



# THE SOUTH INDIA TIMES

*Essence of the South*

NATIONAL DAILY NEWSPAPER

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## No personal agenda, will meet anyone for State's development: CM Revanth Reddy

**January 16 TSIT :** Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Friday asserted that he had no personal agenda and would meet anyone, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, solely in the interest of Telangana's development and for securing funds and projects for the State. Addressing a public meeting at Nirmal after laying foundation stones and inaugurating several development works in the erstwhile Adilabad district, the Chief Minister said politics should be confined to elections and that collective focus should thereafter shift to development. He recalled that the people of Nirmal had placed their trust in him, enabling him to become Chief Minister. Describing Adilabad as a land of valour and struggle, he referred to



the legacy of Kumuram Bheem and the historic fight for 'jal, jangal and zameen', and said the district had not received the level of development it deserved. Mr. Reddy assured that funds on par with those allocated to the Palamuru region would be sanctioned for Adilabad district as well. He announced that a university would be established at the Basara IIIT

and sought the cooperation of all public representatives for the project. The district would also be developed as an industrial hub, he said. The Chief Minister proposed the establishment of an airport in Adilabad district and said about 10,000 acres of land would be required for the project. He suggested that Prime Minister Modi be invited for the inauguration



once the airport becomes operational. Stressing the need to ensure irrigation water for the region, he said the Tummidihatti project must be taken up and completed. Mr. Reddy said he had been meeting the Prime Minister once every three months to seek central assistance for State projects. Responding to criticism over his frequent meetings with

Mr. Modi, he said it was the Centre that had to provide funds and projects, and that unless the State's requirements were conveyed, the Union government would not be aware of them. He alleged that the previous government had failed for a decade to effectively pursue Telangana's demands with the Centre, resulting in significant losses to the State. He

urged BJP leaders in Telangana also to approach the Prime Minister and help secure projects and financial assistance for the State. Announcing further initiatives, the Chief Minister said an Advanced Technology Centre would be sanctioned for Nirmal district, 22 crore would be allocated for the development of the Nagoba Jatara, and 300 crore had already been spent on the reconstruction and development of the Sammakka-Saralamma Jatara. Mr. Reddy said Hyderabad had emerged as a global destination for investments and accused his critics of spreading false propaganda by alleging that the government was indulging in real estate business when it was, in fact, striving to attract investments.

Israel kills 11 Palestinians despite ceasefire agreement entering Phase 2



Israel continued to attack Gaza, killing at least 11 Palestinians and wounding several others on Thursday and Friday, January 15 and 16, even as the ceasefire agreement with Hamas entered the second phase. The United States on Thursday announced Phase 2 of the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas. This phase will focus on demilitarisation, technocratic governance and the reconstruction of Gaza. On Thursday, Israeli air strikes targeted areas like the central city of Deir el-Balah, killing 10. On Friday, as it continued its drone strikes, Israel killed a 62-year-old Palestinian woman in al-Mawasi in southern Gaza. Data by the Gaza Health Ministry showed that Friday's attack took the tally of Palestinians killed since the initiation of the US-brokered ceasefire in October 2025 to 452, Al Jazeera reported. Phase 2 of ceasefire Representatives of Hamas and other Palestinian factions were in Cairo, Egypt, for a discussion on the ceasefire agreement. Most of the objectives set during the first phase of the ceasefire brokered by the United States were not met. The first phase of the ceasefire was supposed to immediately halt the fighting and facilitate the exchange of Israeli and Palestinian hostages. Apart from this, a timeline for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from parts of Gaza was also supposed to be drawn.

## RBI issues revised Integrated Ombudsman Scheme 2026



**Mumbai:** The central bank on Friday, January 16, issued the revised Reserve Bank - Integrated Ombudsman Scheme, 2026, aimed at further improving the efficiency of the resolution of complaints filed by aggrieved customers of banks and other regulated entities. It will come into force on July

1, 2026. "As the intent of the Scheme is to provide a cost-effective and expeditious grievance redress, the proceedings under the Scheme shall be summary in nature and shall not be bound by any rules of evidence," according to the circular on the revised Scheme. The Reserve Bank will appoint one or

more of its officers as RBI Ombudsman and Deputy Ombudsman, to carry out the functions entrusted to them under the Scheme. The central bank on Friday, January 16, issued the revised Reserve Bank - Integrated Ombudsman Scheme, 2026. The appointments will be

made generally for a period of three years at a time. The Reserve Bank said it will establish a Centralised Receipt and Processing Centre at one or more locations, as may be decided, to receive complaints filed under the Scheme and process them. Complaints can also be filed online.



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like Guru Nanak Dev University is crucial. All stakeholders of this university should make every possible effort to guide the youth in the right direction," she said. Addressing the students in the gathering, she advised them to remember that education is not merely a means of livelihood. It is also a means of serving society and the nation. She said that they owe a debt to society, which has contributed to their education. Making efforts to uplift those who have been left behind in the development journey can be one of the ways of repaying the debts. The president said that after completing formal education students will embark on their journeys in different directions. Some will serve in the government or private sector, others will pursue higher education or research, while many will establish their own ventures or build their careers in teaching, she said. While each field requires different types of qualifications and skills, some qualities are equally essential and helpful for progress in every field.

## 2023 Parliament security breach on Dec 13 can't be coincidence: Delhi HC

accused had moved the high court against the dismissal of their bail pleas by the trial court in December 2024. Accused Neelam Azad and Mahesh Kumawat were granted bail by the high court in July 2025. In a major security breach on the anniversary of the 2001 Parliament terror attack, accused Sagar Sharma and Manoranjan D allegedly jumped into the Lok Sabha chamber from the public gallery during Zero Hour, released yellow gas from canisters and sloganeered before they were overpowered by some MPs. Around the same time, two other accused — Amol Shinde and Azad — allegedly sprayed coloured gas from canisters while shouting “tanashahi nahi chalegi (dictatorship won't work)” outside the Parliament premises.

