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**HOLIDAY NOTICE**

On the Occasion of  
**MAKAR SANKRANTI**  
There will be a Holiday on  
**15th Jan 2026**.

So there will be no issue of  
**THE SOUTH INDIA TIMES**  
English Daily  
on 16th Jan 2026

**US base in Qatar advised to evacuate**

Washington: Some personnel at a key US military base in Qatar have been advised to evacuate by Wednesday evening, a US official said. The decision came as a senior official in Iran brought up an earlier Iranian attack there. The official, who spoke to The Associated Press on Wednesday, January 14, on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive plans, described the move at the base as a precautionary measure. The official wouldn't go into any further details about the move, including whether the evacuation was optional or mandatory, if it affected troops or civilian personnel, or the number of those advised to leave, citing the need for operational security. It comes as anti-government protests in nearby Iran continue, and President Donald Trump has said that he is willing to conduct military operations in the country if the government continues to retaliate against the protesters.

## Revanth to inaugurate Chanaka-Korata and Sadarmat barrages on Jan 16



**THE CHIEF MINISTER WILL INAUGURATE THE KORATA-CHANAKA PUMP HOUSE AND RELEASE WATER INTO THE MAIN CANAL AT HATTI GHAT IN BHORAJ MANDAL IN THE AFTERNOON: OFFICIAL INFORMATION**

Nirmal district. He will also address a public meeting in Nirmal town. The Sadarmat project is designed to irrigate about 18,000 acres in Nirmal and Jagtial districts.

Irrigation officials have already inspected pump house motors and conducted trial water releases ahead of the visit. Paddy and cotton are the main crops under the Sadarmat aayacut, and officials expect an increase in paddy cultivation after irrigation begins. However, uncertainty remains over

## International kite festival begins in Hyderabad



Hyderabad (TSIT): The skies over Hyderabad transformed into a vibrant canvas as the Seventh International Kite and Sweet Festival began at the Parade Grounds on Tuesday.

The three-day cultural event was formally launched by Minister for Tourism and Culture Jupally Krishna Rao, alongside Transport Minister Ponnambalam Prabhakar. A total of 40 international kite fliers from 19 countries and 55 members from kite clubs in 15 states are participating in the kite festival, organised as part of the Sankranti celebrations. A total of 60 stalls have been set up at the venue, offering a variety of sweets from various parts of the country and abroad. More than 100 handloom and handicraft stalls have also been set up. Addressing the gathering, Minister Jupally Krishna Rao emphasised that festivals with centuries of history are vital for safeguarding the state's rich culture and traditions.

## Fear grips Indian students in Bangladesh amid rising attacks on minorities



driven not by adventure but by affordability.

"India produces ambition faster than seats. Over two million applicants chase fewer than 60,000 government medical places each year. Private colleges exist, but at costs that verge on extortion. Bangladesh, by contrast, offers medical degrees at roughly half the price. For thousands of middle-class Indian families, it is not a preference but a necessity," it mentioned.

Dhaka, Jan 14 : Bangladesh must adopt a zero-tolerance approach towards violence against foreign students backed by credible prosecution and not hollow assurances, a report highlighted on Wednesday urging local universities to move beyond imposing curfews and stand up for their students outside campus gates.

"There are many ways a country can lose its moral standing. One of the quietest — and most corrosive — is when students begin to fear walking outside their hostels because of the passport they carry. Bangladesh today is drifting dangerously close to that line," a report in Eurasia Review highlighted. Citing a recent interview by an international media outlet with Karim, a pseudonym, of an Indian medical student in Dhaka, the report noted that he locks himself in his hostel room every evening due to

## Sankranti celebrations kick-off in Telugu states with 'bhogi'



**Amaravati (TSIT):** Highlighting the rich Telugu culture, Sankranti celebrations began across Andhra Pradesh and Telangana on Wednesday with 'bhogi' amid usual pomp and gaiety. Villages and towns in both the Telugu states came alive with traditional celebrations to mark the harvest festival.

Three-day celebrations kicked off with 'bhogi', burning of old and unwanted items such as old clothes, mats and broomsticks in the belief that new things usher into their lives. People in villages and towns began the day

with bhogi and prayers. Women were seen playing and dancing around the bonfire.

Sankranti or Makar Sankranti is the biggest festival in Andhra Pradesh. The festival marks the end of the winter harvest season of rabi crops and the beginning of the next sowing season, kharif. Ministers, MPs, state legislators and leaders of all political parties participated in bhogi in various parts of the two states. Andhra Pradesh Home Minister V. Anitha participated in the 'bhogi' festival at her house in Anakapalli. Accompanied by her family members, she

performed 'gau puja' (cow worship). Cultural programmes were organised on the occasion. She played 'dappu', adding to the enthusiasm among participants.

At Visakhapatnam beach, 1.01 lakh dung-cakes of 'desi' cows were burnt in the bhogi fire.

Police Commissioner Shankhabrata Bagchi, along with locals and tourists, participated in the celebrations

Amaravati Utsav Samithi organised bhogi with dung cakes in Vijayawada. According to the organisers, burning dung cakes is good for the environment and health. Former Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu celebrated 'bhogi' along with family members at Nellore. Venkaiah Naidu greeted people and hoped that the festival would bring happiness and prosperity to them. "The 'Bhogi' bonfires lit with joy and enthusiasm by young and old alike convey the message to let go of negative thoughts and move forward with a positive outlook," he said.

Going into journalists' homes in the dead of the night is definitely a stretch! I demand immediate release of the arrested journalists. None of the sections are non-bailable, so why did the Telangana police decide to terrorise the journalists and their families with these midnight arrests," he asked.

## Congress rule in Telangana reminds of Emergency days: KTR



**Hyderabad (TSIT):** Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) working president K. T. Rama Rao on Wednesday alleged that the Congress rule in Telangana reminds of Emergency days. Condemning the arrest of two journalists of a Telugu television channel, he demanded their immediate release. He posted on X that the Director General of Police (DGP) is hell bent on treating journalists like criminals. "You could have served them notices and called them for an investigation.

Resolved in Delhi," he said.

"Yesterday, no discussion took place with Rahul Gandhi. He has asked both leaders to come to Delhi and assured them that everything will be set right. Both CM Siddaramaiah and Dy CM Shivakumar have been invited to Delhi. Shivakumar conveyed to Rahul Gandhi that he wanted to speak to him, and Rahul Gandhi asked both leaders to come to Delhi," Pattan stated.

## Rahul has called CM Siddaramaiah, Deputy CM Shivakumar to Delhi: Cong MLA



with CM Siddaramaiah and Dy CM and State Congress President D.K. Shivakumar at the Mysuru airport on Tuesday.

"All the confusion will be

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## SIR in Bengal: ECI rejects TMC claim over notices to former MPs

Kolkata, Jan 13 : The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Tuesday rejected allegations by the Trinamool Congress (TMC) that two of its former Rajya Sabha members were summoned for hearings during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls without valid grounds.

Earlier in the day, reports emerged that former TMC Rajya Sabha MP and ex-Mohun Bagan football club president Swapnil Sadhan Bose, popularly



known as Tutu Bose, and his son Srinjoy Bose – also a former Rajya Sabha MP and the club's general sec-

retary – had been issued notices to appear for hearings on claims and objections related to the draft

voters' list.

The TMC accused the Commission of deliberately targeting the two leaders because of their association with the ruling party in the state. However, on Tuesday evening, the office of the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), West Bengal, issued a statement dismissing the allegations and clarifying that notices were issued as the enumeration forms submitted by both individuals had left the linkage columns blank.

## Tej Pratap Yadav invites Lalu, Rabri and Tejashwi for Dahi-Chura feast



Patna, Jan 13 : A touching and emotionally charged moment unfolded on Tuesday at 10 Circular Road, the residence of former Chief Minister Rabri Devi, when Tej Pratap Yadav met his parents and younger brother, signaling a visible thaw in strained family ties.

The primary purpose of the visit was to formally invite Tejashwi Yadav, the Leader of the Opposition in the Bihar Assembly, and his parents, Lalu Prasad Yadav and Rabri

Devi, to a Dahi-Chura feast being organised on January 14 on the occasion of Makar Sankranti.

Tej Pratap personally handed over the invitation letter to his younger brother

er, a gesture widely seen as an attempt to convey brotherhood, reconciliation, and family unity.

Upon arrival, Tej Pratap Yadav first touched the feet of RJD supremo Lalu Prasad Yadav and former Chief Minister Rabri Devi, seeking their blessings.

The meeting marked the first occasion in a long time when Tej Pratap and Tejashwi were seen together with warmth and ease in front of the media, after months of living separately and maintaining dis-

tance on public platforms.

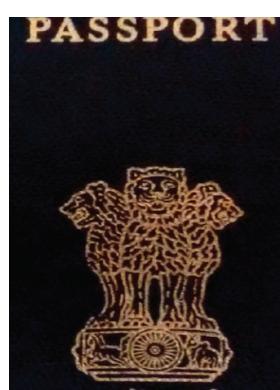
Amid the political symbolism, a deeply personal moment stole the spotlight when Tej Pratap Yadav lifted Tejashwi's daughter and his niece, Kalyani, in his arms. Tej Pratap later described the moment as a wonderful experience. Photographs of him smiling with the child quickly went viral, reflecting that despite political differences and separate living arrangements, familial bonds remain intact.

## Indian passport jumps five places in Henley Passport Index

New Delhi, Jan 14 : Indian passports jumped five places in global mobility rankings in 2026, offering visa-free, visa-on-arrival or eTA access to 55 destinations, a report said on Wednesday. The Henley Passport Index placed India at 80th spot sharing this rank with Algeria and Niger. Singapore, which topped the list, has visa-free access to 192 countries. Japan (188 destinations) and South Korea followed closely, highlighting the connection of travel freedom with the economic strength of the country.

Indian travellers enjoy visa free access across parts of Southeast Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and island nations. However, advance visas are still required for most of Europe, the UK, the US, Canada and large parts of East Asia. European passports dominated the top 10 spots, each offering access to more than 180 countries.

Afghanistan remained the weakest passport with access to just 24 destinations. The United States returned to the top 10 in the index after a brief dip in recent years, even as both the US and UK recorded steep year-on-year losses in visa-free access. "Over the past 20 years, global mobility has expanded significantly, but the benefits



have been distributed unevenly", said Dr. Christian H. Kaelin, Chairman at Henley & Partners and creator of the Henley Passport Index.

"Today, passport privilege plays a decisive role in shaping opportunity, security, and economic participation, with rising average access masking a reality in which mobility advantages are increasingly concentrated among the world's most economically powerful and politically stable nations," he added.

Counting of votes will take place on January 16. More than 25,000 police personnel, including senior officers, will be deployed across Mumbai to oversee elections to the BMC and vote counting. Except for Mumbai, the other 28 urban bodies have multi-member wards. In a political turn ahead of the elections, estranged cou-

## Maharashtra votes for high-stakes civic polls on Jan 15; Mumbai key battleground

MUMBAI: As Maharashtra heads to the elections on Thursday for 29 municipal corporations, the spotlight is on Mumbai, where the BJP-led Mahayuti is locked in a battle with the united Thackeray front for control of the cash-rich BMC. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has predicted that MNS leader Raj Thackeray would emerge as the biggest loser in his alliance with cousin and Shiv Sena (UBT) president Uddhav Thackeray.

He also dismissed the coming together of both NCP factions in Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad as merely a local development.

Fadnavis rued that Deputy Chief Minister and NCP leader Ajit Pawar broke the rule that the alliance partners will not speak against each other. CM Fadnavis led the ruling alliance's canvassing, traversing the state to campaign for candidates of the Mahayuti, which includes the BJP and the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena. NCP, the third partner in the Mahayuti, was strategically excluded to attract "non-Hindu" voters, observers said. This will be the Shiv Sena's first Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) election since the 2022 split, when Eknath Shinde broke away with a majority of the party's legislators, along with its name and symbol. The undivided Shiv Sena had held sway over the country's richest civic body for 25 years. Polling for the 2,869 seats spread across 893 wards will begin at 7.30 am and conclude at 5.30 pm on January 15. A total of 3.48 crore voters are eligible to decide the fate of 15,931 candidates, including 1,700 in Mumbai and 1,166 in Pune.

Counting of votes will take place on January 16. More than 25,000 police personnel, including senior officers, will be deployed across Mumbai to oversee elections to the BMC and vote counting. Except for Mumbai, the other 28 urban bodies have multi-member wards. In a political turn ahead of the elections, estranged cou-

ins Uddhav and Raj Thackeray reunited after two decades in their bid to consolidate Marathi votes, even as rival NCP factions forged a local alliance in Pimpri-Chinchwad. In this election, the Opposition Congress has asserted its presence in Mumbai by stepping out of the shadow of its Maha Vikas Aghadi allies - Shiv Sena (UBT) and Sharad Pawar's NCP (SP). The Congress has joined hands with Prakash Ambedkar's Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA) and the Rashtriya Samaj Paksh in the state capital, even as it contests independently in Nagpur.

