

TCA releases calendar to promote cricket in Telangana

Hyderabad: The Telangana Cricket Association (TCA) on Thursday announced the rollout of its 12th consecutive Annual Domestic Cricket Calendar, aimed at systematic preparation of Telangana State teams for participation in the BCCI Domestic Tournaments for the 2026–27 season.“This initiative is in line with the BCCI directive dated July 11, 2021, which emphasised coordination in game promotion and transparent selection of state teams from districts,” TCA general secretary Dharam Guruva Reddy said.

CM Revanth Reddy to hold meeting with Congress leaders to address water allocations and BRS allegations

From Our Staff Reporter
Hyderabad, Jan 1

A significant Congress meeting is set to take place today at 4 PM at Praja Bhavan, chaired by Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy. The agenda will focus on the allegations put forth by the BRS party and matters concerning water allocations.

Numerous party officials, including Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka, ministers, MLAs, MLCs, MPs, corporation chairmen, and senior leaders, have received invitations to attend the meeting.

Key topics for discussion will include the allocation of water from the Krishna and Godavari rivers, as well as the allegations raised by the BRS. Irrigation Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy is slated to deliver a PowerPoint presentation detailing water allocations. Additionally, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy will provide an overview to attendees regarding water allocations from the Krishna-



Godavari rivers since 2014, along with an analysis of agreements made during the previous BRS government. This meeting serves as a precursor to the anticipated discussions in the Assembly tomorrow regarding water allocation issues.

Telugu student from Jangaon dies in Germany

Germany, Jan 1

A Telugu student, Thokala Hrishik Reddy, has died in Germany following a tragic incident. The 22-year-old, hailing from Malkapur village in Chilpur mandal of Jangaon district, Telangana, had travelled to Germany for higher studies.According to reports that a fire broke out in the apartment where Reddy was residing. In a desperate attempt to escape the flames, he jumped from the building, sustaining severe head injuries. Unfortunately, he succumbed to his injuries shortly thereafter. Further details regarding this heartbreaking incident are currently awaited.

Harish Rao promises to raise journalists’ accreditation issues in Assembly

From Our Staff Reporter
Hyderabad, Jan 1

Former Minister and BRS deputy floor leader T Harish Rao on Thursday assured to raise the issue of accreditation cards in the State Legislative Assembly and demand immediate amendment of GO No. 252, which unfairly divides journalists.

Representatives of the Telangana Union of Working Journalists (TUWJ) called on Harish Rao in Hyderabad and submitted a memorandum seeking rollback of GO 252, introduced by the Congress government. The union representatives pointed out that while nearly 23,000 journalists were granted accreditation under the earlier GO 239, the new GO threatened to strip close to 10,000 journalists of their accreditation.Speaking on the occasion, Harish Rao strongly opposed the separate card system introduced under GO 252, which divides journalists into desk journalists and reporters. “Creating divisions among journalists is unacceptable. Desk journalists play an equally important role in news dissemination. Denying them accreditation and offering only identity cards is an insult,” he said.



Accusing the Congress government of neglecting journalist welfare, the senior BRS leader said the move would deprive journalists of key benefits, including health cards, bus passes and accident insurance. He recalled that during the BRS regime, journalists were provided Rs 5 lakh accident insurance with the government bearing the premium, along with support during the COVID-19 crisis.Calling journalists the fourth pillar of democracy, Harish Rao said reducing accreditation numbers by nearly 10,000 was unjustified. He assured TUWJ leaders of full support and said the BRS would press the government during the ongoing Assembly session to amend GO 252 and ensure justice to journalists.

Rajendranagar police arrests Bihar man for ganja cultivation in Kismatpur

Hyderabad: The Rajendranagar police on Thursday arrested a Bihar native for cultivating ganja plants at a secluded place in Kismatpur and allegedly selling the weed to local consumers.

The man, Surendar, a native of Bihar, is staying at Kismatpur in Rajendranagar. On Wednesday night, some locals alerted the police on suspicion that Surendar was cultivating ganja and, after drying the leaves, selling it to local consumers.

Governor Unveils TWJF New Year 2026 Diary at Raj Bhavan



“Taj Khan, Kaghaznagar, January 1 (Indian Chronicle)“Governor Jishnu Dev Varma on Thursday released the New Year 2026 Diary of the Telangana Working Journalists Federation (TWJF) at Raj Bhavan.“TWJF leaders extended New Year greetings to the Governor and presented him with the diary. “The event was attended by State Founder President and State Convener Mamidi Somaiah, State Co-Conveners P. Anandam, Bandi Vijay Kumar, Tanneeru Srinivas, Vallala Jagan, Kudutadi Bapurao, and National Council Members Padmanabha Rao, Gopal, among others.

TWJF Releases New Year 2026 Diary in Presence of I&PR Special Commissioner



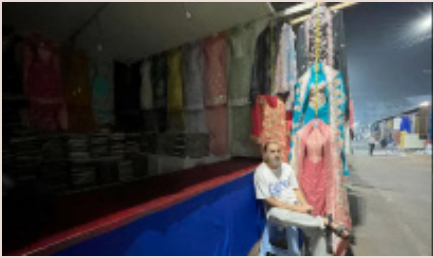
“Taj Khan, Kaghaznagar, January 1 (Indian Chronicle)“Hyderabad: As part of New Year celebrations, members of the Telangana Working Journalists Federation (TWJF) met Special Commissioner of the State Information and Public Relations Department, C.H. Priyanka, and extended New Year greetings. “On the occasion, the TWJF New Year 2026 Diary was formally released by the Commissioner.”

The programme was attended by State Founder President and State Convener Mamidi Somaiah, State Co-Conveners P. Anandam, Bandi Vijay Kumar, Tanneeru Srinivas, Vallala Jagan, Kudutadi Bapurao, and National Council Member Padmanabha Rao, among others.

Numaish 2026 inaugurated; electricity issues affect several stalls

Hyderabad, Jan 1: The 85th All India Industrial Exhibition (AIIE), popularly known as Numaish, began on a sour note on Thursday as the management reportedly failed to provide power connections to several stalls. This has resulted in the traders having to commence their business without lights.

The road outside the stalls was illuminated with the help of street lights, while inside the stalls, it was total darkness. Deputy Chief Minister, Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, in presence of other government officials and exhibition society members, inaugurated the annual Numaish.The exhibition was first started in 1938 at the Bagh e Aam (Public Gardens) and later shifted to present venue in 1948. Over the decades, the annual event has gained immense popularity and become a must-visit not only for the locals but also for those from neighbouring districts.



New Year revelry turns tragic as 40 killed in Swiss ski resort fire

A fire ripped through a bar's New Year celebration in a Swiss Alpine resort less than two hours after midnight on Thursday, with about 40 persons feared dead and over 110 injured, most severely, the police said.

The Crans-Montana resort is best known as an international ski and golf venue, and overnight, its crowded Le Constellation bar morphed from a scene of revelry into the site of potentially one of Switzerland's worst tragedies.

“Several tens of people” were presumed killed at the bar, Valais Canton police commander Frederic Gisler said during a news conference. The Italian foreign ministry said information from the Swiss police indicated about 40 deaths.

Efforts were underway to identify the victims and inform their families, but “that will take time and for the time being, it is premature to give you a more precise figure,” Gisler said, adding that the community is “devastated”.

Beatrice Pilloud, Valais Canton attorney general, said it was too early to determine the cause of the fire.

Experts had not yet been able to go inside the wreckage. “At no moment is there a question of any kind of attack,” Pilloud said.

Helicopters and ambulances rushed to the scene to assist victims, including some from different countries, officials said.

Two women told French broadcaster BFMTV that they were inside when they saw a barman carrying a barmaid on his shoulders. The barmaid was holding a lit candle in a bottle that set fire to the wooden ceiling. The flames quickly spread and collapsed the ceiling, they told the broadcaster.

One of the women described a crowd surge as people frantically tried to escape from a basement nightclub up a narrow flight of stairs and through a narrow door. Another witness described people smashing windows to escape the blaze, some gravely injured, and panicked parents rushing to the scene in cars to see whether their children were trapped inside.

The young man said he saw about 20 persons



scrambling to get out of the smoke and flames and likened what he saw to a horror movie as he watched from across the street. Officials described how the blaze likely triggered the release of combustible gases that ignited violently and caused what English-speaking firefighters call a flashover or backdraft.

“This evening should have been a moment of celebration and coming together, but it turned into a nightmare,” said Mathias Reynard, head of the regional government of the Valais Canton.

The injured were so numerous that the intensive care unit and operating theatre at the regional hospital quickly hit full capacity, Reynard said.

Crans-Montana is less than 5 km from Sierre, Switzerland, where 28 persons, including many children, were killed when a bus from Belgium crashed inside a Swiss tunnel in 2012.

The Swiss blaze on Thursday came 25 years after an inferno in the Dutch fishing town of Volendam on New Year's Eve, which killed 14 persons and injured more than 200 as they celebrated in a cafe.

Swiss President Guy Parmelin said in a social media post that the government's “thoughts go to the victims, to the injured and their relatives, to whom it addresses its sincere condolences”.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Bangladesh at an inflection point

Carrying the burden of a turbulent history since its birth, Bangladesh is now at an inflection point. The death of Khaleda Zia, the former Prime Minister who played a key role in the country's politics for over three decades, will cast a shadow on the national elections, slated for February 12. For the first time, neither of the rival begums — Zia and the ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, now in exile in India — will be around for the elections, which are being held amid prolonged political turmoil and the rise of Islamist hardliners. However, their political legacies will shape the future of a nation that stands on the precipice of major transformation. Khaleda Zia's son and acting chairman of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Tarique Rahman, who returned to the country last week from his self-imposed exile in London for 17 years, will lead the party to the polls. It is a foregone conclusion that he will take over the reins of the country because Hasina's Awami League party has been barred from contesting the elections. Given the BNP's cosy political equation with extremist Islamist groups in the past, it remains to be seen how Rahman would calibrate his party's stand on the issue, as it would determine the upcoming regime's policy towards India. It was during Begum Zia's tenure as Prime Minister between 2001 and 2006 that anti-India terrorist outfits and insurgent groups targeting India's Northeast found political space and legitimacy in Bangladesh. The BNP had joined hands with the Islamist Jamaat-e-Islami.

This period was marked by strained bilateral ties, a sharp contrast to the warming of relations after Hasina's return to power in 2008, when Dhaka cracked down on such groups. After the ouster of Hasina, following massive student protests and the subsequent strife, Dhaka's relations with New Delhi have nosedived. Systematic attacks on minorities and the growing anti-India rhetoric have further worsened the situation. The recent lynching of a Hindu worker, Dipu Chandra Das, in Mymensingh had raised serious concerns over the safety of minorities in the country. The incident was a grim indicator of how rapidly the country is sliding into mob rule under the watch of an unelected interim dispensation. Over 2,900 incidents of violence against minorities have been documented by independent sources during the tenure of the interim government. The unfolding developments in Bangladesh are bound to have security implications for India. By sending External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar to attend Khaleda Zia's funeral, New Delhi signalled an outreach to the new political establishment in Dhaka.

Pachala Katta Someshwara Temple, Bhongir, Unveils New Calendar

Chairman Kolluri Raju Unveils Calendar After Performing Special New Year's Pujas

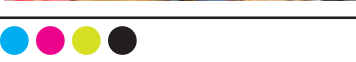
“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhongir District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... January 1):- The new year calendar printed by the renowned pilgrimage site, Sri Pachala Katta Someshwara Temple in Bhongir town, was unveiled today by the temple chairman, Kolluri Raju. The event took place after special pujas were performed at



the temple under the guidance of the chief priest, Kappagantula Nagaraju Sharma. Speaking on the occasion, Chairman Kolluri Raju said that he offered special prayers to Lord Someshwara, wishing that the people of Bhongir town and surrounding areas would prosper with happiness, health, and longevity in the new year, and that the new year would bring light into everyone's lives and be auspicious for all. Former chairmen Devarakonda Narasimha Chari and Kaleru Vinod, trustees Kalya Swathi Nagaraju, Soma Ravinder Reddy, Bachu Raju, Narala Jangaya Yadav, and prominent town dignitaries including Challaguruvula Raghu Babu, Ratnapuram Srisailam, Koteshwara Sharma Pantulu, and Battu Murali participated in the program.

Corporator Bannala Geetha Praveen Extends New Year Greetings to KTR and MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy

“(KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 1 (Indian Chronicle):““On the occasion of New Year 2026, Chilkana Division Corporator and former GHMC Standing Committee Member Bannala Geetha Praveen Mudiraj, along with leaders of the Chilkana Division, paid a courtesy visit to BRS Working President K. T. Rama Rao (KTR) and Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy on Thursday and extended New Year greetings. During the meeting, the corporator felicitated them with shawls. Speaking on the occasion,



Parameshwar Reddy Extends New Year Greetings to Government Chief Advisor Vem Narender Reddy



“(Kishore Vaddepalli, Uppal, January 1 (Indian Chronicle):““Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Parameshwar Reddy extended New Year greetings to Vem Narender Reddy, Chief Advisor to the Telangana State Government. On the occasion of the New Year, Parameshwar Reddy paid a courtesy visit to the residence of Vem Narender Reddy on Thursday, where he felicitated him in a dignified manner and conveyed his best wishes for the New Year. “Speaking on the occasion, Parameshwar Reddy wished Vem Narender Reddy good health and continued success in his service to the state. The programme was attended by District Congress Party President Vajresh Yadav, Quthbullapur Constituency Congress Party In-charge Kolan Hanumanth Reddy, former TPCC General Secretary Narsa Reddy Bhupathi Reddy, and other senior Congress leaders.

BC Welfare and State Transport Minister Ponnam Prabhakar visits Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple in Yadagirigutta on the occasion of the New Year





“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... January 1):- On the occasion of the New Year, Telangana State BC Welfare and Road Transport Minister Ponnam Prabhakar Goud had an Abhishekam darshan of Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy at Yadadri. Vedic scholars offered blessings to the minister. Local MLA and Government Whip Beerla Ilaiah and District Collector Hanumantha Rao participated in the program and offered the minister the sacred water and prasadam of the deity. On this occasion, Bhadradi Kothagudem Congress Party District Observer and Bonagiri Municipal Floor Leader Pothuna Pramod Kumar, upon seeing a board from 1994, expressed his surprise and recalled the memories of the numerous movements and struggles he participated in 32 years ago against the then government's anti-people policies and for the future of the students, when he was the State NSUI President. Padigala Pradeep, Benda Sai Siddhartha, Bharat Goud, Chirra Srisailam, Ramesh Naik, Dasari Madhu, and others participated in this program.

Gurram Raghavender Extends New Year Greetings to MP R. Krishnayya



“(KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 1 (Indian Chronicle):““Gurram Raghavender, Secretary of the Greater Hyderabad BC Welfare Association, met National BC Welfare Association President and Member of Parliament R. Krishnayya on Thursday on the occasion of the New Year. He felicitated MP R. Krishnayya and conveyed New Year greetings in a cordial manner. “Speaking on the occasion, Gurram Raghavender called upon Backward Classes (BCs) to remain united until the achievement of 42 percent reservations and until legal sanctity is provided to BC reservations. He alleged that certain political parties are indulging in drama over the issue of providing legal backing to BC reservations and accused them of lacking sincerity towards BC welfare. “He questioned why leaders who successfully implemented 10 percent EWS reservations in the Constitution were obstructing BC reservations. He demanded that the Central and State governments immediately include the promised 42 percent BC reservations in the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution and ensure guaranteed implementation with the President's approval. “Gurram Raghavender also urged the government to implement 42 percent reservations in the upcoming Greater Hyderabad municipal elections.

sion, KTR and MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy advised the corporator to undertake necessary initiatives to ensure the victory of the pink flag in the upcoming Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation elections. They also appreciated and congratulated Corporator Bannala Geetha Praveen for her continuous service and commitment to public welfare by staying closely connected with the people. “State leader Bannala Praveen Mudiraj, senior leaders Edulla Kondal Reddy, Kokonda Jagan, Farquek, Shyam, Balu, Obed, Sai Goud, and others participated in the programme.

Road safety rules must be strictly followed

.. Create widespread awareness during the National Road Safety Month celebrations: - BC Welfare and State Road Transport Minister Ponnam Prabhakar



activities should be conducted from January 1, 2026 to January 31, 2026. He said that widespread awareness should be created among the public regarding the rules to prevent road accidents. “He said that road safety rules should be explained to everyone who registers new vehicles and everyone who obtains a driving license. “Deputy Transport Commissioner Vani, Bhongir Revenue Divisional Officer Krishna Reddy, RTA Narasimha, District Transport Officer Sai Krishna, and other concerned officials participated in this program.

Protest Over Non -Declaration of January 1 Holiday; Cake Sent to CM Revanth Reddy

“(KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 1 (Indian Chronicle):““The Christian Dharma Prachara Parirakshana Samithi president, Jerusalem Mattaiah, staged a unique protest against the Telangana government's decision not to declare January 1 as a public holiday. As a mark of protest, he sent a New Year cake to Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy through the Uppal Mandal Revenue Office (MRO) on Thursday. Speaking on the occasion, Jerusalem Mattaiah stated that January 1 holds global religious significance for Christians, symbolizing the New Year in association with the birth of Jesus Christ. He said that people of all religions—including Christians, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs,



and Jains—wish to begin the New Year in a spiritual atmosphere. “He pointed out that previous governments in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh had declared January 1 as a public holiday, while treating the second Saturday of February as a working day in compensation. However, he alleged that the Congress-led Telangana government, under Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, declared January 1 as a working day this year, thereby hurting the sentiments and beliefs of the people. As a form of protest, he said that a New Year cake was sent to the Chief Minister through the Uppal MRO office to convey their displeasure. Jerusalem Mattaiah demanded that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy abandon what he termed as a BJP-RSS agenda and instead follow the traditional secular policies of the Congress party or other secular governments.

Governor Jishnu Dev Varma Unveils TWJF Media Diary



“(Mandava Srisailem... Hyderabad... Indian Chronicle... January 1):-“Telangana Governor Jishnu Dev Varma unveiled the 2026 Media Diary prepared by the Telangana Working Journalists Federation (TWJF) at Lok Bhavan (Raj Bhavan) in Hyderabad on Thursday. On this occasion, the Federation's founding president and state convener, Mamidi Somaiah, explained to the Governor about the federation and the media diary. After examining the media diary, Governor Jishnu Dev Varma said that this media diary, compiled with comprehensive information, would be useful to everyone. The Governor congratulated the Federation representatives for creat-

ing the media diary. Earlier, Mamidi Somaiah, along with Federation state co-conveners Pulipalupula Anandam, Vallala Jagan, Bandi Vijay Kumar, Tanniru Srinivas, Kudithadu Bapurao, and leaders Padmanabha Rao, J. Udaya Bhaskar Reddy, Gopal, and others, conveyed New Year's greetings to the Governor. Subsequently, at the Secretariat, the State Minister for Information and Public Relations, Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy, and Special Commissioner CH Priyanka separately unveiled the TWJF Media Diary. On this occasion, the Federation representatives presented flower bouquets to the Minister and the Special Commissioner and conveyed New Year's greetings.

Parameshwar Reddy Extends New Year Greetings to CM Revanth Reddy



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 1 (Indian Chronicle):-“Uppal and Medchal Assembly Constituency Congress Party In-charges, Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy and Thotakura Vajresh Yadav, met Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy and extended New Year greetings. The leaders met the Chief Minister on Thursday at Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Secretariat and conveyed their best wishes on the occasion of the New Year. They also felicitated the Chief Minister during the meeting. On this occasion, the Chief Minister enquired about the ongoing development works in Uppal and Medchal constituencies. He advised the party leaders to remain prepared for the upcoming Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) elections, they said. “If you want, I can also provide:



Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Collector Hanumantha Rao met with Telangana State Chief Minister Enumula Revanth Reddy and extended New Year greetings



“(Mandava Srisailem.. Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau.. Indian Chronicle.. January 1):- Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Collector Hanumantha Rao courteously met with Telangana State Chief Minister Enumula Revanth Reddy, presented him with a bouquet of flowers, honored him with a shawl, and conveyed New Year greetings. On Thursday, at the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Secretariat, on the occasion of the New Year, District Collector Hanumantha Rao courteously met with Chief Minister Enumula Revanth Reddy in his chamber. On this occasion, he presented a bouquet of flowers to the Chief Minister and conveyed heartfelt New Year greetings. Later, he courteously met with Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka and Telangana State Chief Secretary K. Ramakrishna Rao, presented them with bouquets of flowers, and conveyed heartfelt New Year greetings.



