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## INBRIF

**Six Killed as Water Tank Collapses at Nagpur Factory**



Nagpur (TSIT) Six persons died after a water tank collapsed at an industrial unit on the outskirts of Nagpur city on Friday, a police official said. The incident occurred around 9.30 am at Avada Electro Private Limited, a solar panel manufacturing factory located in MIDC Butibori area, the official said. While three persons had died at the time of the incident after getting trapped under the debris, three others who were rushed to hospital have also succumbed to injuries, he informed.

**ED Attaches Rs.7.93 Cr Assets in Illegal Betting App Case**

New Delhi: In fresh trouble for cricketers Yuvraj Singh and Robin Uthappa, actor Sonu Sood and others, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) attached their movable and immovable assets valued at Rs 7.93 crore as part of action against illegal offshore betting platform 1xBet, an official said on Friday.

Earlier on October 6, the ED had attached assets amounting to Rs 11.14 crore of cricketers Shikhar Dhawan and Suresh Raina. Others against whom the latest action in the case has been taken by the ED Headquarters Office, include actresses Urvashi Rautela, Mimi Chakraborty, actor Ankush Hazra and actress Neha Sharma, an ED statement said. The attachment was done under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002, an official

**Manipur security forces recover 16 abandoned IEDs in Churachandpur**

Manipur: Security forces in Manipur on Thursday recovered 16 abandoned improvised explosive devices (IEDs) at Lungdeipha Leinom village junction in the Kangvai area of Churachandpur district, officials confirmed on Friday. The explosives were neutralised by a bomb disposal squad.

Officials said the recovery took place during a search operation in and around the village junction. The incident follows a suspected armed attack by a Kuki group two days earlier, which involved indiscriminate firing and bombings in Torbung Sabal Mamang Leikai in neighbouring Bishnupur district.

## 41 CPI (Maoist) Cadres Surrender in Telangana

**The Cadres handed over 24 firearms**

**HYDERABAD ■ (TSIT):**

In a major setback to the banned CPI (Maoist) organisation, forty-one underground Maoist cadres, including six senior leaders of Company Platoon Committee Member / Divisional Committee Member (CyPCM/DVC) rank, surrendered before the Telangana Police on Friday in the presence of the Director General of Police (DGP), Telangana.

During the surrender, the cadres handed over 24 firearms comprising one INSAS Light Machine Gun (LMG), three AK-47 rifles, five SLR rifles, seven INSAS rifles, one BGL gun, four .303 rifles, one single-shot rifle and two air guns, along with 733 live rounds of ammunition and eight BGL shells. Police officials stated that the surrender of such a large cache of arms has significantly weakened the operational and combat capability of the CPI (Maoist) in the region.



The surrendered cadres belonged to key formations of the CPI (Maoist), including the PLGA Battalion, Komaram Bheem Asifabad-Mancherial Divisional Committee, 2nd Central Regional Command Company, Cherla-Shabari Area

Committee, Platoon-33 of the South Sub Zonal Bureau, South Bastar and Darbha Divisional Committees, and the Gangaloor Area Committee of West Bastar DVC. Many of them had remained underground for periods ranging from seven to

twenty-four years. The cadres stated that they were influenced by Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy's appeal on October 21, 2025, urging Maoists to abandon violence and rejoin the mainstream. Continuous pressure from security forces, shrinking support networks, harsh living conditions, declining health, prolonged separation from families, ideological disillusionment and internal leadership disputes were cited as reasons for surrender.

Under the Telangana Government's Surrender and Rehabilitation Policy, a total eligible amount of Rs.1.46 crore will be disbursed after documentation, with an interim relief of Rs.25,000 already provided to each cadre. Police officials revealed that 509 Maoist cadres have surrendered in 2025 so far, reflecting the steady decline of the extremist organisation.



**KTR dares Revanth to prove 66% support**

**HYDERABAD (TSIT):** Bharat Rashtriya Samithi (BRS) working president KT Rama Rao (KTR) on Friday, December 19, dared Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy to prove his claims of having the approval of people in the panchayat elections by making the 10 defected MLAs from BRS resign and seek fresh mandate. Addressing a victory meeting of newly elected BRS sarpanches in Sircilla, KTR challenged the CM to test his "66 per cent support" claim.

"The CM claimed Congress won 66 per cent in local polls and called it a blessing for his government. Yet, within five minutes, he took a U-turn, stating local polls are fought on local issues and caste, not government performance," he said. "Mr. Chief Minister, if you truly believe the people are with you, accept my challenge."

## CM Naidu Seeks Centre's Support for Projects



**AMARAVATI (TSIT) :** Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu met Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in New Delhi on Friday and sought substantial central support for various projects.

These included the Purvodaya programme, the Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI) scheme works, a transformative horticulture development package for Rayalaseema, and urgent assistance for the Polavaram-Nallamala Sagar Link Project to address persistent drought conditions in several districts.

CM Naidu emphasised that the Purvodaya initiative is crucial for realising the Viksit Bharat vision, as it supports the holistic development of eastern states and strengthens India's national economic growth. According to an official release here, the Chief Minister explained that Purvodaya funds are essential for improving

rural connectivity, modernising irrigation systems, developing infrastructure, expanding industrial corridors, establishing food-processing clusters, and enhancing healthcare and education facilities.

Stressing that these interventions would significantly expand economic opportunities in rural Andhra Pradesh, he requested the Centre to prioritise State-specific needs and simplify administrative norms to ensure smooth implementation of Purvodaya projects.

The Chief Minister also sought the expeditious release of funds under the SASCI scheme for several important projects.

He requested immediate support for the construction of the Unity Mall in Visakhapatnam, the reconstruction of the historic Havelock Bridge under Akhanda Godavari, the Gandikota Tourism Project, and the completion of three working women's hostels in different districts.

## Siddaramaiah asserts full-term CM amid Cong infighting

**BELAGAVI (TSIT):** Amid speculation over leadership change within the Karnataka Congress, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday asserted that he is the incumbent Chief Minister and will continue in office for the full term, while categorically denying that any power-sharing formula had been discussed within the party.

The Chief Minister made the statement on the floor of the Assembly after BJP leaders questioned whether he would remain in office long enough to implement the assurances announced for the development of the North Karnataka region during the ongoing Belagavi session.

I will continue to be the Chief Minister," Senior BJP MLA V. Sunil Kumar said he was raising the issue out of genuine concern.

"Today, you have made announcements for North Karnataka. You should be in a position to implement them. You will remain as the Chief Minister, right?" he asked. In response, Siddaramaiah said that he

would indeed remain in office. Leader of the Opposition R. Ashoka then sought clarity on whether the Congress Legislative Party (CLP) had decided if

Siddaramaiah would serve a full five-year term or only a two-and-a-half-year term. The Chief Minister replied that no such decision regarding a half-term arrangement had been taken within the party.

BJP MLA N. Munirathna followed up by challenging Siddaramaiah to make a categorical declaration. "Won't you thump the table and say that you will remain Chief Minister for five years?" he asked.

## Prez Murmu Urges PSC to Prioritise Honesty



for the Chairpersons of State Public Service Commissions, being organised by the Telangana Public Service Commission, she stated that honesty and integrity are paramount as well as non-negotiable. She under-

lined that lack of skills and competencies can be dealt with through learning interventions and several other strategies, but lack of integrity may cause grave challenges which may be impossible to overcome.

## 93 Indian Airports Switch to 100% Green Energy

**New Delhi :** A total of 93 airports in India have switched over to 100 per cent green energy use, Murlidhar Mohol, Minister of State for Civil Aviation, informed the Parliament. In a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha, the minister stated that four airports in the country, including Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, and Bengaluru, have achieved the highest carbon accreditation level, five, as per the Airports International Council, and have become carbon neutral.



health and well-being", PM Modi noted how India's age-old wisdom, Ayurveda, is centred around balance.

"In Ayurveda, balance, that is, equilibrium, has been called the synonym of health. The one whose body maintains this balance is healthy," the PM said. "Today, we see imbalances in work-life, gut microbiome, sleep, and emotions creating global health challenges. Both studies and data indicate this. Thus, restoring balance is a global urgency," said PM Modi.

World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Ministry of Ayush.

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ing initiatives in shaping a global, science-based, and people-centred traditional medicine agenda. The Summit, held from December 17 to 19, was jointly organised by the

World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Ministry of Ayush.

mobilising the beneficiaries of the 100-day employment scheme," it said. "Let us raise our voices against the union BJP government that deceives the people of Tamil Nadu and the AIADMK that supports them," the release said.

On December 18, the Tamil Nadu government expressed its strong objection to the Centre's new rural employment scheme, saying concerns includ-

## DMK Alliance to protest MGNREGA replacement on Dec 24



with district secretaries, MLAs, local body representatives, and members of the alliance parties.

The alliance demands the withdrawal of the Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Bill, 2025, which replaces MGNREGA and introduces a new rural employment framework.

"On December 24, the

protest would be held at 10 am in the capital city and also in all the party's local levels by

ed, removal of Mahatma Gandhi's name from it and the increased financial burden on states.

Chief Minister M K Stalin told Prime Minister Narendra Modi that the proposed legislation "will jeopardise the livelihoods of crores of rural poor, particularly in performing states like Tamil Nadu, and strain inter-governmental relations."

"The leadership issue is an internal matter of our party. We will follow the directions of the high command. However, I am the current Chief Minister and have completed two-and-a-half years in office. I will continue as the Chief Minister in the future as well," Siddaramaiah said, reiterating "I am here and

## 40 lakh annual FASTag passes issued since August, barrier-free toll collection by 2026: Gadkari

**NEW DELHI:** The government will implement barrier-free toll collection at all 1,050 toll plazas across the country by 2026 and about 40 lakh annual FASTag passes have been issued in four months since August, Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari said on Thursday.

Answering queries during Question Hour in the Lok Sabha, Gadkari said annual FASTag passes will allow private cars to cross 200 toll plazas at Rs 3,000 a year, or an average of Rs 15 per toll.

The pass is much cheaper when compared to the current cost of Rs 15,000 for crossing 200 tolls.

