

OM NAMO VENKATESAYA

01-01-2026

Total pilgrims: 65,225

Tonsures: 31,106

Hundi vanukalu: 3.63 CR

Waiting Compartments: Out side line at Silathoranam

Approx. Darsan Time for Sarvadarshanam (with out SSD Tokens) :20-24H

TO BOOK YOUR ADS CALL

99484 80279, 73307 78889



NATION | NEWS

K'taka CM says bullet fired into air accidentally hit Cong worker; probe on



WORLD | NEWS

Trump and top Iranian officials exchange threats over protests roiling Iran

SPORTS | NEWS

Usman Khawaja to retire from international cricket after Sydney Ashes Test



INBRIEF

Mumbai's next mayor will be 'Hindu-Marathi' and from ruling Mahayuti: Fadnavis

MUMBAI: (Jan 2) As political campaigning heats up for the city's top civic post, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said on Friday that the next Mayor of Mumbai will come from the ruling alliance and will be "both Hindu and Marathi." His comments come as the push for the important Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) elections builds, with polling set for January 15 and results to be announced on January 16. "The Mumbai mayor will be from the Mahayuti (BJP-led ruling alliance). The Mumbai mayor will be a Hindu and a Marathi person," Fadnavis said, responding to a question. The issue had snowballed after Mumbai BJP president Ameet Satam recently remarked that his party would not allow any "Khan" to become the city's mayor, triggering sharp reactions from the Shiv Sena (UBT) and the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS). After uniting with Sena (UBT) chief and his cousin Uddhav Thackeray recently, MNS president Raj Thackeray had declared that "Mumbai's mayor will be Marathi, and he will be ours".

200 parrots die of food poisoning in MP's Khargone district

KHARGONE: At least 200 parrots have died on the banks of the Narmada River in Madhya Pradesh's Khargone district due to food poisoning, officials said on Friday. The carcasses were found in the last four days near an aqueduct bridge on the riverbank in the Badwah area, and a post-mortem report has ruled out bird flu as the cause, they said. Some parrots were alive during rescue operations, but the toxicity of the food was so severe that they died shortly thereafter, District wildlife warden Tony Sharma said. The deaths triggered panic in the area after a suspected bird flu scare, but veterinary examinations found no trace of the infection. Forest department officials have banned feeding near the aqueduct bridge and deployed staff at the site for strict enforcement. Viscera samples from the birds were sent to Jabalpur for further examination, officials said. According to officials from the veterinary department, food poisoning and improper diet have caused the deaths.

Interfering in India's matter, says BJP on Mamdani's note for Umar Khalid

New Delhi (TSIT): The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Friday, January 2, accused New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani of "interfering" in India's internal matter by writing a note on jailed activist Umar Khalid and asserted that India will not tolerate any such effort.Questioning Mamdani's locus standi of commenting on India's internal matters, BJP national spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia also cautioned the New York City Mayor against such efforts, asserting, "If India's sovereignty is challenged, 140-core Indians will stand united under the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership."People of India



have "complete faith" in the country's judiciary, he added. This came after Mamdani wrote a note for Khalid, recalling his words on "bitterness" and the importance of not letting it consume one's self.The note was posted on X by Khalid's partner Banjojyotsna Lahiri. "When prisons try to isolate, words travel. Zohran Mamdani writes to Umar Khalid," the caption accompanying the note said.



Musi Rejuvenation Project on fast track: CM Revanth Reddy said estimates will be finalised by March 31, tenders will be invited immediately, with ADB agreeing to a Rs. 4,000 crore loan and Centre approving Gandhi Sarovar development.

government constructed the Osman Sagar and Himayat Sagar projects as a permanent solution to the flood problem. The two reservoirs are still quenching the thirst of the people of Hyderabad, the CM noted. He revealed that as part of the development of the Musi project, he and his Cabinet colleagues visited London (the Thames River), New York, Japan, South Korea, and Singapore.He said all

world-class cities have protected their river basins. After studying the development of global cities, the

government is preparing plans to ensure that clean water flows in the Musi River throughout the year.

CM Revanth Reddy pointed out that in Gujarat, 60,000 families were relocated during the Sabarmati River cleanup. The Ganga River was also cleaned up, and a riverfront was developed in Uttar Pradesh. Stating that BJP leaders promoted these structures as a sign of development, the Chief Minister took exception to the opposition parties for obstructing the Music Project.

Revanth spreading falsehood on Musi rejuvenation: KTR

Hyderabad (TSIT) : Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) working president K. T. Rama Rao on Friday accused Chief Minister Revanth Reddy of spreading falsehoods in the Assembly on the Musi River rejuvenation.

Rama Rao alleged that the Chief Minister is using the project as a cover for what he termed the "biggest corruption

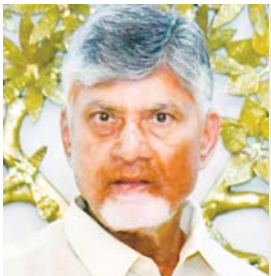
conspiracy in Telangana's history."KTR, as the BRS leader is popularly known, said the Chief Minister had no vision whatsoever to cleanse the Musi and remarked that poison runs through every nerve of Revanth Reddy, driven by anger against those questioning his alleged illegal wealth and opposing the Musi project in its present form.



Andhra captures 25.3 pc of all proposed investments in India

Amaravati, Jan 2 : Andhra Pradesh has firmly established itself as India's leading investment destination, capturing a remarkable 25.3 per cent of all proposed investments in the first nine months of the financial year 2025-26, according to a report by Bank of Baroda.

The state now stands well ahead of peers such as Odisha (13.1 per cent) and Maharashtra (12.8 per cent), signalling a decisive shift in India's industrial and investment momentum toward the eastern and southern corridors. The report highlights that over half of India's total proposed capital investment (51.2 per cent) is now concentrated in just three states - Andhra Pradesh,



Andhra Pradesh has firmly established itself as India's leading investment destination, capturing a remarkable 25.3 per cent of all proposed investments in the first nine months of the financial year 2025-26, according to a report by Bank of Baroda.

Odisha and Maharashtra - with Andhra Pradesh emerging as the clear frontrunner. Overall, investment announcements across the country during the first nine months of the current fiscal touched Rs 26.6 lakh crore, marking an 11.5 per cent increase compared to the same period last year.

Commenting on this milestone on social media platform X, Minister for IT,

Electronics and Communications, Human Resources Development and RTG, Nara Lokesh, said, "Andhra Pradesh isn't catching up, it's pulling ahead. This is the result of consistent reforms, speed in decision-making and an unambiguous commitment to investors. Our focus has been clear, create a predictable policy environment, enable industry at scale and deliver on the ground."

Centre constitutes committee to examine water disputes between Telangana & AP

New Delhi (TSIT): Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India, on Friday notified the constitution of a high-level committee to examine and address issues related to the utilisation of river waters between the Telugu States of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

The decision follows discussions held under the framework of cooperative federalism, with the Centre extending continuous support over the past 11 years to resolve inter-State water disputes between the two States. The newly constituted committee will examine the issues from a technical perspective and facilitate their resolution.As part of its ongoing efforts, the Government of India had earlier notified additional terms of reference to the Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal-II on October 6, 2023, to address the



Krishna river water dispute. Although the original two-year tenure concluded on August 1, 2025, the Tribunal's term was extended by one more year till July 31, 2026, as discussions on the utilisation of Krishna waters are still underway.Under Chapter IX, Section 84 of the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, an Apex Council comprising the Union Minister for Jal Shakti and the Chief Ministers of Telangana and Andhra

Pradesh was constituted to resolve disputes related to Krishna and Godavari river waters. In this context, an Apex Council meeting was held in New Delhi on July 16, 2025, under the leadership of Union Jal Shakti Minister C. R. Patil, with the Chief Ministers of both States participating.

During the meeting, both Chief Ministers raised concerns over inter-State water disputes, following which it

was decided to form a joint technical committee comprising representatives of the Centre and both States. After receiving nominations from the Telangana Government on December 23, 2025, the Ministry of Jal Shakti formally notified the committee on Friday.The committee will be headed by the Chairperson of the Central Water Commission.Members from Telangana include the Advisor to the Water Resources (Irrigation) Department, the Principal Secretary (Irrigation), the Special Secretary to the Government, and the Engineer-in-Chief. Andhra Pradesh will be represented by the Special Secretary (Water Resources-Irrigation), Advisor (Irrigation), Engineer-in-Chief (Irrigation), and the Chief Engineer.

Govt directs Elon Musk-led X to remove vulgar, unlawful content

New Delhi (TSIT) The government on Friday issued a stern notice to Elon Musk-led social media platform X to immediately remove all vulgar and unlawful content, especially generated by its AI app Grok or face action under the law.The Ministry of Electronics and IT has issued a notice to the Chief Compliance Officer for India operations of X for failure to observe statutory due diligence obligations under the Information Technology Act, 2000, and the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines



and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021. "...X is hereby directed to...remove or disable access, without delay, to all content

already generated or disseminated in violation of applicable laws, in strict compliance with the timelines prescribed under the IT

An action taken report has been sought for immediate compliance to prevent the hosting, generation, publication and transmission of obscene, indecent and sexually explicit content through the misuse of AI based services like 'Grok'

Rules, 2021, without vitiating the evidence in any manner," the order dated January 2 said.

The ministry has

sought an action taken report towards immediate compliance for the prevention of hosting, generation, publication, transmission, sharing

or uploading of obscene, nude, indecent and sexually explicit content through the misuse of AI-based services like 'Grok'.

"It is reiterated that non-compliance with the...requirements shall be viewed seriously and may result in strict legal consequences against your platform, its responsible officers and the users on the platform who violate the law, without any further notice, under the IT Act, the IT Rules, the BNSS, the BNS and other applicable laws," the order said.



# Contaminated water claims life of 6-month-old in Indore, family rejects compensation

Indore, Jan 2: A six-month-old child, born after 10 years of prayers and vows, died after allegedly consuming contaminated water in Madhya Pradesh's Indore, in an outbreak that has claimed at least seven lives, plunging families in the area into deep grief. An eerie silence prevails in the Marathi Mohalla of Bhagirathpura, where baby Avyan Sahu lived with his family. A simple act of diluting packaged milk with water from a municipal tap reportedly proved fatal for the infant, who died on December 29. The state government has announced an ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh each for fami-

lies of the deceased, but Avyan's family said they have refused the compensation. "We have not taken any compensation from the state government so far. Our child is gone. Will money bring him back? Money is not greater than a child," Avyan's grandmother Krishna Sahu told PTI. She said Avyan was born after a decade of fervent prayers and vows made by the family. "We prayed for years and made a vow at Hussain Tekri Dargah. My prayers were answered, but I never imagined that the baby would leave us so soon," she said, breaking down. According to the family, the child was healthy



and weighed around five kilograms. "He used to play in his mother's lap. One day, he suddenly developed diarrhoea. We started medicines on a

doctor's advice, but his condition worsened and he was taken to hospital, where doctors declared him dead," Sahu said. Due to insufficient breast milk, the infant was fed packaged milk and milk powder mixed with tap water. The family alleged that contaminated water was the cause of his death. Residents of Bhagirathpura claimed that around 15 people have died over the past year due to vomiting and diarrhoea linked to contaminated drinking water, with Avyan being the youngest victim. However, the health department said only four deaths were officially recorded in

the outbreak. Neighbour Anita Sen said the tragedy has left families terrified. "There is a one-month-old girl, a four-year-old child and a 10-year-old girl in my house. The government must ensure that no mother loses her child due to contaminated water," she said. More than 1,400 people have been affected by vomiting and diarrhoea in Bhagirathpura over the past nine days. Health department officials said 272 patients were admitted to hospitals till Thursday, of whom 71 have been discharged. At least 32 patients remain in intensive care units, undergoing treatment.

## INLD chief sparks row suggesting India emulate youth protests in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal

New Delhi, Jan 2: Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) national president Abhay Singh Chautala has stirred controversy by suggesting that India should witness movements similar to recent youth-led protests that toppled governments in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Nepal. In a widely circulated video, Chautala said, "In Sri Lanka, the way the youth of Bangladesh forced the government to leave the

national interests. BJP spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari also flagged an "anti-India narrative" among opposition leaders, citing Chautala's statement and alleging that senior figures, including Rahul Gandhi, fuel narratives challenging the legitimacy of India's political system. Haryana Cabinet Minister Krishan Bedi questioned the credibility and ideological consistency of Chautala's remarks, invoking the leg-



country, the way the youth of Nepal forced the government to leave the country, the same tactics will have to be implemented in India too to throw the present government out of power." The remarks drew sharp criticism from ruling party leaders. BJP national spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla called it a threat to the constitutional order and democratic norms, accusing opposition figures of adopting an "anti-constitutional, anti-India" mindset. He said such rhetoric undermines faith in India's democratic processes and prioritises political gains over

acy of former Deputy Prime Minister Tau Devi Lal. He emphasised that democratic struggle should be respected rather than undermined. Chautala's comments referenced political upheavals in South Asia over the past few years. In Sri Lanka in 2022, youth-led protests erupted amid a severe economic crisis, forcing President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to resign. In Bangladesh in 2024, student protests against perceived discriminatory quotas escalated into nationwide demonstrations, culminating in Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's resignation.