All Party Members Must Work in Coordination to Strengthen BJP: Banda Karthika Chandra Reddy

“Indian Chronicle, Secunderabad, January 01:“BJP State Vice President Banda Karthika Chandra Reddy congratulated the newly appointed district office bearers of the BJP for the Secunderabad Assembly constituency. “On Wednesday, the newly appointed leaders met her at her residence in Tarnaka as a courtesy call. Kandadi Nageshwar Reddy and Kanakatlra Aravind Kumar were appointed as Vice Presidents, Udutha

Sharada Mallesh and Madderla Shyam Sundar as Secretaries, and Naravari Ajay Naidu as Media Convener. “On the occasion, Banda Karthika Chandra Reddy extended her best wishes to the newly appointed office bearers by presenting saplings. Addressing the gathering, she emphasized that all party members must work in close coordination to strengthen the BJP and lead the party towards victory in the upcoming GHMC and Assembly elections.

Kaghaznagar Police Distribute Blankets, Food to Differently-Abled

“Taj Khan, Kaghaznagar, January 1 (Indian Chronicle)““On the occasion of Traffic Sub-Inspector Yadagiri's birthday, the Kaghaznagar Police organized a humanitarian initiative by distributing blankets and food packets to differently-abled persons at the local DSP Office in Kaghaznagar town. “The distribution was carried out by DSP Mohammed Waheed Uddin, who personally handed over the blankets and food packets to the beneficiaries, reflecting the police department's commitment to social responsibility and community welfare. “Those who received the assistance, along with their family members, expressed heartfelt gratitude to the police personnel, especially to Karyum and the team involved in organizing



the programme. “Police officials and differently-abled beneficiaries were present during the event, making it a meaningful and compassionate gesture by the department.

Ayyappa Maha Padi Puja held in Uppal; M. P. Etela Rajender, MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy participate



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 1 (Indian Chronicle)““The Ayyappa Maha Padi Puja was conducted with religious fervour on Thursday at the residence of Telangana movement activist, Uppal constituency BC JAC leader and former BRS state secretary Nerdam Bhaskar Goud. Malkajgiri Member of Parliament Etela Rajender and Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy attended the puja, performed abhishekam to Lord Ayyappa and took part in special prayers. On the occasion, they extended New Year greetings to the people and prayed for the well-being and prosperity of all, seeking Lord

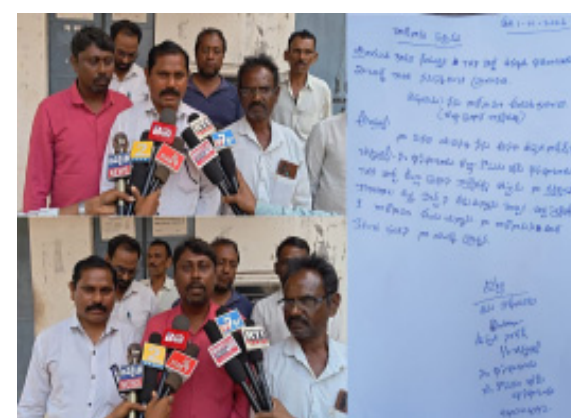
Ayyappa's blessings. They stated that devotees who worship Lord Ayyappa are bestowed with all-round prosperity. The puja was organised by Nerdam Bhaskar Goud, Prasad Goud, Raju Goud, Balakrishnaeshwar Goud, Dhanveer Goud, Manusha (Doctor), Advocate Anusha, Vivekavardhini, Divija, Diyanishi, Dhanveer Dwiti, Panjala Venkatesh Goud, Radhika Hasini, and Nerdam Eshwaramma Goud. “Leaders from various political parties and a large number of local residents participated in the Ayyappa Maha Padi Puja, making the event a grand success.

BJP Leaders from Sanathnagar Extend New Year Greetings to Former Minister Marri Shashidhar Reddy

Indian chronicle, Secunderabad, January 01:““On the occasion of the beginning of the New Year senior Bharatiya Janata Party leaders from the Sanathnagar Assembly constituency met former Minister Marri Shashidhar Reddy at the BJP office in Begumpet on Wednesday and conveyed their New Year greetings. “The leaders extended their best wishes to Marri Shashidhar Reddy, wishing him good health and a long life. They also acknowledged his guidance and valuable contributions to the party over the years. The meeting took place in a cordial atmosphere and reflected the unity and commitment of party leaders as they welcomed the New Year. “Addressing the leaders, Marri Shashidhar Reddy thanked them for their greetings and reciprocated with New Year wishes. He urged party leaders and workers to work with unity, discipline, and dedication to further strengthen the BJP at the grassroots level. He emphasized the need for collective efforts to address public issues and expand the party's reach in the Sanathnagar constituency.



RP Komaram Bheem District General Secretary Resigns with Supporters



“Taj Khan, Kaghaznagar, January 1 (Indian Chronicle)““Kaghaznagar (Komaram Bheem Asifabad): The District General Secretary of the Telangana Rajyadhikara Party (TRP) for Komaram Bheem Asifabad district, Uppari Nagesh, along with his supporters, announced their resignation from the party, citing internal reasons. “Addressing a media conference held at Kaghaznagar town on Thursday, Mr. Nagesh stated that he was unable to continue in the party due to certain internal issues and had therefore decided to resign. He confirmed that members of his supporter group had also tendered their resignations along with him. “Mr. Nagesh further informed that a signed copy of the resignation letter had been forwarded to the Joint Adilabad District In-charge, Kommulla Praveen Raj. “Party members Kadari Srinivas, Nagesh Mondli, Singam Nagesh, Rate Ravinder, Gade Suresh, Iravena Venkatesh, and others were present at the press meet.

Bhayya Venkateshwarlu Yadav Appointed as Political Secretary to Teenmaar Mallanna



“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, January 1, (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Telangana Rajyadhikara Party president and MLC Teenmaar Mallanna has appointed Bhayya Venkateshwarlu Yadav as his Political Secretary. The appointment pertains to Medchal–Malkajgiri district, Uppl Assembly constituency, Kushaguda Division. MLC Teenmaar Mallanna formally handed over the appointment letter to Bhayya Venkateshwarlu Yadav and extended his congratulations on the occasion. Speaking after assuming charge, Bhayya Venkateshwarlu Yadav stated that he would discharge his responsibilities with complete commitment and honesty. He said he would



work in coordination with state committee members and strive to take the party ideology strongly to the people, contributing to the strengthening of the Telangana Rajyadhikara Party. On the occasion, the Telangana Rajyadhikara Party calendar and party stickers were released by MLC Teenmaar Mallanna under the leadership of Bhayya Venkateshwarlu Yadav. Several party leaders attended the programme, including State Discipline Committee Chairman Bandarapu Narsaiah, State Vice President Elaboyina Odelu Yadav, State Youth Wing President Boddapalli Chandrashekhar, Rangareddy District General Secretary Kotla Vasudev, along with other leaders and party workers.

Bandari Lakshma Reddy Assures Support to Journalists

“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, January 1, (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Uppl MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy stated that he would extend full support to journalists at all times. He made these remarks while interacting with leaders of the Telangana Working Journalists Federation (TWJF). On the occasion of the New Year, members of the TWJF Medchal–Malkajgiri district committee met the MLA at his camp office in AS Rao Nagar on Wednesday morning and conveyed New Year greetings. Speaking on the occasion, Bandari Lakshma Reddy said that journalists working in the Uppl constituency would receive his cooperation whenever required. He also assured that efforts would be made to ensure that journalists benefit from welfare schemes announced by the government. TWJF State Council member Gummadi Hariprasad, Medchal district treasurer Madhu Yadav, district vice-president G. Rojarani, district executive mem-



bers B. Rajinikanth Goud, K. Mahender, K. Balakrishna and others were present at the meeting.



Telangana to Observe Savitribai Phule’s 195th Birth Anniversary as State Function on January 3

“Taj Khan, Kaghaznagar, January 1 (Indian Chronicle)“Hyderabad: The Telangana government has decided to commemorate the 195th birth anniversary of Savitribai Phule as a State Function on January 3, 2026, under the aegis of the School Education Department.

Kapra Veerashaivas Unveil 2026 New Year Calendar



“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, January 1, (INDIAN CHRONICLE): The Kapra Veerashaiva community formally unveiled its 2026 New Year calendar on Thursday at the premises of Kapra Vijaya High School. The event was attended by senior leaders of the Veerashaiva Lingayat Ling Balija Sangham. Central Committee member Koppunuri Basappa, State President Dinesh Patil, State Disciplinary Committee Chairperson Karli Rajashekhar, and State General Secretary Rachappa participated as chief guests and released the calendar. Addressing the gathering, the leaders urged the State



Government to name the building under construction at Kokapet as the Veerashaiva Lingayat Ling Balija Basava Bhavan. They also appealed to the government to establish exclusive community halls for Veerashaivas at the district and mandal levels to support social and cultural activities. The State Committee announced its full support for the proposed installation of a statue of Mahatma Basaveshwara, to be undertaken under the leadership of the Kapra community. Several community representatives and members attended the programme, marking the occasion as a significant step towards strengthening social unity and preserving cultural identity within the Veerashaiva community.

Drunk-and-Drive Checks Conducted, Tight Security Ensured on New year



“Indian Chronicle, Secunderabad, January 01:“To prevent accidents and untoward incidents on the occasion of the New Year, drunk-and-drive checks were conducted with the support of traffic police at Padma Rao Nagar T-Junction and near the Sand Quarry area in Lallaguda. Pickets were also set up at key junctions to ensure public safety and maintain law and order.“At Warasiguda Junction, Additional SP Narasayya, ACP K. Shashank Reddy Inspectors Madhusudhan Reddy, Anudeep, Raghu Babu, Purender Reddy, Madhu Babu, Traffic Inspector Jagann Reddy, along with SIs and staff, participated in the New Year celebrations and cut a cake.“From early morning, security arrangements were made at major temples. No untoward incidents were reported in the Chilakalaguda Division. Police officials thanked the public for their cooperation and extended New Year greetings to the people of the Chilakalaguda Division and members of the press.

Journalists Should Combine Professional Ethics with Social Service: Kodandaram



“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, January 1, (INDIAN CHRONICLE): MLC and former Joint Action Committee leader M. Kodandaram stated that journalists should stand at the forefront not only in upholding professional ethics but also in participating actively in social service initiatives. Kodandaram made these remarks on Thursday while unveiling the 2026 calendar of Vision Andhra Telugu daily at his residence. Speaking on the occasion,



he said journalists play a crucial role in building a better society and should work with commitment, responsibility, and integrity. He praised Vision Andhra district staffer D. Kiran Kumar Rao, describing him as a dedicated “warrior of the pen,” and extended his appreciation for his journalistic efforts. Kodandaram also expressed hope that Vision Andhra would continue to progress steadily and strengthen its presence in the media landscape. TUF president Dr. Cheema Srinivas Rao and several Telangana movement activists were present at the event.

Newspapers Must Serve as the Voice of the People: Dr. Cheema Srinivas Rao



“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, January 1, (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Dr. Cheema Srinivas Rao, State President of the Telangana Agitators Forum, unveiled the New Year 2026 calendar of Vision Andhra Telugu daily along with Dommati Kiran Kumar Rao, Medchal–Malkajgiri district staff member of the newspaper. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Cheema Srinivas Rao stated that Vision Andhra has been at the forefront of presenting public issues impartially and responsibly. He said the newspaper has been playing a key role in creating public aware-

ness through continuous reporting on local issues. He emphasized that the media is the fourth pillar of democracy and has a crucial responsibility to function as the voice of the people. Newspapers, he said, must consistently highlight public concerns and contribute to social development by providing meaningful and value-based information. He expressed hope that Vision Andhra, as a Telugu daily committed to public interest, would continue to progress further and strengthen democratic values. Leaders of the Telangana Agitators Forum and others were present at the event.

BRS Leaders Extend New Year Greetings to MLA KP Vivekanand



“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, January 1, (INDIAN CHRONICLE): On the occasion of the English New Year 2026, BRS Party Whip and three-time MLA KP Vivekanand was greeted by constituency leaders. Youth Wing President Dudimetla Suresh Yadav, GHMC Division President Puppala Bhaskar, along with Rudra Ashok and Pole Srikanth, met the MLA and extended New Year

greetings. During the interaction, MLA KP Vivekanand emphasized the need for unity among party workers and youth to strengthen the BRS party at the grassroots level. He stated that public welfare remains the core objective of the party and called upon party members to work with renewed enthusiasm in the new year. He expressed confidence that collective efforts and coordinated action would further enhance public service initiatives and contribute to the party’s growth in the constituency in 2026.

Special Sanitation Drive in Boduppall Circle



“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, January 1, (INDIAN CHRONICLE): As part of the Special Sanitation Programme, sanitation works were carried out on the fourth day across all four divisions of the Boduppall Circle—Boduppall, Chengicherla, Peerzadiguda and Medipally. Cleaning operations were undertaken at all lakes and nalas within these divisions. The works were inspected by Boduppall Circle Deputy Commissioner A.

Shailaja. Officials including DEE (SWM) Jahnvi, AE Mahesh (SWM), Sanitary Inspectors Praveen Kumar, Srinivas Reddy and Sangeetha, Environmental Engineers Nikhil and Murali, along with ward officers, sanitation workers and staff, participated in the programme. The drive aimed at improving cleanliness, preventing stagnation of waste and ensuring better sanitation standards across the circle.

‘Investigation officer not serious from day one’: In 2009 acid attack case, how ‘shoddy probe’ led to acquittal of three men



GNS News Agency, Jan 1

Acquitting three persons accused of conspiring to carry out an acid attack on a 23-year-old woman in 2009, a Delhi court noted the “shoddy” probe by the police when it came to finding the culprits or collecting call details records. The court also pointed out the victim’s alleged reluctance to leave the job despite receiving threats. “The court has due empathy for the prosecutrix. However, the fact remains that other than the strong suspicion raised by her, which cannot substitute legal proof, there is no incriminating evidence against the accused,” Additional Sessions Judge Jagmohan Singh of Rohini Court said in his order dated December 24, which was recently made public.

Speaking to The Indian Express last week, the woman, who is now 40, had said when she heard the verdict: “Tears started rolling down my eyes. I told the judge I don’t want your sympathy, I want justice.” “This is a mockery of the justice system. My statements were completely ignored. I was so hopeful... I waited for 16 years,” she had said. Pointing out various lapses in the investigation, ASJ Singh said, “It has emerged during trial that the IO (investigation officer)... was non serious from day one in investigating the matter. So much so that initially, in such a serious matter as acid attack, an untrace report was filed by the IO.” The Judge added: “... for four years, the IO took no interest in finding the culprits and arresting them”. The court also pulled up the police for not examining the purchase of the acid which was allegedly used in the acid attack. “No effort was made by IO to examine whether the acid was purchased (by the accused)... from Chopra chemical store,” ASJ Singh said.

Prem Kumar Chopra, owner of Chopra Chemicals,

was identified by the prosecution as a witness who had allegedly sold acid to one of the accused persons. Chopra’s testimony couldn’t be recorded as he had passed away. The court further said police made no effort to collect call records of the accused persons, which could have proven whether a conspiracy was in place. “No effort was made by the IO to collect call detail records [of accused persons]... to seize their mobile phones to find out whether any electronic evidence existed in the form of audio call recording or location of the accused to show meeting of minds between them in alleged conspiracy... to throw acid upon the prosecutrix,” ASJ Singh said. After pointing out these lacunae, the court directed Superintendent of Police, Panipat, to conduct an enquiry and to “fix the responsibility of erring police officials and to take action” against them. In 2009, the victim had moved to Panipat after getting a job as a student counsellor at a college. She also enrolled in an MBA course. According to the prosecution, she was harassed at her workplace by the owner of the college and was subjected to threats. She finally put in her papers on November 1, 2009, and was set to leave a month after serving her notice period. She was attacked just 11 days prior to her last working day at the college. According to the prosecution, the owner of the college, his wife and two students planned and carried out the attack. One of the four accused, who was a juvenile, was convicted on December 18, 2015. Other than admonishing the police, the court also pointed out the victim’s alleged reluctance to leave the job despite receiving threats. “... it is amply clear that despite the above possessive and aggressive behaviour of the accused... she continued to work (in the college),” said ASJ Singh. He further said as per the victim’s own testimony, she was tolerating the extremely aggressive behaviour of the owner of the college who had allegedly resorted to beating the victim and injuring her. “However, as per her own admission in the cross-examination, she did not complain nor disclose about the same to anyone... It is amply clear to the court that the accused... and the prosecutrix shared a deeply emotional relationship which was also complicated to say the least,” ASJ Singh said, calling the relationship of the two “beyond the arena of normal employer-employee relation”. The victim had also alleged that the accused tried to rape her in 2009. “... In the considered opinion of this court, the prosecutrix had every opportunity to leave the job as well as leave Panipat City immediately after the alleged incident of attempt to rape. However she did not do so,” the court said.

Performance-based politics, not identity politics, should define democracy: Nitin Gadkari



GNS News Agency, Jan 1

Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari Monday stressed the need for a shift towards performance and development-oriented politics, asserting that those who fail to perform often resort to caste and religion-based politics as shortcuts to success. Speaking during a courtesy visit to The Indian Express office in Nagpur for Loksatta Lok Samvad ahead of the upcoming municipal elections, Gadkari said politics must focus on public welfare and development rather than power. “Politics is not about ruling, it is about serving people. Democracy should be driven by performance and development,” he said.

“I will not do politics based on caste or religion. People will vote if they feel my work is right; if not, they won’t, and both are acceptable to me,” he said, describing Nagpur as his family. Calling for qualitative change in politics, Gadkari said there are two kinds of politics, politics of conviction and politics of convenience. “I believe in conviction. Whether I get power or not doesn’t matter,” he said. Gadkari said he always evaluates his work from the perspective of what he can do for citizens, adding that development is the public’s primary expectation. However, he noted that development is never complete, as aspirations are natural. “People remember what they did not get more than what they received,” he said, underlining the need to do more continuously. Responding to allegations that concrete development had caused flooding in parts of Nagpur two years ago, Gadkari said a detailed study of the Nag River was conducted after water entered houses. He said encroachments and narrowed river channels were addressed, including widening of the Nag River, clearing obstructions,

and resolving the issue. He defended the construction of concrete roads, stating that Nagpur’s black soil does not sustain bitumen roads. “If bitumen roads had been constructed, they would have required rebuilding every two years. Concrete roads built over the last 30 years have lasted,” he said. He insisted that Nagpur city is pothole-free. Gadkari also said that the city of Nagpur has not seen drinking water protests in the last 10 years. He highlighted major water infrastructure upgrades, including expanding the Kanhan water supply to 175 MLD and upgrading machinery. He said there is no water scarcity in Nagpur, with 350–400 MLD of recycled water being supplied to power projects at Koradi and Khaparkheda.

On urban transport and environment, Gadkari said Nagpur’s vehicles will gradually shift to compressed natural gas (CNG), with 160 new CNG pumps planned across the city. “All city buses will be electric within the next two years,” he said. He also spoke about investments in medical colleges, educational institutions, AIIMS, allotment of land to Narsee Monjee Institute (KG to PG), and ongoing Metro work. On industry and mobility, Gadkari said India must aim to become the global leader in the automobile sector, where it currently ranks third. He stressed the need to focus on alternative fuels. “Automobile industry will make India truly self-reliant (atmanirbhar),” he said. Gadkari said ecology and environment remain priorities for him. “We (under the current administration, the party) transplant even 100-year-old trees instead of cutting them, develop world-class ecology parks, plant new saplings, and work on water purification, waste management and treatment of polluted water. We are also pushing for a shift to cleaner fuels, yet we are labelled anti-environment. Those opposing these projects should also reflect on how many trees they have planted and extend cooperation.” “What is the point of opposing something only on paper or in books? I firmly believe in protecting ecology and the environment. I want a garbage-free, clean and pollution-free system, and I stand by this commitment completely.” “There should be no politics of revenge, no need to mock or seek retribution. In any democracy, wishing harm upon others is never right. But democracy rests on four pillars: the media, the judiciary, and the legislature. Together, we must strengthen democracy. This responsibility does not belong to one institution alone; it belongs to everyone,” Gadkari said. Gadkari concluded by saying that there are no differences between the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the BJP.

INSV Kaundinya begins journey to Oman: All you need to know about the ancient-style sailing vessel

GNS News Agency, Jan 1

On Monday afternoon, a pilot craft slowly backed off the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) jetty in the Porbandar district of Gujarat, towing the Indian Naval Sailing Vessel (INSV) Kaundinya out to sea, to the tune of “Jai Ho” from Slumdog Millionaire played by the Naval band. The two-masted sailboat with a specially trained crew will make its maiden voyage to Muscat, in the Sultanate of Oman, retracing the historic maritime routes that connected India with the wider Indian Ocean world for millennia. At the launch ceremony, the Guest of Honour, Issa Saleh Abdullah Alshibani, the Omani Ambassador to India, spoke of historical and cultural ties between the two nations and peoples. He was joined by Vice Admiral Krishna Swaminathan, the Flag Officer Commanding (FOC-IN-C) of the Western Naval Command, as well as Rear Admiral Sritanu Guru, Flag Officer Commanding of the Gujarat Naval Area, among other senior naval officers. Here is all you need to know about INSV Kaundinya.