"By 2026, we will put in place sophisticated AI-based system for collecting tolls at all the 1,050 plazas,



which include 350 private toll booths and 700 government). Cars can move at 80 km/hour on highways without stopping at toll plazas," Gadkari said.

The minister said the new barrier-free seamless high-

way and expressway toll collection system will replace the current system of toll collection, wherein cars have to stop at toll plazas for money to be deducted from FASTag.

Beginning August 15, 2025,

the government has started the FASTag annual pass. The annual pass eliminates the need to frequently recharge FASTag through one-time fee payment of Rs 3,000 for one-year validity or 200 toll plaza crossings.

## Hijab row: Bihar Health minister unaware of doctor's refusal to join duty

**PATNA:** Bihar Health Minister Mangal Pandey on Thursday said he was not aware of reports that a female doctor had refused to join duty following an incident in which Chief Minister Nitish Kumar was seen publicly removing the veil from her face.

The senior BJP leader, however, sought to put a lid on the controversy by asserting that the ruling NDA in the state has always worked for empowerment of women (Matri Shakti).

"I have no such information", was the terse reply of Pandey, whom journalists asked about reports that the Ayush doctor Nusrat Parveen, who hails from Kolkata, has declined the government job following the unsavoury incident that took place earlier this week.

A section of media had on Wednesday reported that she had declined the job.

Parveen was among ten Ayush doc-



tors who had turned up at the Chief Minister's Secretariat on Monday to receive their letters of appointment. When Parveen's turn came, the 75-year-old CM pointed towards her veil (Hijab) and exclaimed 'what is this' before pulling it down and exposing her face. The incident has drawn criticism

from far and wide, including many West Asian countries, and the JD (U) president is facing accusations of disrespecting Muslim traditions, allegedly in line with 'RSS agenda'. However, Pandey insisted, "Women have always been respected by our CM, who has made huge efforts for the empowerment of Matri Shakti".

## PM Modi expresses grief over death of sculptor Ram Sutar



**NEW DELHI:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday mourned the death of noted sculptor Ram Sutar, and said his works will always be admired as powerful expressions of India's history, culture and collective spirit.

"He has immortalised national pride for generations to come. His works will keep inspiring artists and citizens alike. My heartfelt condolences to his family, admirers and all who were touched by his remarkable life and work. Om Shanti," Modi said.

Sutar, 100, breathed his last at this residence in Uttar Pradesh's Noida on late Wednesday night.

Modi said the sculptor's

work will always be admired as powerful expression of India's history and culture. "Deeply saddened by the passing of Shri Ram Sutar Ji, a remarkable sculptor whose mastery gave India some of its most iconic landmarks, in-

cluding the Statue of Unity in Kevadia," Modi said in a post on X.

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**“Soulful Strokes” – the 6th Annual Art Exhibition will be held in Chitrakala Parishath**



Bengaluru : Celebrating the spirit, rhythm, and evolving identity of the city, artist Barnali presents her latest art series titled “Namma Bengaluru: Colours of the City” as part of “Soulful Strokes,” the 6th Annual Art Exhibition organised by the Kalashrishi Group of Artists at Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath, Gallery 2 and 3, Kumara Krupa Road, Bengaluru.

The exhibition, held from December 17 to 21, 2025, will be open to the public daily from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Entry is free. Through

“Namma Bengaluru: Colours of the City,” Barnali offers a heartfelt visual tribute to the city she calls home, moving beyond its image as a technology-driven metropolis to reveal its deeper character shaped by heritage, greenery, memories, and lived experiences. Her artworks depict iconic Bengaluru landmarks such as Cubbon Park, Vidhana Soudha, Lalbagh, KR Market, and Church Street, not as postcard images, but as vibrant spaces filled with emotion and everyday life.

Curated by Bernari Ray, Soulful Strokes features works by eminent artists Vikram, Archana Shailesh, Haribabu, Chaitanya, Latha, Sanjay Kumar, Manoj Ajay Gurunath, and Suparna Rajan, along with promising student artists Adrija Chatterjee and Samita Ghosh. The exhibition brings together diverse artistic styles and contemporary themes, highlighting evolving narratives in Indian art while encouraging emerging talent.

Soulful Strokes promises to be a vibrant cultural experience for artists, collectors, critics, and art enthusiasts alike.

## Nothing wrong in Satish Jarkiholi's dinner meeting: DCM DK Shivakumar

Belagavi: Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Thursday said there was nothing wrong in Satish Jarkiholi hosting a dinner meeting of legislators, asserting that such gatherings were common. Speaking to reporters at the Circuit House, he remarked that no one could object to a dinner meeting and said he had no role in organising it.

Responding to BJP leader B.Y. Vijayendra's remarks branding him the “father of corrup-



tion” and alleging that the Congress was an ATM for the High Command, Shivakumar said the allegations must be proven and that time would answer Vijayendra. On his personal secretary Rajendra Prasad's accident, the Deputy CM said he was stable and out of danger, though advised rest. Expressing grief over the death of a youth in the accident, Shivakumar said the government would ensure adequate compensation to the bereaved family.

## Varshini Aparna brings glory to the state by winning 1 gold, 3 silver, 1 bronze in the 63rd National Roller Skating Championship



Bengaluru: Varshini Aparna has won one gold medal, three silver medals, and one bronze medal in the 63rd National Roller Skating Championship-2025 held in Visakhapatnam.

Aparna, who was being trained by Best Club Coach Raghavendra G.V., has increased the glory of the country by achieving this unique achievement.

Speaking at the same time, Varshini Aparna said that with the great

desire to win a gold medal in skating, she trained continuously under the good guidance of Coach Raghavendra G.V. Thus, she expressed

her joy that it helped her win the gold medal. Coach Raghavendra G.V. Speaking, he said that the BEST Club is working with the aim of encouraging and

supporting boys and girls who are interested in skating,

and so far hundreds of skaters have played at the national and state levels and achieved fame.

The state's Sports Department is providing appropriate cooperation to the skating sport. He said that it is our hope that the youth of our state should represent the sport of skating at the international level and bring fame to our state.

## Congress gave nothing to North Karnataka in Belagavi session: Opposition leader R. Ashok



Bengaluru : The Congress government has given nothing to North Karnataka in the Belagavi session. They have only told lies, said opposition leader R. Ashok, expressing outrage.

Speaking to reporters, he said that in every Belagavi session, discussions take place on the problems of North Karnataka. This time, the BJP had emphasized this issue. Even

though discussions went on for a total of 21 hours, it was like washing tamarind fruit in a river (meaning it was futile). CM Siddaramaiah, who has presented the budget 16 times, says that injustice

has been done to North Karnataka—if that's the case, it is his own failure. Even though there are Public Works and Irrigation Ministers, there are potholes in the roads of North Karnataka. They say they will provide 10,000 crore rupees every year, but later lie by saying it's for the entire state.

They first give assurances on irrigation projects, then say there is a court

injunction. The Govindaraj Commission report is still not complete. CM Siddaramaiah is a complete liar and has told lies. People thought the Chief Minister would announce something new. But they have made it as if there is no electricity, snatching away the light from the entire North Karnataka. They have only made allegations against the central government. They haven't

provided land for the central railway project, nor their share for the waste management project. Even though the central government provided a grant for the development of the Ellamma Temple project, they haven't started it. Even though about 50 crore rupees were given for Belagavi's lakes, they haven't used it. Congress MPs asked a question in the Lok Sabha about the release of funds for the Jal Jeevan Mission scheme, and the answer was to submit the bill. Officials told the CC Patil committee that they couldn't submit the bill. Even after all this, Congress

leaders claim they have done development. When our MLAs asked about the Ghalakshmi funds, no answer was given. When asked where the 5,000 crore rupees went, no answer was provided on that either. This is a government of debtors, engaging in corruption and looting. Under this government, things have become even worse for North Karnataka. The MLAs are wasting time by holding dinner parties. If there is no rift, everyone should have been present when the Chief Minister was speaking in the House. But only 6 ministers were there. About 50% of the MLAs were not present at all.

## Highways Clogged by Encroachments, Shrines and Statues

**T**he primary motive behind the formation of National Highways (NH) in India is to provide a robust and efficient transportation network that connects different regions, promotes economic growth, and enhances national integration.

### The statutory system NH is supposed to be maintained

Under the National Highways Act, 1956, was enacted to develop and maintain a network of high-quality roads that connect major cities, ports, and industrial centers in the country. The Union government has invested heavily in the development of National Highways, with a focus on improving infrastructure, reducing congestion, and enhancing safety. By achieving these objectives, the National Highways aim to contribute to India's economic growth, social development, and overall prosperity. India has a total of 599 National Highways.

(NH) covering a length of approximately 1,51,874 kilometers. These highways play a crucial role in connecting different regions and fostering economic growth and development throughout the country.

### Existing impediments on NH in many spots

Contrary to the objective of national highways, some political party activists and other sector persons have extensively and haphazardly erected religious structures and statues on many National Highways across the country, causing serious disruption to road traffic and leading to accidents. Consequently, the National Highways Authority approached the Supreme Court.

Finally the Supreme Court of India has directed all States and UTs to stop granting permission



for installing statues or any structures on public roads, pavements, and utility areas that obstruct traffic, emphasizing public safety and free movement. From around 2013 the SC orders covered National Highways too, except setting up of streetlights.

This ruling pertained to cases challenging unauthorized constructions, with courts stressing public funds should serve people, not glorify leaders through road encroachments.

The Supreme Court of India has directed all States and UTs to stop granting permission for installing statues or any structures on public roads, pavements, and utility areas that obstruct traffic, ensuring public safety and free movement. In orders from around 2013, applying this to National Highways too, while allowing essential traffic structures like streetlights. This ruling came from cases challenging unauthorized constructions, with courts stressing public funds should serve people, not glorify leaders through road encroachments.

A total of 2,524 unauthorized

structures have been erected in various government lands across the Andhra Pradesh state alone. Among them, 38 are on national highways, 1,671 on state roads, and 815 on state highways. A government order (GO) was issued in 2013, prohibiting installation of statues on public roads, footpaths, sidewalks, and other public utility spaces.