Elections to 29 municipal corporations are being held after a gap of over six years, with their terms having ended between 2020 and 2023. Of these, nine fall within the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), the most urbanised belt in India.

The battlegrounds include Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, Navi Mumbai, Vasai-Virar, Kalyan-Dombivli, Kolhapur, Nagpur, Mumbai, Solapur, Amravati, Akola, Nashik, Pimpri-Chinchwad, Pune, Ulhasnagar, Thane, Chandrapur, Parbhani, Mira-Bhayandar, Nanded-Waghala, Panvel, Bhiwandi-Nizampur, Latur, Malegaon, Sangli-Miraj-Kupwad, Jalgao, Ahilyanagar, Dhule, Jalna and Ichalkaranji. Chief Minister Fadnavis, along with his deputies Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar, campaigned extensively across Maharashtra, while cousins Uddhav and Raj Thackeray concentrated their efforts on Mumbai, Thane, Nashik, and Chhatrapati

Sambhajinagar, where Uddhav held a rally. Telangana minister Mohammad Azharuddin, AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi and Tamil Nadu BJP leader K Annamalai were also among the star campaigners for the polls. Populist promises for women were the highlight of the manifestos of both the Mahayuti and the Shiv Sena (UBT)-MNS. The Mahayuti has promised a 50 per cent concession for women in BEST bus travel, while the Thackeray cousins have assured a Rs 1,500 monthly allowance for women domestic helps and a property tax waiver on houses up to 700 sq ft. The Congress manifesto, by contrast, prioritises combatting Mumbai's pollution, upgrading the BEST fleet, and strengthening the city's financial health.

The race for Mumbai's mayoral post took centre stage in the campaign, with the BJP claiming that a Sena (UBT) victory could lead to a Muslim mayor, a charge the Uddhav Thackeray-led party countered by assuring voters of a Marathi mayor.

CM Fadnavis also guaranteed that the mayor will be a "Hindu and Marathi". In the 227-ward Mumbai, the BJP is contesting 137 seats, the Shiv Sena 90, while the NCP is fighting separately on 94 seats. The Shiv Sena (UBT) has fielded 163 candidates, the MNS 52, the Congress 143 and the VBA 46. The Congress has fielded 1,263 candidates across the rest of the state. After the end of the campaigning on Tuesday, Fadnavis said Raj Thackeray will be the biggest loser in the alliance with his cousin, Uddhav Thackeray. Downplaying the coming together of the rival NCPs in Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad as a "localised phenomenon", he said the BJP will react only if both factions decide to ally after the polls, which he felt was unlikely at the moment. Fadnavis also remarked that the Thackerays lacked wholehearted commitment in their campaign and appeared "unwilling to stake their political prestige".

## Palak paneer dispute ends in Rs 1.8 cr win for Indian PhD students in US

CHENNAI: Two Indian PhD students have won a Rs 1.8 crore (USD 200,000) settlement from the University of Colorado Boulder following a civil rights lawsuit that stemmed from an incident involving heating a lunch of palak paneer on campus, said an Indian Express report.

The issue dates back to September 5, 2023, when Aditya Prakash was warming his lunch in a departmental microwave.



and a staff member objected to the smell, asking him not to use the facility. Prakash calmly responded, "It's just food. I'm heating and leaving."

Prakash and his partner Urmil Bhattacharya, both PhD scholars then, filed a civil rights lawsuit, alleging discrimination and retaliation by the university. Following the incident, Bhattacharya lost her teaching responsibilities, which was also cited as part of their complaint.

In September 2025, the

university agreed to a settlement, under which it would pay USD 200,000 and confer Master's degrees to both. The settlement also bars them from any future enrolment or employment at the university.

The couple has returned to India this month, with Prakash describing the episode as part of "systemic racism" and saying the department initially refused to award their Master's degree, promoting legal action.

In an Instagram post, Bhattacharya wrote: "There is a hardening, a kind of narrowing of empathy. Institutions talk a lot about inclusion, but there is less patience for discomfort, especially if that discomfort comes from immigrants or people of colour." As an international student, the shift is unmistakable, she adds. "The message wasn't always explicit, but it was there: you are here conditionally, and you can be made to feel that very quickly."

## Medicover Cancer Institute Successfully Treats Rare Pontine Cavernoma Using Advanced Stereotactic Radiosurgery



Hyderabad, 14 January, 2025: Medicover Cancer Institute has successfully treated a rare and high-risk brain condition — Pontine Cavernoma with hemorrhage — in a 57-year-old patient, Mr. Ambati Ramulu, using advanced Stereotactic Radiosurgery (SRS), avoiding the need for high-risk open brain surgery.

Mr. Ramulu presented with double vision and restricted eye movements. Detailed evaluation with MRI Brain revealed a pontine cavernoma, a condition caused

by abnormal blood vessel formation in the pons, a critical area of the brain that controls vital neurological functions. Such lesions are prone to micro-bleeds or major hemorrhage, making conventional surgery extremely risky. Considering the sensitive

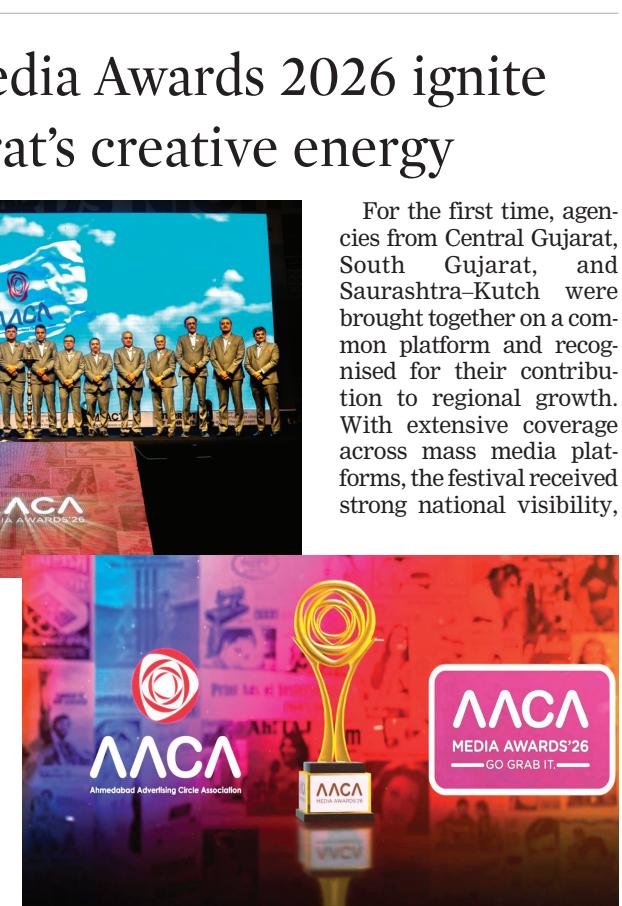
location, the medical team opted for SRS, a highly precise, non-invasive radiation technique that delivers focused radiation to the lesion while sparing surrounding healthy brain tissue. The patient received 5 fractions of SRS with a total dose of 25 Gy (5 Gy per

fraction). The treatment was well tolerated, performed as an outpatient procedure, and the patient was discharged in stable condition on the same day of his final session. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Kandra Prasanth, Consultant Radiation Oncologist, Medicover Cancer Institute, said, "Pontine cavernomas are challenging due to their deep and critical location. Stereotactic Radiosurgery offers a safe and effective alternative for patients where surgery carries high risk. In this case, SRS helped control the lesion, and the patient has had no fresh bleeding episodes on follow-up." Doctors added that SRS is particularly beneficial for deep-seated brain lesions that cannot be safely operated upon, offering patients a safer, surgery-free treatment option with excellent outcomes. The patient is currently under regular follow-up and continues to remain stable.



Ahmedabad, January 4: The Ahmedabad Advertising Welfare Circle Association (AACA) successfully hosted the AACA Media Awards 2026 as part of the grand Festival of Advertising 2026, marking the association's 35th anniversary with record participation and national attention.

The festival brought together leading advertising agencies, media owners, media professionals, and advertisers from across Gujarat to celebrate three and a half decades of creativity, collaboration, and value-driven growth. A total of 39 awards were presented across Print, Television-Cinema, Radio, Outdoor, and Digital Advertising, recognising excellence and innovation in the industry.



Nomination announcements and award presentations kept excitement high throughout the evening, creating several emotional and memorable moments as agencies and professionals were honoured for their creative journeys. The event featured a grand red-carpet welcome, engaging entertainment, and vibrant interactions, reflecting pride in Gujarat's advertising fraternity.

AACA President Manish Gandhi said the response highlighted Gujarat's creative confidence and national impact. He also announced upcoming initiatives including a coffee table book, Creative Spark, blood donation drive, and cricket carnival, reinforcing AACA's commitment to creativity and social responsibility.

**Amruthanjan short film turns into full-length entertainer, says director Jyothi Rao Mohit**



Bengaluru: Everyone remembers the Amruthanjan short movie. They were laughing and laughing happily. Now the same team has made a movie. Director Jyothi Rao Mohit shares his experience.

The reason for making a movie in the name of Amruthanjan? There is a big difference between the Amruthanjan short movie and the Amruthanjan movie. I had done a movie called Sodabuddi before this, which failed. Then when I was unemployed, I made a short movie, the same Amruthanjan. It happened like history. Then when I was thinking about doing something, I decided to make the Amruthanjan movie on the big screen. I did everything that was needed for the movie format.

Short movie won. Expectations on the movie? You can have 100% expectations on this movie too. You have worked so deeply that you have written the story for a year, rehearsed for 3 months, worked with the same team. You can laugh out

loud 40-45 times while watching the movie. We have given importance to laughter in every scene. What new things have you given to people in the short film? Here are some new things. If I stop drinking, will you stop wearing makeup? You have made this dialogue a carry. The story line is very new. Every parent thinks that they should do this for their children.

What was the challenge of making a movie of the same title?..

When we set out to make a movie, you too were short film makers, who wouldn't watch a movie if you made a short film? Viewers who watch on mobile phones won't come to the theater, this won't be a workout, and so on. When we said we would make it new and normal, these kinds of words are all too common. It's censored. If there's a correction, they call us in and say. But they come, shake our hands and say we've made a really good movie. That's a plus point now. It could be a family audience, it could be a youth audience, it wouldn't bore

the Prime Minister's Scholarship for Asia (PMSA) is a New Zealand Government-funded programme, administered by Education New Zealand (ENZ), aimed at deepening partnerships across Asia while building global capabilities in innovation, education and leadership. The vis-

iting delegation comprised

# Karnataka

## Call special session on drug mafia, Kannada insult issues: R. Ashoka

Bengaluru: Opposition Leader R. Ashoka on Tuesday demanded that the Congress government convene a special session of the Assembly to discuss pressing issues such as the drug mafia, illegal residents at Kogilu Cross, and the alleged insult to Kannada in Kerala's Kasaragod region, instead of holding discussions on the Vikasit Bharat Sankalp Yojana. Addressing a press conference, Ashoka criticised the government's decision to hold a session from January 22 to 31 on the Vikasit Bharat Sankalp Yojana. He said objections related to the scheme should be taken up with the Central government, while the state Assembly should focus on local and urgent issues affecting Karnataka.

Ashoka accused Chief Minister Siddaramaiah of neglecting the state's



interests by skipping important forums such as the World Economic Forum in Davos, NITI Aayog meetings, GST Council meetings, and even failing to welcome the German Chancellor during her visit. He claimed this had resulted in the loss of potential investments in the state. He further alleged that Siddaramaiah was more focused on saving his political position than addressing governance issues.

Launching a sharp attack, Ashoka said

the Chief Minister had pushed the state into heavy debt, calling him "Pauper Siddaramaiah," and alleged that loans exceeding 4 lakh crore had been taken. He questioned the need for spending public money on Assembly sessions when several critical issues remained unresolved.

The BJP leader also accused the Congress of hypocrisy in invoking Mahatma Gandhi's ideals, alleging that the party had opposed policies and values Gandhi stood for, including cow protection, prohibition, and spiritual teachings. He questioned the Congress's objection to the term "Vikasit Bharat." Ashoka further alleged harassment of government officials under political pressure, citing threats against Shidlaghatta Municipal Commissioner

## New Zealand delegation explores deeper innovation and skills collaboration with Bengaluru



Bengaluru: A delegation from New Zealand's innovation ecosystem, part of the Prime Minister's Scholarship for Asia (PMSA) programme, met Minister Priyank Kharge and Department officials to explore opportunities for collaboration across technology, education, research and emerging sectors. The interaction focused on strengthening people-to-people connections and building long-term institutional linkages between Karnataka and New Zealand.

