



## NATION | NEWS



Rajnath highlights Lord Ram's values in modern India



WORLD | NEWS  
Russian claims of Ukrainian attack on govt sites 'unfounded', EU's top diplomat says

## India test-fires 2 Pralay missiles off Odisha confirms salvo capability

**Bhubaneswar (TSIT):** India on Wednesday validated the battlefield salvo mode of its indigenously developed quasi-ballistic missile Pralay, launching two rounds 30 seconds apart from a single mobile launcher at 10:30 am from Abdul Kalam Island, Odisha, the Defence Ministry said.

Both 150-500 km-range, solid-propellant weapons followed identical trajectories and hit their designated impact points within circular-error probability, tracking radars at Integrated Test Range, Chandipur, confirmed. The user-evaluation trial, witnessed by Army, Air Force and DRDO teams, paves the way for induction into the Strategic Forces Command.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and DRDO chief Dr Samir V. Kamat



congratulated Research Centre Imarat Hyderabad and industry partners BDL & BEL for "establishing reliable, ripple-fire capability essential for modern theatre operations".

### 713 Cr Released Towards Pending Employees' Bills

**HYDERABAD (TSIT):** The State government has released 713 crore towards clearing pending bills payable to government employees for the month of December, following orders issued by Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu, Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister.

Acting on the Deputy Chief Minister's directions, officials of the Finance Department released the bills on Wednesday, providing relief to employees awaiting settlement of long-pending dues. It may be recalled that the Praja Government had earlier assured employee unions that Rs.700 crore would be released every month towards pending bills. By the end of June, the government had released Rs.183 crore. Subsequently, from August onwards, a minimum of Rs.700 crore has been consistently released each month, in line with the assurance given.

### India's broadband subscriber base surpasses 1 billion mark in Nov: Govt



In the last 10 years, the Broadband subscriber base in India has increased by more than six times.

Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) showed.

As per the data, out of 1,070.81 million internet subscribers, the number of wired Internet subscribers is 44.42 million, and the number of wireless Internet subscribers is 973.39 mil-

lion. Meanwhile, the broadband Internet subscriber base increased by 1.63 per cent from 979.71 million at the end of June to 995.63 million at the end of September this year. The narrowband Internet subscriber base decreased from 23.14 million in the June quarter to 22.18 million at the end of the September quarter.

At the same time, wireline subscribers decreased from 47.49 million at the end of the April-June quarter to 46.61 million at the end of the September quarter, with a quarterly rate of decline of 1.84 per cent. On a year-on-year (YoY) basis, wireline subscriptions increased by 26.21 per cent at the end of the July-September quarter. Monthly ARPU for wireless service increased by 10.67 per cent YoY in the quarter as well.

### INBRIEF

Assam couple lynched, burnt alive over witchcraft allegations

**Karbi Anglong:** In a horrific incident of mob violence rooted in superstition, a married couple was brutally killed after being accused of practising witchcraft in Assam's Karbi Anglong district. The incident occurred on Tuesday at No. 1 Beloguri Munda village in the Howrahgat area. The victims were identified as 43-year-old Gardi Birawa and his 33-year-old wife, Mira Birawa. According to reports, a group of villagers forcibly entered the couple's house and attacked them with sharp weapons. After assaulting the couple, the attackers set the house on fire, resulting in both victims being burnt alive inside the premises.

**New Year Greetings from CM Revanth**

Hyderabad: Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy extended warm New Year greetings to the people of Telangana on the occasion of the New Year.

The Chief Minister expressed optimism that the State government would move forward with renewed vigour in the coming year towards achieving the ambitious

Telangana

Rising Vision 2047. He reiterated that the government would accord top priority to fulfilling the hopes and aspirations of all sections of society, including farmers, women, workers, and the underprivileged. Highlighting the government's commitment to inclusive growth, he said development and welfare would go hand in hand to ensure social equity and economic progress across the State. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy wished that the New Year would help every family achieve their cherished goals and bring happiness, good health, and prosperity to all citizens of Telangana.

### ARAVALLI ROW:

SC asks expert committee to consult stakeholders; sets out parameters for examining crucial issues



the panel to examine if the definition of 'Aravalli Hills and Ranges' restricted exclusively to the 500-meter area between two or more Aravalli Hills, creates a structural paradox wherein the geographical scope of protected territory is significantly narrowed.

Consequently, it should be determined if this restrictive demarcation has inversely broadened the scope of 'non-Arvalli' areas, thereby facilitating the continuation of unregulated mining and other disruptive activities in terrains ecologically contiguous but technically excluded by this definition, it said.

### SC asks expert committee to consult stakeholders; sets out parameters for examining crucial issues

**New Delhi (TSIT):** The Supreme Court has asked a new expert committee set up by it to consult stakeholders to resolve critical ambiguities and to provide definitive guidance on issues relating to definition of Aravalli Hills. A three-judge special vacation bench led by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant – which on Monday ordered to keep in abeyance its November 20 order that was based on a previous committee's recommendations – also set out parameters for the new panel to approach these issues.

It said that prior to the implementation of the committee's report, or the execution of the directions contained in its November 20 judgment, "a fair, impartial, independent expert opinion must be obtained and considered, after associating all requisite stakeholders". It asked

Amaravati, Dec 31 : Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu said on Wednesday that 2025 was an important turning point for the state and announced that in 2026, the government will focus on the speed of delivering governance for all.

The Chief Minister took to X to convey New Year greetings to people. Stating that 2025 was not just another year but an important turning point for Andhra Pradesh, he said the government worked to stabilise welfare delivery and reach the poorest of the poor, while also restoring investor confidence.

"Despite many challenges, we achieved double-digit growth. We restored and protected the sanctity of our religious places and improved the pilgrimage experience for devotees. We attracted major investments,

such as Google and laid the foundations for quantum technology. We also managed calamities like Cyclone Monsoon effectively, providing timely relief and support. Behind every achievement was a dedicated workforce, supported by the trust and cooperation of our people. Our work will continue," posted the Chief Minister.

Meanwhile, Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan said that revival of Andhra Pradesh is a collective dream and that a large part of it rests on the shoulders of bureaucracy.

"As we look back on 2025 and prepare to welcome 2026, I would like to take a moment to appreciate our officers, employees, and every individual who served our people with dedication and selflessness. In 2026, we will focus on the Speed of Delivering Governance for all to



build a healthy, wealthy, and happy Swarna Andhra. Most importantly, none of this progress would have been possible without the trust, blessings, and support of the people of Andhra Pradesh, who are the true drivers of our growth. I wish you all a very happy and prosperous New Year," posted Pawan Kalyan.

"As we step into 2026, I want to extend my warmest New Year wishes to the backbone of our

ment launched an 80-member Tourist Police force and introduced digital initiatives such as a Unified Online Tourism Portal, GIS mapping, and Digital Travel Cards. Infrastructure development gained momentum with 78 of 123 state projects completed, alongside Rs.25.75 crore worth of works under central schemes.

Looking ahead, the department unveiled its 2026 roadmap, featuring heli-tourism circuits, premium destination wedding hubs, and a series of international festivals to kickstart the new year.

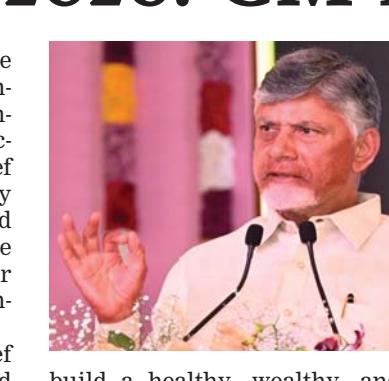
**Don't judge people by caste, wealth or language:**  
**Mohan Bhagwat**

Raipur: Asserting that the country belongs to everyone, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on Wednesday called for social harmony, urging people to rise above divisions of caste, wealth, and language to treat "everyone as one's own." The RSS chief also encouraged families to dedicate one day each week for collective activities like meals, prayers, and discussions to foster connection and combat loneliness. Addressing a 'Hindu Sammelan' at Sonpuri village in Chhattisgarh's Raipur district, Bhagwat said that the first step toward social harmony is the removal of discrimination and separation from one's mind.

"The entire country belongs to everyone, and this spirit is true social harmony," Bhagwat said and insisted that public facilities like temples, water bodies, and cremation grounds must be open to all Hindus without exception.

People should not judge anyone by their caste, wealth, language or region and treat everyone as their own, he said. "The entire India is mine," he said, describing this approach as samajik samrasta (social harmony).

## Andhra to focus on speed of delivering governance in 2026: CM Naidu



administration - our IAS, IPS, IFS, IRS & IFS and all administrative officers. You have come from different states and diverse corners of our great nation, leaving your homes to serve the people of Andhra Pradesh. We deeply recognise that sacrifice and thank you for your dedicated service to our land. Policies are born in the assembly, but they take life into your hands. As politicians, we may set the direction, but it is your integrity and administration on the ground that determines whether a poor man's life actually changes," said the Deputy CM.

"The revival of our Andhra Pradesh is a collective dream, and a large part of it rests on your shoulders. For 2026, my wish for our officers is simple - Let's have a bureaucracy that works with more heart and moves with more speed.

# Rajnath highlights Lord Ram's values in modern India

Ayodhya, Dec 31: Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday drew parallels between the principles of Lord Ram and India's approach to national security, asserting that values and restraint must guide action even in times of conflict. Speaking on the second anniversary of the consecration of Lord Ram at the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Temple during Pratishtha Dwadashi celebrations, Singh said Operation 'Sindo' exemplified modern India upholding these ideals.

"Lord Ram's mission was not merely to defeat Ravana but to eradicate unrighteousness. Similarly, Operation 'Sindo' aimed to dismantle the terror ecosystem, not escalate violence. Our response was measured, controlled, and purposeful," Singh said, emphasizing that India acted with discipline while remaining sensitive to



innocent lives. The Defence Minister described Lord Ram as a symbol of humility, virtue, and compassion, yet a formidable force against injustice. "Ram is embedded in our consciousness; his dignity is our identity. Modern India mirrors this — firm against terrorism

but rooted in righteousness and restraint," he added.

