attached to this land,” Mufti told reporters after visiting Pochal village in Pulwama.

The former chief minister was accompanied by the party’s Pulwama MLA, Waheed Para. “Omar Abdullah is the chief minister, and he should intervene to protect the interests of the people. The BSF can be given infertile land,” Mufti said, adding that she will also raise the issue with the defence minister.

## Revanth challenges KCR to debate Krishna-Godavari water sharing



HYDERABAD TSIT: Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Thursday dared BRS president and former Chief Minister K. Chandrababhan Rao (KCR) to face a public debate on the alleged injustice done to Telangana in the sharing and utilisation of Krishna and Godavari river waters during the 10-year BRS rule.

Addressing a press conference at his residence, the Chief Minister said the Congress government was ready to convene a special session of the Telangana Legislative Assembly at any time to discuss water-sharing issues and place evidence on the floor of the House to prove how the previous government had compromised Telangana’s rightful share.

“I am directly chal-

CM Revanth challenged former CM KCR to a public debate over alleged water-sharing injustices, defended Congress’s governance and welfare achievements, accused the BJP of undermining MGNREGS, and expressed confidence in retaining power with a two-thirds majority in the next Telangana Assembly elections.

lenging KCR to write a letter in his capacity as Leader of the Opposition. We are prepared for a special Assembly session and an open discussion on who committed injustice to Telangana in Krishna and Godavari waters,”Revanth Reddy said, accusing the former Chief Minister of betraying the State’s interests.

Chief Minister said the Congress defeated KCR when he was active in politics, and now he was no longer playing an active role. He asserted that the People’s Government would

expose the alleged failures of the previous regime with facts and records. Revanth Reddy also stated that the government was ready to discuss the proposal for 42 per cent reservations for Backward Classes in a democratic manner in the Assembly and move forward accordingly.

Referring to the changes proposed by the Centre to the rural employment scheme, the Chief Minister alleged that the BJP-led Union Government was conspiring to weaken the Mahatma Gandhi

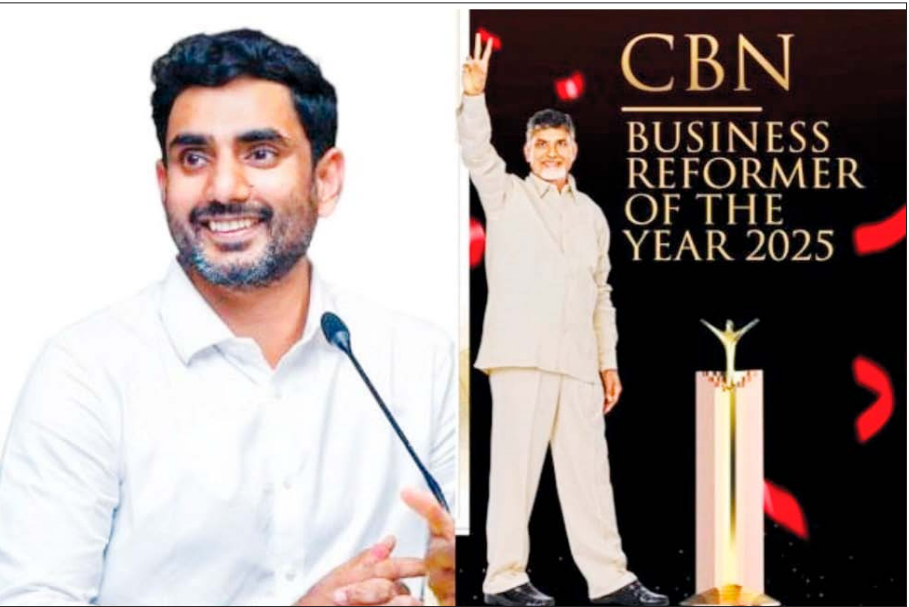
National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS). He said the Congress alone would safeguard the democratic spirit and welfare orientation of the country.

Expressing confidence that the Congress would retain power with a two-thirds majority in the next Assembly elections, Revanth Reddy said the mandate in the recent Gram Panchayat elections reflected the performance of the People’s Government.

He stated that Congress won 7,527 panchayats and Congress rebels won in 808, together accounting for victories in 8,335 panchayats, or about 66 per cent of the total 12,702. The BRS and BJP together secured 33 per cent, while the Left parties won about one per cent.

## CM Naidu honoured with ‘Business Reformer of the Year’ award

Minister Nara Lokesh expresses delight; award announced by The Economic Times



AMARAVATI (TSIT): Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has been conferred with the prestigious ‘Business Reformer of the Year’ award by leading business daily The Economic Times, marking a significant national recognition of his reform-oriented governance. The announcement was made by State IT and Human Resources Development Minister Nara Lokesh through a post on X (formerly Twitter).

Expressing happiness over the honour, Lokesh described the award as a moment of pride not just for their fam-

ily but for the entire state of Andhra Pradesh. “Very few leaders have steered India’s reform journey with such clarity, courage and consistency,” he said in his post.

Lokesh noted that the award stands as a testimony to the confidence reposed in Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu’s reforms and the pace of his governance. Observers see the honour as a major national-level acknowledgment of the Chief Minister’s vision and the wide-ranging reforms implemented under his leadership.

## 202 Indians recruited into Russian Army: Centre in RS

NEW DELHI (TSIT) : As many as 202 Indian nationals have been recruited into the Russian armed forces since 2022, with 26 reported fatalities and seven missing, the Centre informed the Rajya Sabha on Thursday. The disclosure came in response to a question from Trinamool Congress MP Saket Gokhale and Congress MP Randeep Singh Surjewala on the repatriation of Indians allegedly forced or illegally recruited to fight in the Russia-Ukraine war.



ernment also confirmed that 26 Indians have lost their lives in the conflict, while seven are reported missing as per information shared by the Russian side.Of the deceased, the mortal remains of 10 Indian nationals have been repatriated to India, while two were cremated locally in Russia with assistance from the Indian Mission.

“The Ministry has provided assistance in repatriation of mortal remains of 10 deceased Indian nationals to India, and local cremation of two deceased Indian nationals,” the MoS said.“DNA samples of family members of 18 Indians, who were reported dead or missing, have been shared with the Russian authorities in an effort to help establish the identity of some of the deceased Indian nationals,” he added.

## 'Op Sindoor showcased India’s swift, high-impact air power': Rajnath

NEW DELHI (TSIT): Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday said India’s ability to conduct swift, high-impact and short-duration military operations was clearly demonstrated during Operation Sindoor, asserting that the Indian Air Force (IAF) has emerged as a technologically advanced, operationally agile and strategically confident force.



Addressing the Air Force Commanders’ Conclave in New Delhi, the Defence Minister praised the IAF for the courage, speed and precision with which it destroyed terror camps during the operation and for effectively handling what he termed Pakistan’s “irresponsible reaction” following the strikes.Highlighting the growing public trust in the Armed Forces, par-

ticularly India’s air defence capabilities, the Defence Minister said the calm response of citizens during attempted Pakistani attacks on Indian installations reflected confidence in the country’s operational preparedness. “Usually, when enemy attacks, people hide. This time, people continued with their daily routines,” he said.

Emphasising the need to constantly assess an adversary’s offensive and defensive capabilities, Singh urged IAF commanders to draw lessons from Operation Sindoor

and remain vigilant to future challenges.

Referring to recent global conflicts, including the Russia-Ukraine war, the Israel-Hamas conflict, the Balakot air strikes and Operation Sindoor, Singh said air power has become a decisive force in modern warfare.

“Air power gives any leadership the capability to deliver a clear strategic message to the adversary that every step will be taken to uphold national interests. Through speed, reach, and precision, air power has become an effective tool for aligning the nation’s objectives with military means,” he said. The Defence Minister reiterated the government’s commitment to strengthening India’s security apparatus, noting that 21st-century warfare is increasingly driven by technology, ideas and adaptability.

## Telangana panchayat polls: Congress wins over 53% of Sarpanch posts

HYDERABAD (TSIT): The ruling Congress party has emerged as the clear winner in the Telangana Gram Panchayat elections, securing over 53 per cent of the total Sarpanch posts across the State. Elections were held in three phases, with the Congress maintaining its dominance in the final phase conducted on Wednesday.

Out of 4,159 Gram Panchayats notified in the third phase, Congress-backed



candidates won 2,246 Sarpanch posts. The Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) put up a strong fight to secure 1,163 posts, while the Bharatiya



Janata Party (BJP) lagged far behind with just 246 seats. Independents and others won 491 posts in this phase.Overall, out of 12,727 Gram Panchayats

notified by the State Election Commission (SEC) across all three phases, Congress-backed candidates won 6,822 Sarpanch posts (53.60 per cent). BRS stood second with 3,519 posts (27.64 per cent), BJP secured 703 posts (5.52 per cent), and Independents and others won 1,654 posts (12.99 per cent). With several Independents expected to extend support, the Congress claimed victory in nearly two-thirds of the Sarpanch seats.

## Karnataka Assembly passes hate speech bill amid strong opposition

BELAGAVI (TSIT): Amid strong opposition, the Karnataka Assembly, on Thursday, passed the Hate Speech and Hate Crimes (Prevention) Bill, the first such law in the country. The Bill has a provision for a jail term up to seven years and a fine upto Rs 1 lakh.

The bill, cleared by the cabinet on December 4, was presented in the House by Home Minister



G Parameshwara on December 10.The Minister said the provision for 10 years jail term in the event of repeated offence has been reduced to seven years. According to the bill, any expression, which is made, published

or circulated in words either spoken or written or by signs or by visible representations or through electronic communication or otherwise, in public view, with an intention to cause injury, disharmony or feelings of enmity or hatred or ill-will against person alive or dead, class or group of persons or community, to meet any prejudicial interest, is hate speech.



# Collector's Conference Day Two Focuses on Skills, Jobs and Integrated Development

Amaravati:On the second day of the Collectors' Conference, presentations were made on Agritech, logistics, energy management, product perfection, Swachh Andhra and deep tech, along with key sectors such as school education, higher education, skill development of human resources and employment generation.

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu provided clear direction to district collectors, senior officials and ministers on these focus areas.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister said skill development will play a decisive role in the future, and announced that degrees would be offered in skill development on par with traditional courses. He stressed that every department—including industry, tourism and IT—must be evaluated on how many jobs they create for youth.

Recalling the government's assurance of providing jobs to 20 lakh youth under the Yuvagalam initiative, the Chief Minister said 4.5 lakh jobs have already been generated, and directed officials to display beneficiary details with names on dashboards.



He said the government is moving forward on the basis of Ten Principles to achieve the 2047 Swarna Andhra vision, with integrated development aimed at family empowerment. Population management will continue as a key agenda, with a Population Management Policy to be introduced by Ugadi. Through the Family Card, details of beneficiaries receiving government services and welfare schemes will be recorded.

The Chief Minister underlined the need to expand the state's workforce, bring maternal and infant mortality rates to zero, and work towards zero suicides. He highlighted the Care and Grow app, which is being used to identify

developmental issues among children below six years of age, and called for counselling support for farmers, students and families. He also urged awareness on tobacco-free living, similar to anti-drug campaigns. On infrastructure and environment, he cautioned collectors to prevent encroachments on drains and pollution, and to ensure heavy rains do not lead to flooding.

The Chief Minister reiterated plans to develop Andhra Pradesh as a logistics hub on the East Coast and transform Rayalaseema into a horticulture hub, with exports to international markets. He emphasized product perfection to achieve global standards and said steps are being taken to

significantly reduce energy procurement costs.

Under the Swachh Andhra initiative, he called for a clean environment across the state and adoption of the net-zero concept in every village. Collectors were asked to work towards securing all central government awards for the state.

The Chief Minister announced that "Musthabu" (school readiness) programmes will begin in all schools on the 28th of this month, and that rankings will be introduced for speed of governance delivery. He reminded collectors that skill development and employment generation must remain top priorities in district administration.

## Pawan Kalyan Congratulates CM Naidu on 'Business Reformer of the Year' Award

Amaravati:Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan extended his congratulations to Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu during the Collectors and Superintendents of Police (SPs) conference, lauding him for receiving the prestigious 'Business Reformer of the Year' award.

Speaking on the occasion, the Deputy CM said that Andhra

Pradesh is progressing steadily under the leadership of Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu. He emphasized that the government is working under the Chief Minister's guidance and called upon all stakeholders to work collectively for the overall development of the state.

Pawan Kalyan reiterated that united leadership are key to achieving sustainable growth and prosperity for Andhra Pradesh.