The Prime Minister's Scholarship for Asia (PMSA) is a New Zealand Government-funded programme, administered by Education New Zealand (ENZ), aimed at deepening partnerships across Asia while building global capabilities in innovation, education and leadership. The vis-

iting delegation comprised representatives from New Zealand's research, technology, education and innovation ecosystem. During the meeting, the Minister highlighted Karnataka's position as India's fourth-largest technology cluster and a leading hub for R&D, innovation and Global Capability Centres. He spoke about the state's strong talent base, with over 250 engineering colleges and a large network of higher education and

research institutions, making Karnataka a natural destination for academic and industry collaboration. Emphasis was placed on creating skill and market access corridors, enabling startups, researchers and companies from both regions to scale solutions across markets. The Minister spoke about Karnataka's "DeepTech Decade" roadmap and suggested potential collaboration across, artificial intelligence, aerospace, climate and sensor technologies, agritech, marine biotech and other emerging digital sectors. The Minister suggested that the delegation work closely with the Department of IT & BT through its Global Innovation Alliance (GIA) platform to enable sustained engagement with startups, academia, industry and government bodies.

## Complete Geddalahalli Railway Vent Works by End of April: Maheshwar Rao



Bengaluru: The Chief Commissioner, Sri Maheshwar Rao, directed officials to complete the Geddalahalli railway vent works by the end of April. While inspecting various locations within the GBA jurisdiction today, the Chief Commissioner reviewed the progress of the Geddalahalli railway vent project and instructed officials to ensure completion of the work before the onset of the pre-monsoon season.

He noted that the casting work of one vent has already been completed and needs to be pushed beneath the railway track. He directed that the pushing work be commenced immediately and that the casting of the second vent be completed on priority. Officials were instructed to complete the entire project, including the RCC retaining walls, by the end of April.

Conduct Mass Cleanliness Drive:

The Chief Commissioner instructed that a mass cleanliness drive be undertaken in the Geddalahalli and HRBR Layout areas using 10-15 tractors. He directed that the East and Central City Corporations coordinate closely to carry out the cleanliness drive effectively.

Hennur-Bagulur White Topping Road:

White topping work has been taken up on a 5 km stretch of the Hennur-Bagulur Road. Of this, white topping has been completed on a 3.2 km stretch, and vehicular traffic has been allowed on sections where curing has been completed. Continuous inspections are being carried out to ensure timely completion of the remaining work.

He instructed officials to install green cloth barriers in newly concreted areas to prevent pedestrian movement and footprint marks, and to give equal priority to completing footpath works in parallel.

Officials informed that the work is being executed in phases with partial traffic restrictions, in close coordination with the Traffic Police, to avoid inconvenience to road users.

Provide Free Left at Nagawara Junction:

At Nagawara Junction, BWSSB pipeline works are currently in progress. The Chief Commissioner directed that the works be expedited and the road developed immediately thereafter. He also instructed officials of the North City Corporation to coordinate with BMRCL to clear certain properties and provide a free-left turn from the junction towards Tannery Road. To prevent water stagnation during rains at Nagawara Junction, he directed officials to construct sponge-type recharge pits.

Expedite White Topping Works:

White topping works are being taken

up on a total stretch of 5 km, including 2.4 km of Nagawara Road and 2.6 km of Tannery Road. As BWSSB pipeline works have been completed on a 1 km stretch of Nagawara Road, he instructed the Police Department to grant immediate permission to carry out white topping works on half the carriageway.

Hennur 80 Feet Road White Topping Completed:

White topping works on a 2 km stretch of Hennur 80 Feet Road have been completed and opened for vehicular traffic. However, footpath development works are pending. Officials were instructed to complete footpaths along with street lighting, bollards, and other associated works within the stipulated timeline.

White topping works are proposed on a 450-metre stretch of Lazar Road, for which police permission is pending. Officials were directed to obtain the required permission immediately and commence the work. They were also instructed to upgrade the building located on Corporation land along the same road.

White topping works are proposed on a 1 km stretch of Netaji Road from Bamboo Bazaar up to the railway track. As BWSSB pipeline works are yet to be taken up, officials were instructed to obtain immediate police permission and ensure that BWSSB undertakes the pipeline work on priority. During the inspection, East City Corporation Commissioner Sri D.S. Ramesh, Additional Commissioner (Development) Lokhande Snehal Sudhakar, DGP Jayaprakash, Chief Engineers Krishnamurthy and Dr. Raghavendra Prasad, Executive Engineers, and other officials were present.

**BWSSB Implements AI-Based 'IPUMPNET' Across 78 Pumping Stations; Set to Save Over Rs 40 Crore Annually: Chairman Dr. Ram Prasath Manohar**



Bengaluru : The Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) has successfully deployed the AI-based smart pump monitoring and optimization technology, IPUMPNET, across 78 of its pumping stations. This new technology is expected to generate annual energy savings of over Rs. 40 Crore. With this move, BWSSB has achieved the distinction of being the first water supply utility in the world to adopt such advanced technology at this scale, stated BWSSB Chairman Dr. R. Ram Prasath Manohar. In a press statement released, the Chairman explained that IPUMPNET is a fusion of real-time sensors, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and

predictive diagnostics. Unlike traditional methods, this system continuously monitors the performance of pumps and detects 'Hidden Performance Losses'. The system has already identified several pumps consuming power significantly above their designated limits. Based on this data, the Board has initiated the process of replacing low-efficiency pumps with High-Efficiency pumps.

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Regd. Office: Office No. 501, 5th Floor South Annex Tower 2, One World Center Senapati Bapat Marg, Lower Parel Mumbai - 400013	
<b>SALE OF SECURED ASSETS</b>	
Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002	
Whereas, the undersigned, being the Authorized Officer of APAC Financial Services Private Limited ("Lender") under the SECURITISATION & RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS & ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT 2002 ("Act") and in exercise of the powers, conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 ("Rules"), issued a statutory demand notice on 25 November 2022 under section 13(2) of the said Act, upon Modern Education Society ("Mortgagor"), Mr. Deepak Patil ("Co - Borrower"), Mr. Praveen Halalali ("Co - Borrower") and subsequently took constructive possession of below-mentioned properties ("Secured Assets") owned by the Mortgagor on 7th February 2023. A Public Notice for Tender cum Auction for sale of Secured Assets was published in newspaper on 11th April 2023 and a subsequent notice was issued on 21st June 2023. However, no offers were received, and the sale of Secured Assets did not fructify. In view thereof, the Lender has decided to sell the property to the proposed purchaser by executing necessary documents by way of private treaty.	
Standard terms & conditions for sale of property through Private Treaty are as under:	
1. Sale through Private Treaty will be on "AS IS WHERE BASIS" and "AS IS WHAT IS BASIS", "WHATEVER THERE IS BASIS" and "WITHOUT RE COURSE BASIS".	
2. The purchaser will be required to deposit 25% of the sale consideration on the next working day of receipt of Lender's acceptance of offer for purchase of property and the remaining amount within 15 days thereafter.	
3. The purchaser has to deposit 10% of the offered amount along with application till 31st January 2026 which will be adjusted against 25% of the deposit to be made as per clause (2) above.	
4. Failure to remit the amount as required under clause (2) above, will cause forfeiture of amount already paid including 10% of the amount paid along with application.	
5. In case of non-acceptance of offer of purchase by the Lender, the amount of 10% paid along with the application will be refunded without any interest.	
6. The property is being sold with all the existing and future encumbrances whether known or unknown to the Lender. The Authorized Officer / Secured Creditor shall not be responsible in any way for any third-party claims / rights / dues.	
7. The purchaser should conduct due diligence on all aspects related to the property (under sale through private treaty) to his/her satisfaction. The purchaser shall not be entitled to make any claim against the Authorized Officer / Secured Creditor in this regard at a later date.	
8. The Lender reserves the right to reject any offer of purchase without assigning any reason.	
9. In case of more than one offer, the Lender will accept the highest offer.	
10. The interested parties may contact the Authorized Officer for further details / clarifications and for submitting their application.	
11. The purchaser has to bear all stamp duty, registration fee, and other expenses, taxes, duties in respect of purchase of the property.	
12. Sale shall be in accordance with the provisions of SARFAESI Act / Rules.	
<b>SCHEDULE</b>	
<b>Description of the immovable properties</b>	
Part - I All that piece and parcel of the land bearing Re. Sy. No. 546/3, situated at Sindagi Village, Sindagi Taluk, Vijayapura District, admeasuring 2 acres, which is bounded as: On or towards East: Sindagi Re. Sy. No. 546/4 land; On or towards South: Government Road; On or towards West: Sindagi Re. Sy. No. 546/2 land; On or towards North: Road.	
Together with all buildings and structures constructed/erected thereon and all the equipments, fittings, furniture and/or to be constructed/erected thereon attached to the earth or permanently fastened to anything attached to the earth or kept lying thereon.	
Part - II All that piece and parcel of the land bearing Re. Sy. No. 546/4, situated at Sindagi Village, Sindagi Taluk, Vijayapura District, admeasuring 2 acres 11 gunthas, which is bounded as: Under: On or towards East: Sindagi Re. Sy. No. 546/1 land; On or towards South: Government Road; On or towards West: Sindagi Re. Sy. No. 546/3 land; On or towards North: Road.	
Together with all buildings and structures constructed/erected thereon and all the equipments, fittings, furniture and/or to be constructed/erected thereon attached to the earth or permanently fastened to anything attached to the earth or kept lying thereon.	
Reserve Price (in Rs.) Rs.99,00,000/- (Rupees Ninety Nine Lakh Only)	
Deposit Payment The Deposit 10% of Reserve Price which shall be payable through NEFT/RTGS in the following Account:	
Name of the account APAC Financial Services Private Limited Bank Name Kotak Bank Account Number 161204002 Account branch Lower Parel, Mumbai IFSC Code KKKK0000648	
Please Note that Demand Draft from a Nationalized/Scheduled Bank in favour of 'APAC Financial Services Private Limited' payable in Mumbai shall also be acceptable.	
<b>TERMS &amp; CONDITIONS:</b>	
(1) AND WHEREAS, the Authorized Officer of the Lender, has decided to dispose off the said Secured Assets, this notice of sale is published today that the Secured Assets, as detailed in the Schedule above will be sold through private treaty.	
(2) Interested parties may conduct due diligence on documents on any working day from 16th January 2026 to 25th January 2026 between 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM at Mumbai with prior one day notice to Authorized Officer of APAC Financial Services Private Limited.	
(3) The Mortgagor/Guarantors/Borrower in particular and the public, in general, are hereby cautioned and restrained not to deal with the Secured Assets, as detailed above, in any manner in terms of Section 13(13) of the said Act and any dealing with the Secured Assets will be subject to the charge of APAC Financial Services Private Limited for the amounts and further interests thereon.	
(4) The Mortgagor/Guarantors/Borrower are given last chance to pay the total dues aggregating to Rs. 17,45,360.79 (Rupees One Crore Forty Seven Lacs Forty Six Thousand Three Hundred and Sixty and Seventy Nine Paise Only) as on 31st December 2026 together with interest, default/penalty/additional interest and other charges thereon until payment/realization. Legal Counsel's Fee (at actuals), incidental expenses, cost, charges etc. The said dues to be paid by the Mortgagor/Guarantors/Borrower on or before 30th January 2026 before 5:00 PM, failing which, these Secured Assets will be sold as per schedule, as mentioned above.	
(5) The 10% of the offered amount shall be payable through NEFT/RTGS as per the details mentioned above. Please note that Demand Draft from a Nationalized/Scheduled Lender in favour of 'APAC Financial Services Private Limited' payable in Mumbai shall also be acceptable.	
(6) The proposed purchaser shall be required to pay 25% of the offer amount less amount paid as advance deposit within 24 hours on receipt of confirmation of sale from the Authorized Officer of the Lender and the rest 75% balance and final amount(s) within 15 (fifteen) days from the date of confirmation of the sale by the Lender/Authorized Officer or such other date as agreed by the Lender. In case of any default on the part of the successful bidder, all amounts deposited till then shall be forfeited. As per Income Tax rules, TDS @ 1% of sale price is additionally payable by the proposed purchaser as the purchase price is more than Rs. 50 lakhs.	
(7) The particulars in respect of the Secured Assets specified in the Schedule herein above, have been stated to the best of the information and knowledge of the undersigned, who shall however not be responsible for any error, misstatement, or omission in the said particulars. The Tenderer(s) / Offerer(s) / Prospective Bidder(s) / Purchaser(s) are hereby notified that the said Secured Assets will be sold with the Encumbrances and dues payable to Statutory Authority (if any) and are also requested, in their own interest, to satisfy himself / themselves / itself with regard to the above and other relevant details pertaining to the above mentioned Secured Assets before submitting the same.	
(8) For any further clarifications with regard to inspection, terms and conditions of the auction, kindly contact Mr. Yogesh Babar, authorised representative of the Lender on Mob No: 7208244190 or write at yogesh.babar@apacfinc.com to Mr. Yogesh Babar, Authorised Officer of the Lender.	
(9) The Authorised Officer reserves the right to reject any or all the bids or cancel the auction without furnishing any further notice or reasons thereof.	
<b>Statutory 15 days Sale notice under Rule 9(1) of the SARFAESI Act, 2002</b>	
The Borrower/Guarantors/Mortgagor are hereby notified to pay the sum, as mentioned above, along with upto date interest and ancillary expenses on or before 30th January 2026, failing which the said Secured Assets will be auctioned/sold and balance dues, if any will be recovered with interest and cost.	
For APAC Financial Services Private Limited SD/- Place: Mumbai Authorised Officer	