## MP water contamination: Govt report cites 7 deaths, no disease disclosed

was brought dead to an urban primary health centre (UPHC). The cause of death of five-month-old infant Avyan and 43-year-old Nikhar has been described as “unknown”.

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uncertainty surrounding these two critical platform acquisitions reflected a procurement system paralysed by procedure and loath to take timely decisions. "Postponement, it seems, remains the default option in such cases, rather than any urgency to shape outcomes," he said, declining to be named. The result, he added grimly, was that the Indian military's capability gaps were being managed – but not closed. Few materiel procurements in recent years better reflect the systemic dysfunction within the MoD and the two services than the P75I and the MRFA buys. Initiated years ago under different governments, and driven by operational urgency to arrest looming capability gaps in two critical domains – undersea warfare and air superiority – both had morphed into case studies in drift. The P75I was formally launched 19 years ago, in 2007, and the MRFA in 2017-18. Yet, mired in a labyrinthine and over-engineered acquisition process and constantly shifting qualitative requirements, both programmes had badly faltered. It seems that as India's maritime and aerial threats mounted, the platforms meant to counter them remained stuck in files at the MoD and at respective Service headquarters.







## Budget 2026: Industry calls for stronger push to domestic manufacturing

**New Delhi, Jan 15 (IANS)** Industry stakeholders have called for stronger push to domestic manufacturing and the 'Make in India' initiative among the top priorities for the Union Budget 2026-27, a pre-Budget survey conducted by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (Assocham) said on Thursday.

The survey, conducted among professionals across manufacturing, services, infrastructure, IT/ITeS, startups and allied sectors, found that 55 per cent of respondents remain optimistic about the business outlook over the next 12 months, while 32 per cent maintain a neutral stance and only 13 per cent expressed a pessimistic outlook.



Boosting domestic manufacturing emerged as the single most important Budget priority to advance the vision of an Aatmanirbhar and Viksit Bharat, followed by strengthening

MSMEs and simplifying tax and compliance systems. According to the apex industry chamber, infrastructure and logistics development, skills and job creation, and accelerated

digital and AI-led growth also featured prominently among industry expectations from the Budget. To accelerate manufacturing growth, industry participants said the budget should focus on providing cheaper long-term capital, enhancing credit availability and offering targeted tax incentives for technology upgradation, automation and artificial intelligence adoption. Expansion of PLI schemes to more sectors, tax incentives linked to Industry 4.0, rationalisation of customs duties on critical raw materials, and faster clearances at industrial parks, SEZs and industrial clusters were also highlighted.

The survey further underscored the close link between

manufacturing growth and MSME health, with 55 per cent of respondents being MSMEs themselves.

"Delayed payments and working capital shortages were identified as the most critical pain points for MSMEs, reinforcing the demand for cash-flow-based lending, green-channel credit linked to GST and e-invoice data, and incentives for timely payments," the findings showed.

The survey report highlighted that the Union Budget 2026-27 should prioritise execution-oriented reforms, rationalise compliance frameworks and deploy targeted fiscal incentives to unlock private investment, strengthen MSMEs and enable manufacturing scale-up.

## Tesla sells 225 electric vehicles in India in 2025

**New Delhi, Jan 15 (IANS)** US-based Electric vehicle (EV) manufacturer Tesla sold 225 units of its only electric vehicle in India, Model Y SUV, in calendar year 2025, according to industry data.

Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA) data showed that Tesla retailed 64 units in September, 40 in October, 48 in November and 73 in December. US electric vehicle maker is yet to complete a year of retail deliveries in India as it opened its maiden showroom in July.

The company currently offers the Model Y in India as a completely built unit with a rear-wheel-drive (RWD) powertrain. The standard RWD variant of Model Y is priced at Rs 59.89 lakh (ex-showroom), while the Long Range RWD is priced at Rs 67.89 lakh (ex-showroom). Prices are significantly higher than those in overseas markets due to India's high import duties on fully built vehicles. Tesla operates experience centres in Gurugram, Mumbai and Delhi, with around 12 superchargers and 10 destination chargers across those cities.

Tesla claims a range of up to 500 km and the Long Range up to 622 km for Model Y.

## India's startup ecosystem accelerated under PM Modi's leadership: Top entrepreneurs

**New Delhi, Jan 15 (IANS)** Prime Minister Narendra Modi has played a decisive leadership role in strengthening India's startup ecosystem, with his vision, top entrepreneurs said on Thursday.

According to them, the development of digital public infrastructure such as the JAM Trinity (Jan Dhan, Aadhaar and Mobile) and UPI for making business easier and more inclusive. Healthcare platform Img CEO Prashant Tandon said India today offers everything an entrepreneur needs to build and scale a business. "Since Prime Minister Modi took charge, startups have moved into the spotlight. India has successfully established itself on the global startup map," he said.



Tandon added that startups are now widely understood and supported not only by entrepreneurs, but also by corporates, governments and society at large.

"Strong public digital infrastructure has enabled founders to build solutions aligned with the country's real needs," Tandon added.

Urban Company co-founder and CEO Abhiraj Singh Bahl said that when his company started, India had only one or two unicorns. "Over the last eight years, the ecosystem has transformed dramatically. Today, India has over 110 unicorns and thousands of startups across sectors. This growth is a result of the leadership and support provided by Prime Minister Modi," he said.

## Netherland-based Nexperia's dispute with China disrupts supply chains, hits automakers

**New Delhi, Jan 15 (IANS)** Europe's legal and political conflict with China over control of chipmaker Nexperia has disrupted cooperation between raised longer-term questions about stability within global supply chains, a report said on Thursday.

The report from Investment Monitor said the conflict between Nexperia's Holland based company and a key manufacturing site in China's Guangdong halted production at multiple car manufacturing plants.

"As countries jockey for control over different stages of the semiconductor value chain, it's going to lay out these potential breaking points," the report cited Georgetown University Center for Security and Emerging Technology senior data research



analyst Jacob Feldgoise.

