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Rahul Gandhi to attend  
TN school event in  
Nilgiris on Jan 13



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Iran warns it will retaliate  
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Pant ruled out of  
India's ODI series  
against New Zealand



**IN BRIEF**

Sonia Gandhi dis-  
charged from Ganga  
Ram hospital



**New Delhi (TSIT):** Congress leader Sonia Gandhi, who was admitted to Sir Ganga Ram Hospital here nearly a week ago for exacerbation of bronchial asthma due to chest infection, was discharged on Sunday, hospital authorities said. She has responded well to treatment with a good recovery, they said. "The veteran Congress leader was discharged from the hospital today at 5 pm, with advice to continue further treatment at her residence," a senior official of the hospital said. Gandhi was admitted to the hospital on the evening of January 5 under Dr Arup Basu, a chest physician, for "exacerbation of bronchial asthma due to chest infection," the official added.

**TELANGANA GOVT GEARS UP FOR  
SLBC TUNNEL RESUMPTION**



project as a top government priority, the Minister said the SLBC tunnel is a crucial component of the Alimineti Madhava Reddy Project (AMRP), launched in 1983 to address chronic irrigation and drinking water needs in drought-prone regions of Telangana. Stretching nearly 44 km, the SLBC tunnel is being excavated exclusively from two ends—the Srisailam inlet and the Devarkonda outlet—and, once completed, is expected to become the world's longest tunnel constructed without intermediate shafts, the Minister said. The tunnel is intended to irrigate about three lakh acres and supply drinking water to fluorite-affected villages.

Officials reported that excavation has reached 13.94 km from the inlet side and 20.4 km from the outlet, leaving approximately 9.8 km to be completed, including contingency length. The Minister instructed officials to ensure simultaneous excavation from both ends. The Minister was informed that the project site has been fully readied, including the removal of the Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) from the outlet side. Describing the

**Some tried to whitewash religiously motivated attacks for appeasement politics, says PM**

**Somnath :** Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched a strong attack on Sunday against those with a "slave mentality" who opposed the restoration of the Somnath Temple in 1951. He stated that such forces continue to employ "evil means" against India.

He pointed out that there were attempts to "whitewash" the religiously motivated attacks for the sake of "appeasement politics", asserting that the history of hatred and cruelty had been concealed from the public. Taking aim at the "people with slave mentality", PM Modi told the large gathering in Sadhbhava Maidan here, "India has sites like Somnath, thousands of years old, reflecting India's strength, resilience, and traditions. However, unfortunately, after Independence, people with a slave mentality tried to distance themselves from these. They made every effort to erase

such extremism", but still, some tried to oppose the idea of restoration of the shrine for their appeasement politics.

"If the attack on Somnath was merely economic, it would have stopped after the first big loot 1000 years ago; however, it was attacked time and again. We were taught that Somnath was looted for money. The history of hatred and cruelty was hidden from us,"

the history of this place." Remembering the people who made sacrifices for the protection of Somnath Temple, PM Modi, in his impassioned speech, rallied the crowd, stating, "Unfortunately, those who sacrificed everything for the temple weren't given importance, and some politicians and leaders tried to whitewash the religiously motivated attacks, calling them merely a loot for their appeasement politics. However,

Somnath was not attacked just once, but several times."

"If the attack on Somnath was merely economic, it would have stopped after the first big loot 1000 years ago; however, it was attacked time and again. We were taught that Somnath was looted for money. The history of hatred and cruelty was hidden from us," he added.

PM Modi said that those "who are true to their religion, will never support

**Telangana reels under intense cold wave conditions**



**Hyderabad (TSIT):** Telangana is under the grip of intense cold wave conditions with the lowest temperature dropping to below 10 degrees Celsius at some places. According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), Adilabad recorded the lowest temperature of 7.7 degrees Celsius on Sunday.

Kohir in Sangareddy district saw the minimum temperature of 7.9 degrees Celsius. The SLBC works had remained stalled since February 22, 2025 following a major cave-in inside the tunnel. Describing the

their hometowns to celebrate Sankranti are facing hardships. Thousands of families travelling from Hyderabad to various places in Telangana and neighbouring Andhra Pradesh were suffering due to chilly weather.

According to the IMD, the cold conditions are expected to persist for the next three days due to lower-level winds originating from the east and south-east. Residents can expect temperatures to range between 11 and 15 degrees Celsius during this period.

Meanwhile, the weather data shows that winter 2025 has emerged as one of the coldest and most prolonged spells Telangana has seen in the past decade. December recorded an unusually high number of cold-wave days.

The State witnessed 18 cold-wave days in December 2025, a steep jump from just two such days in December 2024 and the highest count recorded in the last 10 years. The month alone saw two severe cold waves.

**BJP no alternative to Congress in Telangana, says KTR**

**Hyderabad (TSIT) :** Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) working president K.T. Rama Rao on Sunday asserted that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) will never emerge as a viable alternative to the Congress party in Telangana.

Addressing a preparatory meeting for the upcoming municipal elections with key leaders from Adilabad and Medak districts, he emphasised that the political battle in the state remains a direct contest between the BRS and the Congress. During the strategy meeting, which was also attended by senior leader and Deputy Floor Leader T. Harish Rao, KTR provided direction to district presidents and public representatives on the roadmap for the municipal elections.

**Will not tolerate attempts to damage Vizag's brand image: CM Naidu**



AP CM N. Chandrababu Naidu on Sunday made it clear that attempts to damage Visakhapatnam's brand image will not be tolerated. He congratulated the Visakhapatnam Police for unravelling the facts behind the attack on a woman in the city by arresting the suspect.

Two days ago, a woman named Vijayadurga posted on social media that she was attacked and abused by a man at Jagadamba Centre in Visakhapatnam.

The police responded immediately and arrested the person responsible for the incident. However, the preliminary investigation revealed that his mental condition was not good.

Officials said the victim expressed satisfaction over the police responding immediately after receiving the information about the incident and arresting the person involved. Though the identity of the accused was not known, the police conducted the investigation and identified and arrested the accused. The woman herself came to the police station

and confirmed that the man was not mentally sound. She requested that he be admitted to a mental hospital. The victim also requested that legal action not be taken against the accused.

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu praised the performance of the police, saying that this is proof that law and order is excellent in Visakhapatnam. He said that the Andhra Pradesh Police Department is committed to the safety of the people. Stating that Visakhapatnam ranks first in the country in

Indian govt inviting Chinese companies to invest even after Op Sindoor: Owaisi

**Jalna (TSIT):** The All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) chief Asaduddin Owaisi, on Sunday, January 11, questioned the ruling BJP's nationalist credentials, accusing the Centre of inviting Chinese companies to invest in India even after Operation Sindoor and failing to respond to what he called US President Donald Trump's repeated insults.

There has been no response from either the government or the BJP on Owaisi's accusations so far. The Hyderabad MP was addressing a rally for AIMIM candidates contesting the January 15 elections to the Jalna Municipal Corporation polls. His party has fielded candidates in 17 of the 65 electoral wards in the civic body. Asaduddin Owaisi alleged that China had supplied arms to Pakistan during Operation Sindoor, which India had launched to respond to the Pahalgam terror attack. He claimed that nearly 80 per cent of Pakistan's military equipment was sourced from China.

The mercury dropped to 9.2 degrees Celsius in Patancheru near Hyderabad, while Rajendra Nagar and Hayath Nagar on the outskirts of Hyderabad recorded minimum temperatures of 10.5 and 12.5 degrees Celsius, respectively.

The minimum temperature was appreciably below normal in Adilabad, Medak and Patancheru. These places recorded a minimum temperature of 3.1 to 5 degrees Celsius below normal. Hanamkonda, Hyderabad, Nalgonda, Nizamabad,

and Ramagundam and Rajendra Nagar recorded minimum temperature 1.6 to 3 degrees below normal.

A total of 12 districts reported temperatures below 10 degrees Celsius, with eight districts recording temperatures between 10.1 and 11 degrees Celsius, and the remaining districts logging temperatures between 11.1 and 14 degrees Celsius.

Cold winds were causing significant distress to residents across the state, with the chilly weather persisting from night to till 11 in the morning.

The biting winds are particularly pronounced between 7 a.m. and 11 a.m. and again from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. People heading to

their homes to celebrate Sankranti are facing hardships. Thousands of families travelling from Hyderabad to various places in Telangana and neighbouring Andhra Pradesh were suffering due to chilly weather.

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The State

## Rahul Gandhi to attend TN school event in Nilgiris on Jan 13

Chennai, Jan 11 : Senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is scheduled to visit Gudalur in the Nilgiris district on January 13 to attend the golden jubilee celebrations of St Thomas English High School. Party sources said the visit is purely ceremonial, with no political programmes or public meetings planned during his brief stay in the hill town.