As per the GO issued in 2019, no permissions have been granted for existing statues, nor for their removal. Collectors will take decisions based on the guidelines. It must be said that these haphazardly constructed statues, encroachments on roads, and religious structures are becoming a serious obstacle to national highways and severely undermining the central government's objective.

Therefore, it is the responsibility of the respective state governments to immediately intervene, remove any statues or religious structures that are causing obstruction, regardless of who they represent, and uphold the purpose of the national highways, thereby implementing the Supreme Court orders.

## Nethradhama Launches Karnataka's First Mobile Unit for Bladeless Eye Surgery:



the state's first Catalys platform for bladeless cataract surgery to pioneer SMILE in South India, innovation has always been part of our DNA. With the Z8 Neo, we have elevated this further, not just by upgrading our in-centre capabilities, but also by mobilising the technology itself. Our specially engineered van, with climate and shock control, allows us to rotate the machine between five centres, including three in Bengaluru, one in Mysuru, and one outreach site. This model makes it possible for patients across centres to access cutting-edge treatment without compromising on precision or outcomes. During the pilot phase, over 600 cataract surgeries and nearly 300 corneal and refractive procedures have already been successfully completed using the Z8 Neo, including bladeless LASIK and the increasingly popular CLEAR technique.

**MANAPPURAM HOME FINANCE LIMITED**  
Formerly MANAPPURAM HOME FINANCE PVT LTD  
CIN: U65923KA2010PLC039179  
Regd. Office: IV/4704 (OLD) W/65384 (NEW) Manappuram House Valapad Thrissur, Kerala 680567  
Corp Office: Manappuram Home Finance Limited, Third Floor, Unit No. 301 to 315, A Wing, Karakka Wall Street, Andheri (East), Mumbai-400093, Maharashtra.  
Phone No.: 022-66211000, Website: www.manappuramhomefin.com

### POSSESSION NOTICE (For Immovable Property)

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## LIVING FOR THE NATION

Patriotism has long been measured by sacrifice, often dramatised through martyrdom and moments of crisis. But a mature civilisation must eventually ask a harder question. What does it mean to live for the nation every single day? True nationalism is not forged only on battlefields or in moments of extreme heroism. It is sustained in ordinary life, in conduct, choices, discipline and collective purpose. To live for the nation is to place it above narrow identities without erasing diversity. It is to understand that caste, creed, region and language are social facts, not political weapons. When society fractures over small differences, it signals not passion but intellectual laziness. Civilisations decline not because of external enemies alone, but because internal cohesion weakens. Unity, therefore, is not a slogan, but a strategic strength. History repeatedly shows that truth alone does not command respect in a competitive world. Moral righteousness without capacity becomes vulnerable. Strength, whether it is economic, cultural, intellectual or social, is what allows values to travel beyond borders. This strength, however, does not emerge from confrontation for its own sake. Wisdom lies in discernment. In knowing when to assert, when to adapt, and when to outgrow conflict altogether. An impulsive society fights every problem whereas a wise one understands which battles elevate and which only exhaust. Living for the nation also means rejecting the false binary between personal success and collective duty. One does not need to renounce the world to serve it. Professional excellence, wealth creation, innovation and ambition are not anti-national. They are essential to nation-building, provided they are anchored in responsibility. A society where individuals rise but forget the collective soon finds that individual success itself becomes fragile. Equally important is cultural confidence. A nation unsure of its own traditions becomes vulnerable to imitation without understanding. Cultural pride is not hostility to the world. It is clarity about oneself. Wearing traditional attire, preserving languages, valuing family bonds and celebrating indigenous thought systems are not acts of regression. They are acts of continuity. Global engagement is meaningful only when rooted in self-respect. Perhaps the most profound idea embedded in the call to live for the nation is the recognition of every individual's importance. Societies are not built only by towering heroes. They are sustained by millions of small contributions. The quiet honesty of a public servant, the ethical choices of a business owner, the discipline of a student, the compassion of a neighbour, these are the invisible bricks of national strength. When people believe their role is insignificant, apathy sets in. When they believe they matter, nations rise. Finally, living for the nation demands emotional maturity. It requires keeping selfish interests in check, resisting constant outrage, and cultivating patience. A great nation is not one that is perpetually angry, but one that is self-aware, resilient and purposeful. Patriotism, at its highest form, is civic responsibility, not performative emotion, not symbolic aggression, but sustained commitment. The future will belong to nations whose citizens can balance strength with wisdom, ambition with ethics, identity with unity. The challenge before us is to not just stop romanticising death for the nation, but start dignifying life lived consciously for it.

## Modi's Gulf, East Africa Visit

## SETTING STRATEGIC FOOTHOLDS

DR D K GIRI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's two-day state visit to Jordan on 15-16 December, marked a watershed moment in India-Jordan relations, coming 75 years after diplomatic ties were established after a 37-year gap since the last full-fledged visit by an Indian premier. The visit, the first leg of a three-nation tour which also took Modi to Ethiopia and Oman between 16-18 December, was framed by both sides as an opportunity to move the partnership from "symbolic" to "substantive". In a series of social media posts and a joint press briefing in Jordan, Modi highlighted a 'meaningful expansion' of cooperation across a wide spectrum of sectors.

PM Modi's four-day, three nation swing though Jordan, Ethiopia and Oman is meant to give India a diplomatic push in two key regions – the Horn of Africa and the Gulf – at a time when New Delhi is rolling out its 'Link West' and 'Africa Initiative' strategies. At the time of writing (17 Dec), Modi will leave from Ethiopia to Oman. This article, thus, covers the events in Jordan visit while hinting at the purpose of Prime Minister's visits to Ethiopia and Oman.

In Jordan, the most tangible results were the Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) signed on 15 December. The Agreements covered renewable energy, water resource management, digital public infrastructure and a twining of UNESCO sites of Petra, Jordan and Ellora in India. The cultural MoU includes the renewal of the India-Jordan Cultural Exchange Programme for 2025-2029 an initiative that the Prime Minister said would 'further deepen people-to-people ties'. In renewable energy, both countries pledged technical cooperation aimed at clean growth, energy security and climate responsibility. This echoes Modi's earlier statement that the partnership "reflects a shared commitment to clean growth".

Water security, a critical issue for both arid countries, was addressed with collaboration on water-resources management and development, with an emphasis on sharing best practices in conservation and technological innovation. Digital transformation received a boost through a Letter of Intent on sharing successful digital solutions and a call for collaboration between Jordan's National Payment System and India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI). The latter was part of a broader push to support Jordan's digital public infrastructure and inclusive governance.

Strategically, the visit reinforced a shared stance against terrorism. King Abdullah II conveyed strong support for India's fight against terrorism as both leaders condemned

terrorism in all its forms. This part of the outcome has reportedly sent shivers through the spine of terror organisations and their patrons in Pakistani military. Modi also praised Jordan's 'active and positive role' on the Gaza issue, underscoring the geo-political dimension of the bilateral dialogues. While King Abdullah II acknowledged India's 'rising influence' expressing confidence that their partnership would serve as a model for South-South Cooperation.

On economic and trade prospects, India is Jordan's third-largest trading partner, with bilateral trade valued at about 2.8b USD. Jordan supplies a significant share of India's fertilizer imports – particularly Phosphates and Potash – making it a key component of India's food security strategy. During the talks, Modi proposed raising bilateral trade to US 5b USD over the next five years, a target that reflects the ambition to deepen economic inter-dependence. The Prime Minister's 8-Point vision, presented to the King, outlined cooperation in trade, critical minerals, civil-nuclear energy, and capacity-building programmes, including the training of 10 master trainers over three years. Jordan expressed its intent to join Indian-led global initiatives such as the International Solar Alliance (ISA), the Global Bio Fuel Alliance, and the Coalition for Disaster Resilience Infrastructure, signalling a convergence of interests on climate and sustainable development.

The latest trade figures show that India imported 1.2m tonnes of Phosphates and 0.8 m tonnes of Potash from Jordan in the last fiscal year, accounting for roughly 12 per cent of India's total fertilizer imports. Both governments have agreed to launch a Joint Business Council to explore new sectors such as renewable-energy components, agri-tech and pharmaceuticals, aiming to double trade volume by 2030.

On strategic and security dimensions beyond economics, the visit cemented a security partnership that builds on the 2018-defence cooperation MoU. Discussions covered military training, defence-industrial collabora-

*The geo-political context is equally significant. Jordan's participation in the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) positions the Kingdom of Jordan as a lynchpin in a multi-model connectivity project that could cut shipping cost by up to 30 per cent and reduce transit times by around 40 per cent. Modi's visit, therefore, was not simply a bilateral affair but also a step toward integrating Jordan into a broader regional architecture that links South Asia to the Mediterranean. In the defence sector, India has offered to supply Jordan with advanced light-weight howitzers and to conduct joint training exercises at the Indian Army's training centre in Rajasthan. A Letter of Intent was also signed to explore co-production of spare parts, which could reduce Jordan's maintenance costs by an estimated 15 per cent over the next decade.*

tion, counter terrorism, intelligence sharing and potential military exports. Modi's reference to Jordan's "firm stand against terrorism and extremism" highlighted a shared security outlook; while the King's support for India's counter terrorism efforts reinforced mutual trust.

The geo-political context is equally significant. Jordan's participation in the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) positions the Kingdom of Jordan as a lynchpin in a multi-model connectivity project that could cut shipping cost by up to 30 per cent and reduce transit times by around 40 per cent. Modi's visit, therefore, was not simply a bilateral affair but also a step toward integrating Jordan into a broader regional architecture that links South Asia to the Mediterranean.

In the defence sector, India has offered to supply Jordan with advanced light-weight howitzers and to conduct joint training exercises at the Indian Army's training centre in Rajasthan. A Letter of Intent was also signed to explore co-production of spare parts, which could reduce Jordan's maintenance costs by an estimated 15 per cent over the next decade.

In cultural exchange and people-to-people ties, the Indian Diaspora in Jordan numbers around 17,500 employed mainly in textiles, construction, manufacturing and UN agencies. The twining of Petra and Ellora is presented as a 'Gateway for heritage conservation', tourism and academic exchanges. To nurture ties among the youth, India will offer 50 scholarships under the ICCR programme for Jordanian students to pursue undergraduate studies in engineering and technology with the first batch set to arrive in August 2026.