## Bhairav Robotics Meets Minister BC Janardhan Reddy, Expresses Investment Interest in Andhra Pradesh

Amaravati:Representatives of Chennai-based Bhairav Robotics (BHAIRAV ROBOTICS) met Minister for Investments and Infrastructure, BC Janardhan Reddy, at the R&B Department office in the Secretariat on Wednesday.

Bhairav Robotics Managing Director Ramakrishna Kommuri and other company representatives held discussions with the Minister and expressed keen interest in making investments in



Andhra Pradesh. The Minister responded positively and assured the delegation of the State government's full cooperation.

The Bhairav Robotics team briefed the Minister on their latest innovations

in the fields of robotics and automation, along with their future expansion plans. The company is known for developing India's first armed quadruped robot, "SHVANA."

Minister BC Janardhan Reddy stated that the robotics sector will play a crucial role in industrial growth and in creating employment opportunities for youth in the State. He reiterated that the government would extend complete support to companies willing to invest in Andhra Pradesh.

## PPP Push Hands Over State to Private Players: CPI Slams Govt Policies



Vijayawada:CPI National Secretary K. Ramakrishna on Thursday strongly criticised the state government's policies, alleging that the education, healthcare and key public sector units are being steadily handed over to private players under the guise of Public-Private Partnership (PPP). He demanded an immediate rollback of the PPP-driven privatisation of government medical colleges and withdrawal of related government orders.

Addressing a CPI-led protest at Dharna Chowk in Vijayawada, Ramakrishna said transferring government land, buildings and centrally approved medical colleges to private entities amounts to outright privatisation. He warned that such moves would make healthcare inaccessible to the poor and further weaken public universities, while favouring private institutions. He also expressed concern over attempts to privatise Visakhapatnam Steel Plant despite record production, alleging policies were being tailored to benefit corporate interests. CPI leaders announced statewide protests involving student, youth and public organisations until the government reverses its decisions.

## Yashoda Hospitals-Hitech City completes 1,000+ major robotic surgeries in one year

Hyderabad, Dec 18, 2025: Yashoda Hospitals-Hitech City has achieved a major milestone by successfully completing over 1,000 complex major robotic surgeries within a single year, marking a first-of-its-kind achievement in the Telugu states. The feat strengthens Telangana and the Telugu states' position as leading centres for advanced robotic surgical care in India. The milestone was celebrated in the presence of Madhapur Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Smt. Riti Raj, who attended the programme as the chief guest, along with Yashoda Hospitals Managing Director Dr. G.S. Rao.

Speaking on the occasion, DCP Smt. Riti Raj said the achievement was a matter of pride not only for Yashoda Hospitals but also for the



city of Hyderabad and the entire Telugu states. She noted that the successful completion of over 1,000 complex robotic surgeries in just one year reflected the hospital's commitment to technological advancement, patient safety and clinical excellence. She added that robotic surgery offers greater precision, enhanced safety, reduced pain and faster recovery for patients.

Highlighting the details of the achievement, Dr. G.S. Rao said the milestone included 434 gynaecology and gynaec-oncology surgeries, 310 general, GI and HPB procedures, 177 urology surgeries, 79 thoracic surgeries and several highly complex head and neck robotic procedures. He stated that all surgeries were performed with utmost precision and excellent clinical outcomes. Dr. Rao further said Yashoda Hospitals continues to raise its profile by adopting advanced technologies and delivering high-quality patient care. He added that the hospital is ranked among the top centres in India for robotic surgeries and that the achievement underscores its position as one of the most advanced healthcare providers in the country.

## Pulse Polio drive in Andhra Pradesh on December 21



Amaravati (TSIT): Andhra Pradesh will conduct a statewide Pulse Polio immunisation programme on December 21, with massive arrangements underway to ensure its smooth and effective implementation. Health authorities have set a target to administer polio drops to over 54 lakh children across the State. To cover all regions comprehensively, a total of 38,267 polio vaccination centres have been established. In preparation for the drive, officials have already distributed 61,26,120 doses of polio vaccine to districts well in advance to avoid any shortages. Health officials have appealed to parents and guardians to ensure that all children below five years of age are mandatorily administered polio drops.

## Christmas Carols Celebrated at Bishop House, Nampally

Hyderabad (TIST): The Centenary Methodist Kannada Church, Chapel Road, Nampally, celebrated Christmas Carols with devotion and joy at the Bishop House in Hyderabad.

The carol celebrations were held in a spiritually uplifting atmosphere, reflecting the true spirit of Christmas and spreading the message of peace, love, and goodwill. The event was led under the guidance of Bishop A. Simeon.

Senior Pastor Rev. Abraham John presided over the programme, while Assistant Pastor Rev. N.G. Samuel played an active role in coordinating the service. Hymns and carols



praising the birth of Lord Jesus Christ were rendered by the church choir and members, filling the Bishop House with festive fervour.

Lay Leader Susheel Kumar, Ushers' Chairman Ravi Anand, Audit Chairman Sunil William, and Bhajana Committee Chairman Xavier were present and extended their

support in organising the celebrations.

Several church members participated enthusiastically in the carol singing and prayers, making the occasion memorable. The programme concluded with special prayers for peace, harmony, and prosperity, followed by fellowship among the congregation.

## KL Deemed to be University Students Win National-Level Smart India Hackathon 2025

Hyderabad, 18 December 2025: KL Deemed to be University (KLEF) has once again made the nation proud by emerging as a National-Level Winner at the Smart India Hackathon (SIH) 2025, securing a cash prize of Rs.1.5 lakh. The winning team developed an innovative solution for the problem statement "Low Cost Automated Classroom Attendance for Rural Areas," proposed by the Government of Punjab. The national finale was held at Chandigarh Engineering College, Landran, Chandigarh, Punjab, where the KL Deemed to be University team outperformed over 500 teams from across India to secure the top position.

The winning team from the KL GNU Linux Users Group (KL GLUG) at KL Deemed to be University, comprises B.Tech students P. Vamsi Krishna, Varun Sharma, V. Jashwanth, Madhuhan Shekhar, Ankita Behera, and Prabhsirat Kaur (IRD department), mentored



by Dr. Sripath Roy Koganti. In Smart India Hackathon 2025, six teams from KL Deemed to be University qualified for the national finals, including five teams from the Vijayawada campus and one team from the Hyderabad campus, with several teams also reaching the grand finale stages.

The award-winning solution employs a hybrid RFID and face-recognition system to reduce attendance time and improve teaching efficiency. It supports data-driven Mid-Day Meal planning, offers role-based mobile applications and dashboards, sends SMS alerts to parents, and is a

low-cost, scalable solution ideal for large-scale government adoption. Back on campus, the winning team had earlier developed "KL EATS," a pre-order food solution for the University canteens, which witnessed wide adoption among students. Developed with the support of KL GLUG and the Department of Experiential Learning, this hands-on product development journey strengthened the team's grassroots understanding, design thinking approach, and real-world execution skills, which directly contributed to the success of their Smart India Hackathon solution. The

Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor and the Registrar congratulated the students and mentor for the achievement. The initiative was supported by Dr. Narasimha Raju, SIH SPOC, with academic leadership from Dr. Aswin Kumar.

This marks the second national-level Smart India Hackathon win for KL Deemed to be University. Earlier, a team from the KL GNU Linux Users Group won SIH 2022, with the finale held in Erode, Tamil Nadu, for a solution focused on providing educational access to rural villages without internet connectivity, which was subsequently implemented in multiple villages. Such national recognitions further strengthen KL Deemed to be University's standing as an innovation-driven institution, where experiential learning and strong mentorship enable students to deliver future-ready solutions with meaningful societal impact.

## Two-day national seminar on space science and defence technology inaugurated at GITAM

Hyderabad: A two-day National Seminar on "Advancements in Space Science and Defence Technology" was inaugurated at the GITAM School of Technology, Hyderabad, on December 18, 2025, in collaboration with the Indian Air Force.

Dr. G. Ramaguru, Director, DRDO-Industry-Academia Centre of Excellence (DIA CoE), IIT Hyderabad, attended the programme as the chief guest and delivered the keynote address. Drawing on his 35 years of experience with the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), he underlined the crucial role of academia in supporting defence-oriented research and innovation through structured funding and strong collaboration.

Highlighting the importance of space science and defence technologies for national security and strategic self-reliance, Dr. Ramaguru traced India's progress from launching indigenous satellites to developing advanced missile and surveillance systems. He also spoke on emerging dimensions of modern warfare, including cyber security



and space warfare, in addition to traditional land, air and naval domains.

A member of the Agni missile programme, Dr. Ramaguru elaborated on India's deterrence capabilities and recent achievements such as counter-drone systems, missile defence initiatives, UAV development and indigenous defence missions. He linked these advancements to the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat and noted the growing role of private space startups like Skyroot in strengthening the coun-

try's defence and space ecosystem. He also explained IIT Hyderabad's nine technology verticals focusing on future-ready areas including additive manufacturing, advanced materials, ultra-high-altitude weapons, hypersonic systems and high-temperature materials. Emphasising the role of educational institutions, he encouraged students to nurture curiosity, creativity, discipline and commitment to excellence, stating that innovation in drones, UAVs and missile systems begins on academic campuses.

## Emmanuel MB Church holds Christmas carols in Sanathnagar

Sanathnagar: As part of Christmas week celebrations, Emmanuel MB Church, Sanathnagar, organised Christmas carols with devotion and spiritual fervour, conveying the message of peace, love and brotherhood. Led by Pastor Srinivas and Pastor



Clement, the programme featured carols praising

the birth of Jesus Christ, creating a spiritually

uplifting atmosphere. The pastors highlighted the values of humanity, compassion, forgiveness and service, stressing unity and harmony as the true essence of Christmas. A large number of local residents attended the event, making it a grand success.



**Date: 18.12.2025, Place: Hyderabad     STATUTORY SALE NOTICE UNDER RULE 8(6) OF THE SARFAESI ACT, 2002     Sd/- Authorized Officer, Punjab National Bank, Secured Creditor**



# EDITORIAL

## What Vijay's First Rally In Tamil Nadu Post-Karur Stampede Really Means

"Shall I take a selfie with Erode?" This expression of interest was articulated by actor-turned-politician Vijay at the end of his speech at a public meeting in Erode. Under normal circumstances, it would mean nothing more than an attempt to pamper his fans fawning over him. But in Erode, it meant a sigh of relief that the lessons of Karur had been learnt, both by his party, the Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK), and its supporters. In September, 41 people died in a stampede at the TVK public meeting venue in Karur. Vijay came under attack for the manner in which the meeting had been conducted there, and his abrupt and immediate departure to Chennai. The party's political campaign schedule went into cold storage. In Erode, even though the police ensured that the TVK followed 80-plus conditions before allowing it to conduct the meeting, it was not surprising that Vijay still told the 35,000-strong crowd that had thronged the Vijaymangalam toll plaza venue in Perundurai, "You have come here safely, go home safely. Your safety is most important to me."

### The Vijay Of His Films

That the post-Karur Vijay was more vigilant was obvious when, during his speech, an activist climbed atop a makeshift structure. Vijay cajoled him to come down, and when the person complied, Vijay thanked him with a flying kiss. While the charm offensive remains Vijay's most potent weapon, it is obvious that the newest politician on the block has realised that he needs to replicate what he does in his films - the good-hearted hero with the right dose of mother-sister-brother sentiment, concerned about everyone's well-being. Vijay's political pitch suggested nothing much has changed post-Karur. If anything, the name-calling has gone a notch higher. Vijay described the 2026 electoral battle as one between "theeya sakthi" (evil force) DMK and "thooya sakthi" (pure force) TVK'. His focus was hyperlocal as he went about dissing the DMK over matters of governance and issues like irrigation, turmeric farming and the power situation.

### Erode As A Stop

But what was more significant was the choice of Erode as the first meeting post-Karur. Erode was Periyar's jannabhoomi, and it allowed Vijay to hyphenate his name to the list of people who are followers of the Dravidian ideologue. His mention of CN Annadurai and MG Ramachandran was significant as it meant telling the AIADMK leaders that they are not the only claimants to their political legacy. More importantly, it allowed recent entrant KA Sengottaiyan to showcase his organisational capabilities. Sengottaiyan was unceremoniously shown the door by AIADMK supremo Edappadi Palaniswami for advocating the party's unification with the likes of O Panneerselvam and TTV Dhinakaran. Now that he has switched over to the TVK, Sengottaiyan has a score to settle. Sengottaiyan has been an MLA nine times and served as a minister in MGR, J Jayalalithaa and EPS governments, and is not a political lightweight by any stretch of imagination. So, if Erode were a film starring Vijay, Sengottaiyan was the brain and the muscle behind the production. Mission Erode was bulk-order political messaging, aided suitably by geography. Erode is a half-hour drive from Gobichettipalayam assembly constituency, which Sengottaiyan has represented since 1980. More importantly, it takes approximately the same time to reach Edappadi in the neighbouring Salem district, represented by EPS.