Singh also highlighted the broader moral significance of Ram, calling him a guide for decision-making, governance, and upholding dignity. "Where power risks turning reckless, Ram defines restraint; where

rights are debated, Ram reminds us of duty. He represents truth, resolve, and the moral compass of humanity," he said. On the development of Ayodhya, Singh said the city has transformed into a global center of religious tourism following the construction of the Ram Temple, with improved infrastructure including roads, housing, green spaces, airports, and railways contributing to a safe and modern urban environment.

He praised the government's efforts in balancing faith, heritage, and world-class infrastructure, calling the Ram Temple movement a centuries-long struggle rooted in societal consciousness, patience, and faith. "Every street of Ayodhya resonates with Ram, inspiring devotion not just locally but across India and the world," Singh said, adding that the temple's consecration marked

a renaissance of national consciousness and a celebration of "strength in dignity and dignity in power."

Earlier, Singh and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath visited Hanuman Garhi, offering prayers to Lord Hanuman, before proceeding to the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi complex. They performed rituals at the Ram Lalla temple and Ram Darbar, including aarti, circumambulation, and hoisting the religious flag atop Maa Annapurna temple, praying for peace, prosperity, and national welfare. Singh was received at Maharishi Valmiki International Airport by CM Adityanath and accompanied him throughout the ceremonial visits. The celebrations were marked by Vedic chants and devotional fervor as leaders and devotees commemorated the enduring legacy of Lord Ram.

## P.V. Narasimha Rao's economic legacy remembered at memorial lecture in Hyderabad

Hyderabad, December 31: The 21st death anniversary of former Prime Minister and Bharat Ratna P.V. Narasimha Rao was observed with solemn reflection at a memorial lecture organised by EMESCO Books in association with the P.V. Narasimha Rao Memorial Lecture Committee at a city hotel on Tuesday.

Eminent economist and former Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission Prof. Montek Singh Ahluwalia delivered the keynote address, recalling the historic economic reforms initiated



during Narasimha Rao's tenure as Prime Minister between 1991 and 1996. Speakers described the

period as a defining phase that transformed India's economic trajectory through liberalisation and global integration.

Addressing the gathering, P.V. Prabhakar Rao, son of the former Prime Minister, termed his father's tenure a "golden era" that rescued India from a severe balance-of-payments crisis. He described Narasimha Rao as a "Karma Yogi" who remained detached from power while taking bold and politically difficult decisions in the national interest.

Prof. Ahluwalia highlighted the crucial part-

nership between Narasimha Rao and Dr. Manmohan Singh, noting that their political will and clarity of purpose dismantled the licence-permit raj and laid the foundation for India's current economic ambitions. He observed that many of today's growth aspirations trace back to reforms of the early 1990s. Several speakers underlined Narasimha Rao's scholarship, global vision, and lasting contribution to nation-building, calling for greater efforts to preserve and popularise his legacy among younger generations.

## 65 injured as Loco trains collide inside THDC tunnel

Pipalkoti, Dec 31: At least 65 workers were injured late Tuesday night after two loco trains collided inside a tunnel at the Tehri Hydro Development Corporation (THDC) hydroelectric project site in the Pipalkoti area of Uttarakhand's Chamoli district, officials said.

The accident occurred around 8.30 pm inside the 4.5-km-long tunnel when a loco train transporting workers and construction material rammed into another train that was stationary on the same track during a shift change. Around 108 workers

were travelling on the two trains at the time of the incident. Two coaches derailed following the collision, triggering panic inside the tunnel. Describing the incident, a source close to the rescue operations said the sound of the crash was deafening and caused confusion and fear among the workers trapped inside the tunnel.

District Magistrate Gaurav Kumar and Superintendent of Police Surjeet Singh Panwar rushed to the district hospital in Gopeshwar to oversee medical arrangements. Officials confirmed that all the injured workers are in stable condition.

## Delivery services may be hit in NCR as gig workers call New Year's Eve strike

New Delhi, Dec 31: Quick commerce and food delivery services across Delhi and neighbouring regions are likely to face disruptions on New Year's Eve, as delivery workers' unions have called for a strike over issues such as lack of pay transparency, blocking of worker IDs and concerns over the 10-minute delivery model.

The strike has been called by the Telangana-based Telangana Gig and Platform Workers Union and the Karnataka-based Indian Federation of App-based Transport Workers Union, with support from the Delhi-based Gig Workers Association. It follows a similar protest on December 25, which, despite limited participation, affected Swiggy and Zomato deliveries in parts of Gurgaon, Noida and Ghaziabad during peak hours.

TGPWU president Shaikh Saladdin said around 50,000 workers participated in the Christmas Day strike and claimed that nearly 1.5 lakh delivery partners are expected to join the protest on Wednesday. According to government esti-



mates, India's gig workforce crossed one crore in 2024-25.

Delivery workers have raised concerns about the risks associated with ultra-fast deliveries and an opaque wage structure. Several workers said incentives are withdrawn even for minor delays, forcing them to take risks on the road. Others complained of longer delivery distances, increased minimum working hours and reduced earnings.

"Workers are paid based on

tasks, not hours, and this does not account for waiting time, traffic, bad weather or low demand. Platforms change pay structures without notice, so workers are unsure of their daily earnings," said Nitesh Kumar Das of the Gig Workers Association.

Restaurant owners across NCR expressed concern over food wastage and business losses.

Pranav Rungta, Vice-President of the National Restaurants Association of

India, said restaurants were in touch with delivery platforms and were awaiting clarity. He noted that the December 25 strike had significantly impacted businesses, especially in Gurgaon. At the same time, several delivery partners said they could not afford to join the strike due to fear of income loss or termination of their IDs. Many said that after expenses such as fuel, food and rent, daily earnings leave them with very little to support their families.

An internal communication to Zomato riders reportedly stated that no partner would be stopped from making deliveries and that alternative arrangements had been made. Even so, some customers and restaurants pre-emptively placed bulk orders or arranged self-delivery, anticipating disruptions. With New Year's Eve being one of the busiest days for food delivery, industry stakeholders said any prolonged disruption could lead to significant losses, even as workers insisted the strike was necessary to highlight safety and livelihood concerns.

## Punjab assembly slams Centre's move to replace MGNREGA

Chandigarh, Dec 31: The Punjab Assembly on Tuesday unanimously passed a resolution opposing the Centre's move to replace the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) with the Viksit Bharat—Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin), alleging that the new law undermines a legally guaranteed right to work and shifts the financial burden onto states. The resolution was moved by Rural Development and Panchayats Minister Tarunpreet Singh Sond during a special session of the Assembly. It stated that the proposed law weakens guaranteed wages and employment for poor labourers, women and lakhs of job card holders by turning a demand-driven scheme into a norm-based programme dependent on budgetary allocations and fixed plans.

Reacting sharply, Union agriculture and rural development minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said the special session itself was against the federal spirit of the Constitution. Speaking in Bhopal, he said it was inappropriate for a state legislature to move against a law passed by Parliament and accused opposition parties of

indulging in "blind politics." Chouhan also alleged large-scale corruption in Punjab's MGNREGA implementation, claiming social audits had exposed several irregularities without corrective action.

Explaining the resolution, Sond said the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act was passed in September 2005 and implemented in Punjab in 2008-09, before being renamed MGNREGA in 2009. He said the Act ensured a mandatory 100 days of wage employment annually to rural households willing to undertake unskilled work.

While the IMD is yet to formally announce the withdrawal of the northeast monsoon, officials said it could extend into the second week of January. However, any rainfall after that window will not be included in the seasonal assessment.

## BJP slams Mamata Banerjee for alleged threats against home minister Amit Shah



Bhubaneswar, Dec 31: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Wednesday launched a scathing attack on West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, accusing her of using inflammatory rhetoric and issuing veiled threats against union home minister Amit Shah during his recent visit to the state.

At a press conference, BJP MP and national spokesperson Sambit Patra condemned Banerjee's remarks, calling them "an assault on democratic norms" and a bid to protect what the party described as her "vote bank" of illegal infiltrators. Patra cited statements allegedly made by the Chief Minister in which she described Shah as "dangerous" and suggested that his freedom of movement in West Bengal depended entirely on her permission.

Patra said, "Mamata Banerjee threatened the Home Minister, saying he is hiding in a hotel and is lucky to be allowed to come out. Such words are unimaginable and unbecoming of a Chief Minister." He accused Banerjee of avoiding the substantive issue of security and instead resorting to name-calling and intimidation.

The BJP also alleged that the West Bengal government has obstructed efforts to secure the India-Bangladesh border by refusing to provide land for fencing, claiming that the Trinamool Congress

is deliberately facilitating infiltration to alter the state's demographic composition. Patra further criticized Banerjee for opposing the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, asserting that she has threatened mass protests and riots to prevent the exercise, which ensures that only Indian citizens are eligible to vote.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is attempting to protect her political base by inciting violence. Under her rule, jihadis and rioters are safer than common citizens," Patra asserted. He also referenced post-poll violence in the state, alleging that over 300 BJP workers have been killed under the Trinamool Congress regime and accused the government of effectively condoning such acts. Patra emphasized that the Home Minister's visit aimed to "restore dignity to Bengal and protect its women," citing atrocities in areas like Sandeshkhali.



Union Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Dr. L. Murugan launching the Government of India's Calendar 2026 on the theme "Bharat@2026: Seva, Sushasan aur Samridhi" at the National Media Center in New Delhi ....

## Northeast monsoon ends with marginal deficit in Tamil Nadu, Puducherry

Chennai, Dec 31: The northeast monsoon, a vital source of rainfall for Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, has concluded on a muted note this year, with the India Meteorological Department (IMD) reporting an overall shortfall across the region.

Official figures show that Tamil Nadu and Puducherry together received 42.8 cm of rainfall during the October to December period, slightly below the normal average of 44.2 cm, reflecting a deficit of around 3 per cent.

This outcome contrasts with early seasonal forecasts that had indicated the likelihood of above-normal rainfall.