According to Congress functionaries, Rahul Gandhi will arrive by helicopter from Mysuru at around 3.30 p.m. After attending the event at the school, he is expected to depart by 4.30 p.m. Apart from a formal reception to be accorded by local Congress leaders at the helipad, no additional engagements have been scheduled.

"As far as we know, the leader has no political events or meetings during this visit," a senior Congress functionary said.

This marks Rahul Gandhi's second visit to Gudalur in recent years. He last visited the region in September 2022 during the Bharat Jodo Yatra, when he addressed supporters and spoke about the scenic beauty of the Western Ghats. During



that visit, he stayed overnight at a private school before continuing his journey towards Karnataka as part of the nationwide march. The golden jubilee celebrations of St Thomas English High School are also likely to be attended by Rev Dr Mathews Mar Makarios Episcopa, Metropolitan of the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church, lending prominence to the event.

Rahul Gandhi's visit comes at a time when the DMK-Congress alliance in Tamil Nadu is facing political undercurrents. In recent weeks, some

Congress functionaries and elected representatives have publicly sought a greater share in power, triggering discussions within the ruling alliance.

The Congress has also intensified its criticism of the BJP over the recent censorship controversy surrounding Vijay's latest film, 'Jana Nayagan', an issue that has sparked sharp political reactions in the state. Meanwhile, sources said the Congress high command is preparing to hold a key meeting in New Delhi to review the party's poll preparedness in Tamil Nadu. Mallikarjun

Kharge and Rahul Gandhi are likely to meet the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee (TNCC) president, former TNCC presidents, and elected representatives from the state on January 18. The meeting was earlier proposed for January 14 but has since been rescheduled. A senior party leader said such meetings are part of the Congress' established practice of holding consultations with leaders from poll-bound states to assess the political situation and fine-tune organisational and electoral strategies ahead of upcoming elections.



## Women-led development at the heart of PM Modi govt's policies: Hardeep Puri

New Delhi, Jan 11 : Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Sunday said that government schemes under Prime Minister Narendra Modi have transformed India's development journey by shifting the focus from women-centred welfare to women-led growth, ensuring dignity, security and greater participation of women in nation-building.

Puri was speaking after an interaction with professionals, industry leaders, academicians, entrepreneurs and students at the 'Professionals Connect 2026' conclave organised

by the Tamil Nadu BJP Professional Cell in Coimbatore. He described Coimbatore as a city that reflects enterprise, discipline and quiet confidence.

"India's quest towards achieving energy security by strengthening and expanding the energy infrastructure across the entire hydrocarbons value chain, and the focus on green energy transition also play a key role in this journey of Viksit Bharat under PM Modi's leadership," he added.

During the discussion, Puri highlighted the positive impact of the Modi government's reforms and policies, saying they have strengthened the India growth story and placed the country on track to become the world's third-largest economy.

"I have had the privilege of being associated with several of PM Modi's

visionary schemes that changed lives for the better and evoked interest around the world. These schemes have shifted the narrative from women-centred development to women-led development," he added.

He said India has already achieved 20 per cent biofuel blending and is making steady progress in future fuels such as green hydrogen as part of the vision of a developed India.

## 'Reflects Himanta Biswa Sarma's Pakistani thinking', Owaisi hits out at 'Hindu PM' remark

Nagpur, Jan 11 : AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi on Sunday slammed Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma over his assertion on the religious identity of India's leadership, stating that it reflects his "Pakistani thinking".

This came as CM Sarma, on Saturday, said that while the Constitution does not restrict anyone from becoming the Prime Minister, the country's civilisational ethos would ensure that the post remains with a Hindu.

Speaking to IANS, Owaisi said, "His mind is like a tubelight. He



took an oath on the Constitution. Where in the Constitution is this written? Himanta Biswa Sarma's thinking reflects that of Pakistan's, where the Constitution allows only a person from a particular community to become Prime Minister or President. In contrast, the Constitution of India, framed by Dr B.R. Ambedkar, is far more inclusive and thoughtful."

"It is unfortunate that some people neither understand the Constitution nor its spirit. India does not belong to any single community; its beauty lies in the fact

that even those who do not follow any religion have a place here. Such narrow-minded thinking reflects a petty mindset," Owaisi added. Addressing the media, Chief Minister Sarma had said there is "no constitutional bar" on who can occupy the highest executive office in the country.

"Anybody can become the Prime Minister of India," he said, but added that India is essentially a Hindu civilisation and expressed confidence that the Prime Minister would always emerge from that civilisational framework.

## CII urges Centre to fast-track privatisation of PSUs

New Delhi, Jan 11 : Apex business chamber CII, in its proposals for the Union Budget 2026-27, has urged the Central government to mobilise resources through a calibrated approach to privatisation to unlock the value of public sector enterprises. Chandrasekhar Banerjee, Director General, CII, said, "India's growth story is increasingly being powered by private enterprise and innovation. A forward-looking privatisation policy, aligned with the vision of Viksit Bharat, will enable the government to focus on its core functions while empowering the private sector to accelerate industrial transformation and job creation." Against this backdrop, CII has called for accelerating the implementation of the Government's Strategic Disinvestment Policy, which envisions an exit from all Public Sector

Enterprises (PSEs) in non-strategic sectors and a minimal presence in strategic ones. To strengthen and expedite the privatisation programme, CII has outlined a four-pronged comprehensive strategy. First, CII recommends a shift to a demand-based approach in selecting PSEs for privatisation. Presently, the government identifies specific enterprises for sale and subsequently invites investor interest. However, when sufficient demand or valuation is not achieved, the process often stalls. CII suggests reversing this sequence by first gauging investor interest across a broader set of enterprises and then prioritising those that attract stronger interest and meet valuation expectations. Such an approach, CII believes, would ensure smoother execution and better price discovery.

# Haryana's Sports Policy: Why Under Criticism?



Jag Mohan Thakur

Two teenage basketball players - Hardik and Aman, died in separate accidents in Haryana after court poles collapsed on them during practice sessions in November 2025. Both the players belonged to Rohtak, Haryana. The painful death of these two promising Haryana Basketball players, not only exposed the ruined infrastructure of playgrounds, but also showed the negligence of the sports officials and the sports department.

These shameful incidents and the negligent and unheeding sports policy of the present BJP-led government has not only fetched criticism from the public but also from politicians. Criticising BJP's sports policy, former Haryana Chief Minister, Bhupinder Singh Hooda, stated that during the Congress tenure, 481 sports stadiums were built in Haryana, and two SAI centres were established. However, the BJP government has not even provided a budget for the maintenance of these stadiums. The BJP government has grossly neglected the interests of sports and athletes in Haryana. The BJP government also scrapped the 'Win a Medal, Get a Job' policy, which the Congress government had implemented

to secure the future of athletes. The Congress government had formulated the SPAT policy to promote sports and athletes from the first grade onwards at the school level, which the BJP government ultimately abolished. Under the SPAT policy, daughters from the Scheduled Caste community received an incentive of 40,000 upon reaching the district/state level, which the BJP government also discontinued.

Hooda claimed that the Congress government provided employment to 750 athletes in various positions. The BJP government has not provided any appointments to date and has deprived athletes of promotions. They have also been denied cash awards since 2021. Furthermore, this government has even abolished competitions held at the rural level.

In a press statement on January 8, 2026, the former Chief Minister accused the BJP of discriminating against Haryana in matters of sports. He said that the BJP-led central government is deliberately spending very little on Haryana, a state that has brought glory to the country worldwide. On the other hand, the BJP government in Haryana is sitting idly by instead of fighting for the rights of the people of Haryana.

Hooda cited the example of the National Games held in Uttarakhand. He said that in Haryana, only Rs. 4.5 lakh was spent per medal. In contrast, other states like Maharashtra spent Rs. 43.50 lakh, Madhya Pradesh Rs. 1.13 crore, Delhi Rs. 1.13 crore, Bihar Rs. 1.69 crore, Uttar Pradesh Rs. 7.85



crore, and Gujarat Rs. 11.21 crore. These figures show that the investment made in sports in Haryana always yields results. Despite this, Haryana is being ignored in everything from releasing the sports budget to organizing the Olympics. Even in the 'Khelo India' budget of Rs. 3,500 crore, Haryana received only Rs. 80 crore.

Bhupinder Singh Hooda said that despite having only 2% of India's total population, Haryana contributes approximately 50% of India's international medals.

At every platform - the Olympics, Asian Games, and Commonwealth Games - Haryanvi athletes have been raising India's flag high for years. Therefore, Haryana's participation and representation in important events like the Commonwealth Games is extremely natural and justified.