## UP teen kills neighbour in self-defence during assault bid

Banda, Jan 2: In a tragic New Year incident, an 18-year-old girl in Uttar Pradesh's Banda allegedly killed her neighbour while trying to protect herself from an attempted sexual assault, police said. The incident occurred when the man, a 45-year-old farmer, allegedly entered the girl's house in an intoxicated condition and tried to assault her. The girl was alone at home at the time. In an act of self-defence, she allegedly attacked him with an axe, resulting in his death. Police said the girl later reached a nearby police outpost and surrendered. Acting on the information, police rushed to the spot, recovered the body and took it into custody for further



legal formalities. The girl was subsequently arrested. Superintendent of Police Palash Agarwal said evidence collected so far indicated that the incident appeared to be an act of self-defence. He added that all available evidence would be placed before the court, which would take a final decision in the matter. During the preliminary inquiry, police found that the farmer frequently visited the girl's house to meet her mother.

## Vice president C P Radhakrishnan on two-day Tamil Nadu visit; to attend convocation, cultural events

Chennai, Jan 2: Vice President C P Radhakrishnan will be on a two-day visit to Tamil Nadu beginning today, during which he will participate in a series of academic, cultural and public programmes in Chennai and Vellore. During his visit to Chennai, all arrangements have been made for the convocation ceremony of Dr MGR Educational and Research Institute University, where the Vice President will deliver the convocation address. Graduands from various disciplines will be awarded their degree certificates at the ceremony. Later in the day,



Radhakrishnan will attend the Ram Nath Goenka Sahitya Samman ceremony in the city. He is also scheduled to grace a public reception at Kalaivanar Arangam and attend a civic reception hosted by the Tamil Nadu Governor at Chennai Lok Bhavan. On the second day of his visit, the Vice President will travel to Vellore to attend a function there. He will also participate in the 9th Siddha Day celebrations to be held in Chennai. The visit is expected to highlight the Vice President's engagement with education, literature, traditional medicine and public outreach in the state.

## Cong worker's death: Karnataka BJP says govt targeting Janardhana Reddy, demands probe by High Court judge



Ballari (Karnataka), Jan 2 : Responding to the incidents of violence resulting in the murder of a Congress worker in Ballari, the Karnataka BJP on Friday accused the state government of targeting mining baron and BJP MLA Janardhana Reddy and demanded a probe by a sitting High Court judge regarding the shoot-out. It may be recalled that supporters of MLAs Janardhana Reddy and Bharat Reddy clashed over the installation of banners to celebrate Valmiki Jayanti in front of Janardhana Reddy's residence on Thursday night. Janardhana Reddy's supporters opposed the installation of the banners, resulting in a quarrel that escalated into stone pelting, lathi charge, and firing by both police and private gunmen. In the ensuing chaos, Congress worker Rajashekar sustained a bullet injury and later died. Karnataka BJP State President B.Y. Vijayendra alleged, "The incident that occurred yesterday in front of MLA Janardhana Reddy's residence in Ballari is a

government-sponsored, premeditated act carried out by Congress goons, and I strongly condemn it." "I urge that adequate security be provided immediately to MLA Janardhana Reddy, former minister Sriramulu, and other key leaders of our party. I also demand that a commission be constituted under the leadership of a sitting High Court judge to investigate the incident," he demanded. "Under the pretext of installing banners for the inauguration of the Maharshi Valmiki statue, this incident was carried out by targeting Janardhana Reddy and his family. Democracy no longer exists in Ballari. With the connivance of the local MLA, his supporters appear to have resorted to criminal acts with the intent of disturbing the peaceful life of civil society and turning the city into one gripped by fear," he claimed. "After Janardhana Reddy rejoined the BJP, the strengthening of party organisation at the local level, and the renewed bonding between Janardhana Reddy

and former Deputy CM Sriramulu as in the past, has become intolerable for political miscreants," he said. "Ironically, local police stations have turned into offices of Karnataka Congress party. The local police have become handmaidens of the Congress, and had they taken preventive measures, this criminal act could have been prevented," Vijayendra slammed. BJP State co-incharge Sudhakar Reddy demanded that the Chief Minister Siddaramaiah government must provide adequate security to Reddy. He strongly condemned the violence and expressed concern that the drug mafia has grown in Karnataka. Law and order has completely collapsed, and goonda raj is prevailing in the state. He accused Congress MLAs of going to police stations, threatening officials, and taking the law into their own hands. Reiterating his strong condemnation of the attack on Janardhana Reddy, he demanded that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Home Minister G. Parameshwara immediately arrest the attackers and the anti-social elements behind the incident. He said Siddaramaiah must resolve the issue immediately by providing security to Janardhana Reddy. Failing this, he warned that the government led by Siddaramaiah would be held responsible for any consequences in the future. Tension has escalated in Karnataka's Ballari district after a Congress worker was shot dead, and the police said that the bullet was fired from a private revolver. The police had earlier stated that it was not clear who fired the fatal shot. In-charge Superintendent of Police (SP) Ranjit Kumar Bandaru stated on Friday that the police have registered four cases in connection so far, including a murder case that has been filed following a complaint by Congress workers.

## Treat gig workers as human beings, not disposable data points: Raghav Chadha



New Delhi, Jan 2 : Gig workers must be treated as human beings, and not just disposable data points, said Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Rajya Sabha MP Raghav Chadha on Friday. Chadha had extended strong support to gig workers across the country who observed a nationwide symbolic strike on New Year's Eve, demanding fair wages, better working conditions and social security from major delivery and e-commerce platforms. "I sat down with delivery riders of Zomato, Swiggy, Blinkit etc. This is not a rant. This is a conversation with those whose lives power our every-

day comfort," the AAP MP shared in a post on social media platform. The nationwide strike, called jointly by the Telangana Gig and Platform Workers Union (TGPWU) and the Indian Federation of App-Based Transport Workers (IFAT), saw thousands of delivery partners across several states log off their apps or reduce work significantly. The protest impacted services on one of the busiest commercial days of the year, with reports of delays and cancellations in multiple cities. "It's tragic that millions of delivery riders who helped build instant-commerce com-

panies into what they are today, are now forced to protest just to be heard," Chadha said. He noted that the quick delivery platforms succeeded with the sweat and labour of the delivery riders and thus must be treated as human beings. "These platforms didn't succeed because of algorithms alone. They succeeded because of human sweat and labour," Chadha said. "It's time companies start treating riders as human beings, not disposable data points. The gig economy cannot become a guilt-free exploitation economy," he added. Earlier, speaking to IANS, Chadha

highlighted concerns over low and unpredictable pay, long working hours, lack of social security and absence of dignity at work. "They are humans, not robots or bonded labour. They are also someone's father, son, husband or brother," he said, highlighting concerns over low and unpredictable pay, long working hours, lack of social security and absence of dignity at work. He also spoke against the pressure created by ultra-fast delivery models, stating that the "10-minute delivery torture" was taking a toll on workers' physical and mental health.



R. Parameshwara was honored with Seva Ratna Rashtriya Award 2026” for his remarkable contributions to social work



Bengaluru: R. Parameshwara, the founder and president of Punarjanma Charitable Trust, was honored with the esteemed "Samaja Seva Ratna Rashtriya Award 2026" for his remarkable contributions to social work. Award was facilitated at new year celebration organized at kalagrama in nagarabhavi by "Akhila Karnataka angavikalara seva Trust and Nisarga Foundation. Parameshwara has been selected due to his efforts for his particularly focused on enhancing the lives of children in distress and those from underprivileged backgrounds, alongside his active participation in development programs for government schools and initiatives designed to uplift marginalized communities and their children, in addition to various other social services. Sri Sri Sri Totapuri Shivakumara Swamiji, a host of film actors and actresses, singers like Shashidhar Kote and film actress Madhu Bala, as well as numerous directors, producers, Dr. Anjanappa, esteemed medical professional & govt and non govt professionals, Many other prominent dignitaries were also present at the occasion.

Commissioner’s Phone-In Programme for Development and Improvement of Civic Services



Bengaluru : With the objective of providing prompt solutions to grievances received from citizens within the Bengaluru North City Corporation limits, Commissioner Pommala Sunil Kumar conducted a phone-in programme Friday 7.00 a.m. at the Byatarayanapura Control Room located on Amruthahalli Main Road, during which he directly listened to the issues raised by the public. Details of grievances over 14 weeks: Through the phone-in programme that commenced on September 26, a total of 772 grievances have been registered over the past 14 weeks, out of which 535 grievances have already been resolved. 40 grievances that do not fall under the jurisdiction of the North City Corporation have been transferred to the concerned other city corporations/ departments. Regarding the remaining 165 grievances, the Commissioner issued strict instructions to the concerned officials to take immediate action. phone-in programme: In Friday programme, 49 calls were received from the public, and a total of 59 grievances were registered. Each grievance has been reviewed, and concerned officials have been instructed to take immediate action.

Hearing of local residents’ grievances on Holiday Village Road: K. N. Ramesh



Bengaluru: The Commissioner of Bengaluru South City Corporation, K.N. Ramesh, visited the areas surrounding Holiday Village Road and listened to the grievances of local residents. He interacted with the public regarding traffic congestion, solid waste management, and infrastructure-related issues faced by residents of over 4,500 apartments located along the approximately 2.8 km stretch of the road. White topping works from Holiday Village Road up to Maramma Temple will be completed by the end of this month. Road development from Kanakapura Road Junction to Maramma Temple, as well as at narrow stretches, will be taken up on priority and expedited. Solid Waste ManagementA shortage of pourakarmikas in the area has been observed. A new tender process is currently underway, and additional auto-tippers and staff will be deployed shortly in proportion to the population. Marshals have been instructed to impose fines on those dumping waste along the roadside. Notices will be issued immediately to Asian Public School for blocking a public road, causing inconvenience to residents of Balaji Layout. Orders have been given to restore the road for public use without delay.

K'taka CM says bullet fired into air accidentally hit Cong worker; probe on



leader or a BJP leader. A probe has been ordered,” the Chief Minister said. According to sources, CM Siddaramaiah expressed his displeasure over the turn of events and refused to speak to MLA Bharat Reddy when other leaders attempted to connect him over the phone. The Chief Minister reportedly said he would not speak to him. He later spoke to former Minister B. Nagendra and asked Kampli MLA Ganesh to visit the spot. ADGP (Law and Order) R. Hitendra, speaking in Ballari, said, “We have seized guns from private gunmen. A total of five guns have been seized

from both sides. The police used only tear gas to control the mob. We have recovered bullets from the spot and are investigating.”

“The dispute over the installation of a banner resulted in a clash between two groups. Four separate cases have been registered in connection with the incident, including a suo motu case by the police. One complaint pertains to the death of the Congress worker. Another complaint has been registered alleging insult to Maharshi Valmiki, and a case has also been filed under Section 307,” ADGP Hitendra said. Minister for Housing and Waqf Zameer Ahmad Khan, who is also the Ballari district in-charge minister, said the Chief Minister has expressed his displeasure over the incident and assured that action will be taken against whoever is responsible. “The

quarrel began over a small issue and ended with the death of an innocent man. It is wrong to allege that certain leaders were targeted. I am also going to Ballari,” he said.

Ballari city MLA Nara Bharat Reddy and other MLAs visited the residence of the deceased Congress worker and took part in the final procession and last rites. MLA Bharat Reddy said he would not make any comments until the final rites were completed. “Rajashekar was like my brother. He is no more, and we are in grief,” he said. Tension escalated in Karnataka’s Ballari district after a Congress worker was shot dead on Thursday night. Police said the bullet was fired from a private revolver, though they had earlier stated that it was not clear who fired the fatal shot.

Bharat Reddy not afraid of hooliganism: Sriramulu

Bellary: BJP leader and former minister B. Sriramulu has demanded legal action against the people who fired shots at a firing incident in the city on Thursday night.

Speaking at a joint press conference with MLA Janardhana Reddy at his residence in the city, he said, “They have come to attack us by shooting at them. We are not afraid of the brutal hooliganism, we demand that the current judge or the CBI investigate it.” I personally and on behalf of the party, express my condolences for the death of the 26-year-old Congress youth, Rajashekar Reddy. This incident took place due to a

trivial reason. They attacked and opened fire on Janardhana Reddy as he was trying to obstruct the road to his house. The police arrived and dispersed him. Slogans were shouted at each other. Police fired and in the air, Satish Reddy’s gunmen fired like in a movie. 0.76 bullets were found. This confirms that they fired from the outside.

Many of our supporters were injured in stone pelt-ing. They were treated in the hospital and sent. It is recorded that Satish Reddy fired with eight gunmen like in Bihar.

They said that the bullet found in the body of the deceased should be investi-

gated and they had come to throw petrol bombs. MLA Bharat Reddy said that he would burn the house. He alleged that it looked like he had come pre-arranged for that.