# Editorial

## After Bondi Beach Attack, Some Hard Questions For The Muslim World

The Bondi Beach massacre, said to be the deadliest attack in Australia since 1996, has shaken the country to its core and no doubt horrified Jewish communities across the Western world. Policymakers are scrambling for answers. Families are grieving. Alarmingly, Australia's sense of safety has been punctured. But this tragedy must also serve as a wake-up call for the ummah, the global Muslim community. It beggars belief. How did two men - a 50-year-old father and his 24-year-old son, with no apparent connection to the Arab-Israeli conflict in the faraway Middle East - carry out an attack that killed 15 innocent Jewish civilians celebrating Hanukkah? There is no doubt this was a pre-meditated assault on families gathered for a peaceful, joyous festival. For God's Sake, Look Inward Yet, instead of widespread introspection, much of the immediate online and WhatsApp chatter in parts of the Muslim world turned to finding excuses or explaining away the dastardly act. They ranged from Gaza to Netanyahu to Western hypocrisy. Indeed, the usual deflections. The gunmen's precise motives are still unclear. The surviving suspect, 24-year-old Naveed Akram, now lies in a hospital bed under heavy guard. The other suspect, Naveed's father, Sajid Akram, was killed during the attack. Police have declared the attack a terrorist incident. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has said early assessments suggest it may have been inspired by Islamic State ideology. Whatever the claimed grievances - even in the face of the unquestionable horrors in Gaza - the Bondi Beach killings cannot be justified. No faith permits such violence. No moral code should defend it. My submission is simple. We must confront the anger, denial and victimhood narratives that create a permissive environment in which extremists begin to believe their violence is righteous. Injustice cannot be fought with more injustice. There is no denying this was antisemitism. This was hate. And if we are to be



honest, painfully honest, this moment demands more than grief and outrage; it demands introspection, especially within the wider Muslim world. Victimhood Meets Denial When the Christchurch mosque massacre happened in New Zealand in 2019, I called it an act of pure, unfiltered hate. I was applauded in my community. A white supremacist, who was an Aussie citizen, had murdered 51 Muslims at prayer. The outrage was unanimous. That day, solidarity worked. But on Sunday, when a Muslim father-son duo killed 15 unarmed Jewish civilians in Australia, I called it what it was - a hate crime, which was indefensible. But the reaction was very different. I was told I was "timid", "too soft", even a "pacifist". Some asked me why I wasn't focusing on Gaza or Kashmir instead. As if anger elsewhere could explain bloodshed on an Australian beach. This reluctance to look inward and this instinct to explain away the actions of the perpetrators is not strength. It is shortsightedness. During my only trip to Israel a few years ago, many Palestinians were pleasantly surprised that the Muslims in the non-Arab world had so much concern for them. Of course, this was before the beginning of the current ongoing war in Gaza.

And yet, I believe justice for Palestinians, both in Gaza and the West Bank, cannot be achieved by murdering Jews in Sydney. Anger over Kashmir cannot justify planting bombs in Delhi. It does not give the moral license to anyone to kill innocent civilians anywhere in the world. Yet, annoyingly, the justifications begin almost instantly. Some quoted the New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman's well-known warning that Israel's war might fuel global antisemitism. Yes, the context matters. But context is not consent. Anger at Netanyahu's government does not explain why a father and son in Sydney picked up weapons and walked towards people who had come to celebrate a festival by the sea. The Bigger Failure - And Not Just Ours There is another uncomfortable truth. Western policymakers must also confront their own blind spots. Naveed Akram, the young suspect, was charged with 59 offences, including 15 counts of murder and one of committing a terrorist act. Punishing individuals is necessary. It is the demand of the law. But is it sufficient? Naveed Akram may spend the rest of his life behind bars and perhaps never be out on parole. But think about it, did the father-son duo not walk to the beach that

evening prepared to die? Suicide bombers in Iraq, lone wolves in Europe, militants in India, none of them acted under the illusion that they would survive. The 10 gunmen who descended upon Mumbai on November 26, 2008, were fully armed. They knew they were on a suicide mission. But they had orders to kill, create mayhem and spread fear. They did it for 60 hours. The lone survivor was hanged to death. Has that stopped terror attacks? You cannot deter a person who believes death is a promotion. The Strange Pull Of Radicalism And this is where the real question for policymakers, and for all of us, begins. Punishment after an act of terror is the easy part; prevention is the hard, necessary work. How do we understand the inner drift of an otherwise ordinary man towards radical certainty? How do we disrupt the slow, corrosive accumulation of grievance, real or imagined, before it hardens into the kind of ideological fury that turns strangers into targets? This is not a Muslim problem alone, nor should it ever be framed that way. Every community has produced its own extremists. Myanmar's Buddhist mobs. India's Hindu lynch groups or individuals. Sikh militants in Punjab in the 1980s. Europe's white supremacists.

## India's Aviation Model Is Cracking Under Its Own Weight

When Indian airlines placed orders for over 1,350 new aircraft in 2023 and 2024 alone, the numbers captured both promise and peril. India is now the world's third-largest domestic-only aviation market (globally it ranks fifth when including all passenger traffic), handling approximately 161 million domestic passengers in 2024 and accounting for 4.2% of global air traffic. Yet, public confidence in air travel has never been more fragile. The Air India Flight 171 crash on June 12 this year, which killed 241 of the 242 people on board (230 passengers and 12 crew) and 19 people on the ground, and the cascading IndiGo flight cancellations in December are not isolated mishaps. They are stress signals from a system stretched to its limits. The crash marked the first fatal accident involving a Boeing 787 Dreamliner since the aircraft entered commercial service in 2011, a fact that underscores the gravity of the incident for global aviation safety. The two incidents reflect different failure modes, one under accident investigation, the other an operational-planning breakdown. But both expose how growth is outrunning institutional capacity. The immediate response to such events often focuses on individual fault, like pilots, crew, or airline management. But that framing obscures the deeper structural challenge. India's aviation ecosystem has expanded faster than its regulatory, infrastructural, and human-capital foundations. The Regulatory Architecture The Directorate General of Civil Aviation's (DGCA) Flight Duty Time Limitations (FDTL) mandate precise constraints on pilot duty hours to combat fatigue-related safety risks. Announced in January 2024 and implemented in two phases, these regulations represent India's alignment with international norms. When the FAA implemented its regulations in 2014, American carriers adjusted proactively. Delta Air Lines began planning well in advance, conducted comprehensive modelling of crew utilisation patterns, and expanded its pilot workforce. American Airlines faced a scheduling crisis in December 2017 when a comput-



er glitch granted vacation to thousands of pilots simultaneously, potentially leaving over 15,000 flights without crews between December 17 and 31. But the management implemented 150% premium pay incentives and engaged in union negotiations regarding compensation and scheduling compliance. Within 72 hours, the airline secured crew coverage for substantially all affected flights. European airlines faced similar challenges when an EASA regulation took full effect in February 2016. The Lufthansa Group established a dedicated transition team comprising operations planners, crew scheduling specialists, pilot union representatives, and legal compliance officers. Ryanair, too, despite its low-cost model emphasising maximum aircraft utilisation, increased pilot staffing and made modest schedule adjustments. Gulf carriers operating under similarly stringent duty time regulations maintain substantially higher pilot-to-aircraft ratios specifically to absorb FDTL restrictions. Emirates, with its all-widebody fleet of approximately 261 aircraft and nearly 4,600 pilots, operates with flexibility to cover extensive crew rest requirements for long-haul operations, absorb disruptions, and maintain service during peak demand periods. Singapore Airlines operates ultra-long-haul flights exceeding 19 hours, utilising an augmented flight crew and enabling in-flight rest

rotations in dedicated crew rest compartments. Making Of An Avoidable Crisis Against this, IndiGo's December 2025 operational collapse reveals a series of strategic failures extending over multiple years. Its ratio of approximately 14 pilots per aircraft represented only 70% of typical full-service carrier staffing and fell below even other low-cost carriers. From fiscal 2022 through fiscal 2024, IndiGo matched pilot growth almost exactly to aircraft acquisition, increasing pilots by 33% while expanding its fleet by 33%. This kind of expansion maintained the lean ratio without building any buffer for the known FDTL Phase 2 implementation. In stark contrast, Air India more than doubled its pilot complement. This means that there was a 127% increase, vastly exceeding its 32% fleet growth, thereby reflecting Tata Group's strategic preparation for FDTL compliance. Internal analysis suggested that FDTL Phase 2 compliance would require IndiGo to increase its pilot workforce by approximately 20-25% to maintain the existing schedule capacity. With 5,038 pilots as of fiscal 2024, this implies a need for roughly 1,000 to 1,250 additional pilots by November 2025. Yet, IndiGo's actual hiring remained insufficient. Even more problematically, IndiGo increased its winter 2025-2026 schedule by approximately 6% despite knowing it faced crew shortfalls estimated at 10-15% under Phase 2 rules.

## Good vs Evil: Will Vijay's Tamil Nadu Election Pitch Succeed?

The first major takeaway from actor-politician and Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) chief Vijay's Erode rally is unmistakable: the animosity between the TVK and the ruling DMK has only intensified. The DMK's sharp attacks on Vijay - particularly its attempts to hold him and his party responsible for the tragic stampede in Karur on September 27 - appear to have hardened his political posture. Vijay's response has been to turn this into an open and bitter rivalry. Invoking the late Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa, Vijay justified the fierce language she once used against the DMK. Declaring the DMK an "evil force" and positioning the TVK as the "pure force", he delivered the message with the flourish of a cinematic monologue - equal parts vehemence and vengeance. By framing the upcoming election as a battle between good and evil, Vijay is deliberately reviving memories of the Jayalalithaa-Karunanidhi rivalry - an intense, deeply personal feud that defined Tamil Nadu politics until they died in 2016 and 2018. Crucially, Vijay is attempting to rewrite the state's political script: no longer DMK versus AIADMK, but DMK versus TVK. Vijay's use of Periyar's name, accusing the DMK of exploiting the state in the name of the Dravidian icon, underlines the ferocity of the rivalry he is building. Periyar remains the DMK's most powerful ideological symbol, and attacking the party on this front is a calculated provocation, especially in Erode, which is Periyar's birthplace. This emotionally charged DMK-versus-TVK narrative does not just threaten the ruling party. It poses an equally serious challenge to the AIADMK. Vijay's rise risks cutting into the AIADMK's traditional vote base, spelling trouble for Edappadi K Palaniswami (EPS), whose leadership has failed to deliver an electoral victory since Jayalalithaa's death in 2017. The party has lost the 2019 (Lok Sabha), 2021 (Assembly), and 2024 (Lok Sabha) elections, and the erosion shows. What worsens matters for the AIADMK is the entry of KA Sengottaiyan into the TVK. The nine-time AIADMK MLA, now



head of TVK's coordination committee, knows the party and EPS intimately. More importantly, he hails from the "Kongu" region in western Tamil Nadu - EPS's last major bastion. Sengottaiyan's presence represents a direct strategic threat. Interestingly, Vijay's attack on the BJP was relatively muted, especially when compared to his sharp criticism of the DMK. The AIADMK, too, was largely ignored as a political force - embarrassingly for the opposition party, given the rally was held in a region traditionally loyal to the AIADMK. Vijay's declaration that more leaders like Sengottaiyan would soon join TVK should make the AIADMK wary. Yet for all its drama, Vijay's speech offered little in the way of concrete political substance. There was no clarity on alliances, no roadmap to address agrarian distress or corruption beyond rhetorical references. The only policy position he clarified was that he was not opposed to welfare measures or so-called freebies. While he avoided personal attacks on Chief Minister MK Stalin, the speech leaned heavily on emotion, spectacle, and symbolism - hallmarks of Vijay's appeal, especially among his fans. And that fan base remains formidable. Despite the Karur tragedy, there was no visible drop in turnout or enthusiasm at Erode. The emotional fervour was as intense as ever. Notably, none of the families of the 41 victims who died in the stampede

have publicly blamed Vijay - an indication of the extraordinary emotional bond he enjoys with his supporters. Strikingly, Vijay made no reference to the tragedy during his speech, despite addressing a crowd just 70 kilometres from the location of the tragedy. There was no public display of grief. This signals a conscious strategic decision: the TVK has chosen to move forward without allowing guilt or remorse to define its campaign. Politically, the party has placed responsibility squarely on the DMK, alleging conspiracy, while keeping outreach to victims' families personal and away from the public gaze. As Tamil Nadu moves closer to the 2026 Assembly election, Vijay's strategies will face their toughest test. An AIADMK-TVK alliance appears virtually impossible, for now. EPS is unlikely to accept Vijay as the face of an alliance, and Vijay, by the same token, is unlikely to play second fiddle to anyone. An understanding with the BJP appears even more improbable, given Vijay's minority vote base. At present, this forecloses the possibility of a TVK-AIADMK partnership within the NDA, pointing instead to a three-cornered contest in 2026: TVK versus DMK-led alliance versus NDA. Yet politics has a way of making the impossible possible. Vijay has noticeably softened his tone towards the BJP since the stampede. With the case now under CBI investigation and before the Supreme Court.