Demanding for organizing

Commonwealth Games in the state, Hooda said, if some events of the Commonwealth Games are held in Haryana, it will not only give young players experience in global competitions but will also provide a strong foundation for the sports ecosystem in the state, along with numerous benefits in the form of advanced stadiums, training centres, and modern sports infrastructure.

Congress MP Deepender Singh has also alleged that the Central Government is undermining Haryana's interests, while the State Government is sitting mute. He said the central government and the state BJP government are completely ignoring and neglecting Haryana's rights. Through a press statement, on January 6, 2026, the Congress MP demanded that Haryana be designated as the host or co-host state for the 2030

Commonwealth Games and the 2036 Olympics announced by the Government of India in Gujarat. He said Haryana, a state that brings 50% of the medals to India from the Commonwealth Games, Asian Games, and Olympics, has been ignored. "In the last four Olympics, Haryana athletes won more than half of the country's total medals. In the last Olympics, approximately 25% of the athletes were from Haryana. We are proud that since 2006, Haryana has contributed 50 percent of the medals and 25 percent of the athletes in all the Games, including the Olympics," he said.

"However, when our country was given the opportunity to host the 2030 Commonwealth Games, the BJP government at the centre did not choose Haryana as the host state. Instead, Gujarat was selected. Lakhs of crores of Rupees will

now be invested in Ahmedabad for the 2030 Commonwealth Games, and sports infrastructure will be built. If this same sports infrastructure, stadiums, and development had been spent in Haryana, lakhs of crores of Rupees would have been spent on it," he pointed out. "The government has announced the submission of official bids to host the 2036 Olympics in Gujarat. Now, the entire sports budget will be spent there, but if this investment had been made in Haryana, it's easy to imagine how many more medals our athletes would have won. Making Haryana at least a co-host state for the 2030 Commonwealth Games and 2036 Olympics would have diverted some of the crores of Rupees from the budget to Haryana's sports infrastructure and improved the state's sports infrastructure," he added.

Deepender Singh added that Haryana received the lowest budget in India's 'Khelo India'. "Gujarat received 600 crore of the country's 3500 crore 'Khelo India' budget, while Haryana, which won the most medals, received only 80 crore, the lowest among the 28 states. The 481 sports stadiums built during the previous Congress government, including the Rajiv Gandhi Sports Stadium and numerous international-level stadiums, have fallen into disrepair and are proving fatal for our athletes. After 2019, these stadiums have been left without repairs, upgrades, or new ones. Sports equipment remains scarce, not to mention the lack of proper infrastructure," he pointed out.

On the other hand, Haryana's Sports Minister, Gaurav Gautam claimed that the main objective of the state government is to provide excellent and modern facilities to players. With this vision, the Haryana Government has released Rs.114 crore through the Sports Department for the repair and rejuvenation of sports stadiums across the state. Work has already started at several locations. He informed that additional resources will be spent by the District Sports Council (DSC) to further improve the grading of the sports fields, and a detailed plan is being prepared for this.

While chairing a review meeting on January 2, at Tau Devi Lal Stadium, Panchkula, with officers of the Sports Department, Sports University, Rai (Sonipat), and the Public Works Department (PWD), the Sports Minister, Gaurav Gautam, discussed the issue of finalising the drawings and designs of modern sports infrastructure.

The Sports Minister directed that officers at the Deputy Director level must conduct surprise inspections of stadiums in their respective districts at least twice a month. Any shortcomings noticed during inspections will be addressed in a time-bound manner, and accountability of the concerned officers will also be fixed. He said that regular monitoring of sports infrastructure is essential to bring real improvement at the grassroots level.

It seems that the state government has started to pay attention towards the weakness of the system.



## EDITORIAL

## A Conversation About Israel That Felt Uncomfortably Familiar

There is a poem by the great German poet Bertolt Brecht. It goes:

General, your tank is a powerful vehicle  
It smashes down forests and crushes a hundred men.  
But it has one defect:  
It needs a driver. General, your bomber is powerful.  
It flies faster than a storm and carries more than an elephant.  
But it has one defect:  
It needs a mechanic.

General, human beings are very useful.  
They can fly and they can kill.  
But they have one defect:  
They can think.

It is difficult to predict, in this day and age, how long this poem will remain relevant. But upon seeing, hearing and speaking with Aida Touma-Suleiman in Jerusalem, this poem came to mind vividly. Sixty-one-year-old Aida Touma-Suleiman is a member of Israel's parliament, known as the Knesset. She is an Israeli citizen, of Arab-Christian origin, but she declares herself an atheist.

She is a member of Israel's Communist Party, and represents the coalition Hadash, a feminist, the editor of the party's Arabic-language newspaper Al-Ittihad – the first and only female editor in Israel. She is also the first female member of the "high-level committee for Arab Citizens of Israel". She fights for the rights of Israeli citizens, but also for that of the Palestinian people.

Meeting her reminded me of all those activist comrades in my own country who, despite not being Muslim, Christian, Dalit, LGBTQ++ or Adivasi, fight for human justice and often face criticism within their own communities. She is also famous for having passed a law in the Knesset, raising the legal age of marriage for women in Israel from 17 to 18.

The conversation I had with her was about Israel, but my own country, India, repeatedly came to my mind with various similar observations. Officially, Israel is a democracy and so is India. But Hitler too rode the chariot of democracy to reach fascist dictatorship, and we see the same is happening in India and Israel today. The capitalist ruling class uses the guise of democracy to carry out anti-people work and secures legitimacy for those crimes in the name of democracy. Whereas, the Left wants to establish that very democracy in the true sense for the welfare and upliftment of the people.

Aida says, "It is true that we have gained a few rights by virtue of being Israeli citizens. We are a group of Israeli Arab citizens, who are indigenous to this land, so we can form our own political party, raise our issues in politics, and contest elections. We also have some scope to raise our voice, however little, against any wrong step taken by the Israeli government. But this was true two years ago."

"Now, replace 'is' with 'was' in these statements – all these things have become matters of the past. It is true that whatever democracy existed in Israel, it was the only so-called democracy in the Middle-Eastern countries, and by that token, we had some rights, but in the last two years, these rights have been completely stripped away. In the last two years, an entirely new kind of situation has been created, and it is taking new shape every single day," she adds. Aida did not condemn the October 7, 2023, Hamas attack in the Israeli Knesset and instead raised her voice against the atrocities by the Israeli army. In response, she was suspended from parliament for two months and penalised with a two-week salary cut. Aida also accused the Israeli army and rulers of bombing hospitals in Gaza, as a result of which only seven out of 48 surgeons survived. She condemned the Israeli army's attack on displaced and unarmed people and refused to apologise or retract her statement.

## Edit

CHENNAI  
MONDAY, JANUARY 12, 2026

4

## India's Biggest Policy Challenge Will be Dealing with the US



The US will be India's biggest foreign policy challenge this year far more than it was in 2025. This, when a strategic option has been available to India for the US to woo it instead of the present pathetic state where president Trump openly ridicules prime minister Modi. He has done this regularly since India denied Trump the credit of the ceasefire in Operation Sindo.

The strategic option is for India to turn the table on the US by normalising its ties with China. This will strengthen the Russia-India-China (RIC) format that grew into Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (BRICS) which Trump fears since it has the potential to displace (not replace) the US dollar as the world's reserve currency. To recall, the now famous picture frame of the smiling trio: Putin (President Putin), Xi (President Xi Jinping), and Modi, taken at the SCO summit in Tianjin (China) on September 1, 2025 had sent shock waves across Washington DC with many US Senators blaming the Trump administration for having lost India to China, described as the US's peer competitor in this century. But, for India to do this requires more than courage and wisdom, which itself is a challenge. It requires intellectual honesty to accept that in the present multipolar world, China is a great power whose geo-economics and technology rise manifested in Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is both unstoppable and uncatchable. Given this, instead of competing with China in South Asia where except for Bhutan all nations have joined the BRI, India would be better served by working with China for mutually beneficial outcomes. This, of course, will not happen as India, with a colonial mindset, would prefer to be photographed with the US leadership, never mind the cost for doing this. And the cost has been huge. Conscious that US could not sustain global military dominance, Trump, describing himself as the 'President for Peace', decided in his first year to minimise the security competition

with China in west Pacific and downgrade the QUAD (Quadrilateral security dialogue between US, Japan, Australia and India for free and open Indo-Pacific region). This robbed India of the strategic role of being the US's military bulwark against China in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). Interestingly, this role was formally given to India by the first Trump administration in May 2018 when it re-named the US' Pacific Command (responsible for Asia Pacific region) as the US' Indo-Pacific Command to give centrality to India. Now, Trump, the maverick president, talks too much, and thus shares his thoughts to whoever is willing to listen. Given that, since his inauguration on January 20, 2025, Trump started talking about getting Greenland, making Canada the 51st American state and so on, prudence should have guided the Modi government to wait and watch to understand his foreign policy priorities. But, in the rush to be amongst the earliest to please Trump, Modi, on his first visit to the White House, signed the February 13, 2025 joint statement which gave US far more than it expected. India commit-

ted to raise the present bilateral trade at USD 132 billion (2024-25) to USD 500 billion by 2030. With this, India agreed to buy energy (including nuclear), military equipment, green and big (Artificial Intelligence infrastructure) technologies, space cooperation and so on. Moreover, India renewed the 10-year defence framework till 2035 with US on October 31, 2025 for joint production and interoperability with the US military. All this was done to demonstrate India's total commitment to Trump's foreign policy called Make America Great Again (MAGA). This is no more than an illusion that the US could once again become the superpower.