Guangdong facility had produced about 50 billion units annually, roughly half of the company's output before the dispute.

Semiconductor manufacturer Nexperia is a Dutch subsidiary of Wingtech Technology, a Shanghai-based electronics firm

partly owned by the Chinese government. A Dutch court placed Nexperia under trustee supervision in October, stripping parent Wingtech Technology of ownership rights and suspending founder Zhang Xuezheng as chief executive, Investment Monitor said citing a Bloomberg report.

The Dutch court placed Nexperia under the supervision following allegations of improper technology transfers and resource diversion. Wingtech appealed before the Dutch Supreme Court denied any wrongdoing and negotiated with trustees but political tensions have persisted, the report said. Some banks withdrew financing to the company, including an unused \$800 million credit line, it added. Both organisations took steps to prepare for future operations independently and the Dutch side committed approximately \$300 million to expanding production capacities outside China, aiming for 90 per cent non-Chinese output by mid-2026. Expansion efforts focus on facilities in Malaysia and the Philippines.

## Nuvocoreports record Q3 cement sales, EBITDA up 50% YoY

**Jamshedpur, Jan 15:** Nuvoco Vistas Corp. Ltd., a leading building materials Company in India, announced its financial results for the quarter ended December 31, 2025. The Company continues its progress on the strategic capacity expansion in the East, coupled with the project execution at the Vadraj Cement facilities, which remains on track, with the operationalisation of the Clinker unit and Grinding units planned in phases starting in Q3 FY27. These initiatives position Nuvoco's total cement capacity at 35 MMTPA, thereby consolidating its position as the fifth-largest cement group in India for the long-term.

The Company sustained improved YoY performance despite macro headwinds in the initial part of the quarter. The Company achieved its highest-ever third-quarter cement sales volume of 5 MMT in Q3 FY26, registering a 7% YoY growth. Consolidated revenue from operations grew 12% YoY to Rs.2,701 Cr. in Q3 FY26. The Company also reported 50% YoY rise in consolidated EBITDA



to Rs.386 Cr. in Q3 FY26.

Premium products continued their strong momentum with premiumisation sustaining at a historic high of 44% for the second consecutive quarter. The robust performance highlights rising brand traction for the Nuvoco Concrete and NuvocoDuraguard franchises, with increasing recognition as trusted choices in building material applications. RMX business is witnessing volume traction within its Concrete range of products. Capitalising on the demand, the division launched Concrete Tri Shield, a specialised product offering three-layer durability and a 50% increase in structural lifespan. Meanwhile, the MBM business launched the Nuvoco Zero M Unnati App, a digital loyalty platform

designed to enhance influencer engagement, transparency, and data-driven channel growth.

Commenting on the performance of the Company, Jayakumar Krishnaswamy, Managing Director, Nuvoco Vistas Corp. Ltd., stated, "Despite early macroeconomic challenges from prolonged monsoon and festivities that softened demand in October and November, December saw healthy double-digit growth, demonstrating strong recovery momentum. The Company delivered its highest-ever third-quarter volume and a 50% YoY rise in EBITDA, driven by a sustained focus on premiumisation and operational excellence. The Company also achieved the lowest blended fuel cost in the last 17 quarters, at Rs. 1.41 per Mcal. Thereafter, refurbishment and project execution at the Vadraj Cement Plant are progressing steadily as planned. These strategic expansions, supported by our focus on premiumisation, cost and operational efficiency, will drive our long-term competitive advantage."

## 81 pc Indians optimistic about future, outpacing global peers



**New Delhi, Jan 15 (IANS)** India is ranked fourth globally in public confidence, and the country is headed in the right direction, with 81 per cent expressing optimism compared with a 48 per cent global average, a report said on Thursday.

The report from SEC Newgate stated that India holds organisations to high standards, with 89 per cent of respondents ranking socially responsible business as highly important versus a global average of 80 per cent.

It highlighted a gap between expectation and performance as 89 per cent expected organisations to act responsibly, while only 78 per cent saw visible performance.

Further, India has also been

ranked third globally in the community's expectations of businesses to communicate their values and speak out on social issues.

The report, based on a survey conducted among 20,000 people across 20 countries, showed that stronger climate ambition is widely supported, with 85 per cent respondents believing businesses should speak up on environmental issues, though affordability pressures continue to shape public acceptance.

Fewer respondents prioritised climate action over business profitability (69 per cent), keeping costs low for consumers (62 per cent), or increasing pay or benefits for employees (57 per cent).

Familiarity with the term ESG

(Environmental, Social, and Governance) is higher in India, with 81 per cent aware of the term and 47 per cent claiming a strong understanding, the report said.

"Notably, 61 per cent of Indian respondents express a strong interest in ESG issues once explained, compared with 35 per cent globally rating high interest.

India is less fatigued by ESG debates and more focused on visible impacts that are locally relevant," it said.

Communities in India also show clear support for businesses investing in local communities, domestic employment, and responsible sourcing.

## 50 pc of Indian startups emerging from Tier 2, 3 cities; women lead inclusive growth



**New Delhi, Jan 15 (IANS)** Startups are increasingly bridging India's rural-urban divide by deploying solutions across agri-tech, telemedicine, microfinance, tourism, and ed-tech, directly addressing developmental gaps and supporting rural livelihoods, an official statement said on Thursday, ahead of the National Startup Day. Notably, women-led startups are emerging as a key driver of inclusive and regionally balanced growth, with more than 45 per cent of recognised startups having at least one woman director/partner as of December 2025.

"This reflects the emergence of innovation not only as an economic engine but also as a driver of social equity and balanced regional development," according to the official statement.

Over the past decade, India has rapidly evolved into one of the world's largest startup ecosystems, with more than 2 lakh startups as of December 2025.

Major hubs like Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Mumbai, and Delhi-NCR have been at the forefront of this transformation. At the same time, smaller cities are also steadily contributing to the momentum, with around 50 per cent of the startups emerging from tier 2 and 3 cities, reflecting the democratisation of entrepreneurship.

