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INBRIEF

Maharashtra civic  
polls: Parties lost  
should introspect,  
says Owaisi

HYDERABAD: Thanking the people of Maharashtra for electing 125 of its candidates as corporators in various Municipal Corporations in the western state, AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi on Saturday said the parties that lost the polls should introspect. Addressing a press conference, Owaisi said the AIMIM party is gearing up to contest Municipal polls in Telangana and that the party already sought the names of interested candidates. "Now those



parties who abuse us (as BJP's B team) should think of themselves. It is the decision of the people. There is an English saying that victory has many fathers, defeat has none. Why did we (they) lose? Those great people will have to say. As far as the voters' list is concerned, it is correct," he replied to a query. Replying to a query on Thackeray cousins coming together, the Hyderabad Lok Sabha MP said the verdict is in front of everyone, and Uddhav Thackeray's candidate has won in the area where Eknath Shinde's house is located.

## Indian students in Bangladesh face rising fear amid political upheaval



**DHAKA (TSIT):** Fear has become a daily companion for thousands of Indian medical students in Bangladesh, as political turmoil and surging anti-India sentiment reshape what was once considered a safe and affordable destination for higher education. More than 9,000 Indian medical students are currently enrolled in Bangladesh, drawn by the country's relatively lower tuition fees compared to India's costly private colleges. For years, this

arrangement worked smoothly, with Indian students blending into Dhaka's academic life. The South Asian Times reported that balance collapsed following the ouster of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in August 2024, after a student-led uprising and violent crackdown.

In December, one Indian student was assaulted by local gangs, his phone and wallet stolen in an incident caught on CCTV. The attack sent

shockwaves through campuses, reinforcing the perception that vulnerability now carries a nationality. Students report self-imposed curfews, whispered conversations, and constant vigilance. "What makes the current moment especially fraught is timing. Bangladesh is heading into a national election amid heightened political violence. Law enforcement presence has increased; so has rhetoric. The interim

government under Muhammad Yunus insists that order is being maintained, that crime levels remain stable, and that foreigners are not under systematic threat. These assurances may be statistically defensible. They are psychologically insufficient," M A Hossain, a political and defence analyst based in Bangladesh, wrote in The South Asian Times.

"For Indian Hindu students, the anxiety is layered. Since Hasina's ouster, attacks on religious minorities (particularly Hindus) have reportedly increased. Dhaka insists these are politically motivated, not communal. That distinction offers little comfort to a student whose examiner's tone hardens the moment his identity becomes clear. In politics, intent matters less than effect," he added.

With the Indian students contributing tuition revenue, academic exchange, and goodwill to Bangladeshi institutions, The South Asian Times notes that the stakes are high. Education is meant to be a neutral zone, insulated from political storms. Yet in Bangladesh today, that insulation is cracking. Degrees are delayed, futures deferred, and anxiety thrives in limbo

## Infiltration biggest challenge for Bengal, refugees need not worry: PM Modi at Malda rally

**Malda (TSIT):** Ahead of the West Bengal Assembly polls, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday made infiltration the central theme of his attack on the TMC government, alleging that large-scale illegal migration had altered the state's demographic balance and fuelled riots, while reassuring refugee communities such as the Matuas that they had nothing to fear.

Addressing a mega rally here in the Muslim-majority district of north Bengal, Modi said infiltration posed "a very big challenge" before the state, alleging that illegal migration had flourished under the TMC's "patronage and syndicate raj" and its alliance with infiltrators.

"There are developed and prosperous countries in the world which have no shortage of money, yet they are removing infiltrators. It is equally necessary to remove infiltrators from West Bengal," he said, adding that a BJP government would take "big action" to stop illegal migration and weed out infiltrators once voted to power. Claiming that the impact of infiltration was visible on the ground, the Prime Minister said the demographic balance had changed in many parts of the



PRIME MINISTER UNVEILED RS 3,250 CRORE RAIL AND ROAD PROJECTS TO BOOST CONNECTIVITY IN BENGAL AND NORTH EAST; FLAGS OFF VANDÉ BHARAT SLEEPER TRAINS AND AMRIT BHARAT EXPRESS SERVICES FROM MALDA, SAYS MODERN TRANSPORT WILL EMPOWER YOUTH AND DRIVE REGIONAL GROWTH

state. "People tell me that in several places, even the spoken language is beginning to change. Differences are emerging in language and dialect. Due to the increasing population of infiltrators, riots have started occurring in many areas of West Bengal, including Malda and Murshidabad," he said.

Modi alleged that the TMC's "syndicate" system was working to ensure infiltrators were settled in the state, claiming there was an "alliance between infiltrators and the ruling party", a charge the BJP has increasingly foregrounded as it sharpens its campaign against the Mamata Banerjee-led government. "You will have to break this alliance. I assure you that as soon as a BJP government is formed, strict action will be taken against infiltration and infiltrators," he said. Modi sought to ringfence refugee communities, particularly the politically significant Matua communi-

ty, which has figured prominently in the citizenship debate, emerging as a key BJP support base since 2019. "I want to assure refugees like the Matuas who took shelter in India due to religious persecution; you need not worry," he said.

The twin emphasis, a hard line on infiltration and a protective assurance to persecuted refugees, came amid the political churn over the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls and ahead of the assembly elections to the 294-member House, due in about three months, with Modi pitching the BJP as both a custodian of national security and a guarantor of the rights of the refugees. Stepping up his attack, the Prime Minister said the "thuggery" of the TMC and its "politics of threatening and intimidating the poor" would soon come to an end, asserting that Bengal, surrounded by BJP-ruled states, was now ready for a change.

## Indian Army restores key Sri Lankan highway with third Bailey bridge after cyclone damage



New Delhi (TSIT): The Indian Army has completed the construction of a third Bailey bridge on Sri Lanka's B-492 Highway, re-establishing a crucial transport corridor between Kandy and Nuwara Eliya that had remained disrupted for more than a month in the wake of Cyclone Ditwah.

Built at KM 15, the 120-foot-long bridge was erected by the Indian Army's Engineer Task

Force under Operation Sagar Bandhu, an ongoing humanitarian mission

aimed at restoring critical infrastructure damaged by the cyclone.

Announcing the development on social media platform X, the Indian Army said its engineers had earlier launched two Bailey bridges in the Jaffna and Kandy regions and have now successfully completed the third structure in Sri Lanka's Central Province. The Army noted that the bridge reconnects the Kandy and Nuwara Eliya districts, reviving a vital link that had been cut off since the disaster.

## Indians return safely from Iran amid unrest, thank Centre



New Delhi, Jan 17: Scenes of anxiety, relief and gratitude unfolded at the Indira Gandhi International Airport late on Friday as several Indian nationals returned from Iran, days after New Delhi urged its citizens to leave the country amid escalating protests and a volatile security situation.

The arrivals followed advisories issued by the Ministry of External Affairs and the Indian

options. The government said it was closely monitoring the situation and remained committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of its citizens.

Those who returned described rapidly deteriorating conditions on the ground, marked by protests, movement restrictions and widespread communication blackouts. "The conditions are bad there. The Government of India has cooperated a lot, and the Embassy guided us on leaving Iran as early as possible. 'Modi jai hai toh har cheez mumkin hai,'" one returnee said after landing in Delhi.

CULTURAL SPLENDOUR AT MEDARAM:

## Sammakka-Sarakka tribal shrine gets a permanent facelift



**DR SRINIVAS VOORADI**  
**E**very two years, on the full moon days of Magha, the dense forests of Medaram in Mulugu district transform into a vast spiritual congregation. The Sammakka-Sarakka (Sarakka) Medaram Maha Jatara, regarded as Asia's largest tribal fair, draws lakhs of devotees from Telangana and neighbouring States. Often described as the "Telangana Kumbh Mela", the four-day jatara—is a rare confluence of faith, history and tribal identity.

This year's jatara has assumed added significance with the comprehensive reconstruction and permanent development of the Medaram Sammakka-Sarakka tribal shrine. Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy is scheduled to inaugurate

the renovated shrine on January 19, marking a major milestone in the preservation of one of Telangana's most revered cultural traditions.

A legacy rooted in resistance

The origins of the Medaram jatara are said to be deeply intertwined with the history of tribal resistance during the Kakatiya period, often remembered as the golden age of Telugu history. During the reign of Kakatiya ruler Prataparudra, the Koya tribals are believed to have fought against oppression, laying down their lives to protect their autonomy and rights. The jatara is held in memory of Sammakka and Saralamma, who are venerated not as conventional idols but as living spirits of sacrifice and resistance. Over centuries, this remembrance has evolved into a massive spiritual gathering, where devotees offer prayers

seeking fulfilment of vows, prosperity and protection.

From temporary arrangements to permanent structures

For decades, infrastructure at Medaram was largely temporary, with crores of rupees spent ahead of every jatara on makeshift facilities. That approach has now given way to permanent reconstruction aimed at preserving the shrine for generations. With the consent of tribal elders and the priests' association, the State government undertook large-scale development works to ensure durability while adhering strictly to tribal customs and traditions. The transformation is visible across the shrine complex, where permanent granite structures have replaced temporary installations.