With no card left to play, the

Modi government's problems with the US started with Operation Sindo. Trump was livid at being denied his peace-making role in Operation Sindo by India. Interestingly, there is enough evidence in support of Trump's claim. For example, he put on his social media account on May 10, 2025 that India and Pakistan had agreed to 'full and immediate ceasefire'. This was confirmed by India the same evening. Then, The Hindu

newspaper reported on January 7, 2026 that the Indian embassy had hired a US lobby firm to fix meetings with top US officials on May 10 to discuss 'media coverage' on Operation Sindo. Instead of assuaging Trump, India's actions incited him to publicly say over 60 times that he ended the India-Pakistan war. Trump's tirade, especially on Modi, has continued unabated. He recently said that India has decreased purchase of oil from Russia since Modi knows it is important to keep him happy.

On the one hand, Trump's outbursts demeaning Modi should be unacceptable to India. On the other hand, it will be difficult for Modi to meet Trump in person as he can insult him on his face.

Given the political angst, it will be difficult to continue business as usual between the two nations.

To add to India's anxiety, Trump, after Operation Sindo, has given a strategic role to Pakistan in the Middle East to share its assessments on Iran, which the US regards as its main enemy.

Despite the choices the multipolar world offers to India, the Modi government remains a prisoner of its archaic foreign policy, condemned to bear Trump's hubris.

## PARASAKTHI DELIVERS A FIERY POLITICAL STATEMENT



Parasakthi. The Supreme Power. Sivaji Ganesan's Parasakthi in 1952 showcased Dravidian ideology and created a cultural movement in Tamil Nadu. In 2026, Sivakarthikeyan's Parasakthi focuses on the anti-Hindi agitations of the 1960s spearheaded by DMK's CN Annadurai. Director Sudha Kongara has crafted a highly-nuanced fictional story based on Tamil Nadu's political history. Set in Madurai, Parasakthi revolves around Chezhian (Sivakarthikeyan) who is the leader of the Pooranaanooru squad, an anti-Hindi student group. His younger brothers, Chinmadurai (Atharvaa) and Rathnamala (Sreeleela), are also part of this strong anti-Hindi movement of the time. As the film progresses, we are taken through the student uprising and how ruthless and spiteful police officer Thirunaadan (Jayam Ravi, the antagonist) is hell-bent on putting an end to it. Parasakthi is mainstream Tamil cinema spoken in the language of politics, ideology, and moral urgency. Director Sudha Kongara has done an exceptional job. She stages the film like an argument - measured in the early stretches, then steadily sharpening into a forceful declaration. She refuses to dilute the film's politics for easy applause, choosing instead to root the narrative in class conflict, institutional power, and moral resistance. The movie progresses slowly and this could be jarring for some. However, this story cannot be rushed because it is not event-driven - it is about political awakening and moral conflict. Some of the hard-hitting dialogues in the film reflect this conflict as well turning into goose bump moments. LAT-EST "At Peak Of Hubris": Khamenei Draws Historical Parallels In 'Will Shoot First, Ask Questions Later'.

Parallels In 'Will Shoot First, Ask Questions Later': Denmark's Greenland Mamata Banerjee Leads Rally, Judge Leaves Courtroom Amid I-P Why S Jaishankar Had To Travel 670 Km By Road In US To Meet 'Can Only Work With States We Trust': Israel Rejects Pak Arm "Worst Criminal Of Humanity": Pak Minister Wants US To "Kidn BCCI Breaks Silence On Bangladesh's Demand To Shift Its T20 Bangladesh Suffer Big Financial Setback, Players To Lose Spo Bangladesh Players Tear Into Board Official Who Called Tamim 'Umar Khalid, Sharjeel Imam In Jail Due To Congress": A Owai Russia Hits Ukraine With A Missile That Travels At 10 Times "Not Accurate": Centre On Trump Aide's PM Didn't Call US P No Release For Jana Nayagan Till Jan 21, Court In Fresh Sett "At Peak Of Hubris": Khamenei Draws Historical Parallels In 'Will Shoot First, Ask Questions Later'.

## The Pawars Are Talking Again, And So Are Thackerays



Maharashtra's political landscape is witnessing unprecedented realignments as the state prepares for municipal corporation elections across 29 bodies, a poll that comes four years behind schedule. The most significant of these changes involves the coming together of estranged Thackeray cousins and tentative steps toward reconciliation between the rival Pawar factions. The Thackeray Reunion In a development that few saw coming, Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) has broken away from the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) alliance to join hands with cousin Raj Thackeray's Maharashtra Navnirman Sena for the elections to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC). This partnership represents more than mere electoral convenience; it is a strategic attempt by both cousins to reclaim the legacy of the legendary Balasaheb Thackeray, whose towering personality once dominated Maharashtra politics. The alliance is built on carefully calculated electoral arithmetic. Together, the Thackerays are wooing the Marathi Manoos, who constitute approximately 40% of Mumbai's population, while also banking on support from the Muslim community, which makes up about 20%. The reasoning behind this strategy is straightforward: the united Thackeray front believes it is better positioned to defeat the Bharatiya Janata Party than the Congress, hence leaving no option for the Muslim community but to back

them. The seat-sharing arrangement reflects the relative strengths of the partners. Shiv Sena (UBT) will contest 165 seats, MNS will field candidates in 52 constituencies, while the Nationalist Congress Party (Sharadchandra Pawar faction) will contest just 10 seats as part of this new coalition. At a joint press conference announcing the tie-up, the Thackeray brothers invoked a potent warning to the Marathi Manoos: "batenge to katenge" - divided we fall, united we stand, taking cue from the BJP's slogan in the 2024 state elections. High Stakes For Uddhav's Shiv Sena For Uddhav Thackeray, these municipal elections represent nothing short of an existential battle. Shiv Sena held sway over the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation for nearly three decades, making it not just a political bastion but a symbol of the party's power and reach. The 2022 split that saw Eknath Shinde walk away with a majority of MLAs has left Uddhav's faction at seri-

ous risk of losing this crucial stronghold. The battle between the two Shiv Sena factions has produced mixed results so far. In what can be termed Round One, the Lok Sabha elections, Uddhav's faction emerged victorious. However, Round Two - the Vidhan Sabha polls - went to Eknath Shinde's faction. These municipal corporation elections, particularly in Mumbai, represent the decisive Round Three that could determine which faction truly inherits Balasaheb's mantle. Uddhav has reasons for optimism. Of the 20 seats his party won in the 2024 Vidhan Sabha polls, half came from the Mumbai region corresponding to the BMC. While the party's overall vote share across Maharashtra stood at just 10%, in the Mumbai region it was an impressive 24%. This concentrated support could prove crucial in municipal elections where local factors often outweigh state-level considerations. The MNS, despite its small footprint, also has a significant presence in Mumbai. While it recorded less than 2% vote share statewide in the 2024 state elections, it managed 7% in the Mumbai zone, suggesting that Raj Thackeray's appeal, though diminished, remains relevant in the city where his party was born. In direct contests between the two Shiv Sena factions, the scoring has been close. Of 11 such fights, Uddhav's party won six while Shinde's faction won five, indicating that the battle for Balasaheb's legacy remains evenly poised. An Ascendia Strategies survey adds another dimension to this contest, revealing that 45% of Marathi Manoos' in Mumbai believe Shiv Sena (UBT) is the real Sena - a significant psychological advantage in a battle fought as much over legitimacy as over votes. Formidable Challenges Ahead Despite these encouraging signs, the Thackeray brothers face severe challenges that could undermine their alliance.

