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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.

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.

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.

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.

Bengaluru, Jan 14: Senior Congress MLA and Chief Whip Ashok Pattan stated on Wednesday that Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi has called Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar to Delhi soon.

Speaking to reporters in Bengaluru on Wednesday, Pattan made the statement when asked about LoP Gandhi's conversations



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

"All the confusion will be

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

## RBI issues norms for internal ombudsman in banks, NBFCs

Mumbai, Jan 14 : The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday issued guidelines for the appointment and functioning of internal ombudsmen in banks and NBFCs, aimed at strengthening the mechanism for resolution of customer grievances. The RBI has issued separate directions for commercial banks, small finance banks, payments banks, non-banking financial companies, non-bank prepaid payment instrument issuers, and credit information companies to ensure specific clarity to each category.

The directions have been issued with a view to strengthening the internal grievance redress mechanism within regulated entities and ensuring a speedy and meaningful resolution of customer complaints by enabling a review by an apex-level authority within the entities, the apex bank said.

The guidelines state that in order to be eligible for appointment as internal ombudsman, the candidate



should either be a retired or serving officer, in the rank equivalent to a General Manager in the regulated entity of the Reserve Bank under the purview of the internal ombudsman framework or a financial sector regulatory body, having necessary skills and experience of minimum seven years of working in areas such as banking, non-banking finance, regulation, supervision, payment and settlement systems, credit information or consumer protection. Every regulated entity

should appoint at least one internal ombudsman, the RBI said. It should deal with the complaints that have already been examined by the regulated entity but have been partially resolved or wholly rejected. "The areas relating to customer service and customer grievance redress, as well as the implementation of these directions, shall be a part of the supervisory review by the Department of Supervision of the Reserve Bank," the RBI statement said.

The Reserve Bank of India had on October 07, 2025, issued the draft Master Direction - Reserve Bank of India (Internal Ombudsman for Regulated Entities) Directions, 2025, seeking feedback from the stakeholders and the public.

The feedback received on the draft Master Direction has been examined, and necessary modifications have been suitably incorporated in the final Master Direction, the RBI statement added.

## Pongal shining symbol of richness of Tamil traditions: PM Modi



NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday greeted people of Tamil Nadu and Tamils across the globe on the occasion of Pongal, and said it is a shining symbol of the richness of Tamil traditions. In a letter in Tamil and English, Modi also said that Pongal is also about expressing gratitude to all those who enrich our lives with their hard work.

"Dear fellow citizen, Vanakkam! I extend my heartfelt greetings to you and your family on the joyous occasion of Pongal. This special festival reminds us of the close relationship between human labour and the rhythms of nature," Modi said in his letter.

The prime minister noted that it is a festival deeply connected with agriculture, the hardworking farmers, rural life and the dignity of work. He said the families come together to prepare traditional dishes and share joy and goodwill and this strengthens bonds across generations and reinforces the spirit of togetherness. "We in India take

pride in the fact that we are home to the oldest language in the world, Tamil. It is gladdening to see Pongal emerge as a global festival. It is celebrated enthusiastically in Tamil Nadu, in different parts of India and by the Tamil community across the world," he said. "Once again, warm

Pongal wishes to you. May this festival bring an abundance of prosperity, success and good health to everyone's lives," Modi said. The prime minister's outreach to the Tamil community is significant ahead of the assembly polls in Tamil Nadu this year.

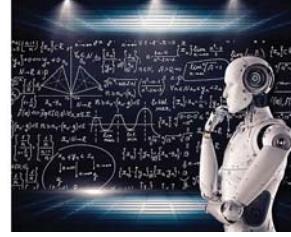


## TN, Sarvam AI MoU to set up India's 1st Sovereign AI Park

CHENNAI: The Tamil Nadu government on Tuesday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Sarvam AI to establish India's first full-stack Sovereign AI Park, aimed at attracting investments of around Rs 10,000 crore over a five-year period. The project is expected to generate about 1,000 high-skilled deep-tech jobs and is seen as a foundational step towards building a robust and inclusive artificial intelligence ecosystem rooted in public interest.