We have no objection:

We have no objection to the unveiling of the statue of Maharshi Valmiki. It is our wish that it should happen. He said, "Don't use Valmiki or caste, we will also help in the ceremony." He said, "It's not like they are behaving without culture. No provocation, no show of force. Whoever came to our houses and created a ruckus, let them investigate."

I didn't do anything wrong, I didn't do it. The police protected us. I didn't

get the land for the expectation. It's Bharat Reddy's business to disturb Janardhana Reddy, he complained.

Do you want to do all this for the unveiling of the statue? People know what Ramulu Valmiki did to the community. All I request from them is that you should grow politically. Don't speed, if you speed up, accidents will happen." He said, "I have informed the party's state and national leaders about the incident."

They came to our houses and created a ruckus. Janardhana Reddy will file a case of attempt to murder and hooliganism in this regard. Janardhana Reddy files life-saving complaint.

Poor air quality: Karnataka flags Bengaluru, Hubballi-Dharwad, Kalaburagi, Davanagere

Bengaluru, Jan 2: Four major cities in Karnataka—Bengaluru, Hubballi-Dharwad, Kalaburagi, and Davanagere—have been classified as ‘non-attainment’ under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) for failing to meet prescribed air quality standards, raising alarms over public health and environmental safety. Bengaluru, grappling with worsening air pollution, has deployed 12 mobile smoke-measuring vehicles, six of which are operational in the city. Equipped with sophisticated instruments, these units, in coordination with the transport department, Police, BMTC and KSRTC, conduct

joint operations targeting vehicles emitting smoke beyond legal limits. Officials confirmed that violators are being dealt with strictly under the law. Under the NCAP, Karnataka operates 43 manual air quality monitoring stations and 39 continuous ambient air quality monitoring stations. These stations track pollutants including sulphur dioxide (SO2), nitrogen dioxide (NO2), particulate matter (PM10 and PM2.5), carbon monoxide (CO), ozone (O3), ammonia (NH3) and benzene. Data from manual stations is collected twice weekly over 24 hours, while continuous stations operate round the clock.

GRAAM survey appears to be pleasing / supporting the Election Commission of India, while questioning its intent and political use

Bengaluru: Mysuru-based NGO GRAAM (Grassroots Research and Advocacy Movement) released a survey claiming 85% of people in Karnataka have accepted the EVM system.

B.K.Hariprasad and Ramesh Babu General Secretary - A I C C Chairman-KPCC Media & Communication released press statement that, There survey was conducted under the aegis of Karnataka Monitoring and Evaluation Authority (KMEA) and linked to the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) machinery. Though projected as an independent civil society survey, it was institutionally connected to the election administration framework.

Key Claims Made by the Survey: 83–85% respondents trust EVMs.

90% respondents believe elections are free and fair. The survey highlights confidence in the Election Commission’s

conduct.

Media headlines selectively focused only on “public trust in EVMs”, ignoring other electoral malpractices.

Why the Report Appears to Please the Election Commission of India survey Framing is Pro-ECI:

Questions are framed around belief and perception, not verifiable audit, transparency, or accountability. No serious probing on: EVM malfunction complaints, VVPAT mismatch concerns, Demand for 100% VVPAT counting This conveniently supports the ECI's longstanding position that EVMs are beyond doubt.

Timing Raises Serious Questions:

The survey was publicized amid national debate on EVM credibility. Comes at a time when, Opposition parties are raising concerns on electoral integrity, Courts are hearing petitions on EVM-VVPAT verifica-

tion. The timing makes it appear like a defensive narrative-building exercise for ECI. GRAAM is founded by R Balasubramaniam who is member of Modi's think tank and has written a Modimala.

Selective Highlighting of Findings:

While the survey reportedly notes:

Influence of money power inducements and misuse of schemes, These findings were downplayed, while EVM acceptance was amplified. This selective projection serves ECI's image management, not electoral reform. Methodological and Democratic Concerns: Survey commissioned through government-linked agencies, not an independent constitutional or judicial body. Sample size (5,100 respondents) is small compared to Karnataka's massive electorate. Urban, educated, first-time voters and marginalised voices may not

be adequately represented.

Public “trust” is treated as a substitute for institutional transparency, which is dangerous in a democracy.

Contradiction with Ground Reality:

Despite this survey, Karnataka Government itself has recommended ballot papers for local body elections, citing erosion of confidence.

If EVM trust is truly so high, why is the state seeking ballot papers?

This contradiction exposes the artificial optimism of the survey conclusions. The GRAAM survey does not strengthen democracy, does not address transparency concerns, functions as a perception-management report, It helps the Election Commission defend itself, instead of encouraging reforms. Democracy does not survive on manufactured consent or perception surveys.

There is an intention to hold elections in colleges: Dr Sharanaprakash Patil

KPCC president has constituted a committee; opinions will be gathered and a report submitted



Bengaluru : Dr Sharanaprakash Patil, Minister for Medical Education, Skill Development, Livelihood and District In-charge Minister for Raichur said, Leadership begins at the student stage itself, and many leaders have

emerged from the college level. With this perspective, there is an intention to conduct elections at the college level.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of an event at Karnataka Examination Authority (KEA) on Friday Dr Patil, who is also the convener of the committee, said that the first meeting of the committee will be held on January 13. In connection with conducting elections in colleges, KPCC President D.K. Shivakumar has recently constituted a committee and appointed Dr Sharanaprakash Patil as its convener.

The meeting will deliberate on the framework and modalities for conducting elections. Based on the decisions taken at the committee meeting, a report will be prepared and submitted to the KPCC president, Dr. Patil said. The committee constituted by the KPCC president includes Higher Education Minister Dr M.C. Sudhakar, Chief Whip Saleem Ahmed, MLAs Rizwan Arshad and B. Shivanna, Legislative Council Members C. Puttanna, Basavanagouda Badarli, H.S. Manjunath Gowda and Keerthi Ganesh.

"Cauvery for Homes – Ultra Pure Treated Water for Industries": BWSSB Floats Tender to Supply ‘Ultra Pure’ Treated Water to Peenya

Bengaluru : Driven by the new motto "Cauvery for Homes, Ultra Pure Treated Water for Industries" and aligning with Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar's vision for sustainable development, the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) has invited tenders to supply 'Ultra Pure treated water to the Peenya Industrial Area. Announcing the initiative, BWSSB Chairman Dr. Ram Prasath Manohar, IAS, stated that the project aims to provide an uninterrupted supply of high-grade treated water to

Peenya, recognized as Asia's largest industrial hub. He emphasized that a primary objective of the scheme is to supply this water at an \*affordable cost to support the growth and operations of small-scale industries in the region. A distinct feature of this project is the superior quality of water being supplied. The 4 MLD (Million Litres per Day) of water sourced from the Nagasandra Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) will undergo processing using state-of-the-art technology. The Chairman specified that this wastewater will be puri-

fied to 'Ultra Pure Treated Water' standards before distribution. Sustainability Impact: The project targets the conservation of potable water currently utilized by the lakhs of workers in the industrial area for daily non-production needs, such as \*flushing and general cleaning\*. By substituting fresh water with this Ultra Pure treated water, the Board intends to save millions of liters of pristine Cauvery water, which can then be redirected to Bengaluru's households. To ensure the Ultra Pure Treated water remains

uncontaminated and does not mix with other sources, BWSSB is establishing a robust, independent infrastructure network. The tender includes the following components: Dedicated Distribution Network: Laying of a 27-km dedicated HDPE pipeline\* to reach industrial units. Storage & Pumping: Construction of a Sump cum Pump House, installation of pumping machinery, a DI Rising Main, and a 5 Lakh Litre capacity Overhead Tank (OHT).

| MANAPPURAM HOME FINANCE LIMITED                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                             | FORMERLY MANAPPURAM HOME FINANCE PVT LTD                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |            |                                          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|------------------------------------------|
| Regd Office: N/470A (OLD) W/363A (NEW) Manappuram House Valmiki Nagar, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala 695057                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                             | CIN: U52929KL2010PLC039179                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |            |                                          |
| Corp Office: Manappuram Home Finance Limited, Third Floor, Unit No. 301 to 315, A Wing, Kanaka Mall Street, Andheri-Kurla Road, Andheri East, Mumbai-400053, Maharashtra.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                             | Phone No: 022-66211000, Website: www.manappuramhometel.com                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |            |                                          |
| DEMAND NOTICE                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |            |                                          |
| <p>Whereas the Authorized Officer of Manappuram Home Finance Ltd., having our registered office at N/470A (old) W/363A (new), Manappuram House, Valmiki Nagar, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala 695057 in India (hereinafter referred to as "MAHOFIN") is a Company registered under the Companies Act, 1956 and a Financial Institution within the meaning of sub-clause (iv) of clause (m) of sub-section (1) of Section 2 of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (hereinafter referred to as the Act) read with Notification No. S.O. 3466 (E) dated 18<sup>th</sup> December, 2015 issued by the Govt. of India, Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance, New Delhi, after also carrying on business of advancing loans for construction and / or purchase of dwelling units and whereas the Borrower / Co-Borrowers as mentioned in Column No. 2 of the below mentioned chart obtained loan from MAHOFIN and whereas MAHOFIN being the secured creditor under the SARFAESI Act, and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(2) of the said Act read with Rule 2 of the security interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, issued demand notice calling upon the Borrowers / Co-Borrowers as mentioned herein below to repay the amount mentioned in the notices with further interest thereon within 60 days from the date of notice, but the notices could not be served upon some of them for various reasons. That in addition thereto for the purposes of information of the said borrowers enumerated below, the said borrowers are being informed by way of this public notice.</p> |                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |            |                                          |
| Sr. No.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Name Of The Borrower / Co-Borrower / Loan Branch            | Description Of Secured Asset In Respect Of Which Interest Has Been Created                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | No. Date   | Date Of Notice Sent / Outstanding Amount |
| 1                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Suresh R. Prajetha J. Sreethy S. ALAPUDDI 6950189/ Alapuzha | All That Is Part And Parcel of Property Having An Extent 3 Acres of land in Sy. No. 103/3, Block No. 2, Rm. Sy. No. 178/1 Situate At Village: Kurampala, Taluk: Adoor, District: Pathanamthitta, Kerala - 695515, East-Vazh, West-Property of Santhamma Sureshndran, South-Property of Janardhanan, North-Property of Vishwanathan | 12-12-2025 | Rs. 1069132/-                            |
| <p>Notice is therefore given to the Borrowers / Co-Borrowers, as mentioned herein above, calling upon them to make payment of the total outstanding amount as shown herein above, against the respective Borrower / Co-Borrower, within 60 days of publication of this notice. Failure to make payment of the total outstanding amount together with further interest by the respective Borrower / Co-Borrower, MAHOFIN shall be constrained to take up 13(4) for enforcement of security interest upon properties as described above, steps are also being taken for service of notice in other manners as prescribed under the Act and the rules made hereunder. You are put to notice that the said mortgage can be redeemed upon payment of the entire amount due together with costs, charges and expenses incurred by MAHOFIN at any time before the date of publication of notice for public auction or private treaty for transfer by way of sale, as detailed in Section 13(8) of the SARFAESI Act.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |            |                                          |
| <p>Take note that in terms of S-13 (13) of the SARFAESI Act, you are hereby restrained from transferring and/or dealing with the Secured Properties in any manner by way of sale, lease or in any other manner.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |            |                                          |
| Date: 3 <sup>rd</sup> January 2026   Place: KERALA                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                             | Sd/- Authorised Officer Manappuram Home Finance Ltd.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |            |                                          |





# EDITORIAL

## 'Hijab' Policing, Work Diktats: How 'New' Bangladesh Is Failing Its Women

Early in 2024, I had met X, a lawyer from Bangladesh. Suave, articulate and glamorous, she was in Kolkata and planning to host with others a World Bengali Congress. She was despondent about how things were panning out politically in Bangladesh. Corruption, nepotism, and stagnation were what defined the days under Sheikh Hasina for her. We need change, she moaned. But even so, the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) was no alternative. Allied to the Jamaat-i-Islami Bangladesh, the BNP could not usher in the progressive change that Bangladesh needed, she said - it would be a regressive rule, anti-women and anti-minority. Moreover, X had other concerns - she had filed cases against members of the Jamaat for some of their anti-national, anti-women activities. Bangladesh, thus, she said, needed a third alternative. Though she was on Jamaat's hitlist, she continued to live and work in Dhaka. A few months later, in August, a 'third' alternative did emerge in the form of the interim government led by Nobel peace laureate Mohammed Yunus. This wasn't really what many had envisioned, but still, it brought hope for a new dawn in Bangladesh. Just months later, fearing for her life, X quietly left Bangladesh for safer shores abroad.

X's flight is a good barometer to gauge the change ushered in by the "revolution" that brought down Hasina's government. The initial days of chaos and violence were a matter of course for any spontaneous uprising against a creaking authoritarianism. In the ensuing months, however, matters got only worse. The Yunus-led government didn't just allow the genie of religious radicalism out of the bottle - it actively abetted it.

