



## NATION | NEWS

ED attaches assets of Yuvraj Singh, Sonu Sood, others in betting case

NEW DELHI (TSIT): Assets of former Indian cricketers Yuvraj Singh and Robin Uthappa apart from that of ex TMC MP Mimi Chakraborty and actor Sonu Sood have been attached by the ED in an "illegal" betting app linked money laundering case estimated to be worth more than Rs 1,000 crore, official sources said Friday.



## WORLD | NEWS

South Korea's Unification minister vows to take lead in policy on North Korea

## SPORTS | NEWS

Self-imposed pressure key to World Cup preparation, says Varun Chakravarthy



## INBRIEF

Seven elephants killed as Rajdhani hits herd in Assam

New Delhi (TSIT): At least seven elephants were killed and one calf injured after a herd collided with the Sairang-New Delhi Rajdhani Express in Assam's Hojai on Saturday morning, leading to the disruption of rail services. According to officials, the accident took place around 2:17 a.m. when the New Delhi-bound Rajdhani Express struck a herd of elephants that was crossing the railway tracks. Forest department authorities later confirmed that seven elephants were killed in the collision, while one calf was rescued in an injured condition and provided medical attention. Additionally, a few coaches of the train were derailed. No passengers or railway staff sustained injuries in the incident.

7 arrested over Hindu youth's lynching, says Bangladesh interim govt

Dhaka : angladesh interim government's Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus on Saturday announced that at least seven people were arrested in connection with the lynching and brutal killing of Hindu youth Dipu Chandra Das over blasphemous charges.

"In the incident of beating to death Sanatan Dharma adherent youth Dipu Chandra Das (27) in Bhaluka, Mymensingh, the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) has arrested seven individuals as suspects," Yunus said in a post on X.

The arrested individuals have been identified as Limon Sarkar, Tarek Hossain, Manik Mia, Ershad Ali, Nijum Uddin, Alomgir Hossain and Miraj Hossain Akon. According to the statement, RAB-14 conducted operations at various locations and arrested the aforementioned suspects.

Six Indians impress at US Kids Indian Championship

Manesar : Nihal Cheema, Drona Singh Dhull and Prince Bainsla among the boys, and Naaya S Sinha, Gairat Kaur Kahlon and Shiksha Jain among the girls, were outstanding performers in the fifth edition of the US Kids Golf Indian Championship at Classic Golf and Country Club. Despite challenging weather conditions and the smog, local golfers made a clean sweep of the titles, with creditable displays in a rather tricky situation. The Tournament Committee reduced the final round for all sections to nine holes because there was insufficient daylight on account of a delayed start. Nihal Cheema in Boys 8 was the only player to shoot par or better on all three days, emerging as a runaway winner over his main rival, Zowra Sikand.

## Public service commissions are governance backbone: Bhatti

HYDERABAD (TSIT): Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu on Saturday said that Public Service Commissions are the backbone of the country's administrative system and play a decisive role in ensuring merit-based, transparent, and inclusive governance.

Addressing the valedictory session of the two-day National Conference of Chairpersons, Members, Experts, and Officials of Public Service Commissions, the Deputy CM emphasized that only through fair, transparent, and accountable recruitment processes can deserving talent be inducted into public service.

He stressed that adherence to an annual examination calendar is mandatory and said delays in conducting examinations lead to frustration and uncertainty among youth. Proper advance planning and strict implementation of job calendars, he said, would strengthen public trust in the system. Appreciating the Telangana Public Service Commission (TSPSC), he noted that it is successfully implementing a job calendar and extended congratulations to the Commission's Chairman and



Members on behalf of the State government.

Transparency, he said, is the lifeline of Public Service Commissions. From question paper preparation to final selection, every stage of recruitment must be clear, error-free, and beyond doubt. He called for extensive use of technology to provide real-time information to candidates and said earning public confidence should remain the foremost objective of commissions.

Expressing concern over incidents of question paper leaks, the

Deputy CM said such acts are against the core values of public service and shatter the dreams of aspirants. He urged the adoption of advanced security systems, ethical training for staff, and swift, impartial action in case of lapses.

He also stated that interviews should not be limited to testing knowledge alone, but should assess personality, ethics, and decision-making abilities. Interview processes must be fair and unbiased, with boards comprising experts from diverse backgrounds, he added.

## CM Naidu meets Amit Shah, discusses Andhra projects

AMARAVATI (TSIT): Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu met Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi on Friday and held discussions on the progress of various key projects currently underway in the state. During the meeting, CM Naidu highlighted the highly positive investor response received at the CII Partnership Summit 2025 held in Visakhapatnam, where leading Indian and global companies expressed strong interest in investing across sectors such as manufacturing, infrastructure, logistics, energy and services.

He noted that Andhra Pradesh's proactive policies, transparent governance and development-focused roadmap have significantly strengthened investor confidence. The Chief Minister and the Union Home Minister also discussed prevailing political developments in Andhra Pradesh, reviewing recent events, political



dynamics and emerging issues in the state.

After the meeting with Amit Shah, CM Naidu attended the CREDAI National Conclave, where he interacted with real estate leaders and showcased the state's urban development vision and investment opportunities.

According to an official release here, CM Naidu also met Union Roadways Minister Nitin Gadkari and requested the Centre

to strengthen national highway connectivity to the state's capital region, Amaravati, by linking it with major cities across the country.

The Chief Minister appreciated Minister Gadkari's sustained efforts in expanding and modernising India's national highway network.

According to an official release here, CM Naidu also met Union Roadways Minister Nitin Gadkari and requested the Centre

## Congress protest against replacing MGNREGA, 'hate politics' in National Herald case



MGNREGA scheme.

BJP leaders have lost the right to stage protests before Gandhi statues. "Here on, you (BJP) should not sit in protest in front of Gandhi statues," the Deputy CM said. Challenging the BJP and the party led government at the Centre to remove Mahatma Gandhi's picture from the currency notes, he further said, "We will not let your attempts to distort history and succeed. The Congress will not allow it to happen."

## 'Bulldozer on MGNREGA': Sonia Gandhi attacks Modi govt over G RAM G Bill



New Delhi (TSIT): Congress Parliamentary Party (CPP) chairperson Sonia Gandhi on Saturday mounted a sharp attack on the PM Narendra Modi-led government, accusing it of systematically running a "bulldozer" over the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and undermining the rights of rural poor, farmers and landless workers, terming it an "assault on rural livelihoods".

This comes two days after the Parliament passed the VB-G RAM G Bill 2025, which escalated into a major political slugfest between the government and the opposition.

In a video message shared by the Congress on X, Gandhi recalled the passage of the landmark employment guarantee law nearly two decades ago during the tenure of former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh. She said MGNREGA was

passed with broad consensus in Parliament and proved to be a "revolutionary step" that provided livelihood security to crores of rural families, particularly the most deprived and marginalised. The law stopped distress migration by ensuring employment in one's own village, strengthened gram panchayats and gave a legal right to work, Gandhi said, adding that the scheme embodied Mahatma Gandhi's vision of Gram Swaraj.

She noted that MGNREGA acted as a lifeline for the poor during

the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the Congress leader alleged that over the past 11 years, the Modi government had made repeated attempts to dilute the scheme by ignoring the interests of the rural unemployed and poor. She expressed "deep anguish" over what she described as recent unilateral changes to the programme. "Without consultation, discussion or taking the opposition into confidence, the government has altered the very structure of MGNREGA. Even Mahatma Gandhi's name has been removed," Sonia Gandhi claimed.

## PM inaugurates new terminal of Guwahati airport



GUWAHATI: (Dec 20) Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday inaugurated the new terminal of the Lokapriya Gopinath Bardoloi International Airport (LGBIA) in Guwahati in Assam.

Touted as the country's first "nature-themed airport", the new terminal will be able to handle 13.1 million passengers per annum, officials said.

The total cost of the project is Rs 5,000 crore, including Rs 1,000 crore earmarked specifically for Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) facilities, they said.

The project has been

developed by Guwahati International Airport Ltd, with operations led by Adani Airport Holdings Limited (AAHL), they added. Adani Group chairman Gautam Adani said the new terminal will serve as a catalyst for regional and industrial development, strengthening Guwahati's role as an emerging economic gateway beyond its tourism potential.

## Indian cyber agency flags WhatsApp 'hijack'

NEW DELHI: Indian cyber security agency CERT-In has flagged a vulnerability in the WhatsApp "device-linking" feature that enables attackers to take "complete" control of an account, includ-



using pairing codes without authentication requirement. "This newly identified cyber campaign called GhostPairing enable cyber criminals to take complete control of WhatsApp accounts without needing password or SIM swaps," the advisory said. A response from WhatsApp to the revelation is awaited. The Indian computer emergency response team (CERT-In) is the national technology arm to combat cyber attacks and guarding of the Indian Internet space. The advisory said that the "high" severity attack campaign usually begins with the victim receiving a message like "Hi, check this photo" from a "trusted" contact. The message contains a link with a Facebook-style preview.

## Wait till after Pongal: Vijay's TVK signals major political shift in TN



CHENNAI (TSIT): Hinting at a major political realignment after the Pongal festival, Tamilaga Vettai Kazhagam (TVK) on Saturday said Tamil Nadu is set to witness a significant transformation in the coming weeks, with all key decisions, including alliance formation, to be taken solely by party president Vijay.

Speaking to reporters at the Chennai airport, TVK administrative committee chief coordinator K A Sengottaiyan said, "After Pongal, you will see what kind of change is going to unfold in Tamil Nadu." He underlined that groundwork was

already underway to ensure electoral success and that the party was moving in a clear, decisive direction. Referring to the TVK meeting held in Erode on December 18, Sengottaiyan said the programme had national resonance. "The event was organised in a manner that made not just Tamil Nadu, but the entire country, take notice.

Nearly three lakh people gathered to see our leader Vijay. It was a historic and record-setting turnout," he said. The former minister said senior leaders were scheduled to meet Vijay later in the day to discuss the party's next phase of outreach. "After consulting Vijay, decisions will be taken on district-level programmes and future movements. Every action will be guided by his advice," he added. Stressing Vijay's authority within the party, Sengottaiyan said, "All decisions, including alliance-related matters, will be taken by Vijay alone."

## Initial probe suggests cough syrup scam has Samajwadi Party links: Adityanath

**LUCKNOW:** Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday said some people arrested for alleged involvement in supplying illegal codeine-based cough syrup have links to the Samajwadi Party.

"Everyone knows that every 'mafia' group has ties with the Samajwadi Party," Adityanath told reporters ahead of the beginning of the Winter session of the UP assembly.