# EDITORIAL

## Bitumen: A Crude Item's Curious Link To Trump's Venezuela Strike - And India

Amid the pervasive gloom and jitters of geopolitics, India has found a silver lining in innovation. It became the first country in the world to successfully develop bio-bitumen, a sustainable alternative to the petroleum-based binder widely used in asphalt for building roads. The New Delhi-based CSIR-Central Road Research Institute and the Dehradun-based CSIR-Indian Institute of Petroleum jointly developed commercially viable bio-bitumen from agricultural residues such as hay (think farm stubble, which is usually burnt). They made it using pyrolysis, an oxygen-free heating process popular in organic waste recycling. The Jorabat-Shillong Expressway (NH-40) in Meghalaya now sports a 100-metre trial stretch using bio-bitumen, demonstrating its feasibility. Regular bitumen, which gives roads their black top, is derived from crude oil and India imports the commodity worth about \$3 billion annually.

**What's the Big Deal?**

On the face of it, the innovation might appear trivial, especially when compared with headline-grabbers such as artificial intelligence or quantum computing. But if you consider the bitumen story at the centre of the geopolitical storm unleashed by President Donald Trump when he ordered the US military to march into the capital of Venezuela and kidnap its head of state, Nicolas Maduro, and his wife, the achievement gets an added sheen for its timing. At over 300 billion barrels, Venezuela holds the largest reserve of crude oil in the world. Crucially, much of it is ultra-heavy crude, the richest source of bitumen and diesel, the former crucial for transport infrastructure and the latter for powering trucks, trains, ships and jets. For the foreseeable future, the US will control where Venezuelan oil flows to.

**Blow to China**

The heavy oil pumped out from the Orinoco fields of the Latin American producer used to be the main feedstock for independent Chinese refineries, nicknamed 'teapots'. China imported 3,89,000 barrels per day of Venezuelan crude in 2025. PetroChina built a refinery complex in Jeyiyan in Guangdong province specifically to process heavy crude originating from fields such as Orinoco. Now, the US intends to steer much of that oil towards refineries in Texas. The US is awash with light sweet shale crude, which is used as a diluent to pump out heavy crude. US energy secretary Chris Wright has said that the country will ship copious amounts of diluent to Venezuela and bring heavy oil back stateside. The US move not only deprives China of discounted heavy oil but also more than half of its source for bitumen. The scarcity of bitumen can impact the expansion and maintenance of highway networks. At the very least, it will make it more expensive to build roads. The other major source countries for heavy crude are Iran, Russia and Canada. While the former two do not produce oil as heavy as Venezuela's, crude from the tar sands of Alberta in Canada matches up but is costlier to transport. The first of China's major sources of relatively cheap heavy crude oil - Venezuela - is blocked. Buying oil from Russia is risk-ridden as Trump will soon likely be armed with fresh powers to impose punitive tariffs up to 500% on sanction-defiers. Iran is gripped by an unprecedented economic crisis and people's agitation that could result in a regime change, jeopardising its oil production and sales in the international grey market.

**India's Advantage**

Several Indian oil companies' shares rose soon after the US attack in Caracas. While a few Indian companies, such as ONGC, Indian Oil and Oil India, have equity stakes in some fields in Venezuela, several Indian refineries, especially Reliance Industries' Jamnagar complex, are equipped to process ultra-heavy crude oil. One of the valuable byproducts of ultra-heavy crude is vanadium, which is used to make steel and aluminium alloys in the auto and aerospace industries. It is also key to making vanadium redox flow batteries, which have a long life and are suited for large-scale grid storage. But it requires sophisticated tech know-how to extract it from petroleum coke or refinery waste.

## Why This Women's Premier League Is Different - And More High-Stakes Than Ever



Watching a Women's Premier League (WPL) match in the ongoing season is a very interesting exercise. After all, everything has changed for the Indian cricketers and by extension for their respective franchises. If you thought you were imagining things when you saw the likes of Harmanpreet Kaur, Deepti Sharma, Smriti Mandhana, Jemimah Rodrigues, Shafali Verma and others have an extra spring in their steps, don't fret, you are not the only one. What you saw is probably real. After all, this is the first edition of the WPL that the Indian cricketers have entered as world champions. They could be forgiven for thinking that they can walk on water - such was the enormity of their achievement last year. So, another very interesting angle that has now been added to WPL viewership, thanks to the added lens of the World Cup triumph, is that of assessing just how far the able-bodied Indian women's game has come.

Historically, most Indian fans, even those who followed cricket closely, would be able to name maybe two or three prominent Indian female cricketers. The likes of Diana Edulji, Shantha Rangaswamy, Anjum Chopra, Jhulan Goswami and Mithali Raj would usually make that cut. However, in the run-up to WPL 2026, along with the "star names", many people have also been curious about the likes of Shree Charani, Richa Ghosh, Sneh Rana, Pratika Rawal, Harleen Deol, Amanjot Kaur, Kranti Gaud, Radha Yadav and others. All of them might not have become household names just yet, but they are being followed by virtue of being World Cup winners. And the WPL is giving them the opportunity to catapult themselves into that category - much like the IPL did for the likes of Ravindra Jadeja, Jasprit Bumrah, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant, Suryakumar Yadav and others. Meanwhile, every single field movement of the World Cup "stars" like Jemimah, Deepti, Harman, Shafali and Smriti is being put under the microscope, reviewed, analysed, dissected, criticised, commented on and sometimes appreciated. It wouldn't be unfair to point out that perhaps for the first time in the history of Indian women's cricket, the star able-bodied female cricketers are being viewed through the same fan lens as the male stars. For years, the

likes of Sachin Tendulkar, Sourav Ganguly, Rahul Dravid, Yuvraj Singh, Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, Jasprit Bumrah, and many other former and current male cricketers have been "idols" for the women's teams. Now, the female "stars" find themselves sharing the same celebrity boat. The biggest indicator that the women's game is becoming more and more popular in India is the largely packed stadiums for the India games, as we saw at the World Cup. It wouldn't be a surprise if the WPL 2026 numbers break all previous records for in-stadia numbers and Television TRPs plus online viewership.

The spike in interest though is not just from the fans. In fact, well before

fan interest in the WPL saw a fresh

surge, a rather influential cluster

had honed in on this group as the

next Indian cricketing gold mine

and drawn up water-tight sales and

marketing plans - the money bags,

i.e., sponsors. For them, the World

Cup win last year finally saw the

women's game in the country make

the transition from "something we

need to keep an eye on" to "let's bank

on them big time". The World Cup

heroes, after all, are now "bankable"

properties. People want to see them,

hear their stories, know about their

struggles, meet their families, find

out what food they like, where they

prefer to vacation, what music they

like to listen to and who their

favourite movie stars are. As

Harmanpreet Kaur and co. have found out, winning a World Cup as an Indian cricketer will change your life overnight. Their lives are no longer just theirs; their own personal worlds are now a thing of the past. They are suddenly on multiple magazine covers, on TV and radio shows, on billboards and hoardings. They are the topics of living room conversations and fan polls. Such was the impact of India's inaugural women's World Cup title triumph that, according to news reports, the overall brand value of the team went up by almost 30%. India's able-bodied women cricketers were suddenly brand darlings. Player endorsement and appearance fees zoomed as more and more brands, including those from industries like automobiles, wellness, FMCG, tech & gadgets, etc., queued up to sign the big names. The Mumbai Indians WPL team, which is captained by the World Cup-winning skipper, Harmanpreet, added the likes of De Beers Group and BKT Tyres to their sponsor list. According to reports, the Delhi Capitals franchise in the WPL, buoyed by the Indian team's recent success and the news of World Cup semi-final hero Jemimah Rodrigues being handed captaincy, saw a huge jump in sponsor interest. It's pretty much the same story across all five franchises. Existing sponsors want to stay put, while those who have so far not boarded the WPL bandwagon are more than interested in getting

on board. For the sponsors, the WPL ecosystem has expanded. They are starting to feel more and more confident in the overall, long-term vision of the BCCI - that the WPL can well and truly do for the women's game in India what the IPL did for the men's. Women's cricket in India and by extension the WPL are now very much a part of the economics of cricket conversation. And no one wants to miss the bus. Thankfully, while the women are finally enjoying a piece of the pie that was so far almost exclusively reserved for the men, no one is grudging them their success. We see it happen all the time in the men's game, with fans pointing out just how much money the star male cricketers are making, especially when they fail. The logic behind spending sums often equivalent to the price of a sprawling four-bedroom house in an ultra-luxury locality in Gurgaon or even Mumbai on acquiring the services of one player for one season at an IPL player auction is often questioned. While the female cricketers are not paid anywhere in the same vicinity as their male counterparts, just yet (Smriti Mandhana, Nat Sciver-Brunt and Ashleigh Gardner were retained for a record Rs 3.5 crore by their franchises, while in the IPL, Virat Kohli was retained by RCB for Rs 21 crore ahead of the 2025 mega auction), we must also not forget that the WPL is only four years old so far.

## Parental intentions, upbringing, and broken homes



PRIYANKA  
SAURABH

In Indian society, parents hold the highest moral position. They are considered the epitome of sacrifice, austerity, and selfless love. From childhood, we are taught that parents can never be wrong. Their every word is an order, their every decision the ultimate truth. But in the changing social landscape, this belief is now under many questions. Today, when incidents of family disintegration, divorce, separation, and domestic tension are increasing, it has become necessary to honestly admit that parents are not always right. The breakdown of many families is not solely due to differences between husband and wife, but the role of parents is becoming equally crucial. This may sound harsh, but the truth is that in many homes, parental favoritism, interference, and control are eroding relationships from within. First, let's discuss the culture of discrimination. It's not uncommon in Indian families to see comparisons and favoritism between children. The eldest son is considered the "heir," the younger one the "compromiser," the daughter "someone else's property," and the daughter-in-law "outsider." When this thinking translates into practice, it creates persistent tension within the home. Parents, unconsciously or intentionally, favor one son and neglect the other. The daughter-in-law is considered the root of every dispute, while the daughter's faults are glossed over. This inequality gradually breaks down

relationships. Even today, the daughter-in-law's place after marriage remains ambiguous in many homes. She is expected to unquestioningly accept every tradition, obey every decision, and abandon her own identity. If she speaks up for her rights, respect, or independence, she is labeled a "homebreaker." The truth is that often the home is already broken from within—only a facade remains. Excessive parental interference is also becoming a major cause of family disintegration today. Interfering in the personal affairs of the son and daughter-in-law, blowing small matters out of proportion, ignoring the daughter-in-law's complaints, and subjecting the son to emotional pressure—all these situations make marriage a burden. The son is often caught between two sides—wife on one side, parents on the other. And society teaches him that supporting his parents is his duty, even if it means sacrificing his marital life. It is also seen that even after his daughter's marriage, parents want to keep her under their control. By repeatedly calling her to their parents' home, interfering in her marital life, and forming opinions against the son-in-law, they inadvertently weaken their daughter's home. The result is that distrust grows between the daughter and son-in-law, and ultimately the relationship reaches the brink of collapse. Another serious aspect is emotional blackmail. "What all have we not done for you?" "You are in this position because of us," "What will people say if you don't listen to us"—such statements mentally enslave children. They strive to keep their parents happy, even at the cost of their own happiness, their relationships, and their dreams. But this suppressed dissatisfaction explodes one day. The problem becomes even more serious when society also promotes this mentality. In every dispute, the first question asked is the daughter-in-law—"What did you do?" The son is considered "forced," and the parents are considered "victims." Due to this

## PM Shri Vidyalaya Teacher Deployment: New Policy for Backdoor Entry



DR. SATYAWAN  
SAURABH

(Selection in the name of merit or killing of merit in the name of selection?)