The MoU was exchanged in the presence of Chief Minister MK Stalin, Industries Minister TRB Rajaa, Industries secretary Arun Roy, and IIT Madras Director V Kamakoti. The project includes the establishment of data centres exclusively to host government data.

The Sovereign AI Park will be a first-of-its-kind, purpose-built district in India integrating AI compute infrastructure, secure data frameworks, model research laboratories and AI innovation clusters, along with a dedicated institute for AI in governance. To come up near the IIT Research Park in Taramani, it will function as a



full-stack system in which data, models and compute capabilities remain within the State's trust boundary, ensuring a sovereign, ethical and inclusive ecosystem for the deployment of AI systems.

Speaking to reporters at the Secretariat, minister Rajaa said the initiative would set a precedent for other states. With large capacity being created in the data centres, he said, other states could also host their data in Tamil Nadu.

He added that the initiative would position Tamil Nadu as a national leader in the large-scale deployment of AI, with implementation across key sectors such as education, agriculture, healthcare and citizen engagement. Kamakoti said artificial intelligence would define the next generation of jobs just as manufacturing and information technology defined the previous one.

## Annamalai remains tight-lipped on potential Vijay-NDA tie-up

NEW DELHI/CHENNAI: Tamil Nadu BJP leader K Annamalai on Wednesday was tight-lipped about a possible alliance with actor-politician Vijay's TVK ahead of the 2026 Assembly elections, saying he is not authorised to comment on it. However, he acknowledged that the priority must be given to consolidating all anti-DMK votes to ensure the ruling party's defeat.

Annamalai was speaking to reporters on the sidelines of Pongal celebrations at Minister of State L Murugan's resi-



dence in Delhi. When reporters pressed him about whether a Vijay-BJP tie-up would strengthen the NDA, Annamalai reiterated, "...there are some things which I don't want to answer. It's above my pay grade."

## Duraimurugan to get Anna award from CM Stalin on Jan 16

CHENNAI: Ahead of Thiruvalluvar Thirunal day, which falls on January 15th or 16th as part of the Pongal festival, the State government on Tuesday announced the recipients of the Ayyan Thiruvalluvar award for 2026, the Peraiyarn Anna, Thanthai Periyar, and Kalaignar awards, among others, for 2025. According to an

official release, scholar of Saiva Siddhantham Sathyavel Muruganar has been selected for the Ayyan Thiruvalluvar award 2026, which is presented to persons popularising the values and principles of Thirukkural in society. DMK general secretary and Water Resources Minister Duraimurugan has been select-

Annamalai had told earlier at a press conference, when asked if he wanted Vijay to join the NDA: "It's not about personal feelings. The best way for DMK to go is if all anti-DMK votes get consolidated. That's politics."

The BJP leader described Tamil Nadu's electoral landscape as a rare "four-corner fight" involving the DMK-led alliance, AIADMK-headed NDA, Tamilaga Vettiri Kazhagam (TVK), and Naam Tamilar Katchi (NTK) chief Seeman's outfit with its 8.9 per cent vote share.

ed for the Peraiyarn Anna award, presented to persons who make outstanding contributions to the development of Tamil society. Nellai Jayantha has been selected for the Mahakavi Bharathiyaar award, while former Chief Secretary V Iraianbu has been picked for the Thiru Vi Ka award 2025.

## Tamil Nadu: Over 9.6 lakh passengers travel by buses ahead of Pongal

CHENNAI: More than 9.6 lakh passengers travelled from Chennai and other parts of the State by government and omni buses ahead of the Pongal festival in 2026, as transport operators stepped up services to meet the festive rush.

According to Managing Director of the State Express Transport Corporation R. Mohan, special buses were operated by the Transport Department to facilitate public travel.

He said that as of mid-



night on January 13, 2,092 regular buses were operated as scheduled, in addition to 2,238 special buses.