The Startup India Initiative, led by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, has emerged as the cornerstone of India's innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystem.

## India's unemployment rate remains largely stable in December

**New Delhi, Jan 15 (IANS)** India's unemployment rate (UR) for persons aged 15 years and above remained largely stable in December, estimated at 4.8 per cent compared to 4.7 per cent observed in November, according to a statement issued by the Ministry of Statistics on Thursday.

The rural UR remained stagnant at 3.9 per cent, while the urban UR stood at 6.7 per cent. Among rural males aged 15 years and above, the UR remained low and stable at 4.1 per cent in December 2025.

Further, the urban female UR moderated to 9.1 per cent last month, compared to 9.3 per cent in



November 2025. The overall Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) among persons aged 15 years and above showed an upward trend at 56.1 per cent in December, compared to 55.8 per cent in November.

According to the official statement, in rural areas, the LFPR was

estimated at 59.0 per cent in December 2025, in comparison to 58.6 per cent in November 2025. The urban LFPR experienced a slight dip to 50.2 per cent from 50.4 per cent during this period.

Overall labour force participation for females aged 15 years and above edged up to 35.3 per cent from 35.1 per cent in November 2025.

In rural areas, it witnessed an increase to 40.1 per cent during December 2025 -- from 39.7 per cent in the previous month and in urban areas, it slipped slightly to 25.3 per cent in December from 25.5 per cent in November 2025.

## NITI Aayog unveils blueprint to empower MSMEs by boosting scheme implementation, service delivery

**New Delhi, Jan 15 (IANS)** NITI Aayog on Thursday released a detailed blueprint to improve outcomes for the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) by streamlining scheme implementation, strengthening inter-ministerial coordination, and enhancing the delivery of financial, skill, marketing, and innovation support.

The report, titled 'Achieving Efficiencies in MSME Sector through Convergence of Schemes', outlines a strategic roadmap to strengthen the effectiveness of government support for MSMEs in the country.

Among other suggestions, the report proposes an AI-powered centralised digital platform inte-



grating MSME schemes, compliance, finance, and market intelligence.

"Drawing on global best practices, the portal would feature information, process, compli-

ance, and market research modules, supported by AI chatbots, dashboards, and mobile access for real-time support to MSMEs," NITI Aayog said in a statement. Further, the report

evaluates existing government schemes and programmes for the MSME sector, assesses the current level of convergence among them, and identifies best practices from central, state, and international experiences, offering actionable recommendations to unlock convergence opportunities and undertake corrective measures to improve efficiency, outreach, and impact of MSME schemes. There are 18 schemes spanning critical support areas such as credit assistance, skill development, marketing support, innovation and R&D, technology and quality upgradation, and infrastructure development. The report recommends a two-pronged approach to con-

vergence, comprising information convergence and process convergence. "Information convergence focuses on integrating government-generated data at the central and state levels to improve coordination, enable informed decision-making, and strengthen governance outcomes," it highlighted.

Two, process convergence aims at aligning and unifying schemes to reduce redundancies, streamline operations, and improve service delivery.

This includes merging similar schemes, combining common components, and fostering collaboration across ministries and states to create a cohesive MSME support ecosystem.



## Men's U19 World Cup: Henil Patel's fifer helps India beat USA by six wickets

**Bulawayo (Zimbabwe), Jan 15 (IANS)** Henil Patel bagged the first five-wicket haul of the tournament and helped multiple-time champion India make a winning start to their campaign in the ICC Under-19 Men's Cricket World Cup with a six-wicket victory (via DLS Method) over the USA at the Queens Sports Club in Bulawayo on Thursday.

Five-time winners India inserted in the USA after winning the toss, and Henil Patel instantly validated that decision by delivering a fiery opening spell that broke the resistance of the USA top order. The right-arm pacer picked up three wickets inside the first 12 overs as the USA were reduced to 35/4.

The Indians then tightened the screws on the USA middle-order



to pick up wickets at regular intervals as DeepeshDevendran, Ambarish RS, Khilan Patel, and VaibhavSooryavanshi all picked up a wicket each. Patel then returned to clean up the tail and bag the first fifer of the

tournament to bowl USA out for just 107 inside 36 overs. **SOORYAVANSHI SETS RECORD**

The USA made a good start to proceedings with the ball, dismissing early Vaibhav

Sooryavanshi, who set a world record by making his debut in the U19 World Cup at the age of 14 years and 294 days, breaking the 18-year-old record held by Indian-origin player Nitish Kumar, who made his debut for Canada at the age of 15 years and 245 days.

Just when skipper Ayush Mhatre and Vedant Trivedi appeared to steady the innings, the game was halted because of the lightning protocols. Rain followed and ensured the game was suspended for long enough for it to be reduced to 37 overs when it resumed after a long break. Chasing a revised target of 96, India were rocked by two quick wickets as skipper Mhatre (19) and Trivedi (2) were dismissed, leaving India struggling at 25/3. But Abhigyan Kundu and Vihaan Malhotra

weathered the storm and slowly turned the tables on the USA bowlers, stitching together a counter-attacking 45-run partnership that got India closer to the target. Malhotra's dismissal didn't prevent the five-time winners from cruising home and putting their first points on the board.

India will be back in action against Bangladesh for their second game in Group A on Saturday. The USA will take on New Zealand on Sunday, with both matches set to take place at the Queens Sports Club in Bulawayo.

**Brief scores:** USA U19 107 all out in 35.2 overs (NitishSudini 36; Henil Patel 5-16) lost to India U19 (revised target 96 - AbhigyanKundu 42 not out; RitvikAppidi 2-24) by 6 wickets (DLS method).

## Mitchell Starc bags ICC Men's Player of the Month Award

**Dubai, Jan 15 (IANS)** Australia's talismanic bowler Mitchell Starc has been named as the winner of the ICC Men's Player of the Month award for December, following his splendid performance against England in the Ashes 2025-26.