The outcomes of the December visit open up several avenues for future collaboration such as renewable-energy, joint ventures,

with Jordan seeking to expand its solar capacity, Indian expertise through the ISA and private sector partnership could create large scale project, leveraging India's cost-effective solar technology. Similarly, digital infra-

structure and FinTech linking UPI – Jordan Payment-System could serve as a template for broader FinTech cooperation including cross-border remittances, E-commerce platforms and date-security standards.

There is also scope in water-management, technology transfer where Indian companies have notable experience – water recycling, drip irrigation and desalination. Opportunities can easily be explored in joint-investment in exploration of critical minerals and fertilizer that could secure supply chain for India's agriculture sector while providing Jordan with value-added industry.

Scope exists in defence and security collaboration, education and capacity building, tourism and heritage conservation which will boost both economies while supporting Jordan's ambition to become a technology hub. Such present initiatives and future scope collectively aim to transform the India-Jordan relationship into a dynamic, multi-sector partnership that can serve as a catalyst for broader regional integration and sustainable development.

Modi's visit to Ethiopia is timed to mark 70 years of diplomatic relations. Ethiopia hosts the Africa Union headquarter, making it a strategic foothold for India's broader Africa outreach. For Ethiopia, India is one of its top trading partners and a major source of concessional loans. Modi's second visit to the Sultanate of Oman also coincides with 70th anniversary of India-Oman diplomatic ties and following Sultan Haithm bin Tariq's state visit to India Dec 2023. Oman's location at the mouth of Strait of Hormuz makes it vital for India's security and maritime interest. In short, the Ethiopia leg is about cementing a strategic foothold in East Africa and expanding economic ties, while the Oman leg leverages a long-standing Gulf partnership, energy security and a pending Free Trade Pact, Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) that could boost bilateral trade beyond the current 10b USD. Also, such a pact with Oman should deepen India's influence in the Western Indian Ocean. ---INFA

## Something is rotten in the state of Goa

GOA, a tiny state on the western coast of India, is the land of my ancestors, who were Hindus. My maternal grandmother told me that our distant ancestors had arrived there with the sage Parshuram, who had fired an arrow that struck the fertile land of Goa, following which the Goud Saraswat community has been living there for aeons. The last time I met my grandmother was in 1952, when I arrived at her home unannounced with my books to prepare for the UPSC's civil services examination. She stayed alone in her huge house with an old woman for company and to cook her meals. I arrived after dusk. To my surprise, all the doors were open. Murders and thefts were rare in Goa in those times.

Goa has progressed into a state comparable to any other in the Indian Union, alive in a sense that it is afflicted by crime and corruption. When the colonial rulers, the Portuguese, were driven out in 1961, the state was merged into the Union of India. The two core services, the IAS and the IPS, were introduced and the judiciary reorganised on the lines of neighbouring states. At first, the local inhabitants were very happy. The new rulers were among their own and till the casino culture gained prominence in Goa, disaffection with those who ruled was minimal. The Congress gave way to the BJP, which ensnared most of

the rival legislators through the lure of office.

It can be safely said that till BJP leader Manohar Parrikar was the Chief Minister, crime and corruption had been checked despite the influx of citizens from northern states and the inroads of the casino culture. The current government led by Pramod Sawant has allowed the hold that Parrikar had on the administration to slip so badly that Herculean efforts will be needed to restore the rule of law. The fire that swept through the nightclub called Birch by Romeo Lane, killing 25 people – including 20 poor migrants who had shifted to Goa to make a living – sums up the sorry state of governance under Sawant's rule.

Two brothers, Gaurav and Saurabh Luthra, owned the nightclub, along with "sleeping partner" Ajay Gupta. The land had been leased to them by the owner, Surinder Kumar Khosla, though he knew that no construction was permitted there since it lay astride former salt pans.

It has been reported that Gaurav and Saurabh, both residents of Delhi, share their residential address with 42 firms, most of which are probably shell companies. The Enforcement Directorate would be well advised to ascertain if these firms are conduits for money laundering. As per a report in a leading English newspaper, when electoral bonds were the flavour of the season, the brothers or the companies they

controlled deposited Rs 37 crore in the scheme (which was later scrapped). This needs to be verified.

Now, the BJP, like any other political party, has to collect money by all means, fair or foul, in order to run its electoral machinery. In Goa, nightclubs and casinos present the politicians with easy pickings. The constructions that have changed the face of the Goan countryside are, of course, their prime source of funding.

The Luthra brothers were in Delhi when the fire struck their nightclub built with birchwood and having thatched roofs – all combustible material. They were informed telephonically within minutes of the disaster.

Immediately, they booked a flight to Thailand to avoid arrest. CM Sawant's minions went into top gear and managed to get the brothers arrested from Phuket. The government hoped that the public would forget that the culprits were those who had shut their eyes to the illegalities.

Who are the officials who permitted the nightclub to operate brazenly on land on which no construction was permitted? If a politician has given the green signal, he or she should be exposed. Why have the erring officials not been named as co-accused along with the Luthra brothers and the landowner?

The officer in charge of the police station where the

nightclub was operating is reported to have sent a written report to his superiors. He alleged that he was told to "keep quiet". If that is so, there is no solace for law-abiding citizens of Goa if the senior officers who should have enforced the law are themselves complicit in the crime committed under their very noses.

My brother retired as the head of the Town and Country Planning Department in the Central government. He worked for five years after retirement as the Director of the School of Planning and Architecture in New Delhi. He told me that he is not abreast of the happenings in his previous department in Goa, though he lives in our

ancestral home in the village. I consulted him about this fiasco. His first comment was that the land on which the nightclub was built was an "eco-sensitive zone, subject to tidal action". According to the Goa Regional Plan (2001-21), which was approved in 2008, no construction can be permitted on such land.

The second mandatory requirement that was disregarded was that there has to be a minimum distance of 70 metres between any building and the spot which a fire tender can access. In the Arpora case, the fire tenders had to operate from a distance of 400 metres, which was obviously ineffective. Planners should have pointed out these

requirements to those empowered to permit construction.

Most native Goans feel that there is no governance in their state. It has collapsed beyond repair and only a change of guard can stem the rot.

The CM is attempting to shift the blame to officials. He has suspended a few of them and threatened not to spare any other who has not acted in good faith. He has not pointed a finger at any politician! But without political blessings, these violations could not have occurred. Goa is too small a state for its residents not to be aware of the levels to which corruption has risen.

The 20 migrants who lost their lives represented the India that has not benefited from PM Narendra Modi's development initiatives and the economic advances the country has made. There appears to be a sense of oblivion about the existence of this India when decisions have to be taken, like they have to be taken every day by those who rule. When Covid struck, our Prime Minister abruptly announced a lockdown. He forgot to factor in the poor migrants who were left without shelter and sustenance. PM Modi's acolytes in Goa apparently don't spare a thought for the migrants who go there to make a living. Forgetting about this parallel, poor India is inexcusable.



## Maruti Suzuki WagonR surpasses 35 lakh production milestone

One of the few models to achieve the 35 lakh production figure in India



New Delhi December 2025: Maruti Suzuki India Limited ("Maruti Suzuki") celebrates a historic milestone of 35 lakh units of cumulative production, across three generations, of the iconic WagonR. This milestone marks the extraordinary journey of trust and emotional connect of the brand with millions of customers across India. Launched in December 1999, the WagonR joins the ranks of Alto and Swift in crossing this significant milestone. Maruti Suzuki WagonR is currently manufactured at the Company's facilities in Gurgaon and Manesar, in Haryana. Mr. Hisashi Takeuchi, Managing Director & CEO, Maruti Suzuki India Limited, said, "This achievement is not just a production milestone, but reflects the enduring love and confidence that generations of customers have shown towards brand WagonR. It is rare for a vehicle to receive such acceptance even after 25 years since its launch. The WagonR kept

evolving with the introduction of new technology and features over time, while retaining its original DNA. The WagonR has been highly appreciated for aspects like its iconic tall-boy design, spacious interiors and fuel efficiency, which aptly reflect our customers' needs and expectations. We are deeply grateful for their continued support and remain committed to providing 'Joy of Mobility' for generations to come."

In Japan, Suzuki WagonR was first introduced in September 1993. Developed as a semi-bonnet style mini wagon, it gained immense popularity as a comfortable and easy-to-use car. It is manufactured across Japan, India, Hungary, and Indonesia. At present, WagonR is sold in more than 75 countries and regions across the world, including Japan, India and Europe. In August 2025, the Suzuki WagonR crossed the accumulated sales of 1 crore units.

Murali Manohar Palod Elected Chairman, Govind Narayan Rathi Vice-Chairman of AP Mahesh Co-operative Urban Bank

Hyderabad: Hyderabad District Collector Harichandana Dasari on Friday said that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of AP Mahesh Co-operative Urban Bank Limited were elected unanimously, as all the board members expressed consensus and no objections were raised. The election process was conducted at the Collectorate mini conference hall, where the District Collector participated along with District Revenue Officer E. Venkatachary during the election proceedings for the posts of Chairman and Vice-Chairman. The Collector informed that two nominations were received for the posts of Chairman and Vice-Chairman and, as no member expressed any objection, Murali Manohar Palod was unanimously elected as Chairman, while Govind Narayan Rathi was unanimously elected as Vice-Chairman. She



also directed all the elected Board of Directors of AP Mahesh Co-operative Urban Bank to submit their election expenditure statements within the stipulated time, as per the prescribed rules. Since the Chairman and Vice-Chairman were elected unanimously by the Board members, the District Collector stated that the report would be forwarded to the Co-operative Elections Authority for approval. On the occasion, the newly elected Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Directors expressed their gratitude to the District Returning Officer for conducting the election smoothly.

## Samsung Solve for Tomorrow 2025: Young Innovators Drive Tech for Sustainability



Galaxy Z Flip smartphones for the top 20 teams.

5. A Growing, Decentralised Innovation Ecosystem

The 2025 edition saw increasing participation from Tier-II and Tier-III cities, with alumni mentoring newcomers and access to IIT Delhi's FITT Labs for prototype development. This reflects the spread of STEM innovation beyond metropolitan hubs.