INSV Kaundinya is a stitched sail ship, based on a 5th-century CE ship depicted in the paintings of Ajanta Caves. The project was initiated in July 2023 through a tripartite agreement signed by the Ministry of Culture, the Indian Navy, and Hodi Innovations, with funding from the Ministry of Culture. The ship, which embodies India’s historic role as a maritime nation, is named after the legendary mariner Kaundinya, who is believed to have sailed from India to Southeast Asia in ancient times. Its sails display motifs of the Gandabherunda and the Sun, the bow bears a sculpted Simha Yali, and a symbolic Harappan-style stone anchor adorns its deck, each element evoking the rich maritime traditions of ancient India.

Sanjeev Sanyal, a member of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister, who first pitched the idea of a stitched ship, listed the day-to-day facilities, food, and other arrangements aboard the vessel in a thread on X. He also noted the few modern devices the vessel will carry on its maiden voyage. So what is life like aboard @INSVKaundinya? Modern amenities are minimal except for safety and communications. This is how it looks under the deck. As you can see, there are no cabins and just a dark hold for storing supplies. Mostly we sleep on the open deck with sleeping bags... Under the deck is a hold for storing supplies, and the crew will sleep in sleeping bags on the deck or below, depending on weather conditions. The crew will relieve themselves in a basket slung over the side of the



vessel. Regarding rations, Sanyal posted, “We are carrying some fresh vegetables that should last the first 5-6 days. Thereafter, it is dry rations and any fish we catch. Fresh water is rationed to 4.5 litres per person per day, including drinking, cooking, and washing. The cooking is on an outdoor stove (the wooded casing has been painted with a fire retardant to make it safe and metal holder inserted to keep the utensil from getting knocked over by the rolling ship).”

The concept of building and sailing a sailing vessel using ancient technologies was first proposed by Sanyal on December 17, 2021. After two years of planning, the keel of the vessel was laid on September 12, 2023, and construction began using a traditional stitching method by a team of 20 skilled artisans from Kerala, led by master shipwright Babu Sankaran and stitcher Rejeesh, the last custodians of an ancient skill. From September 2023 to February 2025, the ship took shape plank by plank, stitched and formed using techniques unchanged for centuries, as detailed on the X handle of the vessel. The Indian Navy played a central role in the project, overseeing the design, technical validation, and construction process. With no surviving blueprints of such vessels, the design had to be inferred from iconographic sources. The Navy collaborated with the shipbuilder to recreate the hull form and traditional rigging. It ensured that the design was validated through hydrodynamic model testing at the Department of Ocean Engineering, IIT Madras, and an internal technical assessment. Hodi Innovations handed over the vessel to the Indian Navy on May 15, 2025. On May 21, 2025, the Indian Navy formally inducted and named the Ancient Stitched ship as INSV Kaundinya at a ceremonial event held at Naval Base, Karwar.

Pastor among 3 held over ‘religious conversion’ claims at UP church; Bajrang Dal workers protest

GNS News Agency, Jan 1

Three people, including a pastor and his son, were arrested over allegations that religious conversion activities were being carried out at a church in Uttar Pradesh’s Fatehpur, said police. Tensions flared on Sunday after a group of Bajrang Dal workers gathered outside the church and staged a protest. Police personnel soon arrived and brought the situation under control. Police said based on a complaint filed by a person, who claimed to have been present inside the church at Deviganj at the time of the alleged conversion, an FIR was registered at the Radha Nagar police station against three named and seven unidentified persons for their alleged involvement in conversion-related activities. “We have arrested three persons, David Gladwin [the pastor], Abhishek Gladwin, and Johan Vishwas alias K K Bangali who were named in the FIR in this case,” said Vinod Kumar Maurya, Station House Officer of Radha Nagar police station. He said police teams are working to trace the remaining accused who are absconding. Maurya also denied allegations that any of the accused were assaulted by members of the public. Police said the case has been lodged under BNS sections 299 (deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs) and 351 (criminal intimi-

dation). Police also invoked sections of the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Act against the accused. When contacted, Vishwa Hindu Parishad’s state vice-president, Virendra Pandey, said Bajrang Dal workers went to the site on receiving information about alleged religious conversion at the church.

After confirming the reports, he said they informed the police. Pandey claimed police also recorded names and addresses of those present at the church and denied that anyone had been assaulted on the premises. According to police, they received information on Sunday afternoon about an argument outside a church, where members of a right-wing organisation had gathered. Police assured the crowd that the matter would be probed and took three persons present inside the church into custody for questioning. Following a complaint by local resident Devprakash Paswan, the FIR was lodged.

In his complaint, Paswan alleged that he and two other men — Neeraj Paswan and Sushil Raidas — had been called to the church at 10 am on Sunday where prayers and hymns were being conducted. Paswan, in his complaint, alleged that the accused promised the congregation money, household items, jobs, and free education for children if they



accepted Christianity. Paswan claimed when they protested, the accused allegedly offered Rs 1,100 to keep them quiet. He also claimed objectionable remarks were made about their deity; he informed some people outside the church and a crowd of local residents gathered. The police also arrived. Paswan also alleged that when they tried to intervene in the alleged conversion, they were threatened

inside the church and warned that they would be ruined if they did not comply. In his complaint, Paswan further alleged that the accused had previously visited his village, Achgawa, in groups of four to five, asking residents to attend church every Sunday. He claimed they promised Rs 1,100 for every person brought to the church.

Ludhiana’s PAU reaffirms its status in rankings, farmer-focused extension, and global engagement



GNS News Agency, Jan 1

Ludhiana’s Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) reaffirmed its status as India’s leading agricultural university through excellence in rankings, research, farmer-focused extension, and global engagement in 2025, the university has said in a press statement.PAU secured the top position among state agricultural universities in the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) for the third consecutive year, ranking first among such universities and second nationally in IIRF 2025.Globally, it entered EduRank’s Top 100 Agricultural Institutions, ranking 93rd in agricultural sciences and emerging as the only Indian state agricultural university on the list. Its education model also earned the Indian Institutional Ranking Framework (IIRF) Education Impact Award 2026 for experiential and extension-linked learning.

With sustained support from the Punjab Government, including a Rs 20-crore capital grant, PAU expanded key infrastructure. Finance Minister Sardar Harpal Singh Cheema inaugurated the Agro-Processing Complex and Jaggery Processing Plant and laid the foundation stone of the Plant Acclimatisation Facility. Hostels and a swimming pool were upgraded, and a gymnasium was established.A field of wheat variety developed by PAU. (Express Photo)

Crime spree grips Punjab’s Doaba region, over 12 thefts and robberies reported in a few days

GNS News Agency, Jan 1

Jalandhar woke up on Monday to a robbery at a jewellery shop, marking the latest incident in a worrying pattern where several parts of Punjab’s Doaba region have witnessed repeated cases of thefts, armed robberies, cyber fraud, and an ATM break-in over the past few days—in Jalandhar, Kapurthala, Hoshiarpur, and Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar districts.In one of the most high-profile incidents, a gang of around a dozen thieves looted gold and silver ornaments worth Rs 70-80 lakh from Babbar Jewellers, located in Jalandhar’s Shahid Babu Labh Singh Nagar in the early hours of Monday.

Citing CCTV footage, the police said the gang arrived at around 2.30 am wearing masks and gloves. Using iron rods and a shawl, they uprooted the shop’s shutter and gained entry within minutes. The theft lasted barely 10 minutes, during which the thieves targeted both the safe and jewellery kept at the counters. The shop’s owner, Gurpreet Singh, said he had closed the shop around 9 pm on Sunday. He was informed about the theft in the morning. The police were alerted around 6 am after locals noticed the damaged shutter. CCTV footage is being analysed to trace the thieves and their movement, the police said, adding that they suspect the gang had prior knowledge of the shop’s layout.Robbers attempt to barge into the house of Lakhwinder Singh. On December 28, two masked men armed with pistols attempted a robbery at a jewellery shop in a densely populated market area in Jalandhar West, the police said. The robbers pretended to enquire about a silver bracelet but soon brandished weapons at the woman present at the counter. Her husband Vipin Verma reacted swiftly by climbing over the counter and pushing the robbers out of the shop, while his wife followed. The robbers fled the spot as locals gathered.The police reached the scene immediately, and former MLA Sheetal Angural was also present. The incident has heightened fear among local traders, who are demanding stronger security measures and increased police presence.Around 1.30 am on December 26, armed robbers barged into the house of Lakhwinder Singh in the Awalpur area and looted cash worth Rs 1 lakh, 100 g of gold worth Rs 12-13 lakh, and other valuables at gunpoint. The same day, multiple other incidents of theft and looting were reported across the region.

In Rampur Jagir village on December 25, thieves struck four houses during the day, stealing gold and silver jewellery weighing around 70 g along with cash. Ironically, a police post is located barely one kilometre from the affected area.ATM heist, cyber fraud and armed robberies across Doabaln Phagwara’s Khajurala village, unidentified thieves uprooted an ATM machine of State Bank of India and made away with Rs 27 lakh in cash between 3 and

Suspended TMC MLA Humayun Kabir alleges police harassment after he laid masjid foundation stone

GNS News Agency, Jan 1

“In 2026, the minority vote will come to us. Mamata Banerjee will not get it. The minority wants their own representative. If required, I will give 200 candidates and 90 will be Muslim candidates. In 2026, it will be Hindus versus Muslims. Suvendu is doing Hindu politics and Mamata is also doing Hindu appeasement — Jagannath, Durga Carnival, Durga Puja doles,” he said.“I will be the leader for Muslims. In 2026, the division between Hindu and Muslim votes will come out clearly in the open. Our main target is the Muslim vote,” Kabir said.

Kabir alleged that the police began “targeting” him after he laid the foundation stone for a Babri-style mosque in Murshidabad. “Since the day I laid the foundation stone for the Babri-style masjid, the police have been after me. Why is there no role of the police today when the Chief Minister lays the foundation stone of a Durgaangan? I will start construction once all paperwork is completed,” he said.Responding to TMC general secretary Abhishek Banerjee’s comment that those building religious places should do so “outside politics”, Kabir said, “If this suggestion is for me, then it should also apply to his aunt (Mamata Banerjee).”A day after Saktipur police detained Kabir’s son Ghulam Nabi Azad, popularly known as Robin — who was later released — on allegations of assaulting Kabir’s per-

A field of wheat variety developed by PAU.

In research and innovation, PAU delivered field-ready technologies and patents, including a portable maize dryer to reduce post-harvest losses, a magnetic field-assisted freezing process for horticultural produce, and a stable zinc phosphide bait for safer rodent control. Advances in precision and digital agriculture included GNSS (global navigation satellite system)-based tractor auto-steering, sensor-based paddy transplanters and internet of things-enabled irrigation systems.In 2025, PAU released 20 new crop varieties and hybrids across cereals, pulses, oilseeds, vegetables, fruits and ornamentals. Several PAU wheat and maize varieties topped the national trials of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), while the university earned multiple Best Centre awards under All India Coordinated Research Projects.Farmers procuring the seed from the PAU project. Farmers procuring the seed from the PAU project. (Express Photo)PAU also strengthened its global footprint, appointing 22 honorary visiting professors, including World Food Prize laureates, and hosting delegations from Japan, the US, Argentina, South Sudan, and the Food and Agriculture Organisation. New collaborations, including a memorandum of understanding with BITS Pilani, expanded work in precision agriculture and agri-techThrough Kisan Melas, Krishi Vigyan Kendra programmes, crop residue management drives and flood-relief seed distribution, PAU ensured large-scale technology adoption. Its innovations, including a remotely operated paddy transplanter, gained national attention.Academic excellence was highlighted at PAU’s annual convocation, held in the presence of Punjab Governor and Chancellor Shri Gulab Chand Kataria, under the chairmanship of Vice-Chancellor Dr Satbir Singh Gosal, along with college-level convocations where hundreds of students received degrees, medals, and merit certificates.

Overall, 2025 marked PAU’s integrated leadership in research, education and farmer-first extension, advancing sustainable and climate-resilient agriculture for Punjab and the country, said V-C Gosal.



3.30 am on December 28. They reportedly arrived in a Swift car. Deputy Superintendent of Police Bharat Bhushan said investigations are underway in connection with the incident.And in Jalandhar’s Jain Colony, a resident named Amritpal Singh told the police that he had been defrauded out of Rs 12.17 lakh through an online investment app. He initially invested Rs 7.5 lakh, was shown fake profits, and was asked to pay additional “taxes” and “service charges”. When he attempted to withdraw the money, the fraud was exposed, the police said.The police arrested three robbery suspects following a brief encounter near Garhshankar in Hoshiarpur district on December 27. Police teams spotted a suspicious motorcycle without a number plate in the forest area of Rampur Bildon village. When signalled to stop, the suspects opened fire, according to the police. One of them, Onkar Singh alias Gora, sustained a bullet injury in the leg in police retaliation and was hospitalised, while Ram Asra alias Shami and Arman alias Manga were arrested on the spot.The police further said they had recovered two country-made pistols and ammunition from the suspects.Sandeep Malik, Senior Superintendent of Police, Hoshiarpur, told the media that the three people were linked to a robbery at a money changer’s shop in Mahilpur (Hoshiarpur) on December 16, where over Rs 4 lakh was looted, and another gunpoint robbery in Hoshiarpur Sadar.Police sources said the robbers are taking advantage of the dense fog.CCTV footage has emerged as a critical tool for investigators in these cases, helping them track suspect movements and vehicles.Authorities say intensified patrols and intelligence-based operations are ongoing, but residents and business communities continue to voice serious concerns over safety, demanding faster action, stronger policing, and improved surveillance infrastructure.Pargat Singh, Congress MLA for Jalandhar Cantt, alleged that law and order in Punjab had deteriorated under the Aam Aadmi Party Government. He said that incidents of firing, killings, and armed robberies had created fear among residents and traders.

sonal security officer (PSO), Kabir said, “They attempted to slap non-bailable sections but could not. I spoke to the officers and then they became a bit soft. Anyone can make allegations against me and my son, but without notice how can they come to my residence with such force? They could not give any answer.”He added, “We are used to all this. Let them take the CCTV footage; they are investigating and experts were also brought.”

Alleging harassment of his family, Kabir said, “If anyone thinks that by getting orders from Calcutta, they will file false cases against me or my party workers in 27 police stations in Murshidabad, they are wrong. In Lalgola, police have been roaming around my daughter’s in-laws’ place with measuring tape for the last four days. They have five properties. Let them touch my son-in-law, my daughter or their properties. What I have said, I will do. I will take the police to task.”Questioning the use of government funds for Durgaangan projects, Kabir said, “Government money cannot be spent like this. Why is the BJP quiet now? Why are they not going to court? Then it must be understood that Mamata Banerjee and the BJP have some understanding. The state administration is completely spineless and will act only on the Chief Minister’s orders.”Tanusree Bose is a dedicated journalist reporting for The Indian Express from Kolkata.

Amid fears of rebellion, BJP makes personal calls to PMC poll candidates instead of announcing list



Confident of winning the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) polls for the second consecutive time after having inducted many leaders from other political parties, the city unit of the BJP now appears apprehensive over possible rebellion from within the party as it quietly distributed letters of candidature to a few of its leaders before declaring the final list of candidates.The filing of nominations for the municipal polls ends on Tuesday afternoon and the city is witnessing hectic political activities with many aspirants, mainly from the BJP, filing their nominations following a personal call from party leaders who have refrained from declaring an official list of candidates.

“The party will declare its list of candidates soon,” said Ganesh Bidkar, who has filed his nomination for the PMC election. He is also the BJP convenor for the civic polls in Pune. The party is contesting the PMC polls in alliance with the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena.Bidkar said he filed the

Maharashtra and Bengaluru police seize illegal drugs worth Rs 1.2 crore during raids in Karnataka

GNS News Agency, Jan 1

Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara said on Sunday that illegal drugs worth Rs 1.2 crore were seized in Bengaluru in an operation conducted by the Mumbai Police, Maharashtra’s Anti-Narcotics Task Force (ANTF), the Bengaluru City Police, and the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), leading to multiple arrests over the illicit manufacture and trafficking of mephedrone and raw materials.

The raids were conducted in Kothanur, Bagalur, and Yerappanahalli on December 24 and 25. One of the arrests was made in Mumbai, another in Belagavi, and two others in Bengaluru. The four people were produced before a Devanahalli court on December 26, the police said.According to the Bengaluru police, on December 21, one Abdul Khader was arrested in Mumbai by the city police on charges related to the possession of approximately 1.5 kg of mephedrone. Based on his statements, Prashanth Patil of Belagavi was arrested, and he provided information regarding the source of the drug, which led the investigators to Bengaluru city.

The Maharashtra ANTF, in coordination with Bengaluru police and NCB officials, later arrested Suresh Yadhav at Kankanhalli in Yelahanka and Malkhan Ramlal Bishnoi at Kannur in Bagalur.The joint operation led to the seizure of 4.2 kg of mephedrone at a house in Yerappanahalli, a village in the Avalahalli police station limits, along with 17 kg of raw material (in liquid form), other chemicals, barrels, mixers, and other equipment. One more mixer was recov-

‘Virtual court of Justice Chandrachud’: Woman duped of Rs 3.71 crore in ‘digital arrest’; Surat garment trader arrested for providing mule account



GNS News Agency, Jan 1

The fraudster allegedly claimed that the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) was investigating the case, and that if she was innocent, her hearing would be conducted as soon as possible and she would be granted bail. He allegedly said that a judge named Chandrachud would conduct her hearing. (Express Photo)The fraudster allegedly claimed that the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) was investigating the case, and that if she was innocent, her hearing would be conducted as soon as possible and she would be granted bail. He allegedly said that a judge named Chandrachud would conduct her hearing.The West Cyber police in Mumbai recently arrested a 46-year-old garment trader who allegedly allowed a fraudster to use his bank account to receive Rs 1.71 crore in connection with a ‘digital arrest’ case in which a 68-year-old woman was allegedly duped of Rs 3.71 crore. The fraudster allegedly threatened the woman, claiming her hearing was held in a ‘virtual court of Justice Chandrachud’ and forced her to transfer all her savings to multiple bank accounts.

The arrested accused has been identified as Jitendrabhai Dhanjibhai Miyani, 46, a resident of Surat. As directed by the fraudster, he and his associate allegedly registered a garment trading firm four months ago and, using the firm’s details, opened a bank account.Miyani then handed over his bank details to the fraudster after withdrawing his commission of Rs 6.40 lakh on the same day when the victim’s money was credited into his account, said a police officer.The fraudster then transferred the entire amount to another account, and the person who was in touch with him fled abroad, said the police. A senior officer involved in the probe said the police have been gathering details about the other members of the syndicate and will apprehend them.

How the ‘digital arrest’ unfoldedAccording to the police, the complainant is a resident of Veera Desai Road, Andheri (West). She told the police she received a call from an unknown number claiming to be from the Colaba police station and that the caller disconnected.Later, she allegedly received a WhatsApp video call, and the caller again claimed

nomination after the BJP sent him an official letter to contest the civic polls. “I am thankful to all the senior leaders of the party, including the chief minister, for giving me the opportunity to contest the civic polls,” he added.While there are only 165 seats in the PMC, the BJP is facing a “problem of plenty” as it received over 2,500 applications from various aspirants, even as it has set aside a few seats for alliance partners Shiv Sena and the Republican Party of India (Athawale).An office-bearer for the BJP said, “The party has called up official candidates personally and asked them to file their nomination for the Pune civic polls. Many candidates are filing their nomination today (Monday).”Leaders who have filed their nominations so far include the BJP’s Yogesh Mulick and Mahesh Wabale, and the Shiva Sena’s Ulhas Bagul. The polling will take place on January 15, and the results will be declared on January 16.