Mangaluru’s Vidya Sampath crowned Mrs Earth International, brings glory to India



Mangaluru, Dec 17: Balancing home, family, her son, and a successful business, Vidya Sampath Karkera of Mangaluru has made her mark in the modelling world by being crowned Mrs Earth International at a prestigious beauty pageant held from December 2 to 10 in the Philippines. Competing against participants from 22 countries, Vidya emerged as the grand winner, bringing pride to India. Speaking to the media on Tuesday, Vidya said, “It was an honour to represent India at

the international level. There were participants from 22 countries, and it is impossible to describe the joy I felt when my name was announced as the grand winner.” Vidya, who previously won the Mrs India Astral Karnataka runner-up title, runs a supermarket in Chitrapur, Mangaluru, and has successfully established herself as both an entrepreneur and a model. She credited her husband for encouraging her to participate and acknowledged the guidance she received from Deepak Ganguli,

regional director of Austral Pageants, during her preparation. Selected through multiple rounds of competition held in Bengaluru, Vidya was the only participant representing India at the international event. She impressed judges with her talent, confidence, and unique perspective, excelling in talent rounds and the national costume round. In the national costume segment, Vidya showcased India’s national animal (tiger), national bird (peacock), and the lotus flower, crafting the outfit entirely from tin and plastic waste under the concept ‘Turning Waste into Art’, raising awareness about environmental conservation. She also presented figurines reflecting Tulu Nadu culture to participants from 22 countries, introducing the richness of her regional heritage to the world. Born in Mumbai but now based in Mangaluru, Vidya trained at Deepak Ganguli’s Pathway Modelling Studio, as well as Mercy Beauty Academy and Ladies’ Salon. Her achievements demonstrate the ethos of ‘Beauty with Brains’, balancing entrepreneurship, family, and modelling with distinction. Reflecting on her achievement, Vidya said, “The competition had many challenging rounds.

Actor, producer, director Kamal Raj releases five works



Bengaluru: Kamal Raj (Kalim Pasha), who is known as an actor, producer, director and distributor in the Kannada film industry, has also made his own mark as a writer of taste. Kamal Raj, who has been known for writing stories, screenplays, lyrics and dialogues for his films so far, has now released five works written by him. Five books titled ‘Devara Universal Business School’, ‘Marketing Icons of India SRK and Modi’, ‘To My Kids Imad and Alia’, ‘Tipu Sultan’ and ‘1000 Shayariyan Jasbaat Dil Se’ were released recently. Young actor Virat, publisher and producer V. Laxmikant, actors Rakshak, Huchha Venkat and many other dignitaries from the film industry and various fields were present to launch these books. These books are written on natural business, marketing strategies, the relationship between father and son, achievements of historical figures and a bunch of emotional songs. These books are available in both languages including English and Kannada. Speaking after releasing his books, Kamal Raj said, ‘Until now, I was mostly writing only for our cinema. Now, I am presenting some things that are outside of cinema and that everyone needs to know through these works.

Vijayendra a ‘collection king’, let him speak in Assembly: DCM DK Shivakumar

Belagavi: Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Thursday launched a sharp attack on BJP State President and MLA B.Y. Vijayendra, branding him a “collection king” and alleging that he was responsible for the declining reputation of his father. Responding to Vijayendra’s claim that the Congress government was emptying the state treasury to appease the party high command, Shivakumar questioned the allegation and challenged him to raise the issue in the Assembly. Speaking to reporters at the Circuit House and Suvarna Vidhana Soudha, Shivakumar said no treasury was empty and asked whether he should disclose details of Vijayendra’s alleged “collection business,” including transactions and



accounts. He urged the BJP leader to stop evading the ongoing Assembly session and speak on the floor of the House, assuring that he would respond appropriately. He also remarked that as party president, Vijayendra should act responsibly and noted his lack of experience. On the Assembly session, Shivakumar said the government had taken tough but pro-farmer decisions, resolving issues

related to sugarcane and maize growers despite the financial burden on the government and sugar factories. He appealed to farmers to remember these steps. He added that the Chief Minister and Revenue Minister would respond to debates on North Karnataka, while he would speak on irrigation projects such as Upper Krishna and Mahadayi if given an opportunity. Refuting BJP allegations that Minister

Lakshmi Hebbalkar had provided false information on the Gruhalakshmi scheme, Shivakumar said the benefit had been disbursed for the last 24 months and funds were being released by the Finance Department without any irregularity. He accused the Opposition of trying to divert attention due to fear over discussions on the alleged harassment of Rahul Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi in the National Herald case. Shivakumar also questioned the Centre’s delay in releasing funds for projects like Upper Bhadra, MGNREGA, Jal Jeevan Mission, grants and GST dues, asserting that while the BJP failed to deliver on promises in other states, the Congress government in Karnataka had fulfilled its commitments.

Adyasha Foundation presents ‘ShishiraChhanda 2025’ – 9th Annual Dance Festival at JSS Auditorium

BENGALURU: Renowned Odissi dancer and Guru Smt. Sarita Mishra, through her Adyasha Foundation, is set to present ShishiraChhanda 2025, the 9th edition of its annual dance festival, on Saturday, 20th December 2025 at 6.00 PM, at JSS Auditorium, Jayanagar, Bengaluru. The festival celebrates the rich legacy of Indian classical dance and brings together distinguished performers from India and abroad. The evening will feature a Bharatanatyam solo recit-



al by an acclaimed dancer from the USA, Smt. Padmini Sirish, followed by an Odissi solo presentation by Smt.

Indu Vijay. The highlight of the evening will be “Mdhaveti”, an Odissi production portraying the sacred journey of Neelamadhava to Jagannatha, a tale of divine discovery, devotion, and destiny, expressed through lyrical movement and soulful rhythm. Gracing the occasion as Special Invites will be: Dr. Veena Murthy Vijay, Dr. Shobha Shashikumar, and Guru Sri Murali Mohan Kalvakalva. Speaking about the festival, Smt. Sarita Mishra shared.

A journey of devotion, discipline, and divine expression unfolds on stage

Bengaluru: Natyanjali School of Dance proudly presents Rangamilana, the Bharatanatyam Rangapravesham of Ms. Saachi Varun, a communication designer and dedicated disciple of Guru Acharya Ashok Kumar. The performance will be held on Saturday, 20th December at 6:00 PM at the Dr. Premachandra Sagar Auditorium, Kumaraswamy Layout, adjacent to Dayananda Sagar College, Bengaluru. The event will be graced by distinguished dignitaries, including, C. R. Chandrashekar, Renowned Psychiatrist, Sukumar Kuna, President, Bangalore City Institute, Guru Vandya Srinath, Director, Brahmara School of Dance, Dr. A. Kumuda, Ph.D. in Dasa Sahitya



Rangamilana marks a significant milestone in Ms. Saachi Varun’s artistic journey, reflecting her years of discipline, dedication, and rigorous training under the guidance of Guru

Acharya Ashok Kumar. The program will showcase her mastery of technique, expression, rhythm, and traditional repertoire, celebrating the rich heritage of Bharatanatyam.



Congress leaders A. Anand, M. A. Saleem, G. Prakash, Sudhakar, Naveen, Hemaraj Chandrashekar, Kushal Haruve Gowda, Umesh, and many party workers participated in this protest.

Hate Speech Prohibition Bill Harms Freedom of Expression: Opposition Leader R. Ashok

Bengaluru : Opposition Leader R. Ashok said, Karnataka’s Hate Speech and Hate Crimes (Prohibition) Bill will erase freedom of expression, and police will start behaving like Hitler. Speaking in the Legislative Assembly, he said that when the Chief Ministers were present, Master Hirannaiah used to perform the play ‘Lanchavatara’ against corruption. At that time, there was that level of democracy. With the new bill brought by the Congress government, police will become like Hitler. This will harm freedom of expression. Cartoonists will not be able to use drawings either.

Protect the Future of Newborns and Children Below 5 Years with Two Drops of Polio Vaccine: D.S. Ramesh

Bengaluru: With the objective of maintaining polio free status among children within the limits of Bengaluru East City Corporation, a Pulse Polio Immunization Campaign will be conducted from December 21 to December 24, in coordination with the Health Department, local bodies, and partner organizations. The primary goal of the campaign is to ensure that no newborn or child below the age of five is left unvaccinated, said Bengaluru East City Corporation Commissioner D.S. Ramesh. Pulse Polio Immunization at Booth Level: On December 21, a booth-level Pulse Polio Immunization programme will be organized across Bengaluru East City Corporation from 8.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. Parents are requested to bring all newborns and children below five years of age to the nearest booth to administer polio drops, the Commissioner stated. Door-to-Door Pulse Polio Immunization Campaign: From December 22 to December 24, teams comprising ASHA workers, Primary Health Centre staff, NGO members, and volunteers will visit every



household within the city corporation limits to administer polio drops to newborns and children below five years of age. Parents are urged to make full use of this facility, the Commissioner appealed. Arrangements for the Immunization Programme: To ensure comprehensive coverage of all areas under Bengaluru East City Corporation, a total of 589 immunization units have been deployed with the following arrangements: \* Establishment of 425 vaccination booths for the general public \* Deployment of 100 mobile teams to cover vulnerable and

hard-to-reach areas where booth access is limited \* 10 mobile teams will operate between 5.00 p.m. and 9.00 p.m. \* Deployment of 64 transit teams at major public transit locations such as bus stands, railway stations, metro stations, markets, and shopping malls \* For the first time, 2 mobile teams have been deployed on trains operating between K.R. Puram Railway Station and Majestic Station in both directions \* Engagement of trained teams comprising 2,356 volunteers and 110 supervisors Information, Education and Communication Activities: Extensive information, educa-

tion and communication activities have been undertaken to create public awareness about the Pulse Polio Campaign, including: \* Public announcements and jingles \* Announcements through auto-rickshaws \* Awareness messages via social media platforms \* Announcements at metro stations, railway stations, and bus terminals \* Display of banners and posters \* Dissemination through media releases Awareness Through Bike Rallies: As part of the awareness drive, a bike rally will be organized on December 19 at 7.00 p.m. at Whitefield Circle. Additionally, on December 20, in collaboration with UPH Riders, a 40-kilometre bike rally will be conducted from K.R. Puram Government Hospital to spread awareness about the importance of polio vaccination and to encourage active community participation, the Commissioner informed.

Invite tenders immediately for the redevelopment of Russell Market in Shivajinagar: Maheshwar Rao

Bengaluru : Chief Commissioner Maheshwar Rao\* directed officials to immediately invite tenders for the redevelopment of Russell Market in Shivajinagar. While inspecting various locations within the Shivajinagar Assembly Constituency under the Central City Corporation, he stated that the Detailed Project Report (DPR) for the redevelopment of Russell Market has already been completed and instructed officials to swiftly implement the project. Russell Market is a heritage structure, and it should be redeveloped by giving it a modern touch while preserving its legacy, transforming it into a vibrant, sustainable, and people-friendly market for Bengaluru. He emphasized that traders should not face any inconvenience and instructed officials to make temporary alternative arrangements before commencing the redevelopment works. During the market development works, proper drainage systems must be ensured, and suitable



arrangements should be made to prevent water stagnation in parking areas. To keep the market clean at all times, a comprehensive waste segregation and composting system should be implemented. He also instructed that all works, including fire safety systems, toilet facilities, granite flooring in public movement areas, clock tower design, and other related infrastructure, must be executed while maintaining high quality standards. In addition, a comprehensive plan should be prepared for the development of the surrounding areas of Russell Market.

Coduct Tax Drive: Officials were directed to revise property taxes in and around the Russell Market area and to conduct a tax drive to improve property tax collection by taking necessary measures. Prepare a plan for the construction of a waterway: Ulsoor Lake receives water from three inlets. After inspecting these inlets, officials were instructed to prepare a plan to develop a civic waterway on the K-100 model. He also directed that the Ulsoor Lake development works be completed at the earliest.