[See More on Nation Page](#)

## US will seek 'separate' semiconductor tariff pacts for countries: Official



**Washington (TSIT) :** US President Donald Trump's administration will seek "separate" semiconductor tariff agreements for "separate countries," a U.S. official said, after the United States and Taiwan reached a deal on the chip levies this week. "Separate agreements for separate countries," a U.S. official said, responding to a question from Yonhap News Agency regarding whether the deal with Taiwan would set a standard for chip tariffs or the U.S. would conduct separate negotiations with other countries for the semiconductor tariffs.

The official's remarks came a day after the U.S. Commerce Department released a fact sheet about a trade and investment deal between the United States and Taiwan, which outlined a bilateral agreement on

semiconductor tariffs. According to the fact sheet, Taiwanese companies building new U.S. semiconductor capacity may import up to 2.5 times that planned capacity without paying sectoral duties during the approved construction period.

Taiwanese companies that have completed new chip production projects in the U.S. will still be able to import 1.5 times their new U.S. production capacity without paying sectoral duties. The agreement on the chip tariffs raised questions over whether it will set a standard for chipmakers from other countries, includ-

ing South Korea. On Wednesday, Trump signed a proclamation to levy a 25 percent tariff on certain semiconductors for artificial intelligence (AI), which are imported into the U.S. and then reexported to other countries.

The White House has also said that Trump may impose "broader" tariffs on imports of semiconductors and their derivative products. The president has rolled out various industrywide tariffs, invoking Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, a law that provides the president with the authority to adjust imports into the U.S. when he determines they threaten to impair national security. South Korea's top trade envoy assessed the Trump administration's proclamation on semiconductor tariffs to have a "limited" impact on local chip makers.





# EDITORIAL

## What Democracy Do We Seek?

The Supreme Court judgement in the Delhi riots bail matter has had predictable reactions. Whilst the government side has expressed satisfaction at two accused not being granted bail, the other side has noted the bail granted to five accused with satisfaction but obviously expressed distress at the denial of bail to Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam. The common ground for bail was the long delay of six years with arguments still stuck on framing of charges.

Beyond the 'who got bail, who did not' conundrum of concern, there are serious issues that have emerged in the judgment: first, the relationship between failure of the right to speedy trial and extent of alleged involvement, and second, the judicially expanded definition of terrorism. It is not as if the matter was *res integra* as lawyers call an area of law not before pronounced upon by courts of law.

The Supreme Court has on several occasions examined how traditional categories of law enforcement regarding law and order, public order etc are separated from national security issues, and obviously, the latter is of paramount concern and inevitably linked with terrorism. These judgments were extensively examined by the Delhi high court in Asif Iqbal Tanha's case but directed by the Supreme Court on the state's appeal, not to be treated as precedents.

The ostensible reason was that the Supreme Court felt that in deciding bail matters, the courts should not delve into detailed discourse on legislation. Yet, in the present case, the 162-page judgment seems to do the same. It is important to know that the senior counsel who argued for the petitioners, keeping in mind the Asif Tanha matter, decided to restrict their arguments to relevant facts but were encountered by extensive arguments by the prosecution in response.

In dealing with the instant judgment, it is only fair to underscore the lip service that the court gave to Article 21 and the right to liberty. Of course, it was right to point out that Article 21 is not qualified and thus requires to make accommodation for national security issues: "At the same time, Article 21 has never been understood as operating in isolation from law. The constitutional promise is not that liberty will be unregulated, but that deprivations of liberty will not be arbitrary, unconscionable, or unfair. The expression "procedure established by law" reflects that balance. The UAPA, as a special statute enacted to address offences alleged to affect the security of the State and the stability of civic life, represents a legislative judgment as to the conditions under which bail may be granted at the pre-trial stage. Section 43D(5) of UAPA embodies the exercise of that judgment." "There is a further constitutional aspect that warrants articulation. Article 21 protects individual liberty. It also, within the same guarantee of life, reflects the State's obligation to protect the life and security of the community. In prosecutions alleging threats to public order and national security, the Court cannot be unmindful that both dimensions are engaged. The constitutional order is not served by an approach that treats liberty as the sole value and societal security as peripheral. Both must be accommodated through reasoned adjudication." There was no discussion on how the individual liberty-national security conundrum is to be resolved. Gross inconvenience to other individuals cannot be taken as part of a utilitarian calculus if rights are to mean anything. Temporary disruption of supply chains cannot be treated as economic security at risk or else any protest would be said to be damaging national security: "Section 15 of the Act defines what constitutes a "terrorist act" for the purposes of the statute. The definition is structured around two essential elements. First, the act must be done with intent to threaten, or be likely to threaten, the unity, integrity, security, including economic security, or sovereignty of India, or with intent to strike terror in the people or any section thereof. Second, the act must be of such a nature as to cause, or be likely to cause, the consequences enumerated in the provision.

## Crisis of balance in relationships: The social reality of emotional exploitation



PRIYANKA  
SAURABH

Human life is shaped by the fabric of relationships. Family, friendship, love, support, and social connections—all give meaning to our existence. But the greatest irony of today's times is that selfishness has replaced sensitivity in relationships, and emotions are considered a weakness. The person who strives to be wholehearted is often the one who ends up hurt and betrayed the most. When a person strives to give their best in a relationship, considers the other person's comfort level, attempts to understand their feelings, yet repeatedly puts themselves on the back burner, this sacrifice isn't always respected.

Often, the other person interprets this behavior not as love or affection, but as foolishness. This is where the process of imbalance in relationships begins. Some people inflate their ego by relying on the emotions of others. They gradually begin to consider themselves overly important. They become deluded into believing they are the center of the relationship, the sole decision-maker, and the other person is incomplete without them. This mindset leads them to give unnecessary sermons, declare their opinions as the ultimate truth on every subject, and consider constant speaking as proof of knowledge. The problem isn't in giving advice; it arises when advice becomes a tool of control rather than respect. When communication becomes a means of dominance rather than equality. Such people don't understand the language of love, affection, care, or emotions. They weigh every relationship on the scale of profit and loss. For

them, relationships are merely a means, not a goal. People with this temperament often live under the illusion that the other person is dependent on them. Their politeness, tolerance, and understanding seem compulsive to them. They assume that this person cannot leave them, cannot question them, and lacks the courage to oppose them. This is where the process of emotional exploitation begins, which gradually becomes normal behavior. But every tolerance has its limits. When the other person becomes aware, introspects, and begins to realize that their existence has become merely a commodity, they try to protect themselves. This is the moment that makes the selfish person most uncomfortable, because now their control is threatened. As soon as they see the other person asking questions, expressing their opinion, or maintaining mental distance, they resort to a new tactic—accusation. Now, the same person who once considered themselves extremely intelligent and knowledgeable begins to cast aspersions on character. They present the relationship story to outsiders in a way that favors themselves and portrays themselves as the victim and the other person as the culprit. This is where the nature of the relationship completely changes. Dialogue is replaced by accusations. Understanding and patience are replaced by bitterness and hostility. Every conversation is filled with the refrain: "You've changed," "You weren't like this before," "You've become arrogant now."

"The reality is that this isn't a change, but rather a self-realization, which the selfish person can't accept. Gradually, relationships turn into the battlefield of Kurukshetra, where the goal is not resolution but victory. One side attempts to protect itself by remaining silent, while the other side clamors and seeks sympathy. Such people are extremely skilled at garnering sympathy. They craft their arguments in such a way that the listener instinctively sides with them. In these circumstances, a normal, sensitive, and moral person suffers the most mental anguish. He knows that it's impossible to respond to every accusa-

# Edit

CHENNAI  
SUNDAY, JANUARY 18, 2026

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## Mumbai Polls: How The 'Marathi Manoos' Campaign Ended Up Uniting Others Against It



The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) elections have delivered a stunning blow to the Thackeray legacy, as the Mahayuti alliance stormed what was once considered an impregnable Shiv Sena bastion. For the first time in the civic body's history, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is poised to secure the mayor's post, marking a seismic shift in Mumbai's political landscape. While the BJP-plus-Shiv Sena (Shinde) alliance secured 118 seats, (4 more than majority mark of 114), the Thackeray brothers' SHS-UBT, MNS and NCP-SP alliance bagged 72 seats, with the Congress chipping in with 24 seats.

### The Crumbling of a Fortress

The BMC, long controlled by the undivided Shiv Sena and later by Uddhav Thackeray's faction, has been the cornerstone of Marathi pride and Shiv Sena's political dominance in India's financial capital. Mahayuti's victory represents not just an electoral defeat but the symbolic sunset of Thackeray influence in Mumbai's civic administration. The alliance's commanding performance has given the BJP its first realistic shot at occupying the mayor's chair, a position that controls one of Asia's richest municipal corporations, with an annual budget running into thousands of crores, higher than many small and north eastern states of India. The defeat comes despite an unprecedented alliance between the estranged Thackeray cousins who came together after a gap of 20 years. Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv

Sena (UBT) and Raj Thackeray's Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) joined forces along with Sharad Pawar's NCP faction, betting that their combined appeal would consolidate the Marathi vote and present a formidable challenge to the Mahayuti juggernaut. Instead, the results have exposed the limitations of identity politics in an increasingly diverse and aspirational Mumbai.