Sheikh Hasina had at least kept the lid on groups like Jamaat so that those like X could challenge them legally; the Yunus government, on the other hand, has freed all criminals and violators connected to the Jamaat from Bangladesh's prisons. It has also lifted the ban on the outfit and allowed sundry radical groups to flock to Bangladesh from around the globe, fuelled by funds and logistical support from powerful countries. Worse, he has allowed the Jamaat to be listed as a political party, which is now set to contest the elections as Bangladesh's largest party in the absence of the Awami League. Women have been one of the first casualties. Rokeya Prachi, a three-time National Award-winning actress, rues that Bangladesh is fast turning into what Afghanistan was earlier. Speaking over the phone from an undisclosed location, she tells me life has become unbearable for women there. Vigilant mobs roam the streets, enforcing dress codes upon women; those without a burqa or hijab are regularly targeted. Sexual violence against women, especially those even remotely connected to the Awami League, has become routine. Most concerning is the fact that such acts are now being video recorded and aired, she says. An Awami League card-carrying member, Prachi herself was physically assaulted when she went to pay respects to the late Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, the country's founding father, on his martyrdom day on August 15, 2024. Other women there were also harassed. Prachi has since gone underground, as have many others associated with the Awami League. No cases have been filed against the assaulters, no arrests made, she says. Such moral policing is not restricted to only women connected with the Awami League. Even civilians have started bearing the brunt of radicalism. In March this year, a female student at Dhaka University was harassed by a university employee for her "inappropriate" clothing. The employee was arrested but later released because of protests mounted by a group calling itself the 'Towhidi Janata', an ally of the Jamaat.

# Edit

## WHEN HOLLYWOOD PATRIOTISM WINS OSCARS, BUT INDIAN FILMS GET CALLED 'PROPAGANDA'

Captain America charges into battle, shield raised high, the living embodiment of American moral superiority. Audiences worldwide erupt in cheers as he single-handedly defeats threats to freedom, his stars-and-stripes heroism never once questioned. The Mission Impossible franchise turns Tom Cruise into an invincible CIA saviour who routinely thwarts global catastrophes, preserving the American-led world order. The James Bond series, though British, has long served as an extension of Western triumphalism - licensed to kill in defence of empire and alliance, always emerging victorious with wit, gadgets, and unshakable confidence. These icons of cinematic nationalism pack theatres, shatter box-office records, and collect awards. Hollywood and its allies sell superpower exceptionalism without apology, and the world applauds. This pattern stretches back decades. In an era when America was the undisputed superpower, films like the original Top Gun ignited a wave of patriotic fervour, turning naval pilots into rock stars and recruitment numbers skyward. Today, even amid national divisions, international scrutiny, and a palpable sense of decline in American exceptionalism, Hollywood persists in rallying audiences with tales of resilience. Oppenheimer (2023) portrays the atomic bomb's creation as a grim but necessary American genius, earning widespread acclaim and multiple Oscars. The biopic Reagan (2024) casts the former president as a steadfast Cold War hero. And Top Gun: Maverick (2022), still echoing in box office records, delivers pure adrenaline-fueled Americana. Acclaimed works like Zero Dark Thirty (2012) and Argo (2012) further elevated the myth of superpower America, depicting intelligence operatives as unflinching saviours who hunt terrorists and orchestrate daring rescues, affirming US dominance on the global stage. These films, showered with laurels including Oscars and critical praise from around the world, present American interventions as heroic



necessities. Take Top Gun: Maverick. Director Joseph Kosinski and star Tom Cruise craft a sequel that feels timeless. The aerial sequences are breathtaking, placing you right in the cockpit as pilots defy gravity and enemy fire. Cruise, older but undimmed, reprises Pete "Maverick" Mitchell with that signature cocky grin. He pushes experimental jets to impossible speeds, trains a new generation for a high-stakes mission, and leads them to victory. It is visceral filmmaking: the roar of engines, the strain of G-forces, the thrill of survival. You leave the theatre believing, once again, in American ingenuity and bravery. This is part of a grand Hollywood legacy, alongside films like American Sniper, Saving Private Ryan, and Independence Day. They present America as the guardian of freedom, the force that upholds order. The patriotism is never interrogated on a grand scale; it is embraced as entertainment of the highest calibre. Yet, a revealing double standard emerges when we turn to Indian cinema. Films like Argo, Oppenheimer, and Zero Dark Thirty - which glorify American intelligence triumphs, often glossing over moral complexities or historical controversies - are rewarded with laurels, including enthusiastic

praise from Indian critics who celebrate their technical brilliance and narrative drive. In contrast, a home-grown effort like Dhurandhar raises hackles among the same circles. They dismiss it as propaganda while framing Kashmir terrorism as a "secessionist struggle" - a euphemism that itself softens brutal reality. This selective outrage highlights how depictions of American supremacy are met with admiration, while assertions of Indian resolve provoke discomfort. India can, and should, aspire to the same unapologetic storytelling. Dhurandhar (2025), directed by Aditya Dhar, arrives as a bold entry in this vein. Released on December 5, 2025, this spy thriller stars Ranveer Singh as a deep-cover operative infiltrating hostile networks in Karachi's underworld, drawing inspiration from real events like the IC-814 hijacking, Parliament attack, and 26/11 Mumbai attacks. It plunges into the shadowy world of espionage, gang wars, and terror financing with unflinching intensity. Clocking in at over three hours, the film has become a massive cultural and commercial phenomenon, grossing over ₹1,000 crore worldwide and emerging as the highest-grossing Indian film of 2025. What makes

Dhurandhar succeed so powerfully is its refusal to sugarcoat reality. It confronts the brutal truths of intelligence work, the moral ambiguities, the graphic violence of terror networks, and the high costs of national security, all rendered with high-calibre technical virtuosity. The set pieces are masterful - grounded yet explosive action sequences, immersive world-building in Karachi's Lyari gangs, and a pounding score that heightens every tense moment. The ensemble, including Akshaye Khanna, Sanjay Dutt, R. Madhavan, and Arjun Rampal, delivers layered performances amid relentless pacing. This is India's Zero Dark Thirty: a gritty, propulsive portrait of covert heroism that honours sacrifice without glossing over the darkness, blending fiction with historical inspiration to create a compelling national narrative. Such films are essential. They unite a vast, diverse nation, instilling pride and cohesion in challenging times. They showcase India's strength, ingenuity, and resolve to global audiences, countering outdated narratives and fostering a sense of shared identity. Just as Hollywood's patriotism is acclaimed without question, India's cinematic assertions of resilience and strategic depth deserve the same celebration.

## NATURE OF RELIGION: SERVICE OR SELFISHNESS?



DR. SATYAWAN SAURABH

For centuries, India has been considered a land of religion, faith, and spirituality. Here, religion has not been limited to worship or rituals, but has been a guiding force in every aspect of life. Faith has provided strength to individuals in difficult situations, keeping them connected to morality and humanity. However, with changing times, it is becoming clear that the very nature of faith is gradually becoming distorted. Religion, once a means of spiritual peace, is in many places becoming a tool of fear, superstition, and commerce. Today's reality is that a large part of religious traditions has deviated from their original purpose. Rituals that were meant to provide spiritual balance to humans have now become associated with financial transactions and ostentation. Pilgrimage sites, once centers of penance, sacrifice, and meditation, have often become mere commercial activities. The financial situation of the devotee is increasingly prioritized over his or her feelings. The foundation of faith is belief—in God, in life, and in oneself. This belief stems not from fear or greed, but from inner satisfaction. When faith becomes based on fear, it degenerates into hypocrisy. Unfortunately, many religious activities today are driven by this fear. People are led to believe that if they do not follow a particular tradition

or donate a certain amount, disaster will occur. Thus, religion, which used to be reassuring, is becoming a source of fear. Traditions are the hallmark of any society. They evolve through experience and knowledge passed down from generation to generation. However, traditions are only useful as long as they are in keeping with the times, wisdom, and humanity. Accepting traditions as set in stone hinders social progress. Today, there is a need to reconsider traditions—to understand their purpose and their relevance in the present. Service has been an important aspect of religion. Service means selflessly helping others. However, when a price is attached to that service, its nature changes. Charity is only considered charitable when it is given voluntarily. When it is given out of pressure, fear, or social prestige, it loses its sanctity. Unfortunately, today, charity is being levied as a compulsory fee in many places. This situation affects ordinary and emotional people the most. In times of grief, sorrow, or crisis, a person is mentally vulnerable. Exploiting their faith during such times is not only immoral but also inhumane. The purpose of religion is to protect humanity from breakdown, not to burden it further. The greatest danger of hypocrisy is that it gradually breeds distrust of religion. When people are repeatedly deceived and their emotions exploited, they either turn away from religion or begin to view every tradition with suspicion. This situation is detrimental to society, as a healthy form of religion plays a vital role in maintaining social balance. In today's educated and aware society, it is expected that individuals should test everything through logic and reason. Faith and reason are not in conflict. True faith is that which is in harmony with reason. If a tradi-

tion goes against humanity, morality, and compassion, changing it should be considered a righteous step. The role of religious institutions and those involved in religion is also crucial. They must understand that their responsibility extends beyond simply performing rituals, but also guiding society in the right direction. If religious leadership itself is driven by greed and self-interest, it is futile to expect morality from the public. The need of the hour is to transform religion into a medium of service, not a business. Society's responsibility is no less. Hypocrisy will never end until people become self-aware. Asking questions isn't unrighteous. Understanding and reflecting on the purpose of every tradition is a sign of intellectual maturity. Blindly accepting everything is neither faith nor religion. The role of the media and educational institutions is also crucial in this context. A balanced, rational, and sensitive discussion of religious issues will increase social awareness. The purpose of education is not just employment, but also the creation of rational citizens—citizens who can distinguish between faith and superstition. Today, we need to strive to return religion to its original form. A religion that offers peace, not fear; one that protects, not exploits; and one that preaches unity, not division. Faith must be transformed into a strength of the soul, not a means to self-interest. Ultimately, it's clear that the future of religion depends more on our thinking than on traditions. If we base our faith on conscience, compassion, and self-respect, hypocrisy will begin to disappear. True religion is one that transforms humans into better human beings. This is the greatest need and the greatest religion in today's times.

## How Mamata Banerjee Is Banking On 'Bengali Hinduism' To Counter BJP

At every rally and public event, Mamata Banerjee states that she does not practise appeasement of any particular religion and that her politics is secular. A few days ago, however, the West Bengal government announced it would build a Durga temple in New Town, Kolkata, where Mamata laid the foundation stone for the project. The project is called 'Durga Angan', and the invitation card for the inauguration ceremony was issued on behalf of the state government. The letter noted that West Bengal's traditional Durga Puja was recognised by UNESCO in 2021 as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, and that the Durga Angan project was meant to preserve that tradition. During the ceremony, Mamata placed a red sari and a white dhoti at the site. The explanation offered was symbolic: Durga is where Shiva is, and Shiva is where Durga is - the merger of 'Gauri' and 'Hara'. Mamata also announced plans to build a Mahakal Shiva temple in North Bengal. The BJP leadership views these actions as a response to political pressure and to ease the perception that the Trinamool Congress engages in Muslim appeasement. Union Home Minister Amit Shah says that while building a Durga temple is not a problem and is, in fact, a good thing, Mamata's actions have come too late and may be seen as inauthentic. But what's behind this shift in Mamata's politics? It is undeniable that Hindutva has been central to the BJP's politics. With the BJP in power in most states, it has been able to spread its Hindutva agenda nationwide. To counter this, parties have had to take their own respective routes. Images of Rahul Gandhi wearing the sacred thread and taking a dip in the Ganga aren't a surprise anymore. Earlier, Rajiv Gandhi had sent Buta Singh to Ayodhya. Kejriwal, too, frequently visits temples before elections. However, the fact is that often, when opposition parties adopt Hindutva to counter the BJP, they often end up appearing like its B-



team. Mamata's case, however, is shaped by the distinct nature of Bengali Hinduism. For instance, Bengali Hindus are largely non-vegetarian, with fish considered auspicious in their culture. In several temples, fish offerings are still common. Shakta traditions are deeply influential. Bengalis are culturally pluralistic, shaped by both Aryan and non-Aryan influences. The Hinduism of Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda reflects this difference. Mamata Banerjee's composite cultural identity is also rooted in this Bengali tradition. Mamata never really foregrounded her religious identity in the past. Yet, like many Bengali Hindu women, she has always been personally devout. What has changed now is the public display of her religiosity. This approach helped her against the BJP in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. What will happen in 2026 remains to be seen. Mamata has also built a political narrative positioning Modi and Amit Shah as outsiders from Delhi, framing their presence as an attempt by an 'external' power to take control of Bengal. By saying "they are not Bengalis", Mamata isn't referring only to ethnic Bengalis but also Gujaratis,

Marwaris, Maharashtrians and Hindi-speaking residents. Linguist Suniti Kumar Chattopadhyay explained extensively how the Bengali identity is rooted in language. It is this collective Bengali identity that Mamata is trying to tap to take on Delhi. As an opposition leader, Mamata is also positioning the election as a direct contest between herself and Modi, rather than between the West Bengal BJP and the Trinamool Congress. While the BJP relies on Modi's brand, Mamata is banking on her radical anti-Centre politics. There is no single axis to this election. The BJP, meanwhile, is looking towards new political formations to split the Muslim vote. It hopes that Humayun Kabir's party will make gains in North Bengal and that the ISF will weaken Mamata in the South. With Murshidabad's 21 seats and Malda's 10, these districts are key targets. Owaisi, too, is attempting to dent Mamata's Muslim support. In any case, many Muslim leaders have begun feeling that Mamata is overperforming Hindu religiosity and neglecting Muslim concerns. Mamata, however, counters this by warning Muslims that such fragmentation will only help the BJP.