# Farmers seek early Samba procurement meet after Kuruvai losses

The farmers thus sounded an alarm about a similar situation in relation to Samba procurement, and thus, the meeting becomes more vital as it will give a clear picture before the release of the procurement policy

TIRUCHY: With the onset of the samba harvest in January, and the delay in convening the pre-procurement meeting and releasing the samba procurement policy, the farmers from the Delta region urged the government to decide on the meeting headed by the Chief Secretary of State to ensure their demands are placed before the authorities concerned across departments.

With the bitter experience having unfolded during the Kuruvai procurement this year, a huge loss was incurred due to the damage of the harvested paddy accumulated at the Direct Procurement Centres amid heavy monsoon rainfall. The farmers thus sounded an alarm about a similar situation



in relation to Samba procurement, and thus, the meeting becomes more vital as it will give a clear picture before the release of the procurement policy. Pointing out that the samba cultivation, despite being hindered by the monsoon rains and the fury of cyclone Ditwah, could cross at least 10.50 lakh acre

across the Delta region with 3.62 lakh and 3.40 lakh in Tiruvarur and Thanjavur respectively, they said as the early samba is set for harvest from the first week of January, the government has to consult with farmers and release the samba procurement policy at the earliest.

"During the kuruvai

procurement, the major obstacle was the shortage of vehicles, gunny bags and manpower. We also found that the transport contract was awarded to a single person who had opted for subcontract; however, the farmers were at the receiving end, with a huge stock of harvested kuruvai accumulated before every DPC. Thus, we demand a pre-samba procurement meeting so that we can put forth our suggestions, which would solve the issues to a certain extent," said Cauvery V Dhanapalan, General Secretary, Cauvery Farmers Protection Association.

Meanwhile, the secretary of Tamil Nadu Cauvery Farmers Protection Association, Swamimalai Sundara Vimalnathan, pointed

out that States like Karnataka, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal have mandated yearly pre-procurement meetings. "But in Tamil Nadu, no such meeting has been held since 2022. This has led to poor planning, and the farmers bore the brunt of it," Vimalnathan lamented.

He appealed to organise a meeting in Thanjavur, chaired by the Chief Secretary, which would enable the farmers to air their demands. "As hardly a few weeks are left for the samba procurement, the government should convene the meeting at the earliest and announce the procurement policy and samba incentive soon," Vimalnathan stressed.

# Identification of laptop beneficiaries across 4,600 Tamil Nadu colleges begins

CHENNAI: With the free laptop distribution likely to begin in the first week of January 2026, the government has begun identifying beneficiaries across around 4,600 arts, science, engineering, agriculture and medical colleges.

The Electronics Corporation of Tamil Nadu (ELCOT) has floated an international tender to procure 20 lakh laptops, and the state government will be allocating Rs 2,000 crore for the same. The three multinational companies - Acer, Dell and HP, identified in the tender would supply laptop computers featuring a 15inch display, Intel i3 or AMD Ryzen 3 processor, 8 to 12 GB RAM, and a 256 GB hard disk.

These laptops will also come with built-in educational tools and essential software. A senior official from the Higher Education Department, seeking anonymity, said that during the first phase of the



scheme, ten laptop computers will be procured from the selected organisations. "Students from around 4,600 government arts, science, engineering, agriculture and medical colleges across the State are expected to benefit from the scheme," he said, adding, "the laptop computers procured during the first phase will be distributed to the third year students". Concerning the arrival of the laptop consignment, the official noted that each batch of systems after arrival will undergo random quality tests by an expert committee comprising faculty members from

Anna University and IIT, along with officials from the National Informatics Centre. Pointing out that all government college principals were instructed to identify beneficiaries, he said the details of students submitted by the institution heads will be thoroughly scrutinised to ensure the scheme reaches all the beneficiaries without fail. "There will be a proper Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system to track delivery schedules, vendor details, supply numbers, and stock for the smooth implementation of the scheme," the official added.



Honble Chief Minister reviewed photo exhibition of development projects under the North Chennai Development Scheme at the foundation-laying ceremony of Government Model Higher Secondary School and Periyar Nagar Amudham Store at Kolathur, Chennai.

# Chembarambakkam full to the brim, maroons Nandambakkam

CHENNAI: Continuous inflow after heavy rains has pushed Chennai's key drinking water source, the Chembarambakkam Reservoir, to its full storage capacity of 24 feet after 30 years, resulting in severe flooding in nearby residential areas and forcing hundreds of residents to evacuate their homes.

At present, the reservoir is holding around 3,645 million cubic feet of water, inundating several residential areas along the reservoir. More than 100 houses in Ambedkar Nagar, located near Nandambakkam area have been marooned, and the locality now resembles an island isolated by stagnant water cutting off normal access routes. Nearly half of the houses in the area are



partially submerged, forcing residents to lock them up and seek shelter elsewhere. Most of the affected families have moved in with relatives, while some have been accommodated in a nearby mosque.

Local residents say it is unprecedented for the Chembarambakkam reservoir to inundate with such large volume of water, as any excess is usually released periodically to prevent flooding of surrounding areas.

However, this time, authorities retained water to its full capacity, leading to widespread inundation.

A resident K Muhammad said, "The unusual move to store water at full capacity has

caused severe hardships. Students, office-goers, and daily wagers are affected as stagnant water has submerged roads and pathways.

It has also led to the accumulation of waste, attracting snakes and other creepy crawlies." Many residents fear the stagnant water may cause an outbreak of diseases and have urged authorities to immediately release excess water from the reservoir and take remedial measures to protect lives and property. The entire area currently remains isolated. When contacted by DT Next, an official with the Water Resource Department said, "The submerged areas are encroachments and that the water level is being maintained at the current level."

# Secret Asteroid mission marks beginning

For generations, Western space missions have largely occurred out in the open. We knew where they were going, why they were going there and what they planned to do. But the world is on the verge of a new era in which private interests override such openness, with big money potentially on the line. Sometime in the coming year, a spacecraft from AstroForge, an American asteroid-mining firm, may be launched on a mission to a rocky object near Earth's orbit. If successful, it will be the first wholly commercial deep-space mission beyond the moon. AstroForge, however, is keeping its target asteroid secret. The secret space-rock mission is the latest in an emerging trend that astronomers and other experts do not welcome: commercial space missions conducted covertly. Such missions highlight gaps in the regulation of spaceflight as well as concerns about whether exploring the cosmos will continue to benefit all humankind. "I'm very much not in favor of having stuff swirling around the inner solar system without anyone knowing where it is," said Jonathan McDowell, an astronomer at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics in Massachusetts. "It seems like a bad precedent to set." But for AstroForge, the calculation is simple: If it reveals the destination, a competitor may grab the asteroid's valuable metals for itself. "Announcing which asteroid we are targeting opens up risk that another entity could seize that asteroid," said Matt Gialich, AstroForge's chief executive. Asteroid mining entered the doldrums in recent years after two startups proposing to prospect the solar system went out of business in the late 2010s. But now several



companies in the United States, Europe and China are taking another stab at the endeavor. Even a congressional committee held a hearing on the subject in December.

The renaissance is sparked by a new wave of commercial space exploration, driven largely by SpaceX, the company founded by Elon Musk that flies reusable rocket boosters and has reduced the cost of reaching space.

With that increased activity is also increasing secrecy.

In 2019, the Israeli-built commercial Beresheet lander crashed while trying to land on the Moon. On board, kept secret until after the failed landing, were a few thousand tardigrades, microscopic animals supplied by the nonprofit Arch Mission Foundation. The crash raised concerns about potentially contaminating the moon with the hearty creatures and led to an investigation by the Federal Aviation Administration. More recently, the suborbital spaceflight firm Virgin Galactic has withheld the identities of the people on board its space plane until after the mis-

sions are completed, a practice not seen before with human spaceflight. And some satellites hitching rides to space with lots of other orbital craft, in what are known as rideshare missions, have also been kept secret. We're seeing frequent launches where we don't know what the satellites are that were deployed until some time afterwards," said McDowell, who maintains a public database of spacecraft in orbit.

For missions beyond Earth, there are no legal restrictions against keeping a deep space mission's destination secret as AstroForge intends to do, said Michelle Hanlon, a law professor specializing in space at the University of Mississippi. We don't have an actual process for deep-space missions like this," she said, because "there is no licensing process" in the United States. But complex issues could arise if, for example, multiple asteroid miners arrived at the same asteroid. "There needs to be some kind of transparency here," McDowell said. He noted that while there was a United Nations require-

ment for space agencies and companies to reveal their orbits and trajectories in space, "it's usually ignored for solar orbit objects."

The lack of penalties, he added, "should spark discussion among regulators." AstroForge's mission, Odin, would be the second spacecraft it has sent to space. Its first in April, Brokkr-1, was a microwave-size machine weighing about 25 pounds. The goal of that mission was to practice refining metals in the environment of space. The spacecraft has encountered problems, however, the company said on Dec. 11. AstroForge is in a "race against time" to get Brokkr-1 working before it is lost. Odin, on the other hand, weighs a much heavier 220 pounds. AstroForge plans for it to piggyback on a robotic mission to the moon in 2024 by the company Intuitive Machines that is sponsored by NASA and being launched on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket. A launch date has not yet been set. During the journey to the moon, the plan is for Odin to be released and to venture into deep space beyond lunar orbit. Within a year, according to AstroForge, the spacecraft will fly past the mystery asteroid, taking pictures and looking for evidence of metal. AstroForge is aiming for what is suspected to be an M-type asteroid. These are thought to be fragmented pieces of failed planetary cores and may be rich in valuable platinum-group metals, which have a wide range of uses including in health care and jewelry. No spacecraft has ever visited such an asteroid before, although NASA's Psyche mission, launched in October, is on a mission to a potential M-type asteroid, also named Psyche, between Mars and Jupiter. It will not arrive until August 2029.

# Ramadoss opposes suspension of judge Chemmal



CHENNAI: PMK founder S Ramadoss has expressed shock over the suspension of District Judge Pa U Chemmal, calling the action unjust and contrary to the principles of justice.

In a statement, the senior leader said that Judge Chemmal, who earlier served in Kancheepuram has a 26-year record of delivering justice with integrity.

Ramadoss noted that Judge Chemmal was widely appreciated by

lawyers and the public for ensuring legal remedies to affected litigants.

He cited a landmark order in a 22-year-old custodial death case in Kancheepuram, where the judge directed monthly pension and land title to the victim's widow and a government job to her daughter. He also handled custodial torture cases strictly within the framework of law.

Referring to a case involving a Kancheepuram Deputy

Superintendent of Police, Ramadoss said Judge Chemmal ordered judicial custody only after the officer failed in his duty. "However, disciplinary action was taken without seeking any explanation from the judge, making it a one-sided move. Such actions, taken without due inquiry, could erode public confidence in the judiciary and create fear among judges delivering justice to ordinary citizens," he said.



# Rupee trades in narrow range against US dollar in early trade

**Mumbai:** The rupee traded in a narrow range against the US dollar in early trade on Thursday as the support from fresh foreign fund inflows was negated by trade deal uncertainty and risk-off sentiment. Forex traders said lack of progress in the India-US trade negotiations and strong dollar demand from corporates and importers weighed on the local unit, even as Brent crude prices hovering near USD 60 per barrel supported investor sentiment. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 90.35 against the US dollar, then gained some ground and touched 90.32 against the US dollar. In initial trade it also touched 90.38 against the American currency. On Wednesday, the rupee recovered 55 paise from its all-time low level to close at 90.38 against the greenback. "The PSU banks were the sellers of dollars on Wednesday on behalf of the RBI. The intervention amount could have been as high as USD 6 billion," said Anil Kumar Bhansali, Head of Treasury and Executive Director Finrex Treasury Advisors



LLP. "We expect the range of 90 to 91.00 on Thursday with 90.25 as support and 90.75 as resistance," Bhansali added. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.05 per cent higher at 98.41. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading higher by 0.67 per cent at USD 60.08 per barrel in futures trade. On the domestic equity market front, the 30-share benchmark index Sensex was trading 114.06 points lower at

84,445.59, while the Nifty was down 41.10 points at 25,777.45. Foreign Institutional Investors purchased equities worth Rs 1,171.71 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data. 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 eco-

nomics 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.