The chief minister said the Legislative Assembly will not likely see any business on Friday due to the sudden death of an MLA. But the government will respond to any questions on the matter in the legislative council and if it is raised outside the House, he said. "However, initial investigation have revealed that some of the men arrested by the STF (special task force) or UP Police have links to the Samajwadi Party. The involvement of Samajwadi Party, which is already notorious

and has a tarnished reputation, will also come to light since a state-level SIT is monitoring the entire case, and officers from the UP Police and the FSDA are part of it," Adityanath said.

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

Addressing a press conference at the party headquarters here after a meeting of the SP MLAs, Yadav added that the racket started from the "area of Pradhan Sansad" (Varanasi MP), targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He said several important issues to be raised in the upcoming session of the assembly were discussed, with the alleged codeine and cough syrup racket being a major concern. dust from his



face". He said details of illegal transactions will come to light somewhere. "Let the investigation proceed. The truth will be revealed to everyone," Adityanath said.

The UP CM said codeine phosphate used in manufacture of cough syrup containing codeine falls under the NDPS Act and the central narcotics bureau regulates

Taking a jibe at Yadav on Friday,

lates its use. In this case, the state government acted after complaints of its misuse as a narcotic substance in many places and illegal trafficking, Adityanath said.

The Uttar Pradesh government through the Food and Drug Safety Administration (FDSA), UP Police, and STF are involved in the investigation and so far, large-scale illegal trafficking operation has been uncovered numerous people have been arrested, Adityanath added.

The FDSA officials have said that codeine-based syrups fall under Schedule H and are legal if sold against prescription, but violations occur when large quantities are supplied without documentation, often facilitating their abuse as intoxicants.

Officials said FIRs have been lodged against 128 establishments across 28 districts under relevant sections of the BNS and the NDPS Act.

## Delhi airport sees 79 flight cancellations due to dense fog

**NEW DELHI:** Dense fog continued to disrupt operations at the Delhi airport, with at least 79 flights getting cancelled on Friday, according to an official.

More than 230 flights were delayed at the airport and the average delay for departures was 49 minutes on Friday morning, as per data from flight tracking website FlightRadar24.com.

The official said that a total of 79 flights, including some international services, have been cancelled.

"Flight operations continue to be in CAT III conditions due to dense

fog. Both arrivals and departures are taking place, though some flights may experience delays or disruptions," Delhi airport operator DIAL said in a post on X.

Delhi International Airport Ltd (DIAL) operates the Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA), the country's largest airport that generally handles around 1,300 flights daily.

While regretting the inconvenience, DIAL said its on-ground officials are working closely with all stakeholders to assist passengers and provide necessary support across the terminals.

## SPNI to bring 'Wheel of Fortune' to India, Akshay Kumar to host the game show

**MUMBAI:** Sony Pictures Networks India on Friday announced that it is bringing the Emmy-winning game show "Wheel of Fortune" to India with Bollywood superstar Akshay Kumar attached as its host. SPNI is also gearing up for one of the largest integrated media launches in the recent years to ensure "Wheel of Fortune" becomes an unmissable event, according to a release here.

Highgate Entertainment, LLC has licensed the format to Sony Pictures Networks India and Frames Production Company is producing the Indian edition for SPNI. "Wheel of Fortune" has been a beloved show for millions around the world, and I'm truly excited to bring its

Indian edition to audiences here. Its multi-generational appeal and the thrill of puzzle-solving have made it a global favourite and I'm confident it will be immensely enjoyed by Indian audiences. With the combined reach of Sony Entertainment Television and Sony LIV, Wheel of Fortune India will engage viewers across platforms like never before," Akshay said in a statement.

Nachiket Pantvaidya, Business Head, Sony Entertainment Television, said Sony Entertainment Television has long pioneered the reality format space in India. "With 'Wheel of Fortune', we're adding another marquee global franchise to the portfolio, bringing high-energy entertainment to Indian homes.

## India invites global partners to Bharat Steel 2026

New Delhi, December 20, 2025: Union Minister for Steel and Heavy Industries H.D. Kumaraswamy held an interactive meeting with ambassadors and representatives of key partner countries, inviting them to actively participate in Bharat Steel 2026, the flagship international conference-cum-exhibition of the Ministry of Steel, scheduled for April 2026.

The meeting witnessed strong participation from diplomatic representatives of countries playing a significant role in the global steel value chain. It formed part of the Ministry's outreach efforts to deepen international cooperation and strengthen India's engagement with major steel-producing and steel-consuming nations.

Addressing the gathering, Kumaraswamy welcomed the ambassadors and underscored the importance India places on trusted global partnerships. He said India's steel sector reflects the country's broader economic transformation and has emerged as a key pillar of growth, resilience and glob-



al integration. The Minister noted that India is currently the world's second-largest steel producer, achieved through sustained reforms, steady investments and a long-term vision focused on modernization, self-reliance and sustainability. He added that the steel sector contributes about 2.5 per cent to India's GDP and supports nearly 2.8 million livelihoods,

against this backdrop, the Minister announced that the Ministry of Steel has institutionalized Bharat Steel as an annual international event, with the first edition to be held at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi. He said the event will bring together policymakers, industry leaders, investors, technology providers and buyers from across the world, featuring a Reverse Buyer-Seller Meet to promote structured B2B engagement. Bharat Steel 2026 will focus on expanding steel consumption, sustainability, circular economy practices, raw material security, technological innovation and investments. Key themes will include green steel, digital steel plants, beneficiation of low-grade ores, advanced steels for clean energy and mobility, and the transition to a circular steel economy.

The Union Minister urged ambassadors to encourage participation from industry leaders and investors from their countries and invited partner nations to join as Partner Countries and take part in Country Roundtables.

## Deputy SP injured in knife attack in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada; woman relative among 2 held

**DANTEWADA:** A Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) was injured after being attacked with a knife by a man and a woman at the Dantewada district headquarters in Chhattisgarh on Friday, officials said. Both the attackers were later arrested, they said, adding that the woman accused, a relative of the officer, had last year lodged a complaint of rape against the DSP in Durg district of the state. The officer was, however, acquitted by a court in September this year.

DSP Tomesh Verma (39), posted as Sub-Divisional Officer of Police (SDOP) in Jagargunda area of neighbouring Sukma district, was attacked this afternoon when he came to the Dantewada district court in connection with a case related to his area, a senior police official said.

The male accused has been identified as Ramashankar Sahu, a former Army personnel and a native of the

state's Durg district. The identity of the woman, who is also a resident of Durg, has not been disclosed, he said. As per the preliminary information, the woman had been calling Verma on the pretext of meeting him to resolve previous issues. When she learnt that he was coming to Dantewada on Friday for official work, she, along with Sahu, came there, the official said. She contacted Verma and met him. She sat inside his car and allegedly pointed a knife towards her wrist, asking him to take her for a drive or else she would cut herself. She also tried to persuade him to take her to a hotel where Sahu was already present, but Verma refused, he said.

At a market place, Verma asked the woman to get down from the vehicle, but she remained seated. Suddenly, Sahu arrived at the spot and attacked Verma with a knife. He attempted

## Madras HC tells Tamil Nadu govt to notify SOP for road shows after deciding on views of parties

**CHENNAI:** The Madras High Court on Friday directed the Tamil Nadu government to notify before January 5, 2026, an SOP to regulate public meetings and road shows.

The government was directed by the HC to take a decision on the views of political parties in this regard and notify the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP).

The first bench comprising Chief Justice M. M. Shrivastava and Justice G. Arul Murugan gave the directive while disposing of petitions filed by actor Vijay-led TVK and three others.

This was besides the impleading petitions from AIADMK and Desiya Makkal Sakthi Katchi. The petitions were filed in the wake of the September 27 Karur stampede, which claimed 41 lives during the road-show of actor-politician Vijay. The petitions sought a di-

rection to the authorities to frame guidelines/SOP for the regulation of political party meetings, rallies, road shows, conferences and other similar events throughout the state of Tamil Nadu.

In its order, the bench said having gone through the affidavit filed by the state, the draft SOP and the suggestions/objections, and after pondering upon the submissions of counsel for the respective parties, "we are of the view that the State should take a decision, one way or the other, on the suggestions/objections submitted before this court in writing..."

The bench said a decision on the suggestions, objections, views and inputs shall be taken by the government, and the finalised SOP shall be notified as early as possible and in any case, not later than January 5, 2026.

## BJP's 'double-engine' govt has demonstrated what real change means: UP CM

**GORAKHPUR:** Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday accused previous governments of misusing public funds for personal gain and said the BJP's "double-engine" government redirected that money towards development across Uttar Pradesh.

Addressing a function to inaugurate a Rs 138-crore rail overbridge in Gorakhpur, Adityanath said the city eight years ago was "plagued by disease, filth, lawlessness, mafia dominance and power shortages, leaving people yearning for basic development."

He said Gorakhpur earlier faced an identity crisis, with residents often viewed with a sense of inferiority outside the state. "With the speed of a double-engine government, the BJP has demonstrated what real change means," he said, adding that public support helped give the

state a new identity and confidence.

The chief minister said under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, India has emerged as a strong nation with a distinct global presence, and that large development projects, road, rail and air connectivity are being implemented with public convenience at the core.

Adityanath highlighted welfare measures, including free ration, healthcare, LPG connections, electricity for all and other benefits for the poor, saying these were delivered without discrimination through collective efforts of the government.

He said Uttar Pradesh no longer faces an identity crisis and is shining with renewed confidence.

Referring to Gorakhpur's transformation, he cited the revival of the fertiliser plant, improved traffic conditions, four-laning of

## Delhi Police holds advisory meeting with senior citizens on cyber safety

**NEW DELHI:** A state-level advisory meeting was held at the Delhi Police Headquarters here on Friday to raise awareness among senior citizens about cyber frauds, including emerging threats such as "digital arrest", officials said. The meeting was attended by senior officers of the Special Police Unit for Women and Children, including the Joint Commissioner of Police, Additional Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners, along with officers from all police districts and the Traffic Unit.

During the interaction, senior citizens shared their experiences, grievances and suggestions, and appreciated the steps taken by the Delhi Police to address issues faced by the elderly at the district and police station levels, police said in a statement.

Participants also praised recent cyber awareness programmes organised by the Delhi Police to educate them about online frauds such as digital arrest, phishing and online impersonation, and measures to stay safe in the digital space.

"Senior citizens are among the most vulnerable targets for cyber criminals. That is why the Delhi Police is focusing on spreading digital awareness among them," a senior police officer said. He said outreach and awareness programmes are organised regularly across districts to educate elderly citizens about different forms of cyber frauds.

"Delhi Police is always ready to assist senior citizens and ensure they feel safe, both physically and in the digital space," the officer added.