While the IMD is yet to formally announce the withdrawal of the northeast monsoon, officials said it could extend into the second week of January. However, any rainfall after that window will not be included in the seasonal assessment.

Chennai, Ariyalur, Chengalpattu, Coimbatore, Dharmapuri, Dindigul, Kancheepuram, Karur, Krishnagiri, Perambalur, Salem, Theni, Tiruppur and Tiruchirappalli, reported below-normal rainfall.

Puducherry also ended the season with a deficit. However, a few districts bucked the trend, with Virudhunagar, Vellore, Thoothukudi, Tiruvarur, Tirunelveli and Tenkasi recording rainfall above the seasonal average.

Despite the overall shortfall, officials said water storage levels across the state remain satisfactory. Adequate inflows during the southwest monsoon and the early phase of the northeast monsoon have ensured that reservoirs hold sufficient water to meet immediate drinking water and irrigation needs, providing reassurance as the monsoon season draws to a close.

## Ten Hindu Raksha Dal members held for sword distribution in Ghaziabad

Ghaziabad, Dec 31: Ten members of the Hindu Raksha Dal (HRD) have been arrested for allegedly distributing swords from the organisation's office in Shalimar Garden, Ghaziabad, police said on Tuesday. Eight swords were also recovered during the operation.

Police said a case was registered against 40 persons, including 30 unidentified individuals, at the Shalimar Garden police station after a video showing the distribution of swords went viral on social media. According to police,

information was received on December 29 that HRD national president Pinky Chaudhary, along with his associates, was distributing swords at the outfit's office in Shalimar Garden X-2. "The video showed several people holding swords, raising slogans and engaging in aggressive demonstrations," police said in a statement. The arrested accused were identified as Kapil Kumar, Shyam Prasad, Arun Jain, Rampal, Amit Singh, Amit Kumar, Amit Arora, Mohit Kumar, Devendra Baghel and Ujala Singh.

## 10-yr B'luru girl enters India Book of Records as youngest author

Bengaluru, 31 Dec 2025: Parinita B., a Class-5 student of NET Public School, Basavanagudi, has become the youngest person listed in the India Book of Records after publishing her illustrated story collection, "Tales by Pari", through Subbu Publications.

The 10-year-old wrote the 40-page book during summer vacation, drawing characters from her everyday observations and grandmother's folk tales. "I just wanted to share my stories with friends; I didn't know it could break a record," said Parinita, who received her certificate at a small school ceremony on Monday. Parents K. Balaji and Dr. Anusha R. Gupta, both engineers, say they first noticed her passion when she began narrating bedtime sequels to the Panchatantra at age six. The school's literary club later gave her a dedicated notebook and weekly feedback sessions that helped shape the manuscript.

Principal M. Shailaja believes the feat will spur "every child to see writing as a real, reachable goal". The India Book of Records confirmed Parinita's entry under the "youngest published author (female)" category after verifying her age, ISBN and print run of

## House distribution on Jan 2

Bengaluru: In the wake of the eviction of illegal houses in Yelahanka Kogilu Layout, the BBMP and Rajiv Gandhi Housing Corporation are continuing to review the documents regarding providing alternative permanent housing to the eligible victims.

The government's intention in this matter is to provide housing only to the eligible ones. Therefore, the Chief Minister has instructed to conduct a comprehensive document review without any haste, and officials of the Revenue, BBMP are busy with that work.

In this context, the distribution of houses that was scheduled for January 1 has been postponed to January 2, Housing Minister Zameer Ahmed Khan said in a Press statement.

## Set up NIPER in the State: M.B. Patil writes to Minister Nadda

Bengaluru: Stating that Karnataka is at the forefront of science and pharmaceutical research, Minister for Large and Medium Industries M.B. Patil has urged the Union government to establish a unit of the National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (NIPER) in the State. In a letter addressed to Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda, Mr. Patil assured that the State government would swiftly provide the necessary land, infrastructure, support, and opportunities for collaboration. In his letter, Mr. Patil recalled that the Union government had earlier considered setting up the institute in Karnataka, though the proposal did not materialise at the time. He urged the Centre to revive the plan, keeping in view the State's strong ecosystem of scientific research institutions and biotechnology (BT) companies.

## Blinkit-Blinkit row turns criminal: trademark transfer stayed, FIR lodged for forgery.

New Delhi / Chennai / Bengaluru: Serious allegations of fraud, forgery, and violations of corporate law have come to light in connection with the illegal transfer of the registered "BLINKIT" trademark. The matter has escalated into a significant legal dispute involving the original promoters of BLINKIT and individuals associated with the Blinkit brand. According to Mr. Paramesh Hulyurudurga Krishnegowda, Co-Founder and Director of BLINKIT, he and his partner Mr. Harish Srinivasa Shetty legally incorporated the company in 2016 and duly adopted and registered the trademarks "BLINKIT" and "IBLINKIT" in the company's name. Since then, the company has been operating in full compliance with applicable laws. Subsequently, Grofers.com, owned by Mr. Albiner Singh Dhindsa, commenced business under the name "BLINKIT", which, according to Mr. Paramesh, is deceptively similar to the registered BLINKIT and IBLINKIT trademarks and is likely to cause confusion. The dispute is currently under judicial consideration in OS No. 3994/2022, wherein the Hon'ble Court has passed appropriate orders after taking into account the rights of the legitimate trademark owners. Following these orders, representatives of Blinkit are stated to have entered into discussions regarding the purchase of the BLINKIT and IBLINKIT trademarks. However, while the civil trademark suit was still pending before the court, it is alleged that taking advantage of Mr. Paramesh's absence, his partner Mr. Harish Srinivasa Shetty, in collusion with Blink Commerce Private Limited and other external individuals, forged his signature and illegally transferred the BLINKIT and IBLINKIT trademarks. These actions were allegedly carried out in violation of the Companies Act, Registrar of Companies (ROC) regulations, and other applicable laws. Following the exposure of these illegal transactions, key accused persons are reportedly absconding, according to sources. Based on these allegations, an FIR has been registered in Bengaluru under multiple sections relating to forgery, cheating, criminal conspiracy, and criminal breach of trust, under Section 173 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (Crime No. 0537/2025). The concerned police and investigating authorities are currently conducting a detailed investigation into the matter. Parallelly, the Trademark Registry, Government of India (Chennai Office) has taken cognizance of the violations of legal process and has stayed the transfer of the BLINKIT and IBLINKIT trademarks. The matter is presently under regulatory and legal scrutiny. Mr. Paramesh stated that this case raises serious concerns regarding transparency in trademark transactions, corporate governance, and adherence to the rule of law.

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# Kochi / Kerala

KOCHI  
THURSDAY, JANUARY 1, 2026

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## BESCOM launches mobile app to monitor preventive maintenance of TCs

Bengaluru: To ensure quality and uninterrupted power supply to its consumers, BESCOM has developed a mobile application, Distribution Transformer Life Cycle Management System (DTLMS). The app will help monitor and systematically carry out preventive maintenance of more than 5 lakh distribution transformers across 8 districts under BESCOM's jurisdiction.

Through the mobile application, officials can continuously monitor the operation, preventive maintenance, repairs, and efficiency of distribution transformers (DTs). Field officers can enter all transformer maintenance details directly



into the app by downloading the same from the Google Play Store for Android phones.

Under DTLMS, a Distribution Transformer Centre (DTC) maintenance module has been developed. This module is expected

to play a key role in improving the efficiency, reliability, and continuity of the power distribution system.

Using this module, BESCOM field officers will carry out quarterly maintenance of all transformers in their respective

areas. This will help prevent power leakage, reduce losses, and ensure a quality power supply to consumers.

As per the directions of Energy Minister K. J. George, BESCOM developed this app to closely monitor transformer maintenance and to regularly service faulty transformers that disrupt uninterrupted power supply. The DTLMS app was recently launched by the Minister.

The initiative is seen as an important step towards using information technology to improve power services and ensure a reliable electricity supply to consumers.

## Ramalinga Reddy: MEI is a proud PSU, must raise output and profit further.



Bengaluru: Minister for Transport and Muzrai Department, Ramalinga Reddy said that, MEI is a proud government undertaking with long-standing experience in the public sector. He expressed his wish that the organisation should further enhance its production targets in the coming days and move towards achieving higher profits.

As MEI has earned a profit of more than Rs.20 crore in the financial year 2024-25, He also stated that celebrating Kannada Rajyotsava in government institutions helps everyone understand and spread the importance of the Kannada language, history, and culture.

He called upon everyone to work together with a commitment towards Kannada and Karnataka and contribute to the development of the state.

In view of the organisation being in profit, he suggested that more employment opportunities should be created by recruiting additional staff, thereby helping to reduce unemployment.

The programme was attended by the Chairman of the organisation, S. Manohar; Managing Director, Smt. Anita C. K., KAS; and senior officers of the institution.

## KSS State President Kannalli Krishnappa urges to provide basic facilities

Bengaluru: KSS State President Kannalli Krishnappa has demanded that the government should immediately provide basic facilities such as drinking water, electricity, sewage system, roads, transportation and many other facilities in Kembhattahalli village of Bangalore South taluk. Speaking after holding a protest in this regard, he said that as a result of the struggle of Karnataka Janandolana Sanghatana, President K. Mariyappa and Siddalingappa, Ratnammal and several

other leaders of the organization, the then BBMP had issued an order to allocate land in the name of the organization, but now some miscreants and vested interests who tolerated this have come here and are threatening the beneficiaries by not allowing them to build houses, and the organization is opposing this.

As a result of the struggle of the last 20 years, today 8 acres 10 guntes of land have been found in Kembhattahalli village of Bangalore South taluk for providing shelter to the poor. The land, which was about 20 to 30 feet deep, has been leveled with a JCB

machine and allotted to more than 380 beneficiaries, he said, and now the beneficiaries have decided to build houses on the land they have allocated with their own money. However, some of the community members who are not in the struggle have come to this land and are claiming their rights. Today, they are throwing stones while cooking and eating and setting fire to the crops when they are harvested. If you need any information, please talk to them and then resolve the matter.