## Sensex opens 227 points higher, Nifty above 26,000; Tata Steel up 3%

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
Benchmark stock market indices opened higher on the last trading day of 2025, as metal stocks rallied after India imposed a 3-year import tariff of 11–12% on select steel products, a move aimed largely at checking a surge in shipments from China.  
The S&P BSE Sensex was up 185.43 points to 84,860.51, while the NSE Nifty50 added 76.75 points to 26,015.60 as of 9:29 am.Dr. VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments Limited, said that the market has the potential for a directional move upwards but is being weighed down by sustained FII selling and absence of fresh triggers like positive news on the US-India trade front."The coming days are going to be eventful, starting with the auto sales data for December, Q3 corporate results, expectations from the budget and other news relating to global economy like the possible Fed action in 2026," he added.Tata Steel led the gainers, rising 2.13%, followed by Titan Company, which was up 0.97%. Bharat Electronics gained 0.88%, Axis Bank moved higher by 0.76%, and Hindustan Unilever added 0.71%, supporting the index in early trade.  
Bajaj Finserv was the biggest laggard, falling 1.06%. Tata Consultancy Services slipped 0.51%, Bajaj Finance declined 0.45%, Tech Mahindra was down 0.45%, and Mahindra and Mahindra lost 0.40%.The Q3 results have to be watched carefully for indications of uptick in earnings. This is significant since there is lot of hope that there will be a rebound in earnings, going forward," said Vijaykumar.  
"Earnings growth will be the single most important factor determining the market trend in 2026. The FII flows in 2026, too, will depend on the earnings performance and expectations surrounding that," he added.

## Retail rush and SIPs drive Rs 14 lakh crore jump in mutual fund assets in 2025

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
Mutual fund industry extended its bull run in 2025, adding a staggering Rs 14 lakh crore to its asset base and pushing total AUM to a record Rs 81 lakh crore by November, powered by surge in retail participation and record SIP inflows.  
Venkat Chalasani, Chief Executive Officer of AMFI, told PTI that the industry's outlook remains positive, with steady SIP inflows continuing to offset foreign portfolio investor outflows and strengthening market resilience.Going ahead, fund flows are likely to be guided by valuations and global developments, with investors increasingly favouring large-cap, diversified and hybrid strategies, he added.  
The year 2025 also witnessed a robust net inflow of Rs 7 lakh crore, along with a sharp increase of 3.36 crore in the investor base, while SIPs alone contributed about Rs 3 lakh crore, according to data from Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI).  
These inflows lifted the industry's assets under management (AUM) by 21 per cent from Rs 67 lakh crore at the end of 2024 to Rs 81 lakh crore by November-end.While the pace of growth was lower than the 31 per cent rise recorded in 2024 and the 27 per cent increase in 2023, the longer-term trend remains strong. The industry had posted a 7 per cent growth in 2022 and nearly 22 per cent in 2021, and has collectively added Rs 50 lakh crore to its asset base over the last five years.

**Kolkata.(Agency)**  
Long-term policy frameworks, particularly for hybrid renewables energy, along with a thrust on adoption of technologies and incentive-driven manufacturing, will help the country meet its renewable energy goals, experts said.Experts also believed decarbonisation will continue to be a priority for the industry.Sharing his views, Piyush Goyal, CEO and Co-founder of Volks Energie, said there are certain areas which are essential not only for meeting



climate commitments, but also for powering India's industrial growth, enhancing energy security, and ensuring affordable electricity for consumers.  
"Accelerating grid upgrades and storage adoption must be treated as national priorities as India's future energy mix depends on both. Further, incentivising domestic manufacturing of inverters, batteries, and critical components will reduce import dependencies and build supply-chain resilience," Goyal said.Manish Dabkara, CMD of carbon credits firm EKI Energy Services, said emerging technologies, including green hydrogen, advanced storage chemistries, and smart grid systems have the potential to address intermittency and ramping flexibility challenges."Stable, long-term policy frameworks particularly for hybrid renewables, offshore wind, and green hydrogen will be critical in attracting sustained private and global capital flows," he noted.Gaurav Moda, Partner and Energy Sector Leader, EY-Parthenon India, said that accelerating renewables, efficiency-led decarbonisation, and digital adoption are delivering measurable returns, while renewed momentum in nuclear energy point to a more integrated and commercially grounded phase of the energy transition.

# Gold set for a 50-year best, silver breaks records: Where should money go in 2026

**The revised allowances will come into effect from January 1 and apply across multiple categories, including domestic layover, night operations, deadhead travel and a newly introduced tail-swap allowance.**

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
Gold and silver prices have cooled off in the last few days of 2025, but the bigger picture remains unchanged. Both metals are heading towards one of their strongest years on record as 2025 draws to a close.  
After months of sharp gains, some investors are locking in profits, leading to short-term weakness in gold and silver. Even so, prices remain far higher than where they began the year.Gold was trading near \$4,334 an ounce, down slightly from recent levels. The yellow metal had

touched a lifetime high of \$4,549 last week.US gold futures for February delivery were also lower at around \$4,346 an ounce. The fall came as the US dollar strengthened, which often puts pressure on gold prices because it becomes costlier for buyers using other currencies.  
**GOLD SET FOR BEST GAINS IN 50 YEARS**  
Gold has risen about 66% so far in 2025, putting it on course for its strongest yearly performance since the late 1970s. This rally has not been driven by one single factor. Instead, several global developments have come together.  
Lower interest rates in the US have made gold more attractive, as it does not pay interest. Expectations that rates will stay low for longer have also helped.Ongoing global conflicts, worries around government debt, and heavy buying by central banks have further supported prices. At the same time, investment demand through exchange-traded funds has picked up steadily through the year.  
Minutes from the US Federal Reserve's



December meeting showed that the decision to cut rates was not simple and involved long discussions on risks to the economy.The Fed's next meeting is scheduled for January 27 and 28, and markets expect no immediate change in rates. This environment continues to favour gold as a store of value.  
**SILVER OUTSHINES GOLD WITH RECORD-BREAKING GAINS**  
Silver has been the standout performer among precious metals in 2025. Prices fell to around \$74.41 an ounce in the latest session, after touching a record high of \$83.62 earlier in the week. Even after this

fall, silver has gained about 157% this year, far more than gold.  
This sharp rise has been driven by strong industrial demand and tight supply. Silver is now seen as a critical mineral in the US, which has lifted its importance.  
Demand from clean energy, electronics and electric vehicles has remained strong, while supplies have struggled to keep up. Low inventories have added to the pressure, pushing prices higher for much of the year.  
**PLATINUM AND PALLADIUM ALSO END STRONG YEAR**  
Other precious metals have also posted impressive gains in 2025. Platinum slipped to about \$2,123 an ounce after touching a lifetime high of \$2,478 earlier this week.Despite the recent fall, platinum is still up around 135% for the year. Its rise has been supported by tight supply, higher investor interest and policy changes in Europe related to combustion engines.  
Palladium was trading near \$1,584 an ounce, down on the day but still up roughly 74% for the year.

## Hindustan copper share price tanks 3%: What's behind the fall

**Copper prices have risen sharply this year due to supply disruptions at key global mines and strong demand from sectors such as electrification, renewable energy and artificial intelligence-led infrastructure.**

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
Shares of Hindustan Copper fell nearly 3% in Tuesday's trade as investors chose to book profits after the stock's sharp rise in recent weeks.The fall came even as the broader outlook for copper remains strong, supported by global demand and supply challenges.  
Hindustan Copper was trading around Rs 515 in intraday trade after slipping as much as 3.3% during the session but recovered to trade at Rs 529.80 down 0.78% as of 10:20 am.Market

participants said the decline was largely driven by year-end profit booking and a mild correction in global copper prices, rather than any company-specific bad news.  
**WHY DID HINDUSTAN COPPER**



**SHARES FALL TODAY?**  
Copper prices eased by more than 1% as traders locked in gains at the end of the year. This had a direct impact on copper-linked stocks, including Hindustan Copper, which has been one of the biggest beneficiaries of the metal's rally in 2025.Copper prices have risen sharply this year due to supply disruptions at key global mines

and strong demand from sectors such as electrification, renewable energy and artificial intelligence-led infrastructure.However, after such a strong run, some cooling off was expected in the short term.  
Experts tracking the stock said the recent fall looks like a pause rather than a trend reversal, especially given the scale of gains already seen.Despite today's fall, Hindustan Copper has delivered very strong returns across time frames. The stock has gained more than 26% in the last five trading sessions. Over the past one month, it is up around 56%.  
Looking at a longer period, the share price has jumped nearly 89.49% in the last six months. On a yearly basis, the stock has risen about 113.71%, making it one of the top performers among metal stocks.This sharp rise is one of the key reasons why investors may be choosing to lock in profits, especially as the calendar year comes to an end.

## MINISTRY OF STEEL INVITES MEDIA PARTNERS FOR BHARAT STEEL 2026

**New Delhi | January 2, 2026:** Bharat Steel, an international conference-cum-exhibition, being organised by the Ministry of Steel, Government of India, is scheduled to be held from 16-17 April 2026 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi. Envisioned as a premier global platform, Bharat Steel will bring together policymakers, industry leaders, technology providers, investors, and international stakeholders to deliberate on the future of the steel sector in India and globally. The conference aims to showcase India's steel vision, policy direction, and investment potential, while facilitating meaningful engagement between the Government of India and the global steel ecosystem. High-level participation is expected from senior leadership

of the Government of India, key Ministries, State Governments, CEOs of leading Indian and international steel and mining companies, global technology players, financial institutions, trade bodies, and international delegations. Bharat Steel is expected to witness important policy deliberations, industry announcements, business collaborations, and knowledge-sharing sessions focused on sustainability, innovation, and long-term growth of the steel industry. Given the scale, significance, and international participation of the event, Bharat Steel is expected to generate wide national and global interest. In this context, the Ministry of Steel proposes to partner with leading media organisations to ensure comprehensive, impactful, and

multi-platform coverage of the event. The Ministry of Steel invites Media Partners across categories - Digital Media Partners, Print Media Partners (Magazines & Newspapers), and Electronic/TV Media Partners, to associate with Bharat Steel 2026. Media partners will play a crucial role in amplifying key messages, policy initiatives, and industry perspectives emerging from the conference. The tentative scope of collaboration includes web and digital promotion through dedicated banners and social media posting, publication of advertisements and editorial coverage in print media, and broadcast of promotional content, interviews, discussions, and event highlights through electronic and television platforms.

## FAIFA Raises Alarm Over Sharp Price Hike of Finished Goods: Warns of Severe Impact on Farmers

**2nd January 2026:** Federation of All India Farmer Associations (FAIFA), a non-profit organization representing the cause of millions of farmers and farmworkers of commercial crops across the states of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Gujarat, etc. has reacted sharply to the Ministry of Finance notification of the Chewing Tobacco, Jarda Scented Tobacco and Gutkha Packing Machines (Capacity Determination and Collection of Duty) Rules, 2026 that has imposed an excise duty of ₹2,050-8,500 per 1,000 sticks, depending on cigarette length, effective 1 February. FAIFA has expressed concern that such a steep hike in taxes, as against the Government statements around the revenue neutral transition from Compensation Cess regime to alternative regime, would make domestic manufacturers to raise prices of finished goods, which will lead to a drop in sales, hurting farmers supplies in return. This could cause a glut in the tobacco crop market in the near term. Already, India's tobacco tax regime is openly discriminatory against FCV tobacco growers hailing from the



states of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. FCV tobacco farmers are already suffering under the burden of extremely high taxation rate on cigarettes (using FCV tobacco) which were on per kg basis more than 50 times higher than for bidis and more than 30 times higher than for Chewing tobacco. Further, while FCV tobacco attracts more than 76 in tax per dose in the finished product, other tobacco forms used in bidis and chewing products are taxed at less than one paisa per dose. Such extreme disparity punishes the

most regulated and compliant farmers. The current steep excise hike is further widening this fiscal discrimination and will crush FCV growers and distort the entire tobacco economy. Mr. Murali Babu, President, FAIFA, said: "While announcing GST 2.0 on 4 September 2025, Government had assured that in the case of tobacco products, GST would be charged at 40% of the retail sales price, while the overall incidence of tax would be kept unchanged. The farming community across India has been holding on to

this assurance of revenue neutrality and had welcomed the government's decision to rationalise GST by restructuring rates and doing away with the 12% slab, which helped reduce prices. We are shocked to see that the promise has not been kept, and instead a sharp increase in taxes has been notified, at the cost of farmers livelihoods." Appealing to the government, FAIFA leaders stressed that India's legal cigarette prices are already among the least affordable globally when measured against per capita income, as reflected in World Health Organization's affordability index. Current steep increase will render legal products unaffordable to a huge section of consumers, accelerating consumer migration to illegal channels. FAIFA has urged the Government to roll-back the notified excise rates and revise them to revenue-neutral rates, to disincentivise smuggling, and support domestic agriculture. A stable taxation framework, FAIFA noted, is necessary to sustain farmer incomes, protect employment across the value chain, and align economic policy with long-term public health goals.