## PRSI Hyderabad holds N. L. Narasimha Rao memorial lecture



Hyderabad, December 20: The Public Relations Society of India (PRSI), Hyderabad Chapter, on Friday organised the first memorial lecture in honour of late Sri N. L. Narasimha Rao, former Chairman of the Chapter, on the theme "Legacy and Leadership in Public Relations: Bridging People and Policy."

The memorial lecture was held at the Conference Hall of Suravaram Pratap Reddy Telugu University, Hyderabad. Late Sri N. L. Narasimha Rao, born on December 20, 1938, passed away on August 4, 2019. He served in various capacities in the Public Relations Department of the erstwhile united Andhra Pradesh government and held the post of PRSI Hyderabad Chapter Chairman for five tenures. He also served as National Vice President (South) of PRSI.

Shri U. S. Sharma, National Vice

PRSI, and shared his five-decade-long association with late Narasimha Rao, recalling their professional journey in HUDA and PRSI.

Several senior members of the Chapter, including Shri Y. Babji, Lion Govind Raj, Shri Pramod Rao, Shri Mohan Rao, Shri Subbarao, Shri V. Bhujanga Rao, Ms. Aparna Rajhans, Ms. D. Aruna, Shri Shyam, Smt. Indumathi, and family members, attended the programme and shared memories of his contributions to PRSI and the public relations profession. Earlier, Dr. Yadagiri Kambampati, Chairman, PRSI Hyderabad Chapter, welcomed the gathering and family members of late Sri N. L. Narasimha Rao. Shri Rajesh Kalyana, Secretary of the Chapter, proposed the vote of thanks.

## Following Jainism leads to noblest life: Basavaraj Bommai



Haveri: Former Chief Minister and Member of Parliament Basavaraj Bommai said that by following the principles and practices of Jainism, a person can become the noblest among human beings, as the religion teaches harmony with nature, sanctity of life and the supreme value of non-violence.

Speaking at the concluding ceremony of the Grand Shri Siddhachakra Mahamandala Vidhan Mahotsava and Pinchi Parivartana Programme at Rajani Auditorium in Haveri on Saturday, Bommai said Jainism not only guides how life should be lived but even teaches how one should breathe without harming the smallest living organisms. He described ahimsa (non-violence) as the

supreme dharma and said Jainism grows and survives in complete harmony with nature.

The MP said life itself is a continuous struggle from birth to death and that the divine governs even the act of breathing. Jainism, he said, highlights the sanctity of breath and teaches mindful living. If the teachings imparted by Jain Gurus are followed, one can attain the highest human values and spiritual elevation. Bommai noted that while humans often seek power through possession, Jainism teaches that true power lies in renunciation. He said those who renounce worldly attachments and practise austerity possess immense spiritual strength, and their words and thoughts naturally inspire others. Citing

the example of Bhagwan Mahavira, who renounced his kingdom and wealth, he said detachment itself is supreme power.

He further stated that humans are endowed with the power to think and express, and if this energy is directed positively, it will benefit all of humanity. The essence of Siddhachakra, he said, lies in channelising spiritual energy for human welfare. On the occasion, Charayashiramani Munishri 108 Vidyasagar Maharaj and Swastishri Bhattakalakanika Bhattarakar Swamiji of Swadi Digambar Jain Math, Sonda, graced the event. Former MLAs Veerupakshappa Ballari and Sanjay Patil, along with several leaders and dignitaries, were also present.

## Udupi: Woman ends life by jumping into well

Udupi, Dec 19: A woman allegedly died by suicide after jumping into a well located behind the MGM College grounds at Sagri. The deceased has been identified as Seetha Nayak (67), a resident of a private residential complex. Her body was found in a well situated in a nearby vacant plot. PSI Bharatesh of the Udupi city police station conducted the investigation process. Fire and emergency services officer Ravindra, along with staff member Raghavendra Acharya and their team, retrieved the body from the well. Social worker Nithyananda Volkadu extended assistance in shifting the body to the post-mortem examination centre at Ajarkad district hospital. Suicide is not a solution to any problem. Kindly seek the help of mental health experts if you are under any kind of distress. Toll free helpline number 9152987821.



**High Command has informed it would call CM and me at an appropriate time: Shivakumar**



Bengaluru: Stating that the Congress High Command had given some message to CM and him on power sharing, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar today said that the CM and him would go to Delhi when called.

Speaking to reports at his Sadashivanagar residence, he said, "I won't travel to Delhi secretly. I will travel with the CM when the High command calls us. We will inform you (media) if we are travelling." He was replying to a question on if he and CM would travel to Delhi and meet the High command.

"The ED charge sheet in National Herald case has been

quashed and only one FIR is pending. We are protesting to tell the world how we are being harassed," he added. Asked about responding to Delhi police notice, he said, "I am travelling to Delhi on Tuesday and I will meet them then. The Union Jal Shakti minister has called for a meeting on river linking project on that day. I will also discuss key irrigation projects of the state such as Mahadayi, Upper Krishna, Mekedatu, Upper Bhadra. I have sought time from the Union Environment minister and Union Urban Development minister as well. I am meeting all of them to protect state's interest.

## Karnataka to Lead India in Inclusive Skilling and Jobs for Persons with Disabilities



Bengaluru: Reaffirming Karnataka's commitment to building a skilled and inclusive society, Dr Sharangprakash R Patil, Minister for Skill Development and Medical Education said that inclusive growth is both a moral imperative and an economic necessity.

Addressing the Job Habba, a dedicated employment platform for persons with disabilities at BMS Women's

College jointly organised by KSDA, KSDC and AssisTech Foundation on Saturday, the event brought together job seekers with disabilities, employers, training partners and civil society to celebrate talent, inclusion and opportunity.

Dr Patil noted that Karnataka was home to more than 20 lakh persons with disabilities and the state was working on a new framework to expand opportunities

in both education and employment.

There is an urgent need to change workplace practices and attitudes as low representation of persons with disabilities is seen in the corporate workforce nationally," he said. The minister highlighted the draft Karnataka Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Employment and Education Bill, 2025, which proposes a 5% job quota in the private sector and 10% reservation in educational institutions for persons with disabilities. He said this would be among the most forward-looking measures in the country and closely aligns with the Karnataka Skill Development Policy 2025-32, which focuses on inclusive skilling, industry partnerships, accessible infrastructure and technology-enabled training.

## Project Walkaluru – 7th Footpath Walk Conducted in RT Nagar



Bengaluru: Under the leadership of the Commissioner of Bengaluru North City Corporation, Pommala Sunil Kumar, and with the cooperation of Corporation officials, The Ugly Indian and citizen groups jointly and successfully conducted the 7th Footpath Walk under Project Walkaluru today in RT Nagar.

**OBJECTIVE AND OBSERVATIONS:**

The primary objective of the walk was to ensure that citizens can walk confidently and continuously on footpaths without fear, obstacles or inconvenience.

Participants were encouraged to stop wherever obstacles were found, document them through photographs or videos, and submit complaints to the Corporation, assuring that issues would be addressed promptly.

It was anticipated that

pedestrians

might

encounter

approximately

2-3

obstacles

per kilo-

metre,

amounting to

14-21

obstacles

along

the

7 km

route.

Only 4

major

obstacles

were

identified

across

the

entire

7 km

stretch.

Notably,

no

black

spots,

broken

or

missing

foot-

path

slabs,

or

footpath

encroachments

were

found.

Officials and staff par-

ticipating in the walk

## Commissioner K. N. Ramesh Listens to Grievances of HSR Layout Residents



Bengaluru: The Commissioner of Bengaluru South City Corporation, K. N. Ramesh, made a surprise visit last night to a park located on 16th 'A' Main Road in HSR Layout and inspected the functioning of streetlights and park lighting.

During the inspection, representatives of local residents' associations and morning/evening walkers who noticed the Commissioner's presence shared their grievances with him. Residents brought to the Commissioner's attention key issues in HSR Layout such as rampant unauthorized vehicle parking, encroachment of footpaths, problems related to streetlights, and other civic concerns.

Responding to the grievances, the Commissioner stated that a process has been initiated to visit every ward and listen to public grievances, and that efforts would be made to resolve issues by issuing directions to the concerned officials on the spot, as far as possible. On the occa-

sion, Joint Commissioner Shri Satish Babu, Chief Engineer Shri K. V. Ravi, and other officials were present.

Footpath Encroachment Removal Drive on Jyoti Nivas College Road, Koramangala. Based on requests made during previous meetings by representatives of residents'

### Details of the Operation:

Along approximately 1.1 km of footpath, a total of 7 petty shops and 5 pushcarts that were obstructing pedestrian movement were completely removed.

In this stretch, pedestrians were forced to walk on the carriageway, causing inconvenience to both pedestrians and vehicular traffic. This action was taken in the interest of public safety and smooth movement, based on public complaints. Team Details: operation was carried out under the leadership of Executive Engineers of the BTM Layout Division along with other engineers.

To support the operation, 8 tractors and required machinery were deployed. A total of 40 workers participated in the removal work. From a safety perspective, 5 police personnel and 2 marshals were deployed. Officials stated that encroachment of footpaths is illegal and that such enforcement drives will continue in the coming days as well.

### ROUTE DETAILS:

The route comprised a continuous 7 km pedestrian corridor, starting from the JC Nagar Main Gate on Jayamahal Main Road, proceeding towards Mekhri Circle, entering RT Nagar via the CBI Junction, and covering a loop on both sides of RT Nagar Main Road. The route passed through several parks and major industrial, cultural and government institutions.

### FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS

Most participants rated the entire 7 km walking route as clean, green and pleasant. Both first-time walkers and regular local pedestrians expressed satisfaction, noting that the footpath corridor was enjoyable and conducive for walking. Project Walkaluru Completes 50 Kilometres With the support of the Greater Bengaluru Authority and city corporations, The Ugly Indian team has so far completed 50 km of pedestrian walks and is working towards achieving 100 km, with the vision of making Bengaluru a truly walkable city. In total, 29 km of pedestrian walks have been conducted within the limits of Bengaluru North City Corporation alone. Commissioner Pommala Sunil Kumar expressed that when citizens evaluate their footpaths and work collaboratively with officials for improvements, it leads to safer infrastructure and more effective, long-lasting outcomes.

## Virohan raises Rs.65 crore in series B round

# VIROHAN

Bengaluru: Virohan, a leading healthcare education platform in India, has raised 65 crore (\$7.5 million) as part of its ongoing Series B funding round, led by Japan-based Mynavi Corporation, with participation from existing investors Blume Ventures, Bharat Inclusive Technologies Seed Fund and Rebright Partners.