## Silver slips from record highs on profit booking; gold prices ease



Silver prices retreated from the record levels on Thursday, declining by Rs 751 to Rs 2,06,684 per kg in the futures trade, as traders booked profits amid weak global cues. On the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), silver futures for March 2026 delivery depreciated by Rs 751, or 0.36 per cent, to Rs 2,06,684 per kg. Silver prices had zoomed by Rs 10,078, or 5.10 per cent, to hit a record high of Rs 2,07,833 per kg in the previous session. Gold prices also eased, with the February contract of the metal falling by Rs 580, or 0.43 per cent, to Rs 1,34,314 per 10 grams. Analysts said

precious metals retreated due to weak global cues. In international markets, Comex gold futures for February delivery dropped by USD 12.6, or 0.29 per cent, to USD 4,361.3 per ounce. Silver futures for March 2026 delivery fell by USD 1.18, or 1.76 per cent, to USD 65.72 per ounce. "Gold has made its biggest jump since the 1979 oil crisis in 2025, with prices doubling in the last two years and silver has crossed all barriers, posting gains of more than 120 per cent and breaking USD 65 as well," Manav Modi, Commodities Analyst at Motilal Oswal Financial Services, said.

"Backwardation in silver rises once again, difference in spot and futures rose once again to 50-60 cents, suggesting supply tightness and speculative buying driving prices at such a high pace," Modi added. The white metal on Wednesday scaled a fresh peak of USD 67.18 per ounce. "Silver made history by closing at an all-time record high, reaffirming that it's far more than just a runner-up to gold," Vijay Kuppaa, Chief Executive Officer, InCred Money, said. He added that investors are no longer viewing silver only through the lens of jewellery or industrial use.

## The Hinduja Family & Friends Hold a Prayer Meeting for GP Hinduja



**December 2025:** A Prayer Meeting was organised in Mumbai to honour the memory of Gopichand P Hinduja, late Chairman of the Hinduja Group, who recently passed away. The Prayer Meeting was attended by Captains of the India Inc, friends from the Political world cutting across party lines, members of the diplomatic corps, and several leading film personalities.

Glowing tributes were paid to Shri GP Hinduja about his multi-faceted personality by Spiritual Leaders like Chidanand Saraswati of Parmarth Niketan, close associates, etc. Notable singers like Anuradha Paudwal, Nitin Mukesh, and Mohit Lalwani sang GP Hinduja's favourite bhajans and songs pictured on his dear friend, the late Raj Kapoor.

## BP NAMES NEW BOSS AS CURRENT CEO LEAVES AFTER LESS THAN TWO YEARS

BP has appointed a new chief executive, making Meg O'Neill the first woman to run a major global oil firm. The London-based energy giant said its current boss Murray Auchincloss would step down less than two years after he replaced Bernard Looney, who was found to have committed "serious misconduct" in failing to disclose relationships with colleagues. Under Ms O'Neill, who currently runs Australian oil and gas firm Woodside Energy, BP is expected to continue its recent strategy of moving away from renewables to refocus on its core oil and gas business. Ms O'Neill said she looks forward to helping BP "do our part to meet the world's energy needs". Ms O'Neill's surprise appointment comes only three months after BP appointed a new chairman, Albert Manifold. In February, the energy giant said it would shift its strategy following pressure from some investors who were frustrated that its profits and share price had lagged behind rivals. Rivals Shell



and Norwegian company Equinor have also scaled back plans to invest in green energy and US President Donald Trump's call to "drill baby drill" has encouraged firms to invest in fossil fuels. Energy consultant and former Shell executive Robin Mills told the BBC's Today programme that the "surprise" appointment of Ms O'Neill was about refocusing on its core oil and gas businesses. "The new chairman... has really decided to put his stamp on things," he said. "I think the announcement that's been put here made it very clear that he felt Murray [Auchincloss] had done a decent job, but not enough and more was needed and some new leadership, some new blood."

## PRICE INCREASES IN THE US EASE UNEXPECTEDLY IN NOVEMBER

Price increases in the US eased in recent months, as costs for items including hotels, milk and some kinds of clothing fell. The latest figures from the Labor Department showed prices rose 2.7% over the 12 months to November. That pace was down from 3% in September and lower than many analysts had expected, potentially bolstering the case for the US central bank to continue cutting interest rates. The signs of cooling inflation came as frustration over years of rising prices has raised pressure on US President Donald Trump to deliver on his promises of relief. The consumer price index (CPI) report had been delayed by the US government shutdown, which also prevented collection of some data. Art Hogan, chief market strategist at B. Riley Wealth, said the report reflected discounts offered by retailers in November, as the holiday shopping season swung into gear. But he noted that without the October data it was difficult to draw too many definitive conclusions about wider trends. "All told this is



a positive report, that comes with an asterisk," he said. "Subsequent CPI's will likely smooth out the statistical errors that might have been present in today's report." The report showed an unusual slowdown in the price back some of those plans, including most recently announcing exemptions from tariffs for high-profile consumer food staples like bananas and coffee. The White House has blamed frustrations on the jump in prices that Trump inherited when he entered office, while arguing that any further rise in prices associated with tar-

iffs would be a one-time move. But analysts have been concerned about price pressures spreading into other areas, especially as Trump's crackdown on immigration tightens the supply of workers in sectors such as farming, hospitality and construction. In a primetime address on Wednesday, Trump claimed that inflation had "stopped". He called on the Federal Reserve to deliver relief in the form of lower borrowing costs, promising to name a new person to lead the US central bank "who believes in lower interest rates by a lot". Some analysts said Thursday's report could help convince the Fed that further cuts would be appropriate, even though inflation, despite the president's claims, remains above the 2% rate considered healthy. "Today it got to see inflation moving in the right direction," said Ellen Zentner, chief economic strategist for Morgan Stanley Wealth Management. "Inflation may still be above target, but today's data made the opening for additional rate cuts just a little wider."

## RBI clears Paytm arm PPSL as payment aggregator for offline, cross-border transactions

**New Delhi:** Fintech firm One97 Communications on Thursday said its subsidiary Paytm Payments Services Limited (PPSL) has received authorisation from the Reserve Bank of India to operate as a Payment Aggregator for physical (offline) payments and cross-border transactions. The approval is in addition to the authorisation for Online Payment Aggregation already granted by the central bank to PPSL last month. "Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on December 17, 2025 has authorised Paytm Payments Services Limited (PPSL), a wholly-owned subsidiary of One 97 Communications Limited, to operate as a Payment Aggregator for Physical (offline) payments and Cross-Border transactions (both inward and outward), in addition to the online Payment Aggregator authorisation already granted by RBI on November 26, 2025, under the Payment and



Settlement Systems Act, 2007," Paytm said in a regulatory filing. With the new license, PPSL now holds Payment Aggregator authorisations across online, offline, and cross-border segments use cases, enabling end-to-end payment aggregation services for merchants. In November 2020, PPSL applied for a license with the RBI to operate as a payment aggregator under the guidelines on Regulation of Payment Aggregators and Payment

Gateways. However, in November 2022, the RBI rejected PPSL's application and asked the company to resubmit it, so as to comply with Press Note 3 under FDI rules. Subsequently, the company filed the required application on December 14, 2022, with the Government of India for the past downward investment from OCL (One97 Communications Ltd) into the company in order to comply with Press Note 3 prescribed under FDI guidelines.

## NOT CONCERNED ABOUT RUPEE AT ALL: ECONOMIC ADVISORY COUNCIL TO PM

**New Delhi:** Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) member Sanjeev Sanyal on Thursday said he is not concerned about the rupee at all, arguing that even China and Japan witnessed exchange rate weaknesses during their high growth phases. Speaking at "Times Network's India Economic Conclave 2025", Sanyal said since the 90s, the rupee has mostly been allowed to find its own level, but the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) uses its reserves to intervene in either direction to stop excessive volatility. "I am not concerned about the rupee at all... Let me say that the rupee and its current weakness should not be necessarily conflated with some economic worry, because historically, if you go over time, you will see that economies that are in their high growth phase very often go through a phase of exchange rate



weakness," he said. The rupee sank to a fresh record low, breaching the 91-a-dollar mark for the first time on Tuesday. "So you go back to, for example, when the Japanese economy was growing very, very fast, their exchange rate was kept quite weak. The Chinese had that in the 90s and 2000s till they began to allow the yuan to strengthen. "So in itself, if weakening of rupee) does not mean

anything, as long as it is not generating domestic inflation, which clearly, it is not," Sanyal argued. Since April 2, 2025, when the US announced sweeping tariff hikes across economies, the Indian rupee (INR) has depreciated 5.7 per cent against USD (most amongst the major economies), notwithstanding sporadic phases of appreciation owing to optimism over the US-India trade deal. Responding to a

**Highlights**  
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question on the India-US trade deal, Sanyal said India is pursuing trade negotiations very aggressively with the European Union and the US. "But let me also be very clear here that as we pursue these, we will have to make decisions where some trade-offs have to be made, but we will work to make sure that they are done to our best national interest," he said. So for example, Sanyal said in the case of the US, India

has not escalated anything. "We have been careful not to do that. But at the same time, we have not bent down," he said, adding that China and India are now only two countries that have not really bent down to the US pressure. India and the US are "very close" to finalising the framework for their proposed bilateral trade agreement. The two countries are holding two parallel negotiations — one on a framework trade deal to address the high tariffs and another on a comprehensive bilateral trade agreement (BTA). These talks are important as the Trump administration has imposed steep 50 per cent tariffs on Indian goods entering American markets. The outcomes will also have a positive influence on the trajectory of the rupee, which has depreciated to lifetime lows lately and also breached the psychologically important 90-to-a-dollar mark.



# Zelensky gives stark warning as EU leaders start crunch talks on Russia's frozen assets

Volodymyr Zelensky is urging European Union leaders gathered at a crunch summit in Brussels to loan billions of euros in frozen Russian money to fund Ukraine's military and economic needs. Most of Russia's 210bn (£185bn; \$245bn) worth of assets in the EU are held by Belgium-based organisation Euroclear, and so far Belgium and some other members of the bloc have said they are opposed to using the cash as a "reparations loan". Russia has warned the EU not to use its money, but without a boost in funding Ukraine's finances are set to run dry in a matter of months. "I hope we will be able to get a positive decision," Zelensky told reporters. "Without this there will be a big problem for Ukraine." The Brussels summit comes at a pivotal moment in the war and Russia has filed a lawsuit against Euroclear in a

Moscow court in a bid to get its money back. One European government official described being "cautiously optimistic" that a deal would be agreed. European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said "we will not leave the summit without a solution". All eyes are on Belgian Prime Minister Bart De Wever, who told the Belgian parliament on Thursday: "I haven't yet seen any text that would persuade me to change Belgium's position". US President Donald Trump has said a deal is closer than ever to end the war - which began with Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. US and Russian officials are due to meet in Miami this weekend for further talks on a peace plan, a White House official told the AFP news agency. It is thought Kremlin envoy Kirill Dmitriev will talk to Trump



envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner. Ukrainian officials are also heading to the US, and President Volodymyr Zelensky, who is in Brussels, told reporters that Kyiv needed the money, either to support its army if the war continued, or to direct the funding entirely for recovery. Russia has not yet responded to the latest peace proposals, but the Kremlin has stressed that plans for a

European-led multinational force for Ukraine supported by the US would not be acceptable. President Vladimir Putin made his feelings towards Europe clear on Wednesday, when he said the continent was in a state of "total degradation" and that "European piglets" - a derogatory description of Ukraine's European allies - were hoping to profit from Russia's collapse. The European Commission - the

EU's executive arm - has proposed loaning Kyiv about 90bn (£79bn) over the next two years - out of the 210bn of Russian assets sitting in Europe. That is about two-thirds of the 137bn that Kyiv is thought to need to get through 2026 and 2027. Until now the EU has handed Ukraine the interest generated by the cash but not the cash itself. "This is a crunch time for Ukraine to keep fighting for the next year," a Finnish government official told the BBC. "There are of course peace negotiations but this gives Ukraine leverage to say 'we're not desperate and we have the funds to continue fighting'." The head of the European Commission says it will also ramp up the cost of war for Russia. Russia's frozen assets are not the only option on the table for EU leaders. Another idea, backed by Belgium, is based on the EU borrowing the money on the international

markets, using the EU budget as a guarantee. However, that would require a unanimous vote and Hungary's Viktor Orban has made it clear he will not allow any more EU money to help Ukraine. For Ukraine, the hours ahead are significant and EU leaders have been keen to stress the momentous nature of the loan decision. "We know the urgency. It is acute. We all feel it. We all see it," Ursula von der Leyen told the European Parliament. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz has played a leading role in pushing for the Russian assets to be used, telling the Bundestag on the eve of the summit it was about sending a "clear signal" to Moscow that continuing the war was pointless. EU officials are confident they have a sound legal basis to use the frozen Russian assets, but so far the Belgian prime minister remains unconvinced.