6. Empathy-Driven, Responsible Innovation

Students were guided through design-thinking focused on solving real-world problems responsibly, prioritizing societal impact and sustainable AI solutions.

7. Legacy of Changemaking

Since 2010, Samsung Solve for Tomorrow has engaged 2.9 million young innovators in 68 countries, empowering students with mentorship and tools to create impactful STEM solutions. India's diverse and vibrant contribution continues to grow year on year.

Wealth

The standout Samsung Solve for Tomorrow 2025 winner, Prithvi Rakshak, is a modular AI-powered vermicomposting system developed by three teenagers - Abhishek Dhanda, Prabhkirat Singh, and Rachita Chandok. Their innovation automates organic waste conversion into nutrient-rich compost with smart sensors, making it suitable for schools, markets, and communities.

1. Innovation Rooted in Urgency and Growth  
Students developed technologies that conserve water, energy, waste, and biodiversity, turning sustainability into a catalyst for economic and social progress.

2. Theme Winner Prithvi Rakshak: Transforming Waste into

using solar atmospheric condensation

Renewable Desalination (Assam): Low-cost & energy efficient desalination system to deliver clean drinking water.

SmalBlu (Gujarat): AI platform to optimize enterprise data infra & reduce carbon footprint in cloud infrastructure.

VOXMAPS (Madhya Pradesh): LiDAR & HD imaging sensors mounted on drones to collect pollution data & create Voxel maps

4. Support for Scaling Impact

Winners received up to 1 crore incubation support at IIT Delhi, with additional awards for top teams, including 1 lakh grants, Goodwill Awards and Young Innovator Awards and Samsung

## Vi Partners with Niyo to Offer Zero Forex Markup Cards for International Travellers



Leading telecom operator Vi has partnered with travel banking fintech Niyo, to provide Zero Markup Forex Card delivery for Vi customers travelling abroad this holiday season. This first-of-its-kind partnership by a telco, enables Vi customers travelling overseas on holiday, business or higher education to receive a Niyo Zero Forex Markup Card delivered to their doorstep within 24 hours.

With the Niyo partnership, Vi is adding a strong financial convenience layer to this travel ecosystem. Vi customers can request for the Zero mark-up Niyo Forex card on Vi App. A Niyo executive will assist Vi users with KYC verification, card setup and a trial transaction. Customers can input their name and pin code details to determine if their location is serviced by Niyo Express. For locations outside of the Express purview, customers can download the Niyo App and activate their card digitally.

As a special introductory offer for Vi customers, Niyo is offering their flagship Niyo Premium service (worth Rs 999/year) completely free, which gives travellers a host of benefits such as: Rs 10,000 worth of annual savings on travel. Zero convenience fee on visa & Rs 99.

flight bookings on Niyo app  
Flat 10% off on international hotels on Niyo app

1 free lounge access every quarter  
1 free ATM withdrawal every quarter

Accepted in more than 180 countries, the Niyo Forex card processes international transactions at base exchange rates and helps customers avoid the usual 3 to 5 percent forex mark-up that increases the cost of spending overseas.

This new initiative aligns with Vi's continued focus on strengthening its International Roaming proposition combining first in Industry propositions for the benefit of International Travellers. Recently Vi had announced special roaming discounts for secondary members on Vi Family Postpaid plans, whereby Secondary members receive a 10 percent discount and REDX Family users receive a 25 percent discount on IR packs. Vi also partnered with Aditya Birla Health Insurance to offer Travel Insurance cover of Rs.40 Lakh, at an attractive price point — just Rs.285 with all Vi IR Packs.

Additionally, Vi's partnership with Blue Ribbon Bags extends delayed/lost baggage protection with compensation of up to Rs 19,800 per bag at just Rs 99.

## Flipkart Acquires Majority Stake in Minivet AI to Accelerate GenAI-Powered E-commerce Innovation

Bengaluru - December, 19 2025: Flipkart, India's homegrown e-commerce marketplace, today announced it executed definitive documents to acquire a majority stake in Minivet AI, an innovative AI/ML solutions provider founded in 2024. The acquisition is a strategic move to build and invest in core Generative AI (GenAI) capabilities, at a time when e-commerce is rapidly shifting towards visual, conversational, and AI-led discovery. This is expected to accelerate the transition to a more intuitive, interactive, and immersive shopping experience for e-commerce platforms, including Flipkart.

Minivet AI focuses on generative video for e-commerce, transforming static product catalogs into rich, engaging video content at scale. Built on a foundation of sophisticated model orchestration and deep performance optimization, the platform delivers quality results at a fraction of traditional production costs. Beyond video, Minivet AI offers a broader suite of e-commerce AI capabilities—positioning the company as a full-stack AI partner and a foundational GenAI capability for online retail platforms.

Speaking on the acquisition, Aditya Rachakonda, Founder, Minivet AI, said, "This partnership

with Flipkart is a pivotal moment for Minivet AI. It allows us to accelerate the deployment of our proprietary GenAI solutions, from catalog videoification to conversational search, directly onto India's leading e-commerce platform at scale, making shopping more intuitive and immersive for millions of customers." This investment strengthens Flipkart's long-term technology portfolio, ensuring the company remains at the forefront of digital commerce innovation. This acquisition is subject to completion of customary closing conditions.

Ravi Iyer, Senior Vice President

- Corporate, Flipkart, said, "Acquiring Minivet AI is a strategic investment that will enhance Flipkart's core GenAI capabilities by the integration of niche talent and advanced proprietary technology, which includes leading solutions for catalog videoification and semantic search. These are critical for addressing the rising industry trend of visual-first and video-first commerce, ultimately driving higher customer engagement, conversions, and long-term innovation across the Flipkart platform and, over time, the wider Flipkart Group ecosystem."

## Celebrate Christmas in Dubai: Festive Dining Experiences Across the City



Dubai: This Christmas season, Dubai's top hotels are offering an array of festive dining experiences, combining culinary delights, entertainment, and the city's magical holiday ambiance. From elegant brunches to lavish dinners, families and friends can indulge in seasonal flavours at some of the city's most luxurious venues. St. Regis Downtown Dubai - BASTA! & Ginori Terrace: Guests can enjoy Italian festive specials, live stations, and canal views from December 4th-30th. Christmas Eve Dinner is priced at AED 450 (including house beverages), while Christmas Brunch on December 25 ranges from AED 395 for children to AED 850 for premium adults. Royal Mansour Marrakech - La Gastronomie: From late December to early January, enjoy refined festive

menus with French, Italian, and Moroccan classics. Pricing varies depending on à la carte or set menus. Ciel Dubai Marina - East 14: Celebrate Christmas Eve on December 24 with bold Asian flavours, live dim sum, and sushi stations overlooking Dubai Marina. Prices range from AED 325 to AED 595 per adult, with discounts for children under 12. Palazzo Versace Dubai - Giardino: Enjoy an international buffet on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day (24-25 December) with prices from AED 275-445 per adult, while children aged four and below dine free. Armani Hotel Dubai - Armani/ Meditarraneo: Christmas Eve Buffet on December 24 features seasonal favourites in a cozy setting, priced at AED 420 per adult with soft drinks, and discounts for children aged 4-6. Rixos Premium Saadiyat Island: Christmas Eve Dinner on December 24 (AED 985) and Christmas Day Brunch on December 25 (AED 895) offer festive elegance, live music, and family-friendly celebrations. From luxury Italian feasts to international buffets and Asian delights, Dubai's hotels are creating memorable holiday experiences for every taste, making this Christmas season a true culinary celebration.

From luxury Italian feasts to international buffets and Asian delights, Dubai's hotels are creating memorable holiday experiences for every taste, making this Christmas season a true culinary celebration.

## Century Mattresses & Sofas Sleep Specialist Store Inaugurated in Karimnagar

Karimnagar: Century Mattresses, India's renowned Sleep Specialist brand with over three decades of expertise, inaugurated its new Century Mattresses & Sofas Sleep Specialist Store at Ashok Nagar, Karimnagar, on Thursday.

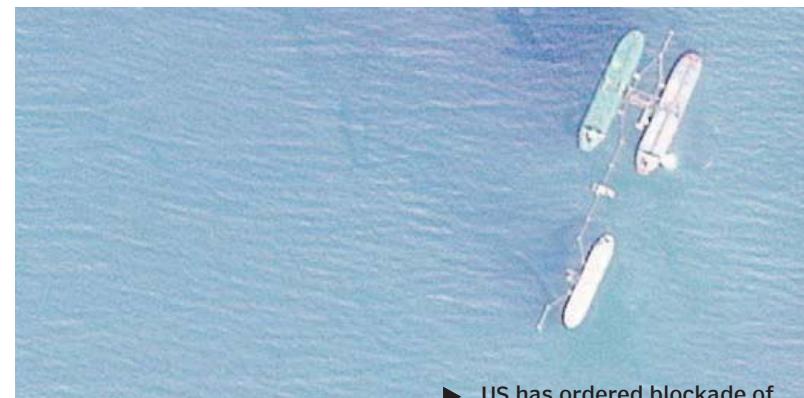
Located at Bomma Venkanna Building, Ashok Nagar, the exclusive store aims to provide customers with expert-backed, world-class sleep and comfort solutions under one roof. As part of the inaugural celebrations, the company announced special launch offers, including a flat 25% discount on mattresses and sofas, along with a complimentary pillow set and bedsheet with every mattress purchase. The store was inaugurated by Uttam Malani, Executive Director, Century Mattresses and Sofas, in the presence of Gouri Shetty Srinivas and

Kanna Santosh, Proprietors of Sai Balaji Furniture. The opening witnessed a strong response from customers and industry representatives. Speaking on the occasion, Uttam Malani said the Karimnagar store marks another important step in strengthening Century's presence in Telangana and offering customers a personalised, immersive shopping experience to help them choose the right sleep solutions.