## Veteran BHEL engineer Dr R. Jayaram bags Pride of K'taka Award for co-op service.

Bengaluru, 31 Dec 2025: Dr R. Jayaram, who retired as engineer after 39 years with BHEL and has led the Renco House-Building Co-operative Society since 1994, was presented the Pride of Karnataka Award at the

decade volunteer career. "Members have kept re-electing me—first as president, now vice-president—because we built 1,200 homes without profit motive," he told the gathering, becoming emotional.



Press Club here on Monday.

Accepting the trophy from Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, Assembly Speaker U.T. Khader and four state ministers, the 69-year-old said the cooperative ideal of "service through cooperation" had guided his three-

Jayaram's mantle already includes the Bharat Jyoti Excellence Award-2025, an honorary doctorate from Cedar Brook University, USA, and the Pride of Nation Award from Sri Lanka. He plans to use the latest honour to promote youth cooperatives across Karnataka.

## Surprise raid at district prison; mobile phone, SIM card seized

Mangaluru, Dec 30: Officials and staff, led by the district prison superintendent, conducted a surprise inspection at the city's district prison late on Monday night and seized prohibited items. During the inspection, two mobile phones, one SIM card and one wireless charger were found in the possession of inmates and were seized by the authorities.

As the use of mobile phones is prohibited inside the prison, a case has been registered at the Mangaluru Barke police station. District prison superintendent Sharan Basappa said that Karnataka prisons and correctional services director general of police Alok Kumar has been informed about the incident.

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District prison superintendent Sharan Basappa said that Karnataka prisons and correctional services director general of police Alok Kumar has been informed about the incident.

Kerala (TSIT): Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday told the 93rd Sivagiri pilgrimage that the shrine is "India's original anti-communal project" and urged the country to turn its annual gathering into a nationwide movement for equality.

Addressing thousands of devotees at the hill-top mutt, the Karnataka leader said the event's theme—"The Role of the Sivagiri Pilgrimage in Modern Nation-Building"—was chosen because "dialogue, equality and ethics are under siege". He praised Sree Narayana Guru for turning reli-

"When I asked residents for ID cards, most produced ration cards issued elsewhere or nothing at all."

The BJP leader alleged that a local Congress worker, Waseem, had "parcled out" plots and that ministers Zameer Ahmed Khan and D.K. Shivakumar were "rushing to protect the

## Ashoka demands citizenship check, NIA probe for Kogilu 'illegal residents'

Bengaluru, 31 Dec 2025: Opposition leader R. Ashoka on Wednesday asked the Karnataka government to verify the citizenship of people who have built huts on 15 acres of government land at Kogilu Cross and, if documents are found dubious, hand the cases to the National Investigation Agency.

"Satellite images taken a year ago show only open land; today there are 250-odd concrete sheds with illegal power lines but no meters," Ashoka told reporters after walking through the freshly cleared Fakir Layout. "When I asked residents for ID cards, most produced ration cards issued elsewhere or nothing at all."

The BJP leader alleged that a local Congress worker, Waseem, had "parcled out" plots and that ministers Zameer Ahmed Khan and D.K. Shivakumar were "rushing to protect the

encroachers because elections are due". He claimed some occupants admitted they arrived only six months ago, yet BESCOM had laid overhead cables without installing meters—something 400,000 legal city residents still wait for. Ashoka said the mix of undocumented migrants from Andhra Pradesh, north Karnataka and "possible Bangladesh" made the pocket a potential sleeper-cell hub. "Before we clear other encroachments, the state must prove it can distinguish between genuine slum-dwellers and national-security risks," he argued, demanding a 30-day biometric drive and NIA vetting.

## Siddaramaiah: Sivagiri shows spirituality must fight inequality, not politics



Kerala (TSIT): Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday told the 93rd Sivagiri pilgrimage that the shrine is "India's original anti-communal project" and urged the country to turn its annual gathering into a nationwide movement for equality.

Addressing thousands of devotees at the hill-top mutt, the Karnataka leader said the event's theme—"The Role of the Sivagiri Pilgrimage in Modern Nation-Building"—was chosen because "dialogue, equality and ethics are under siege". He praised Sree Narayana Guru for turning reli-

gion into a tool of social justice by proclaiming "One Caste, One Religion, One God" and

for building schools and temples that taught self-respect instead of hierarchy.

**Kotak Mahindra Bank**

### Notice

This is to inform you that our Mathew Sons Centre Point branch, Kochi, is shifting to 32/1172, A-1, Ground Floor, Veerath Complex, Palarivattom, Kochi - 682025 in March 2026.

The existing lockers too will be relocated to the new address.

Contact the Branch Manager for any details.  
Kotak Mahindra Bank Ltd.



# Rupee slumps 5pc in 2025, closes at 89.88 as foreign funds exit

**Mumbai:** The rupee slumped 5 per cent in 2025 as persistent capital outflows from foreign investors, alongside heightened dollar demand from importers, making it one of the worst-performing Asian currencies. On the last trading session of 2025, the rupee depreciated 13 paise to close at 89.88 against the US dollar as month-end demand and FPIs' dollar buying kept it lower. The domestic currency has exhibited a negative bias throughout the year, making it Asia's worst-performing currency in 2025, with foreign portfolio investors pulling out USD 16.5 billion from equities this year, further denting investor sentiments, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange, the local unit opened at 89.89 against the dollar and touched an intra-day low of 89.95 and a high of 89.84 against the American currency. At the end of Wednesday's trading session, the rupee was quoted at 89.88 against the greenback, registering a fall of 13 paise over its previous close. On Tuesday, the rupee rose 23 paise to close at 89.75 against the greenback. On a year-on-year



basis, the rupee has plunged 4.95 per cent. It was quoted at 85.64 on December 31, 2024. Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities, said, "The rupee resumed its downward trajectory following Tuesday's pause, weighed down by a rebounding US dollar against major currencies. For the year 2025, the rupee emerged as the regional laggard, with spot prices whipsawed by tightening dollar liquidity, surging trade deficit, relatively high US Tariff and capital flows." Since the Trump Administration took over, the rupee has been the worst performing currency, underpinned by robust

domestic demand, benign inflation, and prudent macroeconomic policies despite an uncertain and challenging global economic backdrop. "The domestic financial system remains robust and resilient, bolstered by strong balance sheets, easy financial conditions, and low financial market volatility. Nonetheless, there are near-term risks from external uncertainties — geopolitical and trade-related," it said. Bhansali further said that "consistent outflows by FPIs and stake sales by investors, demand from defence, oil and gold have all impacted the rupee as it fell to its lowest at 91.08

before reined in to control it and bring it up to current levels". Parmar added, "We anticipate a period of range-bound consolidation for USD/INR, anchored between the 89.40 support and 90.26 resistance levels." Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.10 per cent higher at 98.33. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading 0.13 per cent higher at USD 61.41 per barrel in futures trade. Forex traders said the USD/INR pair is trading under pressure due to multiple factors, including a shift toward risk aversion, driven by persistent capital withdrawals from foreign investors ahead of the holiday break, alongside heightened greenback demand from importers. On the domestic equity market front, benchmark-sensitive indices ended 2025 on a high, with the Sensex jumping 545.52 points to settle at 85,220.60, while the Nifty surged 190.75 points to 26,129.60. Foreign institutional investors offloaded equities worth Rs 3,597.38 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

## Economy growing at robust pace, banking sector remains sound: RBI

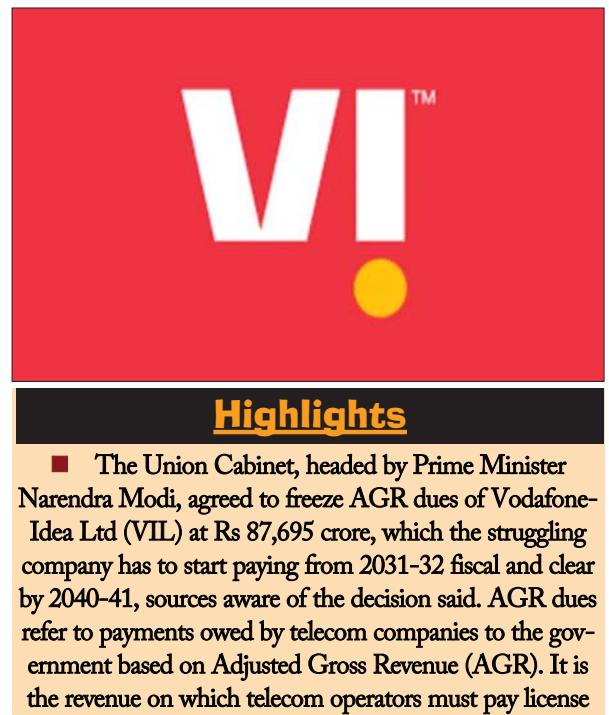
**Mumbai:** The Indian economy is growing at a robust pace, driven by strong domestic demand, low inflation, and the healthy balance sheets of banks, said a Reserve Bank report released on Wednesday. The domestic financial system remains robust and resilient, bolstered by strong balance sheets, easy financial conditions, and low financial market volatility, said the December 2025 edition of the Financial Stability Report (FSR). "Nonetheless, there are near-term risks from external uncertainties — geopolitical and trade-related," said the report, which reflects the collective assessment of the Sub-Committee of the Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC) on the resilience of the Indian financial system and risks to financial stability. It further said the health of the scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) remains sound with strong capital and liquidity buffers, improved asset quality and robust profitability. "Macro stress test results affirm the resilience of SCBs to withstand losses under hypothetical adverse scenarios and maintain capital buffers well above the regulatory minimum. From a capital buffers per-



spective, the report said, the capital to risk-weighted assets ratio (CRAR) remained strong as of September, with state-owned banks at 16 per cent and private sector banks at 18.1 per cent. Banks will be able to withstand adverse economic shocks, the report said, listing out how the capital buffers will be impacted in adverse events. On the economy, the report noted that the real gross domestic product (GDP) growth surprised on the upside in both Q1 2025-26 and Q2 2025-26 at 7.8 per cent and 8.2 per cent, respectively, supported by strong private consumption and public investment. "Growth outlook remains positive, aided by low inflation, easy financial conditions, above normal monsoon, direct and indirect tax reforms.