# Selfie, 'penny drop' mandated as KYC for crypto customers in India

New Delhi: Selfie with liveness detection, recording of geographical coordinates, and verification of bank account by the 'penny-drop' method are among the mandatory new measures listed by India's financial intelligence agency under the anti-money laundering and terrorist financing KYC protocols for cryptocurrency exchanges while onboarding users. The directives also discourage Initial Coin Offerings (ICOs) and Initial Token Offerings (ITOs), equivalent to IPOs in stock markets, by the exchanges. They say that tumblers, mixers, and anonymity-enhancing tokens-linked transactions shall "not" be facilitated. PTI has reviewed the updated set of guidelines brought out by the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), a body that functions under the Union Finance Ministry, on January 8 as part of the 'anti-money laundering (AML) and combating financing of terror (CFT) guidelines for reporting entities providing services related to virtual digital assets (cryptocurrency).' The guidelines have been updated about three years after they were first published in March 2023. The FIU is the



single-point regulator for cryptocurrency exchanges (reporting entities or VDA service providers) operating in India under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The fresh guidelines mean that all crypto exchanges must register with FIU as reporting entities and submit regular reports on suspicious transactions and maintain records of their clients (customers) to identify and combat money laundering, terrorist financing and proliferation financing risks associated with crypto assets, which India has not identi-

fied as a legal tender but taxes under the Income-Tax law. The guidelines stipulate that exchanges should "mandatorily" obtain the Permanent Account Number (PAN), selfie with liveness detection, and latitude and longitude coordinates of the onboarding location with date and timestamp, alongwith the IP (Internet Protocol) address of the customer as part of the 'client due diligence' measures. The RE (crypto exchange) shall also ensure that the client whose credentials are being furnished at the time of onboarding is the same individual who is actu-

ally accessing the application and personally initiating the account creation process, they stipulate. "The authenticity of such access and personal presence shall be established by capturing a live photograph of the client and employing liveness detection technology to verify the client's physical presence..." it said. Liveness detection is done by specified software and is used for various legal purposes in India, such as generating a life certificate for pensioners, where they have to blink their eyes to establish that they are alive and authentic. The exchanges

have also been directed to collect one more identity and address document of the client—either passport, driving licence, proof of possession of Aadhaar, voter ID or an equivalent ID—apart from verifying their mobile number and email through a one-time password (OTP). A verification of the client's bank account shall be done through the 'penny-drop' mechanism to confirm the ownership and operational status of the account, it said. Under the 'penny-drop' method, a refundable Rs 1 credit is taken by the banking or payment gateway from a customer to authenticate their bank account. The exchanges have been asked to do a KYC (Know Your Customer) updation for "high-risk" clients every six months and for all others annually. An 'enhanced client due diligence', by gathering details from open sources and consulting independent databases, is to be done for high-risk individuals or entities who either have links to tax haven countries or jurisdictions named under the FATF grey or black list and politically exposed persons (PEPs) or non-profit organisations (NPOs).

## Andhra Pradesh Cement Works Recognised at the ASSOCHAM India Water Leadership Conclave 2025



UltraTech's integrated manufacturing unit Andhra Pradesh Cement Works (APCW), located in Tadipatri, Andhra Pradesh, was felicitated at the ASSOCHAM India Water Leadership Conclave 2025, for its transformational water stewardship initiatives in drought-prone districts of Anantapur and Nandyal. Held in December in New Delhi, in partnership with the Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India, the award recognises APCW's outstanding CSR initiatives in the "Community Water Initiatives by Industry" category. The districts face severe water scarcity,

receiving only 450-500 mm of annual rainfall, which significantly affects agriculture and overall community resilience. Over-extraction has further resulted into groundwater levels declining by almost 30 cm annually, leading to borewells and dug wells drying up after the monsoon season, exacerbating water scarcity. Over the past five years, APCW has implemented a range of interventions, including the construction of water harvesting structures, provision of soil health mapping & fertilizer advisories, establishment of RO water plants, as well as providing livelihood training for women, with focus on millet-based

## Simplified Income Tax Act, 2025, to come into force from April 1

New Delhi: Beginning April 1, the Income Tax Act, 2025, will come into force replacing the six-decade old tax law and the changes made in tax laws in 2026-27. Budget will be incorporated in the new legislation. The 2025 I-T law is revenue neutral with no change in tax rates. It has only made direct tax laws simple to understand, removed ambiguities thus reducing scope for litigations. It reduces tax volume and sections by about 50 per cent vis-a-vis the 1961 income tax act. The new law simplifies the tax timeline by doing away with the distinction between the assessment year and the previous year, replacing it with a single 'tax year' framework. It also allows taxpayers to claim TDS refund even when ITRs are filed after deadlines, without any penal charges. Any changes with regard to taxation of individuals, corporates, HUFs and others, which are announced in the Budget for 2026-27 on February 1 will be incorpo-



rated in the new I-T Act, 2025. The rules to implement the new Income Tax law are being framed and likely to be notified after the presentation of the FY27 Budget. The new Income Tax law was approved by Parliament on August 12, 2025 after a scrutiny by a Parliamentary committee. It had become an Act after receiving assent of President Droupadi Murmu on August 21, 2025. The rules relating to the Income Tax Act, 2025, are being worked out, while the various tax return forms like those relating to payment of Advance Tax,

TDS, will be notified thereafter. Following is an explainer about the Income Tax Act, 2025. Q. Why the Income Tax Act, 1961, was reviewed? A. Income tax law was enacted 64 years ago in 1961 and since then a lot of changes have taken place in the society, in the way people earn money and companies do business. The 1961 Act was framed at a time when Indian republic was young and faced challenges peculiar to those times. Over the time, as the country progressed, the Act was amended to keep pace with changing times. In view of the technological advance-

ment and changes in the socio-economic fabric of the country, there was a pressing need to completely overhaul the archaic Income Tax Act which has become bulky on account of hundreds of amendments in the law. It has become almost impossible for the common man to comprehend the law and multiple references to different sections, sub-sections, and provisos. Q. What the new Income Tax Act proposes to do? A. The new law is leaner and more reader-friendly. The intention of the government is to halve the volume compared to the old law and make the language simpler so that taxpayer can know his exact tax liability. It would also help in reducing litigations and thereby cut down on disputed tax demands. Q. How will the new law be leaner? A. The Income Tax Act, 1961 deals with imposition of direct taxes—personal I-T, corporate tax, securities transaction tax, besides gift and wealth tax.

## 'The answer cannot be nothing': The battle over Canada's mystery brain disease

In early 2019, officials at a hospital in the small Canadian province of New Brunswick noticed that two patients had contracted an extremely rare brain condition known as Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease, or CJD. CJD is both fatal and potentially contagious, so a group of experts was quickly assembled to investigate. Fortunately for New Brunswick, the disease didn't spread. But the story didn't end there. In fact, it was just beginning. Among the experts was Alier Marrero, a soft-spoken, Cuban-born neurologist who had been working in the province for about six years. Marrero would share some worrying information with the other members of the group. He had been seeing patients with unexplained CJD-like symptoms for several years, he said, including young people who showed signs of a rapidly progressing dementia. The number of cases was already more than 20, Marrero said, and several patients had already died.

Because of the apparent similarity to CJD, Marrero had been reporting these cases to Canada's Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease Surveillance System, or CJDSS. But the results had been coming back negative. Marrero was stumped. More worrying still, he was seeing a dizzying array of symptoms among the patients, according to his notes. There were cases of dementia, weight loss, unsteadiness, jerking movements and facial twitches. There were patients with spasms, visions, limb pain, muscle atrophy, dry skin and hair loss. Many said they were suffering with both insomnia and walking hallucinations. Patients reported excessive sweating and excessive drooling. Several exhibited Capgras

Delusion, which causes someone to believe that a person close to them has been replaced by an identical-looking imposter. Others appeared to lose the ability to speak. One patient would report that she had forgotten how to write the letter Q. Marrero ordered test after test. But he was at a loss. "I just kept seeing new patients, I kept documenting new cases, and I kept seeing new people dying," he recalled. "And an image of a cluster became more clear." Over the coming months, Marrero and the CJDSS scientists began to suspect that instead of a small cluster of CJD patients, the province of New Brunswick might have on its hands a much larger cluster of people suffering from a completely unknown brain disease. Over the next five years, Marrero's cluster would balloon from 20 to an astonishing 500. But there came no scientific breakthrough, no new understanding of neurology, no expensive new treatments.