### The Marathi Card Falls Flat

The most striking revelation from the election data is the failure to consolidate even the Marathi vote bank. Despite the alliance between UBT and MNS, the Shinde faction of Shiv Sena secured 29 seats mostly in Marathi dominant / influenced seats and in direct head to head contests against each other, showcasing Shinde, too, has earned a slice of the Marathi Manoos votebank. This is a failure of strategy built entirely on linguistic and regional identity. The Marathi manos, it appears, is no longer voting as a monolithic bloc driven solely by cultural pride or fear of outsiders. The Thackeray brothers miscalculated the aspirations of a new generation of Marathi voters—educated, middle-class professionals who prioritize development, infrastructure, and economic opportunities over identity-based appeals. These voters remember the MNS's violent campaigns against north Indians and south Indians, the disruption of businesses, and the creation of an atmosphere of intimidation. While such tactics may

have won applause from certain quarters in the past, they have increasingly alienated moderate Marathi voters who see themselves as part of a cosmopolitan Mumbai rather than a besieged linguistic community.

### The Muslim Vote Conundrum

Equally problematic was the alliance's inability to secure Muslim votes, which remained largely with the Congress and parties like the AIMIM, the NCP and the SP. The Thackeray camp had assumed that Muslims would vote strategically for whichever party was best positioned to defeat the BJP. This calculation ignored the deep historical scars left by the Shiv Sena's role during the Babri Masjid demolition and the subsequent Mumbai riots of 1992-93.

Raj Thackeray's past rhetoric and the original Shiv Sena's history made it difficult for Muslim voters to trust the Thackeray alliance, regardless of current political expediency. The community chose to stick largely with the Congress and ethnic parties like AIMIM/SP, even if it meant splitting the opposition vote. This led to failure of the strategy of consolidating the 40% Marathi Manoos and 20% Muslim community vote.

### The Counter-Consolidation

Perhaps the most consequential outcome of the Thackeray strategy was the counter-consolidation it triggered. Non-Marathi voters—estimated at 40%—overwhelmingly backed the Mahayuti. The speeches and histori-

cal record of Raj Thackeray, who built his political career targeting south Indians, north Indians, and Gujaratis, came back to haunt the alliance.

Mumbai's demographic transformation over the past two decades has been dramatic. The city is now home to millions of migrants from across India who have made significant economic and social contributions. These communities felt directly threatened by the Thackeray alliance's rhetoric and voted decisively to keep them out of power. The irony is stark: a campaign built on Marathi identity ended up uniting everyone else against it.

### Development Trumps Identity

Devenendra Fadnavis and the Mahayuti alliance recognized what the Thackerays missed—that Mumbai's voters, including Marathis, are increasingly concerned about quality-of-life issues. The Mahayuti's focus on infrastructure projects, building society amenities, improved roads, better drainage systems, and overall urban development resonated with the aspirational middle class and youth. The Thackeray pitch, by contrast, was not forward-looking. It dwelled on grievances, fears of cultural erosion, and nostalgia for a Mumbai that exists more in imagination than reality. Many voters felt this approach was taking the city backward rather than forward. In a city where traffic congestion, flooding, housing shortages, and infrastructure gaps are daily concerns, promises of cultural preservation felt inadequate.

## The Great Nobel 'Giveaway': Machado About Nothing?



The recent exchange of a Nobel Peace Prize medal in the Oval Office—passed from Maria Corina Machado to Donald Trump like a baton in a relay race of dubious optics—is a scene that would have been rejected by the writers of the American sitcom "Veep" for being too heavy-handed. Yet, here we are in January 2026, watching the gold-plated collision of Venezuelan desperation and American ego, a moment that managed to offend the sensibilities of the Norwegian Nobel Committee while perfectly encapsulating the transactional nature of modern geopolitics. To understand the absurdity of the current row, one must first look at the players. On one side, we have Machado, the 2025 Nobel Peace Laureate who spent years as the "Iron Lady" of Venezuela's opposition, finally seeing the Maduro Presidency toppled by US intervention earlier this month. On the other, we have an American President who has treated his lack of a Nobel Prize as a personal grievance on par with a missed Oscar. By physically handing over her Nobel medal, Machado performed a piece of political theatre so brazen that it bordered on performance art. It was an attempt to buy, with a gold medal and global prestige, the one thing she currently lacks:

relevance in the eyes of a White House that seems increasingly ready to move on without her. Donald Trump The "Nobel Laureate"? The Norwegian Nobel Institute's reaction was as swift as it was predictable. Their stern reminder that the prize is "personal and non-transferable" felt like a librarian trying to enforce a "no talking" rule during a courtship between the library stacks. Of course, the title is non-transferable; no one seriously believes Donald Trump is now a Nobel Laureate because he has a new golden paperweight. But the Committee missed the point. In the ecosystem of Mar-a-Lago and the MAGA-verse, the object is the thing. Trump's social media posts regarding the "wonderful gesture" for the "work I have done" suggest that, in his mind, the bookkeeping error of 2019 has finally been corrected. He didn't need the Committee's vote; he just needed a willing donor. But who actually won this exchange? If we look past the flashbulbs, the scorecard is surprisingly bleak for all involved, particularly the person who initiated the trade. Machado's gambit smells of desperation-driven politics. Despite her Nobel pedigree, she finds herself in the untenable position of being the hero of a revolutionary drama whom the libera-

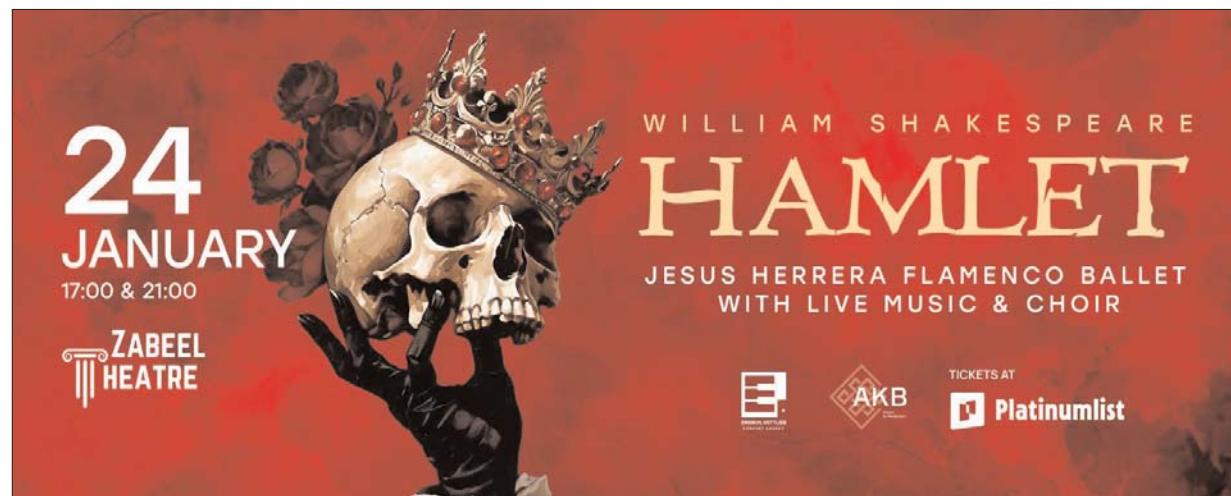
tors find inconvenient at the climax. The Trump administration's sudden pragmatism—favouring a working relationship with interim President Delcy Rodriguez and the remnants of the Chavista old guard to ensure the oil keeps flowing—is a cold splash of water for the democratic purists. The damsel in distress finds the knight in shining armour riding in to vanquish the Dark Knight—and then ride away with the wrong damsel! Machado must have thought she now had to make a deal; if Qatar could offer a Boeing, the Swiss gold bars and a custom Rolex, and the Pakistani cryptocurrency assets, what could she gift Trump of remotely comparable value to get what she wanted? Flatter The King But by giving away her medal, Machado didn't just give away a piece of gold; she confessed her own weakness. A leader who is confident in her domestic mandate doesn't need to offer up her highest international honour as a tribute to a foreign patron. It was a move of "flatter the King" supplication that suggested the King has already looked elsewhere. And indeed, the deal looks very one-sided for now: she gives, he takes; next! The Nobel Committee, meanwhile, has emerged as the grumpy uncle of the international community.

## Dubai's January 2026 Line-Up: Concerts, Culture and Can't-Miss Moments

National, 17th January, 2026:

From concerts & cultural festivals to world-class theatre, comedy, sport and culture, Dubai continues to cement its place as one of the world's most dynamic entertainment hubs. January 2026 sets the tone for the year ahead with a packed calendar that brings together global icons, immersive experiences, family-friendly festivals and cutting-edge cultural showcases. Whether you're planning a music-filled getaway, a cultural escape or an action-packed holiday, Dubai this January offers a one-stop destination to experience the very best in live entertainment, art, sport and lifestyle events. Tiësto Live at Be Beach: Global electronic music icon Tiësto returns to Dubai for a high-energy, one-night-only performance at Be Beach, Dubai Harbour, on 22 January. Set against a chic beachfront backdrop, the Dutch DJ will deliver an electrifying set featuring his timeless hits and festival anthems. This intimate and immersive show promises an eclectic crowd, festival-ready vibes and seamless sets by supporting acts Alex Twin and Djad, making it a must-attend for EDM enthusiasts.