# China backs Venezuela

China voiced political support for Venezuela Thursday after the United States ordered a blockade of sanctioned oil tankers, denouncing what it called 'unilateral bullying' but offering no details on any concrete assistance to its long-time oil supplier



**Beijing opposes all forms of unilateral bullying and supports countries in safeguarding their sovereignty and national dignity**

elan counterpart Yvan Gil on a phone call Wednesday.

Wang did not name the United States or Trump in the official readout of the call. Wang also did not elaborate on the form or extent of the support that China might or could offer to Venezuela, with which Beijing previously said it had forged an ironclad friendship.

The US is squeezing Venezuela's principal source of revenue in its attempt to target terrorism, drug smuggling and human trafficking, according to Trump. Last week, the US Coast Guard seized an oil tanker off the coast of Venezuela.

China is the biggest buyer of Venezuelan crude, which accounts for roughly 4% of its imports, with shipments in December on track to average more than 600,000 barrels per day, analysts have said.

Beijing opposes all forms of "unilateral bullying" and supports countries in safeguarding their sovereignty and national dignity, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told his Venezu-

- US has ordered blockade of sanctioned oil tankers moving in and out of Venezuela
- China says opposed to "unilateral bullying"
- China's foreign minister spoke to Venezuelan counterpart on the phone
- UN and other nations urge de-escalation and dialogue

bered". For years, China has extended credit lines to Venezuela under loans-for-oil deals. In a meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Moscow this year, Maduro told Xi that Venezuela was looking forward to expanding cooperation in trade and energy.

At the same time, Beijing has been making an intense effort to co-exist with the US, its most important trading partner. After months of acrimonious dispute over trade and tariffs, Trump and Xi in October managed to hammer out a consensus on how to handle thorny trade issues. China says it opposes any acts that violate the UN Charter or encroach on the sovereignty and security of other countries.

"China believes the international community understands and supports Venezuela's position in defending its legitimate rights and interests," Wang said.

#### US AGGRESSION

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has urged the de-escalation of tensions, asking the US and Venezuela to honour their obligations under international law, including the UN Charter and any other applicable legal framework to safeguard peace in the region. The presidents of Mexico and Brazil have also urged restraint and dialogue.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, in a phone call to Maduro last week, "reaffirmed his support for the policy of N. Maduro's government, aimed at protecting national interests and sovereignty in the face of growing external pressure."

Venezuela requested the UN Security Council meet to discuss the "ongoing US aggression", according to a letter to the 15-member body seen by Reuters, Wednesday.

China supports Venezuela's request for an urgent meeting of the council, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson said Thursday, when asked at a regular news briefing what role China, as a "responsible" major power, would play.

Asked whether what Caracas has described as US "aggression" could put China and the US on a collision course in the region, the spokesperson reiterated Wang Yi's comments and did not say more.

## FRESH TENSIONS WITH CHINA

# US rolls out \$10bn Taiwan arms deal



**Washington, Dec 19:** The Trump administration has announced a massive package of arms sales to Taiwan valued at more than \$ 10 billion that includes medium-range missiles, howitzers and drones, drawing an angry response from China.

The State Department announced the sales late Wednesday during a nationally televised address by President Donald Trump, who made scant mention of foreign policy issues and did not speak about China or Taiwan at all. US-Chinese tensions have ebbed and flowed during Trump's second term, largely over trade and tariffs but also over China's increasing aggressiveness toward Taiwan, which Beijing has said must reunify with the mainland.

The eight arms sales agreements announced Wednesday cover 82 high-mobility artillery rocket systems, or HIMARS, and 420 Army Tactical Missile Systems, or ATACMS — similar to what the US had been providing Ukraine during the Biden administration to defend itself from Russia — worth more than \$4 billion.

They also include 60 self-propelled howitzer systems and related equipment worth more than \$4 billion and drones valued at more than \$1 billion. Other sales in the package include military software valued at

more than \$1 billion, Javelin and TOW missiles worth more than \$700 million, helicopter spare parts worth \$96 million and refurbishment kits for Harpoon missiles worth \$91 million. China's Foreign Ministry attacked the move, saying it would violate diplomatic agreements between China and the US; gravely harm China's sovereignty, security and territorial integrity; and undermine regional stability.

"The Taiwan independence forces on the island seek independence through force and resist reunification through force, squandering the hard-earned money of the people to purchase weapons at the cost of turning Taiwan into a powder keg," said Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun.

"This cannot save the doomed fate of Taiwan independence but will only accelerate the push of the Taiwan Strait toward a dangerous situation of military confrontation and war. The US support for Taiwan Independence through arms will only end up backfiring. Using Taiwan to contain China will not succeed," he added.

## India resumes visa services in Dhaka



when a brief clash occurred as the protesters tried to break through the security barricades. The protesters raised anti-India slogans, according to the videos on social media.

In Khulna, the protesters under a banner called 'Unity Against Indian Hegemony' tried to march towards the Assistant High Commission of India but army soldiers and navy sailors joined hands with police to thwart the marchers. "We had enforced a stringent vigil preventing them (protestors) from proceeding towards the mission. They left the scene after staging a 'peaceful' rally," Khulna's deputy commissioner of police Tajul Islam said.

The reports said in both the rallies the protestors accused India of sheltering deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina and demanded her immediate return to be exposed to gallows.

## Trump lists administration's successes in year-end address



While Trump did not name the conflicts, he has throughout the year repeated his claim innumerable times that he ended wars between India and Pakistan, Thailand and Cambodia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, Kosovo and Serbia, Israel and Iran, Egypt and Ethiopia, as well as Rwanda and the Congo.

He also touted his administration's success in dealing with migrants coming into the country from around the world, taking up American jobs and driving up housing costs.

Trump said that a major factor in driving up housing costs was the "colossal border invasion".

"We have never been invad-

ed. This is the worst thing that frankly, in my opinion, the worst thing that the Biden administration did to our country is the invasion at the border," he said.

Trump said the Biden administration and its allies in Congress brought in "millions and millions" of migrants and gave them taxpayer-funded housing, while the rent and housing costs for Americans skyrocketed. He claimed that over 60 per cent of growth in the rental market came from foreign migrants.

"At the same time, illegal aliens stole American jobs and flooded emergency rooms, getting free health care and education paid for by you, the American taxpayer," Trump said.

He claimed that for the first time in 50 years, the US is now seeing "reverse migration", as migrants go back home, leaving more housing and more jobs for Americans."

In the year before his election, all net creation of jobs was going to foreign migrants. "Since I took office, 100 per cent of all net job creation has gone to American-born citizens. Hundred per cent," he said.

## Deposed PM Oli re-elected party chair

**Kathmandu, Dec 19:** Ousted Nepal Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli was Thursday elected as the CPN-UML's chairman for the third consecutive term with a two-thirds majority.

Oli was elected the Communist Party of Nepal - Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) chairman in a contest held three months after his government was forced to resign following a student-led protest.

During the 11th general convention of the party that concluded Thursday, Oli secured 1,663 votes against his opponent Ishwor Pokharel, who received 584 votes, according to party sources.

Pokharel, 71, had received the backing of former President Bidya Devi Bhandari, his rival in the presidential election.

The convention started with a public meeting in the Bhaktapur district and concluded with the election of Oli and other office bearers and central committee members of the party.

Shankar Pokharel, from Oli's panel, was elected to the post of General Secretary of the party for the second term. He defeated Surendra Pandey, former finance minister, who contested the election from Pokharel's panel.

Among 19 office bearers of the party, 17 were elected from Oli's panel, while two were from Pokharel's panel.

Prithvi Subba Gurung, Bishnu Paudel, Raghujit Panta, Ram Bahadur Thapa and Gokarna Bisht have been elected to the post of Vice President. Among them, only Gokarna Bisht is from Oli's rival team.

Similarly, among three deputy general secretaries, Lekh Raj Bhatta, Yogesh Bhattarai and Raghbir Mahaseth, Bhattarai is from Pokharel's team. All nine secretaries were elected from Oli's team.

Hundreds of cadres belonging to Oli took out a victory procession in Kathmandu's Bhrikutimandap, where the general convention was held, soon after the election results were out.



## CEPA SIGNED

**India and Oman formalised a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), that aims to boost trade, investment, and cooperation across key sectors**



**Muscat, Dec 19:** India and Oman Thursday signed a free trade agreement, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi held talks with Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and explored ways to further add greater depth to the bilateral Strategic Partnership.

Modi, who arrived in Oman Wednesday on the last leg of his three-nation tour, was welcomed by Sultan Haitham at Al Baraka Palace in Muscat before their one-on-one talks and the

delegation-level meeting.

"Today, we are taking a historic step forward in India-Oman relations, whose positive impact will be felt for decades to come. The Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) will energise our ties in the 21st century,"

Modi thanked the Sultan for his efforts in finalising the historic CEPA, as he described it as "a new and golden chapter" of bilateral cooperation.

They also exchanged views on regional and global developments and reaffirmed their commitment to regional peace and stability. They reaffirmed

their commitment to further enhancing the defence and security collaboration, including in the maritime domain.

The CEPA - signed by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and Oman's Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef - is expected to enhance market access, promote investments, and strengthen cooperation across key sectors.

The pact will increase trade between the two countries by reducing trade barriers and

creating a stable framework. It will unlock opportunities in all major sectors of the economy, enhance economic growth, create jobs and boost investment flows between both countries.

This is Oman's second FTA with an individual country and the first FTA they have done in about 20 years.

Modi said he also discussed with Sultan Haitham ways to further boost trade and investment linkages. "Financial services also offer great scope for working together. We talked about how sectors like energy, critical minerals, agriculture, fertilisers and healthcare have rich potential for closer ties," he said.

"We discussed how cultural and people-to-people linkages can be enhanced. This includes student exchange programmes and other such ways to ensure our youth connect regularly," Modi said.

**Today, we are taking a historic step forward in India-Oman relations, whose positive impact will be felt for decades to come. The Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) will energise our ties in the 21st century -**

**NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER, INDIA**

opportunities across different sectors, and greatly benefit the youth of both nations.

They also exchanged views on regional and global developments and reaffirmed their commitment to regional peace and stability. They reaffirmed

their commitment to further enhancing the defence and security collaboration, including in the maritime domain.