## Asian Thalassemia Conclave 2026 Concludes in Hyderabad, Global Experts Emphasise Prevention to Reduce Disease Burden



Hyderabad, 11 January 2026: The Asian Thalassemia Conclave (ATC) 2026, organised by the Thalassemia and Sickle Cell Society (TSCS), Hyderabad, in collaboration with Kamala Hospital Research Center, concluded successfully with over 400 delegates from across India and around the world participating in the two-day deliberations. The conclave brought together leading clinicians, public health experts, policymakers, researchers, non-gov-

ernmental organisations and patient advocates to strengthen a coordinated response to thalassemia, one of the most serious yet preventable genetic blood disorders. Hon'ble Minister for Health, Medical and Family Welfare, Government of Telangana, Shri Damodar Raja Narasimha, visited the conclave and interacted with organisers and delegates. During his visit, the Minister reiterated the government's commitment to strengthening thalassemia

## Coca-Cola Brings the Iconic FIFA World Cup™ Trophy to India After 12 Years



including Sanket Ray, President, Coca-Cola India and Southwest Asia; Greishma Singh, Vice President, Marketing, Coca-Cola India and Southwest Asia; and Devyani Rana, Vice President, Public Affairs, Communications, and Sustainability, Coca-Cola India and Southwest Asia. Speaking on the occasion, Hon'ble Union

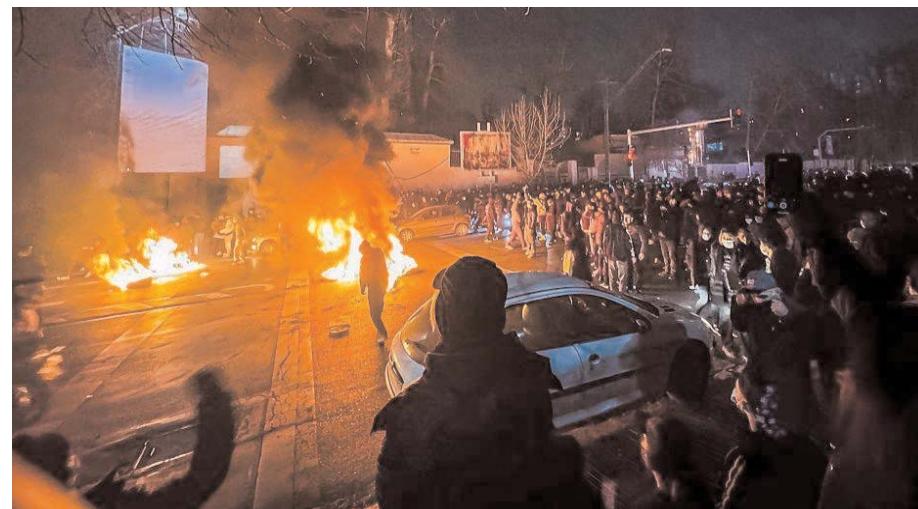
Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports Dr Mansukh Mandaviya said, "Under the visionary leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji, sports has emerged as a national priority. We firmly believe that sports is a powerful instrument for nurturing discipline, confidence, and character, particularly among our youth. The FIFA

World Cup™ Trophy Tour resonates strongly with our aspiration to position India among the world's top five sporting nations by 2047. As India advances on its journey towards becoming a Viksit Bharat (Developed India) by 2047, sports will stand as a vital pillar of nation-building and youth empowerment." Sanket Ray, President, Coca-Cola

India and Southwest Asia said, "Sport in India is entering a defining phase, marked by wider participation, stronger infrastructure, and growing global engagement. This progress has been enabled by sustained government-led initiatives that are strengthening access, facilities, and local engagement across the country. Our long-standing partnership with FIFA enables us to bring such landmark sporting moments closer to Indian consumers." The FIFA World Cup™ Trophy Tour by Coca-Cola is built on one of the longest-standing partnerships in global sport, with Coca-Cola and FIFA collaborating for over 50 years. During its global journey, the Trophy will visit 30 FIFA Member Associations (countries) across 75 stops and over 150 tour days, offering fans an incredible opportunity to experience the thrill and connection of football.

# Iran warns it will retaliate if US attacks as protesters defy crackdown

Iran has warned it will retaliate if it is attacked by the US, as protesters defied a government crackdown on Saturday night despite medics at two hospitals telling the BBC more than 100 bodies had been brought in over a two day period. Videos verified by the BBC and eyewitness accounts appeared to show the government was ramping up its response to the protests, which have spread to more than 100 cities and towns across every province in Iran. US President Donald Trump has threatened to hit Iran "very hard" if they "start killing people". Iran's parliament speaker warned on Saturday that if the US attacks, Israel and all US military and shipping bases in the region would be legitimate targets. The protests were sparked by soaring inflation, and protesters are now calling for an end to the clerical rule of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah



Ali Khamenei. Iran's attorney general said anyone protesting would be considered an "enemy of God" - an offence that carries the death penalty - while Khamenei has dismissed demonstrators as a "bunch of vandals" seeking to "please" Trump. Trump on Saturday said the US "stands ready to help" as Iran "is looking at FREE DOM". As protests intensify,

the number of deaths and injuries continues to rise. Two human rights groups have reported more than 100 people, including security personnel, killed. Staff at several hospitals told the BBC they have been overwhelmed with the injured and dead, with BBC Persian verifying 70 bodies brought to one hospital in Rasht city on Friday night and a health worker

reporting around 38 people dying at a Tehran hospital. Iran's police chief said on state TV that the level of confrontation with protesters had been stepped up, with arrests on Saturday night of what he called "key figures". He blamed a "significant proportion of fatalities" on "trained and directed individuals", not security forces, and pangs can be heard. A figure standing on a nearby footbridge appears to fire multiple gunshots in several directions as a couple of people take cover behind a fence. In Tehran, a verified video from Saturday night shows protesters also taking over the streets in the Gisha district. Other verified videos from the capital show a large group of protesters and the sound of banging on pots in Punak Square, and a crowd of protesters marching on a road and calling for the end of the clerical establishment in the Heravi district. Internet access in Iran is largely limited to a domestic intranet, with restricted links to the outside world. But during the current round of protests, authorities have for the first time severely restricted the domestic intranet. An expert told BBC Persian the shutdown is more severe than during the "Women, Life, Freedom" uprising in 2022.

## Last Kurdish forces leave Aleppo after ceasefire deal reached



The final Kurdish fighters have withdrawn from the Syrian city of Aleppo, after the announcement of a ceasefire deal in the early hours of Sunday morning. Mazloum Abdi, leader of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), said an agreement had been made via international mediation, securing the safe evacuation of "martyrs, the wounded, the trapped civilians and the fighters" from the city. Buses carrying the last Kurdish-led SDF members were seen leaving the Kurdish majority neighbourhood of Sheikh Maqsoud, according to local media reports. The latest clashes in Aleppo started earlier this week, after negotiations to integrate the Kurds into Syria's new government reached a stalemate. At least 12 people were killed in the latest outbreak of violence, which also saw tens of thousands of civilians displaced after they were forced to flee Sheikh Maqsoud and Ashrafieh.

The Syrian army shelled the area on Wednesday afternoon after designating the neighbourhoods "closed military areas", in response to what it alleged were attacks by armed groups in the area. The Kurdish-led SDF - which insists it has no military presence in Aleppo - called it a "criminal attempt" to forcibly displace residents. A ceasefire was raised earlier in the week, but Kurdish forces refused to leave the last stronghold of Sheikh Maqsoud under the deal. In March 2025, the Kurdish-led SDF, which controls much of Syria's northeast and has tens of thousands of fighters, signed a deal to integrate all military and civilian institutions into the Syrian state. Both sides accusing each other of trying to derail the negotiations that followed, with the agreement still not realised almost a year later. The newest iteration of the ceasefire agreement was mediated by the US and other world powers.

## Author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's family accuse hospital of negligence over son's death



The family of Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has accused a hospital of negligence over the death of her 21-month-old son. Nkanu Nnamdi died at a hospital in Nigeria on Wednesday following a short illness, leaving the family of the acclaimed postcolonial feminist writer "devastated". Now, the family allege there was a litany of failures at Euracare Hospital in Lagos that led to

the toddler's death, including being denied oxygen and being given too much sedation, causing a heart attack. The hospital expressed its "deepest sympathies" over the loss of the child but denied improper care, which it said had been in line with international standards. It added that Nkanu had arrived at the hospital "critically ill" and that an investigation into the death was now underway. Adichie's sister-in-law, Dr Anthea Nwando, made a series of allegations about the hospital in an interview with Nigerian broadcaster Arise TV on Saturday. In it, she said the medical director of Euracare had told Adichie her son "had received too much sedation".