Date: Thursday, 22 January 2026



Time: 19:00

Venue: Be Beach, Dubai Harbour

Zakir Khan Live: India's most-loved stand-up comedian Zakir Khan brings his signature storytelling and relatable humour to Dubai Opera on 20 and 21 January. Fresh from the success of his special Tathastu, Khan continues to captivate audiences with his sharp observations and heartfelt narratives. From Haq Se Single to Kaksha Gyarvi, his performances have resonated with millions worldwide, making this a must-watch for fans of Hindi comedy.

Date: Tuesday, 20 January

2026 – 19:00 | Wednesday, 21 January 2026 – 19:00

Venue: Dubai Opera

Tom Odell Live: BRIT Award-winning singer-songwriter Tom Odell takes the stage at Coca-Cola Arena on 24 January for an emotionally charged live performance. Known for his global hit Another Love and his raw, piano-driven sound, Odell promises an intimate night of music and storytelling. Fans can expect a mix of beloved classics and tracks from his latest album A Wonderful Life, delivered with the sincerity and emotion that define his artistry.

Date: Saturday, 24 January

2026

Time: 21:00

Venue: Coca-Cola Arena

Dubai Racing Carnival: Fashion Friday: Fashion meets sport at one of Dubai's most glamorous sporting events. Fashion Friday takes over the Meydan Racecourse on 23 January, inviting racegoers to dress to impress for an unforgettable evening of horse racing and high style. The event features eight thrilling group races showcasing some of the world's finest thoroughbreds, followed by gourmet dining experiences and five-star hospitality at the iconic venue.

Date: Friday, 23 January 2026

Date: Friday, 23 January 2026

Time: From 17:30

Venue: Meydan Racecourse

Hamlet – Flamenco Ballet: Experience Shakespeare's timeless tragedy through a powerful flamenco ballet adaptation directed by acclaimed Spanish choreographer Jesús Herrera. Staged at Zabeel Theatre, this visually arresting production blends intense choreography, live music and emotive storytelling to explore themes of love, betrayal and madness. Featuring over 30 performers including dancers, a live orchestra and choir, the show reimagines Hamlet as a visceral and deeply moving theatrical experience.

## ROYAL ENFIELD GOAN CLASSIC 350 2026 EDITION RECEIVES NEW RIDER-FOCUSED UPDATES



Royal Enfield, the global leader in the mid-size motorcycle market (250-750 cc), has introduced the 2026 edition of the bobber-inspired, free-spirited Goan Classic 350. The bobber-inspired motorcycle, which celebrates and embodies non-conformity and free-spirited lifestyle, now comes with additional rider-focused features that enhance the overall ride experience. With a new assist-and-slipper clutch, the Goan Classic 350 offers better control during downshifts, smoother gear changes, and lighter clutch action. The existing USB Type-C charging port on the motorcycle has been

upgraded for faster charging, ensuring riders stay connected with essential devices on the go. At the core of the Goan Classic is the popular 349cc air-oil-cooled, single-cylinder engine that balances effortless power with refined character. Producing 20.2 bhp at 6,100 rpm and 27 Nm of torque at 4,000 rpm, this engine is tuned for smooth, unhurried performance, ideal for the laid-back nature of bobber riding. The 5-speed gearbox allows for easy shifts and relaxed cruising, whether in city traffic or on open highways. True to its roots, the Goan Classic 350 with the new rider-focused improvements will be available at all authorised Royal Enfield stores in India, at Rs. 2,19,787 (ex-showroom) for Shack Black & Purple Haze and Rs. 2,22,593 (ex-showroom) for Trip Teal Green & Rave Red colourways.

seat bobber silhouette, a floating rider seat for all-day comfort, whitewall edge-type aluminium tubeless spoke wheels, distinctive chopper fenders, slash-cut exhaust and mid-ape handlebars—embodiment bold custom culture and self-expression, now refined with these modern touches for contemporary riders. The Goan Classic 350 with the new rider-focused improvements will be available at all authorised Royal Enfield stores in India, at Rs. 2,19,787 (ex-showroom) for Shack Black & Purple Haze and Rs. 2,22,593 (ex-showroom) for Trip Teal Green & Rave Red colourways.

## RIDE EASY. VIBE EASY. THE ALL-NEW CHETAK C25 IS HERE

Hyderabad, 17 January 2026 – Bajaj Auto Ltd., the most valuable two-wheeler and three-wheeler company in the world, today announced the launch of the all-new Chetak C25, a stylish, sleek, and youthful addition to the Chetak portfolio. Designed for easy mobility, the C25 brings a younger, cooler expression to the brand, while staying rooted in the same Chetak DNA of solidity, sturdiness and reliability. It delivers a lighter, effortless riding feel that makes everyday movement easy and intuitive.

Built for weaving through busy streets, with ease and style, the Chetak C25 is designed to cater to evolving urban lifestyles. In a market cluttered with plastic and fibre scooters, Chetak has found strong acceptance across the spectrum of customers, families—youth, women and young couples—who value its robust build, reassuring ride feel and longevity. As multi-scooter ownership grows with



in households, the C25 answers the need for independent mobility without compromise.

**Designed for the City, Styled for You**

The Chetak C25 features a neo-classic design language in a sleek, contemporary avatar. A premium metal body with superior paint finish, a signature

DRL headlamp, a monobody construction without joints, and vibrant colour options, give the scooter a clean, cohesive and distinctly premium appearance. Its solid build, nimble proportions and agile handling make it easy to manoeuvre through dense traffic and tight urban spaces. Reinforcing the "ride easy" promise at the

heart of the C25. The C25 comes in a range of six vibrant colours, with distinct, youthful street art inspired graphics. Powered by a 2.5 kWh battery, the Chetak C25 delivers a range of up to 113 km, a top speed of 55 km/h, and 80% charging in just 2.25 hours, aligning perfectly with everyday city usage. A 25-litre boot adds practical convenience, offering enough space for daily errands or a week's worth of groceries for a family. Empowered by premium features like hill hold assist, guide me home, and disc brakes, the C25 enhances safety and ease of use.

**One Portfolio. Every Need.** The Chetak C25 completes a portfolio designed to address diverse mobility requirements, alongside the 35 and 30 Series—ensuring there is now a Chetak to meet every user's needs. Backed by Chetak's wide service network, the C25 combines compact agility with trusted durability.

## BBG Group Celebrates Sankranti With Grand Free Plot Lucky Draw, Declares New Festive Benefits For Buyers

**Siddipet | January 17, 2026:** Continuing the festive momentum of Makar Sankranti and 19th anniversary celebrations, Building Blocks Group (BBG) successfully conducted the bumper lucky draw event for its widely acclaimed "From Free Registration To Free Plot" campaign. The event marked the conclusion of BBG's special Sankranti initiative, where one fortunate buyer was awarded a FREE plot worth 30 lakhs, reaffirming the brand's promise of transparency, trust, and customer-first celebrations. The bumper lucky draw was conducted in the presence of BBG leadership, customers, and associates, drawing enthusiastic participation and festive cheer. The winner, Mr. V Kiran from Macharla was selected from the first 100 buyers who invested across the three participating BBG projects, Beverly Hills Kaza (Kaza), Fortune Empire City (Chalivendrapalem), and Capital West (Kondapavuluru), all strategically located in the fast-developing Amaravati region. The grand prize was a 133.33 sq yards Plot at Beverly Hills Kaza was presented by Mr. M.V. Mallikarjun Reddy, CMD, BBG, with great fanfare in the presence of customers, BBG team members and associates. The remaining 99 plot owners who were a part of the lucky draw were given a surprise gratification of Rs. 10,000 gift coupons each. The over-



whelming response to the Sankranti offer has encouraged BBG to extend the festive celebrations further and reward the loyalty and enthusiasm of its customers. Building on this success, BBG has announced another limited-period Sankranti Carnival offer for buyers. FREE registration on every plot, buyers will also receive a 55-inch Smart LED TV, making the Sankranti festivities even more rewarding. This special TV offer is valid only for the three festive days, adding exclusivity and urgency to the celebration.