This is perhaps the first time in history that the passing criteria and merit of a selection exam have been set to be determined after the results are viewed. The Haryana government's State Model Culture and PM Shri School Teacher Deployment Policy - ??2025 is being touted on paper as a document of transparency and fairness, but a closer examination of its provisions raises several serious and uncomfortable questions. The most significant and fundamental flaw in the PM Shri Vidyalaya Teacher Recruitment Policy is that it doesn't set a minimum passing score for the screening test. How can selection be considered merit-based when it's unclear how many marks are required to pass the exam? This isn't a simple technical error, but a direct blow to the credibility of the entire selection process. The policy assigns 60 percent weighting to the screening test, but the lack of clear pass-fail criteria leaves the test entirely at the discretion of the administration. When there are no written, public, and binding standards for discretion, the selection process automatically becomes suspect. This gives rise to the possibility of backdoor entry—admission and exclusion. Even more shocking is that the policy makes no provision for a mandatory merit list. There is no mention of rankings, no cut-off marks, and no clarification on how priority will be determined in the event of a tie. Previously, when selections were made through centrally

conducted examinations, clear merit lists, public scores, and comparative evaluation were in place. Under the current policy, the selection process appears to be merely a means of formal legitimacy, rather than being challengeable—as if decisions were already made and scores were added later to justify them. The transparency of the screening test itself is a major question mark. It is not clear who will set the question paper, which institution or agency will conduct the evaluation, and by what method, and whether there will be any system like normalization of scores. When this test is the largest and most opaque in selection, it is natural to fear that recognition, access, and recommendation may play a decisive role over merit. A look at the background behind the policy reveals a clearer picture. The reality is that the expected number of applications for these PM Shri and Model Sanskriti schools did not arrive. The department itself knows that not all candidates passed the screening test at the required level. This is why many positions in these schools remained vacant even in the initial stages. Vacant positions pose a threat to departmental credibility. Vacant positions in "model" schools undermine the claims of the education system's success. Under this pressure, the department relaxed the selection criteria in the initial stages. Teachers working in remote districts were accommodated in these schools by relaxing the appropriate criteria, interview, and merit requirements. This process allowed many teachers who had been posted in remote areas for years to return to their home or nearby districts. The situation became even more inconsistent in the later stages. The candidates who subsequently joined differed from the criteria initially set for these schools. This disparity in the selection process itself is evidence that the implementation of the policy was neither uniform nor fair. Against this backdrop, the current policy's lack of minimum passing marks and the failure to publicly publish results and merit lists does not appear to be a mistake. The department clearly fears that if stricter criteria,

clear cut-offs, and transparent merit are implemented, a large number of seats will remain vacant. The reality is that most teachers do not want to move to these schools—neither the working conditions are attractive, nor does the transfer policy offer any long-term security. This is why the entire process has been deliberately kept flexible, vague, and subject to administrative discretion. If seats remain vacant, anyone—especially "our own people"—can be sent to these schools without merit, without comparative evaluation, and without public accountability. This is where the concept of merit-based selection ends and the system of controlled selection begins. Another serious aspect of the policy is that after selection, teachers can remain in the same schools for ten years. If the selection process itself is flawed or biased, there is no practical possibility of correcting the mistake. The harm will not be limited to qualified teachers, but students and the entire education system will have to pay the price. If the government truly intended fair and quality selection, a clear merit list of three or five times the number of candidates could have been prepared. This process would have been constitutionally, equitably, and legally sound, but the policy deliberately omitted this option. Often, the true intent of a policy is revealed not by its contents but by what it does not state. The absence of minimum qualifying marks, the absence of a mandatory merit list, and the lack of clear provisions for challenging the selection process—all indicate that the objective is not merit-based selection, but rather to fill seats and control selection. Ultimately, this policy appears more like backdoor entry in the name of merit than merit-based selection. If the government is truly serious about quality and equity in education, it must clearly establish minimum passing scores, make merit lists mandatory, and subject the entire selection process to public scrutiny. Otherwise, this policy will be remembered in the future not as selection, but as an example of the killing of merit in the name of selection.

# KRAFTON, Royal Enfield team up to bring rideable bike inside game

**New Delhi:** KRAFTON India and Royal Enfield today announced a landmark partnership that bridges two of India's most influential cultural domains – mobile gaming and motorcycling. The collaboration debuts Royal Enfield's iconic Bullet 350 and the OG cafe racer Continental GT 650 as rideable motorcycles inside BATTLE-GROUNDS MOBILE INDIA (BGMI), offering an unprecedented blend of automotive heritage and interactive entertainment. The iconic Royal Enfield Bullet 350 and sporty Royal Enfield Continental GT 650 will be introduced as rideable motorcycles inside the BGMI universe. Both motorcycles to make their debut in the game from January 19, 2026, as a part of the BGMI 4.2 update that goes live on January 15, 2026. New update introduces a range of exclusive Royal Enfield-themed in-game content and rewards Royal Enfield to also showcase a unique custom-built Royal Enfield Continental GT 650 inspired by elements from the BGMI universe. Royal Enfield also showcased a custom-built, real-world motorcycle inspired by BGMI's tactical and war-ready aesthetic – crafted on the soul of the



Continental GT 650 – underscoring the creative synergy between both brands. Opening 2026 with one of the most significant brand integrations in Indian gaming history, this collaboration reinforces BGMI's continued ambition to expand its universe through culturally relevant, localised experiences, while reflecting Royal Enfield's intent to engage India's next-generation audiences through innovative dig-

ital platforms. Gaming enthusiasts will soon experience the thrill of riding legendary Royal Enfield machines across virtual battlegrounds, while auto aficionados will see their passion reflected inside one of the country's largest entertainment ecosystems. "This strategic partnership with Royal Enfield embodies BGMI's vision of creating culturally meaningful and locally rooted experiences," said Seddharth

Merrotra, Head of Business Development & Partnerships at KRAFTON India. "2026 will be a year of many firsts, and we're kicking it off with one of our most ambitious brand integrations yet, while fundamentally elevating how partnerships enhance player engagement and drive shared value. Royal Enfield is an iconic name in the global automotive universe and its deep community roots with evolving digital ethos make it a natural

**Big tech plans major hiring push in India in 2026 amid US layoffs: Report**



**New Delhi :** Around 52 per cent of tech and banking professionals in India and US said their companies plan to increase hiring in India in 2026, a report said on Wednesday, January 14. The report from anonymous community app for professionals, Blind, said that 34 per cent of respondents expect a significant increase and 18 per cent who anticipate a moderate rise, the report said. The survey gathered responses from 2,392 verified professionals across the United States and India and reported that the trend signals an acceleration of offshoring by major global tech firms including Google, Amazon, Microsoft, Uber, and eBay. When asked how India hiring affects US-based roles, 38 per cent said it is replacing US-based roles while 23 per cent said it complements US hiring, the report said. The report highlighted that 28 per cent of respondents cited recent H-1B visa restrictions as a factor pushing companies to hire more in India, while 25 per cent said the changes had no material impact. Around 4 per cent respondents said the restrictions led to increased US-based hiring. "The findings point to India's growing role as a functional alternative to the US hiring market. Rather than relying on U.S.-based expansion, many companies appear to be redirecting growth to India, signaling a structural shift in global workforce planning," the report mentioned. Among employees at global firms such as eBay, Wayfair, LinkedIn, Qualcomm, Capital One, Google, Amazon, Salesforce, SAP and Microsoft, up to 93 per cent reported plans to expand hiring in India. In terms of how companies are expanding in India, 25 per cent said their employers are scaling up existing India teams, while about 20 per cent reported the creation of new roles in India and another 20 per cent said specific projects or functions are being moved there.

## Coupang told to remove internal data breach findings amid probe



**Seoul:** South Korea's data protection watchdog on Wednesday, January 14, urged online retailer Coupang to take down its independent probe results into a massive data leak from its mobile application and website, describing them as unverified information. The Personal Information Protection Commission took issue with the company's notice that claims a former employee breached the personal information of 33 million users but saved data from only about 3,000 accounts, which Coupang claimed was later deleted.

Coupang is currently under investigation by authorities over the data breach, which the company earlier reported in November as having impacted the personal data of 33.7 million customers, such as their names, phone numbers and delivery addresses. The regulator said the company's internal probe results could lead to confusion among the public as it has yet to be verified by an official investigation, noting the notice could be considered as interfering in its investigation into the company. It noted Coupang has been uncooperative with its investigation by

delaying or failing to submit requested documents, warning such acts could be seen as acts of obstruction that could be considered in possible future penalties. It also called on the company to make improvements to its response measures to the leak, such as adding a function within its mobile app and website for users to look up whether their data has been breached. Meanwhile, ordering a temporary suspension of business operations at e-commerce giant Coupang may be possible, the head of South Korea's antitrust watchdog said, amid an ongoing investiga-

tion over a recent large-scale data breach at the US-listed company. "If an order is not implemented or if it is deemed insufficient to provide relief to affected consumers, a business suspension is also possible," Ju Byung-gi, chairman of the Fair Trade Commission (FTC), said in a radio interview. Coupang announced the results of its internal probe on December 25, saying a former employee had stolen personal information from 33.7 million user accounts but saved data from only about 3,000 accounts, which, it claimed, was later deleted.

## Samsung Innovation Campus Certifies 1,750 Youth in Future-Tech Skills in Uttar Pradesh

**LUCKNOW, India – January 2026** – Samsung, India's largest consumer electronics brand, on the occasion of National Youth Day, announced the certification of 1,750 students in Uttar Pradesh under its flagship Samsung Innovation Campus (SIC) programme, marking a significant milestone in the company's youth-skilling efforts in the state. The certification ceremony was held at the City Group of Institutions in Lucknow, in the presence of Smt. Rajni Tiwari, Hon'ble Minister of Higher Education, Government of Uttar Pradesh, along with academic leaders and programme partners. With this cohort, the total number of students trained under Samsung Innovation Campus in Uttar Pradesh has reached 3,900, making it one of the fastest-growing states under the programme. Samsung announced its intent to skill 5,000 youth in Uttar Pradesh, as part of its broader national target

of upskilling 20,000 students, a six-fold increase over the previous year. The programme is currently operational across 10 states. Under the Lucknow initiative, students received industry-aligned training in emerging technologies, including Artificial Intelligence (950 students), Coding & Programming (550 students), Big Data (150 students), and Internet of Things (100 students). "At Samsung, our firm belief is that the future of India will be defined by its youth. Samsung Innovation Campus is designed to bridge the gap between education and industry by providing hands-on training in future-tech courses such as AI, IoT, or Big Data and Coding. The certification of 1,750 students in Lucknow underscores our commitment to support the Government of India's skilling vision and empower young learners across Uttar Pradesh with industry-relevant capabilities. Samsung Innovation Campus is our flagship programme designed to empower the next generation and make them job-ready for the fourth Industrial revolution", said Shubham Mukherjee, Head, CSR & Corporate Communications at Samsung Southwest Asia. "As higher education evolves, it is essential that learning outcomes remain aligned with emerging economic and technological needs. Samsung Innovation Campus adds significant value by exposing students to advanced digital disciplines and experiential learning. Such collaborations strengthen our institutions and help create a knowledge-driven, competitive workforce for Uttar Pradesh. I commend Samsung's commitment to empowering our youth and supporting the state's vision of building a future-ready, skilled workforce. Our young people are the foundation of Uttar Pradesh's progress and the driving force behind India's growth story", said

## Indian equities enter 2026 on firmer footing, await Budget 2026



realistic rather than euphoric, and India enters the year with macro stability," said Sonam Srivastava, smallcase Manager and Founder of Wright Research. We expect returns to be earnings-led in 2026 rather than multiple-led, which favours disciplined stock selection and factor-driven strategies, Srivastava added. Sneha Jain, smallcase Manager, Founder and CEO, WealthTrust Capital Services said that after the valuation reset in 2025, large caps, traditionally the premium P/B cohort, are now trading below SMIDs on a price-to-book basis – an