According to a BJP source, “It was obvious that there will be disappointed leaders who would not get candidature. A few may jump to other political parties to contest civic elections.”Meanwhile, RPI(A) party workers held a protest outside the city BJP office on Monday, accusing alliance partner BJP of “fooling” them. “There is no information on how many seats the BJP has allotted for the RPI(A) even as their candidates are filing nominations,” an RPI(A) worker said.A leader of the Ajit Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) said the party will also delay announcing its final list of candidates as part of a strategy to rope in rebels from the BJP and its allies to contest on behalf of the NCP wherever possible.The BJP had won 98 seats in the 2017 PMC elections in which it had targeted to win 125 wards.



ered at N G Gollahalli in Kothanur. No functional lab or factory was located at any of the raided places. Raw materials stocked at a carpenter shed in Kannur were also seized, said the police.“We conducted tests on the finished 4.2 kg substance. The general test was positive for amphetamine, but a specific test for meth/MDMA was negative. It could be an impure substance. In all, 4.2 kg of mephedrone worth 1.2 crore and 17 kg of precursor or raw material were seized. The total worth of the raw materials is yet to be verified. The NCB has fixed the price of 1 Kilogram of mephedrone at Rs 30 lakh,” said Seemanth Kumar Singh, Commissioner of Police, Bengaluru.While Parameshwara said that drugs worth Rs 1.2 crore were seized, the Maharashtra ANTF claimed that they had seized narcotics worth Rs 55 crore.

to be calling from the Colaba police station. The caller allegedly told her that her Aadhaar card was used to open a Canara Bank account, which was then used for illegal transactions totalling Rs 6 croreThe fraudster allegedly told her that one Naresh Goyal had been arrested in connection with a money laundering case, in which her name had also been mentioned.

The fraudster allegedly claimed that the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) was investigating the case, and that if she was innocent, her hearing would be conducted as soon as possible and she would be granted bail. He allegedly said that a judge named Chandrachud would conduct her hearing.Soon, a person in a black coat appeared on the video call and asked her whether she was involved in a money laundering case, she told the police. When the woman replied that she had done nothing wrong, he allegedly refused her ‘bail’, got up from his chair, and left.The accused then allegedly demanded that she deposit all her savings for verification. According to the FIR, the woman transferred 3.71 crore from her bank account between August 29 and October 6, per their instructions.When the accused demanded more money and started giving excuses for not returning her money, she realised she had been duped. The woman approached the cyber police station and submitted all the chats, transactions, screenshots and the bank statements to the police. They verified the facts, registered a case in November, and began an investigation.

Telangana govt doctors seek CM’s intervention over long-pending salary, service issues

Hyderabad: Government doctors from across Telangana on Monday sought Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy’s intervention for a permanent and sustainable solution to the long-standing salary and service-related issues faced by the doctors working in hospitals under Telangana Vaidya Vidhan Parishad (TVVP).The members of Telangana Government Doctors Association (TGDA) also submitted a memorandum to Principal Secretary, Health, Dr Christina Z Chongthu, urging the State government’s quick action on this matter.The core issue of bringing TVVP under Directorate of Secondary Health Services (DSHS) has remained unresolved. As a result, doctors continue to face uncertainty in salary disbursement, administrative ambiguity, cadre stagnation and lack of parity with their counterparts in other government health departments, the members of TGDA on Monday said.

Top diplomats of China, Cambodia and Thailand meet as Beijing seeks to strengthen role in dispute

GNS News Agency, Jan 1

Hong Kong: Foreign ministers from Cambodia and Thailand convened with their Chinese counterpart on Monday as the Beijing government, building on its expanding presence in the world diplomatic arena, sought to play a stronger mediating role in the violent border dispute between the two Southeast Asian countries.The trilateral meeting, held in a southwestern Chinese province north of the contested border, came two days after Thailand and Cambodia signed a fresh ceasefire agreement to end weeks of fighting that killed more than 100 people and forced hundreds of thousands to be evacuated on both sides of the border.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi called for joint efforts to promote regional peace, stability and development, which is language typical for China in such situations."Allowing the flames of war to be reignited is absolutely not what the people of the two countries want, and not what China, as your friend, wants to see. Therefore, we should resolutely look ahead and move forward," Wang said during the meeting Monday in Yunnan province.It was noteworthy that the meeting was held there, nearer to the dispute and to Southeast Asia, rather than in Beijing, the Chinese capital and seat of government about 1,300 miles (2,500 kilometers) northeast.

Cambodian Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn said he believed the latest ceasefire would last and would create an environment for both countries to work on their relations and resume the previously agreed-upon ways to settle their differences, according to a Chinese interpreter.Thai Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuanketkeow also expressed hopes for peace with neighboring countries, the interpreter said.The Thai Foreign Ministry later said in a statement that China volunteered to be a platform to support peace between the two countries and Thailand reiterated that adjustments of ties should be conducted "on a step-by-step basis." "The Thai side will consider the release of 18 soldiers after the 72 hours ceasefire observation period and requests that Cambodia facilitate the return of Thais along the border," the ministry said.

A day after the fresh pact was signed, Sihasak and Prak Sokhonn held separate meetings with Wang on Sunday.

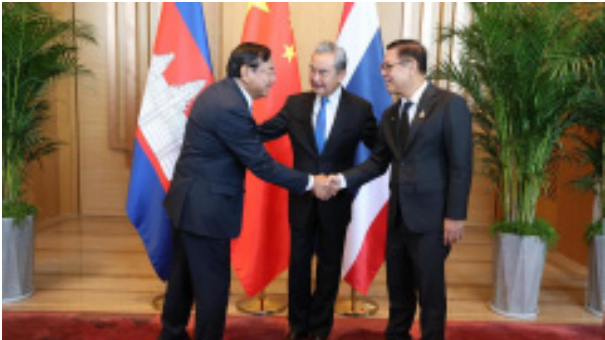
13 killed, 98 injured after passenger train derails in Mexico



GNS News Agency, Jan 1

Mexico City: A passenger train carrying 241 passengers and nine crew members derailed on a bridge near Nizanda in southern Mexico on Sunday, leaving at least 13 people dead and 98 others injured, the Secretariat of the Navy said on social media.The accident occurred on the Interoceanic Train, which links the Pacific port of Salina Cruz with Coatzacoalcos on the Gulf Coast, as it rounded a bend near the town of Nizanda in Oaxaca. The train, consisting of two locomotives and four passenger cars, partially toppled off the tracks, with several carriages tilting down the side of

Top diplomats of China, Cambodia and Thailand meet as Beijing seeks stronger role in dispute

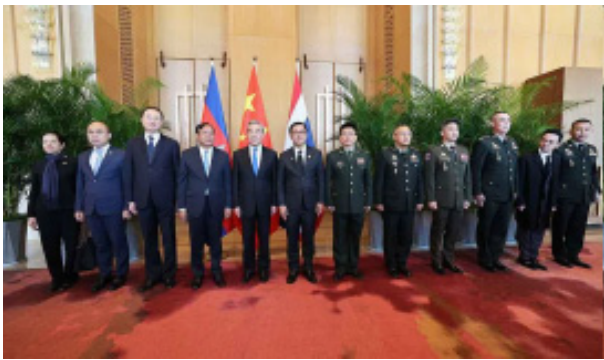


GNS News Agency, Jan 1

Foreign Ministers from Cambodia and Thailand convened with their Chinese counterpart on Monday (December 29, 2025) as the Beijing government, building on its expanding presence in global diplomacy, sought to play a stronger mediating role in the violent border dispute between the two Southeast Asian countries.The trilateral meeting, held in a southwestern Chinese province north of the contested border, came two days after Thailand and Cambodia signed a fresh ceasefire agreement to end weeks of fighting that killed more than 100 people and forced the evacuation of hundreds of thousands on both sides of the border.

"We haven't resolved everything, but I think we are making progress in the right direction, and we have to keep up the momentum," Thailand Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuanketkeow told reporters after the meeting in Yunnan province. He said the chief priorities are to ensure a sustained ceasefire and continue rebuilding trust.It was noteworthy that the meeting was held in Yunnan, nearer to the dispute and to Southeast Asia, rather than in Beijing, the Chinese capital and seat of government, about 2,500 kilometres (1,300 miles) northeast.The meetings represented China's latest efforts to strengthen its role as an international mediator and, in particular, its influence in Asian regional crises. As China grows into an economic and political force globally, Beijing has spent the past decade and more working in various ways to increase its voice as a third party in diplomatic matters.Hopes for peace expressed

During the meeting on Monday (December 29), Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi called for joint efforts to promote regional peace, stability and development — language typical for China in such situations."Allowing the flames of



day, the first day of the two-day gathering.The meetings represented China's latest efforts to strengthen its role as an international mediator and, in particular, its influence in Asian regional crises. As China grows and becomes more of an economic and political force regionally and globally, Beijing has spent the past decade and more working in various ways to increase its voice as a third party in diplomatic matters.The two Southeast Asian countries originally reached a ceasefire in July. It was brokered by Malaysia and pushed through under pressure from U.S. President Donald Trump, who threatened to withhold trade privileges unless Thailand and Cambodia agreed. The preliminary pact was followed by a more detailed October agreement.

But Thailand and Cambodia carried on a bitter propaganda war, with minor, cross-border violence continuing. The tensions erupted into heavy fighting in early December.The Saturday agreement calls for Thailand, after the ceasefire has held for 72 hours, to repatriate 18 Cambodian soldiers who have been held prisoner since the earlier fighting in July. Their release has been a major demand of the Cambodian side. The agreement also calls on both sides to adhere to international agreements against deploying land mines, a major concern of Thailand.Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet on Monday issued a statement to all Cambodian combatants along the border with Thailand."Even though we can still fight," he said, "as a small country we still have nothing to gain from prolonging the fighting for a long time."

a cliff. Of the 98 injured, five were in serious condition.

Most have been admitted to hospitals run by the Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS) in Matas Romero and Salina Cruz, while others were treated at IMSS-Wellbeing hospitals in Juchitán and Ixtepec.Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo posted on X, "The Secretariat of the Navy has informed me that in the Interoceanic Train accident, unfortunately 13 people died; 98 are injured, five of them seriously."Rescue workers were seen helping passengers alight from the derailed train, while local and federal authorities coordinated relief and medical assistance.Governor Saloizm Jara Cruz expressed deep regret over the accident and assured that state authorities were cooperating fully with federal teams to assist the affected families.

Mexico's Attorney General has launched an investigation into the cause of the derailment.The Interoceanic rail link, inaugurated two years ago under former President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, was designed to strengthen regional connectivity, boost passenger and freight transport, and create a strategic trade corridor across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec.Authorities continue to monitor the situation closely, focusing on the safety of passengers and providing urgent medical care to the injured. The accident underscores the need for rigorous safety measures on this vital rail corridor through Oaxaca's challenging terrain.

war to be reignited is absolutely not what the people of the two countries want and not what China, as your friend, wants to see. Therefore, we should resolutely look ahead and move forward," Mr. Wang said.Cambodian Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn said he believed the latest ceasefire would last and would create an environment for both nations to resume previously agreed-upon ways to settle differences, according to a Chinese interpreter. Sihasak also expressed hopes for peace with neighbouring countries.

After the meeting, Chinese official news agency Xinhua quoted Wang as saying the three nations reached a consensus to move forward with the ceasefire without reversal, maintain dialogue and restore ties between the two Southeast Asian countries step by step.A statement released by Xinhua, the Cambodian state news agency Agence Kampuchea Presse and the Thai Foreign Ministry said the three sides had in-depth exchanges on maintaining the ceasefire. The next key step was to work toward resuming normal exchanges, it said. China said it was ready to provide immediate humanitarian assistance for displaced residents, the statement said.

The countries also agreed to take more robust measures to combat transnational crimes, including telecom and online scams, the statement said.Sihasak and Prak Sokhonn had also held separate meetings with Wang on Sunday, the first day of the two-day gathering.The two Southeast Asian countries originally reached a ceasefire in July. It was brokered by Malaysia and pushed through under pressure from U.S. President Donald Trump, who threatened to withhold trade privileges unless Thailand and Cambodia agreed. The preliminary pact was followed by a more detailed October agreement.But Thailand and Cambodia carried on a bitter propaganda war, with minor, cross-border violence continuing. The tensions erupted into heavy fighting in early December.The Saturday (December 27) agreement calls for Thailand, after the ceasefire has held for 72 hours, to repatriate 18 Cambodian soldiers who have been held prisoner since the earlier fighting in July. Their release has been a major demand of the Cambodian side. The agreement also calls on both sides to adhere to international agreements against deploying land mines, a major concern of Thailand.Sihasak said Thailand would start repatriating the 18 Cambodian soldiers if the ceasefire could be maintained for 72 hours with no additional incidents. Thailand would also ask Cambodia to facilitate the return of remaining Thais in the Cambodian border city of Poipet, he said.

China's military to conduct ‘Justice Mission 2025’ live fire exercises around Taiwan

The Chinese military said on Monday (December 29, 2025) it was dispatching air, navy and rocket troops to conduct joint military drills around Taiwan, a move it called a "stern warning" against separatist and "external interference" forces.The drills came after Beijing expressed anger at a statement by Japan's Prime Minister, Sanae Takaichi, that its military could get involved if China were to take action against Taiwan, the self-governing island that the world's second-biggest economy says must come under its rule. But the Chinese military did not mention Japan in its statement on Monday (December 29, 2025) morning.

Taiwan, an island off the southeastern coast of China, separated from the mainland in 1949 amid Civil War. It has operated since then with its own government, though the mainland's government claims it as sovereign territory.Senior Col. Shi Yi, spokesperson of the People's Liberation Army's Eastern Theatre Command, said the drills, code-named "Justice Mission 2025", would be conducted in the Taiwan Straits and areas to the north, southwest, southeast and east of the island. Mr. Yi said the activities will focus on sea-air combat readiness patrol, "joint seizure of comprehensive superiority", blockades on key ports and deterrence outside the island chain."It is a stern



warning against 'Taiwan independence' separatist forces, and it is a legitimate and necessary action to safeguard China's sovereignty and national unity," the command said in a statement released on WeChat.Beijing last week also imposed sanctions against 20 U.S. defence-related companies and 10 executives, a week after Washington announced large-scale arms sales to Taiwan valued at more than USD 10 billion. If approved by the U.S. Congress, it would be the largest-ever American weapons package to the self-ruled territory.

U.S. offers Ukraine 15-year security guarantee as part of peace plan, Zelenskyy says

GNS News Agency, Jan 1

The United States is offering Ukraine security guarantees for a period of 15 years as part of a proposed peace plan, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Monday (December 29, 2025), though he said he would prefer an American commitment of up to 50 years to deter Russia from further attempts to seize its neighbour's land by force.U.S. President Donald Trump hosted Mr. Zelenskyy at his Florida resort on Sunday (December 28) and insisted that Ukraine and Russia are "closer than ever before" to a peace settlement.

Negotiators are still searching for a breakthrough on key issues, including whose forces withdraw from where and the fate of the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, one of the 10 biggest in the world. Mr. Trump noted that the months-long U.S.-led negotiations could still collapse."Without security guarantees, realistically, this war will not end," Mr. Zelenskyy told reporters in voice messages responding to questions sent via a WhatsApp chat.Ukraine has been fighting Russia since 2014, when it illegally annexed Crimea and Moscow-backed separatists took up arms in the Donbas, a vital industrial region in eastern Ukraine.

Details of the security guarantees have not become public, but Mr. Zelenskyy said on Monday (December 29) that they include how a peace deal would be monitored as well as the "presence" of partners. He didn't elaborate, but Russia has said it won't accept the deployment in Ukraine of troops from NATO countries.Kremlin spokesman Dmitry



Peskov said on Monday (December 29) that Russian President Vladimir Putin and Mr. Trump were expected to speak in the near future, but there was no indication the Russian leader would speak to Mr. Zelenskyy.French President Emmanuel Macron said Kyiv's allies will meet in Paris in early January to "finalise each country's concrete contributions" to the security guarantees.Mr. Trump said he would consider extending U.S. security guarantees for Ukraine beyond 15 years, according to Mr. Zelenskyy. The guarantees would be approved by the U.S. Congress as well as by parliaments in other countries involved in overseeing any settlement, he said.Mr. Zelenskyy said he wants the 20-point peace plan under discussion to be approved by Ukrainians in a national referendum.However, holding a ballot requires a ceasefire of at least 60 days, and Moscow has shown no willingness for a truce without a full settlement.

Russia strikes Ukraine's capital killing one, day before Zelenskyy-Trump meeting

GNS News Agency, Jan 1

Russia attacked Ukraine's capital with ballistic missiles and drones on Saturday (December 27, 2025), killing at least one person and wounding 27, a day before talks between the leaders of Ukraine and the United States, authorities said.Explosions boomed across Kyiv as the attack began in early morning and continued for hours.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy prepared to meet with U.S. President Donald Trump in Florida on Sunday for further talks on ending the nearly four-year war. Mr. Zelenskyy told reporters that he and Trump plan to discuss several matters, including security guarantees and territorial issues in the Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia regions."This attack is Russia's answer on our peace efforts. It really shows that (Russian President Vladimir) Putin does not want peace," Mr. Zelenskyy said after stopping in Canada to meet with Prime Minister Mark Carney in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Carney announced \$1.8 billion worth of economic assistance to Ukraine that helps unlock financing from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank for reconstruction and development."The barbarism that we saw overnight, the attack of Kyiv, shows just how important that we stand with Ukraine during this difficult time," Mr. Carney said.The Russian Defence Ministry said it carried out a "massive strike" overnight, using "long-range precision-guided weapons from land, air and sea, including Kinzhal hypersonic aeroballistic missiles" and drones. It said it targeted energy infrastructure facilities used by Ukraine's forces and military-industrial enterprises.

Earlier on Saturday, the ministry said air defences shot down seven Ukrainian drones over the Russian regions of Krasnodar and Adygeya overnight. On Saturday afternoon, the ministry said 147 more drones were shot down over a number of Russian regions.Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin said air defences intercepted more than 20 drones "flying towards" the Russian capital on Saturday. He did not report any damage or casualties. It was not immediately clear whether those were included in the Defence Ministry's count.Russia claims territorial gainsIn what could be viewed as an effort to further ramp up pressure on Ukraine before the Zelenskyy-Trump talks, the Kremlin on Saturday night released a video of Mr. Putin in military fatigues receiving reports from top military officials in an unidentified military command post.Russia's General Staff chief, Gen. Valery Gerasimov, reported to Putin that the Russian troops have taken full control of Myrnohrad in the Donetsk region — Russia uses the old Soviet name of the city, Dimitrov — the city of Huliaipole in the Zaporizhzhia region, and a few other settlements.

There was no immediate comment from Ukrainian officials. Ukraine's General Staff reported attempts by Russian forces "to push Ukrainian defenders from their positions" in a number of areas, including Myrnohrad, and Kyiv's forces repelling "enemy attempts to advance" in the areas of Huliaipole and Bilohiria.Mr. Putin said that "if Kyiv authorities are not willing to end the matter peacefully, we will achieve all the goals we have in the special military operation by military means".Poland scrambled fighter jets and closed airports in Lublin and Rzeszow near the border with Ukraine for several hours during the Russian attacks, the country's armed forces command said on social media.



There was no violation of Polish airspace, it said.Civil aviation authority Pansa later said the airports had resumed operations. It was unclear what caused the alert in Poland when the Russian attacks were focussed on Kyiv, which is far from the border.Russia targeted Ukraine with 519 drones and 40 missiles, Ukraine's air force said. The main target was energy and civilian infrastructure in Kyiv, Mr. Zelenskyy said. In some districts of the region, there is no electricity or heating because of the attacks, he said.

More than 10 residential buildings were damaged, Ukrainian Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko said on social media.Olena Karpenko, 52, said she heard a man as he burned to death. "His scream is still in my ears. I cannot believe it," she said, weeping.Karpenko said they heard an explosion at the nearby thermal power plant, followed by a stronger blast that shook the windows of her home. Then came the strike on her building.Two children were among those wounded in the attack, which hit seven locations across the capital, the head of the Kyiv Military Administration, Tymur Tkachenko, said on social media.A body was found under the rubble of one damaged building, he said. It was not immediately clear if that person was the man who burned to death.A fire broke out in an 18-story residential building in the Dnipro district, and emergency crews rushed to contain the flames. A 24-story residential building in the Darnytsia district was also hit, Tkachenko said, and more fires broke out in the Obolonskyi and Holosiivsky districts.In the wider Kyiv region, the strikes hit industrial and residential buildings, according to Ukraine's Emergency Service. In the Vyshhorod area, emergency crews rescued one person found under the rubble of a destroyed house.Ukraine's largest private energy company, DTEK, said on X on Saturday evening that the Russian attack caused "extensive power outages" in Kyiv, saying that hundreds of thousands of customers remained without power.Security guarantees prioritisedMr. Zelenskyy told reporters he would aim to ensure there were "as few unresolved issues as possible" in talks with Trump, while respecting Ukraine's red lines.Speaking by audio note in a WhatsApp chat with journalists, Mr. Zelenskyy said he would prioritise discussing security guarantees for Ukraine. He has said that in the draft peace plan, the US has committed to providing guarantees that mirror the NATO alliance's Article 5, which means an attack on Ukraine would trigger a collective military response from the US and its allies.Territorial concessions are the most sensitive of issues the two leaders will discuss, including the Donetsk region and the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant. Mr. Zelenskyy reiterated that Ukraine would never recognise any territory as Russian "under any circumstances".