Announcing the fund-

raise,

Virohan CEO

Kuna

l said the

company

aims

to

bridge

the

widening

gap

between

healthcare

education

and

employment

in

India

and

abroad.

Hidekazu Ito, Managing Director at Mynavi India, said the growing global demand for skilled healthcare professionals makes Virohan's industry-aligned, technology-driven education model highly relevant. He

added that Mynavi

believes

Virohan's

sustained

growth

will

create

meaningful

social

impact

by

addressing

key

challenges

in

healthcare

human

resources

and

education.

The funding will

support

Virohan's

journey

towards

profitability

through

product

innovation

, operational

efficiencies

and

strategic

## Editorial

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2025

## Opening India's nuclear sector

With Parliament passing the nuclear energy bill, India has opened up the civil nuclear energy sector to the private sector. It took over three decades, since the sweeping 1991 economic reforms, for the country to allow private participation in strategic sectors and end the state monopoly over defence production, aerospace, and now nuclear energy. The passage of the Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India Bill, 2025 (SHANTI), can therefore be described as a bold move by the BJP-led NDA government.

The BJP can be credited with providing a substantial impetus to strengthening the country's energy security, although a strong foundation in terms of policy and regulatory frameworks was laid by the previous UPA government. Even though, due to political compulsions, the BJP may keep haranguing with wildly exaggerated claims that nothing was done by the Congress Party, the truth is that several important initiatives were Congress projects which were once opposed and even obstructed by the BJP as an opposition party and, after 2014, were repackaged and implemented with renewed vigour. A case in point is the vehement opposition mounted by the BJP against the Indo-US Civil Nuclear Deal with regard to supplier liability. Once in power, it was forced to eat its words and follow the UPA model. Now the government is tying itself in knots to rationalise its stance on supplier liability provisions that it once recklessly opposed. While acknowledging the removal of supplier liability, the government maintained that it was done after "detailed consideration of global practices and advances in reactor safety, while negligence and penal provisions remain enforceable under the law".

The present SHANTI Bill aims to reap the benefits accrued from the Manmohan Singh-led UPA government's strong diplomatic thrust to end the so-called nuclear apartheid faced after the 1998 nuclear tests that rattled the major nuclear powers. The UPA government's stupendous achievement in nuclear diplomacy was securing a waiver from the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) without signing the global Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). It requires magnanimity and a spirit of bipartisanship when it comes to strategic and national interests to acknowledge the impressive work done by past governments. The improved and modernised framework paves the way for private sector participation, which is enabled by the UPA government's NSG waiver that allowed the import of nuclear fuel and technology. Unless insisted upon by the government, there is a possibility of the private sector depending on foreign companies such as General Electric, Westinghouse Electric Co. and France's EDF, rather than using indigenous reactor and fuel-cycle technologies developed by the public sector Bhabha Atomic Research Centre. Moreover, the government should broaden private sector participation to multiple players rather than promoting just a couple of conglomerates such as Adani Power, Reliance Industries and Tata Power. The government should learn from the Indigo fiasco and be cautious about the dangers of duopoly in strategic sectors.

While the promotion of small modular reactors is important, and retaining government control over sensitive materials and management of spent fuel is reassuring, there are valid concerns regarding safety aspects and the liability of private players. This clean energy initiative is a welcome move and, amid global uncertainties around crude oil, it will help reduce dependence on fossil fuels as well.



PRIYANKA SAURABH

The debate on environmental protection is often steered in a convenient direction—governments don't formulate policies, ministries are inactive, and laws remain confined to paper. This criticism isn't entirely misplaced. Looking at the record of environmental ministries at the central and state levels, nature often becomes the first casualty of development projects. Deforestation, river pollution, toxic air, and groundwater scarcity—all of these are attributed to policy failure. But this is an incomplete truth. The full truth is that the environmental crisis is deeply rooted in our own lifestyles. We have treated the environment as a government subject, as if it were a departmental file separate from civic life. This mindset is the biggest crisis. Air, water, soil, and forests are not the property of any ministry, but a collective responsibility. When citizens distance themselves from this responsibility, no policy remains effective.

Today, the bulk of pollution isn't generated by factories, but by everyday household behavior—excessive private vehicles, countless plastics, uncontrolled waste, and wasteful water and electricity consumption. We consider conveniences a right and their consequences a problem of governance. This very thinking is slowly pushing the environment toward destruction.

In a developing country like India, environmental protection is often dismissed as anti-development. This is an artificial and misleading argument. The truth is that the destruction of nature is itself antithetical to development. Floods, droughts, extreme heat waves, water scarcity, and diseases—these are all the products of "development" that ignores the balance of nature.

But even in this debate, the role of the citizen is relegated to a secondary role. We don't ask how much our individual habits contribute to our development model. Is it necessary to take out a car for every short distance? Is unnecessary ostentation necessary at every wedding, ceremony, and festival? Is life impossible without single-use plastic? We avoid these questions because the answers make us uncomfortable.

Environmental protection isn't possible through laws and regulations alone. It's a question of civic character and social values. Countries that demonstrate environmental discipline are not just driven by strict laws, but also by disciplined citizens' habits. The problem in India is that

we are extremely conscious of our rights, yet almost indifferent to our duties. We don't hesitate to litter outside our homes, yet we expect the government to ensure cleanliness. We pollute rivers in the name of worship, then protest for their cleanup. This contradiction exposes our social mindset. When it comes to tree planting, enthusiasm is limited to government campaigns and photo opportunities. Trees are planted on Tree

behind at least nine maunds of trees." This saying is even more relevant today. Do we strive to give back something equal to the resources we consume in our lives?

Today, planting trees is no longer a noble deed, but rather a minimal moral obligation. Yet, we avoid it. Space, time, water, and care—we have excuses for everything. The truth is, we've prioritized convenience and considered responsibility

over environmental protection. Strict enforcement of environmental laws, honest environmental assessments of projects, stringent penalties for polluters, and empowerment of local bodies are all essential. But history shows that when society is inactive, even the best laws become ineffective. The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan is an example of this. Where citizens participated, results were seen. Where it was considered merely a government



When it comes to planting trees, enthusiasm is limited to government campaigns and photo opportunities. Saplings are planted on Tree Planting Day and forgotten the next day. No one takes responsibility for their conservation. This is why millions of trees are planted in statistics, but on the ground, forests continue to dwindle. There is an old saying: If a person takes nine maunds of wood with him throughout his life, he should leave behind at least nine maunds of trees. This saying is even more relevant today. Do we strive to give back something equal to the resources we consume in our lives?

Planting Day and forgotten the next day. No one takes responsibility for their conservation. This is why millions of trees are planted in statistics, but on the ground, forests continue to dwindle. There's an old saying: "If a man carries nine maunds of wood throughout his life, he should leave

a burden. Not planting trees is not just environmental negligence, but an injustice to the lives of future generations. It's a crime our children will pay for—in the form of dirty air, toxic water, and an insecure future. It's also not correct to say that gov-

ernment, the situation remained the same. Environmental protection will also work on this principle. The solution to the environmental crisis lies not in one big decision, but in millions of small citizen decisions. Household waste segregation, rainwater harvesting, using public transportation, energy-efficient appliances, local tree planting—these steps are all simple yet impactful.

Environmental education in schools and universities must not be limited to curriculum, but must be translated into practice. Children must be connected to nature, so that they develop not only information but also sensitivity. The role of the media and social organizations is also crucial. The environment must be presented not only as a disaster or a day-to-day issue, but as an everyday concern.

Ultimately, the most honest answer to the environmental crisis is to ask ourselves—what are we giving to nature? Until this question arises in the minds of every citizen, policies will continue to come and go, and nature will continue to be quietly destroyed. Nature is not the responsibility of any ministry; it is a test of our collective character. And so far, we have failed this test. There is still time—if we truly want development, it must be built in harmony with nature, or future generations will never forgive us.

## The forgetting of water: modernity, arrogance, &amp; a drying earth



Dr. Satyavani Saurabh

Of India's contemporary crises, water is the most discussed, yet also the least understood. Drought, floods, depleting groundwater, polluted rivers—we see them all as separate events, whereas they are different chapters of a single story. This story is not one of natural disaster, but of human forgetfulness. We have considered water merely a resource and abandoned the memory, culture, and empathy associated with it.

The idea of impounding water above ground by building dams is one of the greatest fallacies of modern development. This sys-



tem is built against the very nature of nature. Water's nature is not to stagnate, but to flow—to absorb the earth's womb, and from there to nourish life. Ponds, tanks, wells, and stepwells were expressions of this nature. They didn't impound water, they conserved it. That's why they were time-tested and self-evident systems that supported human civilization for millions of years.

Today, we consider dams a symbol of development, while ponds a sign of backwardness. This is a loss of vision. At one time, more than 17,000 ponds were mentioned in Punjab. They were not just water sources, but centers of community life—living spaces connecting animals, fields, birds, and humans. Today, the situation is such that, let alone ponds, even proper records of Shambat lands are not available in Punjab. When memory is erased, crisis becomes inevitable. Our ancestors knew that floods were not destruction, but opportunity. They knew that if floodwaters spread and flowed into ponds, tanks, and plains, they would revitalise the earth. Therefore, there were traditions of dredging ponds—some called it voluntary

labor, others a social duty. Ponds were deep, their beds wide, and they absorbed maximum rainfall. This was a system that relied on understanding, not technology. The irony is that the same hands that filled ponds, filled tanks, and clogged wells with garbage are now looking to the sky for water. When those who killed the ponds themselves begin to die, the blame is placed on nature, climate change, or our ancestors. The courage to self-criticize is becoming rare.

This crisis isn't just about water, it's also about education. I often wonder what it means to be properly educated. Is it just

degrees, statistics, and technical jargon? No. To be properly educated means to be a Samavedi—to be one with the entire ecosystem provided by God. When humans begin to consider themselves separate from nature, their knowledge becomes cleverness, and cleverness ultimately leads to destruction. Everything else is just a refined form of nonsense.

The state of water management in the country can be gauged from the fact that, to date, no comprehensive, reliable, and comprehensive survey has been conducted to determine India's actual water reserves. We formulate plans, approve budgets, and make

announcements—without knowing the basis. This is not policy, but conjecture; and development based on conjecture is bound to collapse sooner or later.

The picture of groundwater exploitation is even more horrifying. Nearly 1750,000 submersibles in Punjab and nearly 900,000 in Haryana are pumping water from the earth's womb. It's as if the earth is lying on a bed of arrows for submersibles. Without the boon of voluntary death, we are killing it a little bit every day. This is a silent tragedy, wrought at the expense of greenery, and one that will only worsen in the future. At the

expense of the environment is like sitting on the very branch we are cutting. This situation is reminiscent of Kalidasa's fable—where foolishness is cloaked in wisdom. Wide roads, tall buildings, and shiny projects give us the illusion of progress, while the ground is drying up underneath. This is not development, but staged destruction.