## CHINA ANNOUNCES RECORD \$1TN TRADE SURPLUS DESPITE TRUMP TARIFFS

China announced record export numbers for 2025, a year when US President Donald Trump's tariffs and trade policy caused turmoil in the global economy. Beijing on Wednesday reported the world's largest-ever trade surplus – the value of goods and services sold overseas compared to its imports – at \$1.19tn (£890bn). It's the first time China's full-year trade surplus has passed \$1tn, beating 2024's record figure of \$993bn. China's monthly export surpluses passed \$100bn seven times last year – a sign that Trump's tariff campaign has barely affected its overall trade with the rest of the world. Trade with the US did weaken, but this was made up for by a rise in Chinese exports elsewhere, especially to South East Asia, Africa and Latin America. Wang Jun, the deputy director of China's customs, said during a press conference on Wednesday that the figures are "extraordinary and hard-won" given the "profound changes" and challenges in global trade. He noted a rise in exports of green technology, artificial intelligence-related products and robotics. The huge surplus can be explained by strong overseas demand for Chinese goods as trade



with global partners including South Asian countries and others in Africa and Europe grew, as well as a weak domestic market. China's economy has been weighed by a property crisis and rising debt, which has made businesses more hesitant to invest and consumers cautious about spending. As a result, there is less of a need to import goods, and imports rose by just 0.5%, according to the new figures. Meanwhile, a weaker yuan, a strong supply of goods and inflation in Western countries have also made Chinese exports more attractive. The results are a "mixed blessing" for Beijing, said trade policy analyst Deborah Elms from the Hinrich Foundation. China has benefited from sales and more jobs created from its business abroad, but its goods could face "greater scrutiny" from foreign markets that are under pressure to compete with its products, she said. China's success will likely continue in 2026 as Chinese goods and services become more deeply entrenched into global businesses, said Elms. These latest figures will be seen in Beijing as a sign that China has customers all around the world, besides the US, but Wang warned that China faces an uncertain external environment. Several countries have raised concerns that their markets are being flooded with low-priced Chinese products they cannot compete with. Businesses are also bracing for another year of turbulence and tariff tensions from the Trump administration. In April last year, Trump caused turmoil in the global economy by announcing sweeping tariffs on goods from more than 90 countries. Some of the most severe tariffs were reserved for China, which exports more to the US than any other country. An escalating war of words between the world's two largest economies saw threats of blanket triple-digit tariffs. At the time, trade experts saw this as a test of China's reliance on the US market, which Beijing insisted was just one of many places that Chinese businesses could sell to. Both sides managed to pause hostilities after a meeting between Trump and China's leader Xi Jinping in South Korea in October, avoiding a complete breakdown in trade relations. Other more moderate tariffs remain in place, which have severely damped Chinese exports to the US.



## Trump vows 'very strong action' if Iran executes protesters

President Donald Trump has said the US will take "very strong action" against Iran if it executes protesters, as rights groups say more than 2,400 anti-government demonstrators

have been killed in a violent crackdown by Iranian authorities. Relatives of 26-year-old Erfan Soltani, who was detained last week, told BBC Persian he was due to be executed on Wednesday. It is unclear whether this has taken place. A representative from the Hengaw Organization for Human Rights also told the BBC that they had "never witnessed a case move so quickly". Speaking to the BBC's US partner CBS News, Trump said of potential executions: "If they hang them, you're going to see some things... We will take very strong action if they do such a thing." Soltani's relative told BBC Persian that an Iranian court had issued a death sentence "in an extremely rapid process, within just two days". They were "deeply concerned that he could

be executed without any prior notice", given that contact with Iran has been affected by the internet shutdown. Soltani's detention demonstrated that the Iranian government was trying "to control the population, to not allow any more protests to happen", Hengaw representative Aywir Shekhi told the BBC's Radio 4 Today programme on Wednesday. Soltani's sister - who is a lawyer - tried to intervene in his case but was told by authorities there was nothing to pursue, Shekhi added. Prisoners sentenced to death in Iran are typically granted final moments with loved ones. While the Iranian authorities have told the family they will allow a meeting with Erfan before his execution, Shekhi said, he hasn't been allowed any contact with his family since his arrest. An Iranian official told Reuters that 2,000 people had been killed, but that "terrorists" were to blame.

Trump earlier said he planned to attend a meeting at the White House on Tuesday night to discuss the situation in Iran, pledging to get "accurate numbers" on the death toll from the protests. "The killing looks like it's significant, but we don't know yet for certain," Trump told reporters while returning to the White House. Once he has the numbers, he said, "we'll act accordingly." The US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA) said that it had so far confirmed the killing of 2,403 protesters, as well as 12 children, despite an internet blackout. Nearly 150 people affiliated with the government have also been killed, the group said. State-linked Iranian news agency Fars reported that funerals were held in Tehran on Wednesday for more than 100 members of the security forces and others they described as "martyrs". On Tuesday, Trump wrote on his

Truth Social platform that Iranian authorities would "pay a big price" for the killings, and urged people to "keep protesting". "I have cancelled all meetings with Iranian officials until the senseless killing of protesters STOPS. HELP IS ON ITS WAY. MIGA!!!," he added, using the acronym for a US-based Iranian opposition slogan, "Make Iran Great Again". Trump has been weighing military and other options in response to the crackdown, having already announced 25% tariffs on any country trading with Iran. Iran's government has responded by accusing the US of seeking to "manufacture a pretext for military intervention", warning that "this playbook has failed before". The protests, which have reportedly spread to 180 cities and towns in all 31 provinces, were sparked by anger over the collapse of the Iranian currency and soaring cost of living.

AT LEAST 32 KILLED  
AFTER CRANE COL-  
LAPSES ON TRAIN IN  
THAILAND



## LA to open ticket draw for 2028 Olympics - with seats starting at \$28



Sport fans will be able to sign up from Wednesday for a chance to attend the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games - with tickets starting at \$28 (£20.80). Registration opens at 07:00 local time (15:00 GMT) for fans to enter a random ticket draw covering all events that will take place at the Games. The window will remain open until mid-March. If chosen, fans will be notified via email and will be given a time slot to purchase tickets in April. One million of those tickets will sell for \$28, and about one-third are set to cost less than \$100 (£74.41). "These Games belong to everyone," Casey Wasserman, the chairman of LA 2028 said on Tuesday. "These Games have to be affordable and inclusive." The announcement of affordable ticket prices come after the price of tickets for the 2026 men's football World Cup - which will also be hosted in the US, as well as Canada and Mexico - received some

public criticism. Speaking to reporters on Tuesday, LA officials said affordability and accessibility were central to their ticketing plan - and their hope that sport fans around the globe would be able to attend. Tickets for the 2024 Olympics in Paris started at \$27.95 (£20). A special early purchase window will also be open for residents in the Los Angeles area and Oklahoma City, where some Olympic Games are also being held. 2028 will be the first time the Olympics will be held in the US since the 1996 Games in Atlanta. Los Angeles has twice hosted the Olympics - in 1932 and 1984 - and plans to use its already established infrastructure to host the Games. Event organisers, along with hundreds of Olympians and Paralympians, gathered at the LA Memorial Coliseum on Tuesday for a ceremonial lighting of the Olympic venue's cauldron ahead of the opening of ticket registration.

## Colleen Hoover reveals 'successful' cancer surgery

Best-selling author Colleen Hoover has revealed she has been having treatment after being diagnosed with cancer. The US writer, 46, known for *It Ends With Us* and *Reminders of Him*, said she has nearly finished radiotherapy and that earlier surgery was a success. She publicly discussed the news in an Instagram post this week, with a selfie showing her in a hospital gown. In a further message on Tuesday, she told fans: "I'm doing much better. My cancer diagnosis was a while ago but I chose to keep it private until after finding out my surgery



was successful and what my other treatments would be." That came after she initially shared the news with fans in a private Facebook chat about a month ago, telling them the cancer had been removed and that "I'm okay".

## ONLY TRUMP CAN STOP PUTIN, POLISH PRESIDENT TELLS



Donald Trump is the only world leader capable of stopping Vladimir Putin from threatening Europe, according to Poland's President Andrzej Duda. In an interview with Radio 4's Today programme he said the Russian leader was not to be trusted, but that Europe needed to do everything it could to support President Trump in his efforts to end the war in Ukraine.

President Duda was

well-known as a firm supporter of Donald Trump even before he landed in Ukraine. Referring to last September's mass incursion by Russian drones, when more than 20 uncrewed aircraft crossed into Poland from Belarus and Ukraine, President

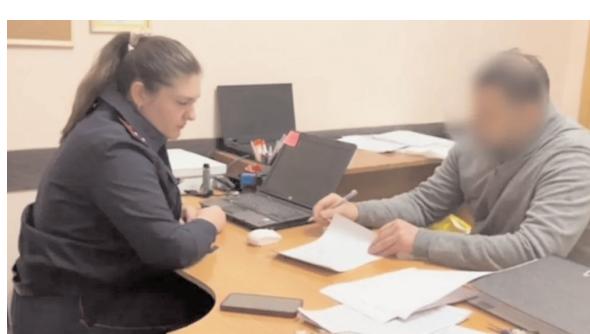
and eastern Europe, the US president was the only person who could, as he put it, "solve this problem" - as well as ending the war in Ukraine. Referring to last September's mass incursion by Russian drones, when more than 20 uncrewed aircraft crossed into Poland from Belarus and Ukraine, President

Nawrocki called it "an extraordinary situation", adding that "until that time, no Nato member state had experienced a drone attack on that scale".

Russia, he said, was testing Poland's defences and testing Nato's solidarity. The Polish president then thanked Britain for sending over RAF Typhoon jets

to help defend his borders. He said Poland had been in a state of hybrid war with Russia since 2021, as it dealt with drones and disinformation. This Russian grey zone activity showed "we are living in dangerous times", he added. He was asked about his friendship with Donald Trump, particularly in the light of the US president's threats to take over "by any means" the Danish autonomous territory of Greenland, something which has rattled Europe and which threatens to rupture the 77-year old Nato alliance. The US, he insisted, despite recent statements by US officials to the contrary, was still the guarantor of security in Europe.

## RUSSIAN DOCTORS ARRESTED AFTER 9 BABIES DIE IN MATERNITY HOSPITAL



Two senior doctors have been arrested in Russia following the deaths of nine babies in a maternity hospital in Siberia this month. The newborns died during the long New Year holiday in Novokuznetsk, Russia's main investigative authority said in a statement. No reason for the babies' deaths has been given. The case has caused anger around Russia. All the babies were born in the Novokuznetsk Maternity Hospital No.1 from 1-12 January, with the first death on 4 January, Russia's Investigative Committee spokesman

Svetlana Petrenko said. Without giving details, the committee said the chief physician and the head of the intensive care unit had been detained for the "improper performance of their official and professional duties in organ-

ising and providing medical care". It said the suspects were co-operating with the investigation and authorities were deciding on charges as well as pre-trial detention. The committee released a video showing one man being escorted

away and a man signing some papers in the presence of a uniformed officer. Victims and witnesses had been questioned and materials seized as work continued to gather more evidence, it added. Nine post-mortem examinations were being carried out. The Interfax news agency said the Kemerovo Region Ministry of Health which was also investigating said the infants had had a severe intra-uterine infection. The hospital has announced that it is no longer accepting patients due to a higher-than-usual rate of respiratory infections.

## Uganda election chief says he has had threats over results declaration



The head of Uganda's electoral body says he has received threats warning him against declaring certain presidential candidates the winners of Thursday's election. Simon Byabakama said he would not be intimidated by such threats from senior state officials, whom he did not name. He was responding to a BBC question about a widely shared video which shows a presidential assistant saying the electoral commission would never declare opposition candidate Robert Kyagulanyi, popularly known as Bobi Wine, as president, even if he were to win. "Some people say if you don't declare so-and-so as president, you will see. I tell them that I am not in the business of donating votes," said Byabakama.

President Yoweri Museveni, 81, who has ruled the country for nearly four decades, is seeking a seventh term in office. Bobi Wine, a 43-year-old pop star turned politician, is Museveni's main challenger, seeking to unseat him for the second time after finishing runner-up in 2021 polls. Six other candidates are also in the race, in which about 21.6 million voters are registered to vote. Campaigning has been marked by the disruption of opposition activities, including the detention of activists and the breaking-up of rallies by police. At the Electoral Commission headquarters in the capital, Kampala, Byabakama said he was not worried about threats from what he called "idle people". "You can see from my demeanour that fear is a word that does not exist in my vocabulary," said the poll chief, adding that only the will of voters and the law would guide the process. In the video shared by the Daily Monitor newspaper on social media last week, Yiga Kisakye Mukama, the special presidential assistant for service delivery and monitoring, was captured saying Museveni would never leave power through the ballot.