## Centre approves 5-year moratorium on Vodafone Idea's AGR dues

**New Delhi:** The Union government on Wednesday, December 31, approved a major relief package for Vodafone Idea, freezing its outstanding dues and approving a five-year moratorium on payments, providing a critical lifeline to the debt-laden telecom operator. The Union Cabinet, headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, agreed to freeze AGR dues of Vodafone-Idea Ltd (VIL) at Rs 87,695 crore, which the struggling company has to start paying from 2031-32 fiscal and clear by 2040-41, sources aware of the decision said. AGR dues refer to payments owed by telecom companies to the government based on Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR). It is the revenue on which telecom operators must pay license fees and spectrum usage charges. It is defined to include all revenues, even non-telecom income (like interest, rent, asset sales). Besides these outstanding, the AGR dues for FY2017-18 and FY 2018-19, which were finalised based



on the Supreme Court order of September 2020, will now have to be paid over 2025-26 to 2030-31 fiscal without any change, they said. Vodafone Idea has been battling a prolonged financial crisis, driven by intense price competition, high debt, and massive AGR liabilities that arose from a change in the definition of AGR. The company has struggled with persistent losses, a shrinking subscriber base, and limited ability to invest in network

expansion, even as rivals accelerated 4G and 5G rollouts. Repeated rounds of government relief and equity conversion of dues have kept the company afloat, but its long-term viability continues to hinge on sustained policy support, fresh capital infusion, and a turnaround in operating performance. Some had expected that the Cabinet would waive a part, if not all, of the AGR dues. But instead, it decided to give a moratorium, which would allow the company to recover. The dues that have been frozen will be reassessed by a committee based on audit reports, sources said, adding the outcome shall be binding on both parties. Sources said the decisions taken by the Cabinet were to protect the interests of the government, which now has a 49 per cent stake in VIL. It will also enable orderly payment of dues to the government, ensure competition in the sector and protect the interests of 20 crore consumers of the company.

**■ The public issue of E to E Transportation Infrastructure Limited — the rail engineering and system integration specialist — closed on December 30, 2025, after a highly subscribed bidding period that began on December 26, 2025. The IPO, aggregating Rs 84.22 crore, attracted strong participation from all categories of investors, underscoring robust market sentiment toward the company's growth prospects in the railway infrastructure segment.**

## E2E Transportation Infrastructure IPO Draws Overwhelming Response, Subscribed 525.25x

**December 2025:** The public issue of E to E Transportation Infrastructure Limited — the rail engineering and system integration specialist — closed on December 30, 2025, after a highly subscribed bidding period that began on December 26, 2025. The IPO, aggregating Rs 84.22 crore, attracted strong participation from all categories of investors, underscoring robust market sentiment toward the company's growth prospects in the railway infrastructure segment.

Day 3 Subscription Highlights (as of December 30, 2025 | 4:29:58 PM)

QIB (Ex-Anchor): 236.30x

NII: 871.67x

Retail (Individual Investors): 541.85x

Total: 525.25x

NSE Link: <https://www.nseindia.com/market-data/all-upcoming-issues-ipo>

Chittorgarh Link: <https://www.chittorgarh.com/ipo/e-to-e-transportation-infrastructure-ipo/2720/>

The subscription figures reflect significant interest from non-institutional and retail investors, supported by steady participation from institutional buyers.

### About the IPO:

Issue Size: 84.22 crore (Fresh issue)

Price Band: 164 - 174 per share

Lot Size: 800 shares

Bidding Period: December 26 -

December 30, 2025  
Allotment Finalisation: December 31, 2025  
Listing Date: January 2, 2026 (on NSE SME)  
E to E Transportation Infrastructure Limited plans to use the proceeds primarily for working capital requirements and general corporate purposes.  
Company Overview & Business Highlights  
Incorporated in 2010, E2E Transportation Infrastructure Limited is an ISO 9001:2015 certified company engaged as a system integrator of Signalling and Telecommunication (S&T) systems for the railway sector. The Company provides end-to-end solutions, including

ing design, engineering, procurement, installation, testing, and commissioning, across mainline railways, metro rail projects, and private sidings. As disclosed in the Red Herring Prospectus, the Company has executed projects aligned with Kavach 4.0, India's indigenous automatic train protection system, reflecting its capabilities in safety-critical signalling infrastructure. The Company has also collaborated with Tata Elxsi on select technology-led initiatives, as detailed in the RHP. The promoter group includes Sourajit Mukherjee and Vinay Rao, associated with Ventureast, and Zephyr Mantra, a US-based fund. The Company's shareholding structure also includes Mukul Mahavir Agarwal, Ashwini Agarwal, and Himanshu Modi, among other investors, in accordance with disclosures made in the RHP. The Company has undertaken projects involving CBTC signalling for metro networks, railway electrification, signalling and telecom modernisation, and integrated infrastructure solutions for industrial and logistics clients. As of September 30, 2025, the Company's order book stood at 20,110.37 lakh. For the financial year ended March 31, 2025, the Company reported operating revenue of 2250.80 crore and net profit after tax of 14.37 crore, as disclosed in the offer documents.

## PNB Secunderabad Circle Opens 69th Branch at Pragathinagar



Punjab national Bank 2 nd largest Bank has opened its 69th Branch in Pragathinagar under Circle Office Secunderab. Branch Inaugurated by 1. Smt. Vandana Pandey, Zonal Manager, Hyderabad 2. Sh. Sujee Kumar Jha, Circle Head, Secunderab 3. Sh. Aravind Kalra, Circle Head, Hyderabad 4. Sh. Suresh Manduva, Branch Manager, Pragathinagar And other officials, union leaders from Hyderabad, and Secunderab Cirle attended

## Big Bullion Theory: Gold, silver retain sparkle in shaky geopolitical sands

**New Delhi:** Outsmarting all asset classes globally in 2025, gold and silver with massive returns and repeated record-breaking rallies redefined the precious metal market dynamics amid intensifying global political challenges, unstable tariff policies and persistent supply-chain disruptions. Marking one of the strongest performances for bullion in decades, silver prices surged more than 169 per cent during the year, while gold rallied over 76 per cent, reaffirming the role of precious metals as an anchor investment class in an extremely volatile world. In the domestic market, gold touched a lifetime high of Rs 1,42,300 per 10 grams on December 26, while silver scaled a record of Rs 2,41,000 per kg on December 30. Globally, spot gold began the year at around USD 2,657.16 per ounce and rallied to a peak of USD 4,550.11 per ounce on December 26, registering gains of up to 71.24 per cent. Spot silver, meanwhile, started the year at about USD 29.57 per ounce and soared to a peak of USD 83.63 per ounce on December 29, clocking robust returns of 182.82 per cent. The rally was initially triggered by the Fed's policy easing, but it gathered pace as President Donald Trump's return to the White House, with tariff rhetoric to

fuels uncertainty, central banks doubled down on bullion reserves, and supply constraints across metal markets. "Gold and silver surged over the past year on the back of a powerful mix of macro factors, such as structural demand and physical supply tightness," Naveen Damani, Head of Research, Commodities, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd (MOFSL), told PTI. US Federal Reserve's Pivot Marks Inflection Point: The early momentum in bullion's remarkable rally in 2025 came from the US Federal Reserve's (Fed) policy easing, with the central bank delivering three cautious 25-

basis-point rate cuts amid signs of cooling inflation, putting pressure on the US dollar, lending support for the bullion prices. "2025 marked a clear inflection point for the Fed, with three cautious 25-basis-point cuts delivered amid divided voting and visible political pressure. "...with Chair Jerome Powell's term ending in May 2026 and a potentially more dovish successor in the wings. Bullion is likely to react ahead of policy, keeping the bias constructive despite brief corrective phases," Damani said. Silver outshines due to the supply crunch: Silver has emerged

as an all-out performer of 2025, driven by strong industrial demand, amid constrained mine supply, and rising production costs. Silver has been facing shortages for five years due to mine shutdowns and China-led supply constraints, with a sixth straight shortfall likely in 2026 amid rising costs and firm demand. "Silver is entering 2026 with a fundamentally tighter setup than gold. With recent mine shutdowns and fresh supply constraints from China and elsewhere, next year is likely to mark a sixth straight deficit. This is no longer just a demand story; it is a structural supply squeeze," Damani of MOFSL said. Trump's tariff rhetoric fuels uncertainty, lifts safe-haven assets: The demand for safe-haven assets increased after Trump returned to power, a resurgence of trade uncertainties and tariff-related tremors globally. "Supply chains remain fragile, with tariffs and trade re-shoring creating hidden inflation pockets even as growth slows," Damani said, adding that "In this tug of war between inflation and growth, gold benefits as a balance-sheet hedge, while silver sits at the crossroads of industrial demand and physical scarcity, making both metals strategic rather than speculative assets in 2026."

Heavy police presence in Sydney for New Year's celebrations after Bondi attack



Thousands of heavily armed police officers are patrolling the streets of Sydney as people mark the new year - a rare and stark sight in Australia, following the Bondi Beach mass shooting. Some officers were authorised to carry high-grade weapons as part of heightened security measures. The attack on 14 December targeted Australia's Jewish community and killed 15 people at a Hanukkah festival. New South Wales (NSW) Police said more than 2,500 officers would be on duty across the city. Official New Year's Eve parties were paused at 23:00 local

time (12:00 GMT) for a minute's silence to commemorate the victims of the attack, while the Sydney Harbour Bridge was lit up by a white light to symbolise peace. Pictures from Sydney Harbour - where huge crowds gather every year to watch the city's famous fireworks display - show officers patrolling the crowds with longarm weapons. In the lead up to the event, Premier Chris Minns had warned that some people may find the sight "confronting", with police "carrying firearms and weapons that you haven't seen before".