Cities are the most glaring example of this failure. Modern academic institutions and policy-makers still lack a comprehensive vision, a national framework for drainage, water conservation, waste reduction, and waste utilization in Indian cities. Cities flood during the rainy season, and in the summer, they groan with thirst. This contradiction is evidence of a failure not of the system, but of the vision.

The state of rivers is the most poignant chapter of this story. The list of polluted rivers has become so long that reading it feels like looking at a list of the dead. Rivers that gave birth to civilizations are now victims of our negligence. We call them mothers, yet behave as if they are eternally tolerant. This cultural hypocrisy has reached its limits.

Just a few decades ago, India's cities, villages, pastures, fields, forests, ponds, wells, and stepwells teemed with life. This is not an idealized past, but a fact of social memory. At that time, resources were limited, but understanding was broad. There was community, participation, and a sense of symbiosis with nature. Government development programs shattered this social character. Planning grew, but society shrank.

Today, the need is to not leave water management solely to engineers and planners. This question is more ethical and cultural than technical. The revival of ponds, the restoration of johads, rainwater harvesting, and the protection of community lands—these are not discoveries of the future, but memories of the past. We need to remember, not go back. Water is not a commodity, but a relationship—between humans and nature. When this connection is broken, disasters arise. There is still time, but the warning is clear. If we don't mend our relationship with water, history will remember us as the generation that killed our own planet with thirst.

# RBI has allowed compounding of FEMA case against Genpact India: ED

NEW DELHI: The Enforcement Directorate on Saturday said the RBI had issued a compounding order for Genpact India, against a one-time payment, resulting in termination of a FEMA against the technology major.

The agency had filed a complaint against the company in October 2018 for alleged contravention of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) to the tune of about Rs 26 crore.

It issued a show cause notice to the firm and its directors in the same month and initiated adjudication proceedings.

Genpact subsequently filed an application before the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for compounding of the said FEMA "contraventions".



The agency had filed a complaint against the company in October 2018 for alleged contravention of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) to the tune of about Rs 26 cr

On reference from the RBI, the ED issued "no objection" for such compounding in line with the true spirit of the Act (FEMA), and the banking regulator compounded the offence through an order issued on October 17 with a one-time payment of Rs 4.72 lakh to be made by the company, the ED said in a statement.

A compounding order in the regulatory context means a formal decision taken by an authority to settle an offence by allowing the defaulter to pay a monetary penalty instead of facing prosecution.

"This has resulted into termination of adjudication proceed-

ings under the provisions of FEMA against the company and its office bearers as well as further litigation," it said.

The agency said that a similar compounding had been ordered by the RBI in the case of some other companies.

ED Director Rahul Navin, while speaking at an ED Day event in May, had said that to promote the Union government's policy of 'ease of doing business' and to reduce litigation, the agency will encourage defaulters of the civil law to file applications for "compounding" of the offence, in cases it deems appropriate.

Officials earlier told PTI that cases of "petty or technical" FEMA violations would be allowed for compounding to end "frivolous" litigations.

Policy reforms, digital push make India a trusted global partner: Piyush Goyal

NEW DELHI: Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Saturday said that with policy reforms, new Labour Codes, digital innovations and robust exports, India has become a reliable global partner.

Addressing the 'World Hindu Economic Forum 2025,' on the topic 'Establishing Brand Bharat: Competitiveness in Global Trade,' Goyal said the reformatory approach of the government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi has formed the foundation of the journey towards a 'developed India' (Viksit Bharat).



# Soch opens 11th store in Hyderabad

Hyderabad: Soch, India's leading evening and occasion wear brand, continues to reinforce its strong presence in South India with the launch of its 11th exclusive store in Hyderabad. A key market for the brand, Hyderabad's deep-rooted cultural heritage and evolving fashion sensibilities make it central to Soch's growth journey.



Customers the perfect opportunity to explore their favourite styles at exceptional prices. This milestone further strengthens Soch's retail presence in the city and reaffirms its position as a preferred destination for women seeking timeless, stylish ethnic fashion.

Celebrating 20 successful years in the Indian ethnic wear market, Soch

# Priyanka Chopra opens Kapil Show season 4

Mumbai, December 20, 2025: Netflix's The Great Indian Kapil Show returned with a grand launch of Season 4, opening with global star Priyanka Chopra Jonas, who brought her signature desi charm, humour and warmth to Kapil Sharma's ever-expanding comedy universe.

Kapil Sharma makes a flamboyant comeback in a new avatar as Raja, setting the tone for a bigger and louder season. Joining him are Krushna Abhishek as Laramata, Kiku Sharda as Motapa and Sunil Grover as Diamond Raja, promising

high-energy comedy, spectacle and spontaneous laughter.

The opening episode featured playful banter between Kapil and Priyanka, with jokes touching on romance, fame and marriage. Responding with confidence and wit, Priyanka spoke candidly about her relationship with Nick Jonas, sharing that while Nick is used to her being flirted with, she always "goes home to him."

Priyanka also spoke about her life as a mother to Malti, her connection to Indian traditions and Nick Jonas's roman-



tic gestures. She revealed that Nick once took her on a flight above the clouds so she could see the moon and break her Karva Chauth fast, drawing laughter and applause from the audience.

Balancing global stardom with her roots, Priyanka's appearance set the perfect tone for the new season. Her laughter-filled episode marked a strong start, signalling a season packed with bigger punchlines, larger moments and unabashed entertainment on Netflix.

The opening of Soch's 11th store in Hyderabad coincides with the brand's much-awaited Red Dot Sale, giving cus-

today operates over 175 exclusive stores across 65+ cities. The brand also offers a seamless omnichannel shopping experience through its website soch.com and leading marketplaces including Amazon, Myntra, Ajio, Nykaa, Tata Cliq and Flipkart.

To stay updated on new launches and offers, follow SochStories on Instagram. Soch is also present on Facebook, YouTube and Pinterest. For more information, visit soch.com.

Address of the store: Lakeshore Mall, Third Floor, Kukatpally, Hyderabad, Telangana - 500 072

# HCLTech to acquire HPE's telco solutions business

Noida, December 20, 2025: HCLTech, a leading global technology company, has signed an agreement to acquire the Telco Solutions business from Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE), strengthening its engineering, AI-led and cloud-native network offerings for global communication service providers (CSPs).

Building on its earlier acquisition of select assets from HPE's Communications Technology Group (CTG) in 2024, HCLTech will gain advanced intellectual property, strong product engineering and R&D capabilities, and long-standing client relation-

ships with leading global CSPs. The Telco Solutions business supports over one billion devices across more than 200 deployments worldwide, enabling key telecom functions such as Operations Support Systems (OSS), Home Subscriber Server (HSS) and 5G Subscriber Data Management (SDM), along with AI-driven closed-loop network automation.

The previously acquired CTG portfolio, covering business support systems, network applications, service cloudification and data intelligence, has been successfully integrated into HCLTech and is witness-

nessing growth. With this expanded portfolio, HCLTech aims to accelerate network transformation initiatives, including Network as a Service (Naas) and AI-led autonomous networking.

As part of the agreement, nearly 1,500 engineering and telecom specialists from 39 countries will join HCLTech's global delivery team, further enhancing its scale and domain expertise.

Commenting on the acquisition, Anil Ganjoo, Chief Growth Officer and Global Head of Telecom, Media, Publishing and Technology at HCLTech, said the company is well

positioned to help CSPs transform into technology-driven organizations, shifting from "telcos to techcos" through IP-led and high-value services. Rami Rahim, Executive Vice President and President and General Manager, Networking at HPE, said the transaction would help accelerate innovation and deliver long-term benefits to CSPs as both companies continue to focus on the telecom sector through differentiated strategies.

The transaction is subject to regulatory approvals and customary closing conditions and is expected to be completed within approximately six months.

New Delhi: Samsung Solve for Tomorrow (SFT) 2025, the flagship education programme of Samsung conducted in partnership with IIT Delhi, is driving social change in Indian sport by leveraging technology to improve access, inclusion and talent discovery across the country.

Under the theme "Social Change Through Sport & Technology," thousands of students from across India participated, reimagining sport as a pathway for opportunity beyond geographical and social limitations. The initiative focused on innovations that expand access to training, virtual coaching, e-sports and skill development, especially for youth from underserved

regions. One of the standout innovations was NextPlayAI, developed by tennis players and IIT Pune computer science students Aadish Shelke and Bhagyashri Meena. The AI-powered platform uses video analytics and machine learning to identify sporting potential, provide personalized feedback and enable affordable access to elite-level guidance.

Several other finalist teams showcased solutions aimed at inclusion, including Shatranj Swaya Crew from Assam, which developed an AI-powered, FIDE-compliant system enabling visually impaired players to play chess independently, and SPORTS4AUTISM from Tamil Nadu, a hybrid app that gamifies therapy for autistic children through sports. Innovations from Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu also focused on AI-based personalized coaching and patented devices for cognitive development.

# Samsung SFT 2025 promotes access and inclusion in sport

**SAMSUNG**

# Maruti Suzuki Chairman R.C. Bhargava receives ICSI lifetime achievement award



New Delhi: Maruti Suzuki India Limited Chairman Mr. R.C. Bhargava was conferred the ICSI Lifetime Achievement Award for Excellence in Corporate Governance into Reality at the ICSI National Awards for Excellence in Corporate Governance.