## Greenlanders brace for summit that could shape the Arctic's future - and their own



take it "the easy way or the hard way". Ahead of Wednesday's talks, he said the US needed Greenland for national security, and Nato "should be leading the way for us to get it". After his recent controversial military action in Venezuela, people in Greenland are taking him at his word. The anxious countdown to the Washington meeting has been going on for days. Passers-by tell me it feels like years. "I would like to encourage (Donald Trump) to use both his ears wisely, to listen more and to speak less. We are not for sale. Our country is not for sale," Amelie Zeeb said, removing her chunky mittens, tradi-

tionally made here with seal-skin and known as pualuk, in order to wave her hands for emphasis. "My hope is for our country to be independent and well-managed and not be bought," said Inuit writer and musician, Sivissok Rask. While Maria, with her seven-week-old baby, wrapped snugly inside her winter coat, told me, "I worry for the future of my young family. We don't want all this attention here!" But international attention on Greenland is not going to disappear anytime soon. Far more hangs in the balance than the fate of this island

alone. The tussle over Greenland pits Nato nations Denmark and the US against one another. Greenland is a semi-autonomous territory of Denmark. The Danish prime minister Mette Frederiksen has warned that if the US takes control of the island by force, that will be the end of the transatlantic defence alliance that Europe has relied on for security for decades. It will also be another damaging blow to US-European relations, already badly bruised since Donald Trump's return to the White House. And remember: Europe's leaders are desperate to keep the Trump administration onside, to back a sustainable

peace deal for Ukraine too.

The potential ramifications of a fallout over Greenland are huge - but it is unclear how Washington intends to handle Wednesday's meeting. Will the spirit be one of compromise or confrontation? President Trump insists he needs Greenland for national security. If the US doesn't take Greenland, then China or Russia will, he says. Mindful of this, major European powers, which have vocally supported Danish sovereignty over Greenland, have also been scrambling to come up with military proposals to boost Nato's presence around the island and in the Arctic more broadly.

It's crunch time. The US Vice-President, JD Vance, is hosting the Danish and Greenlandic foreign ministers, as well as their US counterpart, Marco Rubio, in the White House on Wednesday. The focus of the talks: the future of the world's biggest island, Greenland. There is a large digital news ticker tape running above the snow-covered shopping mall in the island's capital, Nuuk. You don't have to speak Greenlandic to understand the words "Trump", "Greenland" and "sovereignty" that appear over and over again, in stark red letters. Donald Trump says he wants this territory and he'll



# AMATEUR STUNS WORLD'S BEST TO WIN AS\$1M IN MELBOURNE

Amateur player Jordan Smith would have been "happy winning just one point" - but walked away with A\$1m (£496,835) and bragging rights over world number two Janik Sinner as he triumphed at the Australian Open's Million Dollar One Point Slam. The innovative format offered amateur players the opportunity to win the prize money by playing a sole point against some of the sport's top talent and other famous faces. Smith was the star of the show on Rod Laver Arena, also defeating women's world number four Amanda Anisimova in front of almost 15,000 people. Smith faced women's world number 117 Joanna Garland in a fitting finale, after the Taiwanese 24-year-old stunned men's world number three Alexander Zverev and former Wimbledon finalist Nick Kyrgios. New South Wales state champion Smith was not the only amateur to seize his moment in the spotlight, with Queensland state champion Alec Reverente beating men's world number seven Felix Auger-Aliassime. As the two best performing amateurs, Smith and Reverente also went head-to-head to win a brand new car, with Reverente



triumphing. The tournament was played in good spirits - even a racquet smash by Kyrgios following his defeat was performed with humour - and generated genuine intrigue. Many of the beaten players, including men's number one Carlos Alcaraz, remained at Rod Laver Arena and gathered around televisions to watch the conclusion between the two unlikely finalists. The opening match set the tone for the evening when tennis coach Andres Schneiter knocked out men's world number 34 Corentin Moutet. The upsets kept on coming across the

quick-fire format as fellow players offered enthusiastic support from the side of the court and the crowd rallied behind the underdogs. British-born Garland, who was beaten in the first round of singles qualifying in Melbourne, appeared more stunned than anyone as she beat former women's world number three Maria Sakkari and 2024 Wimbledon semi-finalist Donna Vekic. Smith, meanwhile, did not need to hit a ball against Sinner after the men's world number two failed to land his serve - with professionals only granted one opportunity to get it right. He was not

done there, following up victory over Anisimova by beating 71st-ranked Spaniard Pedro Martinez to set up his shot at the prize money. "Coming into tonight I would have been happy winning just one point," said the 29-year-old Smith, who won national titles as a junior. "I was so nervous but enjoyed being out here, it was a great experience." Elsewhere, Sakkari ended Alcaraz's bid after the top-ranked men's player netted an attempted drop shot. Meanwhile six-time major winner Iga Swiatek saw off the men's world number 22 and 31 in Flavia Cobolli and Frances Tiafoe respectively before losing to Martinez. The event, held four days before the Australian Open starts on Sunday, featured a total of 48 competitors, including 24 top professionals. Eight amateur winners of state championship rounds, eight players who qualified in Melbourne, and another eight wildcards - including celebrities and invited personalities - made up the rest of the competition. Beginning with a game of 'rock, paper, scissors' to decide who serves, each match consisted of a single point, with the winner progressing in a knockout format.

## Mitchell Starc Wins Internet With 3-Word Post After Wife Alyssa Healy Announces Cricket Retirement

Australia pacer Mitchell Starc made a heartwarming post on social media after his wife Alyssa Healy announced her retirement from international cricket. Wicket-keeper batsman Healy, who has won six T20 World Cups, two 50-over World Cups and a Commonwealth Games gold in women's cricket, announced that she would retire following Australia's series against India in February and March. Starc captioned his post with a three-word phrase. The two have been married for nearly a decade, having tied the knot in April 2016. "Proud of ya," wrote Starc in a post on his Instagram story, along with a heart emoji. The 35-year-old pacer also made a separate post, celebrating Healy's Australia career. Healy made the announcement on the Willow Talk podcast she co-hosts, drawing curtains on a 16-year international career. Healy has also been one of the most



productive all-format run-scorers, with her 7,106 behind only Meg Lanning (8,352) and Ellyse Perry (7,607) for Australian women. "It's with mixed emotions that the upcoming India series will be my last for Australia," Healy said in a statement.

## Revised Guidelines For Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Trophy In Question, Panjab University Files Formal Complaint With Ministry

A major controversy has erupted surrounding the Khelo India University Games 2025. A government university in Punjab, Guru Nanak Dev University, has lodged a formal complaint with the Sports Ministry, alleging that sudden changes in the rules have undermined the fairness of the entire tournament. The university says that these changes have harmed government institutions while benefiting a private university. What is the issue? For nearly 65 years, the Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Trophy in Punjab has been awarded based on year-round sporting performance. International tournaments, All-India University Championships and consistent performance were given



importance. However, after the end of the 2023-24 sports session, the rules were changed. Earlier, the Khelo India University Games had only a 10-15 per cent weightage in determining the Abul Kalam Azad Trophy. This was suddenly increased to around 100 per cent. According to the complaint, before the rule change, the private university in question had only three medals.

But within a single session, this number jumped to 32 medals, and in the current session, it has risen further to 42 medals. Medals increased by adding expensive sports. The controversy doesn't end there. In 2024-25, sports like canoeing and kayaking were included in the Khelo India University Games. These decisions were taken during or after the sports session, by which

time most universities had already finalised their sports budgets and preparations. While these relatively expensive sports have about 10 Olympic events, the Khelo India University Games conducted nearly 30 events in these categories. These sports are costly and require special infrastructure that most government universities do not have. Allegation: Sports Were Chosen So That Only a Few Could Win The government university alleges that the organisers intentionally selected such sports and added more events in which only a few select universities could benefit. This drastically increased the chances of winning medals in expensive sports and disrupted the balance of the medal tally.

## "Delhi Not The Place To Host Badminton": World No. 3 Anders Antonsen Withdraws

In a significant blow to the ongoing India Open 2026, World No. 3 Anders Antonsen has officially withdrawn from the India Open 2026, citing hazardous air pollution levels in New Delhi. This marks the third consecutive year that the Danish star has opted out of the Super 750 event, a decision that has sparked a heated debate regarding the suitability of the Indian capital as a top-tier sporting venue during the winter months. Antonsen, who recently reached the semi-finals of the Malaysia Open, didn't hold back in his criticism of Delhi. Taking to social media, he shared a screenshot of Delhi's Air Quality Index (AQI) which has hovered in the "Severe" and



"Very Poor" categories between 300 and 400, stating that the city is currently not a fit environment for professional badminton. The Badminton World Federation (BWF) regulations mandate that the top 15 singles players must participate in Super 750 events or face financial penalties.

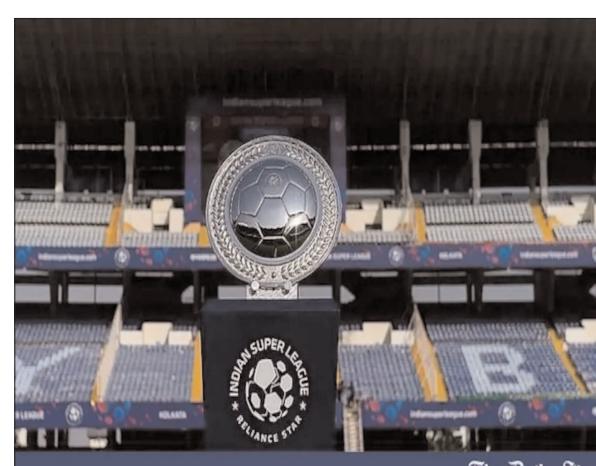
World Championships take place in Delhi. Antonsen is not alone in his grievances. His compatriot, Mia Blichfeldt, also voiced sharp criticisms after her first-round match at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium. While she praised the scale of the arena, she described the conditions as "unhealthy" and "unprofessional," citing a lack of cleanliness and even the presence of birds inside the hall. The timing of these withdrawals is particularly sensitive for the Badminton Association of India (BAI). The current tournament is being treated as a "test run" for the 2026 BWF World Championships, scheduled to be held at the same venue this August.

## SA20: Sikandar Raza Seals Dramatic Last-Ball Victory In Record Chase



Sikandar Raza climbed deeper into the hearts of the Paarl Royals faithful when the Zimbabwean international struck a six off the final ball to clinch a six-wicket victory at Boland Park on Tuesday evening. The Royals required six runs off David Wiese's final over, and the equation was reduced to two runs off the last delivery when Raza held his nerve in this Betway SA20 clutch moment to send the Royals fans into a state of delirium. It also saw the Royals complete the highest successful chase at Boland Park after Durban's Super Giants had posted an imposing 186/5. Raza finished on 27 not out (13 balls, 2x4, 2x6), but the Royals had plenty of heroes on this dramatic night, with Rubin Hermann (65 not out, 45 balls, 3x4, 3x6) and Dan Lawrence (63 off 41 balls, 2x4, 4x6) striking vital half-centuries to keep the chase alive. The third-wicket partnership between Hermann and Lawrence was pivotal, with the pair adding 106 runs off only 61

## Indian Super League To Kick Off On February 14 After All Clubs Confirm Participation



The running of the ISL from the 2025-26 season under a 20-year proposal sent to clubs, according to local media reports. "Many clubs had agreed earlier, but the remaining

few came on board on Tuesday," an AIFF source told AFP on condition of anonymity. Talks are continuing to finalise a home-and-away format for a 91-match season after sports

minister Mansukh Mandaviya announced last week that all 14 clubs would compete. Launched in 2014 with global stars such as Italy's Alessandro Del Piero, the franchise-based ISL aimed to give Indian football a glamorous reboot. But television ratings have slumped and sponsor interest has waned. The AIFF invited bids for a new commercial partner under the supervision of a Supreme Court-appointed committee, but failed to find any takers. Indian football has long struggled to find its footing on the global stage despite a passionate fan base and a rich history. India's men's team is a dismal 142nd in the FIFA world rankings.

## WHY OSIMHEN HAS BECOME 'KING OF NIGERIAN FOOTBALL'



The 27-year-old striker and his Nigeria team-mates face hosts Morocco in the semi-finals of the Africa Cup of Nations on Wednesday, with five wins from five games so far. Osimhen is joint second in the tournament's top scorers list with four goals, level with Liverpool and Egypt's Mohamed Salah and one behind Morocco's Brahim Diaz. But the tournament has not been plain sailing for Galatasaray striker Osimhen or the Super Eagles, with a high-profile on-field argument threatening to overshadow their impressive displays. His spat with Ademola Lookman during the 4-0 last-16 win over Mozambique attracted plenty of headlines, with reports - which Nigeria have denied - even suggesting Osimhen had threatened to quit the camp. Osimhen confronted Lookman over his failure to pass the ball to him in a clear goal-scoring position and then signalled to manager Eric Chelle to replace him, which he duly did. Osimhen went straight down the tunnel at full-time, not taking part in the on-field celebration. The storm has since died down, with players - including Osimhen himself and Chelle insisting any internal conflict had been squashed soon after the final whistle. But people who know him best insist Osimhen would not be the same striker without that will to win and say any accusations of selfishness towards the striker could not be further from the truth. With two goals needed to level the late Rashidi Yekini as Nigeria's record goal scorer with 37, Osimhen is on the brink of cementing his place in Nigerian football folklore. He said: "It doesn't matter if I equal the record or I surpass it. I think Mr Rashidi Yekini is the best striker the Super Eagles have ever produced. I'm just doing my best. Of course, it's amazing to be part of the history of the Super Eagles. So I'm just trying to win something important for my country. And I think with the help of my team-mates, I'm on that path." He's had a tough upbringing born in Lagos, the early years of the Galatasaray striker's life were unimaginably difficult.