L&T Finance Ltd. (LTF) records highest ever core Profit After Tax (PAT) of Rs. 760 Crore (before one-time impact of New Labour Code provision), up 21% YoY (Year-on-Year) in the third quarter ended December 31, 2025 (Q3FY26); PAT after one-time impact stands at Rs. 739 Crore, up 18% YoY. Highest ever Retail disbursements for Q3FY26 at Rs. 22,701 Crore, up 49% YoY. Robust Retail franchise with a retail portfolio of Rs. 1,11,990 Crore, reflecting a 21% growth YoY. Consolidated loan book grew by 20% YoY to Rs. 1,14,285 Crore. All-time high disbursements in

Two-wheeler Finance at Rs. 3,217 Crore and Farmer Finance at Rs. 2,783 Crore growing 33% YoY and 12% YoY, respectively. Net Interest Margins (NIMs)+Fees sequentially improved by 19 basis points (bps) Quarter-on-Quarter (QoQ) to 10.41% from 10.22% in the second quarter ended September 30, 2025 (Q2FY26). PAT after one-time impact of New Labour Code stands at Rs. 739 Crore, up 18% in Q3FY26. During the quarter, the retail book size reached Rs. 1,11,990 Crore, up 21% YoY. The consolidated loan book grew by 20% YoY to Rs. 1,14,285 Crore. The Company has recorded the highest ever

quarterly retail disbursement of Rs. 22,701 Crore for the third quarter ended December 31, 2025, up 49% YoY. The Company also recorded all-time high disbursements in Two-wheeler Finance at Rs. 3,217 Crore and Farmer Finance at Rs. 2,783 Crore growing 33% YoY and 12% YoY, respectively. Retailisation stood at 98% of overall book as on December 31, 2025. The Company's Net Interest Margins (NIMs)+Fees sequentially improved by 19 basis points (bps) Quarter-on-Quarter (QoQ) to 10.41% from 10.22% in the second quarter ended September 30, 2025 (Q2FY26). PAT after one-time impact of New Labour Code stands at Rs. 739 Crore, up 18% in Q3FY26. During the quarter, the retail book size reached Rs. 1,11,990 Crore, up 21% YoY. The consolidated loan book grew by 20% YoY to Rs. 1,14,285 Crore. The Company has recorded the highest ever

## Avik Agrawal from Mumbai bags the 'Spell Master of India' title at SBI Life Spell Bee Season 15

**Mumbai, January 2026:** SBI Life Spell Bee, one of India's long-running spelling competitions, concluded its Grand Finale, marking the successful culmination of the 15th edition of the initiative in association with Mirchi. Eleven-year-old, Master Avik Agrawal, from Bombay Scottish School, Powai, Mumbai, emerged as the winner, through a gruelling competition that witnessed participation from over 1.25 lakh students across 300 schools nationwide, earning him the prestigious 'Spell Master of India' national title. The Grand Finale, hosted by Indian actor, fashion designer and television presenter Ms. Mandira Bedi, witnessed an engaging face-off among the country's top young spellers, who advanced through multiple competitive rounds testing spelling accuracy, vocabulary, and presence of mind. Kushagra Pandey, age 13 years from The Millennium School, Lucknow, was declared the First Runner-Up, while Jasmine Jonwal, age 13 years from Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan, Pratap Nagar, Jaipur, secured the Second Runner-Up position. All the finalists demonstrated strong language skills and consistency throughout the competition. As the National winner, Avik

Agrawal was awarded a cash prize of INR 1,00,000, along with an all-expenses-paid trip to Disneyland, Hong Kong, as a recognition for his performance and progression through the competition. This year's edition was anchored around the theme 'Bee Spellionaire', which positions knowledge and language skills as a form of long-term value for young learners. The concept underscores the role of spelling and vocabulary in building confidence, clarity of expression, and critical thinking among students. Through this initiative, SBI Life continues to provide structured platforms that encourage learning beyond classrooms and supports the holistic development of our future leaders. Mr. Ravindra Sharma, Chief of Brand, Corporate Communications and CSR at SBI Life Insurance, said, "The theme of SBI Life Spell Bee, 'Bee Spellionaire', reflects our endeavour to create intellectual wealth for our future leaders by enriching their vocabulary and introducing them to new words that expand knowledge and sharpen articulation. This growing richness of language fosters confidence and clarity, empowering young Spellionaires to express their thoughts and vision, to carve a better

future for themselves and the nation. At SBI Life, we describe this spirit of progress as 'Apne Liye, Apne Ke Liye'. He further added, "Platforms such as the SBI Life Spell Bee engage young learners by nurturing curiosity, competence and confidence—qualities that are fundamental to building a confident nation. We are humbled by the enthusiastic nationwide participation in the 15th edition of SBI Life Spell Bee, the promising performances offer a glimpse into the potential of our enterprising future leaders." Avik Agrawal, 'Spell Master of India'—SBI Life Spell Bee Season 15, said, "It was enriching to meet so many children from across the country, and I have learnt a lot from this experience. I am grateful to the organizers for giving me this opportunity and platform". Commenting on the Grand Finale, Mr. Yatish Mehrishi, CEO, Entertainment Network (India) Limited, said, "Season 15 of Spell Bee showcased some of the country's finest young spellers. The new gamified format and engaging finale experiences helped us connect more deeply with students. It is encouraging to see the continued support of schools, parents, teachers and students in making Spell Bee India's largest spelling competition."



# Iran supreme leader admits thousands killed during recent protests



Iran's supreme leader has for the first time publicly acknowledged that thousands of people were killed, "some in an inhuman, savage manner", during recent protests. A violent response to the unrest has claimed 3,090 lives, according to US-based Iranian Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA), with some activist groups putting the death toll far higher. An internet blackout has made it extremely difficult to get clear information. In a speech on Saturday, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said thousands had been killed and blamed the US for the deaths. US President Donald Trump recently urged Iranian demonstrators to "keep protesting" and threatened military intervention if security forces kill them. The protests, which began on 28 December over the economy, have turned into calls for the end of the rule

of Iran's supreme leader. The Iranian government has called the demonstrations "riots" backed by Iran's enemies. Protesters have been met with deadly force and videos of security forces shooting at demonstrators have been authenticated by both BBC Persian and BBC Verify. There has also been a near-total shutdown of the internet and communication

services in Iran. On Saturday overall connectivity remained at about 2% of ordinary levels, according to cyber monitor NetBlocks. There have been fewer reports of unrest in recent days but with internet access still restricted developments on the ground remain unclear. A woman in Shiraz, southwestern Iran, told BBC Persian that "security



forces are still patrolling on motorbikes to keep the situation under control, but overall things have gone back to normal". During his speech on Saturday, Khamenei also said Iran considered President Trump to be a "criminal" and said the US must be "held accountable" for recent unrest. He also claimed on social media that "America's goal is to

swallow Iran". Trump has not yet responded to the supreme leader and the BBC has approached the White House for a comment. The US state department said on Saturday that it had "heard reports that the Islamic Republic is preparing options to target American bases". It said Iran would be met with "a very, very powerful force" if it launched such an attack

and warned Tehran not to "play games with President Trump". The US president said on Wednesday he had been told "the killing in Iran has stopped", but added that he had not ruled out military action against the country. His comments came after the US and UK both reduced the number of personnel at the Al-Udeid air base in Qatar. Officials told CBS, the BBC's US partner, that a partial American withdrawal was a "precautionary measure". Iran's supreme leader has for the first time publicly acknowledged that thousands of people were killed, "some in an inhuman, savage manner", during recent protests. A violent response to the unrest has claimed 3,090 lives, according to US-based Iranian Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA), with some activist groups putting the death toll far higher.



people have been killed around the country in recent days. The authorities have so far confirmed seven deaths. Access to the internet has been cut in the country since Tuesday, making it hard to verify information. The authorities say the blackout was necessary to prevent misinformation, fraud and the incitement of violence - a move condemned by the UN human rights office as "deeply worrying". Wine has demanded that the internet be restored.

## Paracetamol is safe in pregnancy, says study refuting Trump autism claims



Taking paracetamol while pregnant is safe and there's no evidence it raises the risk of autism, ADHD and developmental issues in children, say experts behind a major new review. Pregnant women "should feel reassured" by the findings, they say, which contradict controversial claims from US President Donald Trump last year that paracetamol "is no good" and pregnant women should "fight like hell" not to take it. His views were criticised at the time by medical organisations worldwide. Experts say this latest review, in a Lancet journal, is rigorous and should end the debate over its safety. But US health officials maintain that "many experts" have expressed concern over its use during pregnancy. The US President shocked many doctors worldwide when he and his administration claimed paracetamol - known as acetaminophen in the US - which is

## FROM CAMOUFLAGE TO TRACK-SUITS - GUINEA'S JUNTA LEADER BECOMES CIVILIAN PRESIDENT



From the moment he seized power in September 2021 Guinea's Mamadi Doumbouya struck an imposing figure. Just 36 years old at the time, the broad-shouldered colonel, standing at well over six feet (1.8m), wearing military fatigues, mirrored sunglasses and a red beret certainly made an impression when announcing the coup. A relatively unknown member of an elite army unit, he declared that the government of ousted President Alpha Condé had disregarded democratic principles and that citizens' rights were being trampled on. After more than four years of acting as interim president, and going back on a promise not to run for leadership of the country,

Doumbouya, now 41, was sworn in as the elected head of state on Saturday. The discreet, disciplined and private man won 87% of the vote in December's election against a severely depleted field. Ex-Prime Minister Cellou Dalein Diallo, now in exile, described the process as a charade which generated "fabricated" results.

## US justice department investigating Minnesota Democrats over alleged obstruction of ICE



Two prominent Minnesota Democrats are being investigated over alleged attempts to impede federal immigration operations, in an escalation of the Trump's administration's clash with the state's leaders. Gov Tim Walz and Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey are facing a US justice department inquiry over comments made about Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), according to the BBC's US partner CBS News. The probe comes as a federal judge limited what tactics ICE and other law enforcement officials

could use in Minneapolis, blocking the use of pepper spray and arrests of peaceful protesters. Protests have ramped up in the city after Renee Good, 37, was shot and killed by an ICE agent last week. New details also came to light

on Friday about Good's death. The Minneapolis woman was found by paramedics with at least three gunshot wounds and possibly a fourth to the head, according to official reports viewed by CBS. Governor Walz responded on Friday to

news of the inquiry against him by posting on X: "Weaponizing the justice system against your opponents is an authoritarian tactic. "The only person not being investigated for the shooting of Renee Good is the federal agent who shot her." In a statement to the BBC, Mayor Frey said "I will not be intimidated". "This is an obvious attempt to intimidate me for standing up for Minneapolis, our local law enforcement, and our residents against the chaos and danger this Administration has brought to our streets," he said.