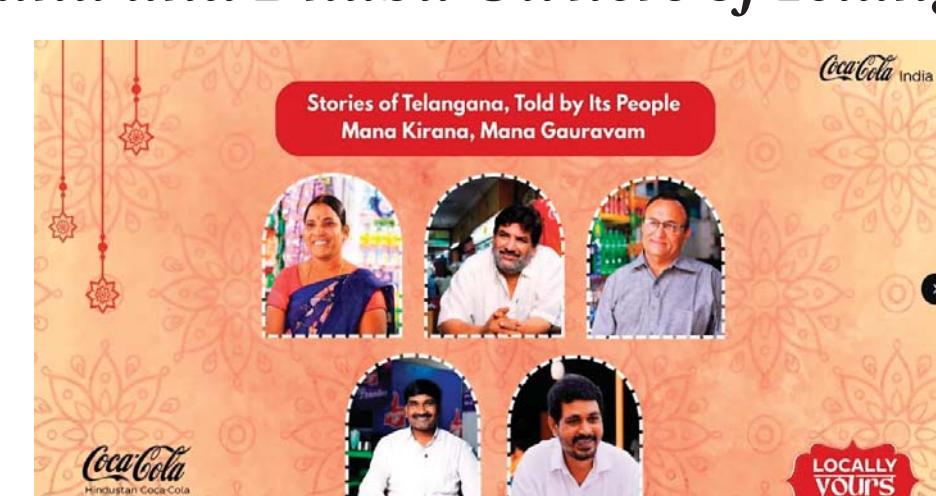
The award was presented by Dr. Raj Bhushan Choudhary, Hon'ble

Minister of State for Jal Shakti, Government of India, and Padma Shri Ms. P. T. Usha, Hon'ble Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha and President, Indian Olympic Association, presenting ICSI Lifetime Achievement Award for Translating Excellence in Corporate Governance into Reality to Mr. R.C. Bhargava, Chairman, Maruti Suzuki India Limited, at ICSI National Awards for Excellence in Corporate Governance.

was adjudged by a jury chaired by Hon'ble Dr Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, former Chief Justice of India. The Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI), a statutory professional body established under the Company Secretaries Act, 1980, functions under the Ministry of Corporate Affairs and plays a key role in promoting good corporate governance and ethical business practices in India.

Accepting the honour, Mr. Bhargava said the recognition belonged to the entire Maruti Suzuki family. He credited the company's management and employees for maintaining high standards of ethics and integrity over more than four decades and dedicated the award to all past and present members of the organization.

# Coca-Cola India's 'Locally Yours' Spotlights Resilient Kirana and Dhaba Owners of Telangana



ies are the need of the hour, as small businesses are the real backbone of the economy and play a critical role in driving the nation's growth."

Satyana Rayana, a dhaba owner along the highway, shared how this support has shaped his business. Our dhaba has been on the highway for many years and it supports several families who work with us. Good service and good food bring travellers back and Coca-Cola's support with coolers, regular supplies and guidance on improving our setup has helped us meet customer expectations better. Footfall has increased and the business has become more stable, which benefits everyone who depends on this place for their livelihood."

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## Trump suspends green card lottery programme that let Brown University, MIT shootings suspect into US

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump suspended the green card lottery programme on Thursday that allowed the suspect in the Brown University and MIT shootings to come to the United States. Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said in a post on the social platform X that, at Trump's direction, she is ordering the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services to pause the programme.

"This heinous individual should never have been allowed in our country," she said of the suspect, Portuguese national Claudio Neves Valente. Neves Valente, 48, is suspected in the shootings at Brown University that killed two students and



wounded nine others, and the killing of an MIT professor. He was found dead Thursday evening from a self-inflicted gunshot wound, officials said.

Neves Valente had studied at Brown on a student visa beginning in 2000, according to an affidavit from a Providence police detective. In 2017, he was issued a diversity immigrant visa and months

later obtained legal permanent residence status, according to the affidavit.

It was not immediately clear where he was between taking a leave of absence from the school in 2001 and getting the visa in 2017. The diversity visa programme makes up to 50,000 green cards available each year by lottery to people from countries that are little represented in the US, many of them in Africa. The lottery was created by Congress, and the move is almost certain to invite legal challenges.

Nearly 20 million people applied for the 2025 visa lottery, with more than 131,000 selected when including spouses with the winners. After winning, they must undergo vetting

to win admission to the United States. Portuguese citizens won only 38 slots.

Lottery winners are invited to apply for a green card. They are interviewed at consulates and subject to the same requirements and vetting as other green-card applicants.

Trump has long opposed the diversity visa lottery. Noem's announcement is the latest example of using tragedy to advance immigration policy goals. After an Afghan man was identified as the gunman in a fatal attack on National Guard members in November, Trump's administration imposed sweeping rules against immigration from Afghanistan and other countries.

### KREMLIN WARNS SEIZURE OF RUSSIAN ASSETS 'WILL NOT BE LEFT UNANSWERED'

MOSCOW: The Kremlin has warned that seizure of Russian assets will not be left unpunished for its masterminds and Russia will use all available legal means to punish them, local media reported on Friday. "We have repeatedly said that all actions related to expropriations of Russian assets will not be left unanswered. Those who made decisions collectively, those who made decisions individually and those who put them into practice will all bear responsibility," Russian Presidential Press Secretary Dmitry Peskov said, state-run news agency Tass reported. "To that end, all possible legal mechanisms will be used," he added.

## Hindu man lynched to death in Bangladesh over alleged blasphemy



DHAKA: A Hindu man was lynched to death and his body set on fire over alleged blasphemy in Bangladesh, in the latest incident of violence against the religious minority in the country.

The deceased, identified as 25-year-old Dipu Chandra Das, was a factory worker in Mymensingh city, the Bangla Tribune news portal reported on Friday. In a statement, the interim government on Friday condemned the lynching of the Hindu man in Mymensingh city, saying there is no space for such violence in the new Bangladesh. "The perpetrators of this heinous crime will not be spared," it added. Das was first beaten up by a mob outside the factory over blasphemy allegations on Thursday night and hanged from a tree, police said. "After the incident, the angry crowd left the body of the deceased on the side of the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway and set it on fire. This stopped traffic on both

sides of the highway," Inspector (Investigation) of Bhaluka Model Police Station Abdul Malek was quoted as saying by the news portal.

The police recovered the body and sent it to the Mymensingh Medical College morgue for autopsy. Malek added that the incident created tension in the area, and the police are trying to control the situation. The video of the incident went viral on social media. "We strongly and unequivocally condemn all acts of violence, intimidation, arson, and destruction of properties," the interim government said.

## South Korea's Unification minister vows to take lead in policy on North Korea



SEOUL: South Korea's Unification Minister Chung Dong-young said Friday the ministry aims to take a leading role in establishing policies toward North Korea. In a policy briefing to South Korean President Lee Jae Myung, Chung said the ministry, which is in charge of relations with Pyongyang, would "strengthen its leading role as a party directly involved in the Korean Peninsula issue," Yonhap News Agency reported.

Chung also said international sanctions imposed on North Korea over its illegal nuclear and missile programs have effectively lost their bite, adding the ministry will seek sanctions relief in a bid to reengage the country.

"In order to buttress inter-Korean and multilateral exchanges and cooperation, (the ministry) plans to discuss and seek the relaxation of sanctions," Chung told the briefing. "There are some arguments calling for the strengthening of sanctions on North

Korea, but, realistically, sanctions against Pyongyang have lost their effectiveness," the minister said.

North Korea's trade with China, which accounts for most of Pyongyang's external commerce, now goes partly unscreened, while the regime regards sanctions as "the most hostile" action against it, he said, as the rationale for seeking sanctions relief. Seeking dialogue with North Korea while keeping sanctions against them in place would not be acceptable to Pyongyang, he noted.

Whether lifting sanctions against North Korea would be possible, however, remains unclear as Washington reportedly remains skeptical. Acting US Ambassador to South Korea Kevin Kim reportedly told Chung during their meeting last month of the need to maintain sanctions on North Korea as a source of bargaining leverage in potential negotiations with North Korea.

## Lahore-bound PIA flight makes emergency landing in Saudi Arabia



ISLAMABAD: A Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) flight en route from Jeddah to Lahore made an emergency landing in Saudi Arabia after a technical alert was received mid-air, triggering the deployment of oxygen masks and causing panic among passengers, including dozens of Umrah pilgrims, local media reported on Saturday.

"According to the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) spokesperson, flight PK-860 was scheduled to land at

## US awards no-bid contract to Denmark scientists studying hepatitis B vaccine in African babies

NEW YORK: The Trump administration has awarded a USD 1.6 million, no-bid contract to a Danish university to study hepatitis B vaccinations on newborns in Africa that is raising ethical concerns. The unusual contract was awarded to scientists who have been cited by anti-vaccine activists and whose work has been questioned by leading public health experts. Some experts have suggested the research plan is unethical, because it will withhold vaccines that work from newborns at significant risk of infection.

The contract did not undergo a customary ethics review, The Associated Press has learned.

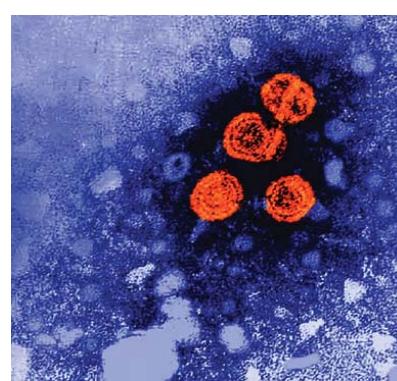
The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention awarded the grant to a research team at the University of Southern Denmark that has been lauded by US Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., according to a federal notice posted this week.

One of the team's leaders is Christine Stabell Benn, a consultant for a Kennedy-appointed committee that recently voted to stop recommending a dose of hepatitis B vaccine for all US newborns.

The study is to begin early next year in Guinea-Bissau, an impoverished West African nation where hepatitis B infection is common. The researchers are funded for five years to study 14,000 newborns.

It's to be a randomised controlled trial, with some infants given the hepatitis B vaccine at birth and some not. Children will be tracked for death, illness and long-term developmental outcomes.

Most of the children will be followed for less than two years to look for side effects, but the first 500 enrolled will be followed for five years to look for behaviour and brain development problems. There is no placebo involved, according to a copy of the study protocol prepared earlier this year that was obtained by the AP.



Hepatitis B can be passed from an infected mother to a baby. It also can be spread by other infected people a baby comes in contact with. Research and widespread medical consensus holds that the hepatitis B vaccine protects newborns, so withholding it from some babies — in this case, Black babies — has raised ethical alarms.

Medical evidence is clear that the vaccine protects infants from developing liver disease and an early death. The well-documented infection risk far outweighs hypothetical concerns about side effects, said Dr. Boghuma K. Titanji, an Emory University infectious diseases doctor.

Benn did not respond to an email seeking comment about the proposal. An automatic response said she is out of the office until early January. But, in a statement, the research team said the study "will be the first and likely the only one of its kind." They said it takes advantage of an unusual window of opportunity: Guinea-Bissau doesn't currently recommended a birth dose of the hep B vaccine, but the nation will be implementing uni-

versal vaccination of newborns in 2027. Vaccine skeptics and opponents have suggested that all the vaccine's possible side effects were inadequately studied before the CDC began recommending it for newborns in 1991. Public health experts counter that over more than three decades no serious side effect has been documented. The award is highly unusual. The CDC did not announce a research funding opportunity and invite proposals. The proposal was unsolicited and the award did not go through customary review, said a CDC official with knowledge of the decision. Department of Health and Human Services officials told CDC officials to approve it and said HHS would provide special funding for it, the CDC official said.