## PETER ARNETT, PULITZER-WINNING WAR REPORTER, DIES AGED 91



Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and war correspondent Peter Arnett has died at the age of 91, US media has reported. Arnett won the international reporting prize in 1996 for his Vietnam War coverage at the Associated Press (AP). But he was also well known for his work at CNN, having become a household name while reporting on the first Gulf War. His career spanned decades and covered several conflicts in countries including Iraq, Vietnam and El Salvador. The New Zealand-born journalist died on Wednesday surrounded by family and friends in California, his son told reporters. He was receiving

hospice care for prostate cancer. Arnett first worked for AP as a wire-service correspondent in Vietnam, from 1962 until the war's end in 1975, often accompanying troops on missions. At a talk in 2013, he recalled the moment he witnessed a soldier being shot in Vietnam as he paused to read a map. "As the colonel peered at it, I heard four loud shots as bullets tore through the map and into his chest, a few inches from my face," Arnett told the American Library Association. "He sank to the ground at my feet." The journalist left AP in 1981 to join US outlet CNN, where he later became known for his work on the first Gulf War.

## Australian PM announces crackdown on hate speech after Bondi shooting



Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese says his government will crack down on hate speech following Sunday's deadly shooting at Bondi Beach that targeted a Jewish festival. Fifteen people were killed when two gunmen opened fire at an event to mark the first day of Hanukkah. New laws will target "those who spread hate, division and radicalisation", Albanese told reporters in Canberra. The home affairs minister will also be given new powers to cancel or refuse visas for those who spread hate and a new taskforce will be set up to ensure the education system "prevents, tackles and properly responds to antisemitism". The new laws will also include penalties for preachers and leaders who promote violence, a new federal offence of "aggravated hate speech", and the introduction of "hate" as an aggravating factor in sentencing crimes for online threats and harassment. "Every Jewish Australian has the right

to feel safe, valued and respected for the contribution that they make to our great nation," Albanese said. "The terrorists, inspired by ISIS... sought to turn Australians against each other. Australians have responded to that act of hatred with love and sympathy for those in mourning." Tensions have been high in the country since the shooting, with police detaining seven men in southwest Sydney on Thursday after receiving a tip that a "violent act was possibly being planned", New South Wales Police said in a statement. Police said they did not identify "any connection" to their investigation into Sunday's attack in Bondi. Two cars were "intercepted" at George Street, police said. In videos shared by local media sites, armed officers appeared to detain people on the street just hours after Albanese made his speech. Antisemitism envoy Jillian Segal, who also spoke at the press conference.

## Don't let Matilda's death fuel anger, say family of Bondi victim, 10, at funeral



The family of the Bondi shooting's youngest victim, Matilda, urged the community not to let her death fuel anger, as they said a final goodbye to the 10-year-old on Thursday. Matilda was among 15 people who were shot dead when two gunmen opened fire on an event marking the start of Hanukkah at Sydney's Bondi Beach on Sunday. Speaking to the BBC at Matilda's funeral, her aunt Lina Chernykh

said the Jewish community is right to want more action to stamp out antisemitism - she does too. But she said Matilda was a joyous child who spread love everywhere she went, and urged the community to do the same in her honour. "Take your anger and... just spread happiness and love and memory for my lovely niece," Ms Chernykh said. "I hope maybe she's an angel now. Maybe she [will] send some good vibes to the world." Jewish community leaders have in recent days suggested the tragedy was an inevitable result of Australia struggling to address rising antisemitism. The attack on Sunday was the country's deadliest incident since 1996, when a gunman killed 35 people during the Port Arthur massacre.

## FRENCH 'DOCTOR DEATH' WHO POISONED PATIENTS JAILED FOR LIFE

A former anaesthetist has been jailed for life for intentionally poisoning 30 patients, 12 of them fatally. Frédéric Péchier, 53, was convicted Friday at the end of a four-month trial in the eastern city of Besançon. In one of France's biggest ever medical malpractice cases, Péchier was found to have introduced chemicals like potassium chloride or adrenaline into the infusion bags of patients. His youngest victim, a four-year-old child, survived two cardiac arrests during a routine tonsil surgery in 2016. The oldest victim was 89. "You are Doctor Death, a poisoner, a murderer. You bring shame on all doctors," said prosecutors last week. "You have turned this clinic into a graveyard." The chemicals



Péchier added triggered cardiac arrest or haemorrhaging in patients, which required emergency intervention in the operating theatre. This was often provided by Péchier himself, who was then able to pose as the patient's saviour. But in 12 cases he was unable to intervene, or it was too late, and the patient died. The prosecution argued that Péchier acted in order to

discredit fellow anaesthetists against whom he bore a grudge. In most of the operations, he was not the primary anaesthetist. It was alleged he came in early to the clinic to tamper with the infusion bags. Then, when things went wrong, he was able to step in after diagnosing the problem and ordering an antidote. Péchier was first placed under investigation

eight years ago, when he was suspected of poisoning patients at two clinics in Besançon between 2008 and 2017. The alert was raised in 2017 after a surfeit of potassium chloride was found in the infusion bag of a woman who had a heart attack while being operated on for a back complaint. Investigators found a pattern of "serious adverse events" at the Saint-Vincent private clinic in Besançon. While the national average for fatal heart attacks under anaesthetic was 1 in 100,000, at the clinic it was more than six times that. And in most cases nationally, an explanation for the heart attack was subsequently found, whereas at Saint-Vincent the cause remained a mystery.

## THAILAND BOMBS NEAR CAMBODIA'S POIPEL BORDER CROSSING

Thailand says it has bombed a "logistics centre" near the Cambodian town of Poipet, known for being a major casino hub and the biggest land crossing between the two countries. The bombings come as renewed border clashes show no sign of abating. Cambodia's defence ministry said Thai forces dropped two bombs, while the Thai side said that they targeted a facility storing rocket systems. The renewed fighting this month has killed at least 21 people in Thailand and 17 in Cambodia, while displacing around 800,000, officials say. In a statement, the Cambodian defence ministry said Thai forces dropped two bombs in the



area of Poipet municipality at around 11:00 am (0400 GMT) Thursday. Shortly after, Thai Air Force spokesman Air Marshal Jackkrit Thammavichai said that the Thai military had attacked the centre outside Poipet that had been used to store BM-21 rockets and that no civilians were harmed.

BM-21 rockets are weapons that are typically fired in volleys from the back of an armoured vehicle. The bombings appear to be the first on Poipet, which is known for casinos popular with Thai gamblers and its international border checkpoint. On Tuesday, Thailand said Tuesday that between 5,000

and 6,000 Thai nationals remained stranded in Poipet after Cambodia closed its land border crossings between the two countries. Cambodia's interior ministry said the border closures were a "necessary measure" to reduce risks to civilians, adding that air travel remained an option for those seeking to leave. The century-old border dispute between the South East Asian neighbours dramatically escalated on 24 July with a Cambodian rocket barrage into Thailand, followed by Thai air strikes. That set off five days of intense fighting, which left dozens of soldiers and civilians dead.

## DAN BONGINO STEPPING DOWN AS FBI DEPUTY DIRECTOR



Dan Bongino has said he will leave his role as the FBI's deputy director in January. In a post on X, he thanked President Donald Trump, as well as the director of the FBI and the US attorney general "for the opportunity to serve with purpose". Bongino did not say in his post why he was stepping down. Earlier on Wednesday, Trump said the former podcast host "did a great job" in office, and "wants to go back to his show". Bongino, who was appointed to the role by Trump in February, built a large following through his podcast and other media appearances. He was previously a New York City police officer and a US Secret Service agent assigned to protect Barack Obama, the former president. Bongino, a staunch Trump ally, was considered a surprise pick for the role - which had previously been held by career agents - because he had no prior experience with the agency. The FBI Agents Association, which repre-

sents around 14,000 current and former agents, had opposed his appointment to the position. Announcing his decision to step down in Wednesday's social media post, Bongino wrote: "I will be leaving my position with the FBI in January. I want to thank President Trump, AG [Pam] Bondi, and Director [Kash] Patel for the opportunity to serve with purpose." "Most importantly, I want to thank you, my fellow Americans, for the privilege to serve you. God bless America, and all those who defend Her." Before joining the agency, Bongino had echoed disinformation and conspiracy theories about Trump's false claim that he won the 2020 election, and about the 6 January 2021 pipe bomb investigation. Bongino had previously called the pipe bomb case an "inside job". After taking office he pushed to make the investigation, which Attorney General Bondi said had "languished."

# TRUMP ANNOUNCES 'WARRIORS DIVIDEND' FOR TROOPS AS HE DEFENDS ECONOMIC RECORD

US President Donald Trump has announced a "warrior dividend" payment to US service members, in a speech in which he also defended his track record on the economy after 11 months back in office. In a televised address to the nation on Wednesday, Trump said cheques for \$1,776 (£1,329) for 1.45 million US service members were already on the way" and should arrive before Christmas. He said they would be paid for, in part, by his tariffs. In the combative address, Trump also touted his achievements on immigration while railing against opposition Democrats. Speaking loudly and quickly, he seemed determined to convince Americans that the US was doing well - and things

would only get better. He claimed prices were falling, at a time when polls show that many Americans are unhappy about the cost of housing, childcare and healthcare. Democrats were critical of the speech. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said the president's words "showed he lives in a bubble completely disconnected from the reality everyday Americans are seeing and feeling". Schumer added: "People are feeling squeezed harder and harder every day and tonight Donald Trump took a victory lap." In the brief, 18-minute address, Trump said the "warrior dividend", which totals \$2.57bn (£1.9bn), would be distributed "in honour of our nation's founding in 1776". Trump



added that the funds were drawn from his sweeping tariffs, as well as the "One Big, Beautiful Bill" that he signed into law on 4 July. "Nobody deserves it more than our military," he said. The president offered little new information in the speech, and some of his assertions were either exaggerated or unfounded. Much of Trump's

address focused on his economic record and the administration's efforts to bring down prices - which he blamed on former US President Joe Biden and the Democrats. Trump mentioned the former president seven times. "Now, under our leadership, they [prices] are all coming down and coming down fast," he said.

"Democrat politicians also sent the cost of groceries soaring, but we are solving that too." While fuel and egg prices have indeed fallen, many other food items are more expensive. Economic data from September shows the US inflation rate hit 3% for the first time since January, while consumer confidence fell to its lowest level since April due to concerns over the cost of living, jobs and the wider economy. Trump has previously acknowledged that concerns over rising prices have contributed to a lacklustre performance for candidates from his Republican Party during elections held in November - with the Democrats having success in Virginia, New Jersey and

New York City, as well as more recently in Miami and Georgia. He has also acknowledged that incumbent presidents and their parties often fare poorly in mid-term elections, which will take place next year. The White House has since been wrestling with how to address voter concerns about the economy, while at the same time pushing back on repeated Democratic criticism over rising prices. The political dilemma faced by the Trump administration has been highlighted by recent polling. One poll, from Politico, showed that about half of overall voters - and 4 in 10 people who voted for Trump in 2024 - felt the cost of living was the worst it has been in their lives.



"MS DHONI WILL MOVE ON":

## CSK Head Coach Stephen Fleming's 'At Some Point' Remark At IPL 2026 Auction Creates Buzz

Chennai Super Kings head coach Stephen Fleming was quite honest while talking about the side's decision of trading Ravindra Jadeja for Sanju Samson. He admitted that the move was executed in order to keep the franchise prepared when MS Dhoni leaves. Notably, the legendary wicketkeeper-batter has guided CSK to a record-equaling five Indian Premier League titles. Given Dhoni is at the fag end of his career, CSK need a replacement to fill his shoes in the upcoming years. The trade was a big call from the franchise as it also included England's Sam Curran. The all-rounder too headed to Rajasthan Royals along with Ravindra Jadeja for Samson as part of the deal. "For us, the opportunity was there. We felt we were still a little bit light in our opening batting. And we were also looking at the fact that at some point, MS will move on," Fleming said at the IPL 2026 auction. "Sanju is an



international-quality player, and he fills that role very well "So it's succession planning, but also about refreshing the group and looking at what Chennai will look like in six years, not just two." CSK are shifting from their mindset of preferring experience over everything. The franchise that was once known as the

hub for veteran cricketers is now moving towards roping in more and more youngsters. The change was seen midway through IPL 2025 when CSK included the likes of uncapped players Ayush Mhatre and Urvil Patel. Even during the auction on December 16 this year, the franchise splurged a huge

sum of Rs 14.2 crore each for uncapped players Prashant Veer and Kartik Sharma. "As the game has evolved, we might have been a little bit slow to evolve with it. Only halfway through the (2025) tournament we had a big shift and you saw with the players we got in as reserves, there was a shift in what we needed

to do," Fleming said. Mhatre, Urvil, Veer and Kartik represent a new generation of players who have grown up training to meet T20's demands, and are as likely to catch IPL scouts' eyes in local T20 leagues as they are to come through the traditional route of age-group and domestic cricket. Fleming said these "T20 babies" played in a way that was all about expressing their skills, where earlier generations may have second-guessed themselves looking to assess the match situation. "I just wonder if we're now seeing the product of T20 coming to the fore," Fleming said. "We witnessed at the start of last year, and certainly the year before that my view used to be that experience was going to win, but now you have this fearless athlete that's been brought up on T20 cricket and has a skillset that's mouthwatering, and they just have no fear about what environment they need to exhibit these skills.