The 35-year-old was on a roll in the recently concluded Ashes series, taking 31 wickets and contributing with two half-centuries. His outstanding all-round performance earned him the Player of the Series award.

Australia's left-arm fast bowler was nominated for the Player of the Month award after he took 16 wickets and scored 139 runs across three tests in December.

Starc was proud to have won the award on the back of a successful home Ashes win.



## Adelaide International: Andreeva, Shnaider set up all-Russian semis clash

**Adelaide, Jan 15 (IANS)** World No. 8 Mirra Andreeva stormed into the semifinals of the Adelaide International, setting up an all-Russian clash against Diana Shnaider after a dominant victory over local hope Maya Joint in Adelaide on Thursday.

The Adelaide International serves as a crucial warm-up event ahead of the season's first Grand Slam, offering players a final chance to fine-tune their form for Australian hard courts. Andreeva, the third seed, proved too strong for local hope Maya Joint in a battle between two rising teenagers. The Russian star dispatched the 32nd-ranked Australian with a commanding 6-2, 6-0 victory to book her place in the final four.



## India Open 2026: Lakshya Sen beats Kenta Nishimoto to reach QFs; Srikanth, Prannoy crash out

**New Delhi, Jan 15 (IANS)** Former champion Lakshya Sen relied on his strong defence and injection of pace to defeat Japan's Kenta Nishimoto, while KidambiSrikanth and HS Prannoy's inspired performances were not enough in the second round of the India Open 2026 at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium in New Delhi on Thursday. Sen packed off Nishimoto 21-19, 21-11 to advance into the quarterfinals after Srikanth had gone down 21-14, 17-21, 21-17 against BWF World Tour Finals winner Christo Popov of France, and Prannoy lost to eighth seed Loh Kean Yew of Singapore 18-21, 21-19, 21-14.

India's challenge in the women's section of the BWF World Tour Super 750 event being organised by the Badminton Association of India also came to an end after the fifth-seeded Chinese Han Yue accounted for MalvikaBansod 21-18, 21-15. The going was tough even for Sen in the initial stages of the first game against Nishimoto, as the Indian was struggling to find his rhythm and the length of his strokes. The Indian Oil employee trailed the Japanese 11-16 in the opening game and then 14-18, but kept on engaging his opponent in long rallies and came up with some brilliant defensive strokes to parry Nishimoto's smashes to



claw back. He won five straight points to take the lead and then wrapped up the opening game on the very first opportunity. Sen was much more clinical in the second game, varying his pace and going for the kill whenever he found an opportunity. As he

grew in confidence, the 24-year-old mixed his half smashes with clever reserve drops to keep his opponent guessing and sealed his quarterfinal spot in 50 minutes.

**Important results:** Men's singles: Lakshya Senbt Kenta

Nishimoto (Jpn) 21-19, 21-10; 5-Christo Popov (Fra) bt Kidambi Srikanth 21-14, 17-21, 21-17; 3-Jonatan Christie (Ina) btYushi Tanaka (Jpn) 21-15, 21-19; 8-Loh Kean Yew (Sin) bt HS Prannoy 18-21, 21-19, 21-14; 2-Kunlavut Vitidsarn (Tha) bt Lu GuangZu (Chn) 21-14, 21-16. Women's singles: 1-AN Se Young (Kor) bt Huang Yu-Hsun (Tpe) 21-14, 21-9; 7-Ratchnok Intanon (Tha) bt Mia Blichfeldt (Den) 21-16, 21-11; 5-Han Yue (Chn) bt Malvika Bansod 21-18, 21-15; 4-Chen Yu Fei (Chn) btBusanan Ongbamrungphan (Tha) 21-11, 21-13; Natsuki Nidaira (Jpn) bt 8-Tomoka Miyazaki (Jpn) 21-19, 8-21, 21-16.

## Washington Sundar ruled out of NZ T20Is with rib injury

**New Delhi, Jan 15 (IANS)** India all-rounder Washington Sundar has been ruled out of the five-match T20I series against New Zealand, as he is still recovering from a rib injury he suffered during the ODI series opener in Vadodara, sources told IANS on Thursday. The five-match T20I series, which is set to begin on January 21 at the Vidarbha Cricket Association Stadium in Nagpur, is part of India's preparation for the T20 World Cup, which starts on February 7. It remains unclear whether the all-rounder will recover



in time for the marquee tournament. "Washington is ruled out of the T20Is against New Zealand, as he would take at least a few more weeks to recover from the injury suffered in the Vadodara ODI. It is yet to be known if he will be fully fit in time for the T20 World Cup," said a source familiar with the matter to IANS. The source further said, "Washington is likely to report to the CoE in Bengaluru on Saturday and will know more about his recovery timeline once he reaches there."

## Laura Wolvaardt named Player of the Month for December

**Dubai, Jan 15 (IANS)** South Africa's captain, Laura Wolvaardt, has bagged the Player of the Month award for December after her remarkable performance in the last month of the year 2025, which helped the team register series victories against Ireland in T20I and ODI formats.

Fresh off a commanding campaign in the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2025, Wolvaardt continued to showcase her brilliance, rounding off a remarkable year by registering three centuries



across formats in just one month. Wolvaardt was at her destructive best in the opening T20I, blasting an unbeaten 115 at a staggering strike rate of 205.35, an innings studded with 15 boundaries and four sixes. Her dominance carried into the ODI series, where she opened the batting and played a key role throughout. After a steady 31 in the first match, she struck back-to-back centuries, hammering 124 off 111 balls in the second ODI before finishing unbeaten on 100 in the final game to seal the whitewash.

## Najmul sacked as players' revolt puts BPL in limbo

**Dhaka, Jan 15:** The crisis-ridden Bangladesh Cricket Board stared at the prospect of its flagship T20 league coming to a halt after senior national players revolted against it for not sacking director Najmul Islam for his disparaging comments against them even though the BCB removed him as head of its finance committee.