NEWS BOX

Tatiana Schlossbery, granddaughter of ex-US President John F Kennedy, passes away at 35 due to myeloid leukaemia

WORLD. (Agency)

Tatiana Schlossbery, a climate journalist and granddaughter of former US President John F Kennedy, passed away at 35. Tatiana was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukaemia in 2024, after her second child was born. She underwent chemotherapy and bone marrow transplant treatments following the diagnosis. Tatiana is well-known for her book "Inconspicuous Consumption: The Environmental Impact You Don't Know You Have", released in 2019. The book explores the climate crisis and its solutions. It also empowers readers to make informed choices as consumers in relation to the well-being of the environment. She had also written pieces concerning climate change in the New York Times.

A social media post by her family, shared by the John F Kennedy Library Foundation, reads, "Our beautiful Tatiana passed away this morning (December 30). She will always be in our hearts." Notably, Tatiana lost her grandfather, President Kennedy, to an assassination in 1963, and her uncle, John F Kennedy Jr, to a plane crash in 1999.

CIA behind strike at Venezuelan dock that Trump claims was used by drug smugglers, say sources

WASHINGTON . (Agency)

The CIA was behind a drone strike last week at a docking area believed to have been used by Venezuelan drug cartels, according to two people familiar with details of the operation who requested anonymity to discuss the classified matter.

The first known direct operation on Venezuelan soil since the US began strikes in September marks a significant escalation in the administration's months-long pressure campaign on Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro's government. The strike has not been acknowledged by Venezuelan officials. US President Donald Trump first made reference to the operation in an interview Friday with John Catsimatidis on WABC radio in New York, saying the US had knocked out some type of "big facility where ships come from." In an exchange with reporters Monday as he hosted Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at his Mar-a-Lago resort, Trump added that the operation targeted a "dock area where they load the boats up with drugs." But the president declined to comment when asked whether the attack was conducted by the military or the CIA. The CIA and White House officials also declined to offer further comment on the matter. Col. Allie Weiskopf, a spokesperson for Special Operations Command, which oversees US operations in the Caribbean, said in a statement that "Special Operations did not support this operation to include intel support."

Thieves drill into German bank vault, make off with about 30mn euros in cash, valuables

BERLIN. (Agency)

Robbers used a large drill to break into a German savings bank's vault room and steal cash, gold and jewelry worth some 30 million euros (\$35 million), police said Tuesday. The heist in the western city of Gelsenkirchen saw the thieves break into more than 3,000 safe deposit boxes, they said.

While the criminals remained at large, hundreds of distressed bank customers massed outside the branch on Tuesday demanding information, but were kept at bay by police. According to police, the robbers drilled their way into the underground vault room of the Sparkasse savings bank from a parking garage.

Investigators suspect the gang spent much of the weekend inside, breaking open the deposit boxes.



The break-in came to light after a fire alarm was triggered in the early hours of Monday and emergency services discovered the hole.

Witnesses reported seeing several men carrying large bags in the stairwell of the parking garage during the night from Saturday to Sunday. Footage from security cameras has also shown a black Audi RS 6 leaving the parking garage early Monday morning, with masked persons inside. The car's license plate had been stolen earlier in the city of Hanover, police said.

A police spokesman told AFP that the break-in was "indeed very professionally executed", likening it to the heist movie "Ocean's Eleven".

Taipei, which slammed the two-day war games as "highly provocative and reckless," said the manoeuvre failed to impose a blockade on the island.

TAIPEI . (Agency)

Chinese warships and coastguard vessels are withdrawing from waters around Taiwan, the island's coastguard said on Wednesday, with Beijing's military drills appearing to be "over." China launched missiles and deployed dozens of fighter jets, navy ships and coastguard vessels around the island on Monday and Tuesday in live-fire drills aimed at simulating a blockade of the Taiwan's key ports and assaults on maritime targets. Taipei, which slammed the two-day war games as "highly

provocative and reckless," said the manoeuvre failed to impose a blockade on the island. Communist China has never ruled democratic Taiwan, but Beijing claims the island of 23 million people is part of its territory and has threatened to use force to annex it. "The warships and coastguard vessels are withdrawing, but a few are still lingering outside the 24-nautical-mile line," Hsieh Ching-chin, deputy director-general of Taiwan's coastguard, told AFP, indicating the "drills should be over." Taiwan's coastguard has maintained a deployment of 11 ships at sea because China Coast Guard vessels "haven't completely left the area yet" and "we can't let our guard down," he said.

Beijing has not yet publicly declared the drills to be finished. Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te warned on Wednesday that Chinese drills targeting the island "are not an isolated incident" and pose "significant risks" to the region. "China's authoritarian expansion and

escalating coercion pose significant risks to regional stability and also impact global shipping, trade and peace," Lai said at a promotion and rank conferment ceremony for military officers in Taipei. China's show



of force follows a bumper round of arms sales to Taipei by the United States, Taiwan's main security backer, and comments from Japan's prime minister that the use of force against Taiwan could warrant a military response from Tokyo. There has been a chorus of international

criticism of China's drills. Japan said Wednesday that China's military exercises "increase tensions" across the Taiwan Strait, and that it had expressed its "concerns" to Beijing. Australia's foreign ministry also condemned on Wednesday China's "destabilising" military drills around Taiwan, saying it had raised concerns with Beijing counterparts. Beijing slammed criticism of its exercises as "irresponsible." "These countries and institutions are turning a blind eye to the separatist forces in Taiwan attempting to achieve independence through military means," foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian told a news briefing Wednesday. "Yet, they are making irresponsible criticisms of China's necessary and just actions to defend its national sovereignty and territorial integrity, distorting facts and confusing right and wrong, which is utterly hypocritical."

Envoys of Quad countries hold rare publicised meeting at US Embassy in Beijing

PARAMARIBO. (Agency)

BEIJING: Ambassadors of the Quad nations, consisting of the US, India, Australia and Japan, held a rare publicised meeting in Beijing. The meeting took place on Tuesday at the US Embassy in Beijing, according to the post on X with a photo by the American Ambassador to China, David Perdue. "The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) is a force for good in maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific region," Perdue said in his post. "It is a pleasure to meet with the ambassadors of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue countries in Beijing. The relations among the four countries — the United States, Australia, India, and Japan — continue to be stable and strong," he said and posted a photo of

the four envoys, including Indian Ambassador to Beijing Pradeep Kumar Rawat. The Indian Embassy

meetings, stated that it is opposed to countries forming cliques, engaging in group politics and bloc confrontation.



here has not yet commented on the meeting. China, over the years, has been a strong critic of the Quad and has not yet reacted to the meeting. Beijing, in the past while reacting to the Quad

In her reaction to the Foreign Ministers meeting of the Quad countries held in January this year, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said China has always advocated that cooperation among countries should not target third parties. "China believes that cooperation between countries should not target any third party," she said.

"Engaging in group politics and bloc confrontation will not bring lasting peace and security, and is not conducive to peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific and the world as a whole," she said.

Mali and Burkina Faso impose retaliatory travel ban on US nationals

The White House noted persistent attacks by armed groups as one of the reasons for the travel ban. Mali and Burkina Faso have struggled to contain armed groups that have spread rapidly in both countries.

DHAKA . (Agency)

Mali and Burkina Faso said late Tuesday they would ban US citizens from entering their countries in retaliation for US President Donald Trump's decision to ban Malian and Burkinabe citizens from entering the United States. The announcements, made in separate statements by the foreign ministers of the two West African countries, marked the latest twist in the frosty relationship between West African military governments and the US. On Dec. 16, Trump expanded earlier travel restrictions to 20 more countries, including Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, which are run by



juntas and have formed a breakaway association from the regional bloc, the Economic Community of West African States. "In accordance with the principle of reciprocity, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation informs the national and international community that, with immediate effect, the Government of the Republic of Mali will apply the same conditions and requirements to US nationals as those imposed on Malian citizens," the Malian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a

statement. Another statement signed by Burkina Faso's Minister of Foreign Affairs Karamoko Jean-Marie Traoré cited similar reasons for the ban on American nationals entering Burkina Faso. The White House noted persistent attacks by armed groups as one of the reasons for the travel ban. Mali and Burkina Faso have struggled to contain armed groups that have spread rapidly in both countries. The juntas vowed to fight the armed groups after deposing civilian governments over the insecurity that has.

A forgotten chapter: The stories of Allied POWs in Nagasaki during the atomic bombing

NAGASAKI . (Agency)

Hundreds of prisoners of war from Allied countries were held at brutal Japanese camps in Nagasaki when the United States dropped an atomic bomb 80 years ago.

Their presence during the Aug. 9, 1945, bombing is little known, and family and researchers have been collecting and publishing testimonies to tell the stories of these often unrecognized victims. In September, dozens of relatives of Dutch POWs and descendants of Japanese bombing survivors came together to commemorate both those who were abused at the camps and the tens of thousands of Japanese who were killed that day. The dead included at least eight captives at one of the Nagasaki camps.

Descendants and survivors reckon with a painful past Andre Schram, who represented the Dutch families at the Nagasaki memorial, unveiled in 2015, is the son of a sailor who was among nearly 1,500 POWs held at the Fukuoaka No. 2 Branch Camp for three years and forced to work at the Kawanami shipyard.

Many of the prisoners were Dutch service members captured by the Japanese in Indonesia, transported to Nagasaki on so-called "hell ships," kept at two major camps — No. 2 and No. 14 — and used as slave labor.

About 150,000 Allied prisoners were held in dozens of camps across Asia during the war, including 36,000 sent to Japan to make up for labor shortage as Japanese men were drafted and deployed to battlefields across Asia, according to the POW Research Network Japan.

There were also prisoners from the United States, Britain and Australia in Nagasaki. None died from the atomic blast at the No. 2 Camp, but more than 70 earlier died of malnutrition, overwork and illness.

Andre Schram's father, Johan Willem Schram, returned to the Netherlands four months after the war ended, but only near the end of his life did he tell his son about being treated like a slave. Japanese officials have apologized multiple times for wartime atrocities, "but Johan, like many other victims, had doubts about their sincerity," his son said. He felt Japan and the Netherlands treated him and other prisoners of war with disrespect. He never wanted anything to do with Japan again," Andre Schram wrote in "Johan's Story," a booklet about the Netherlands' colonial rule of the Dutch East Indies, the war with Japan and the aftermath, based on his research after his father died in 1993. Peter Klok said his father, Leendert Klok, also a Dutch POW at the camp, told him that Japanese civilians at the shipyard were friendly and helped him find parts to repair his watch. Military police later beat him for seeking help. Klok called the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki awful, but said Japan must reflect on its atrocities.

Mamdani will take his initial oath at the former City Hall subway station in Manhattan. On Thursday afternoon, he will be sworn in again, this time by Bernie Sanders on the steps of City Hall.

NEW YORK . (Agency)

Zohran Mamdani will become mayor of New York City as the clock ticks over into 2026 — but the celebrations are set to last through New Year's Day. The Democrat's team is planning two separate swearing-in ceremonies Thursday — a small, private one with his family in an old subway station around midnight, followed by a large event in the afternoon that will include a public block party outside City Hall. As a new mayor's term begins immediately with the new year, it has been

customary for the city's incoming leaders to hold two events. Outgoing mayor Eric Adams held his initial swearing-in at Times Square shortly after the famous ball drop, while Adams' predecessor, Bill de Blasio, took his first oath at home in Brooklyn.

For his part, Mamdani will take his initial oath at the former City Hall subway station in Manhattan — one of the city's original stops on its subterranean transit system, known for its tiled arches and vaulted ceilings. New York Attorney General Letitia James, a political ally and notable foe of US President Donald Trump, will administer the oath of office.

The old City Hall stop was designed as the flagship station of the city's first subway line, but was decommissioned in 1945. These days, outside of occasional guided historical tours, locals can usually only catch a glimpse of it by staying on the 6 train after its last stop downtown when it turns around to head north. In a statement, Mamdani's office said the choice to be sworn in at the station reflected his "commitment to the working people who

keep our city running every day."