Arundhati Roy’s beedi and the Republic of What-if



These were the words of a senior lawyer making his case against an image of Arundhati Roy smoking a beedi on the cover of her new book — and by the time he’s finished speaking these words, you realise the case isn’t really about tobacco. It’s about panic, particularly the Indian variety that sees a woman with a beedi and immediately imagines the collapse of civilisation, national health policy, and possibly the rupee.

The facts are boring. A book cover shows Ms. Roy with a beedi. The publisher adds a disclaimer saying this isn’t meant to promote smoking. But that doesn’t stop petitions from invoking tobacco advertising. Fortunately the courts look at the cover, recall the law, and say “relax”. Panic is rarely about facts. It’s about the delicious freedom of not knowing. “We don’t know if it’s a ganja beedi,” the lawyer says, and in that one sentence manages to confess both ignorance and certainty. He doesn’t know — but he knows enough to be frightened. And the less he knows, the more frightened he’s allowed to be. Soon, the courtroom is no longer dealing with a photograph. It’s dealing with a fantasy — a country where a book cover overpowers public-health campaigns, parental guidance, school curricula, and common sense. Prove the unprovable Unfortunately for this fantasy (and fortunately for us), the law doesn’t operate on what-ifs. It cares about “what is”. COTPA’s provisions on advertising are concerned with promoting tobacco products, not with whether a person somewhere might mistake a work of literature for a cigarette commercial and panic about imaginary ganja. The judges to their credit keep dragging the case back from the Republic of What-If to the Republic of India. Is this an advertisement? No. Is the photograph being used to sell tobacco? No. Is there already a disclaimer precisely to avoid confusion? Yes. Then the law has nothing further to say. What speculative fears do power is moral policing. If the state can’t quite ban something on the law as written, someone can always stand up and say, “We don’t know if…” and invite the court, or the media, to fill in the gaps with anxiety. Nothing has actually happened yet, and that’s the point. The harm is always potential, latent, “out there”. The work of art is treated as a time bomb whose existence the

artist must justify while the fear is treated as self-evidently legitimate, warranting no evidence at all. Ordinarily, if you want to censor something, you must show that it crosses some legal line, e.g. obscenity. But in the new culture of “we don’t know if…”, the artist needs to prove the unprovable: that no unknown hurt sentiment will ever surface. The fragile parent

The disclaimer on Roy’s book, offered in good-faith to signal that the image isn’t an ad, is immediately reimagined as “anticipatory bail”, a confession of guilt. It isn’t enough to clarify your intent: your very attempt to clarify becomes proof that you’ve got something to hide. Heads, the moral police wins; tails, free expression loses.

None of this is accidental. These speculative anxieties sit inside a larger political project. Call them the hidden structures (to borrow a term from physics) of our current culture wars — the background assumptions that are never litigated directly yet which shape which images are called “too much”. Some of these structures are easy to spot. Creative freedom is becoming suspicious by default. An artist or filmmaker isn’t just making something. They’re presumed to be smuggling in an agenda that corrupts youth and attacks the nation. Women’s autonomy in particular is always too visible! A male author with a cigarette is a trope; a female author with a beedi is “too much” — too much of a woman being at ease, too much of an author refusing to pose as a safe and respectable figure, too much of literature threatening to look like life instead of staying inside the classroom. Ultimately the state is reimagined as a fragile parent on the brink. The government’s anti-tobacco campaigns, we’re told, can be derailed by one cover. National resolve is no stronger than a matchstick. When right-wing nationalists fight liberal ideas, they rarely say “we want fewer dissenting books”. Instead, they say: we’re concerned about the youth, about women, about social harmony, about public health. The enemy isn’t the novel or the painting but the imaginary riot. The beedi on Roy’s cover thus becomes part of a script in which liberal expression is always one step away from catastrophe. And the court is invited not just to read the law but to share in the anxiety. “We don’t know if it’s a ganja beedi” is a request: please, Your Lordships, join our panic. What’s really “too much” in this episode isn’t the beedi. It’s the ambition of a politics that wants to supervise not just what the law forbids but what your imagination is allowed to settle on without immediately reporting itself to the nearest steering committee. But when you strip away the performance you’re left with something oddly small: a misreading of a law and a plea that the courts protect citizens from the risk of misinterpreting a photograph. In fact the Supreme Court’s response is the real satire, a measured reminder that renowned authors and publishers don’t need a beedi to sell books — and that “we don’t know if” is not a legal standard.

Shrinking space for the Humanities



Higher education across the world has, of late, been witnessing a significant shift toward disciplines such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). These disciplines foster technical knowledge and analytical skills and are much sought after because they are considered job-oriented. Modern universities, driven by global economic uncertainties and market forces, and seeking external funding and research grants, seem to be under pressure to prioritise programmes based on these disciplines. Besides, elite private universities, eager to justify exorbitant tuition fees, offer state-of-the-art courses aligned with the STEM trend.

It is unfortunate that the excessive patronage extended to such new-generation programmes is at the expense of the Humanities, which includes subjects such as history, philosophy, language and literature. There has been a systematic and organised attempt to marginalise and deprioritise such academic disciplines. Such discrimination is evident in the slashing of departmental funding and downsizing of the faculty — developments that inevitably lead to declining student enrolment, programme termination, and, ultimately, the closure of entire departments. The Humanities engage with human culture, history, and experience through critical and interpretive enquiry. They explore human values, expressions, and societies to deepen our understanding of what it means to be human. Studying the Humanities develops critical thinking, cultural awareness, empathy, ethical intelligence, and strong communication skills, shaping learners into well-rounded individuals. Endowed with historical perspective, moral sensibility, and creativity, such individuals stand ready to bring qualitative changes to social life.

Though these attributes may not always ensure lucrative jobs, unemployment is not particularly widespread among Humanities graduates. Their versatility, general awareness, leadership qualities, and flair for languages are indeed marketable. They have the potential to become great teachers who can mould the minds of millions; statesmen who think about the next generation and not just the next election; intellectuals who raise the level of public discourse; and social activists driven by justice, equality, and democratic values. The decline and devaluation of the humanities and the shrinking space they occupy on university campuses does not augur well for social harmony and peace. The trend reflects a moral ambivalence and cultural degeneration, often camouflaged by the ostentatious display of material prosperity. The diminishing role assigned to disciplines other than science, technology and business studies can undermine the cause of social justice and bring about cultural disintegration and moral corruption. It might spawn a generation that is too positivist and desensitised. A system that focuses solely on the creation of a knowledge economy would produce enormous wealth but promotes endless mass consumption, an outcome of a commercialised education system. A better understanding of the complementarity of science and the Humanities is essential for a functional and progressive society. A convergence of the head and the heart, intellect and emotion, what Matthew Arnold called “sweetness and light” would be the panacea for a wounded civilisation. Scientific temper blended with creativity is essential for the modern man. In this context, it might not be out of place to recall the insight-

ful observations made by Jawaharlal Nehru, the visionary leader of India, on the need to combine scientific temper with the emancipatory potential of the Humanities. According to Nehru, a university must stand for humanism, tolerance, reason, adventure of ideas, and the quest for truth. He visualised the harmonious coexistence of the Humanities and science and technology on Indian campuses. He believed that critical thinking, humanism and social responsibility would humanise technology. Herbert Marcuse, the German-American social critic and political theorist of the ‘Frankfurt School’, posited that denial of the study of Humanities and the broader philosophical capacity for critical thinking, contributes significantly to the creation of the “one-dimensional man”, who seldom questions the status quo and always accepts the dominant social order. Modern society, propelled by technological rationality and consumerism, focuses on what is immediately useful. The prevailing education system that dispenses with critical thinking will promote a utilitarian culture that produces individuals who are unable to recognise their own alienation or challenge the social control under which they are reduced to blissful slaves. Scientists seek to unravel the mysteries of the physical universe. But empathy, emotional intelligence and intuition nurtured by the Humanities are needed to know the inner universe, to strike a chord with the “still sad music of humanity” and to probe the possibility of a more fulfilling existence on this planet.

Kremlin welcomes end to ‘direct threat’ label in U.S. national security strategy: report

The Kremlin welcomed a move by U.S. President Donald Trump’s administration to revise its national security strategy and stop calling Russia a “direct threat,” spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Sunday (December 7, 2025). Since Russia’s 2014 annexation of Crimea and its 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine, U.S. strategies have designated Moscow as a major threat. However, the updated U.S. policy, announced on Friday, adopts a softer tone, urging limited cooperation. Mr. Peskov told the state-run TASS news agency the updated document dropped language describing Russia as a direct threat and instead urged cooperation with Moscow on strategic stability issues. “We considered this a positive step,” he said, adding that Moscow would examine the document closely before drawing broader conclusions. “We certainly need to look at it more closely and analyse it,” Mr. Peskov was quoted as saying.

The new 29-page strategy set out Trump’s foreign policy vision as one of “flexible realism” and said U.S. policy would be driven above all by “what works for America”, according to the document. Washington would seek a quick resolution to the conflict in Ukraine and aimed to re-establish “strategic stability” with Moscow, while maintaining that Russia’s actions in Ukraine remained a central security concern, the document said. The strategy was released amid a stalled U.S. peace initiative, in which Washington presented a proposal that endorsed Russia’s main demands in the nearly four-year-old war. Mr. Trump has often made positive and admiring comments about Russian President Vladimir Putin, prompting critics to accuse him of being soft on Moscow even as his administration maintained sanctions over Russia’s actions in Ukraine. European allies, reliant on U.S. military support to deter Russia, have watched the shift closely and voiced concern that softer U.S. language might weaken efforts to confront Moscow as the war in Ukraine continues.

Trump's Pentagon chief under fire as scandals mount



U.S. Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth is under mounting pressure from scandals surrounding strikes on alleged drug boats and his use of Signal to discuss sensitive military information, sparking growing criticism and calls for him to quit. Mr. Hegseth — a former Army National Guard major who went from Fox News co-host to leader of the world’s most powerful military — is no stranger to controversy and was only narrowly confirmed by the Senate earlier this year. The strikes on alleged narcotics smugglers — especially an incident in which survivors of an initial attack were subsequently killed — and his use of commercial messaging app Signal to talk about an impending operation in Yemen, have fuelled further opposition to Mr. Hegseth. “He’s in another difficult position. In fact, his two big problems have now merged,” said Mark Cancian, a retired U.S. Marine colonel and senior advisor at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

“But he seems to retain [U.S. President Donald] Trump’s confidence, even as he’s lost support of some Republicans. So I don’t think he’s in... [a] fatal situation,” Mr. Cancian said. Jim Townsend, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for European and NATO policy during the Obama administration, said Mr. Hegseth is “on thin ice,” and that Mr. Trump has “a Secretary of Defence that is giving him lots of headaches.” Mr. Townsend agreed that Mr. Hegseth is unlikely to be fired immediately, but said if something happens that “really riles up the Republican Party” or embarrasses Mr. Trump’s Make America Great Again movement, “they’ll probably try to move him somewhere else.” Yemen strikes Mr. Hegseth came under fire during his

The price of breathing



Delhi is facing winter, and with it the familiar air of emergency — schools closing, flights getting diverted, masks reappearing, and the skyline dissolving into a grey wall. The pollution is not the only worry. The deeper concern is that, like every year, we have arrived here after violating all deadlines meant to prevent this crisis. Firecrackers were banned, but burst in full splendour; stubble-burning cut-off dates were set, but ignored; construction norms exist, but get flouted. Even the decision to create artificial rain — at enormous cost — came only after the air had turned toxic. This raises a deeper question: why are deadlines and public-interest rules so routinely broken in India?

A common psychological belief is that individual actions are too small to affect an entire city. Farmers burning a few acres of straw, motorists skipping a pollution control test, or residents lighting “just a few” crackers — the reasoning is the same: My crackers can’t pollute the whole city, can they? But when millions act on this belief, we get exactly what follows Deepavali every year: a massive spike in PM2.5 levels (particulate matter with a diameter of 2.5 micrometres or less), sharp drops in visibility, and children with breathlessness being rushed to clinics. Behavioural scientists call this the tragedy of the commons — where each individual’s small gain creates a large, shared loss.

India is a country of festivals, but our “celebrations” have expanded into noisy and toxic dimensions. Firecrackers — once limited to simple phool jharis and diyas — have now turned into industrial-scale explosives. The sentiment “This is a once-a-year event; let’s enjoy without restrictions”

Japan, Australia urge calm after Chinese radar locks on Japanese jets

Japan and Australia urged calm on Sunday after Chinese military aircraft locked radar on Japanese fighter jets, a month after the Japanese leader’s recent remarks on Taiwan that stirred tensions between Tokyo and Beijing. Defence Minister Shinjirō Koizumi said Japan formally protested the incident, calling it “an extremely regrettable” act and “a dangerous” one that “exceeded the scope necessary for safe aircraft operations.” “We have lodged a strong protest with the Chinese side and demanded strict preventive measures,” Mr. Koizumi said. Japan’s Defence Ministry said China’s military aircraft J-15 took off from the Chinese carrier Liaoning near the southern island of Okinawa on Saturday (December 6) and “intermittently” latched its radar on Japanese F-15 fighter jets on two occasions, for about three minutes in the late afternoon and for about 30 minutes in the evening. It was not made clear whether the radar lock incident involved the same Chinese J-15 both times. Japanese fighter jets had been scrambled to pursue Chinese jets that were conducting aircraft takeoff and landing exercises in the Pacific. They were pursuing the Chinese aircraft at a safe distance and did not take actions that could be interpreted as provocation, Kyodo News agency said, quoting defence officials, when the radar lock happened. There was no breach of Japanese airspace, and no injury or damage was reported from the incident.

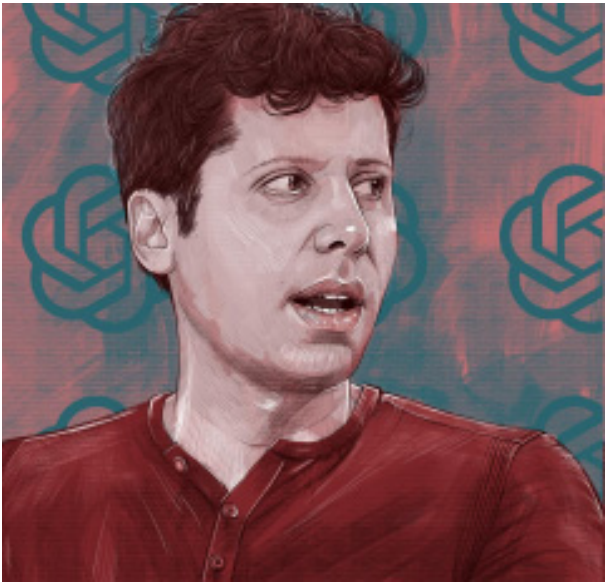
Senior Colonel Wang Xuemeng, spokesperson for the Chinese Navy, defended China’s flight training near the Miyako island on Saturday (December 6), saying Beijing announced the exercises beforehand and accused Japanese aircraft of “harassment”. Mr. Wang, in a statement posted Sunday (December 7) on the Chinese Ministry of Defence website said, “We solemnly asked the Japanese side to immediately stop slandering and smearing, and

confirmation process over alleged financial mismanagement at veterans’ nonprofits where he previously worked, reports of excessive drinking, and allegations that he sexually assaulted a woman in California. His time as Secretary of Defence has also been marred by scandals, including one related to strikes on Yemen that were launched in mid-March. The Atlantic magazine revealed that its editor-in-chief had been inadvertently included in a Signal chat in which officials, including Mr. Hegseth, discussed the upcoming operation. The Pentagon chief sent messages on the timing of strikes hours before they happened and information on aircraft and missiles involved. The incident sparked an investigation by the Pentagon’s independent inspector general’s office, which concluded in a report released on Thursday (December 4, 2025) that Mr. Hegseth’s actions could have resulted in “potential harm to U.S. pilots.” Targeting alleged drug boats Another controversy stemmed from a September 2 attack on an alleged drug-smuggling boat in the Pacific. An initial strike left survivors, with a follow-up attack killing those two people. Mr. Hegseth and the White House have repeatedly said the decision for the second strike was made by the operational commander, Admiral Frank Bradley, rather than the Defence Secretary. Lawmakers attended a classified briefing on Capitol Hill this week in which they were shown extended video footage of the incident — only a brief part of which has been publicly released — but there are conflicting views about whether the follow-up strikes were justified. The footage showed “the United States military attacking shipwrecked sailors — bad guys, bad guys — but attacking shipwrecked sailors,” said Democratic Representative Jim Himes. Republican Senator Tom Cotton — another briefing attendee — described all four strikes on the boat as “entirely lawful and needful,” and said the survivors were attempting to flip the drug-laden vessel back over and “stay in the fight.” Mr. Hegseth has faced calls from some Democratic lawmakers for his resignation or firing over the follow-up strikes and the Signal controversy, but his job seems safe for the moment. Mr. Cancian, however, said that another scandal could push the Trump administration to remove him as Defence Secretary. “If there’s maybe another one after this... the White House might lose its patience,” he said, describing the controversies that have already occurred as “very embarrassing.”

prevails. But pollution is not a one-day event. Its effects linger — spikes in asthma and respiratory distress within 24 hours of Deepavali, and air quality sliding into “hazardous” overnight. Cultural introspection is overdue. Laws and bans exist, but enforcement is inconsistent. An unenforced rule rarely becomes a real law. When people see neighbours lighting crackers or farmers burning stubble without consequences, compliance collapses. Contrast this with Delhi’s behavioural shift after seat belts and speed cameras became the norm. Compliance rose sharply because enforcement was visible. Pollution rules need similar visibility — real-time challans for cracker violations, drones monitoring hotspots, and ward-level pollution reports displayed publicly. Civic pride Can culture change? Yes — and there is precedent. Indore turned waste segregation, once resisted everywhere, into a badge of civic pride. Cleanliness was reframed as identity. School campaigns, neighbourhood competitions, and public celebration of compliance created a culture where following rules was socially rewarded. Delhi’s air crisis demands a similar rethink. Clean air must be linked to shared identity, not just individual sacrifice. A cultural shift cannot rely on bans alone. You cannot take something away without offering something equally joyful in return. Cities around the world are replacing fireworks with drone shows, laser and projection-mapped light festivals, and low-smoke, low-noise regulated pyrotechnics. These are not dull alternatives — they are spectacular, photogenic, and family-friendly. India has already experimented with drone shows at the G20 Summit and in several State capitals. Imagine Indian cities hosting grand, free, open light festivals every Deepavali — creating a true community celebration without toxicity. Children are among the strongest forces for cultural change. When schools run “Green Deepavali” campaigns, families listen. When children calculate the cost of air pollution — school disruptions, health impact, emergency expenses — they bring the moral clarity adults often lack. Delhi’s worsening air is not inevitable. It is the sum of our choices. This winter, we must ask: can we celebrate without poisoning the air our children breathe? If we can shift even one festive habit — from noise to light, from smoke to spectacle — we would not just be keeping the air clean. We would be redefining celebration, responsibility, and civic sense in modern India.

strictly restrain its frontline actions. The Chinese Navy will take necessary measures in accordance with the law to resolutely safeguard its own security and legitimate rights and interests.” Relations between Japan and China have worsened after Japan’s Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi said in early November its military could get involved if China were to take action against Taiwan, the self-governing island that Beijing claims as its own. Japan and Australia, whose Defence Ministers held their scheduled talks in Tokyo on Sunday (December 7), expressed worry over the development. “We are deeply concerned by the actions of China in the last 24 hours,” Australian Defence Minister Richard Marles told a joint news conference on Sunday (December 7) after holding talks with Mr. Koizumi. “We expect those interactions to be safe and professional.” Australia does “not want to see any change to the status quo across the Taiwan Straits”, Mr. Marles said, adding that China is his country’s largest trade partner and he wants to have productive relations with Beijing. “We continue to advocate to China about these issues again, in a very calm, sensible and moderate way,” he said. Talks deepen between Japan and Australia amid rising China tensions Japan and Australia, during Sunday talks, agreed to bolster military ties to lead the region’s multilateral defence cooperation. The two Ministers agreed to form a comprehensive “framework for strategic defence coordination” and discuss further details. Tokyo has been accelerating its military buildup while expanding its defence ties beyond its only treaty ally, the United States. It now considers Australia to be a semi-ally. Mr. Marles also visited a Mitsubishi Heavy Industries shipyard in Nagasaki on Saturday (December 6) to observe production of the upgraded Mogami-class frigate that his country chose in September as a replacement for its aging fleet.