# India Beat SF, Win T20I Series 3-1



Team India players celebrate with the trophy after winning the series against South Africa at the end of the fifth Twenty20 international cricket match at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad....

**AHMEDABAD:** Hard-hitting India batters Tilak Varma and Hardik Pandya hammered fine half-centuries while spinner Varun Chakravarthy snared four wickets as India defeated South Africa by 30 runs to clinch the five-match T20I series 3-1 here on Saturday. With Varma (73 off 42 balls) and Pandya (63 off 25 balls) in full flow, India scored a competitive 231 for 5 and then restricted the visitors to 201 for 8. The Proteas were in the match till opener Quinton de Kock (65 off 35 balls) and Dewald Brevis (31 off 17) were at the crease, but the visitors lost wickets quickly once the two departed in successive overs.

Chakravarthy (4/53) removed the dangerous Aiden Markram and Donovan Ferreira off consecutive deliveries in the 13th over to take the fight out of the South Africans by reducing them to 135 for 5 from 118 for 1 in 10 overs. Earlier, skipper Suryakumar Yadav's poor run with the bat continued as he scored just five runs but India still put up a big total with Varma and Pandya sharing a 115-

run stand for the fourth wicket.

**Brief scores.**  
India 231 for 5 in 20 overs (Abhishek Sharma 34, Sanju Samson 37, Tilak Varma 73, Hardik Pandya 63; Corbin Bosch 2/44).

South Africa 201 for 8 in 20 overs (Quinton de Kock 65, Dewald Brevis 31; Varun Chakravarthy 4/53, Jasprit Bumrah 2/17).

Team India produced a stunning all-round performance to defeat South Africa by 30 runs in the fifth T20 match, clinching the series in style. Brilliant half-centuries from Tilak Varma and Hardik Pandya, followed by a magical bowling spell from Varun Chakravarthy, powered India to a memorable victory at the Narendra Modi Stadium, where fans witnessed a run-fest.

After winning the toss, South Africa captain Aiden Markram opted to field first. India got off to a solid start with openers Abhishek Sharma (34) and Sanju Samson (37) laying a strong foundation. Captain

**With Varma (73 off 42 balls) and Pandya (63 off 25 balls) in full flow, India scored a competitive 231 for 5 and then restricted the visitors to 201 for 8.**

Suryakumar Yadav had a brief stay at the crease, but the innings truly came alive when Tilak Varma and Hardik Pandya joined forces.

The duo launched a fierce counter-attack, dismantling the South African bowling with a flurry of boundaries and sixes. Hardik Pandya played a breathtaking knock, smashing 63 runs off just 25 balls, including five fours and five sixes. Tilak Varma anchored the innings beautifully, scoring 73 runs off 42 balls with ten fours and a six. Their

explosive partnership propelled India to a massive total of 231 for 5 in 20 overs. Chasing a daunting target of 232, South Africa responded positively. Opener Quinton de Kock played a superb innings, scoring 65 off 35 balls, while Dewald Brevis contributed a quick 31, keeping the visitors in the hunt. At one stage, South Africa looked capable of pulling off a remarkable chase.

However, India's bowlers rose to the occasion at crucial moments. Jasprit Bumrah broke the momentum by dismissing the dangerous de Kock, while Varun Chakravarthy turned the game on its head with a brilliant spell. The mystery spinner picked up four wickets, including two in a single over, ripping through South Africa's middle order. Bumrah was equally impressive, finishing with figures of 2 for 17 and applying the brakes with disciplined bowling.

In the end, South Africa were restricted to 201 for 8 in their 20 overs, falling short by 30 runs. India's comprehensive victory sealed.

## Inter-CIL Volleyball Tournament 2025-26 hosted

**Ranchi, Dec 19:** The three-day Inter-CIL Volleyball Tournament 2025-26 was inaugurated Tuesday at the CMPDI Sports Ground, Ranchi, and will continue till December 19.

The tournament was formally opened by Director (Technical/CRD) Shankar Nagachari, Director (Technical/ES) Rajiv Kumar Sinha, Director (Technical/RT&T) Nripendra Nath, and Chief Vigilance Officer Pankaj Kumar, who interacted with the players and inaugurated the event by serving the ball.

Several senior officials, sports enthusiasts, and mem-



bers of the CMPDI fraternity were present on the occasion. Addressing the gathering, the dignitaries underlined the importance of sports in fostering teamwork, discipline, physical

fitness, and camaraderie among employees. All participating players took an oath to uphold sportsmanship and fair play.

The tournament aims to strengthen inter-organisation-

al relations and promote unity, health, and team spirit within the Coal India family.

In the opening match, MCL-Sambalpur defeated CCL-Ranchi by 25-18, 25-18, 25-19. In the second encounter, NCL-Singrauli registered a win over WCL-Nagpur by 25-20, 27-25, 25-12. The third match saw SECL-Bilaspur defeating CMPDI-Ranchi by 25-18, 26-24, 25-20.

Teams from all Coal India Limited subsidiaries are participating in the tournament, including host CMPDI (Headquarters)-Ranchi and SCCL-Kothagudem, highlighting a spirit of healthy competition and unity across the organisation.

**Hangzhou, Dec 19:** India's Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty dished out a solid performance to outwit the Indonesian pair of Fajar Alfian and Muhammad Shohibul Fikri in their second Group B match to inch closer to the knockout stage of the BWF World Tour Finals here Thursday.

The former world No 1 Indian pair shored up their defence and dominated the proceedings to register a 21-11, 16-21, 21-11 win over world No 8 Alfian and Fikri in the men's doubles match that lasted an hour.

With two wins from two matches, Satwik and Chirag

now lead the group and have built a considerable advantage in points difference.

Third seeds Satwik and Chirag will face second seeds Aaron Chia and Soh Wooi Yik in their last group match Friday. Facing a pair known for their exceptional front-court skills, the onus was on Chirag, but he was ably supported by Satwik, who was simply flawless in the evening.

**NAT'L SHOOTING C'SHIP**  
**Ketan wins women's 10m air pistol gold**

**New Delhi, Dec 19:** Haryana's Ketan Malik overcame a strong field comprising Paris Olympic double medallist Manu Bhaker and was crowned the women's 10m air pistol national champion here Thursday. Ketan struck the gold with 240.0, ahead of Meenu Pathak of Delhi, who took silver with 238.4, and Surbhi Rao, who claimed bronze with 219.5. In the junior women's category, Vanshika Chaudhary from Uttarakhand emerged on top, edging out Anjali Shekhawat by 0.2 for gold, while Asian Games champion Palash Gulia secured bronze, and Army Marksmanship Unit's Lakshita Bishnoi claimed the youth title after a narrow 0.6 victory over Rashmika Sahgal, with Sanskriti Bana completing the podium. The final followed an extensive qualification phase that saw over 900 shooters compete across 39 relays. Gulia topped the qualification with 582.24x. She was joined at the top by Bhaker, who also shot 582, finishing second on inner-10 count with 19x. In the final, Bhaker finished seventh with 137.2, followed by Anjali Choudhary on 110.1, while Mohini Singh ended fourth with 197.9 and Anjali Shekhawat placed sixth with 157.5.



## WFI tightens selection norms for wrestlers

**The wrestling body makes presence at national camp must; bars wrestlers from training independently**

**New Delhi, Dec 19:** The Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) has unveiled a new selection policy that makes attendance at national camps mandatory to be eligible for national selection, bars wrestlers from training independently and mandates Olympic Games quota-winning athletes to appear in a final one-bout selection trial.

The policy was discussed and cleared at WFI's recent General Council meeting during the Na-

It was also presented to the Sports Authority of India (SAI) for feedback and a review.

**No Nat'l camp, no India jersey**

"Participation in the National Coaching Camp is mandatory for all wrestlers, including elite and iconic athletes. To be eligible for the camp, a wrestler must have won a medal in the National Championship of the concerned year," the policy under the sub-head National Coaching Camps, stated.

"Once selected, wrestlers are required to train exclusively at the designated national camp. No athlete is permitted to train independently at any other venue," it added.

It means that Vinesh Phogat, who recently announced her comeback from retirement, will have to prove herself at the domestic level before being reckoned for a spot in the



national team. The policy made it clear that a failure to attend the camp will make the wrestler "ineligible to participate in the selection trials." "We are not going to give trials exemption to anyone. No athlete can sit on past achievements. In the past, few athletes had asked for exemption which is not fair to up and coming wrestlers, WFI will give equal opportunity to all," a WFI official told PTI.

The policy has also made a provision to keep a list of reserve wrestler, who will be asked to do the national duty in case of injury to selected athlete. The policy makes it clear that "past performances

will not be considered for selection trials." "We are not going to give trials exemption to anyone. No athlete can sit on past achievements. In the past, few athletes had asked for exemption which is not fair to up and coming wrestlers, WFI will give equal opportunity to all," a WFI official told PTI.

**Selection trials must for international competitions**

The policy also states that trials are mandatory for teams representing India in major international competitions such as Olympic Games, Asian Games, Continental Championships and World Championships.

The objective of the trials is to provide fair opportunity, assessment of form and fitness, transparency, accountability and merit-based representation. The WFI asserted that Olympic quotas are awarded to the nation and not to individual athletes, and it reserves the right to conduct trials for Olympic participation.

## Eng's Ashes hopes hanging by a thread



**Australia lead series 2-0, need only a draw to retain urn**

**London moves to second on Australia's all-time bowling list**

bilitated back into his work, removing Zale Crawley (9) caught behind in a partnership-breaking dismissal before Lyon struck with two wickets in four balls.

Lyon's second dismissal was a peach, bowling Ben Duckett for 29 with a ball that gripped, turned and beat the outside edge.

It put the wily off spinner second on Australia's all-time test wickets list on 564, one ahead of great Glenn McGrath and behind only Shane Warne.

It's the biggest wicket that we are organizing in the Milano Organizing Committee.

Lyon's first wicket was a gift, though, as under-fire number three Ollie Pope surrendered it for three with a flick off his pads caught at midwicket.

**SNICKO IN THE SPOTLIGHT**

A Snicko controversy had engulfed day one and a new one flared late on day two.