Between January 9 and midnight on January 13, a total of 15,762 government

buses were operated, enabling 6,90,720 passengers to travel. Of these, 2,73,152 passengers travelled after making advance reservations.

During the Pongal travel period, additional buses would continue to be operated based on public demand. Passengers were advised to plan their journeys in advance and make reservations to avoid last-minute rush, the official said. Meanwhile, All Omni Bus Owners Association president A. Ambazhagan said that 2,72,850 passengers travelled in omni buses from Chennai to various parts of Tamil Nadu in view of the festival. As of 5pm on January 13, 49,200 passengers travelled in 1,230 buses on January 9, followed by 44,000 passengers in 1,100 buses on January 10.

On January 11, 47,250 passengers travelled in 1,180 buses, while 58,000 passengers travelled in 1,450 buses on January 12. On January 13 alone, 74,400 passengers travelled in 1,860 omni buses, he said.

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## HMPV not new virus, majority Indian population immune to it: Experts



New Delhi The Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) is not a new virus and most of the Indian population are immune to it, said health experts on Monday, even as the number of reported cases climbed to three in the country. On Monday, health officials in the country reported three cases of HMPV – babies aged three- and eight-month-old from Bengaluru (Karnataka) and a two-year-old child in Gujarat's Ahmedabad.

"Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) is not a new virus. It has been part of the circulating flu virus in India for long. Hence, the majority of the Indian population has developed immunity against it," Dr. Harshal R Salve, Additional Professor, Centre for Community

Medicine at AIIMS, New Delhi, told IANS. He added that the "chances of a severe disease are very rare".

HMPV was first discovered in 2001 and is part of the Pneumoviridae family along with the Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). The symptoms commonly associated with HMPV include cough, fever, nasal congestion, and shortness of breath.

"Like for any other flu viruses, elderly people, children and people with comorbidities must take care. There is no need to create panic, and one should stop rumour-mongering in the public," Salve said.

The two cases from Karnataka were detected via routine surveillance by ICMR in a 3-month-old girl and an 8-month-old boy. Both had a history of broncho-

pneumonia – a form of pneumonia, a lung infection, and were admitted to a private hospital. Bronchopneumonia affects both the alveoli in the lungs and the bronchi.

The Health Ministry informed that while the baby girl "has been discharged", the baby boy "is now recovering". In the third case, the child, from Rajasthan, was admitted to a private hospital in Chandkheda's area of Ahmedabad, after showing symptoms of cold and cough. The child is stable now, reports quoted civic officials as saying. "HMPV is not a new virus. It commonly causes colds among children and also some adults. For self-limiting colds, we don't do expensive tests to diagnose which specific virus it is due to. Therefore, the finding of this virus

upon testing is not anything unusual or worrisome," Dr Rajeev Jayadevan, Chairman of the Kerala State IMA Research Cell, told IANS.

"All over the world, HMPV is a well-known cause of common cold," he added. HMPV is already in circulation globally, including in India, and cases of respiratory illnesses associated with HMPV have been reported in various countries, particularly in China.

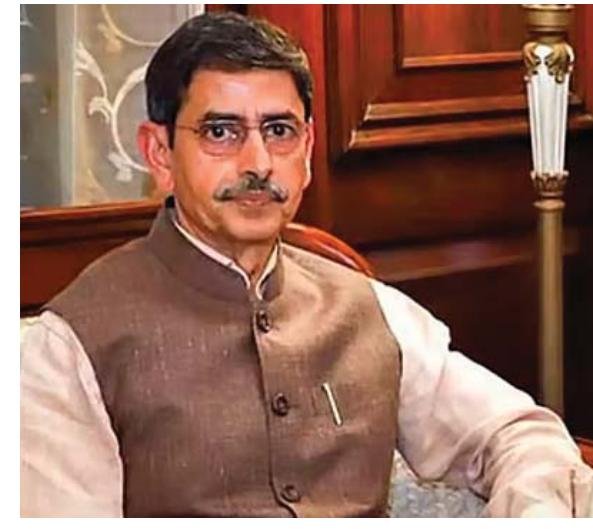
"Common cold is more common in winter, therefore it is being reported from China at this time. People should not get the impression that a new virus from China has now reached Bangalore," Jayadevan told IANS. Notably, the three cases of HMPV have no travel history. Thus, it currently remains unknown whether the cases are related to the outbreak seen in China.