Despite the removal of Najmul from the key BCB post, two matches of the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) scheduled on the day were postponed and the tournament itself looked in disarray due to the players' firm stance.

The cricketers taking part in the BPL were unified in their demand for immediate removal of Najmul as BCB director. BCB removed Najmul as chairman of the board's finance committee but he remains a Board director, a position that can be taken from him on disciplinary grounds. "...Following a review of recent developments and in the best interest of the organisation, the BCB President has decided to release Mr.Najmul Islam from his responsibilities as Chairman of the Finance Committee with immediate effect," said the BCB in a statement."Until further notice, the BCB President will assume the role of Acting Chairman of the Finance Committee. The BCB reiterates that the interests of the cricketers remain its highest priority."

## Keys loses to Mboko in Adelaide International QF

**Adelaide, Jan 15 (IANS)** Defending champion Madison Keys suffered a shock exit from the Adelaide International on Thursday, crashing out in the quarter-finals after a three-set defeat to Canada's rising star Victoria Mboko. World No. 17 Mboko, 19, defeated ninth-ranked Keys 6-4, 4-6, 6-2 in one hour and 53 minutes for her second career victory against a top-10 opponent. Eighth seed Mboko struck first by breaking Keys early to take the opening set but struggled to match the American's powerful serving in the second. In the deciding set, Mboko was clinical on serve, winning 75 percent of points on her first delivery and capitalising on the only break opportunity she earned. "I know she won this tournament last year and, of course, the Australian Open. I knew coming into this



match it had to be a big fight, so I'm glad I got it done," Mboko said on court after the match, as reported by Xinhua. Keys had won the Adelaide International title in 2025 before going on to claim her first career Grand Slam title at the Australian Open weeks later. She will be in action in Melbourne on January 18 to defend her title. Mboko will play Australia's Kimberly Birrell in Friday's semifinal, after the world No. 107 came back from a set down to beat Romania's JaquelineCristian 5-7, 6-1, 7-5 in a three-hour epic. Birrell led 5-2 in the first set and had five set points but could not make the most of the opportunities as Cristian won five games in a row to seal the set. Birrell flipped the momentum in a dominant second set where she won the opening five games.

## Jsr officials appointed arbiters at National School Games

**Jamshedpur, Jan 15:** The 69th National School Games Championship 2025-26 is currently underway at Khelgaon, Ranchi, with over 300 participants competing in the Under-14 boys' and girls' categories. The prestigious event has drawn participation from 31 sports units, representing states from across the country.

Two officials from Jamshedpur, Dr SuchetaBhuyan and Mrs ShwetaKumari, have been invited to serve as match arbiters for the championship. Their selection reflects recognition of their experience and contribution to the sport.

Narendra Kumar Tiwary, General Secretary of the East Singhbhum District Chess Association, extended his best wishes to both officials and the participants for a successful and competitive championship.



## Sabuj Kalyan Sangh to host first Rapid Chess Tournament on Jan 18



**Jamshedpur, Jan 15:** Sabuj Kalyan Sangh, Telco, will organise its first-ever Rapid Chess Tournament 2026 on January 18 at the Sabuj Kalyan Sangh campus, marking a new milestone for chess promotion in the area.

The event has already received an encouraging response, with over 100 players registered so far. Top seed of the tournament will be Kumar Sankalp, with an Elo rating of 1771, while Ishani Choudhary (rating 1462) will be the top-seeded player in the women's category. The organisers have announced a total cash prize of Rs 40,000, along with 36 trophies for boys and girls across various age groups.

Reporting time for players will be 8:00

am, and the first round will begin at 8:30 am. The tournament will be played in eight rounds.

The entry fee has been fixed at Rs 650. The tournament will be conducted under the supervision of Chief Arbitrer Jayant Kumar Bhuyan, with Vishal Kumar Minz as Deputy Chief Arbitrer. A final preparatory meeting was held to finalise all technical aspects of the event.

The meeting was attended by office-bearers of Sabuj Kalyan Sangh, including Pradeep Ghoshal, Joy Jyoti Khatua, Deepak Banerjee, Mithilesh Ghosh, Sudhir Bhattacharya and Subroto Bose along with Narendra Kumar Tiwary, General Secretary, East Singhbhum District Chess Association.

## PST-11 clinches Chamber Premier League 2026 title

**Jamshedpur, Jan 15:** PST-11 emerged champions of the Chamber Premier League (CPL) 2026, defeating PRW-11 by a convincing margin of 134 runs in the final match held at the Tube Makers Club Ground. The two-day fifth edition of the tournament was organised by the Singhbhum Chamber of Commerce and Industry on January 13 and 14.

The final began at 7:00 pm and witnessed an impressive performance by PST-11, which dominated the match from start to finish. VikasAgarwal was named Man of the Match for his outstanding contribution in the final. The details were jointly shared by Chamber President ManavKedia and Honorary General Secretary PuneetKanwatia.



The closing ceremony took place at 8:30 pm at the same venue. MukulChaudhary, Chief Sports, Tata Steel, attended as the chief guest, while Rajiv Badhan, Secretary of Cricket Country Club, Ranchi, was the guest of honour. They presented trophies to the winning and runner-up teams and distributed consolation

prizes to all participating players. Addressing the gathering, MukulChaudhary appreciated the enthusiasm of business owners and entrepreneurs for sports despite their busy schedules, and praised the Chamber for promoting a healthy lifestyle. Rajiv Badhan also lauded the initiative and encouraged the

Chamber to continue supporting sports activities.

President ManavKedia said the Chamber has begun organising sports events alongside its regular activities to promote fitness, camaraderie and sportsmanship among its members. He added that the number of teams is likely to be increased to eight in the next CPL season.

Six teams-PST-11, Executive-11, PRW-11, Trade-11, Industry-11 and Tax & Finance-11-participated in the tournament. The top four teams qualified for the semi-finals played on January 14.