"When Old City Hall Station first opened in 1904 — one of New York's 28 original subway stations — it was a physical monument to a city that dared to be both



beautiful and build great things that would transform working peoples' lives," Mamdani said. "That ambition need not be a memory confined only to our past, nor must it be isolated only to the tunnels beneath City Hall: it will be the purpose of the administration fortunate enough to

serve New Yorkers from the building above," he said. On Thursday afternoon, Mamdani will be sworn in again, this time by US Sen. Bernie Sanders, one of his political heroes, on the steps of City Hall in a ceremony scheduled to kick off at 1 p.m. US Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, another political ally, will deliver opening remarks. Mamdani's transition formed an inaugural committee that includes actor John Turturro, playwright Cole Escola and writer Colson Whitehead, as well as advocates, small business owners and campaign workers who the incoming mayor's office says have "provided perspective, guidance, and cultural sensibility" for the ceremony.

The public swearing-in will be accompanied by a block party along a stretch of Broadway leading up to City Hall. Mamdani's office expects thousands of people to attend and says there will be performances, music and interfaith elements.





## NEWS BOX

## Ashes hero Travis Head makes crucial BBL call ahead of T20 World Cup 2026

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Superstar Australian cricketer Travis Head has hinted at missing the ongoing season of the Big Bash League (BBL) amid concerns over burnout. The left-handed opener said he wants to stay fresh for next year's T20 World Cup, which begins on February 7, especially after playing a major role in Australia retaining the Ashes urn. Describing the ongoing Ashes battle as emotionally draining, Head said he needs a break before what promises to be another demanding season of cricket next year. The 32-year-old has already endured a busy home summer, featuring in the white-ball series against India before playing a Sheffield Shield match as preparation for the Ashes. Head has been in belligerent form in the Ashes, hitting two decisive hundreds, including the whirlwind 123 in the series opener in Perth. When asked about turning out for the Adelaide Strikers in the BBL, Head told News Corp: "Probably unlikely with the emotional drain of an Ashes series, and what's coming up in terms of the World Cup. The emotional drain of actually being in an Ashes series and playing is always



tough. So I think it's important to go into a World Cup fresh." Head has not appeared for the Adelaide Strikers since the 2022-23 season of the Big Bash League. The star batter has regularly skipped Australia's premier domestic T20 competition in recent years to prioritise international commitments and the Indian Premier League since returning to the tournament in 2024. Head has been an integral member of the SunRisers Hyderabad setup, forming a devastating opening partnership with Abhishek Sharma. He scored 567 runs at a staggering strike rate of 191.59 when SRH reached the final in 2024, followed by another prolific season in 2025. The BBL, which got underway on December 14, has once again been without several of Australia's leading Test stars due to the Ashes.

## Magnus Carlsen now a 20-time world champion, ends 2025 with Rapid and Blitz double

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

World No. 1 Magnus Carlsen showcased his endgame genius once again as he added a record-extending ninth World Blitz title to the Rapid gold medal he had won two days earlier. Carlsen defeated Uzbek GM Nodirbek Abdusattorov in a hard-fought final of the World Blitz Championship in Doha on Tuesday, December 30. The Norwegian took home a €70,000 prize, securing his 20th world championship title overall across all three time controls. The triumph also marked the fifth time he has claimed the rare double crown as both the World Rapid and World Blitz champion. Carlsen refused to settle for a draw in the title showdown against the



young Abdusattorov and produced a stunning, unexpected pawn move in the fourth game of the clash to seal a 2.5-1.5 victory and extend his reign in Blitz chess. After the first three games, both players were locked at 1.5 points apiece. The victory was all the more sweet and fulfilling for the Norwegian, who had endured a string of losses during the qualifying (Swiss round) and struggled to secure a place in the knockout semifinals. A draw in Round 19 against Abdusattorov saw both Carlsen, on 13.5 points, and the Uzbek, on 13 points, clinch the final two semifinal spots on Tuesday, finishing behind sole leader Arjun Erigaisi, who topped the standings with 15 points, and American GM Fabiano Caruana, who followed with 14 points. Carlsen then went on to defeat Caruana 3-1 to book his place in the final, while an impeccable Abdusattorov handed Erigaisi a crushing 2.5-0.5 defeat in the semifinals, as the Indian settled for a second bronze medal after finishing third in the Rapid event. Meanwhile, the two bronze medals are a remarkable achievement for the 22-year-old Erigaisi, who will return home stronger and more resolute from the experience.

## Arsenal end 2025 on top, Man United stumble against bottom-placed Wolves

**Premier League 2025-26: Arsenal delivered a commanding 4-1 win against Aston Villa to end 2025 at the top of the table. Meanwhile, Manchester United struggled to a 1-1 draw with bottom-placed Wolves on Tuesday night.**

Liverpool. (Agency)

Arsenal delivered a resounding message in the Premier League title race on Tuesday night, demolishing third-placed Aston Villa 4-1 at the Emirates Stadium to end 2025 firmly at the top of the table. The Gunners had trailed Villa in momentum—Villa came into the game on an 11-match winning run across competitions—but Arsenal's performance turned heads and highlighted their title credentials. The scoring burst came after a tight first half: Gabriel Magalhes opened the scoring early in the second half with a well-

timed finish, before Martin Zubimendi doubled the lead minutes later, adding impetus to Arsenal's charge. Leandro Trossard's composed strike made it 3-0, and substitute Gabriel Jesus added a fourth just minutes after entering the pitch—a goal that underlined both Arsenal's depth and attacking fluidity. Villa managed a late consolation through Ollie Watkins, but it was little more than a footnote to a dominant evening for the hosts. The significance of the win goes well beyond the scoreline. Arsenal extended their lead to five points at the summit, topping the Premier League as the calendar year closed—five points clear of second-placed Manchester City and six ahead of Villa. Crucially, this result came against one of the division's most in-form sides, signaling not just consistency but the sort of performance that transforms title ambition into genuine momentum. For Villa, the loss halts their streak and sees them slip further behind a charging Arsenal, but Unai Emery's side remain firmly in the hunt for a top-four finish. Still, the emphatic nature of Arsenal's victory will likely resonate across the title race discussions over the winter

period. While Arsenal were celebrating, Manchester United endured another frustrating evening at Old Trafford, drawing 1-1 with bottom-placed Wolverhampton



Wanderers. What should have been a straightforward home victory instead quickly became a statistic United will want to forget, days after a 1-0 win over Newcastle. The result was particularly embarrassing given Wolves' position; the Midlands side are at rock-bottom of the Premier League and had managed only a handful of points all season. That they could take a point from Old Trafford not only denied United valuable ground in the race for

Champions League qualification but also sparked discontent from supporters, with boos heard at full time.

United took the lead through Joshua Zirkzee, whose effort deflected in and gave the hosts the advantage shortly before the half-hour mark. But the positivity was short-lived: Ladislav Krejci headed Wolves level just before half-time, ending United's hopes of a comfortable progress. In the second half, United dominated possession and saw a last-gasp effort ruled out for offside, but could not find a decisive breakthrough.

United manager Ruben Amorim did not sugar-coat his assessment of the draw.

Post-match, he pinpointed the team's lack of quality and fluidity in attack as key reasons they failed to put away a team struggling so massively on paper. Amorim highlighted the absence of key players—many away at the Africa Cup of Nations or sidelined through injury—as contributors to the disjointed display, but stressed that this should not be used as an excuse. That is normal, but we didn't use that excuse against Newcastle. We are not going to use it today (Dec 30).

## Indian sports in 2025: Handshake rows, stampedes and controversies that shaped the year

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Sports in India may have had many memorable highs, but it has also had their fair share of controversies. Isolated moments quickly escalated to a year that had many notable moments defined by public disputes, administrative lapses and moments that embarrassed India as a nation. From international fixtures clouded by political tensions to domestic events marred by chaos, sport repeatedly slipped out of control. These controversies were no mere social media scandals or fleeting cycles of outrage; they disrupted schedules, people's careers and also raised uncomfortable questions on how sport is run in India, where there has always been passion, but planning or the administrative side of things tends to have fallen short. This was the year when the noise around the game proved louder than the game itself. Let us take a look at some of the biggest sporting controversies in India for 2025.

## BREAKDOWN OF INDIAN FOOTBALL

Indian football's biggest worry in 2025 wasn't results on the pitch, but whether its

premier competition would survive at all. The future of the Indian Super League, long projected as the backbone of the sport's professional structure, drifted into uncertainty after its commercial and ownership framework unravelled. With no



clear bidders, unresolved contracts and mounting financial strain, the league's next season was left without firm timelines or guarantees. For clubs, the silence was crippling. Recruitment stalled, preseason planning froze, and players were left unsure if they would even have a competition to prepare for. Administrators offered reassurances, but clarity never followed. The instability also exposed how heavily

Indian football had come to rely on a single top-flight product, with little cushioning beneath it. As weeks passed without resolution, concern spread beyond boardrooms. Coaches warned of lost development time, fans feared regression, and the national ecosystem began to feel the strain. In 2025, Indian football wasn't battling opponents — it was battling uncertainty over whether its top tier could stay upright at all.

## WOMEN'S WORLD CUP MARRED BY SAFETY CONCERNS

What should have been a routine day during a global tournament instead exposed an uncomfortable gap between hosting prestige and on-ground safety. During the Women's World Cup in Indore, two members of the Australia women's cricket team were subjected to harassment while walking near their hotel, an incident that jolted players, officials and organisers alike. The brief encounter, involving a man on a motorcycle, was enough to trigger an alarm within the visiting camp and force an immediate police response.

## Margins to mainstream: India women's cricket team wins Battle of the Sexes in 2025

Dubai. (Agency)

For decades, India has fielded two senior national cricket teams—Men's and Women's. Yet, for much of that time, public attention, media coverage, and institutional support remained overwhelmingly skewed toward the men's side. The women's team, despite consistent performances and international success, was often relegated to the margins of public discourse. Rather than receiving the recognition they deserved, players from the women's team were frequently subjected to dismissive commentary and online ridicule. Social media narratives questioning the relevance of women's cricket—along with derogatory labels that trivialised their professionalism—became all too common, undermining both their achievements and credibility. The contrast in public reaction was stark. Landmark performances by male cricketers routinely sparked nationwide celebration, while equally impactful

contributions from leading women cricketers were met with comparatively muted acknowledgement. This imbalance highlighted a deeper issue: the women's



team was not only competing on the field but also fighting for visibility and respect in a sport where they had long proven their excellence. For years, this disparity defined the narrative around Indian women's cricket. However, 2025 has signalled a decisive turning point—a moment that

marks a profound shift in perception, recognition, and the broader cultural conversation surrounding the women's game. But 2025 has marked a seismic shift.

This year, things changed. India Women's Cricket has finally come into its own. 2025 will go down as the year that transformed the fortunes of these incredible athletes. It's the year when the players, who once faced endless mockery, could finally sleep with the quiet knowledge that their struggle had been worth it. The relentless effort, the tough journeys, and the battles—both on and off the field—have led them to a place where they can now proudly call themselves a force to be reckoned with.

2025 is the year when women's cricket in India was no longer an afterthought. It's the year the Indian women's team could stand tall, heads held high, and with the word "respect" finally associated with their name.

## Australian great Damien Martyn in induced coma, battling for life against Meningitis

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Harbhajan Singh has thrown his weight behind former Australian cricketer Damien Martyn in an induced coma, fighting the life-threatening disease meningitis. Martyn was rushed to a hospital in Brisbane in serious condition after falling ill on December 26.

The 54-year-old is suffering from meningitis, a disease that causes inflammation of the membranes surrounding the brain and spinal cord and can lead to swelling of the brain.

Former Australia wicketkeeper-batter Adam Gilchrist, a close friend of Martyn, informed the public on behalf of his family that Martyn is receiving treatment in a hospital. "He is getting the best of treatment, and (Martyn's partner) Amanda and his family know that many people are sending their prayers and best wishes," Gilchrist was quoted as saying by cricket.com.au. Cricket Australia CEO Todd Greenberg also sent his best wishes for



Martyn's speedy recovery.

"I'm saddened to hear of Damien's illness. The best wishes of everyone at Cricket Australia and in the wider cricket community are with him at this time," Greenberg said in a statement. Martyn made his debut in international cricket during a Test against the West Indies in Brisbane in 1992, scoring 36 and 15 in two innings. Over the course of his career, Martyn became known for his elegant strokeplay and went on to play 67 Tests and 208 ODIs for Australia.

## Martyn's illustrious career

The right-handed batter was a vital part of Australia's middle order during their dominant era from the late 1990s to the 2000s. Martyn was also part of Australia's World Cup-winning campaigns in 1999 and 2003.

He played a key role in the 2003 World Cup triumph, scoring a vital 88\* (84) against India in the final. He was involved in a massive 234-run stand with Ricky Ponting (140\* off 121 balls) to help Australia post a huge total of 359/2 in their allotted 50 overs.