"They (infected children) have not traveled to China, Malaysia, or any other country. The outbreak in China is linked to a new variant of HMPV. We do not yet have full details, and the government is still gathering information," said Karnataka Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao, while speaking to the media.

"HMPV isn't new. What we don't know is whether the strain is novel and has a virulence that's different from what we've experienced in the past. Until one knows that it is a novel strain, cases have been detected all the time! Hopefully, whole genome sequencing and clinical information will clarify soon," said Lancelot Pinto, an Indian pulmonologist and epidemiologist, in a post on social media platform X.

Meanwhile, the government has issued precautionary measures such as covering mouth and nose with handkerchiefs or tissue paper while coughing, or sneezing; washing hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based sanitizer; avoiding crowded places; staying away from public places while having fever, cough, or sneezing.

## Governor RN Ravi extends warm Pongal greetings, hails farmers and Bharatiya heritage



highlighted the significance of Maatu Pongal, celebrating the indispensable role of cattle in agriculture and rural life. The Governor described Pongal as a proud celebration of the nation's spiritual and cultural heritage, which transcends boundaries and unites people worldwide. He connected the festivities to the spirit of national unity, noting that "Kaanum Pongal celebrates joy, togetherness... reflecting the various manifestations of the same oneness — Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat." Concluding with his wishes, Governor Ravi expressed hope that the festival would fill every home with happiness, prosperity, and good health. He underscored that the celebrations should strengthen "the spirit of unity, peace, and progress, leading us toward a Viksit Bharat by 2047."

## 42 resorts sealed in Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve on court orders

COIMBATORE: Forty-two unauthorised resorts in Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve (STR) were sealed by authorities on Tuesday in compliance with court directions.

The action follows a public interest litigation by environmental activist R Karpagam from Coimbatore, alleging that illegal resorts were functioning inside the reserve without obtaining mandatory approvals



and other regulatory bodies. On the court's directions to take action and submit an action taken report by 19 January, the authorities issued notices to resorts functioning illegally in areas including Thalavadi, Hassanur, Thalumalai and surrounding areas.

They were directed to obtain proper permission by 13 January, failing which, they would be shut down. Following this, the officials sealed them all and pasted closure notices on the premises.

## Study says ozone therapy promising new treatment for sepsis-induced lung injury

New Delhi: Sepsis, a severe and often fatal complication of infection, is a leading cause of both acute lung injury (ALI) and acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS). Now, researchers report medical ozone therapy as a promising new treatment for sepsis-induced ALI. This innovative approach could significantly improve survival rates and lung function in pre-clinical models, offering hope for patients with limited treatment options, according to the study from Nanjing Medical University in China.

"All over the world, HMPV is a well-known cause of common cold," he added. HMPV is already in circulation globally, including in India, and cases of respiratory illnesses associated with HMPV have been reported in various countries, particularly in China.

"Common cold is more common in winter, therefore it is being reported from China at this time. People should not get the impression that a new virus from China has now reached Bangalore," Jayadevan told IANS. Notably, the three cases of HMPV have no travel history. Thus, it currently remains unknown whether the cases are related to the outbreak seen in China.

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"HMPV isn't new. What we don't know is whether the strain is novel and has a virulence that's different from what we've experienced in the past. Until one knows that it is a novel strain, cases have been detected all the time! Hopefully, whole genome sequencing and clinical information will clarify soon," said Lancelot Pinto, an Indian pulmonologist and epidemiologist, in a post on social media platform X.

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# 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 digi-

tal 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

ally for BGMI's player-centric universe. Together, we are weaving storytelling, lifestyle, and digital culture into gameplay in a way that truly reflects the aspirations of modern Indian youth. Looking ahead, this collaboration sets a strategic foundation for future partnerships that are experiential, immersive, and deeply connected with our community's passions across movies, sports, FMCG and lifestyle landscapes."