## Blair and Rubio among names on Gaza 'Board of Peace'



writing that it would be "an honour" to participate. Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi has also been invited, the country's foreign minister said, adding "we are studying the matter". Sir Tony was UK prime minister from 1997 to 2007 and took the UK into the Iraq War in 2003. After leaving office, he served as Middle East envoy for the Quartet of international powers (the US, EU,

Russia and the UN). In this role, he focused on bringing economic development to Palestine and creating the conditions to move towards a two state-solution. Sir Tony had already been a part of high-level talks about Gaza's future with the US and other parties. In August, he joined a White House meeting with Trump to discuss plans for the territory, which Witkoff described as "very comprehensive". In a statement, the former prime minister said he was honoured to be appointed and it had been a "real privilege" to work with Witkoff and Kushner so far. "I look forward to working with them and other colleagues in line with the president's vision to promote peace and prosperity," Sir Tony said. He is the only founding member of the executive board who is not a US citizen. In September, Health Secretary Wes Streeting told the BBC that involving Sir Tony in such talks, given his record on the Iraq War, would "raise some eyebrows". But Streeting also noted the former prime minister's role in brokering the 1998 Good Friday Agreement to end Northern Ireland's Troubles. "If he can bring those considerable

skills there, in both diplomacy and statecraft," Streeting told the BBC, "that can only be a good thing". It comes after the announcement of a separate 15-member Palestinian technocratic committee, the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG), charged with managing the day-to-day governance of post-war Gaza. Ali Shaath, a former deputy minister in the Palestinian Authority (PA) which governs parts of the occupied West Bank not under Israeli control, will head that new committee. The statement also said that Nickolay Mladenov, a Bulgarian politician and former UN Middle East envoy, would be the board's representative on the ground in Gaza working with the NCAG.

## UGANDAN LEADER EXTENDS 40-YEAR RULE AFTER WINNING CONTESTED POLL



Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni has been declared the winner of Thursday's election extending his four decades in power by another five years. He gained 72% of the vote, the election commission announced, against 25% for his closest challenger Bobi Wine, who has condemned what he described as "fake results" and "ballot stuffing". Wine has not provided any details and the authorities have not responded to his allegations, but African Union election observers said they saw "no evidence of ballot stuffing". Wine has called for non-violent protests. Museveni, 81, first came to power as a rebel leader in 1986 but since then has won seven elections. The election process was marred by violence and Wine, a 43-year-old former pop star, says that at least 21

## Big names on Trump's peace panel face huge challenges in Gaza



The White House has announced the first members of its Gaza "Board of Peace", and the list of names will do little to dispel the criticism from some quarters that the US president's plan resembles, at its heart, a colonial solution imposed over the heads of the Palestinians. There are still several unknowns - namely who else might be added, and the exact structure of what is currently a rather complicated layout. So far, no Palestinian names are included on the two separate senior boards that have been officially unveiled. One is a "founding Executive Board", with a high-level focus on investment and diplomacy. The other, called the "Gaza

Executive Board", is

responsible for overseeing all on-the-ground work of yet another administrative group, the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG). That committee is made up of supposedly technocratic, apolitical Palestinians, led by Dr Ali Shaath, a civil engineer by

Envoy to the Middle East, but also a friend of the president and a fellow real estate developer. Ajay Banga, president of the World Bank, is something of an exception as a dual-national, Indian-born US citizen. Sir Tony Blair, meanwhile, is a former UK Prime Minister, and his inclusion is likely to further fuel concerns about how the Board of Peace will operate. Over the past few weeks, criticism of Sir Tony's possible inclusion has come from figures like prominent politician Mustafa Barghouti, general secretary of the Palestinian National Initiative, and newspaper reports quoting unnamed officials from Arab states in the region.

## Japanese mayor apologises after calling staff 'human scum'



The mayor of Yokohama has apologised for insulting colleagues after an official publicly accused him of making offensive remarks. At a news conference, the Japanese city's human resource chief, Jun Kubota, alleged that Mayor Takeharu Yamanaka had used terms such as "idiot" and "human scum" to disparage staff. It is highly unusual in Japan for a serving city official to openly accuse a sitting mayor and demand an apology. Yamanaka initially denied the allegations, but later admitted to some of them. "I want to frankly apologise for placing a psychological burden on the personnel director," he said. At a news conference on Thursday, Kubota accused Mayor Yamanaka of repeatedly making remarks towards officials - including himself - that could amount to workplace harassment. The mayor was accused of calling officials "useless", "silly" and "low-spec", as well as making comments about colleagues' appearance and likening them to animals. He is also accused of threatening Kubota, saying he would have to "commit seppuku" - a Japanese ritual suicide by disembowelment - if he failed to secure an international conference bid. Kubota demanded an apology from Yamanaka and called for an investigation. Yamanaka initially published a statement on his personal website, denying the allegations. But on Friday, he publicly acknowledged some remarks - such as using words like "idiot" and "human scum" - and apologised. "I am reflecting on this. I will be more careful with my words and behaviour," Yamanaka said. He said those comments were made during discussions over personnel evaluations. However, the mayor denied other accusations, including insulting colleagues' appearance.



## Bangladesh Break Silence On 'No Handshake' With India During U-19 World Cup

Controversy erupted during the U-19 World Cup 2026 match between India and Bangladesh when the two captains did not shake hands after the toss. India captain Ayush Mhatre and Bangladesh vice-captain Zawad Abrar, who attended the toss in place of captain Azizul Hakim, did not shake hands. There was a lot of chatter on social media over the incident considering the political tensions between the two teams. However, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) said that the absence of a handshake was "completely unintentional and resulted from a momentary lapse in concentration". "The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has taken note of an inadvertent and unwarranted action that occurred at the toss prior to the opening match of the ICC Under 19 World Cup 2026, Zimbabwe & Namibia, between Bangladesh and India," the official press release read. "Due to illness, regular captain Azizul Hakim was unable to attend the toss, and vice-captain Zawad Abrar represented the team on the occasion. The BCB wishes to clarify that the absence of a handshake with the opposition captain was completely unintentional and resulted from a momentary lapse in concentration. There was no intent whatsoever to show courtesy or disregard towards the opposition." "The Board has viewed the matter with due seriousness, as upholding the spirit of cricket and respect for opponents is a fundamental prerequisite for representing Bangladesh at any level and immediately advised the team management accordingly. The players have also been reminded of their responsibility to maintain the highest standards of



sportsmanship, camaraderie and mutual respect in all interactions with opposing teams. The Bangladesh Cricket Board remains fully committed to the values of cricket, both on and off the field," the release added. Meanwhile, the BCB remained steadfast on their stance of not playing T20 World Cup 2026 matches in India despite holding multiple meetings with the International Cricket Council (ICC). "The Board has viewed the matter with due seriousness, as upholding the spirit of cricket and

respect for opponents is a fundamental prerequisite for representing Bangladesh at any level and immediately advised the team management accordingly." It said the players have also been reminded of their responsibility "to maintain the highest standards of sportsmanship, camaraderie and mutual respect in all interactions with opposing teams." Amid deterioration in the bilateral relations between the neighbours, the Indian cricket board (BCCI) had on January 3 directed Kolkata Knight Riders to release Bangladeshi pacer Mustafizur Rahman from their IPL 2026 roster. The BCB then asked the International Cricket Council to shift its matches in next month's T20 World Cup out of India to co-host Sri Lanka, citing security concerns. The Bangladesh government has also suspended IPL coverage in the country. Two ICC officials met BCB officials on Saturday in a bid to resolve the T20 World Cup issue. Cricket in the subcontinent last year reflected the tense ties between India and Pakistan. The countries were involved in a brief armed conflict. In the Asia Cup that followed in Dubai.

## "Slowly Being Poisoned": Indian Grandmaster Highlights Delhi's Rising AQI, Questions Authorities

Delhi woke up to a chilling and extremely harsh morning on Saturday, with the entire city enveloped in a dense layer of fog that brought visibility down to nearly zero. The minimum temperature dipped to 4.4 degrees Celsius, and the India Meteorological Department issued a yellow alert for a cold wave and thick fog. Amid these conditions, another factor troubling Delhi residents was the rapidly deteriorating air quality. Noticing this, Indian chess grandmaster Vidit Gujrathi raised his voice and questioned the Delhi authorities over the city's worsening state. Taking to X (formerly Twitter), Vidit shared screenshots of Delhi's AQI (Air Quality Index), which showed the status as "Hazardous." He wrote, "We are slowly being poisoned and no one cares? Shouldn't solving this be the top priority?" Earlier on Wednesday,



out of the India Open for the third consecutive year. Due to the extreme pollution in Delhi at the moment, I don't think it's a place to host a badminton tournament. Crossing my fingers that it will be better in the Summer when the World Championships will take place in Delhi. As a result BWF once again has fined me 5000 USD," he wrote. Antonsen also shared a screenshot of air quality in Delhi on the Instagram story, which showed AQI to be 348 and described conditions as hazardous.