## New year celebration seen across the world



### Mali and Burkina Faso impose travel ban on US citizens in tit-for-tat move



Mali and Burkina Faso say they will bar US citizens from entering their countries in response to a similar move by the Trump administration. The two West African states were recently placed under full entry restrictions under US President Donald Trump's expanded travel ban. In separate statements, they said they would apply the same measures on US nationals. Burkina Faso's foreign affairs minister Karamoko Jean-Marie Traoré said his government was acting on the "principle of reciprocity", while Mali's foreign ministry called for "mutual respect and sovereign equality". The latter said it regretted the US's move, adding that "such an important decision was made without any prior consultation". Mali and Burkina Faso's decision comes days after Niger's state news agency reported that Niger had imposed a similar travel ban on US citizens, though no official statement has been issued by its foreign ministry to confirm this. The three countries are ruled by military juntas which seized power in coups. They have formed their own regional bloc, and have pivoted towards Russia after relations with other West African states and Western powers became strained. Earlier this month, the White House said that full-entry restrictions would be imposed on people from the three countries, as well as South Sudan, Syria and Palestinian Authority passport holders. The decision would come into effect on 1 January, and was intended to "protect the security" of the US, it said. The administration also moved Laos and Sierra Leone, which were previously subject to partial restrictions, to the full ban list, and put partial restrictions on 15 other countries, including Nigeria, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. The White House said the restrictions would remain in place until affected countries show "credible improvements" in identity management, information-sharing and cooperation with US immigration authorities.

### Jailed HK tycoon's 'teeth rotting and fingernails falling off', daughter tells

The daughter of Jimmy Lai, the pro-democracy tycoon jailed in Hong Kong, has expressed concerns about her father's deteriorating health in prison, saying that his fingernails "sometimes fall off" and his teeth are rotting. Lai, 78, has been detained since December 2020 and faces life in prison. Earlier this month he was convicted of colluding with foreign forces under the city's controversial national security law (NSL). Hong Kong and Chinese authorities have denied that Lai has been mistreated in prison, saying he is in "good health". The BBC has seen a letter written by Lai's family urging UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer to call for Lai's release when he meets Chinese President



Xi Jinping next month. His daughter Claire Lai, who is in exile in London, told the BBC that she fears she "may never see him again". "Of course I worry that my father is going to be a martyr, and I don't want him to be a martyr. But I would not be here today, I would not be speaking out if I didn't think this was his best chance of reuniting with our family." She described her father as an "extremely robust and strong man" when he went to prison.

### Russian claims of Ukrainian attack on government sites 'unfounded', EU's top diplomat says



Since Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov first shared the claims, Russian state media and politicians have discussed the alleged attack in increasingly incendiary tones. "The attack is a strike on the heart of Russia," said Andrei Kartapolov, head of the Russian parliament's defence committee. "After what [Ukraine] has done, there can be no forgiveness." Although the Kremlin ini-

tially said it saw no point in sharing proof of the alleged attack, on Wednesday the Russian army released what it said was evidence of the attempted strike. It included a map allegedly showing that the drones were launched from the Sumy and Chernihiv regions of Ukraine and a video of a downed drone lying in snowy woodland. The BBC hasn't been able to verify the

### MACHU PICCHU TRAIN CRASH LEAVES ONE DEAD AND DOZENS INJURED

A train driver has died and at least 40 people have been injured in a head-on rail collision near Peru's most popular tourist attraction, Machu Picchu. Two trains collided on the single track leading to the ancient Inca town on Tuesday, according to a statement from the local government. It said that 20 ambulances had attended the scene and that injured people had been transferred to medical facilities in the nearby city of Cusco. The US embassy in Peru said that US citizens were injured in the crash, while the UK Foreign Office said it was "supporting a number of British nationals involved". Local media outlet Peru21



reports that hundreds of tourists remain at the scene awaiting evacuation, which has been hampered by difficult terrain around the crash site. At least 20 of the injured are in a serious condition, a health official told the Reuters news agency. The collision occurred on

"We deeply regret what has happened," PeruRail said in a statement, adding that its staff had "immediately" provided first aid to the train driver, the train conductor and the passengers involved in the incident. The cause of the accident has not yet been made clear. The crash comes amid an ongoing dispute between providers of transport to the Unesco world heritage site, with local communities unhappy with what they say is an insufficiently open bidding process. The trains and buses that take tourists to the ancient town have steep ticket prices and can be highly lucrative due to its limited accessibility.

### Eurostar services return to normal after major Channel Tunnel disruption



Eurostar and Le Shuttle services between the UK and France have resumed through the Channel Tunnel after major travel disruption on Tuesday. Thousands of passengers faced hours of delays after Eurostar cancelled most of its London to Europe services due to overhead power supply problem and a failed Le Shuttle train which blocked all routes. Repair work took place overnight and rail services through the tunnel in both directions resumed on Wednesday morning. But Eurostar urged passengers to check before travelling as it warned for possible knock-on delays and last-minute cancellations. Most of Eurostar's Wednesday morning services in and out of London St Pancras have departed. Only three - one towards Paris Gare du Nord; another destined for Brussels Midi and the other bound for Amsterdam Centraal - have been cancelled, according to Eurostar's

## HUGE CROWDS MOURN BANGLADESH'S FIRST FEMALE PM AT STATE FUNERAL

Hundreds of thousands of people travelled from across Bangladesh to the capital Dhaka on Wednesday to pay their final respects to former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia. Zia, who was the country's first female prime minister, died on Tuesday from a prolonged illness. She was 80. The mourners held out their hands in prayer and carried flags printed with her photographs as a motorcade carrying Zia's body - including the hearse wrapped with the national flag - drove on streets near the parliament house. Flags were flown at half-mast and thousands of security officers were deployed. "I have come this far just to say goodbye. I know I won't be able to see

her face, but at least I could see the [vehicle] carrying her for the last rites," Setara Sultana, an activist from Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), told the BBC. Sharmina Siraj, a mother of two, called Zia "an inspiration", noting that stipends introduced by the former leader to improve women's education made a "huge impact" on her daughters. "It is difficult to imagine women in leadership positions anytime soon," she told AFP news agency. India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, the Speaker of Pakistan's National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadig and Bhutan's Foreign Minister Lyonpo DN Dhungyel were among those

who attended the funeral. Earlier in the day, Zia's body was taken to the house of her son Tarique Rahman, who was seen reciting the Quran beside his mother's office. The state funeral marks the end of Zia's extraordinary journey, from a homemaker to the first female prime minister of Bangladesh. Zia

was be buried next to her husband Ziaur Rahman, who was assassinated in 1981 while serving as president - an incident that thrust Zia into the political limelight. She went on to lead the BNP in the country's first elections in 20 years. She was dubbed an "uncompromising leader"

after refusing to participate in a controversial election under military ruler General Hussain Muhammad Ershad in the 1980s. For several years, along with her bitter political rival Sheikh Hasina, she fought for democracy and against military dictatorship, enduring arrests. There was talk among Bangladesh's rulers at the time to keep the two "battling begums" - Zia and Hasina - out of politics in what was then known as the "minus two formula". But Zia eventually became prime minister, first in 1991 and again in 2001. During the time of the military-backed caretaker government in 2007, she was kept

under detention. In the last 16 years, under Hasina's Awami League government, Zia emerged as the most prominent symbol of resistance to Hasina's rule which many saw as increasingly autocratic. Zia's resilience drew admiration from her supporters, who say that despite various personal and political setbacks, years in opposition and convictions under Hasina's government, Zia never gave up, refused to compromise on her principles and stood her ground. The fact that hundreds of thousands of people, including those who didn't vote for her party, turned up for the funeral would be seen as a reflection of her popularity among the masses.



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## Not Rehman Dakait, Pakistan Star Called 'Chacha Dakait' After Celebrating Win With Dhurandhar's FA9LA Dance

Akshaye Khanna's dance steps on the track 'FA9LA' from the movie Dhurandhar have slowly reached iconic status. From Instagram Reels to YouTube Shorts, the song has become a viral pop-culture favourite. FA9LA is originally a Bahraini hip-hop song written and performed by Flipperachi and Daffy, with DJ Outlaw composing the music. The song already existed before the makers of Dhurandhar discovered it. Now, Pakistani cricketer Iftikhar Ahmed, whose nickname is Chacha, danced to the track after Khan Research Laboratories (KRL) clinched the President's Cup Grade-I.

In the movie Dhurandhar, the character of Rehman Dakait, played by Akshaye Khanna, dances to the track. After the dance, Iftikhar is now being called 'Chacha Dakait'. Rehman Dakait, born Abdul Rehman in 1976, grew up in Lyari, one of



Karachi's oldest and poorest neighbourhoods—an area long synonymous with crime, gang wars, and a deep-rooted crime-police nexus. According to a report, he was the son of Dad Mohammad and his second wife, Khadija. His family was already entrenched in the

underworld. Rehman Dakait's descent into crime began shockingly early. At just 13, he stabbed and injured a man who stopped him from bursting crackers in Lyari. Two years later, he escalated from violence to murder, killing two rival drug peddlers after a dispute.

The most disturbing chapter of his life unfolded in 1995. Months after escaping police custody, Rehman shot dead his own mother, Khadija, inside their home. He told the police that he killed her because "she became a police informant." However, it is widely

believed that he suspected her of having a relationship with a rival gang member—a detail that Dhurandhar does not shy away from depicting. In 1995, Rehman was arrested for possession of weapons and drugs. He spent around two and a half years in jail before pulling off a dramatic escape while being transported from Karachi jail to court. He fled to Balochistan, where he began rebuilding his criminal empire with renewed ferocity. By the early 2000s, Rehman Dakait had emerged as one of Lyari's most powerful ganglords.

By 2006, he had amassed immense wealth, properties, and political influence. He married three times and fathered 13 children. Reports also claimed that he owned property not just in Karachi and Balochistan, but even in Iran. Rehman Dakait's reign continued until 2009, when the Lyari Task Force tracked him using phone data.