Individual honours went to Vinit Kumar Lala (Man of the Series), Pritam Jain (Best Batsman), AshutoshKabra (Best Bowler), VinitLala (Best Fielder) and SugamSaraiwala (Best Wicketkeeper).



# “Heartfelt thanks to every single audience for giving us such a massive success” – Star Entertainer Naveen Polishetty at the Anaganaga Oka Raju Thank You Meet

“This is the first Sankranthi in six years that truly gave me satisfaction” – Producer Suryadevara Naga Vamsi Arriving as a Sankranthi gift and showering theatres with nonstop laughter, Anaganaga Oka Raju is racing ahead toward a sensational blockbuster status. Starring star entertainer Naveen Polishetty in the lead, the film is produced by Suryadevara Naga Vamsi and Sai Soujanya under the banners of Sithara Entertainments and Fortune Four Cinemas, and presented by Srihara Studios. The film is directed by debutant Mari, with Meenakshi Chaudhary as the female lead. Released on January 14 amid huge expectations, Anaganaga Oka Raju received an extraordinary response from the very first show. Along with rib-tickling comedy, the film touched hearts with its emotional moments, earning praise as a true festive entertainer. In just two days, the film created a sensation by collecting a massive ₹41.2 crores worldwide. With collections pouring in at the box office backed by overwhelming audience support, the team organized a Thank You Meet to express their gratitude. Speaking at the event, Naveen Polishetty said, “First of all, Sankranthi



greetings to everyone. My heartfelt thanks to each and every audience member who gave us such a big success, and to our media friends who stood by us with immense support. Sithara Entertainments is a blockbuster production house that has delivered many milestone films. Recently, one or two films from the banner did not perform as expected. At such a time, audiences giving a blockbuster in the form of Anaganaga Oka Raju has brought great happiness to all of us. Seeing a smile on Naga Vamsi garu’s face especially made me very happy. I wish he always stays smiling like this. I must specially talk about our gurus Trivikram garu and

Chinna Babu garu. They trusted us and encouraged us greatly for this film. The episodes they believed in and allowed us to retain are now receiving tremendous appreciation from audiences. From the very first scene to the interval, audiences are laughing continuously in the first half. The political entertainment in the second half is also getting an excellent response. I always prioritize entertainment in my films, but this time we also wanted to deliver strong emotions along with it. I admire Rajkumar Hirani’s films, and with that inspiration, we attempted something similar in Telugu. We watched the film in a mass theatre like Sriramulu, and the way

audiences enjoyed the entertainment and showered applause during the emotional scenes made us feel that our story connected with all sections of viewers. As a hero, this is only my fourth film and my first Sankranthi release. Despite competition from big films, audiences made our film a blockbuster. A dialogue from a Trivikram film says there’s some power behind you. The power behind me is the audience. They are the ones carrying my films forward. From someone who once went around asking for just one

chance, to receiving four consecutive hits, I sincerely thank every Telugu family for this love. I’ll continue to work harder than ever to entertain you. Director Maari’s contribution is unforgettable. He also played a key role in the writing. When I was feeling low while writing the story after an accident, our co-writer Chinmayi filled me with motivation. Meenakshi Chaudhary and Rao Ramesh garu delivered outstanding performances. Thanks to Mickey J. Meyer garu for the wonderful music. When writers, artists, and directors are trusted and given creative freedom, this is the kind of output that comes. My heartfelt thanks to Naga Vamsi garu for trusting us and giving us complete freedom. Thanks to everyone who was part of this film. Many film personalities congratulated us saying we delivered a great Sankranthi film. Those who haven’t watched Anaganaga Oka Raju yet, please book your tickets immediately. You will definitely enjoy it.” Producer Suryadevara Naga Vamsi said, “This is the

Sankranthi that gave me true satisfaction after six years. After Ala Vaikunta Puramuloo in 2020, this is the first Sankranthi to give me that level of fulfillment. My heartfelt thanks to audiences for delivering such a big success this Sankranthi. Thanks to the media for the tremendous support. Many producers wished for this film to succeed, and with everyone’s blessings, we achieved this level of success. Fans are also showing massive support on social media, and a big announcement that will make them happy is coming soon. Even though two big films released this Sankranthi, our distributors stood strongly by us and allotted sufficient theatres, which helped us achieve a ₹41 crore gross in just two days. My thanks to all distributors who trusted me and Naveen and stood by us. Releasing a film during Sankranthi and delivering a hit is very special to me. Special thanks to Naveen for being a key part of this success. Meenakshi Chaudhary dedicated an entire year exclusively to this film, and I sincerely thank her. For any script-related doubts, I constantly discussed with creative director Chinmayi, and I promised her that if this film succeeds, I’ll introduce her as a director under our banner. Trivikram

## Energetic Mass Track Basavanna From Arjun’s Seetha Payanam Unveiled



Multi-talented actor and director Action King Arjun is gearing up with his upcoming film Seetha Payanam. Produced under the Shree Raam Films International banner, the movie marks the silver-screen debut of Arjun’s daughter Aishwarya Arjun as the female lead. The film also features Niranjan, Sathiyaraj, Prakash Raj, and Kovai Sarala in key roles. Along with directing, Arjun himself plays a special character, while his nephew Action Prince Dhruva Sarja appears in a striking cameo. The newly released song ‘Basavanna’, introducing Dhruva Sarja’s character, has grabbed instant attention. The track hints at Dhruva Sarja portraying a powerful and intense role as Basavanna.

Anup Rubens’ composition is packed with high energy, showcasing the importance of the Basavanna character in the film. Kasarla Shyam’s lyrics deliver goosebumps, while the vocals by Nakash Aziz and L. Keerthana are vibrant and appealing. Choreographers Lalitha Shobi and Sriшти Varma have added dynamic visuals to the song. From the glimpse this track offers, Dhruva Sarja is all set to become one of the film’s biggest strengths. The team has now completed the shoot and post-production work. The makers have already announced that the film will release on February 14, hitting screens on a grand scale in Telugu, Kannada, Tamil, Malayalam, and Hindi.