Sam Altman | Merchant of the future



Work pressure might be simmering down worldwide as the holidays approach, but at OpenAI, CEO Sam Altman has declared “code red”. Mr. Altman, 40, stressed the need for the company to improve user experience with ChatGPT by enhancing its speed, reliability, ability to answer more questions, and its personalisation — even if that means holding back other products, according to a report. OpenAI in October reached a valuation of \$500 billion, so what could have caused this urgent shift? One answer is Google, which in November introduced its “most intelligent model” yet: Gemini 3. From a child who experimented with his Macintosh computer to announcing a partnership with Apple decades later, the CEO of one of the world’s most famous tech companies has always juggled both tech and business aspirations.

Samuel Harris Altman, born in Chicago on April 22, 1985, grew up with his younger siblings, two brothers and a sister, in a Jewish family. He lived in Missouri and studied computer science at Stanford University but dropped out in 2005, according to Forbes. Mr. Altman went on to co-found Loopt, a social mapping service designed to help people discover more about their location. He later sold Loopt and became closely involved with Y Combinator and had been the start-up launcher’s president between 2014 and 2019. Though best known for his work in the generative AI space, Mr. Altman was active in the blockchain sector. He is a co-founder of Worldcoin, a cryptocurrency project introduced in 2021 and launched in 2023 that aims to collect people’s biometric data in exchange for giving them an ID and some digital currency simply for “being human”. Activists allege that the project was used to harvest biometric data without informed consent from people in poverty-struck regions, while Mr. Altman’s initiative was also publicly criticised by NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden.

OpenAI was founded in 2015 as a non-profit artificial intelligence research company. Billionaire Elon Musk was part of the organisation but left its Board three years later over differences over how to operate the company. Since the introduction of ChatGPT in late 2022, Microsoft has invested billions in OpenAI to leverage generative AI technology for its own products. The two companies — and their CEOs — gradually drifted apart as they became competitors. Furthermore, Mr. Musk and Mr. Altman’s relationship has soured badly since 2018, with Mr. Musk suing OpenAI multiple times over alleged violations of business regulations, while the ChatGPT-maker claimed it was being harassed by the billionaire who now has his own AI company: xAI. There were also internal conflicts. In November 2023, Mr. Altman was suddenly fired from OpenAI, with the company noting that “he was not consistently candid in his

communications with the board”. Soon, Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella announced that Mr. Altman would join the software giant to lead its AI team. In a surprising turn, however, Mr. Altman returned as the CEO of OpenAI, with Board members Helen Toner, Tasha McCauley, and OpenAI co-founder Ilya Sutskever later being removed. The tech world keenly observed the chaotic series of events, which highlighted Mr. Altman’s influence over his peers. A string of employees left the company soon after, with former researcher Jan Leike claiming that “safety culture and processes have taken a backseat to shiny products”. In the months following ChatGPT’s viral fame, Mr. Altman faced criticism over OpenAI’s approach to training its AI models, with authors and creators alleging that the company illegally scraped their copyrighted works, possibly from piracy databases, to feed AI models with high-quality information. The New York Times joined the fray as it sued OpenAI over alleged copyright infringements.

OpenAI and Mr. Altman are facing a lawsuit filed by two U.S. parents regarding a far more serious matter. Matthew and Maria Raine in August alleged that ChatGPT helped “coach” their 16-year-old son Adam Raine into dying by suicide. The Raine family said that ChatGPT taught their teenager about various self-harm and suicide methods that he later used to take his life, and that the chatbot reportedly discouraged the child from seeking human support. OpenAI expressed its sympathies and has since rolled out safety settings for children, but intends to defend ChatGPT. Mr. Altman, meanwhile, has defended user freedom for adult users of ChatGPT. Concerns over child safety caused ripples even as OpenAI moved to redefine its non-profit structure. In October, the company announced that the non-profit was the OpenAI Foundation, while the for-profit was a public benefit corporation called OpenAI Group PBC; the foundation controls the group and their mission is the same, says the company. Microsoft now holds around 27% of the OpenAI Group. Mr. Altman married his partner Oliver Mulherin in January 2024, and announced the arrival of his son this year by sharing the baby’s photo on the Musk-owned social media platform X. While there were congratulatory messages, the comments on X were also teeming with anti-Semitic and homophobic hate speech. Mr. Altman does not frequently post about his family on social media, but his personal life made headlines after a family member alleged that he sexually abused her for years when she was a child, and filed a lawsuit against him. In January, Mr. Altman issued a public statement denying all allegations, calling them “utterly untrue” and expressing concern about the woman’s well-being. Uncertain future

ChatGPT recently turned three, with Mr. Altman claiming that the chatbot has more than 800 million weekly users. ChatGPT is unquestionably the chatbot that led the generative AI boom in 2023, with Microsoft and Google following with their own chatbot releases that felt rushed and spewed grave errors as a result of AI chatbot hallucination, shocking long-time customers of these legacy companies. OpenAI greatly enjoyed its first-mover advantages, with Mr. Altman jetting around the globe to meet world leaders, discuss AI regulation, and explore expansion overseas. However, Google’s sudden leap ahead presents a new threat for Mr. Altman, who previously exulted in his first-mover advantages. At over 25 years of age, Google is a behemoth that dominates multiple search and online technology markets and platforms. In other words, Google can likely bear larger losses for longer than OpenAI as it promotes top-of-the-line AI offerings and integrates them into products used by billions. Google announced last month that its AI Overviews has 2 billion users every month and that the Gemini app surpasses 650 million users per month. According to the Internet search giant, its Gemini 3 Pro model beat OpenAI’s recently upgraded GPT-5.1 across a range of key AI benchmarks.

strikes so far. Multiple warships, including the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R Ford, have been stationed in the Caribbean Sea. Besides blocking all property and interests in the U.S. and prohibiting transactions, the FTO designation may strengthen the U.S. case for military action in Venezuela, giving the military and law enforcement greater power.

The term FTOs was expanded earlier this year to include eight Latin American criminal organisations. In July 2025, the Treasury Department sanctioned the Cartel de los Soles as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist. Now, it has said the cartel funnelled support to Tren de Aragua and the Sinaloa Cartel, designated FTOs and Specially Designated Global Terrorists on February 20, 2025. Tren de Aragua is a Venezuelan crime group involved in drug and human trafficking, money laundering, extortion and exploitation. The Sinaloa Cartel is one of the oldest and most powerful cartels in Mexico. Notably, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration has not called Cartel de los Soles a drug trafficking organisation in its annual National Drug Threat Assessment. The Trump administration has also not provided any evidence to substantiate its claims that Mr. Maduro is heading it. Venezuela’s Foreign Ministry has categorically rejected the designation, terming it a “new and ridiculous lie” while Mr. Cabello has called it an invention and an excuse for U.S. officials to target those they don’t like.

Thousands of devotees from across Bengal, other States arrive in Kolkata for mega Gita recital

Thousands of devotees, including sadhus and sadhvis from across West Bengal and adjoining States, have begun assembling at the Brigade Parade Ground in Kolkata on Sunday (December 7, 2025) morning to participate in a mega Bhagavad Gita recital.

Christened ‘Panch Lakkho Konthe Gita Path’ (Gita chanting by five lakh voices), the programme is being organised by the Sanatan Sanskriti Sansad, a collective of monks and spiritual leaders drawn from various monasteries and Hindu religious institutions.

Waving saffron religious flags, participants streamed into the venue from early morning, many carrying copies of the Gita. Cultural performances have already started, setting the tone for the day-long event. “Ahead of the chanting, the energy here is overwhelming. We all read Gita at home, but reciting it along with five lakh people is an experience of awakening -- a prayer for the world’s peace and prosperity,” said a sadhvi from a West Bengal-based ashram. The spiritual lead will be taken by Swami Gyananandaji Maharaj of the Geeta Manishi Mahamandal, with yoga guru Baba Ramdev and other renowned monks invited as special guests.

ED to chargesheet Gurugram realty company, promoter for multi-crore 'fraud' in PMAY



The Enforcement Directorate is soon expected to chargesheet a Gurugram-based real estate company and its promoters in a multi-crore money laundering investigation linked to alleged irregularities in the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna (PMAY) and fraud with homebuyers, official sources said on Sunday (December 7, 2025). Swaraj Singh Yadav, the MD and “key person” of the company named Ocean Seven Buildtech Pvt. Ltd. (OSBPL), was arrested by the federal probe agency on November 13 and is currently lodged in jail under judicial custody.

The ED has alleged that Mr. Yadav “fraudulently diverted” and laundered homebuyers’ funds worth ₹222 crore collected under PMAY through cancellation and re-sale of units at inflated prices, collection of substantial cash premiums, and diversion of Escrow proceeds into “shell” (dummy) entities. The PMAY aims to provide housing to the economically weaker sections as part of the Union Government’s ambitious plan to ensure ‘home for all’. The agency, sources said, is carrying out an exercise for valuation of the assets of the company and its promoters so that they can be possibly attached under the anti-money laundering law and later restituted to the victims of the alleged fraud. A chargesheet is also expected to be filed against Mr. Yadav and his linked entities soon, the sources said. There was no immediate response from the company on the allegations made by the ED against it and its MD. The agency had claimed to have found a “pattern of accelerated liquidation” of personal and company-held assets by Mr. Yadav across Gurugram,



The kettle exhales before anyone does. Clink. Steel spoons kiss glass tumblers. Tap-tap. Someone crushes adrak and tulsi, releasing their fragrance. Ghooon-ghooonshhhh... Milk swirls into black tea like monsoon clouds drifting into the sunrise. Across the staffroom, a professor pauses mid-sentence — her spectacles fogging — while a student, clutching freshly printed research drafts, forgets both citation formats and imposter syndrome. In this moment, academia dissolves not in theory, but in steam. We have spent decades speaking of knowledge exchange, yet seldom of warmth exchange. University corridors buzz with deadlines and debates, but rarely with gentleness. Tea, in most institutions, arrives hurriedly on steel trays, shouted for rather than invited. Cups drop on desks as punctuation marks rather than pauses. But what if tea were not caffeine

What the resurgence of Mechanical Engineering means for students and HEIs

Over the past decade, India has steadily built the capacity to design and manufacture world-class equipment and systems, not only for itself but also for global markets. This quiet transformation of Indian industry carries an important message for today’s students: that Mechanical Engineering and manufacturing are not relics of the past. They are the fastest route to shaping India’s future. For years, Computer Science and Information Technology absorbed the lion’s share of student interest. Mechanical Engineering and other traditional disciplines were neglected. In 2020–21, enrollment in Mechanical Engineering dropped to 10% of B.Tech intake but, by this year, nearly 19% of engineering students are choosing mechanical disciplines again. The resurgence reflects a new recognition that India’s economic destiny will be written as much in factories and design labs as in the digital economy.

Powerful convergenceAt the centre of this transformation is a powerful convergence of technology, policy, and resilience. Factories across the country are becoming smart, connected ecosystems. Robotics, artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, and digital twins are reshaping the way goods are designed and produced. Thus, the engineer of the future will require a dual toolkit. On one side are timeless capabilities such as materials science, mechanics, thermodynamics, and systems thinking. On the other are emerging skills that align with digitisation and sustainability.

The industry needs a blend of classical strengths (statistics, materials, systems thinking) and digital fluency. Think additive manufacturing (moving from prototyping to production parts), mechatronics and controls, industrial IoT and sensor analytics, digital twins for simulation, and sustainability-driven design (life-cycle thinking and materials circularity). Additionally, the industry readiness also demands soft skills like cross-disciplinary teamwork, project management, and the ability to translate customer problems into producible designs. This shift calls for a stronger collaboration between academia and industry. Universities cannot remain bound by outdated curricula while companies face an acute skills shortage. A decisive pivot is needed. Longer internships that expose students to real-world manufacturing challenges, joint laboratories co-funded by corporates, and dynamic syllabi guided by industry experts will help create industry-ready graduates. Multidisciplinary capstone projects, where Mechanical,

Maharashtra and Rajasthan in the recent past to convert “illicit” gains into easily disposable form. The ED told a court and in a public statement that Mr. Yadav’s wife Sunita Swaraj “relocated” to the U.S. in August, 2025 and was found residing at Harvard University at Boston in Massachusetts, while his children (a son and a daughter) were studying at the Trinity College in Connecticut. “...such accelerated sales indicates a clear attempt to dissipate assets and evade legal action,” the ED alleged. The agency also detected an alleged modus operandi deployed by Mr. Yadav to generate illicit funds by “cancelling” allotments of flats under PMAY under “false” pretexts and reselling the same units at higher prices without refunding earlier payments, thereby collecting dual proceeds.

Mr. Yadav, the ED said, also controlled the cash-based premium collection over and above the money received through banking channels in such resales. A similar cash-driven mechanism was followed in the sale of parking areas, where only a nominal amount was routed through the company’s bank, and the remaining premium was taken in cash as per his instructions. “These actions are part of a larger investigation into the misuse of escrow funds and other violations mentioned in multiple FIRs for predicate offences,” as per the ED. The ED found that the price of one PMAY flat was ₹26.5 lakh but the allotment of the eligible homebuyer was cancelled under the pretext of non-payment and subsequently re-sold at a price ranging from ₹40-50 lakh. “This resale process was executed without refunding the amount paid by the previous customer, ensuing collection of dual payments against the same unit [house],” the ED found. The agency also found that Mr. Yadav transferred a “huge” amount to the U.S. via a bank account opened in the name of his wife through “hawala” transactions. Mr. Yadav’s legal team told a Delhi court during his remand proceedings in November that the majority FIRs on which the ED relied to file a money laundering case against their client have been “settled”. The court of Additional Sessions Judge (Patiala House courts) Shafali Bamala Tandon subsequently rejected Mr. Yadav’s plea to quash his arrest and allowed ED’s application for his 14 days custody on November 14. He was later sent to judicial custody.

Steaming silences at academic corridors

intervention, but communion? What if we reclaimed tea not as a beverage, but as a philosophy?

Inspired by Okakura Kakuzo’s The Book of Tea, let us propose a new academic ethic: tea as ceremony, not consumption. Tea must be a pause, not a transaction. Let the boiling of water be heard like a prelude. Let silence be served before tea. Let mobiles be face-down, and eyes face each other. Each gathering must carry intention, let ingredients speak before words do. If calm is needed, let tulsi or jasmine float softly in the pot. If courage is demanded before a presentation or committee decision, let black pepper or clove awaken the tongue. For affection, offer elaichi or kesar; for grounding, stir in jaggery. And let this be announced as the tea is offered: “Today’s tea carries pepper — for clarity and boldness. Let us speak firmly, but never harshly.” Suddenly, tea becomes not a flavour, but a language. Most of all, let tea dissolve hierarchy. In that circle, there must be no Head of Department, no Junior Research Fellow, no Professor Emeritus. Only co-drinkers. The cup is the great equaliser.

A slightly chipped mug in one hand and a terracotta kulhad in another become the true academic credentials. No tea gathering is successful unless someone laughs without fear and someone speaks without caution. Before dispersing, look once — at the kettle, at the cup, or at the person who poured — and say aloud: “Thank you — for warmth, not just tea.” For only gratitude completes a tea gathering. Not applause, not politics, not metrics.

Cartel de los Soles | Mission Maduro



The U.S Department of State has designated Cartel de los Soles (Cartel of the Suns) as a “foreign terrorist organisation”, effective November 24, 2025. According to the U.S, the Venezuela-based cartel is headed by President Nicolas Maduro and other high-ranking officials of his government, corrupting the country’s military, intelligence, legislature, and judiciary. The term Cartel de los Soles emerged in the 1990s, coined by Venezuelan media after a General overseeing counter-narcotic action in the National Guard was accused of drug trafficking. The name stems from the sun insignia worn by Venezuelan military officers on the epaulettes of their uniform to indicate rank.

Soon, the term spread to all officials with alleged drug ties, not necessarily belonging to one organisation. In a media interview, Jeremy McDermott, co-director of InsightCrime, a Washington-based think tank, called the so-called cartel “a series of normally disconnected cells embedded within the Venezuelan military” rather than a traditional hierarchical crime organisation. Drug activities in Venezuela reportedly emerged post the dismantling of cartels such as the Medellín in Colombia, leading to the emergence of new routes. Crime and corruption have flourished as Venezuela grapples with an economic crisis that has persisted for years. In a 2020 indictment, the U.S. Department of Justice alleged that Mr. Maduro and 14 others had conspired with Colombian rebels and Venezuelan military officers “to flood the United States with cocaine” and use the drug trade as a “weapon against America”. Information about this alleged ring was provided by Leamsy Salazar, a former security chief for Hugo Chávez, Mr. Maduro’s predecessor. Prosecutors alleged that since 1999, the Cartel de los Soles was helmed by Mr. Maduro, Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello, former spy chief Hugo Carvajal (El Pollo), and former General Clíver Alcalá. Others included in the indictment were Defence Minister Vladimir Padrino and Maikel Moreno, the former Supreme Court head. The current cartel designation is being seen as a way to further pressure Mr. Maduro. The U.S government has refused to accord legitimacy to Mr. Maduro’s regime, dismissing last year’s elections as rigged. It has also promised rewards worth \$50 million and \$25 million, respectively, for information leading to the capture of Mr. Maduro and Mr. Cabello. Adopting a headline stance, the Trump government started attacking boats in the Caribbean, accusing them of drug trafficking. More than 80 people have been killed in the

IndiGo, Air India warn of flight cancellations as dense fog blankets Delhi IGI Airport



The Delhi Airport and major airlines — IndiGo and Air India — have warned of possible flight cancellations and delays due to the dense fog conditions prevailing across North, East and Northeast India. In an advisory on Monday morning, the Delhi airport authority said it had activated CAT-3 procedures for flight operations due to poor visibility. Aviation regulator, DGCA, has announced 10 December 2025-10 February 2026 as the official fog window this season.

The general visibility at Indira Gandhi International Airport in Delhi on Monday was reduced to barely 50 metres, with the temperature hovering around 11 degrees Celsius. This prompted the airport to activate CAT-3 measures. This is a specialized navigation system used when visibility is very low, allowing equipped aircraft and trained pilots to land in thick fog. While CAT III allows for landings, the low visibility often causes a backlog. Passengers should expect delays and potential cancellations, the airport said in a statement. "Do not head to the airport without confirming your flight status first. Contact your airline directly via their app, website, or customer service helpline," Delhi IGI airport advised. Dense fog in Noida POV — You are driving in Delhi-NCR on Monday morning amid the dense fog that reduced visibility to only a few metres If your flight is still scheduled, allow extra time for your commute to the airport, as road visibility is also poor. On Monday morning most vehicles in Delhi-NCR had their hazard lights on as the visibility on the roads were barely a few metres. The country's largest airline IndiGo said early-morning fog is expected to hit visibil-

ity across Delhi, Amritsar, and Chandigarh. "During these hours, visibility can reduce suddenly, impacting flight operations. Our teams will remain fully prepared through the night, monitoring the weather minute by minute," it said. Dense fog in Jammu continues to affect visibility, impacting flights operating to and from the airport. "As conditions evolve, some services may experience delays, and a few may need to be cancelled depending on clearance and operational feasibility," the airline said. It also warned of disruptions due to low visibility and fog in Kolkata, Guwahati, Dehradun, and Hindon. IndiGo flyers across the country are advised to keep checking the status of their flights before heading to the airports. IndiGo rescheduling or refunds claims can be done at <https://goindigo.in/plan-b.html>.

Air India said flight routes in North India, including the airline's primary hub Delhi, are likely to be hit due to dense fog-induced low visibility. It warned of a cascading impact on flight schedules across the network in India. "Passengers also have the option to avail complimentary rescheduling or opt for full refund without penalty through Air India Fog Care: <https://www.airindia.com/in/en/manage/fog-care.html>, ” the airline said in a statement. Air India flyers can check the status of their flights at <https://www.airindia.com/in/en/manage/flight-status.html> or reach out to 0116 932 9333 for queries. SpiceJet, too, said due to poor visibility in Delhi, all departures and arrivals and their consequential flights might get affected. Passengers are requested to keep a check on their flight status via <http://spicejet.com/#status>. The Airports Authority of India warned of disruptions due to fog and issued helpline numbers for all airlines. In a statement, it said: "Due to fog today on 29.12.2025 visibility levels in Northern India has reduced at select airports potentially impacting flight schedules, including delays. Passengers are advised to stay in touch with their respective airlines through official communication channels for the latest flight updates and to plan their travel accordingly by allowing additional time for airport arrival and check-in procedures." "AAI has activated passenger facilitation measures and deployed assistance teams at affected airports to support travellers on the ground. We remain committed to ensuring passenger safety, convenience, and smooth airport operations during adverse weather conditions," it added.