## 'Game has gone' - bad night for VAR in semi-final



Manchester City's 2-0 win over Newcastle in the first leg of the Carabao Cup semi-final was overshadowed by a contentious decision to disallow a goal from Antoine Semenyo in the second half. The £65m January signing fired City ahead after 53 minutes and thought he had added a second 10 minutes later when he flicked Tijjani Reijnders' cross past Nick Pope. However, the forward was denied what would have been a third goal in two games for his new side after a five-and-a-half-minute VAR check determined Erling Haaland had interfered with play from an offside position. "The second goal should have stood," Semenyo said after the game. Haaland was jostling for position with Newcastle's Malick Thiaw

when he was deemed to have obstructed the defender from stopping Semenyo's effort. Both players were closer to goal than goalkeeper Pope, meaning that whether Haaland was ahead of Thiaw, the deepest Newcastle outfield player, was irrelevant. The factual offside appeared quite clear. However, a failure of the semi-automated offside technology meant the

lines had to be drawn manually and it was more than four minutes before an image confirming the offside was shown on the television coverage. In that time, the crowd at St James' Park had grown increasingly restless, with boos and anti-VAR chants filling much of the delay. After more than four minutes, referee Chris Kavanagh was finally sent to the screen

## Pawan Kalyan Creative Works and People Media Factory promise many interesting and diverse projects



Power Star Pawan Kalyan is one of the biggest stars of Indian Cinema and he established his revered production house, Pawan Kalyan Creative Works, to give talented individuals great opportunities to realise their creative dreams. Now, the production house has joined hands with another prominent production house, People Media Factory. These two organizations are preparing to deliver great films to the audience. Discussions regarding stories have

already started in the past and recently, on Bhogi day, they met again taking them to next level. Regarding the meeting between Pawan Kalyan and TG Vishwa Prasad, Pawan Kalyan Creative Works tweeted on X, "Marking the spirit of new beginnings on the auspicious occasion of Bhogi, and taking forward earlier discussions on upcoming projects, Sri @PawanKalyan met with @peoplemediafactory Producer Sri @vishwaprasadtg for further

## PRABHAS NIMMALA'S "MIRACLE" FIRST LOOK AS A SANKRANTI TREAT!!



As a special Sankranti gift, the first look of the action entertainer "Miracle", directed by Prabhas Nimmala, is all set to be released on January 16. Produced jointly by Ramesh Eggidi-Srikanth Mogadasu - Chander Goud under the banner Saida Family Entertainment, "Miracle" is being made on a prestigious scale. The film is directed by Prabhas Nimmala, who earlier impressed audiences with "Satya Gang" and "Fighter Shiva". Randheer Bhisu plays the lead role in the film, with Hebbah Patel as the

female lead and Akanksha as another heroine. Senior heroes Sriram and Suresh will be seen in key roles. The film also features an ensemble cast including Naresh Naidu, Janardhan, Yogi Khatri, Vijay Surya, Imtiyaz, Sai Baba, Dil Ramesh, Jhansi, Suryanarayana, Sridhar, Srikanth, Shiva, Aamani, Haimavathi, Navya (Ammu), Bejawada Mastan, Dheeraj Appaji, and others in important roles. With a strong cast and experienced technical team, "Miracle" promises to be an engaging action-packed entertainer.

## 'Kotha Malupu' First Look Launched as a Sankranti Treat – Akash & Bhairavi Ardhya as the Lead Pair

**Hyderabad:** Marking the festive occasion of Sankranti, the makers of 'Kotha Malupu' unveiled the film's first look, presenting it as a special treat for audiences. The film features Akash, son of renowned playback singer Sunitha, in the lead role, with Bhairavi Ardhya playing the female lead. Kotha Malupu is being produced under the Tadhastru Creations banner. The movie is directed by Shiva Varaprasad Keshanakurthi and produced by Tati Balakrishna. Senior actors Raghu Babu, Prudhvi, Prabhavathi, Mahender, DD Srinivas, and Kittayya will be seen in key supporting roles. Speaking about the film, director Shiva Varaprasad Keshanakurthi said, "We have blended romantic



love, suspense, and comedy in this film. The pair

## Grand Introduction of Hero Pidugu Vishwanath at 'Vedavyas' Launch During K. Atchi Reddy's Birthday Celebrations

On the occasion of the birthday of renowned producer K. Atchi Reddy, director SV Krishna Reddy's 43rd film "Vedavyas" hero Pidugu Vishwanath's introduction program was held in a grand manner. Director SV Krishna Reddy, who has given many great successes in the Telugu film industry with wholesome family entertainers, is producing his 43rd film "Vedavyas". This film is being presented by renowned producer K. Atchi Reddy and produced by renowned businessman and politician Kommuri Pratap Reddy under the banner of Sai Pragathi Films. It is noteworthy that South Korean actress Jun Hyun Ji is playing the heroine in this film. On Wednesday, producer K. Atchi Reddy celebrated his birthday and on Tuesday evening, along with his birthday celebrations, "Vedavyas" hero Pidugu Vishwanath was introduced. Actor Saikumar participated as a guest in this program held at the Film Nagar Cultural Center in Hyderabad. On this occasion

Actor Saikumar said - This is the first time I am acting in a film by Atchi Reddy and Krishna Reddy. However, I dubbed for their first dubbed movie Surya The Great. Since then, I have a good relationship with them. However, I have dubbed for their movies many times but for some reason I could not act. I am happy to get that opportunity with this film. I am playing a good character named Vedha Narayana in the movie "Vedavyas". It is



called Knowledge is Divine. SV Krishna Reddy is making this film so that the whole family can watch it together with the good theme that we should not forget our civilization. Atchi Reddy introduced our Adi with the movie Prema Kavali. I am as happy as I felt then, today I am equally happy to see Vishwanath being introduced as a hero. Pidugu Subbarao garu's son, who has been familiar to us in the film industry for many years, is coming before us as a hero. He should make a good name as a hero. I want this movie to be a big hit. Pidugu Subbarao said - I am very happy that my son Vishwanath is being introduced as a hero with the great combination movie of SV Krishna Reddy and Atchi Reddy garu. There has never been a time in my life when I have felt happier. My thanks to Krishna Reddy

garu and Atchi Reddy garu. He said. Journalist Prabhu said - I have worked as a PRO for many star hero films. I have a lot of friendship and connection with Atchi Reddy and Krishna Reddy. However, I did not work as a PRO for their films. One day, Atchi Reddy called me to his office and told me to work as a PRO for this movie. He had a great intention behind giving me this opportunity, which is that recently a tragedy happened in my life. With the idea of distracting me from those thoughts and keeping me busy in something, Atchi Reddy and Krishna Reddy hired me as the PRO for the movie "Vedavyas". What is a greater proof of his good intention than this? Krishna Reddy told me this story. He is going to bring a great film to us. He said. Hero Pidugu Vishwanath said - I am grateful to Atchi

villain. He said that it would be good to have a new hero and chose Vishwanath. After watching all of them in the movie, I understood how correct Krishna Reddy's judgment was. Saikumar garu played a major role named Vedha Narayana in this movie. Sai garu will get a lot of praise with this movie. We have been associated with him since our first movie. Politician and head of educational institutions, Kommuri Pratap Reddy garu, are good friends of ours. Pratap Reddy liked the script prepared by Krishna Reddy with the aim of spreading knowledge to the world and came forward to produce it. You will see how well Vishwanath acted as the hero in the film "Vedavyas" in the movie. He said. Director SV Krishna Reddy said - I am happy to introduce Vishwanath as a hero. He acted wonderfully in every scene in this film. He did good fights. I am saying this because I have shot it. Vishwanath will make a good name as a hero. Also, Saikumar garu played the key role of Vedha Narayana in our movie. He naturally acts well. Saikumar garu's performance in our movie gave me great satisfaction as a director. We took a Korean girl as the heroine in the movie "Vedavyas". She learned Telugu and dubbed for her. Also, the Mongolian villain acted well. We have very little to say here about this movie, which is being made to showcase the greatness of Indian culture and traditions. You will see everything else in the movie. He said.

## "Grateful to audiences for giving blockbuster talk to Anaganaga Oka Raju" – Star Entertainer Naveen Polishetty



With the aim of turning this Sankranti into a festival of laughter, star entertainer Naveen Polishetty arrived in theatres with Anaganaga Oka Raju. After delivering three consecutive blockbusters and earning a special place in the hearts of audiences, Naveen Polishetty plays the lead in this film. It is produced by Suryadevara Naga Vamsi and Sai Soujanya under the banners of Sithara Entertainments and Fortune Four Cinemas, and presented by Srikrupa Studios. The film is directed by debutant Mari, with Meenakshi Chaudhary as the female lead and music composed by Mickey J. Meyer. Released today (January 14) as a Sankranti treat amid huge expectations, Anaganaga Oka Raju has been receiving an extraordi-

nary response right from the first show. Audiences are calling it a true festival film that not only delivers nonstop laughter but also touches hearts with its emotional climax. With viewers showing immense love on the

film from the very first screening, the team held a success press meet to express their gratitude and share their happiness. Speaking at the event, Naveen Polishetty said, "First of all, Sankranti greetings to everyone. From

the overseas premiere shows itself, the response has been phenomenal. Everyone in theatres is thoroughly enjoying the film. Hearing audiences describe it as nonstop entertainment is incredibly gratifying. Those who

haven't watched the film yet, please book your tickets and go. You'll definitely enjoy it. This morning, we watched the film along with audiences at Sriramula Theatre in Hyderabad. From the first half to the second half, people were laughing continuously without any drop. At the same time, many said the emotion in the climax worked beautifully. People are saying they came to laugh freely but ended up with tears in their eyes in the end. My heartfelt thanks to every single viewer who gave Anaganaga Oka Raju blockbuster talk from the very first show. I also thank our media friends who stood by us with their support." Heroine Meenakshi Chaudhary said, "The wonderful response our film is receiving from audiences makes me extremely

## Anil Ravipudi Credits Chiranjeevi for the Mega Blockbuster Success of 'Mana Shankara Vara Prasad Garu' at Thank You Meet



Thank you so much to the Telugu audience all over the world who are celebrating Mana Shankara Vara Prasad Garu. The entire credit for this success goes to Chiranjeevi Garu. Director Anil Ravipudi on mega blockbuster Thank You Meet Megastar Chiranjeevi and hit machine Anil Ravipudi's mega blockbuster 'Mana Shankara Vara Prasad Garu' has entertained Victory Venkatesh in a key role. Produced by Sahu Garapati and Sushmita Konidela under the banners of Shine Screens and Gold Box Entertainments, the film has Nayanthara as the heroine. Smt. Archana presented the film. The premiere received a wonderful response. The film, which was released worldwide on January 12 as a Sankranti gift, is running housefull with record-breaking collections and a mega blockbuster success. On this occasion, the makers organized a mega blockbuster

thank you meet. Director Anil Ravipudi said in the Thank You Meet. Greetings to everyone. Thank you so much to all the Telugu audiences around the world who made this Sankranti so memorable for me. I will make such good films again and again and give you joy and express my gratitude through it. This is the script that I finished very fast in my career. I completed the script in 25 days. The reason for that is Megastar

Chiranjeevi. If you think about how the average audience admires Chiranjeevi garu without saying Chiranjeevi garu for a while.. If you want to speak the dialogues very coolly and with casual body language, it gave inspiration to that.. Chiranjeevi, if you want to make us all cry without tears coming out of our eyes.. Chiranjeevi, if you want to dance gracefully.. Chiranjeevi, if you want to light a cigarette with an atti- tude when standing in front of a hundred fighters and show your bossism.. Chiranjeevi.. Saying this, Chiranjeevi presented us all with his trademark style of acting in a wonderfully beautiful way. When I was writing the story for such a Chiranjeevi garu, I went along with all the special features he had. I went along with how he entertained for a few decades. That's why the script was finished so quickly. The inspiration for every scene written in this is Chiranjeevi garu. That is why I give all this credit to Chiranjeevi garu. My heartfelt gratitude to Chiranjeevi garu for giving me this opportunity. Today, Chiranjeevi garu's fans all over the world, all the audiences who admire Chiranjeevi garu as an actor, are celebrating this film. Chiranjeevi garu has given me the opportunity to create magic at every step in this film.