## From a 10-Minute Short Film to a Rs. 10-Crore Feature Film: AVAA International Short Film Contest Season 1 Announced

On the auspicious occasion of Sankranti and Pongal, AVAA Entertainments announces the launch of the AVAA International Short Film Contest – Season One, a unique, director-centric initiative aimed at discovering and encouraging new filmmaking talent across India. The production house extends warm wishes to everyone for a very Happy Sankranti and Pongal. Designed as a director-focused reality format, the contest invites aspiring filmmakers to submit short films with a maximum duration of 10 minutes, judged purely on storytelling and directorial vision. The standout highlight of the contest is its grand reward – the winning director will get an opportunity to direct a ₹10-crore feature film,



produced by actor and film producer Mr. Vishnu Manchu. Known for his constant support of emerging talent, Vishnu Manchu’s vision behind this initiative is to provide deserving directors a

genuine gateway into mainstream cinema. With this initiative, AVAA Entertainments reinforces its commitment to nurturing fresh voices and shaping the future of Indian cinema.



## Kartik Aaryan walks away from his Rs 15 crore paycheck: Reports

**Mumbai:** In an industry where success is celebrated loudly and failures are quickly forgotten, Kartik Aaryan has chosen a different path. The actor is winning hearts not for a blockbuster, but for a bold and generous decision after his latest film struggled at the box office. Kartik’s romantic comedy Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri, co-starring Ananya Panday, released during the festive Christmas season with high expectations. The promotions were energetic, the songs trended online, and fans expected another

crowd-pleaser. However, once the film hit theatres, the response turned lukewarm. Ticket sales dropped quickly, and the movie failed to recover its big budget.

**Kartik Aaryan refuses to take remuneration**  
While most stars walk away from underperforming projects without looking back, Kartik reportedly chose to forego Rs.15 crore from his acting fees to ease the financial burden on the producers. In Bollywood, where star salaries are often fixed regardless of box office results, such a gesture is rare. His decision reflects not just professionalism, but empathy for the team that believed in the project. Industry insiders say the move has earned Kartik

immense respect. Crew members and trade analysts have praised him for standing by his film even when it didn’t deliver expected results. It sends a strong message that filmmaking is teamwork and success or failure belongs to everyone involved. Rumours of strained relationships with producers and talent agencies surfaced after the setback, but sources close to the actor have dismissed them. Kartik is already moving forward with new projects and continues to be one of Bollywood’s most bankable young stars. While the film may not have worked magic at the box office, Kartik Aaryan’s real-life gesture has certainly struck the right chord proving that sometimes character matters more than collections.

## Introducing The Graceful Nabha Natesh As Parvathi From Nagabandham, Pan-India Release In Theaters This Summer

Abhishek Nama’s ambitious mythological action drama- Nagabandham, starring Virat Karina, continues to scale new heights as it nears the final stages of production. While the film is already making waves for its massive scale and mystical storyline, the team has now unveiled the captivating first look of lead actress Nabha Natesh as Parvathi. Marking the occasion of Makara Sankranti, the poster showcases the graceful Nabha Natesh in a gorgeous and traditional avatar. Draped in an elegant saree and adorned with intricate jewellery, she radiates poise, purity, and spiritual warmth. Her soulful expression hints at a character deeply rooted in devotion and mythic grace. Adding to the visual richness, a vivid blue bird rests near her hand, complemented by the



presence of a majestic peacock and a temple backdrop. This poster perfectly

captures the essence of the character and the film’s thematic core. Iswarya

Menon is the other heroine, with stalwarts like Jagapathi Babu, Jayaprakash, Murali Sharma, and B.S. Avinash in pivotal roles. Nagabandham unfolds against the backdrop of India’s ancient Vishnu temples. The storyline explores the sacred mysteries of the Nagabandham tradition, weaving mythology, suspense, and divine legacy into a gripping contemporary narrative. With Soundar Rajan S handling cinematography, RC Pranav overseeing editing, and Ashok Kumar taking care of production design, the film promises visual excellence. Backed by producers Kishore Annapureddy and Nishitha Nagireddy, Nagabandham is gearing up for a grand multi-language release in Telugu, Hindi, Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam, this summer.

## PRABHAS NIMMALA’S “MIRACLE”: FIRST LOOK RELEASED

Starring Randheer Bheesu – Hebbah Patel as the lead pair, with senior actors Sriram and Suresh in key roles, “Miracle” is being made as an out-and-out action entertainer. Produced jointly by Ramesh Eggidi, Srikanth Mogadasu, and Chander Goud under the Saida Family Entertainment banner, “Miracle” is directed by Prabhas Nimmala, known for films like “Satya Gang” and “Fighter Shiva.” The first look of the film was released today (January 16) as a Sankranti special. Mrs. Jyotsna is the co-producer of the film. The film’s first schedule, packed with high-octane action sequences, has been completed successfully. The second schedule is set to commence from January 22 in and around Hyderabad. In “Miracle,”



Randheer Bheesu plays the hero, while Hebbah Patel stars as the female lead. Akshara Nunnna Sujana appears as another heroine. Senior actors

Sriram and Suresh will be seen in crucial roles. Naidu Pendra is being introduced as the villain. Veteran film journalist Dheeraj Appaji will be

seen in a special role as a Forensic Officer. The film also features Janardan, Yogi Katre, Vijay Surya, Inthiyaz, Sai Baba, Dil Ramesh, Jhansi, Suryanarayana, Sridhar, Srikanth, Shiva, Aamani, Haimavathi, Navya (Ammu), Bezawada Mastan, R. Kumar, and several others in important roles. Speaking on the occasion, the producers said: “After proving his directorial strength with Satya Gang and Fighter Shiva, director Prabhas Nimmala is now coming up with his third film ‘Miracle.’ Hebbah Patel’s glamour, powerful performances by senior actors Sriram and Suresh, and high-voltage action blocks will be the major highlights of the film. The second schedule will begin from January 22.”