In private communications channels, CDC staffers were expressing outrage about the award, said the official, who is not authorised to talk about it and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Some of those CDC scientists have compared the work to the infamous Tuskegee Study, which the agency oversaw in its later stages. In that decades-long study, health workers withheld treatment from unsuspecting Black men infected with syphilis so doctors could track the terrible ravages of the disease. Like Tuskegee, this study involves the prospect of researchers watching people grow ill when a medical intervention could have kept them healthy, Titanji echoed.

"It is an apt comparison," she said. The new study's researchers say the trial was approved by a national ethics committee in Guinea-Bissau. But it did not undergo a customary ethics review within the CDC, the agency official told the AP. In a statement, HHS spokesman Andrew Nixon said "we will ensure the highest scientific and ethical standards are met."

vital role in achieving independence by demonstrating courage, foresight and leadership during the 1971 Liberation War. As deputy chief of staff of the Mukti Bahini, Khandker's strategic decisions, organisational skills and unwavering patriotism further strengthened the liberation struggle, Yunus said in a statement.

Khandker had joined the then Pakistan Air Force in 1952 and served as a fighter pilot and instructor before joining the Liberation War against Pakistan in 1971. In subsequent years, he served as Bangladesh High Commissioner to India and ambassador to Australia. He later served as the planning minister during the then President Hussain Muhammad Ershad's rule and again was charged with the same portfolio in 2009, when deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina's now disbanded Awami League was elected to power. Khandker was elected twice to parliament on Awami League ticket from his home district in northeastern Pabna. He was regarded as a key-figure in establishing in 2007 the 'Sector Commanders Forum' by organising Liberation War time sector and sub-sector commanders to wage a campaign to offset forces which were opposed to Bangladesh's independence in 1971.

## Russian missile strike on Odesa kills 8 as US hosts Kremlin envoy for talks on peace plan



KYIV: A Russian missile strike on port infrastructure in Odesa in southern Ukraine killed eight people and wounded 27, Ukraine's emergency service said Saturday, as a Kremlin envoy was set to travel to Florida for talks on a US-proposed plan to end the nearly four-year war.

The discussions are part of the Trump administration's months-long push for peace that also included meetings with Ukrainian and European officials in Berlin earlier this week. Ukraine's chief negotiator said late Friday that his delegation had completed separate meetings in the US with American and European partners.

Meanwhile, European Union leaders agreed on Friday to provide a massive interest-free loan to Ukraine to meet its military and economic needs for the next two years.

fied, it said.

The drilling platform at the Filanovsky oil and gas field has also hit. The facility is operated by Russian oil giant Lukoil. Ukrainian drones also struck a radar system in the Krasnosil's area of Crimea, which Russia illegally annexed from Ukraine in 2014.

There was no immediate comment from the Russian government or Lukoil. The company is one of two Russian oil majors — alongside state-owned Gazprom — targeted by recent US sanctions that aim to deprive Moscow of oil export revenue that helps it sustain the war.

Kyiv has used similar arguments to justify months of long-range strikes on Russian oil infrastructure, which it says both funds and directly fuels the Kremlin's all-out invasion, soon to enter its fifth year.

US President Donald Trump has unleashed an extensive diplomatic push to end the war, but his efforts have run into sharply conflicting demands by Moscow and Kyiv. Russian President Vladimir Putin has recently signalled he is digging in on his maximalist demands on Ukraine, as Moscow's troops inch forward on the battlefield despite huge losses.

On Friday, Putin voiced confidence that the Kremlin would achieve its goals militarily if Kyiv doesn't agree to Russia's conditions in peace talks.

EU leaders agreed to provide 90 billion euros (USD 106 billion) to Ukraine to meet its military and economic needs for the next two years, although they failed to bridge differences with Belgium that would have allowed them to use frozen Russian assets to raise the funds.



## T20 WC squad: Gill axed, Suryakumar to lead, Axar named vice-captain; Ishan returns

MUMBAI: In a surprising development, defending champions India have left out Shubman Gill from its squad for next year's T20 World Cup and T20Is against New Zealand. In the squad announced by BCCI Secretary Devajit Saikia, captain Suryakumar Yadav and chief selector Ajit Agarkar, Axar Patel has been named as the vice-captain.

Apart from Gill, wicket-keeper-batter Jitesh Sharma misses out as Ishan Kishan makes a stunning return to the team, following his explosive form leading Jharkhand to a recent Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy win. Meanwhile, Rinku Singh also makes his return to the T20I team after missing out on the 3-1 series win in South Africa. "We are looking at combinations. Our thought was to have another keeper. Gill is a

In the Men's T20 World Cup, defending champions India have been placed in Group A alongside Pakistan, USA, Netherlands and Namibia

quality player, unfortunate to miss out, but it is the combination we want. Ishan bats at the top, he has been in good form, and played before for India.

"He wasn't there because Jurel and Pant were ahead. Sanju is at the top. Ishan at the top. That is the combination we are looking at right now. We felt he is the best backup keeper at this point," said Agarkar.

The 2026 Men's T20 World Cup, to be held from February 7 to March 8, will have 40 group matches scheduled to be played till February 20. Top two teams from each of the four groups will advance to the Super Eights starting on February 21.

India and Sri Lanka are hosting the Men's T20

World Cup for the second time. Sri Lanka were the hosts of the 2012 edition, while India last hosted the competition in 2016. After the completion of the three-match ODI series, India will play five T20Is against New Zealand, starting on January 21 in Nagpur, followed by games in Raipur, Guwahati, Visakhapatnam and Thiruvananthapuram. In the Men's T20 World Cup, defending champions India have been placed in Group A alongside Pakistan, USA, Netherlands and Namibia. The Men in Blue will be aiming to become the first team to successfully defend the Men's T20 World Cup title, the first team to win the T20 World Cup on home soil, and the first team to clinch the T20 world title for a third time. India will open its Cup campaign against USA at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai on February 7, before facing Namibia at the Arun Jaitley Stadium in New Delhi on February 12. India's marquee clash against Pakistan is scheduled for February 15 at the R. Premadasa Stadium in Colombo, before the side plays their final league stage game against the Netherlands at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on February 18.

**India squad:** Suryakumar Yadav (captain), Abhishek Sharma, Sanju Samson (wk), Tilak Varma, Hardik Pandya, Shivam Dube, Axar Patel (vice-captain), Rinku Singh, Jasprit Bumrah, Varun Chakaravarthy, Arshdeep Singh, Kuldeep Yadav, Harshit Rana, Washington Sundar and Ishan Kishan.

## Italian Super Cup: Bologna beats Inter Milan on penalties to enter final



RIYADH (TSIT): Bologna will meet Napoli in next week's Italian Super Cup final after beating Inter Milan 3-2 on penalties following a tight-fought 1-1 draw in Saudi Arabia on Friday. Ciro Immobile scored the deciding spot kick for Super Cup debutant Bologna after Alessandro Bastoni, Nicolo Barella and Ange-

Yoan Bonny all missed for Inter.

Lewis Ferguson and Jonathan Rowe also scored for Bologna, while Lautaro Martinez and Stefan de Vrij converted for Inter.

The result means Bologna will play Napoli on Monday in Riyadh. Serie A champion Napoli beat AC Milan 2-0 in the

first semifinal on Thursday.

The Italian Super Cup is played between the winners and runners-up of last season's Serie A and Italian Cup, with all the games in Saudi Arabia.

Inter took the lead after just 70 seconds at Al-Awwal Park Stadium in Riyadh. Bastoni drove forward before crossing to the far post where Marcus Thuram volleyed home spectacularly.

Bologna got back on level terms 10 minutes before halftime through Riccardo Orsolini. The former Juventus winger scored from the penalty spot after Yann Bissec was adjudged to have handled. Both sides had chances to win in regulation time but profligate finishing and good goal-keeping sent the game to penalties.

## Self-imposed pressure key to World Cup preparation, says Varun Chakravarthy



which is scheduled to be held from February 7 to March 8 in India and Sri Lanka.

"It is very important to keep putting pressure on yourself to get ready for the World Cup," the Tamil Nadu spinner said on 'Follow The Blues'.

"You have to challenge yourself even when there is no challenge. If a match feels easy, you have to create that pressure mentally and start challenging yourself. Confidence, bowling the right lengths, and understanding the opposition are key. That is one major factor I want to take into the World Cup. With a better understanding of the opposition, I think I can do well."Chakravarthy said sticking to the basics and trusting his skillset have been the key to his recent success at the international level.

## U-19 Asia Cup: George, Malhotra set up title date with Pakistan

DUBAI: Vice-captain Vihana Malhotra's exhilarating stroke-play was well complemented by Aaron George's composure as India U-19 set up an U-19 Asia Cup summit date with arch-rival Pakistan after crushing Sri Lanka colts by eight wickets in a rain-curtailed semi-final here on Friday. After rain reduced the match to 20-overs per side, the Indian bowling unit, which has been spot on throughout the tournament, restricted Sri Lanka to 138 for 8 in 20 overs. In reply, left-handed Malhotra (61 not out off 45 balls), who was snapped by RCB at the recently-concluded IPL mini auction, flicked and pulled with ease to hit a couple of sixes apart from muscling a few boundaries. His partner and India's crisis man in this event, George (58 not out off 49 balls), was technically perfect

with his strokes as India chased down the target in 18 overs. India's eighth appearance in the final was built on the unbroken 114-run stand for the third wicket between Malhotra and George. In the other semi-final, Pakistan beat Bangladesh by eight wickets, and the bitter neighbours will meet in the continental final after a gap of 11 years. The last time India U-19 beat Pakistan in the Asia Cup final in 2014, the team comprised of Shreyas Iyer, Sarfaraz Khan, Sanju Samson and Kuldeep Yadav, to name a few. India U-19 had an inauspicious start to its chase with teenage IPL sensations Ayush Mhatre (7) and Vaibhav Suryavanshi (9) being done in by pacer Rasisht Nimsara. Mhatre, who has endured a horrible tournament, was hurried into a mis-timed pull by short ball from Nimsara.

## Salah apologised to teammates after outburst, says Jones

Salah was then dropped for a Champions League win at Inter Milan before returning as a substitute in a home win against Brighton.

LONDON: Liverpool forward Mohamed Salah apologised to his team-mates following his recent outburst, says Reds midfielder Curtis Jones.

In an explosive interview, Salah said he felt like he had been "thrown under the bus" by Liverpool and his relationship with head

coach Arne Slot had broken down.

The Egypt international made his comments following a poor run of form for Liverpool and after he was an unused substitute for a 3-3 draw at Leeds United on December 6.