## 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.

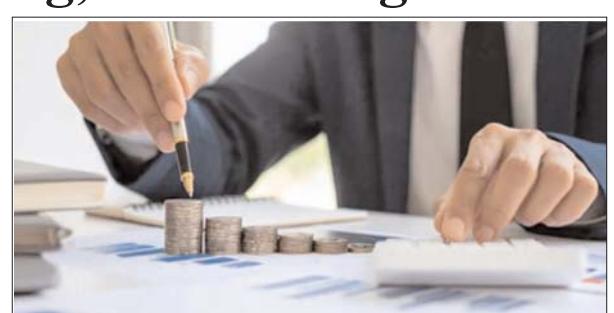
## Samsung Innovation Campus Certifies 1,750 Youth in Future-Tech Skills in Uttar Pradesh

**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

Smt. Rajni Tiwari, Hon'ble Minister of Higher Education, Government of Uttar Pradesh. Launched in India in 2022, Samsung Innovation Campus focuses on expanding access to future-tech education, particularly in underserved and semi-urban regions. The programme is implemented in collaboration with the Electronics Sector Skills Council of India (ESSCI) through accredited training partners. Nationally, the programme has recorded 44% women participation, underscoring Samsung's focus on inclusive and equitable skilling. In addition to technical training, students receive soft-skills inputs and placement support to improve workplace readiness. Together with initiatives such as Samsung Solve for Tomorrow and Samsung DOST, Samsung Innovation Campus reflects the company's long-term commitment to strengthening and expanding India's digital skilling goals.

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



**Mumbai:** Indian equity markets are entering 2026 on a firmer footing after a year of consolidation, with improving valuations, realistic earnings expectations and strong domestic fundamentals shaping a more constructive outlook, according to a report released on Wednesday, January 14. While global events could be a source of uncertainty, India's macro fundamentals remain strong, according to smallcase managers. They believe that the coming year is likely to reward earnings-led investing rather than momentum-driven trades. They project a strong consumption-led growth cycle in 2026, supported by moderate inflation, tax cuts, GST reductions, and interest-rate cuts that boost disposable incomes and ease borrowing conditions, said the report. "As we move into 2026 which structurally is more constructive than 2025, valuations look far more reasonable today, earnings expectations are

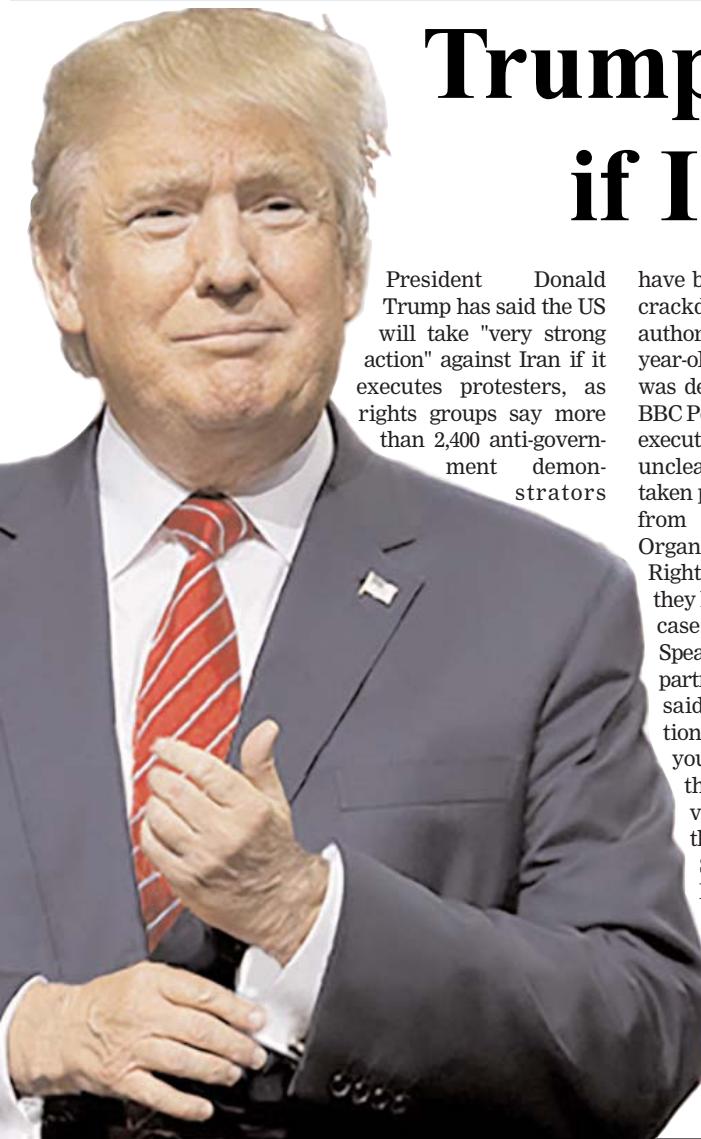
realistic rather than euphoric, and India enters the year with macro stability," said Sonam Srivastava, smallcase Manager and Founder of Wright Research. We expect returns to be earnings-led in 2026 rather than multiple-led, which favours disciplined stock selection and factor-driven strategies, Srivastava 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 have 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