## ONE PERSON DEAD AND 300 BUILDINGS DESTROYED IN AUSTRALIA BUSHFIRES



One person has died and 300 homes and buildings have been destroyed in bushfires that have torn across south-east Australia. The fires have raged in dozens of locations across the country for several days, mostly in the state of Victoria, but also in New South Wales, burning through land almost twice the size of Greater London. A state of emergency has been declared in Victoria as thousands of firefighters and more than 70 aircraft battled the blaze. Residents in more than a dozen communities have been advised to leave their homes. The authorities fear the blazes, which are being fuelled by very hot, dry and windy conditions, could

burn for several weeks. Victoria's Premier, Jacinta Allan, said 30 active fires were burning across the state, ten of which were a particular concern. She said 350,000 hectares had been burnt across the state as of 06:00 local time on Sunday (23:00 GMT on Saturday).

in the village of Gobur, near the town of Longwood, some 110km (70 sq miles) north of the state capital Melbourne, police said. The victim has not yet been identified. Allan praised the emergency workers who worked to retrieve the body. "This is difficult and confronting work, and it takes a heavy toll." "The Gobur community is grieving," Allan said. Bushfire smoke is impacting air quality in many areas across Victoria, including metropolitan Melbourne. Authorities said the fires were the worst to hit the south-east of Australia since the 2019-2020 blazes that destroyed an area the size of Turkey and killed 33 people.

## US MILITARY STRIKES ISLAMIC STATE GROUP TARGETS IN SYRIA, OFFICIALS SAY



The US and its partner forces have carried out large-scale strikes against Islamic State (IS) group targets in Syria, the US Central Command (Centcom) has announced. US President Donald Trump directed the strikes on Saturday, which are part of Operation Hawkeye Strike, in retaliation to the IS's deadly attack on US forces in Syria on 13 December. Centcom wrote on X. The strikes were conducted in an effort to combat terrorism and protect US and partner forces in the region, according to Centcom. "Our message remains strong: if you harm our

warfighters, we will find you and kill you anywhere in the world, no matter how hard you try to evade justice," Centcom said. The US and its partner forces fired more than 90 precision munitions at more than 35 targets in an operation that involved more than 20 aircraft, an official told CBS News, the BBC's US partner. The official added that aircraft including F-15Es, A-10s, AC-130Js, MQ-9s and Jordanian F-16s had taken part in the strikes. The location of the strikes and the extent of any casualties is not yet clear. "We will never forget, and never relent," Defence

Secretary Pete Hegseth wrote on X on Saturday in reference to the military action. The Trump administration first announced the Operation Hawkeye Strike in December after an IS gunman killed two US soldiers and a US civilian interpreter in an ambush in Palmyra, located in the centre of Syria. "This is not the beginning of a war - it is a declaration of vengeance," Hegseth said when announcing the operation in December. "The United States of America, under President Trump's leadership, will never hesitate and never

relent to defend our people." Prior to the latest strikes on Saturday, US forces killed or captured nearly 25 IS group members in 11 missions between 20 December and 29 December as part of Operation Hawkeye Strike, Centcom said. In the operation's first mission on 19 December, US and Jordanian forces carried out a "massive strike" against the IS group, deploying fighter jets, attack helicopters and artillery to strike "more than 70 targets at multiple locations across central Syria", according to Centcom. That operation, it said, "employed more than 100 precision

## BRIDE AND GROOM KILLED BY GAS EXPLOSION DAY AFTER PAKISTAN WEDDING



A newly-married couple was killed when a gas cylinder exploded at a house in Islamabad where they were sleeping after their wedding party, police have said. A further six people - including wedding guests and family members - who were staying there also died in the blast. More than a dozen people were injured. The explosion took place at 07:00 local time on Sunday (02:00 GMT), causing the roof to collapse. Parts of the walls were blown away, leaving piles of bricks, large concrete slabs and furniture strewn across the floor. Injured people were trapped under

the rubble and had to be carried out on stretchers by rescue workers. Emergency workers said the blast happened due to gas leakage, which filled the room and then exploded. Three neighbouring houses were also damaged. The chairman of Pakistan's Senate, Yusuf Raza Gilani, called it "a heart-wrenching incident that turned celebrations into mourning". Hanif Masih, the father of the groom, said his son had been married the previous day, and the newlywed couple, along with family members and guests, were sleeping in the house at the time of the explosion.

## Thousands march and dozens arrested in Minneapolis protests against ICE



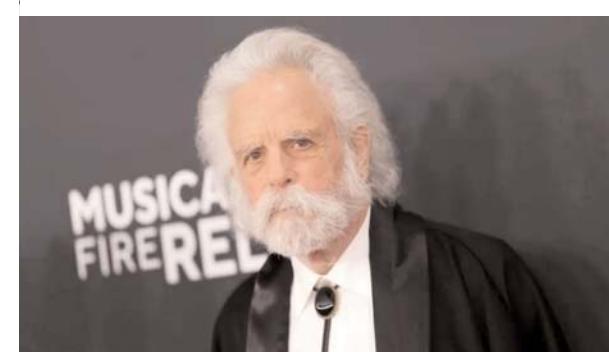
Thousands of people joined another night of protests in Minneapolis on Saturday, following the death of a woman who was shot by a US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agent in the city. Earlier, city officials said 30 people had been arrested during the weekend's protests, and one police officer was injured after a "chunk of ice was thrown at them". Protests against immigration enforcement have been held across the US after 37-year-old Renee Nicole Good was shot in her car on Wednesday. The Trump administration said the agent who fired the shots acted in self-defence. Local officials have insisted the woman posed no danger.

People gathered in

Minneapolis on Saturday night despite bitterly cold weather, while anti-ICE protests also took place elsewhere in the US, including in Austin, Seattle, New York and Los Angeles. The city of Minneapolis said on Saturday that the "vast majority of community members have demonstrated peacefully". On Friday night, Minneapolis Police declared an unlawful assembly as protesters gathered outside the Canopy Hotel in the city, where some ICE agents were believed to be staying. The Minneapolis police department said in a statement that "several hundred people" attended and "some individuals forced

entry into the hotel through an alley entrance". Videos posted online showed protesters flashing bright lights into the area, blowing whistles and banging on drums. Police said some threw ice, snow and rocks at officers, police vehicles and other vehicles, but no serious injuries were reported. One law enforcement officer suffered minor injuries but did not need any medical attention, according to the BBC's US partner CBS News. Officials said another hotel in the city was also targeted and had window and graffiti damage. At a news conference on Saturday, Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey applauded the majority of protesters who he said have been peaceful.

## BOB WEIR, GRATEFUL DEAD CO-FOUNDER, DIES AGED 78



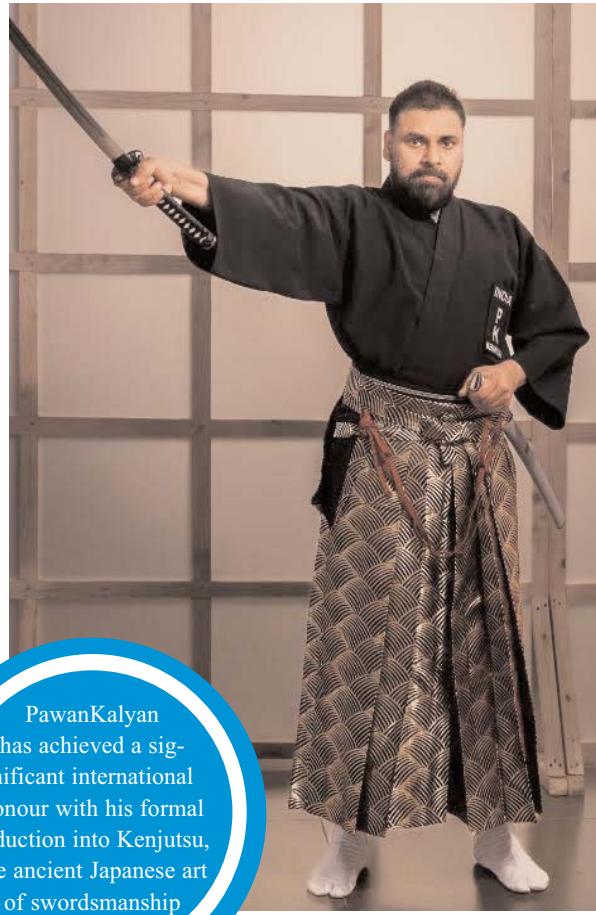
Bob Weir, the guitarist who co-founded the Grateful Dead, has died aged 78. Weir, a cornerstone of the California psychedelic rock group and many of its offshoots, passed away after a battle with cancer and lung issues, according to a post on his Instagram. "There is no final curtain here, not really. Only the sense of someone setting off again," the post says, noting his hopes that his legacy and lengthy catalogue will live on. The post says he "transitioned peacefully, surrounded by loved ones". "He often spoke of a three-hundred-year legacy, determined to ensure the songbook would endure long after him," the post continues. "May that dream live on through future generations of Dead Heads." With a career spanning more than 60 years, Weir's big break was in 1965 with the founding of the Grateful Dead. Within a few years, they became a force within San Francisco's charac

teristic counterculture. Quickly their style began shaping rock music - blending psychedelia and 1960s drug culture with musical tones that fused folk and Americana. They are considered one of the pioneers of jam bands. The group was inducted in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1994 and received a Lifetime Achievement Award by the Grammy's in 2007. A large amount of weirdness: The long, strange success of the Grateful Dead The group officially halted in 1995 with the death of fellow co-founder Jerry Garcia. But Weir was involved in various spin-offs, including Dead & Company, which had a residency at the Las Vegas Sphere in 2024 and 2025. Weir was diagnosed with cancer in July and even while being treated, he continued to perform, according to the post on his page. "Those performances, emotional, soulful, and full of light, were not farewells, but gifts," the post says.