This marked the third consecutive year Anders opted out of the Super 750 event. In an Instagram story, Anders said he hopes New Delhi's air quality will improve later this year, when the national capital will host the BWF World Championships. Anders also confirmed that BWF has fined him 5000 USD. "Many is curious to why I have pulled

## Vaibhav Suryavanshi Shatters World Record, Scripts U-19 World Cup History

India's 14-year-old sensation, Vaibhav Suryavanshi, added another major feat to his name during the U-19 World Cup 2026 encounter against Bangladesh on Saturday. The youngster scored 72 off just 67 deliveries, including 6 fours and 3 sixes. Starting the proceedings in his trademark explosive manner, he reached his half-century in just 30 balls. At 14 years and 296 days, he became the youngest cricketer to register a 50-plus score in a Men's U-19 World Cup match. Previously, the record belonged to Afghanistan's Shahidullah Kamal, who scored a fifty against the West Indies at the age of 15 years and 19 days. Pakistan's Babar Azam



is now third on the list, following his fifty against the West Indies in 2010. Youngest to register a 50-plus score at Men's U19 World Cup 14y 296d - Vaibhav Suryavanshi (IND19) vs BAN19, Bulawayo, 2026 15y 19d - Shahidullah Kamal (AFG19)

vs WI19, Dubai (ICCA 2), 2014 15y 92d - Babar Azam (PAK19) vs WIU19, Palmerston North, 2010 15y 125d - Pervez Malikzai (AFG19) vs Fiji19, Cox's Bazar, 2016 15y 132d - Sharad Vesawkar (NEP19) vs ENG19, Chattogram, 2004 Suryavanshi also surpassed

Virat Kohli on the list of Indian batters with the most runs in Youth ODIs. In 20 Youth ODIs, Vaibhav has scored 1,047 runs, while Kohli scored 978 runs in 28 matches. For India, Vijay Zol leads the list with 1,404 runs from 36 matches; overall, Bangladesh's Najmul Hossain Shanto holds the top spot with 1,820 runs. Earlier, India captain Ayush Mhatre and Bangladesh's Azizul Hakim Tamim avoided the traditional pre-match handshake, reflecting the current state of affairs between the two teams. Surprisingly, the vice-captain, Zawad Abrar, came out for the toss instead of Hakim, although the latter was named in the playing XI.

## "Steve Smith Ka Baap Bhi Single Leta": Virat Kohli Namedropped In Brutal Take On Babar Azam Row



Former Pakistan cricket team star Basit Ali namedropped Virat Kohli in a brutal verdict on the ongoing controversy surrounding Babar Azam in the Big Bash League. During the match between Sydney Sixers and Sydney Thunder, Babar, who was batting in the 40s, wanted a single off the final ball of the 11th over. However, Steve Smith rejected the call which resulted in Babar being visibly upset. The Sixers took the Power Surge - a two-over powerplay - from the 12th over and Smith went on to slam 32 runs in it - the most in BBL history. On the other hand, Babar was dismissed on the very first ball of the 13th over and he even hit the boundary cushions with his bat to express his frustra-

tion. Following the incident, there has been a lot of discussions regarding the incident and former Pakistan cricketer Kamran Akmal said that he believes Smith 'disrespected' Babar with his gesture. "This shouldn't have happened. I understand Smith hit a fast hun-

Basit, however, said that Babar was to blame for the entire incident and even added that if Virat Kohli would have asked for the single, Smith would not have refused the India star batter. "Smith proved it next over. At one point, I thought he would hit 6 sixes in that over. He answered it, na? If Virat Kohli had wanted to take this single like Babar Azam, Steve Smith ka baap bhi single leta! (even Smith's father would have accepted it)." Basit said. "You have brought your own value down with your game. Pakistan's name is not sullied by this. People who say that are fools. Babar went to play Big Bash because he was invited there, but the Pakistan cricket board didn't send him," Basit Ali said.

## Indian ICC Official Fails To Get Bangladesh Visa, T20 World Cup Row Deepens: Report



The 'final round' of high-stakes negotiations between the International Cricket Council (ICC) and the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) began with a logistical nightmare, after a planned two-man delegation was halved due to visa complications. Andrew Ephgrave, the ICC's Head of Anti-Corruption and Security, travelled to Dhaka alone on 17th January to address the ongoing deadlock regarding Bangladesh's participation in the upcoming T20 World Cup 2026. His colleague Sanjog Gupta, the CEO of ICC, however, was reportedly forced to remain behind after failing to secure a visa on time, sources confirmed. The visit is being viewed as a "last-ditch" effort by the game's global governing body to resolve a diplomatic and sporting crisis that has cast a shadow over the tournament, which is scheduled to begin on 7 February. At the heart of the dispute is a security concern

## Meg Lanning, Phoebe Litchfield Star As UPW Notch Up Second-Straight Win



UP Warriorz vs Mumbai Indians, WPL 2026 Live Updates: UP Warriorz captain Meg Lanning smashed 70 off 45 balls and compatriot Phoebe Litchfield made 61 off 37 as they beat Mumbai Indians by 22 runs in their Women's Premier League (WPL) 2026 clash on Sunday. This is UP Warriorz's second consecutive win, after three losses at the start of the season. Lanning and Litchfield's efforts powered UPW to 187/8 in 20 overs. In response, MI lost wickets at regular intervals at the start, and Amelia Kerr's 49 and Amanjot Kaur's 41 were eventually not enough. This is the third defeat in five games for Harmanpreet Kaur-led MI! That wraps up an entertaining game, with UP Warriorz picking up back-to-back wins

and finally moving off the bottom spot, while Mumbai Indians will have a few questions to answer ahead of their next outing. The WPL action, however, does not stop here, with another big clash coming up shortly as Royal Challengers Bengaluru take on Delhi Capitals. You can simply switch tabs to catch all the

coverage of that game. Meg Lanning, the victorious skipper of UP Warriorz, is also the PLAYER OF THE MATCH for her excellent knock. She says that it is a nice bounce-back for them.

Adds that it was not ideal to lose the opening game, but the group stayed positive and backed themselves.

Mentions that getting back-

to-back wins against a strong MI side is very pleasing and gives them momentum going ahead in the season. Says that Mumbai have some strong batters, you need to be clear with your specific plans, and they prepared very well in the last two games. Further adds that it is very enjoyable batting alongside Phoebe, and hopes to continue building such partnerships. Tells that they could have finished their batting innings well, but Mumbai bowled really well towards the end. Ends by saying that there is still room for improvement and they are looking ahead to the next game. Harmanpreet Kaur, the captain of Mumbai Indians, mentions that her team wanted to chase after winning the toss.

## India, Bangladesh Tensions Spill Onto U19 World Cup, Captains Snub Handshakes At Toss



The brewing diplomatic and sporting chill between India and Bangladesh reached the global stage today as the two sides met in a Group A clash at the Under-19 World Cup 2026. In a moment that immediately trended across social media, India captain Ayush Mhatre and Bangladesh's deputy Zawad Abrar avoided the traditional pre-match handshake, summing up the current state of affairs between the two teams. Surprisingly, it was the vice-captain, Abrar, who came out for the toss instead of Bangladesh skipper Azizul Hakim, who was named in the playing XI though. After a rain-affected delay, Abrar won the toss

and elected to bowl first, citing the dampness of the Bulawayo track. While the technical conversation regarding the pitch and team changes was professional, the lack of a handshake was what drew the attention of fans from all across the globe. This follows a precedent set during

the 2025 Asia Cup and the Women's World Cup, where Indian teams refrained from shaking hands with Pakistan teams, amid political conflicts between the two countries. What began as a stance against Pakistan in 2025 has now seemingly been extended to Bangladesh, following a series of diplomatic disagreements, which have spilled onto the senior men's T20 World Cup 2026, too. Relations between the BCCI and BCB have been under immense pressure following the scrapping of high-profile player contracts in the IPL and debates over the venue for the upcoming T20 World Cup. Once the toss concluded, the focus shifted to the cricket. Abrar expressed confidence in his bowling attack, while Mhatre noted that India would have also preferred to bowl but was prepared to set a target. "We will field first. The wicket looks damp and we would like to take advantage for the first 10-15 overs.

## Pakistan Star Sahibzada Farhan Mocks Bowler, Catastrophe Unfolds On Next Delivery



Bangladesh bowler, bowled the next delivery at Farhan, all fired up, pushing it slightly wider and tempting Farhan into a loose shot. Looking to back up his taunt with a big boundary, Farhan reached out for an expansive drive. Instead of the intended result, he succeeded only in slicing a thick outside edge. The ball flew directly to the short third man, where the fielder made no mistake. The Pakistan batter had no option but to head back to the dressing room. This incident is just the latest in a string of controversies surrounding Farhan this season. From his "gun-fire" celebrations to a recent viral interview where he controversially ranked Ahmed Shehzad above icons like Sachin Tendulkar and Virender Sehwag, Farhan has become the BPL's primary lightning rod for criticism. For the Rajshahi Warriors, losing their key man so early in the innings after such a public display of overconfidence proved to be a major setback.

## Vijay and Samantha's film 'Police' to be re-released on the 23rd of this month



The Tamil film 'Theri', starring star hero Vijay and top heroine Samantha, directed by sensational director Atlee and produced by Kalaipuli S. Thanu under the V Creations banner, was a grand success. It was dubbed into Telugu as 'Police' and won the hearts of the audience, becoming a super hit film. This film is now ready to create a buzz on the silver screen once again. The film 'Police' will be re-released on the 23rd of this month.