in 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.



## 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.

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



## 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

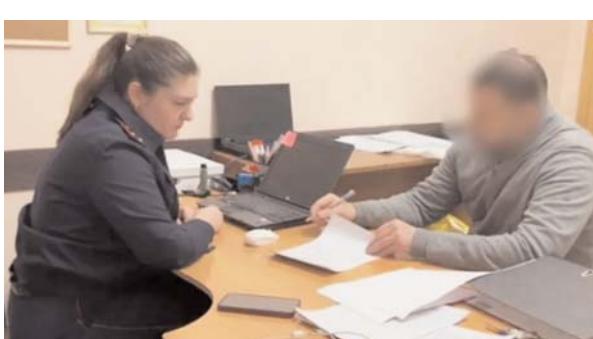


Donald Trump is the only world leader capable of stopping Vladimir Putin from threatening Europe, according to Poland's President Karol Nawrocki. In an interview with Radio 4's Today programme he said the Russian leader was not to be trusted, but that Europe needed to do everything it could to support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

## 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-

izing 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 Kisakayamukama, 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.

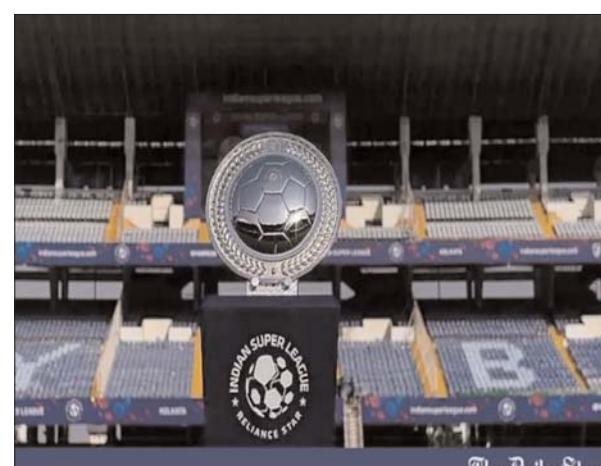
World Championships take place in Delhi." Antonsen is not alone in his grievances. His compatriot, Mia Blichfeldt, also voiced sharp criticisms after her first-round match at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium. While she praised the scale of the arena, she described the conditions as "unhealthy" and "unprofessional," 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

## 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 @pawan\_kalyan 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 Polisetti



With the aim of turning this Sankranti into a festival of laughter, star entertainer Naveen Polisetti arrived in theatres with Anaganaga Oka Raju. After delivering three consecutive blockbusters and earning a special place in the hearts of audiences, Naveen Polisetti 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 Srikrishna 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 Polisetti 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.