"As far as I am concerned, he

Rishabh Pant was not included in India's T20 World Cup 2026 squad and media reports claimed that he will not be included in the ODI series squad as well. It has been a tough period for the wicket-keeper batter who had his struggles with injury and has seen KL Rahul emerge as the top-choice wicket-keeper in ODIs. On the other hand, Dhruv Jurel and Ishan Kishan have also made their intentions clear with brilliant performances in domestic cricket. Former India cricketer Deep Dasgupta believes that Pant needs to understand his role in T20 cricket and even wondered whether he sees himself as a top-order hitter, a middle-order option, or a finisher in the format. "In T20 cricket, is he a top-three batter? Or is he a middle-order batter or is he a finisher? What's he? He needs to answer these questions," Dasgupta told India Today.

"As far as I am concerned, he

likely to be left out of the squad for the upcoming ODI series against New Zealand, according to a report by India Today. The report claimed that sources close to the selection committee have confirmed that the team management may opt for a different direction while choosing the squad for the three-match series. Pant's exclusion could pave the way for Ishan Kishan's return to the ODI setup after the Jharkhand cricketer impressed with stellar performances in domestic cricket.

## Sara Tendulkar, Daughter Of Sachin Tendulkar, Targetted Over Video With Friends In Goa. Gets Support

Sara Tendulkar, who is an entrepreneur and the daughter of cricket great Sachin Tendulkar, is facing intense trolling on social media. The reason: a video of her with friends on the streets of Goa. While it cannot be confirmed when the video was shot, some social media users claimed it was filmed close to New Year's Eve. In the video, Sara can be seen strolling on the road along with her friends. Some social media users, however, made unsavoury comments as she was holding a bottle, which they claimed was a beer bottle. Some social media users even named-dropped Sachin Tendulkar in their comments. Sara, however, received support from a section of social media too. "What kind of



brain-dead mentality is this? How is Sara having a beer equivalent to Tendulkar promoting alcohol? And can't a daughter have a drink?" wrote one user. "There is nothing worth trolling here," wrote another user. In August, Sara revealed the reason behind not pursuing a career in cricket. Sara's brother, Arjun, is also a

cricketer and plays at the domestic level for Goa as an all-rounder. However, Sara said that while she has countless favourite memories of her father's iconic knocks, the 27-year-old never thought about following in his footsteps. "Never. It's been my brother's forte. I have played gully cricket, but never thought about it,"

Sara told India Today in an interview. On the professional front, Sara officially stepped into India's wellness landscape with the launch of Pilates Academy X Sara Tendulkar in Andheri, Mumbai. The studio, which opened its doors to the public on August 21, 2025, is the fourth branch of the popular Dubai-based Pilates Academy franchise. In an exclusive interview with NDTV, Sara Tendulkar shared: "Pilates has played a huge role in my fitness journey. My background in clinical nutrition and public health makes me view wellness as much more than just workouts or diets. It's about balance - the kind that lets you care for your health while still enjoying the little things you love."

## New Zealand Star Glenn Phillips Turns To Left-Handed Batting Mid-Match, Result Stuns All

A video of New Zealand wicketkeeper-batter Glenn Phillips from a Super Smash 2025-26 match is going viral on social media. Right-handed batter Phillips, who represents Otago in the tournament, turned left-handed mid-match against Central Districts spinner Jayden Lennox during the action on December 30. The left-arm orthodox Lennox tried to go with a fuller ball away from Phillips. He bowled it around the tramline, but the batter still smashed it away for a six over extra cover, surprising the fans as well as the commentators. Phillips ended up



scoring an unbeaten 90 off 48 balls, with the help of seven fours and four sixes. His innings had a strike rate of 187.50. He eventually earned the Player of the Match award as Otago won the game by 41 runs. Reacting to the switch in his batting stance, Phillips told TVNZ, "I

have done it for a little while in the nets, but never quite brought it out. Obviously it is a little bit of an interesting thing, the switch-around in a game of professional cricket... the other day I was stroking it better in the nets when I was left-handed than when I was right-handed. "So it sort of made sense to at least try and bring it out when there was nothing left to lose." In the Indian Premier League (IPL), Phillips is part of the Gujarat Titans squad. He played three matches for Rajasthan Royals in 2021, which happened to be his first season in the tournament. Two years later, Phillips represented Sunrisers Hyderabad in five matches.

The player was then picked by GT for Rs 2 crore ahead of IPL 2025, and got retained by the franchise for the upcoming season.

## Sarfraz Khan Slams 157 Off 75 Balls In Vijay Hazare Trophy, Sends Big Message To BCCI Selectors



Vijay Hazare Trophy 2025: Sarfraz Khan sent a stark reminder to the selectors ahead of the New Zealand ODI series, slamming 157 off just 75 deliveries during Mumbai's Vijay Hazare Trophy encounter against Goa on Wednesday. The 28-year-old was in blistering form, clearing the ropes 14 times and hitting 9 fours during his stay at the crease. After Goa opted to bowl first, Vasuki Koushik gave them an early breakthrough by dismissing Angkrish Raghuvanshi. However, Yashasvi Jaiswal and Musheer Khan steadied the ship before Sarfraz dismantled the opposition with his explosive hitting. Having enjoyed a sensational run in domestic cricket, this knock came at the perfect time to stake his claim for the ODI series against New Zealand, which begins on January 11. In their last match, Shardul Thakur ticked all the boxes, right from winning the toss to blowing the Chhattisgarh top order with a match win-

## England Will Win Ashes In Four Years In Australia With This Bowler Being The 'Player Of The Series'



Tufnell's comments come after Josh Tongue produced a man-of-the-match performance in the recently concluded Australia vs England Boxing Day Test of the ongoing Ashes series, helping the Three

Lions win their first match on the tour Down Under. Coming into the match 3-0, the Ben Stokes-led England defeated Australia by four wickets at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) to rule out the

possibility of a clean sweep. Josh Tongue claimed a five-wicket haul in the first innings of the Boxing Day Test and followed it up with a two-wicket haul in the second innings, taking seven wickets in the match. He became the first England bowler to be named Player of the Match in an Ashes Test in Australia since Dean Headley in 1998. Tongue also earned a surprise call-up, as the Three Lions have included him in their T20 World Cup 2026 squad despite him never having played a limited-overs match for England. Along with the T20 World Cup squad, Tongue has also been included in Sri Lanka's tour squad.

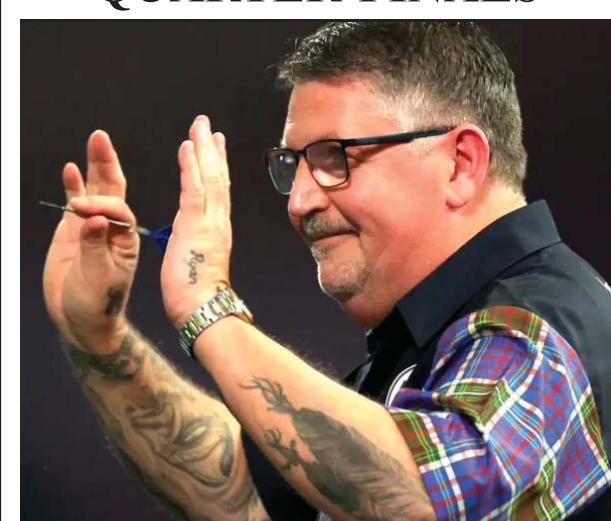
## Uganda Forced To Use 3 Goalkeepers During AFCON Match. This Is The Reason



The Africa Cup of Nations match between Uganda and Nigeria saw a bizarre incident as Uganda ended up using three different goalkeepers in the same game. With Uganda trailing in the second half, their 40-year-old first-choice goalkeeper Denis Onyango was forced to leave the pitch after suffering an ankle injury. He was replaced by Salim Jamal Magoola, but just 11 minutes later he was sent off for handling the ball outside the penalty area in an attempt to stop a shot from Victor Osimhen. As a result, Uganda had to introduce their third-choice goalkeeper, Nafian Alionzi. He played the remainder of the match, but Nigeria went on to win 3-1. Meanwhile, Senegal and Congo served notice of their intent with convincing wins at the

Taifa Stars to the last 16 as one of the six groups' best third-place finishers. Angola, which finished third in Group B, had been hoping for a favor from Tunisia to beat Tanzania and another from Nigeria, which complied by defeating Uganda 3-1. But Tanzania's goal proved the difference. Both Tanzania and Angola finished with two points and a goal difference of minus 1. Salum's goal meant the Taifa Stars had scored more in the group stage (Tanzania's three goals vs. Angola's two), meaning they go through to the next round. "I hope this will be a reminder to these players and the next generation of players on the potential of Tanzanian football," Taifa Stars coach Miguel Gharbi's penalty, sent the

## ANDERSON BEATS VAN GERWEN TO REACH QUARTER-FINALS



Scotland's Gary Anderson got the better of long-standing rival Michael van Gerwen to reach the PDC World Championship quarter-finals. Having been part of the sport's elite for more than a decade, the pair's fourth-round tie was much anticipated and both players averaged more than 99 overall. Anderson, who lifted back-to-back world titles in 2015 and 2016, won the first two sets against 36-year-old Dutchman Van Gerwen - himself a three-time former champion and the third seed at this year's event. Although last year's runner-up pulled a set back, 55-year-old Anderson recovered to seal a 4-1 success and move into the last eight of the World Championship for the first time in four years. He will next face popular English debutant Justin Hood, who produced a finishing masterclass to eliminate Ismael Gamondi during the afternoon session. Meanwhile, world number two Luke Humphries and Dutch 10th seed Gian van Veen set up a blockbuster quarter-final on Thursday by winning their respective last-16 matches by a 4-1 scoreline. Unseeded Dutchman Kevin Doets averaged more than 111 to win the first set against England's Humphries, but was unable to maintain his exceptional start. The 2024 champion won 12 of the next 14 legs as he coasted to a comfortable victory with an overall average of 103.07. Humphries told Sky Sports: "I've felt like I've played well but I feel like that there's another level in me, which is important. If you're going to win this tournament, you have to have another level in you because that won't win you the World Championship. "Gian is a classy player. He's changed a lot, he's worked on his game and now he's a top player."