US deal alone insufficient to secure India's long-term trade, export growth: CII Director General Chandrajit Banerjee



While valuable, a free trade agreement (FTA) with the US in itself will not be enough to secure India's long-term trade and export growth, according to Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). Having concluded agreements with UK, New Zealand, and Oman in 2025, Banerjee said the industry is hopeful 2026 will see a "broader and more strategic push, both through early conclusion of other key negotiations, including with the European Union, and through effective implementation of already-signed agreements to ensure tangible benefits for exporters, especially Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)." In an interview with The Indian Express, Banerjee also discussed India's macroeconomic situation, the government's reform push, and the weakening of foreign fund flows into the country. Edited excerpts:

2025 has been a great year for the Indian economy looking at GDP growth and inflation. What is your outlook for 2026 for these key macro indicators? Recent data point to sustained strength, with real GDP growth exceeding 8 per cent in the first half of the fiscal year, continued expansion in manufacturing and services PMIs (Purchasing Managers' Index), resilient services exports, recovery in rural demand, and steady traction in government capital expenditure. Reinforcing this positive assessment, the latest CII-Business Confidence Index rose for the third consecutive quarter to 66.5 in Q3, up from 66.0 in Q2 and 66.2 in the same quarter last year, marking the highest level in the past five quarters and signalling sustained improvement in business sentiment.

What adds to our confidence is the increasingly broad-based nature of growth. Public capex is effectively crowding in private investment, corporate balance sheets remain healthy, and capacity utilisation is gradually improving. The lagged impact of tax reforms, regulatory measures, and monetary easing is beginning to support consumption and investment decisions, even as global conditions remain uncertain. Looking ahead, India's domestic demand engines, led by investment, infrastructure-driven activity and a strong services sector, are expected to provide stability to growth. At CII, we expect GDP growth in the range of 7.3-7.5 per cent in the current fiscal year, higher than our earlier assessment. This momentum is likely to carry into the next year as well, with growth expected to remain in a similar range, reflecting the underlying strength of domestic drivers. Inflation, meanwhile, is likely to remain anchored below the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) target of 4 per cent next year, providing a stable macroeconomic backdrop. Private consumption, led by income tax and Goods and Services Tax (GST) rate cuts, has helped push growth. Do you see domestic demand continuing to grow at the current pace of 8 per cent or more? Urban demand is gradually gaining traction on the back of these measures, aided by improving consumer confidence and stable inflation that has preserved real purchasing power. At the same time, rural demand remains resilient, underpinned by a

favourable monsoon that has supported higher agricultural activity, strengthened farm incomes, and improved overall income prospects in rural areas. This combination of strengthening urban consumption and resilient rural demand provides a solid foundation for domestic demand growth.

Looking ahead, as the full impact of GST, repo rate cuts, tax relief and regulatory measures plays out, private consumption is likely to sustain a healthy pace in real terms. While maintaining growth of 8 per cent or more will depend on continued income gains, the underlying drivers of domestic demand remain firmly in place. What about private capex? Companies continue to sit on a lot of cash, make financial investments, as seasonally adjusted capacity utilisation is stuck around 75 per cent. CII's analysis suggests that private capex in India has clearly moved beyond a tentative phase and is gaining momentum, supported by the strength in household consumption that provides a durable demand outlook. An assessment of around 1,600 non-financial firms using CMIE's (Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy) Prowess database shows that corporate capex rose to about Rs 12.1 lakh crore in FY25, up from Rs 8.1 lakh crore in FY24 and Rs 5.5 lakh crore in FY19, implying a healthy 14 per cent CAGR (compound annual growth rate) since the pre-pandemic period. This points to firms increasingly committing capital to productive assets rather than merely accumulating cash. Strong new project announcements and a moderation in project stalling rates further indicate improving investment confidence and execution discipline. Although overall manufacturing capacity utilisation remains in the mid-70 per cent range, several infrastructure-linked segments, particularly cement, select steel categories, and digital infrastructure, are already operating at relatively tight levels, signalling rising investment readiness and the onset of the next capex cycle.

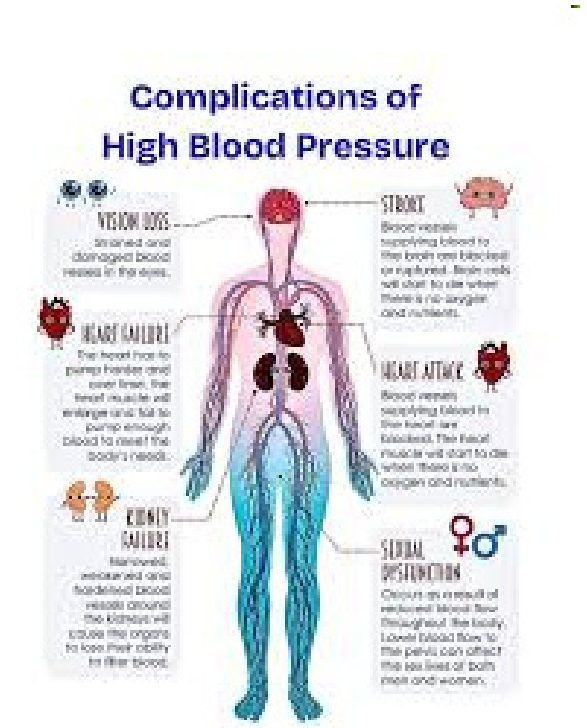
For 2026, industry is looking for greater certainty, in a very uncertain world. The need for greater ease of doing business remains, even as the governments at the Centre and states have already done quite a bit in this area. The global trade environment was difficult in 2025. What are your hopes from 2026 — will a trade deal with the US be enough? As we look ahead to 2026, there is cautious optimism that the global trade environment will stabilise, supported by India's growing competitiveness and proactive trade policy.

A trade deal with the US would certainly be valuable as it is one of India's most important export destinations, and a balanced agreement could help address tariff and non-tariff barriers, enhance predictability for businesses, and unlock new opportunities in high-value sectors such as manufacturing, digital trade, and services. However, from an industry standpoint, a US deal alone will not be sufficient to secure India's long-term trade and export growth. The government's recent success in concluding FTAs with the UK, New Zealand, and Oman is a significant step forward and sends a strong signal of India's commitment to deeper global integration. Building on this momentum, industry hopes that 2026 will see a broader and more strategic push, both through early conclusion of other key negotiations, including with the European Union, and through effective implementation of already-signed agreements to ensure tangible benefits for exporters, especially MSMEs. Equally important is strengthening domestic competitiveness through logistics reforms, easier access to export finance, faster regulatory clearances, and support for compliance with global sustainability and quality standards.

This year we saw the government get active on the reforms front: GST 2.0, labour codes, and nuclear law amendments, among others. How do you assess their impact and what are the others the government should prioritise? The reforms announced this year will strengthen India's competitiveness. The momentum of next generation structural reforms should gather further pace, to accelerate long-term growth.

Sustaining capital expenditure should be a key priority. CII recommends a strengthened National Infrastructure Pipeline with a target investment of Rs 150 lakh crores. The NIP should identify shovel-ready, revenue-credible projects and deploy faster dispute-resolution mechanisms to crowd in private investment and enhance productivity across sectors.

This is what happens to the heart, brain, kidney, and eyes when you have untreated high blood pressure



High blood pressure usually has no dramatic symptoms, but it can quietly harm the body for years. Many people feel fine, not realising their hearts, brains, kidneys, and eyes are under stress. Dr Prabhat Ranjan Sinha, Senior Consultant in Internal Medicine at Aakash Healthcare, says this lack of clear warning signs is what makes untreated hypertension so risky. "Most people with high blood pressure appear fit and well," explains Dr Sinha. "But internally, vital organs are being gradually damaged. If hypertension is not detected and treated early, it can eventually lead to serious complications such as a heart attack, stroke, or kidney disease."

Dr Sinha points out that delayed diagnosis is a significant problem. Symptoms such as headaches, tiredness, or a fast heartbeat are often ignored or blamed on work stress, especially by people in cities. "In many cases, people only visit a doctor when the condition becomes severe. That's why regular health check-ups after age 30 or 35 are now often recommended," he adds. Uncontrolled hypertension places extra pressure on almost every system in the

body, according to Dr Sinha. The heart, in particular, is forced to work harder to pump blood against increased resistance. Over time, this can cause the heart muscle to thicken and enlarge. "Initially, the heart compensates by growing bigger, but if the pressure is not controlled, it eventually becomes weaker and less efficient," Dr Sinha explains. The brain is another major organ at risk, he adds. "Persistently high blood pressure can damage blood vessels supplying the brain, significantly increasing the chances of a stroke. Long-term uncontrolled hypertension may also affect memory and cognitive function. These changes happen slowly, which is why people don't immediately connect them to blood pressure." Kidney damage caused by hypertension is often gradual and silent, much like the condition itself. As kidney function deteriorates, symptoms may show up elsewhere in the body. The eyes, too, are vulnerable—damage to the delicate blood vessels in the retina can impair vision over time. "The progression is slow, but the damage can be permanent if left unchecked," warns Dr Sinha.

While any sustained elevation in blood pressure is concerning, certain levels significantly raise the risk of life-threatening complications. "A reading of 140/90 mmHg is itself a red flag," says Dr Sinha. "The risk increases substantially when blood pressure goes beyond 160/100." Even mildly elevated blood pressure, if chronic, can damage the kidneys, heart, and brain. Notably, he points out that otherwise healthy individuals are not immune. "We do see unexpected heart attacks or strokes in people who thought they were fine. Regular medication, along with lifestyle changes, can dramatically reduce these risks," he notes.

Are lifestyle changes enough? Dr Sinha stresses the importance of quitting smoking, reducing salt intake, cutting down on oily and processed foods, and engaging in regular physical activity. "These measures are essential for maintaining good heart health and controlling blood pressure," he says. However, lifestyle changes alone may not be sufficient, especially if organ damage has already begun, he adds. "In such cases, medication and regular monitoring become necessary to prevent further complications. With rising work-related stress, unhealthy diets, and sedentary habits, cases of hypertension—and even strokes—are increasingly being reported among younger professionals." The message, he emphasises, is clear: don't wait for symptoms. "Monitoring blood pressure, especially after the age of 30–35, and seeking timely medical advice can make a critical difference. High blood pressure is manageable—but only if it is taken seriously."

Bharti Singh says doctors asked her about sterilisation after birth of second son, admits feeling scared after her water broke: 'Aisa lagta hai, ek aur...'; expert on making informed choices



Comedian Bharti Singh, who recently gave birth to her second son, opened up about being asked about sterilisation at the operating table after giving birth. While she replied with a stern no, she expressed her long-standing desire for a daughter in a heartfelt conversation with her husband and screenwriter, Haarsh Limbachiya. In the family's YouTube blog, Bharti, 41, said, "Ek baat hai... aap logon ko bata du. Doctor ne poocha tha sterilisation ke liye. Maine bola, 'nahi.' Unhone poocha nahi ki Harsh ki karwani hai ya nahi, main toh nahi (I wanted to share with you all... doctor had asked me about sterilisation to which I responded no... they didn't ask about whether Haarsh wants to get one)."

She also opened up about her desire for a daughter. "Pata nahi... jab bachcha ho jaata hai, aisa lagta hai... ek aur... ek ladki honi chahiye thi... ek ladki ho jaaye toh mazza aajaaye. Par teesra bhi ladka hogaya na, main ganji ho jaungi (When a child is born, you feel you want another one... I wish to have a daughter, but another son would be too much to handle)," said Bharti at the hospital. During the conversation, a teary-eyed Bharti also admitted feeling scared when he water broke early in the morning at 6, and they had to rush to the hospital in an emergency. Let's understand more about female sterilisation and the road toward making the choice.

Dr Richa Bharadwaj, consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist, Wockhardt Hospitals, Mumbai Central, said sterilisation is a permanent choice, so informed counselling is essential. "Couples should make sure their family is complete and that their decision is not influenced by emotional, social, or financial stress, especially right after childbirth. We talk about age, number of children, overall health, future uncertainties, and whether both partners feel comfortable with the choice. Timing is also important; while sterilisation can be performed soon after delivery, it should not be rushed," said Dr Bharadwaj.

How does female sterilisation compare with male vasectomy in terms of safety and recovery? From a medical standpoint, vasectomy is simpler, safer, and involves a quicker recovery, said Dr Bharadwaj. "It is a minor outpatient procedure with few complications and does not impact sexual performance or masculinity, which are two common concerns. Female sterilisation is safe when performed correctly, but it is still a surgical procedure that requires anaesthesia and a longer recovery time. Health-wise, vasectomy places much less physical strain on the family." doctor Here's what you should consider (Photo: Getty Images/Thinkstock) According to Dr Bharadwaj, many men are apprehensive about vasectomy due to myths about weakness or loss of sexual function, while women are often expected to "adjust." "As doctors, we increasingly promote shared responsibility because contraception should be a joint decision, not a sacrifice by one partner," said Dr Bharadwaj.

What options exist for couples who are unsure about permanent sterilisation?

Notably, there are several effective long-term but reversible options today. "These include intrauterine devices (IUDs), hormonal implants, injectables, and oral contraceptives. These methods give couples time to decide without making a permanent commitment," said Dr Bharadwaj.

A closer look at Sikkim Sundari, the Himalayan flower that blooms once in decades and then dies

High in the cold, windy parts of the eastern Himalayas grows a plant so rare that it seems almost mythical. Locals call it Sikkim Sundari, and scientists know it as Rheum nobile. This remarkable plant is one of Sikkim's best-kept secrets, waiting as a quiet reward for travellers who make the climb to higher altitudes. In a viral post, business baron Anand Mahindra has described the Sikkim Sundari as "a masterclass in patience." Thriving at 4,000 to 4,800 metres, this plant belongs to a fascinating group often referred to as "glasshouse plants." Its tall, translucent bracts act like natural greenhouses, trapping heat and protecting the delicate flowers inside from freezing winds and intense UV radiation. Against the stark Himalayan landscape, the plant appears almost luminous—like a glowing tower rising from rock and snow.

What makes the Sikkim Sundari truly special is its unique life cycle. This plant is monocarpic, so it flowers just once in its life. For 7 to 30 years, it stays close to the ground as a small rosette of leaves, quietly saving energy in tough mountain conditions. Then, in one last, dramatic moment, it grows up to two metres tall, blooms into a pagoda-shaped tower, spreads its seeds, and dies," Mahindra noted in his post. Few plants show the idea of waiting for glory as clearly as this one. The Sikkim Sundari is both a privilege and a poignant reminder of the fragility of Himalayan ecosystems. It is typically found along high-altitude trekking routes in North Sikkim, particularly near alpine passes and glacial valleys.



African Nations Cup needs a World Cup winner to get the recognition it deserves



GNS News Agency, Jan 1

Gianluigi Buffon decided to become a goalkeeper after watching Cameroon's Thomas N'Kono in Italia 90. The legendary Italian goalkeeper named his first son after him too. N'Kono was nicknamed the 'Black Spider' for his immaculate reflexes; he conformed to the African stereotypes of flashy attires, snake-hips that swayed during celebrations and was once arrested mid-match for allegedly performing black magic on the ground. He was not the only one in history too.

As decades rolled on, numerous footballers from Africa became idols for young footballers in Europe and the world. George Weah became an icon in Serie A; Samuel Eto'o, Didier Drogba and Mohammed Salah were revered as club talismans; Africa hosted a World Cup, it would co-host one in 2030; it exports elite footballers (124 players across 62 clubs in Europe's top five); scouts from Europe dig every corner of the vast continent in search of unpolished football gold as they once did real gold and diamonds; African nations continue to win admirers in World Cup; Morocco, semifinalists in Qatar, is a genuine powerhouse. Yet, the African Nations Cup is bewilderingly under-watched, existing as the upstart cousin of Euro and COPA, despite a history as old as those tournaments and socio-cultural influences as overarching as those in Europe. Maybe, it originates from Europe's powers to shape football-world views, from its self-serving perceptions of the event as a league-spoiler. Jurgen Klopp once belittled it as a "little tournament". He later claimed he was misunderstood and praised the tournament for "its quality, talent and history." Managers moan and negotiate with the managements of respective countries to stretch the deadlines of players joining the national teams. Buckling to pressure, Fifa reduced the deadline from two weeks to six days.

Scheduling, inviolably, is counter-intuitive for the tournament's appeal, but the blame lies more with the Fifa than the African confederation. The 2025 edition was pinned for June and July, but was pushed back on the insistence of Fifa boss Gianni Infantino, so that the Club World Cup could be fitted into the window. Staging the tournament has experienced frequent hiccups too. The last time the tourna-

ment was held at the pre-decided country and followed the calendar was in 2012, with Gabon and Equatorial Guinea playing hosts. The reasons ranged from civil wars and political upheavals to Ebola and construction delays; the continent is still reeling from the wreckings of colonialism, the poverty and conflict it had bequeathed. The football world had been empathetic in words but not deeds. Fifa fetishes the African votes; it has 54 voting members, its largest vote bank in the world. It's a huge market for the sport, as 16 percent of the world's population live in Africa. Yet, the heart remains in Europe, its tunes composed to their ears. The brand of football is perhaps not evolved or systemised as Europe because most of the nations are young and just scrambling to life.

The most condescending is the loyalty test. West Ham's striker Sebastien Haller, from Ivory Coast, was once so incensed when asked whether he would set the club duties aside for his country, that he retorted: "This question shows the disrespect for Africa. Would this question ever get asked to a European player ahead of the Euros? Of course I am going to the Africa Cup." For all the shortcomings and stereotypes, glitches and chaos, it is not only an important tournament but also a highly thrilling one. Football has flair, is not system-fixed and doctrinal, but more spontaneous and thus exciting. It is both quick and physical, dramatic and intense. The bicycle kick goal from Morocco's El Kaabi in the opening game embodies the free-spiritedness. It has been the blockbuster movement the tournament had craved for global attention. The outrageous goal has won the audience, who have turned to zealous AFCON converts. As had several years ago Lakhdar Belloumi, the Algerian who invented the blind pass. "We were," he would once famously say, "the Brazilians of Africa." Algerians were stylists—Riyad Mahrez, the former Manchester City winger, is carrying the lineage forward. Most games are open and see goals. Only one game, thus far, has ended goalless. The average goal per game is 2.2 thus far, better than COPA and on level with Euros. The qualifying stages are so competitive that four-time champions Ghana did not progress this time. Nigeria did not qualify for the 2026 World Cup either. Upsets are the overriding theme. Unsung Zambia denied Ivory Coast's golden generation the title in a frenetic shootout in the 2012 final; Burkina Faso spun a golden run to the final of the 2013 instalment. Some of the tournament rules have been downright comic. Like using draw of lots to eliminate teams level on points in the group stage (in 2015). Derbies are heated affairs. Red cards are frequent. New names barge into the consciousness. Like Ivory Coast's 19-year-old Yan Diamo, or Algerian midfielder Fares Chaibi, or Zimbabwean forward Tawanda Maswanhise. Some of them are already in Europe; some soon would be. It's the same old cruel story of the colonial days, the gems of Africa shine the brightest in the markets of Europe. There are but stories of resilience, like Zambia's. It lost 18 players in a plane crash in 1993, but 19 years later, won the AFCON.

India Open Super 750 gets a new venue as India gears up for Badminton World Championships later



GNS News Agency, Jan 1

The BWF India Open Super 750 tournament will be held at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium instead of the KD Jadhav Indoor Hall this time. The tournament is scheduled from 13th January to 18th January and is the second event on the BWF World Tour with Malaysia Open Super 750 being the season opener. The change in venue is due to the more seating capacity of the venue and with India set to host the Badminton World Championships next year in August, it will also serve as the test run for the venue.

The Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium has a seating ca-

capacity of over 8,000, more than double that of the previous venue, and tickets for the India Open will be available exclusively online through the tournament's ticketing partner, Ticmint, priced from Rs 400 onwards, with premium seating capped at Rs 1,750. The Super 750 tournament sees an influx of finest badminton players across the world with the tournament offering up to 11,000 ranking points and a total prize purse of USD 950,000. Indian stars like PV Sindhu, Lakshya Sen, Satwik Rankireddy, Chirag Shetty along with global stars such as Kunlavut Vitidsarn, Viktor Axelsen, Anse Young, Shi Yuqi, and Jonathan Christie light up the event. "Moving the India Open to the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium this year marks an important step in the tournament's evolution," BAI General Secretary Sanjay Mishra said in a release. "

The larger venue allows us to accommodate significantly more fans while delivering a better on-ground experience for players and spectators alike. " "As Indian badminton continues to grow in stature, it is essential that our flagship events evolve in step, creating spaces where the sport, the athletes and the fans can all thrive together," said Mishra. At the last edition, there had been complaints about 'unacceptable' playing conditions during the event. Danish shuttler Mia Blichfeldt had criticised the playing conditions.