## ICC Takes Big Call After Alex Carey 'Snicko' Controversy Hits Ashes 3rd Test

England had a review reinstated following a major controversy over 'Snicko technology' during Day 1 of the third Ashes Test against Australia. Controversy erupted when the Australia batter survived an early chance in the innings when he flashed at a delivery from Josh Tongue in the 63rd over. Wicket-keeper Jamie Smith completed the catch behind the stumps and he was confident in his appeal along with other England fielders. However, umpire Ahsan Raza turned it down and England quickly went for a review. There was a spike shown on the 'Snickometer' but it appeared 2-3 frames before the ball passed the bat. The third umpire was not convinced and he ruled in Australia's favour while explaining that the ball had "gone well under" the bat: "There's a clear gap, no spike." What England did next However, the England team management was not convinced by the decision and according to ESPNcricinfo, head coach



Brendon McCullum and team manager Wayne Bentley held talks with the match referee Jeff Crowe after the end of play on Day 1. The England Cricket Board (ECB) also requested the International Cricket Council (ICC) to review their systems. Even Carey, who went on to score 106, admitted that he thought that he had hit the ball. "I felt something when it went past," Carey said. "In the moment you just trust the process, but it did feel like one of those where the players knew more than the screen was showing."

Apology from 'Snicko' operator BBG Sports, the supplier of the 'Snicko technology', suggested that an operator had "selected the incorrect stump mic for audio processing" and took "full responsibility for the error". The apology also resulted in England bowling coach David Saker expressing his doubts about the technology. "We shouldn't be talking about this after a day's play, it should just be better than that," Saker said. "In this day and age, you'd think the technology is good enough to pick things up like that."

## Yashasvi Jaiswal Suffers 'Food Poisoning', Loses Over 2 Kg Weight In Two Days: Report

Talented India batter Yashasvi Jaiswal had a big health scare on Tuesday and had to be rushed to a hospital. The left-handed opener experienced severe stomach cramps after a Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy match between Mumbai and Rajasthan in Pune. Jaiswal had to be admitted to Aditya Birla Hospital with acute gastroenteritis. The 23-year-old batter scored 15 off 16 balls as Mumbai chased down the target of 217. A report has now claimed that Jaiswal "ate something" in the hotel where he was staying, which resulted in the complication. "It is food poisoning. He ate something in the



Pune hotel, which has led to this. There was pain, but his condition is much better after timely medication. He has lost over 2 kg already in the last two days, and the doctors have asked him to rest for at least the next 7-10 days," TOI quoted a source as saying. Jaiswal

might have to miss the first few rounds of matches in the domestic one-dayer Vijay Hazare Trophy, which starts on December 24. "It will be touch and go for the first few matches for him to turn up for the Vijay Hazare Trophy. There are ODIs vs New Zealand after

that too, and he is likely to be in the squad for that series," the source added. Jaiswal had been suffering from stomach cramps throughout the SMAT game, and his condition worsened after the match. At the hospital, he underwent an ultrasound and a CT scan and received proper medical attention. He was later advised to continue his medication and take adequate rest. Talking about the match, Ajinkya Rahane's unbeaten 72 and Sarfaraz Khan's brutal 22-ball 73 powered Mumbai to a three-wicket victory over Rajasthan in their Super League Group B clash of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy.

## Ishan Kishan Surpasses MS Dhoni, Equals Abhishek Sharma After 45-Ball 100 In Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy Final

Ishan Kishan was in fiery form for Jharkhand against Haryana in the final of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy - the national T20 tournament. The wicketkeeper-batter, who is the captain of Jharkhand, slammed 101 off just 49 balls (10x6s, 6x4s). This was Kishan's fifth century in SMAT in 62 innings, equalling Abhishek Sharma. Kishan hit 33 sixes in SMAT 2025 - the most by a designated wicketkeeper-captain in any T20 tournament (international or domestic franchise). Earlier, MS Dhoni (30 sixes, IPL 2018) and Nicholas Pooran (30, ILT20 2023-24) held the record. Kishan's century is bound to be noticed by the BCCI selectors. Kishan, who last played for India against Australia in a T20I in 2023, has been play-



ing for India A in recent times. However, as far as T20Is go, Sanju Samson and Jitesh Sharma are above him in the pecking order. Kishan made a compelling case for a T20I recall with a belligerent hundred to power Jharkhand to their maiden

Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy title with a 69-run victory over Haryana here on Thursday. Kishan went on a six-hitting spree, smashing 10 maximums en route to a breathtaking 49-ball 101, as Jharkhand piled up an imposing 262 for 3.

Jharkhand bowlers, led by medium pacer Anukul Roy, then struck twice in his opening over while his team applied the brakes with regular wickets to bowl out Haryana for 193, despite a fighting half-century from wicketkeeper-batter Yashvardhan Dalal (53). Roy also smashed a 20-ball 40. Jharkhand thus became the 12th state to win the country's premier T20 domestic tournament. Invited to bat first, the Jharkhand skipper stitched a decisive 177-run partnership for the second wicket with Kumar Kushagra, who played the perfect foil with a rapid 81 off 38 deliveries to keep the pressure firmly on the Haryana bowlers. The century was Kishan's second of the tournament.

## ECUADOR DEFENDER PINEIDA KILLED IN SHOOTING



Ecuador defender Mario Pineida has died at the age of 33 after being shot in Guayaquil. Local media reported that Pineida was shot on Wednesday by two people on motorbikes who opened fire on him, his mother and another woman outside a shop in the north of the city. Ecuador's interior ministry said it has sent a special police unit to investigate. Guayaquil has become a hotspot for gang violence and drug trafficking, with 1,900 murders recorded between January and September - the highest in Ecuador. Three second-tier footballers were killed in September and a local

player was wounded in a shooting in October. Pineida won nine caps for Ecuador between 2014 and 2021. He began his club career at Independiente DV before moving to Barcelona SC in Guayaquil in 2016. He also spent time on loan at Fluminense and El Nacional. Independiente and Fluminense paid tribute to Pineida on social media, while Barcelona SC said "this unfortunate news makes all of us who are part of this institution deeply dismayed". In a statement, the Ecuadorian Football Federation condemned the violence and passed on condolences to Pineida's family.

## KKR'S RS 9.2 CRORE BUY TO MISS PART OF IPL 2026? REPORT MAKES BIG CLAIM

Bangladesh cricket team fast bowler Mustafizur Rahman will not be available for a portion of the IPL 2026 season, according to a report by India Today. He was bought by KKR for Rs 9.2 crore in the IPL 2026 auction alongside Sri Lanka's Matheesha Pathirana who came for Rs 18 crore. The report quoted sources from the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) and stated that Mustafizur will miss the matches between April 16 and 23. The IPL 2026 schedule is all set to clash with Bangladesh's home ODI and T20I series against New Zealand. IPL 2026 will reportedly run from March



26 to May 31 and although Mustafizur is not a regular in Bangladesh's ODI side, he features prominently in their T20I matches. The report further claimed that he will be issued a partial No

Objection Certificate (NOC) from the cricket board that will exempt him from the ODI series and as a result, he will just head to India after just playing the T20I series. Kolkata Knight Riders

(KKR) made a strong statement at the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 mini-auction, led by the marquee signings Cameron Green, Matheesha Pathirana and Mustafizur Rahman. They also added depth with Finn Allen, Rachin Ravindra and returning players Tim Seifert and Rahul Tripathi. Backed by a clear focus on emerging Indian talent, KKR's buys reflected balance, quality and long-term planning, as per a release. The side went all out for Australian batter Green, winning a bidding battle against the Chennai Super Kings to secure him for Rs 25.20 crore.

## MATVEI SAFONOV HERO AS PSG BEAT FLAMENGO IN INTERCONTINENTAL CUP

Back-up goalkeeper Matvei Safonov saved four penalties as Paris Saint-Germain edged out Brazilians Flamengo 2-1 in a shoot-out to win the FIFA Intercontinental Cup final in Qatar on Wednesday. PSG led through Khvicha Kvaratskhelia before Jorginho's spot-kick levelled for Flamengo as the game finished 1-1 after extra time. Copa Libertadores winners Flamengo defeated Mexicans Cruz Azul and African champions Pyramids last week to earn the right to face PSG and pushed the European champions all the way with a dogged display. But Luis Enrique's men, who received a bye to the final, were indebted to Safonov and followed in the footsteps of Real Madrid who lifted the inaugural title last year. "I think this year is impossible to

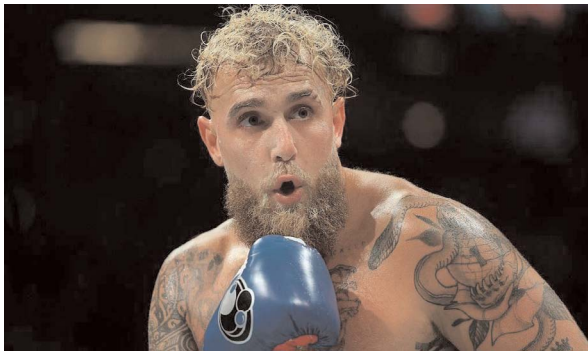


repeat for Paris Saint-Germain. It's an unforgettable year," said Luis Enrique. "Six trophies, not bad. We must keep going. It's our mentality to keep winning and keep making history. That's what we want." PSG thought they had taken the lead in the ninth minute when Fabian Ruiz cleverly hooked the ball into an empty net after Flamengo goalkeeper

er Agustin Rossi miskicked a clearance while trying to prevent a corner. But the goal was ruled out by VAR because Rossi had narrowly failed to stop the ball from going out of play. But PSG did break the deadlock eight minutes before half-time courtesy of another Rossi error. The Argentinian turned Desire Doue's low cross, which looked to be too strong for

Kvaratskhelia, straight into the Georgian's pass for the simplest of tap-ins. Flamengo managed to stay in the game, though, and were awarded a penalty on the hour mark for a foul by Marquinhos on Uruguay midfielder Giorgian de Arrascaeta after a VAR review. Former Chelsea and Arsenal player Jorginho stepped up to send Safonov the wrong way in trademark fashion. PSG pressed for a winner, sending on Bradley Barcola and Ousmane Dembele who set up a last-gasp chance for Marquinhos. But the centre-back could not react quickly enough to get his effort on target as the ball flashed across goal and the game headed into extra time. Both teams saw half-chances come and go in the added half-hour, with Dembele flashing a shot narrowly off target in the 116th minute.

## A 'NOVICE' WHO CAN 'PUNCH A BIT' - HOW GOOD IS PAUL?



Jake Paul has spent years demanding to be recognised as a "real" boxer. He has called out the likes of Saul 'Canelo' Alvarez, while at the same time picking opponents ranging from retired MMA fighters and faded ex-champions to reality TV personalities and even a grandfather. But on Friday in Miami, that sideshow collides with boxing's top tier as Paul faces two-time heavyweight world champion and Olympic gold medalist Anthony Joshua. Some give Paul, the Disney-actor-turned-YouTuber-turned-boxer, credit for daring. Others question his sanity. Almost nobody gives him a chance. "I worry about Jake's health," trainer Joe Gallagher tells BBC Sport. Former world champion and Team GB coach Richie Woodhall says Joshua is the "hardest puncher" he has ever had on the pads. Liverpool's two-division champion Natasha Jonas calls the whole event simply "wild". That tension with boxing's old guard irritates Paul. In

fight week, he bristled at the mention of criticism, describing detractors as a "peanut gallery that doesn't exist" and insisting the question of whether he belongs no longer concerns him. On paper, Paul-Joshua is the biggest mismatch to headline a boxing event. Yet inside Paul's camp, the tone is very different. There is a belief the 28-year-old has improved far more than the public realise. Paul has built the kind of operation only someone with serious finances - and intent - could assemble. Even sceptics acknowledge the graft. "He's not one of these people who say it but don't live it. He takes it seriously," Jonas says. He trains out of a £3m converted warehouse in Puerto Rico, a full-time base with recovery suites, a strength and conditioning centre and high-end equipment used by elite professionals. Conditioning coach Larry Wade, who has worked with world champions such as Shawn Porter and Badou Jack, oversees his physical work.