## Anaganaga Oka Raju is a Complete Festival Feast - Naveen Polishetty

Star entertainer Naveen Polishetty, who has earned a special place in the hearts of Telugu audiences with three consecutive blockbusters, is set to entertain once again with his upcoming film *Anaganaga Oka Raju* for Sankranthi 2026. Produced by Suryadevara Naga Vamsi and Sai Soujanya under the banners of Sithara Entertainments and Fortune Four Cinemas, the film is presented by Srika Studios. Directed by debutant Maari, the film stars Meenakshi Chaudhary as the female lead with music by Mickey J. Meyer. Set to hit theaters on January 14th as a true festive treat, expectations for the film are sky-high. The team has already grabbed attention with their innovative promotional material. Recently, they hosted a unique event—"Raju Gari Pelli Reception" (Raju's Wedding Reception)—at the Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel in Hyderabad on Tuesday evening. Attended by members of the press, the event was filled with creativity at every turn. Lead pair Naveen Polishetty and Meenakshi Chaudhary energized the crowd by dancing to the songs Bhimavaram Balma and Raju Gari Pelli ro, from the film. Following the performance, they welcomed guests just like a real wedding reception. Appearing on stage as a "newlywed couple," the duo was the center of



attraction. In a fun twist, journalists approached the stage like relatives to bless the couple, handing over "gift covers" and asking questions in return. Naveen Polishetty began his speech with New Year wishes to everyone, "I wish for this New Year 2026 to bring light into everyone's lives. 2024 was a difficult year for me. After three consecutive hits, I

wanted to bring you another amazing film immediately, but an accident kept me away from shooting. It took a lot of time to recover mentally and physically. During that recovery, I sat with our team to write the story for *Anaganaga Oka Raju*." Later, he explained the timeline of the film, "We started filming this February. Many people mes-

saged me asking, 'Brother, when is the movie coming?' It is because of your love and support that I recovered quickly. I thank each one of you. With your love, we completed this film happily in six months. The output is excellent. When discussing the release, our producers felt Sankranthi would be perfect," shared Naveen. Talking about the film's vibe and his connect with audiences, he further said, "I came from the audiences. It makes me happy that my film is releasing alongside the stars whose movies I used to watch as a fan. I want to thank the audience for bringing me to this level. We are bringing this entertainer for the festival because Sankranthi means entertainment, it has a specific vibe. I, Meenakshi, and the whole team worked with our hearts. We look forward to you watching *Anaganaga Oka Raju* with your families on Jan 14. I also wish success to Chiranjeevi Garu's *Mana Shankara* Varu Prasad Garu and Prabhass Garu's *The Raja Saab*. This Sankranthi will be a true cinematic feast for Telugu audiences." Talking about the film, Meenakshi Chaudhary said, "This is my third Sankranthi film. I am very happy to be a part of *Anaganaga Oka Raju*. I am confident you will like it because it is a great family entertainer. I am eagerly waiting for the love you will show this film.

## Honest Films Will Always Win: Audience Proves It Again with 'Eesa' – Producer Suresh Babu"

Following the blockbuster success of *Little Hearts* and *Raju Weds Rambai*, the successful duo Bunny Vas and Vamsi Nandipati has delivered yet another hit with the horror thriller *Eesa*, produced under the banners Nandipati Entertainments and Bunny Vas Works. Released on December 25 as a Christmas special, *Eesa* emerged as a Christmas winner, giving the duo a hat-trick of successes. Presented by KL Damodar Prasad and produced by Pothula Hema Venkateswara Rao under the HVR Productions banner, *Eesa* features Trigun, Hebbal Patel, Akhil Raj, Siri Hanumanth, and Prithviraj in key roles. The film was jointly released by Bunny Vas and Vamsi Nandipati and is currently running successfully in theatres. On this occasion, the film unit organized a grand success meet, graced by eminent producer Suresh Babu as the chief guest. Speaking at the event, Suresh Babu congratulated Bunny Vas and Vamsi Nandipati for delivering yet another hit and thanked his friends Suresh Babu and Ashok for



attending the event. He stated that in cinema there is no concept of small or big films—a successful film automatically becomes a big film. He spoke highly of director Srinivas Manne's long journey and dedication, expressing confidence that this success would mark a new phase in his career. Producer Bunny Vas expressed happiness over Damodar Prasad's success with *Eesa* and appreciated director Srinivas Manne for connecting strongly with the audience.

## Grand Trailer & Song Launch of "RK Deeksha" - Panel Members Clarify Their Stand on Film Chamber Elections



The trailer and songs of the upcoming film "RK Deeksha" were launched in a grand and festive manner. The film is being produced under the banners RK Films and Sigdha Creations, with Dr. Pitani Ramakrishna Goud serving as both producer and director, and BS Reddy as the presenter. The film features Kiran in the lead role, with Dhee fame Aqsa Khan and Alekhyaa Reddy as the female leads. Tulasi, Anusha, Keerthana, Pravallika, and Rohit Sharma play key supporting roles. The music has been composed by Raju Kiran, while Meghana Srinu has worked as the editor. With the release

approaching, the trailer and songs were officially unveiled by prominent guests. The event was attended by producer Chadalavada Srinivasa Rao, Telugu Film Producers Council Secretary Tummala Prasanna Kumar, and several other industry personalities. Speaking at the event, producer-director Dr. Pitani Ramakrishna Goud thanked the chief guest Chadalavada Srinivasa Rao, other dignitaries, and the media for their support. He announced that *RK Deeksha* is planned for a February release. As a devoted fan of NTR, he said it was an honor to make a film inspired by an iconic title

associated with the legendary actor. He revealed that the film includes a special song dedicated to martyr Murali Naik, who sacrificed his life for the nation. Expressing confidence in his cast, he said audiences would surely support the film and make it a success. Heroine Aqsa Khan greeted everyone and sought the blessings of the audience for the film's success. She expressed happiness over the positive response to the trailer and songs and thanked director Ramakrishna Goud for giving her the opportunity. She shared that the entire cast and technical team worked hard

on the project and mentioned that she also contributed as a choreographer in the film. She requested audiences to encourage her further as both a dancer and an actress. Producer Tummala Rama Satyanarayana wished the entire *RK Deeksha* team great success and conveyed his best wishes to the unit. Telugu Film Producers Council Secretary Tummala Prasanna Kumar expressed hope that *RK Deeksha* would achieve good success and be well received by audiences. Mohan Vadlapati said that the trailer and songs are very impressive and wished the film a grand success. Palli Keshava Rao extended his best wishes to director Ramakrishna Goud and hoped the film would turn out to be a successful venture. Padmini stated that dedicating a song to martyr Murali Naik is a proud moment and wished heroine Aqsa Khan all the best, expressing confidence that the film would become a big hit. Ajay praised the film's title and song lyrics and wished the film great success and prosperity for the producers. Presenter DS Reddy thanked everyone who attended the event and explained that the film portrays the life of a jawaan.

## GRAND LAUNCH OF "SIDHU GAADI LOVE STORY" FIRST LOOK POSTER

"Sidhu Gaadi Love Story," starring Mahan, Shruthi, and Mohana Sidhi in the lead roles, is being produced by Savithramma C under Shiva Brahmendra Creations, presented by Balabrahmachari. The film is directed by Ramesh C, with Venugopala Chari as co-producer. The first look poster was launched today at the Hyderabad Film Chamber. Renowned director VN Aditya attended the event as the Chief Guest and unveiled the poster. Director VN Aditya said: "Savithramma garu has fulfilled her son Ramesh's dream of becoming a director through this film. I met Ramesh in the US—he is someone who carries pure passion for cinema. Even while con-



tinuing his professional career there, he came back to India and completed this film. Just like we made 'Khushi' a hit by showcasing Sidhu-Siddharth Roy's love story, I hope the audience will also make 'Sidhu Gaadi Love Story' a success. Mahan, Shruthi, and Mohana Sidhi have already

worked in a few films, and I hope this one earns them great appreciation. Samba Shiva Rao, the executive producer, is also a good friend of mine. The songs in the film are excellent. I wish the entire team a grand success." Hero Mahan said: "Our film 'Sidhu Gaadi Love Story' has

beautiful songs and action sequences. Along with a love story, the film also carries a meaningful message. Shruthi will appeal more to the class audience while Mohana Sidhi will connect well with the mass crowd. I'm confident everyone will love my character." Heroine Mohana Sidhi said: "Opportunities are comparatively limited for Telugu girls. I am thankful to director Ramesh garu for giving me this role. I have a solo song in the film based on nature. I'm sure this movie will give me a remarkable identity as a heroine." Heroine Shruthi said: "We thank VN Aditya garu for launching our first look poster.

## Meher Ramesh Wishes Marathi Audience in Hyderabad to Watch and Make 'Magic' Movie a Hit

"Magic" is a Marathi film produced by Raju Satyam under the banner of TwoThree Ventures. The movie stars Jitendra Joshi and is directed by Ravindra Vijay Karmarkar. This film is set to be released on January 1st. On this occasion, the film unit met with the media. The event was graced by the President of the Maharashtra Mandal, Geeta, MLC Arun Kumar, and director Meher Ramesh, who attended as chief guests. Subsequently, during the media interaction: Meher Ramesh said... "Raju Satyam is a very good friend of mine. Raju acted in my film 'Veera Kannadiga' which I did with the late Puneeth Rajkumar Garu. Since then, our friendship has continued. He has now produced



the movie 'Magic'. I saw the trailer. I found it very gripping. Raju acted in Puri Garu's films. Now he has become a passionate producer. All of Bollywood has come forward to support this

film. The Marathi audience in Hyderabad also have screens. I urge everyone here to watch the 'Magic' movie and make it a success." Geeta, President of the Maharashtra Mandal, said...

"You must have understood what 'Magic' is going to be like by watching the teaser and trailer. Raju Satyam Garu took a great step forward by producing this movie in Marathi. I wish for this film to come with Telugu subtitles. You would have never seen a film like this." MLC Arun Kumar said... "All the best to the producer of 'Magic', Raju Satyam. The Marathi industry holds a special place in Indian cinema. Wonderful artists have emerged from there. The film 'Magic' is coming directly from such an industry. Even before its release, it has already won 9 international awards worldwide. The entire Hindi industry genuinely rallied together for this movie. It is a good film.