Salah was then dropped for a Champions League win at Inter Milan before returning as a substitute in a home win against Brighton.

"Mo is his own man and he can say his own stuff," Jones told British Media, external prior to his side's game at Tottenham on Saturday.

"He apologised to us [saying], 'if I've affected anybody or made you feel any sort of way, I apologise'. That's the man that he is.

"I can only speak from me



knowing Mo and how he is with us and how he acted on that. "He was positive as well. He was the exact same Mo. He had a big smile on his face and everybody was exactly the same with him. I guess it's just part of wanting to be a winner and I don't think he will be the last."Salah delivered the corner from which Hugo Ekitike scored Liverpool's second goal in a 2-0 win at Anfield against Brighton and that was the cue for home fans to sing his chant.

He did a lap of the pitch at full-time in his final appearance before joining up with Egypt for the Africa Cup of Nations. However, his comments after the Leeds game have put a question mark over his Liverpool future, especially with Saudi Pro League clubs interested in

him and the January transfer window coming up.

Former Reds defender Jamie Carragher described Salah's aside as a "disgrace", while ex-Blackburn and Celtic striker Chris Sutton said the controversial remarks had caused "carnage" at the club.

Speaking before the Tottenham game, Slot said "we moved on" as he attempted to draw a line under the issue. Jones added: "I get that there are certain ways you can go about things, but if a lad's fine to just be on the bench and he doesn't want to play and help the team, then I think that's more of an issue.

"When there's been any sort of anger from us, including myself, it's always been from a good place."

## BWF WORLD TOUR FINALS:

# Ratchanok keeps hopes alive as Se Young, Akane reach SF

HANGZHOU: Former World Champion Ratchanok Intanon of Thailand maintained her chances of advancing from women's singles Group B with a comfortable victory over China's third seed Han Yue in the preliminary league stage of the BWF World Tour Finals on Friday.

In the match played on Court 1 of the Hangzhou Olympic Sports Centre Gymnasium, Ratchanok emerged as the 21-17, 21-10 winner in the 38-minute encounter.

Meanwhile, in Group A, Korea's top seed Se Young and Akane Yamaguchi finished at the top of the standings, securing their places in the semifinals.

Se Young topped the group unbeaten, finishing with three wins from three matches, while Yamaguchi ended second with two wins from three matches. Indonesia's Putri Kusuma Wardani ended third with one point, from one win in three matches, while Tomoka Miyazaki finished last in the four-player group with three losses and no points.

Se Young defeated fourth-seed Yamaguchi in three hard-fought games, coming back after losing the first game to win 13-21, 21-5, 21-14 in 47 minutes.

In a match played on the same Court 2, Indonesia's Putri defeated



ed Tomoka Miyazaki of Japan in two games, winning 21-17, 21-9 in 30 minutes.

In the evening session, India's Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty will hope to end their group proceedings with a win over second seeds, Aaron Chia and Soh Wooi Yik of Malaysia, in a Group B encounter.

Earlier on Thursday, India's top men's doubles pair,

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, registered their second successive win at the BWF World Tour Finals 2025, defeating Indonesia's Fajar Alfian and Muhammad Shohibul Fikri in a pulsating three-game contest. The Indian pair, ranked No.3 in the world, showed authority and composure to win 21-11, 16-21, 21-11, extending their unbeaten run in Group B and moving into a strong position for a semi-final berth.

## GCL Season 3: It's a very special feeling to get my first win, says World Champion Gukesh



Chess League at the Royal Opera House on Thursday. Gukesh, along with compatriot Arjun Erigaisi, delivered in a must-win situation to help PBG Alaskan Knights register their first win of the tournament. With Gukesh winning his first game in the event.

## Producers confident of profits for Shambhala

The producers of the upcoming horror entertainer Shambhala have expressed strong confidence in the film's commercial prospects, stating that the project is already financially safe due to robust pre-release business. Starring Aadi Saikumar in the lead, Shambhala is produced by Rajashekhar Annabhimmoju and Mahidhar Reddy under the Shining Pictures banner and directed by Ugandhar Muni. The film also features Archana Iyer, Swasika, Ravi Varma, Madhunandan, and Shiva Karthik, with music composed by Sricharan Pakala. The film is set for a grand theatrical release on December 25. Interacting with the media, the producers said the story itself convinced them to back the project, especially its unique blend of devotional elements with horror. Though the film began with a modest budget, they later enhanced the scale to maintain high production values, driven by



their belief in the content. The producers revealed that nearly 80 per cent of the film's investment has already been recovered through

OTT and satellite rights, placing the project in a safe zone even before release. They expressed confidence that theatrical collections would



## Mohanlal's Vrussabha trailer promises epic saga

a sweeping saga that blends action, emotion, and destiny, centering on the unbreakable bond between a father and son. The trailer opens with Mohanlal experiencing recurring violent dreams, gradually revealing a powerful reincarnation theme. It establishes that Mohanlal was once a mighty king, Vijayendra Vrussabha, and that an age-old conflict continues across generations.

Packed with high-octane action and dramatic moments, the trailer hints at a story that spans two timelines — from the grandeur of a historic kingdom to the intensity of the modern era. Alongside Mohanlal, the film features Samarjit Lankesh, Ragini Dwivedi, and Nayan Sarika, with Ajay, Garuda Ram, and Kishore in key roles.

The film boasts music by Sam CS, sound design by Oscar-winner Resul Pookutty, dialogues by SRK, Janardhan Maharshi, and Karthik, and action choreography by Peter Hein, Stunt Silva, and Nikhil. Shot simultaneously in Malayalam and Telugu, Vrussabha will also release in Hindi and Kannada.

Presented by Connekki Media and Balaji Telefilms Ltd in association with Abishek S Vyas Studios, and produced by Shobha Kapoor, Ektaa Kapoor, and others, Vrussabha promises a visually grand cinematic experience that explores legacy, vengeance, and the powerful emotional bond between a father and son.

## EESHA WARNING: Pure Fear and Edge of the Seat experience on Dec 25th

The upcoming horror thriller Isha features Thirgun and Hebah Patel in lead roles with Akhil Raj, Siri Hanmanth and Prithveeraj also playing significant roles. The team recently released a terrifying promo titled "Eesa Warning," offering a glimpse into a cursed land and a chilling world dominated by ghosts and dark energies. Packed with spine-tingling moments, the promo captures the growing dread of four friends as fear seeps into their very bones. Promising an edge-of-the-seat horror experience, the promo has significantly raised expectations for the film. Amid multiple releases slated for December 25th, this horror thriller stands out with heightened buzz, as the narrative teases haunting encounters and sinister secrets tied to an abandoned house. Eesa is set to arrive in theatres on December 25th, 2025. RR Dhruvan's background score heightens the tension, and the visuals along with the production quality stand out impressively. Backed by Pothula Hema Venkateswara Rao under HVR Productions, the movie brings together a skilled technical team including Santosh Sanamoni for cinematography, RR Dhruvan for music and Vinai handling the editing. Following their impressive success with Little Hearts and Raju Weds Rambai, producers Bunny Vas and Vamsi Nandipati are now gearing up to deliver another gripping project. Known for their strong judgment in selecting content-driven stories, the duo is presenting Isha under their respective banners.



## Curtain raiser held for Little Miss & Mr South India pageant

The curtain raiser of the much-anticipated Little Miss & Mr South India Beauty Pageant was unveiled at Prasad Labs, marking the official launch of one of South India's leading ethical platforms aimed at nurturing young talent and confidence. Organised by The Looks – Modeling & Acting Academy, the pageant focuses on confidence building, personality development, communication skills, and stage presence among children from Hyderabad, Visakhapatnam, Vijayawada, and Tirupati. The grand finale is scheduled to be held on December 27 at Shourya Convention Hall, Police Lines,

Yousufguda Check Post, Hyderabad. The launch event was graced by Founder and Bigg Boss fame Kaushal Manda, along with popular anchor Ravi, who jointly unveiled the promotional posters of the pageant. Addressing the media, Kaushal Manda said the initiative is not about physical beauty alone but about fostering discipline, creativity, and holistic personality development in children. He emphasized that the pageant strictly follows ethical and child-friendly guidelines, focusing on grooming and growth rather than unhealthy competition. The pageant will feature multiple age categories ranging from 3 to

19 years for both girls and boys. Participants will undergo certified grooming sessions, personality development workshops, talent rounds, and a grand finale ramp walk. Anchor Ravi appreciated the initiative, stating that such platforms help children identify their strengths at an early age while enhancing self-esteem, communication, and social skills. The organisers also expressed gratitude to sponsors and partners for supporting Little Miss & Mr South India – Future Stars and Little India Fashion Times (LIFT), a fashion platform that promotes emerging women designers from across South India.

## Raashii Khanna shares BTS from 'Ustaad Bhagat Singh' sets

Actress Raashii Khanna, who plays a pivotal character in director Harish Shankar's eagerly-awaited action entertainer 'Ustaad Bhagat Singh', featuring actor Pawan Kalyan in the lead, has now shared a few BTS videos of her from the sets of the film. Taking to her Instagram page, the actress shared a couple of videos of her on the sets of Ustaad Bhagat Singh and said, "Between action and cut, there's stillness. And sometimes, laughter. @harish2you #ubs." The BTS videos make it evident that the actress has had a wonderful time, shooting for the action entertainer. In fact, it may be recalled that earlier this year, the



actress had described her experience of working alongside Pawan Kalyan in 'Ustaad Bhagat Singh' as a 'true honour.' The actress in a post had expressed her excitement and gratitude for being part of the much-anticipated project. Posting a selfie she had clicked with Pawan Kalyan, she wrote, "It's a wrap for @pawankalyan garu for #ustaadbhagatsingh. It has been amazing sharing this film with him, a true honour and a memory I'll always cherish." For the unaware, the makers of Ustaad Bhagat Singh announced in July this year that Raashii Khanna would play a character called Shloka in the film.



## Vanara to release in theatres on January 1

Vanara, marking the debut of Avinash Thiruveedhula as both hero and director, is set for a grand worldwide theatrical release on January 1, coinciding with New Year celebrations. Presented by Shantanu Pathi and produced by Avinash Buyani, Alapati Raja, and C. Ankith Reddy under the Silver Screen Cinemas banner, the film features Simran Choudhary as the female lead, with Nandu playing the antagonist. The mythological rural

drama is expected to stand out with Sai Madhav Burra's powerful dialogues and Vivek Sagar's music. The film has already generated strong buzz through its promotional content. The teaser has crossed two million views, while the first single Adaraho has received an encouraging response from music lovers. With its unique theme and growing anticipation, Vanara is gearing up to entertain audiences as a special New Year treat on January 1.