The film is being released on a large scale in the Nizam region by the leading distribution company Asian Films, and in Andhra by Suresh Movies. With the news of the re-release already receiving a huge response on social media,

Vijay's fans and film lovers are eagerly waiting to watch this emotional action entertainer in theaters once again. Atlee crafted 'Police' by blending father-daughter bonding, a police backdrop, emotions, action, and commercial elements in equal measure. Vijay impressed in a dual role, and Samantha's character greatly appealed to the audience. Amy Jackson also played another female lead. The roles of Prabhu and Radhika Sarathkumar were also crucial to the film. In particular, the climax scenes and emotional moments were the highlights of the film. The songs composed by G.V. Prakash Kumar for this film were chartbusters at the time. The background music, cin-

ematography, and action sequences played a key role in attracting audiences to the theaters. This film, 'Police', further strengthened Vijay's already strong fan base in Telugu as well. Now, with its re-release in improved quality using modern technology, trade circles believe that this film will once again prove its mettle at the box office.



## SARA ARJUN SPOTTED IN AMEERPET

**Hyderabad:** The city of pearls witnessed a sparkling cinematic morning today as Dhurandhar fame actress Sara Arjun graced the trailer launch of her upcoming film Euphoria. The much-awaited event took place at AAA Cinemas in Ameerpet here, drawing fans, media, and film enthusiasts from across Hyderabad. From the moment Sara walked in, all eyes were on her. She looked stunning in a bright pink traditional outfit, blending elegance with youthful charm. Her graceful appearance, glowing smile, and confident presence instantly became the highlight of the event. Cameras flashed non-

stop as fans cheered and tried to capture every moment of the star in her gorgeous traditional look. Taking the stage, Sara greeted the Hyderabad audience warmly. She expressed her excitement about Euphoria and thanked the team for believing in her. Speaking with sincerity, she said she feels a special connection with South Indian audiences and is thrilled to present her new film to them.

BTS REUNION 2026: NEW ALBUM 'ARI-RANG' ANNOUNCED



## SRK may reprise Don role following Ranveer's exit

The Don franchise is back in the spotlight, and this time the buzz is bigger than ever. Bollywood fans are excited by fresh reports suggesting that Shah Rukh Khan might return to Don 3 after Ranveer Singh's reported exit from the film. If true, it could mark the comeback of one of Hindi cinema's most iconic on-screen characters. Shah Rukh Khan first brought Don to life in the 2006 reboot, followed by the superhit Don 2 in 2011. His stylish swagger, sharp dialogue, and unforgettable screen presence made the character legendary for a new generation. So when Don 3 was announced with Ranveer Singh stepping into the role, reactions were mixed. Many fans were curious, while others missed SRK already. Now, reports say Ranveer Singh is no longer

part of the project due to creative differences with the film's team. This unexpected development has reopened the door for Shah Rukh Khan's return. But there's a twist. Insiders reveal that SRK is willing to come back only if director Atlee joins the project. After their massive success with Jawan, Shah Rukh reportedly trusts Atlee's vision for high-octane action and grand storytelling. He believes Atlee's direction could take Don 3 to a whole new level. However, the makers of the film, led by Farhan Akhtar, have not officially confirmed any casting changes yet. Everything remains under discussion, and final decisions are still pending. Still, the possibility alone has set social media on fire, with fans eagerly demanding "SRK as Don" once again. For now, Don 3 remains a film full of suspense both on screen and behind the scenes. Whether Shah Rukh Khan returns or a new Don rises, one thing is certain, Bollywood's most

Casting of 'Don 3' back in focus as Shah Rukh Khan comeback reports surface

stylish criminal is ready to make headlines again. The idea, sources suggest, is to raise the film's scale and bring renewed excitement for audiences. As of now, no final call has been taken, and the makers have not confirmed any of these developments. The Jawan star last played Don in the second film of the franchise. Ranveer Singh was later announced as his replacement but quit the film late last year. Pinkvilla reported that the actor's priorities shifted after Dhurandhar's blockbuster success. A source said, "He is keen to collaborate with filmmakers like Sanjay Leela Bhansali, Lokesh Kanagaraj, and Atlee, and at the same time, he doesn't want to be seen in back-to-back gangster films."

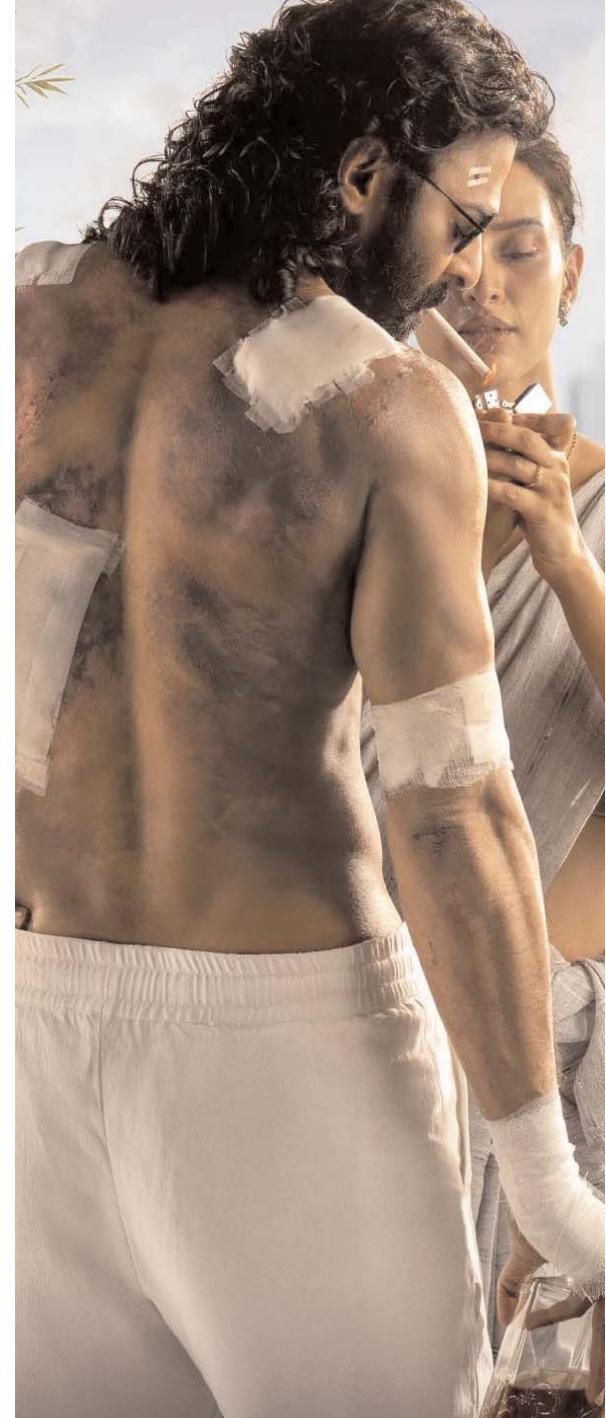
## Chiranjeevi's Mana Shankara Vara Prasad Garu All-Time Record On Day 5, Grosses 226 Cr+ Worldwide



Megastar Chiranjeevi's wholesome family entertainer Mana Shankara Vara Prasad Garu, directed by Anil Ravipudi, is creating wonders at the box office this Sankranthi season. The film has turned theaters into festive celebrations, drawing massive family turnouts across Telugu states. In a stunning milestone, MSG raked in a big numbers on Day 5 in AP/TS, breaking previous record. This

## Rebel Star Prabhas and Sandeep Reddy Vanga's 'Spirit' movie to have a grand release worldwide on March 5, 2027

Rebel Star Prabhas is all set to play the most intense character of his career in 'Spirit', directed by Sandeep Reddy Vanga, who has delivered a hat-trick of blockbusters. The makers have released a powerful first look for the New Year. This poster, which presents Prabhas in a raw, unfiltered avatar, has gone viral. The makers have now finalized the theatrical release date. Spirit will have a grand release on March 5, 2027, kicking off next year's summer rush. Sandeep Vanga's Mark is going to provide an amazing cinematic experience with intense action, emotions, and raw power. Tripti Dimri is playing the heroine and Prakash Raj is playing a key role. Bhadrakali Pictures and T-Series Films are jointly producing this project on a grand scale. The film is currently in the shooting stage. Spirit will be released universally in a total of 8 languages ??including Telugu, Hindi, Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada, as well as Chinese, Japanese, and Korean.



## 'Manaswini Balabommala' Makes Her Film Debut with "Kokkoroko"



Young and promising performer Manaswini Balabommala is all set to make her silver screen debut with the Telugu film Kokkoroko, marking an important milestone in her artistic journey. On the festive occasion of Sankranthi, the makers unveiled a special poster that instantly drew attention for its warm and rooted presentation. The poster carried the message, "Our Bangarraj Family wishes you and your family a

Happy Sankranthi. "Kokkoroko" in cinemas soon," setting a celebratory tone for the film. The Sankranthi poster also revealed the first official look of Manaswini Balabommala, where she is seen alongside senior actor Samuthirakan and other cast members. Although her appearance in the