## Pawan Kalyan Inducted into Kenjutsu, Achieves Historic Global Recognition in Japanese Martial Arts

Renowned South Indian actor, politician and Deputy Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Pawan Kalyan has achieved a significant international honour with his formal induction into Kenjutsu, the ancient Japanese art of swordsmanship. The honour marks a rare global recognition of his more than three decades of disciplined training, research, and commitment to martial arts traditions. Pawan Kalyan's engagement with martial arts began well before his entry into cinema and politics. During his early years in Chennai, he underwent intensive training in karate and related disciplines, developing a strong technical and philosophical foundation. Over time, his pursuit evolved beyond physical practice into a deeper study of Japanese Samurai martial traditions, which he researched and followed with exceptional seriousness. His understanding of martial arts has also found expression in cinema. Through films such as Akkada Ammayi Ikkada Abbayi, Thammudu, Khushi, Annavaram, and OG, Pawan Kalyan brought authentic martial disciplines to mainstream Indian cinema, contributing to wider awareness and appreciation of these traditions among global audiences.



Pawan Kalyan has achieved a significant international honour with his formal induction into Kenjutsu, the ancient Japanese art of swordsmanship

In recognition of his sustained dedication, Pawan Kalyan has been conferred with multiple international honours. He has awarded the prestigious Fifth Dan (5th Dan) by the Sogo Budo Kanri Kai, one of the most respected authorities in traditional Japanese martial arts. He is also the first Telugu-speaking person to be inducted into the Takeda

Shingen Clan under the lineage of Soke Muramatsu Sensei outside Japan, an honour rarely extended beyond Japanese practitioners. Additionally, Pawan Kalyan was felicitated by the Golden Dragons organisation with the distinguished title "Tiger of Martial Arts". As part of his advanced training, Pawan Kalyan studied under renowned Budo authority Hanshi Professor Dr. Siddiq Mahmoodi, one of India's foremost exponents of Japanese martial arts.

Mass Maharaja Ravi Teja, directed by Kishore Tirumala, is a family entertainer 'Bharta Mahasayaluku Vignyapthi', produced by Sudhakar Cherukuri under the banner of SLV Cinemas. Starring Dimple Hayathi and Ashika Ranganath, the film has already created a huge buzz with its teaser, trailer and songs. The film is set to release grandly on January 13. On this occasion, the makers organized a grand pre-release event. Speaking at the pre-release event, Mass Maharaja Ravi Teja said...Hello everyone. Our art director Prakash and I have done 13 films together. Almost all our films have become hits. Our heroines look very beautiful in this film. DOP Prasad Moorella made me look very beautiful too. I have done nine films with him. All the songs composed by choreographers Shekhar and Bhanu have also become super hits. Fight master Prudhvi has composed entertaining fights in this. Producer Sudhakar Cherukuri does not talk much. He looks like an Australian cricketer. The film has been made with a lot of passion. In this, we are going to see fun like Dubai Seenu again with Sunil. Satya Kishore Muralidhar garu did a wonderful job with the getup, Seenu Soni and everyone else. I enjoyed a lot with them. Anil Ravipudi, Harish Shankar, Bobby, Kishore.. I am enjoying

working under their direction immensely. Our director Kishore made the dance flow in the Tirumala promotions. Our Pawan gave the title to this film. Director Kishore has made a very wonderful entertainment with this film. This film will be full of fun. Let's meet at the theaters on January 13th, requesting my husband Mahasaya. Director Harish Shankar said.. Greetings to everyone. Producer Sudhakar

Cherukuri is my favorite producer. A very sensible producer. I definitely want to work with him in my film under his banner. Mass Maharaja Ravi Teja is a person who is similar to Mr. Bachchan who came with Mirapakaya. A person with a sense of calm. I saw that quality in Pawan Kalyan garu and later in Ravi Teja garu. All the people he introduced as directors are star directors today. He is the one who gave me a directorial rebirth. I will make a blockbuster with Ravi Teja garu again. That is my promise. All the artists in this film are my favorite. The content of this film is very amazing. As soon as I saw the trailer, I got a blockbuster feeling. This is defi-

nately a blockbuster. Kishore Tirumala is a sensible director of the film. This film will definitely be a blockbuster for him. Many years ago, Mirapakaya was a blockbuster when it was released on January 11. This movie will be released again on January 13th. It will definitely be a blockbuster. All the best to everyone. Dimple Hayati said.. Hello everyone. It is very happy to see director Harish Shankar here. This film will also be a blockbuster. The character of Balamani that I have done in this film will be very different. The audience will feel a lot of novelty. Our producer Sudhakar garu has produced the film wonderfully.

## "Anaganaga Oka Raju offers a refreshing new kind of entertainment" –Meenakshi Chaudhary

This Sankranthi, Anaganaga Oka Raju is set to arrive before audiences as a complete entertainment feast. Starring star entertainer Naveen Polishetty as the hero, the film features Meenakshi Chaudhary as the female lead. It is produced by Suryadevara Naga Vamsi and Sai Soujanya under the banners of Sithara Entertainments and Fortune Four Cinemas, and presented by Srikrishna Studios. The film is directed by debutant Mari, with music composed by Mickey J Meyer.

Right from the beginning, the promotional material has stood out with its freshness and has grabbed audience attention. Positioned as a true festive entertainer, Anaganaga Oka Raju is slated for a theatrical release on January 14, 2026. Coming after three consecutive blockbusters from Naveen Polishetty, expectations around the film are high, and the recently released trailer has doubled that excitement. As the film gears up for release amid strong buzz, heroine Meenakshi Chaudhary spoke to the media and shared several interesting details about the project.

You have films like Guntur Kaaram, Sankranthiki Vastunnam, and now

Anaganaga Oka Raju releasing for Sankranthi one after another. How does that feel?

It feels really, really happy. Last year, Sankranthiki Vastunnam gave me an unforgettable Sankranthi success. Now, with Anaganaga Oka Raju, I'm confident I'll once again win the hearts of the audience.

How will your character be in this film?

My character's name is Charulatha. She comes from a wealthy family and is pampered by her father. She's brought up like a princess at home. She's a very good girl, innocent, soft-hearted, and sensitive. Her behavior is cute, and audiences will see me in a full-fledged comedy role.

What kind of homework did you do for the role of Charulatha?

It's a very different character. During my college days, I had seen one or two people with similar traits in real life. Based on the inputs given by the director and my own understanding, I tried to completely immerse myself in the character. This role is totally different from who I am in real life. I'm a practical person, whereas Charulatha is emotional and sensitive.



## B. JAYA: A TRAILBLAZING DIRECTOR FOLLOWING IN LEGENDARY FOOTSTEPS

In the Telugu film industry, it is rare to see women excelling in technical roles like direction. When we speak of great female directors, the names Bhanumathi and Vijayanirmala usually come to mind first. Following closely in their footsteps, B. Jaya carved a special place for herself as a successful director who delighted audiences with her films. On her birth anniversary, January 11th, we celebrate her inspiring journey from a dynamic journalist to a celebrated filmmaker. Born on January 11, 1964, in Ravulapalem, B. Jaya was a highly educated woman with degrees in English Literature, Journalism, and Psychology. She began her career as a journalist for Andhra Jyoti and Indian Express. She quickly gained a reputation for being dynamic, straightforward, and firm in her opinions. Her writing garnered significant



attention, eventually leading her to transition into the film industry as an assistant director to pursue her passion for cinema. During her early career, she married BA Raju, who was making his mark as a film journalist and PRO. Together, they formed a powerful team

rooted in dedication and shared responsibility. In 1994, they founded Superhit Film Weekly. Thanks to their hard work, it became the number one film magazine in the industry. Remarkably, they published the weekly magazine for decades without ever missing a single issue, proving their incredible commitment to their craft. With her husband's support, B. Jaya turned her passion for direction into reality. After supervising the production of their first film, Premalo Pavani Kalyan, she made her directorial debut with Chantigadu. The movie was a massive success, running for 100 days in 25 centers. She followed this up with hits like Premikulu, Gundammagari Manavadu, Lovely, and Vaisakham. These successes solidified her position as a prominent female director alongside the legends of the industry.