**Shubman Gill, Ravindra Jadeja and KL Rahul will play in the Vijay Hazare Trophy in January. The trio will leave their respective teams ahead of the three-match ODI series against New Zealand, beginning on January 11.**

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

India Test and ODI captain Shubman Gill, all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja and star batter KL Rahul are all set to play in the Vijay Hazare Trophy in January. The trio will join their respective teams ahead of the upcoming three-match ODI series against New Zealand, beginning on January 11. According to Cricbuzz, Shubman Gill is expected to feature in Punjab's matches on January 3 and 6 against Sikkim and Goa in Jaipur. Punjab, grouped with powerhouse Mumbai in Group C, currently sit fourth with



two wins from three games. After playing two games, Gill will leave his state side to join the Indian team, which is set to assemble in Baroda on January 7-8 ahead of the first ODI against New Zealand. Ravindra Jadeja has also informed the Saurashtra Cricket

Association (SCA) that he will play the January 6 and 8 fixtures against Services and Gujarat. Saurashtra are playing their league matches in Alur, Karnataka, and currently have one win from three games, placing them sixth in the eight-team group. The

Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA) has not confirmed KL Rahul's participation, but he's likely to play in the January 3 and 6 games against Tripura and Rajasthan in Ahmedabad.

Karnataka are second in Group A, maintaining a 100% win record from three matches. Several big names have lit up the ongoing season of the Vijay Hazare Trophy, as star batters Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli also fulfilled their mandatory domestic commitments set by the BCCI. Wicketkeeper batter Rishabh Pant is also consistently featuring for Delhi and will play the entire season for his team. Kohli will return to play for Delhi for their January 6 fixture against Railways under Pant's captaincy. Opening batter Yashasvi Jaiswal also returned to play for Mumbai for their fourth fixture against Goa after being hospitalised with severe stomach cramps following Mumbai's Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy (SMAT) 2025 match against Rajasthan.



## Megastar Chiranjeevi, Victory Venkatesh, Anil Ravipudi’s Mana Shankara Vara Prasad Garu Theatrical Trailer Launch On January 4th

Megastar Chiranjeevi and Hit Machine Anil Ravipudi’s highly anticipated wholesome family entertainer Mana Shankara Vara Prasad Garu co-starring Victory Venkatesh in a prominent role is already making huge noise, thanks to impressive promotional material, and vigorous promotional activities. Bheems Ceciroleo’s sound-track is already a chart-buster. Meesala Pilla stormed past 100M+ views, Sasirekha continues to trend with close to 40 M views, and the festive banger Sankranthi Adiripoddi featuring Chiranjeevi and Victory Venkatesh has become a celebratory anthem.

The wait is finally nearing its end, as the team behind Mana Shankara Vara Prasad Garu has officially confirmed the arrival of the much-awaited theatrical trailer. The trailer will be dropped on January 4th. Chiranjeevi appears in a white shirt and dark pants in the trailer poster, kneeling on one knee with a shotgun raised, surrounded by men caught in dynamic action. The trailer is



expected to finally crack open the film’s core story, a major point of curiosity ever since Anil Ravipudi hinted at a family entertainer laced with high-voltage mass elements and crime drama undertones. Nayanthara plays the leading lady and Catherine

Tresa will be seen in a special role in the movie produced by Sahu Garapati and Sushmita Konidela under Shine Screens and Gold Box Entertainments, with Smt. Archana presenting. On the technical front, the film boasts a strong and experienced crew.

## DRAUPATHI 2" IGNITES BUZZ AS CHIRAG JANI LEADS A FEROCIOUS VILLAIN LINE-UP



The much-awaited ‘Draupathi 2’ heightens the expectation meter with its next phase of unveiling three villains with Chirag Jani roaring as First-Level Antagonist.” From the moment it was launched, Mohan G’s historical action drama Draupathi 2 has continued to build strong curiosity in audiences and trade circles alike. Mounted as a grand multi-lingual period film rooted in 14th-century South India, the project has completed post-production and recently received its U/A certification from the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC). Richard Rishi’s magnetic look, the scintillating songs, and the film’s striking visual scale have added further momentum to the hype, and the introduction of three powerful villains, with Chirag Jani positioned as the first-level antagonist, has intensified the intrigue surrounding the narrative. Speaking about the casting of Chirag Jani, director Mohan G says, “Chirag portrays Mohammad Bin Tughlaq, not simply as a villain, but as a layered ruler whose brilliance often clashed with the consequences of his own choices. I wanted an actor who could convincingly bring together physical gigantism and intellectual brilliance. History remembers Tughlaq as

an ‘intelligent fool,’ and capturing that contradiction requires tremendous control. Chirag immersed himself completely, he brought menace, dignity, calculation, and emotional depth to the role. He doesn’t just act the character; he lives it, and that presence lifts the film.” Draupathi 2 features Richard Rishi in the lead, with Rakshana Indusudan as the female lead and Natti Natraj in a pivotal role. The ensemble cast includes Y.G. Mahendran, Nadodigal Barani, Saravana Subbiah, Vel Ramamoorthy, Siraj Johnny, Dinesh Lamba, Ganesh Gaurang, Divi, Devayani Sharma, and Arunodayan. The film is produced by Chola Shakkaravarthi (Netaji Productions) in association with G.M. Film Corporation, with cinematography by Philip R. Sundar, music by Ghibran Vaibodha, action choreography by Action Santosh, choreography by Thanika Tony, editing by Devaraj, and production design by Kamalnathan. Dialogues are written by Padma Chandrasekhar and Mohan G. With censor formalities completed, Draupathi 2 is now set to kick-start its marketing campaign, the trailer and audio launch will be unveiled shortly, followed by the worldwide theatrical release announcement very soon.

## Vaammo Vaayyo Ignites Screens with Ravi Teja, Ashika & Dimple’s High-Energy Folk Dance

Experience A Power-packed Folk Anthem- Mass Maharaja Ravi Teja, Ashika Ranganath, Dimple Hayathi Set Dance Floor On Fire In Mass Dance Number Vaammo Vaayyo From Bhartha Mahasayulaku Wignyapthi Mass Maharaja Ravi Teja will next be seen in an out-and-out family entertainer, Bhartha Mahasayulaku Wignyapthi. Directed by Kishore Tirumala and produced by Sudhakar Cherukuri under the SLV Cinemas banner, the film stars Dimple Hayathi and Ashika Ranganath playing female leads opposite Ravi Teja. The first two songs, each featuring Ravi Teja with a different heroine, already



garnered terrific response. Now, the makers have unveiled the third track, bringing Ravi Teja together

with both leading ladies. Bheems Ceciroleo once again proves his flair for crafting massy, foot-tapping numbers.

Vaammo Vaayyo is a vibrant folk track powered by lively orchestration. What truly elevates the song is the enchanting voice of Swathi Reddy UK, whose unique tonal quality adds an irresistible charm. The colourful set design enhances the visuals, giving the song a lively and visually rich vibe that perfectly matches its upbeat mood. Dev Pawar’s lyrics carry a raw rustic flavour with an appealing mass touch, while Sekhar VJ master’s high-energy choreography injects additional spark with dynamic, crowd-pleasing moves. Ravi Teja delivers his trademark energetic dance performance. Heroines Ashika Ranganath and

Dimple Hayathi complement him beautifully. They look radiant, match his energy beat for beat, and bring ample glamour to the screen. Together, the trio set the dance floor on fire with electrifying chemistry. Vaammo Vaayyo clearly stands out as the best song of the album so far, and it is poised to boost the film’s buzz to the next level. The film has cinematography by Prasad Murella, while Sreekar Prasad takes care of editing, and production design is overseen by AS Prakash. Bhartha Mahasayulaku Wignyapthi is going to be one of the must-watch family entertainers this Sankranti, arriving on January 13th.

## SUVARNA TEXTILES FIRST LOOK RELEASED

The first look of the film "Suvarna Textiles", directed by Prashanth Namini and starring Shivakumar Ramachandravarapu, Deborah Doris Fell, Rajasekhar Aningi and Vikramaditya Dambar in the lead roles, has been released. This film, which is being made as a youth entertainer, is being produced by producer Anil Ierugudindla under the banners of A.Y.V. Productions and Sanatana Creations. It will go on the sets soon. Producer Anil said that the shooting has been completed in two schedules and preparations are being made to release the film in August. He said that the first look is being well received by the youth.



He said that the film is being made by adding comedy to

some adult content that the youth will like.

## 'Asura Samharam' movie teaser released by Tanikella Bharani



Legendary actor Tanikella Bharani’s latest film is ‘Asura Samharam’. Presented by Sri Sai Pravarthika Boyella, the film is being produced by Sai Srimanth and Shabarish Boyella under the banner of Sri Sai Tejo Celluloids. Kishore Srikrishna is directing the film, providing the story, screenplay and dialogues. The latest teaser and song launch of the film was held grandly by Tanikella Bharani. Tanikella Bharani, who has impressed with his diverse roles in over 750 films, plays the lead role in this film. The film is made as an inter-

esting ‘village crime drama’ set in a rural setting. Along with Tanikella Bharani, Midhuna Priya is playing another lead role. Speaking on the occasion, Tanikella Bharani said, “Asura Samharam is the victory of good over evil. Director Kishore Srikrishna has made a good subject. The film came out well. I played the role of a detective in a village in this film. NRI Shabarish and Midhuna Priya helped us a lot in the production and shooting of this film.” Director Kishore Srikrishna said, “Tanikella Bharani will be seen in a different role as a ‘village

detective’ in this. I am confident that this film will become a film that will go down in film history. Executive producer Mithun Priya, who played a key role in this film, is in collaboration with us. Currently, post-production work is going on at a fast pace. We are preparing to bring the film to the audience in March.” Actress and executive producer Mithun Priya said... I have done it in a few films. This is a big film for me. We shot around Nellore. This film needs the support and blessings of the audience. We are preparing to release the film in March.”

## RS 1.5L CRORE EARNINGS: MEET HIGHEST GROSSING ACTOR IN THE WORLD



**Hyderabad:** Who knew that a blue-skinned Na’vi and a green warrior would help one actress break record after record at the global box office? Zoe Saldana, the powerhouse behind Neytiri from Avatar and Gamora from Guardians of the Galaxy, is not just a household name she’s now the highest-grossing actor of all time. With an estimated Rs. 1,58,259 Crore (17.6 billion USD) in earnings, this remarkable feat comes from starring in some of the biggest franchises in cinema history. Movies like Avatar, Avengers: Endgame, and Guardians of the Galaxy are among the highest-grossing films globally, all contributing to Saldana’s unmatched success. Her roles have turned her into a global sensation, with films con-

sistently shattering box office records.

### Breaking New Records

Zoe Saldana has reached a new milestone with her films earning an astounding Rs. 1,58,259 Crore (17.6 billion USD) worldwide, surpassing previous record holders Scarlett Johansson, Robert Downey Jr., and Samuel L. Jackson. This feat was primarily driven by her involvement in Avatar and the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU), which have earned billions over the years. With the release of Avatar: Fire and Ash, her career earnings skyrocketed, making her the undisputed queen of the box office. Notably, Avatar (2009) remains one of the highest-grossing films of all time, cementing Saldana’s place in cinematic history.

## Did you know Kabir Singh was first offered to this Bollywood star?



**Hyderabad:** In 2019, Kabir Singh became a massive hit, reviving Shahid Kapoor’s career in the process. Directed by Sandeep Reddy Vanga, who had previously directed the Telugu film Arjun Reddy, Kabir Singh was the Hindi remake that turned Shahid into one of Bollywood’s biggest stars once again. Shahid’s portrayal of Kabir Singh, a troubled surgeon battling his inner demons and a toxic love life, resonated deeply with audiences. The film grossed Rs. 379 crore worldwide, becoming a major box office success and marking Shahid’s career-defining moment.

● **Ranveer Singh Was the Original Choice** However, Kabir Singh

could have looked very different. Director Sandeep Reddy Vanga initially approached Ranveer Singh for the lead role, believing his intensity would be perfect for the character. But Ranveer turned down the offer, feeling the role was “too dark” for him at that time. Ranveer, who had already played intense roles in films like Bajirao Mastani, decided that the character’s emotional and mental struggles were too much for him. As a result, the role went to Shahid Kapoor, who embraced the challenge and delivered a powerful performance.

● **Shahid Kapoor’s Iconic Performance** Shahid’s portrayal of Kabir Singh was raw and intense,

striking a chord with audiences. The film became one of the highest-grossing films of 2019, earning Rs. 379 crore worldwide. Shahid’s career, which had seen ups and downs, was revived, and Kabir Singh became his biggest box office success. His performance in the film re-established him as one of Bollywood’s top actors, and the film’s success is still talked about today.

● **Dhurandhar: Ranveer Singh’s Unstoppable Rise** While Kabir Singh skyrocketed Shahid’s career, Ranveer Singh’s rejection of the role didn’t slow his own rise. Ranveer’s latest film, Dhurandhar, became the highest-grossing Bollywood film of 2025, earning Rs. 739 crore in India alone.