England wicketkeeper Jamie Smith was at the centre of the confusion, first surviving a caught-behind appeal when on 16 then being given out caught behind for 22 when he appeared to completely miss a Cummins ball.

With third umpire Chris Gaffaney having to rule on both decisions, Snicko only appeared to muddy the waters rather than clear up matters.

Australia paceman Mitchell Starc said Snicko needed to be "sacked" after Smith's earlier reprieve, while Smith left the field furious when he was eventually dismissed.

When focus shifted back to the cricket, England ended up losing 3-9 to fall to 168 for eight courtesy of a two-wicket burst from pacer Scott Boland before Archer joined Stokes to push England past 200.

**NAT'L SHOOTING C'SHIP**

**Ketan wins women's 10m air pistol gold**

New Delhi, Dec 19: Haryana's Ketan Malik overcame a strong field comprising Paris Olympic double medallist Manu Bhaker and was crowned the women's 10m air pistol national champion here Thursday. Ketan struck the gold with 240.0, ahead of Meenu Pathak of Delhi, who took silver with 238.4, and Surbhi Rao, who claimed bronze with 219.5. In the junior women's category, Vanshika Chaudhary from Uttarakhand emerged on top, edging out Anjali Shekhawat by 0.2 for gold, while Asian Games champion Palash Gulia secured bronze, and Army Marksmanship Unit's Lakshita Bishnoi claimed the youth title after a narrow 0.6 victory over Rashmika Sahgal, with Sanskriti Bana completing the podium. The final followed an extensive qualification phase that saw over 900 shooters compete across 39 relays. Gulia topped the qualification with 582.24x. She was joined at the top by Bhaker, who also shot 582, finishing second on inner-10 count with 19x. In the final, Bhaker finished seventh with 137.2, followed by Anjali Choudhary on 110.1, while Mohini Singh ended fourth with 197.9 and Anjali Shekhawat placed sixth with 157.5.



## MISSTERIOUS MOVIE REVIEW:

## A Suspense Thriller with a Hint of Horror

Missterious is one of the small-budget films in recent times that generated positive buzz ahead of its release. The promotional content clearly hinted at a suspense thriller, and the presence of comedy legend Brahmanandam at the pre-release event further boosted audience curiosity. The film has now hit theatres, and here is a balanced review.

## Story

Kondapur Sub-Inspector Ramkhi alias Ram Kumar (Abid Bhushan) goes missing under mysterious circumstances. To crack the case, ACP Anand Sai (Balaraj Wadi) steps in. During the investigation, he questions architect Virat (Rohit Sahni) and his wife Shilpa (Meghna Rajput). What is the connection between Virat and Shilpa and SI Ramkhi's disappearance? Why did Ramkhi visit the villa purchased by Virat? How does Misstra (Riya Kapoor) enter the story? And most impor-

tantly, who killed SI Ramkhi? These questions unfold through a series of twists, suspenseful turns, and surprises.

## Analysis

While watching Missterious, viewers may be reminded of familiar triangle love stories seen in everyday life. However, the director gives this routine setup a fresh spin by blending it with suspense, thriller elements, and a subtle horror layer. It is evident that the story has been written with care, keeping the genre's demands in mind.

Being a suspense thriller, the director avoids unnecessary delays in character introductions and quickly moves into the core plot. Characters are introduced while the story progresses, ensuring that twists arrive at regular intervals. The identity of the killer remains a question mark until the climax, which helps keep the audience engaged. In this aspect, the director



succeeds to a fair extent. The interval block delivers an un-

expected twist, pushing the story to the next level. In the second half, the

addition of horror elements intensifies the suspense further. A major twist in the climax changes the course of the narrative and is likely to shock viewers who think they have already figured out the killer.

## Performances

Director Mahi Komatireddy has included three songs, all placed appropriately within the narrative, which works in the film's favour. Music director ML Raja provides suitable background score and songs that complement the thriller mood.

In terms of performances, most actors deliver solid work. Rohit Sahni, Riya Kapoor, Meghna Rajput, and Abid Bhushan perform convincingly in the lead roles. Balaraj Wadi stands out as the senior police officer with his trademark performance. Jabardasth fame Rajamouli gets a meaningful role and does justice to it, while Gaddam Naveen, though appearing briefly, performs within his

scope. One drawback is that most of the cast are relatively unfamiliar faces, which slightly affects the film's overall impact. With more attention to casting, the film could have benefited further.

## Technical Aspects

ML Raja's music enhances the suspense-thriller atmosphere effectively. Cinematographer Parvathu Devendra Suri deserves praise for his visuals. However, since he also handled editing, tighter editing in certain portions would have improved the pace. Production values are decent and suit the scale of the film.

## Verdict

Missterious is a suspense thriller that goes beyond the genre by adding a horror touch. Despite a few shortcomings, it manages to keep viewers hooked with its twists and climax. It is a film worth watching at least once for fans of suspense and thriller movies.



## Teaser of S/O Launched; Vinod Kumar Praises Film

The teaser of S/O (Son of), produced by Sai Simhadri under the banner Sai Simhadri Sainma and directed by Bathala Satish, was released on Friday, generating excitement among audiences. The film features senior actor Vinod Kumar in a pivotal role and promises a unique father-son narrative.

Director Bathala Satish described the film as a comeback for Vinod Kumar, stating that the actor embraced every scene with strong performances. He added that lead actor Sai Simhadri, who returned from America for this project, trusted the team and contributed to bringing the story to life. "We have shown strongly why the son filed a case against his father," Satish remarked.

Speaking at the event, Sai Simhadri expressed a personal connection to the story. "This

story resonates with my real-life experiences with my father. It is exciting, emotional, and every son should show it to his father.

Senior actor Vinod Kumar supported the film wholeheartedly," he said.

Senior actor Vinod Kumar praised the screenplay, noting, "S/O is not a regular format movie. It tells a real-life father-son story with honesty. Director Satish narrated the story extraordinarily, and I am confident everyone will like it. This film is a great achievement by Sai Simhadri."

The event also saw the participation of Chitra Seenu, Rishi, and other prominent personalities. S/O (Son of) is shaping up as a heartfelt, screenplay-driven film that explores the dynamics between fathers and sons with strong performances and commitment from the team.

## 'Bad Girlz' teaser released; christmas release set

**B**ad Girlz' is an entertainer directed by Phani Pradeep Dhulipudi, who has previously directed the successful '30 Rojullo Premichadam Ela'. The film is being produced under the banners of Prashitha Entertainment, Neeli Neeli Aakasam Creations, and NVL Creations. Anchal Gowda, Payal Chengappa, Roshini, Yashna, Rohan Surya, Moin and Rohan Surya are the main actors in 'Bad Girlz'. The tagline for the film, 'Kani Chala Manchodu', contradicts with the title in an interesting way. Sasiidhar Nalla, Emmadi Soma Narsaiah, Ramisetti Rambabu, and Ravula Ramesh are producing this film. The film is slated for release as a Christmas gift on December 25. Today, the teaser of

used to think that Munna would surely become a director, and that I should become one too. Just like how the song 'Nee Kallu Neeli Samudram' from my film Uppena became a chartbuster, the song 'Neeli Neeli Aakasham' is an even bigger hit. Music director Anup Rubens has given wonderful songs for this film as well. I am a big fan of the songs from the film Manam. In this movie, Renu Desai garu plays an important role. The fact that she agreed to do this film itself shows how good the story is. The movie releases on December 25—do watch it without fail." Director Phani Pradeep Dhulipudi said, "Our Bad Girlz is a complete entertainer. If hilarious films like Jathi Ratnalu and MAD were made with girls in



this film was released by Buchi Babu Sana, director of Ram Charan's upcoming pan-India film Peddi. Speaking on the occasion, the talented filmmaker said that he knows the story of Bad Girlz and that it's quite interesting. "The climax is highly emotional. When I was working as an assistant director under Sukumar garu, Munna used to come to him, narrate the stories he had written, and get them approved. Back then, I

the lead, they would have been like Bad Girlz. It's a refreshing movie. We released the teaser today to give an idea of what our movie is like. I am very happy that the teaser is out at the hands of my well-wisher, Buchi Babu Sana garu. Whether I am facing difficulties or experiencing happiness, the first person I share it with is him. When I narrated the story of this film to him, he appreciated its content.

## Uday Bhaskar Prepares for Career Milestone with Upcoming Film 2nd Innings

**A**ctor Uday Bhaskar, known for his grounded performances and emotional authenticity, has completed shooting for his upcoming film "2nd Innings", which is currently in the post-production phase. With a career spanning 16 years, Uday Bhaskar continues to evolve as a performer who prioritizes depth, realism, and sincerity over spectacle.

Over the years, Uday Bhaskar has built a reputation for immersing himself fully into every role he takes on. His acting journey, shaped by consistent learning and dedication, reflects a strong foundation in per-

formance-driven storytelling. Industry observers often describe him as an actor who communicates emotions through silence, restraint, and subtle expressions rather than exaggerated dramatics.

In 2nd Innings, Uday Bhaskar's performance is already being spoken about positively within industry circles. While the makers are maintaining complete secrecy around the film's narrative, they emphasize that the emotional intensity of the film rests heavily on the strength of performances. According to the unit, Uday Bhaskar's portrayal stands out as one of the film's key strengths, with

many calling it a potential career-defining moment.

His on-screen chemistry with co-star Nakshatra has also been highlighted as a major asset. The interactions between the two actors are said to feel organic and emotionally honest, adding weight to the film's overall impact without relying on overt dramatization.

Currently, 2nd Innings is undergoing post-production, with editing, background score, and sound design in progress. Special care is being taken to ensure that the technical elements enhance the emotional layers of the performances. The makers have stated that the film's soundscape and music

are being designed to complement Uday Bhaskar's performance rather than overpower it.

Despite being 16 years into his career, Uday Bhaskar remains selective and purposeful in choosing projects. He is known for favoring emotionally rooted roles that allow him to explore human complexity and inner conflict. 2nd Innings reflects this approach and aligns closely with the artistic path he has been carving over the years. As the film moves closer to completion, expectations are steadily building within the industry. Many believe that Uday Bhaskar's work in 2nd Innings will resonate