England's Gus Atkinson ruled out of final Ashes Test with hamstringing injury



GNS News Agency, Jan 1

After losing the five-match Ashes Test series already with a 3-0 margin, the visiting England team were dealt a fresh blow to their hopes of bringing some semblance of respectability to the final scoreline of the series. England pace bowler Gus Atkinson has been ruled out of the fifth and final Ashes cricket Test in Sydney with a hamstringing injury. Atkinson, thus, will join the likes of Mark Wood (knee) and Jofra Archer (side strain) in the injury box.

Atkinson reportedly picked up the niggle during the second morning of the Boxing Day Test, after bowling his fifth over of Australia's second innings. He was officially ruled-out after scans on Monday confirmed the injury in his left leg. While confirming the injury, the England and Wales Cricket Board noted that England will not call up a replacement for the fifth Test. The previous Test at Melbourne ended in barely two days with the pacers ruling the roost. Match referee Jeff Crowe termed the pitch was "unsatisfactory". "The MCG pitch was too much in favour of the bowlers," Crowe said. "With 20 wickets falling on the first day, 16 on the second day, and no batter even reaching a half-century, the pitch was 'unsatisfactory' as per the guidelines, and the venue gets one demerit point." Down-in-the-dumps England have called up 27-year-old Matthew Potts to come

into the team for the fifth Test which starts from January 4. He will join forces with Brydon Carse and Josh Tongue in the attack. This means that Carse is the only English pacer who is remaining from the original four that took the field in Perth, believing they could tear through a brittle Australian batting lineup with lightning pace, but lost the series inside 11 days. Atkinson played in the two heavy eight-wicket defeats in the first two Tests in Perth and Adelaide, before being dropped for Josh Tongue for the third Test at Adelaide. He was recalled for the injured Archer for the Boxing Day test, England's first win in Australia since 2011, and had a series return of six wickets at 47.33. Captain Ben Stokes and spin-bowling allrounder Will Jacks also remain available as bowling options, as is specialist spinner Shoab Bashir, who is yet to play a match in the series.

ICC rates MCG pitch unsatisfactory after fourth Ashes Test

Hyderabad: The ICC Match Referee has rated the pitch for the fourth NRMA Insurance Ashes Test at the MCG as "unsatisfactory". Under the ICC's four-tier pitch rating system, "unsatisfactory" is the third ranking and describes a pitch that "does not allow an even contest between bat and ball by favouring the bowlers too much, with too many wicket-taking opportunities for either seam or spin".

The MCG pitch had received the highest "very good" rating for the past three Boxing Day Tests. England beat Australia by four wickets in two days. Australia now leads the series 3-1. "We were disappointed for the fans holding tickets for days three and four, and also the millions of fans excited to watch the action in Australia and around the world, that the pitch did not provide the MCG's customary balance between bat and ball.

‘Still motivated to score 1,000 career goals’: Cristiano Ronaldo



GNS News Agency, Jan 1

Footballing superstar Cristiano Ronaldo said his passion for the game remains undimmed and that he is still motivated to reach his target of 1,000 career goals after the Portuguese forward was named Best Middle East Player at the Globe Soccer Awards in Dubai on Sunday. Recently,

Ronaldo scored a brace for his club Al-Nassr and took his tally of total career goals to 956 for club and country. With his career going well at the Saudi club, it looks like Ronaldo can easily achieve the milestone of 1000 goals.

"It's hard to continue playing, but I am motivated," he said after receiving the award for the second consecutive year. "My passion is high and I want to continue. It doesn't matter where I play, whether in the Middle East or Europe. I always enjoy playing football and I want to keep going. "You know what my goal is. I want to win trophies and I want to reach that number (1,000 goals) that you all know. I will reach the number for sure, if no injuries." In a career spanning over two decades now, Ronaldo has played for some of the biggest clubs in the world: Real Madrid, Juventus, and Manchester United. The Global Soccer Awards validated the results of Ballon d'or this year with Ousmane Dembélé of PSG winning the best male player and Aitana Bonmati of Barcelona winning the best female player. Désiré Doudé of PSG was awarded the best emerging player while Luis Enrique was named the best coach.

Magnus Carlsen tapes over betting sponsor logo to avoid fresh war with FIDE in Doha



GNS News Agency, Jan 1

When Magnus Carlsen addressed a press conference along with Aleksandra Goryachkina after winning his sixth World Rapid Championship in Doha, two pieces of tape on his clothes stuck out like sore thumbs: one on the right shoulder sleeve of his jacket and another on the left chest of his shirt. Mid-way through the World Rapid Championship, the world no 1 from Norway had made a sartorial decision to make a couple of tweaks to his clothes: he had used tape to cover up the logo of one of his sponsors, Betby.

Because FIDE's dress code policy for the year-ending World Rapid and Blitz in Qatar mandated that no player could sport logos of 'prohibited sponsors like betting companies, alcohol, tobacco brands'. Magnus Carlsen at the FIDE World Rapid Championship with the Betby logo covered with tape. (PHOTOS: Lennart Ootes via FIDE) Magnus Carlsen at the FIDE World Rapid Championship with the Betby logo covered with tape. (PHOTOS: Lennart Ootes via FIDE)

Carlsen has had a long-term sponsorship with Betby, a betting company which calls itself a B2B provider of top-tier sports betting services, since October 2024. Since the partnership came into effect, Carlsen has sported the company's logos at two spots: on his jacket sleeves and on his shirt. Carlsen also started the World Rapid Champi-

Aakash Chopra on MCG Test: “Match ended in Ahmedabad in two days, a BBC report said, ‘death of Test cricket.’ Here, they say it’s actually not bad”



GNS News Agency, Jan 1

Former Indian cricketer Aakash Chopra was quite critical of the English media and players. The Test at Perth ended in two days, but the rating given was very good by ICC referee similiary the game in Melbourne also got over within a couple of days. Aakash Chopra noted that the narrative has been more concentrated around the techniques of the batters and not the pitches. "When the match ended in Ahmedabad in two days, a BBC report said, 'death of Test cricket.' Here, they say it's actually not bad, that two-

day Test matches are also great. Hypocrisy much. Something there and something else here," Chopra observed on his YouTube channel.

"I am talking about the hypocrisy. The match ended in two days in Perth. The ICC rates it a very good surface. The entire world says the pitch was good and that the batters' technique has become bad. Then the same thing happened in Melbourne. The match ended in two days. There also they say the pitch was good, there was slightly more help, but the batters' technique has become bad," Chopra said. "Ben Stokes spoke very diplomatically because these guys, when they are talking about each other, they are very diplomatic. He said that it was favoring one skill more. If it had been a rank turner in India, they would have said it's like the death of Test cricket, and what sort of pitch it is? There also it is helping the spin-bowling skill a little more," he added. In the MCG Test, not even a single over of spin has been bowled. "Not even a single over of spin was bowled on the Melbourne ground, and the match got over. How is that right? If a Test match happens in India or in subcontinental conditions and a single over of fast bowling is not bowled, there is an uproar, but that's not the case here," he said.

‘Don’t understand how people find negative in this event’: Sabalenka after ‘Battle of Sexes’

On a night that turned out to be more subdued than it was expected, Aryna Sabalenka and Nick Kyrgios defended their controversial "Battle of the Sexes" match. The duo said they failed to understand why an exhibition aimed at showcasing tennis drew so much negativity from the tennis community. Former Wimbledon finalist Kyrgios defeated world number one Sabalenka 6-3 6-3 at a packed Coca-Cola Arena on Sunday despite several rule tweaks implemented by the organisers to level the playing field. Since the game was announced, a lot of criticism was aimed it could trivialise the 1973 original "Battle of the Sexes" in which women's trailblazer Billie Jean King beat then 55-year-old former Grand Slam winner Bobby Riggs. King said Sunday's encounter lacked the stakes of her match while others, including former doubles world number one Rennae Stubbs, said the event was a publicity stunt and money grab.

"I honestly don't understand how people were able to find something negative in this event," Sabalenka told reporters. "I think for the WTA, I just showed that I was playing great tennis; it was an entertaining match ... it wasn't like 6-0 6-0. It was a great fight, it was interesting to watch and it brought more eyes on tennis.

Sabalenka said that the idea behind the event was to help the sport grow and show tennis from a different side. "The idea behind it is to help our sport grow and show



tennis from a different side, that tennis events can be fun and we can make it almost as big as Grand Slam matches," she said. Competitive game Once a Wimbledon finalist and world number 13, Kyrgios has dropped down to world number 671 due to multiple injuries. After the game, he pointed out that Sabalenka was extremely competitive against him. "Let me just remind you that I'm one of 16 people that have ever beaten the 'Big Four' — Andy Murray, Novak Djokovic, Roger Federer, and Rafa Nadal have all lost to me," Kyrgios said. "

Ranveer Singh's film crosses Rs 19 cr on 4th Sunday



has already minted Rs 1,026 crore worldwide in just 23 days of its release. Dhurandhar recorded an overall Hindi occupancy of 38.48 per cent on Saturday. Morning shows registered an occupancy of 20.54 per cent, while evening and night shows saw maximum footfall with occupancies of 45.34 per cent and 42.27 per cent, respectively.

The film has surpassed Prabhas' Kalki 2898 AD in terms of India net collection, which stood at Rs 646.31 crore. Dhurandhar is now eyeing the lifetime global collection of Shah Rukh Khan's Pathaan, which earned around Rs 1,055 crore worldwide. The Ranveer Singh-starrer is also competing to beat Pushpa 2, whose Hindi collection stood at Rs 812.14 crore. Dhurandhar has already emerged as the highest-grossing film of 2025, leaving behind blockbusters such as Kantara: Chapter 1 and Chhaava. Meanwhile, Dhurandhar continues to give stiff competition to Kartik Aaryan's Christmas release Tu Mera Main Teri Main Tera Tu Meri. As per trade trackers, the film has earned around Rs 5.25 crore on Saturday, its third day of release, which is significantly lower than Dhurandhar's Rs 20.05 crore on the same day. The Kartik Aaryan-starrer has collected only Rs 18.25 crore within its first three days at the box office. Directed by Aditya Dhar, Dhurandhar also stars Sanjay Dutt, R. Madhavan, Rakesh Bedi, Arjun Rampal, Akshaye Khanna, and Sara Arjun in key roles.

Dhurandhar Box Office Collection Worldwide Day 23 Update Ranveer Singh film earns Rs 706.40 cr in India Dhurandhar Box Office Collection Worldwide Day 23 Update: Ranveer Singh's film crosses Rs 700 cr mark in India net. Dhurandhar box office collection day 23: Ranveer Singh-starrer Dhurandhar is refusing to die down even in its fourth week. The film minted Rs 20.9 crore on its 4th Saturday, bringing its total domestic collection to Rs 706.40 cr. As far as its global box office performance goes, the film

Tara Sutaria hugged AP Dhillon on stage; the internet decided boyfriend Veer Pahariya was jealous. He wasn't



After appearing at singer AP Dhillon's Pune concert recently, Tara Sutaria joined him on stage during his recent Mumbai performance as well. However, the actor and her boyfriend Veer Pahariya, who was also present at the concert, were in the headlines for the wrong reasons. Several rumours of Veer allegedly feeling jealous of girlfriend Tara's interaction with Dhillon surfaced on the internet, after videos of his reaction went viral on social media. However, now, Tara and Veer have called out the 'false narratives' on Instagram. For the unknown, AP Dhillon and Tara Sutaria have previously collaborated on the music video Thodi Si

Daaru, which released this year.

Tara Sutaria says 'paid PR campaigns' were run to make them look insecure. Taking to her Instagram handle, Tara shared a video, with several compiled moments of her and Dhillon's appearance on the stage together. Along with the post, she wrote, "Loud and proud and in it together!!! @aphillon FAV!!!! What a night! Thank you Mumbai for SO much love for our song and here's to more music and memories together." Addressing the ongoing rumours, the actor added in the caption, "P.S – False narratives, 'clever editing' and paid PR campaigns by folks won't and don't shake us up! In the end, love and the truth always wins. So the joke's on the bullies." AP Dhillon also commented under the same post and wrote, "Queen." Several other celebs commented in support of Tara, including Disha Patani and Badshah. Veer Pahariya further clarified that the video was patched together using glimpses from two different moments. "Not to mention the reaction footage of me was taken during another song not even Thodi Si Daru," he commented. However, his close friend Orry aka Orhan Awatramani begged to differ as he replied to his comment jokingly, "Jhooth bola kawwa kaata (you are lying)." In the viral social media reels, Dhillon can be seen inviting Tara on stage, during his performance at the Mumbai concert. The actor, dressed in a black dress, joined him as they exchanged a warm friendly hug and a cheek kiss before dancing together to their popular song. But, the fun moment quickly grabbed eyeballs online, with many people alleging that Veer looked uncomfortable as he watched the two on stage, from the audience.

As Kartik Aaryan takes indirect dig at 'hypermasculine' Dhurandhar, trade expert says warned actor, Karan Johar to postpone Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri



Kartik Aaryan shared a post by screenplay writer Saurabh Bharat on Monday which feted Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri for being progressive amid films that are hypermasculine. Kartik reacted with a heart on the post that read, "It's so heartwarming to see that amidst the madness of hypermasculinity and testosterone-boasting action films, someone is making a breezing progressive film. Congratulations. For building a genre of cinema which entertains yet pushes an envelope deep in the society."

The year 2025 has been a mixed bag when it comes to box office — if there were many that wrapped up at the ticket windows while disappointing their audience (here's looking at you Sikander and War 2), Ranveer Singh-starrer Dhurandhar has been an outlier who is daily beaking records in its fourth week. Breaking records that Chhaava, Jawan, Stree 2, and many other films had set, Dhurandhar is also proving to be quite a tough competition to the other releases. While the Hollywood release Avatar Fire and Ash still managed to have a decent box office earning, Kartik Aaryan-Ananya Panday-starrer Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri has been hit hard by the Dhurandhar wave.

Kartik amplifies post about Tu Meri's narrative against 'hypermasculine' films. Kartik Aaryan shared a post by screenplay writer Saurabh Bharat on Monday which feted Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri for being progressive amid films that are hypermasculine. Kartik reacted with a heart on the post that read, "It's so heartwarming to see that amidst the madness of hypermasculinity and testosterone-boasting action films, someone is making a breezing progressive film. Congratulations. For building a genre of cinema which entertains yet pushes an envelope deep in

the society."

Warned Kartik Aaryan, Karan Johar to postpone Tu Meri Main Tera release

Turns out, both Karan Johar and Kartik Aaryan had been warned about their release and requested to push Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri release date amid Dhurandhar success. As reported by Bollywood Hungama, trade analyst Taran Adarsh said he requested both Dharma Productions and Kartik Aaryan to reconsider their release dates. "Five days before the release, I called Dharma Productions' team and requested that they postpone the release. I told them, 'There's a strong Dhurandhar wave. You still have time. Even if you get the screens, you won't get the audience'. When I saw the film, I told Kartik Aaryan that he made a mistake by coming amid the Dhurandhar wave. I strongly feel that when a film unleashes a tsunami, it's best to shift to another date. There should be no ego at all," Taran Adarsh said. The trade analyst also spoke to ANI about Aditya Dhar's film's success and said he saw such a craze in the audience after Sholay. Praising Dhurandhar, Taran Adarsh told ANI, "The way Dhurandhar is performing at the box office, I will say it's a tsunami, we rarely get to see this at the box office. If you compare it with other films, it will be wrong because it is breaking all records that Pushpa, Jawan, Pathaan, Stree 2, Baahubali 2, or any other film made. It is setting new benchmarks." "The film is a top-class entertainer, it shows things that have not been seen on the big screen before. All the actors in the film have done a brilliant job. I salute Aditya Dhar and Jyoti Deshpande. This is the best film of 2025. Dhurandhar has also proven that the audience wants to come to the theaters, they want to buy expensive tickets, if the story is good. I am only wondering what will happen when Dhurandhar 2 releases," Taran Adarsh added. Sharing how other films have been affected due to Dhurandhar's success, Taran Adarsh shared, "A week after Dhurandhar, Kapil Sharma's film released — Kis Kisko Pyaar Karoon 2, it got affected. Then the Hollywood film Avatar also didn't get a great response. Even Kartik Aaryan's film has gotten tough competition from Dhurandhar." In its 24-day run, Dhurandhar has earned Rs 862.23 crores gross in India and has crossed Rs 1100 cr mark globally. As per Sacnilk, on Sunday, Dhurandhar collected Rs 22.5 crores. Unfortunately, Kartik's film has managed to earn just one-fifth of the amount of Dhurandhar, Rs 5.25 crores, on the same day. In its 4-day run, Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri has earned a total of Rs 23.75 crores in India, which is his lowest first weekend earnings in 8 years. On its fourth day at the box office, Dhurandhar had earned a total Rs 23.25 crores in India.

Who is Riya Shibu, the 21-year-old producer of Vikram's actioner, now winning hearts with her performance in Nivin Pauly's Sarvam Maya?



With the massive success of director Akhil Sathyan's Sarvam Maya, actor Nivin Pauly, who had been going through a rough patch for quite some time, has made a strong comeback, positioning himself as a force to be reckoned with at the box office yet again. In just five days, the movie has grossed Rs 44 crore globally, according to industry tracker Sacnilk, making it one of the major Malayalam successes of 2025. While Nivin is, as usual, earning praise for his performance, another name has also been making headlines for stealing audiences' hearts. And it's none other than Riya Shibu, who played Delulu, a bubbly young ghost, in Sarvam Maya. Although this is just her second acting venture, cinema is not new to Riya. In fact, the 21-year-old is already an established producer who has gifted South Indian cinema with some impressive works, including one headlined by "Chiyaan" Vikram. The daughter of renowned producer and distributor Shibu Thameens of Thameens Films — which bankrolled Dulquer Salman's ABCD: American-Born Confused Desi (2013), "Thalapathy" Vijay-Sridevi's Puli (2015), and Vikram-Nayanthara's Iru Mugan (2016), among others — Riya became a popular figure first in the virtual world through her short videos on TikTok, Dubsmash, and Musically.

After making a mark as a young social media sensation, Riya Shibu turned to cinema and made her debut by bankrolling the Tamil action drama Thugs (2023), a remake of the 2018 Malayalam film Swathanthryam Ardhathriyil, under the banner of HR Pictures. Her brother, Hridhu Haroon, most notable for his role in the globally acclaimed All We Imagine as Light (2024), and actor Anaswara Rajan played the lead roles in the film. The same year, she also co-produced Vikrant Massey and Vijay Sethupathi's Mumbaikar (2023), a remake of director Lokesh Kanagaraj's directorial debut Maanagaram (2017). Riya Shibu plays a key role in Nivin Pauly's Sarvam Maya. Riya Shibu with co-stars Nivin Pauly and Aju Varghese in Sarvam Maya. (Credit: Instagram/@ajuvarghese) While she bankrolled the gangster thriller Mura, again starring Hridhu, in 2024, her biggest project to date, director SU Arun Kumar's Veera Dheera Sooran: Part – 2, arrived in 2025. Featuring Vikram, SJ Suryah, Suraj Venjaramoodu, and Dushara Vijayan in key roles, the movie opened to positive reviews and became a box office success, grossing Rs 63.45 crore worldwide. Speaking about Riya, Vikram said during a promotional event for Veera Dheera Sooran, "She is a producer who truly blew me away. I first met her on the day of the photoshoot. Just a young girl, standing there so calmly holding a camera. I remember thinking, 'Is she actually the producer?' Then I saw one of her reels — it was incredible! Man, what energy! I wondered, 'How does she even do all this?' I also saw her dancing brilliantly at a wedding, and I was stunned once again. Riya, you have a long way to go."

Meanwhile, Riya Shibu made her acting debut opposite Mathew Thomas in the 2024 Malayalam movie Cup. However, it failed to impress the audience and went largely unnoticed. Sarvam Maya is her sophomore acting venture, and its massive success is expected to mark a significant turning point in her career. She continues to be a beloved figure on Instagram as well, boasting over 6.92 lakh followers. She is reportedly an alumna of Trivandrum International School and Loyola College in Chennai, where she pursued a degree in Visual Communication. Riya's father, Shibu, also runs Thameens Release, which distributes Tamil and Malayalam movies.

Inside Malaika Arora's restaurant Scarlett House where khichdi costs Rs 550, a bottle of 'anti-ageing' water is for Rs 350



Malaika Arora is a co-owner and partner of the restaurant Scarlett House, in Mumbai. Malaika Arora is a co-owner and partner of the restaurant Scarlett House, in Mumbai. Reality TV judge and dancer Malaika Arora started a joint venture with her son Arhaan Khan — a luxury restaurant Scarlett House. Located in Mumbai's 90-year-old Indo-Portuguese bungalow, the Bandra's Pali Village restaurant is the new hotspot for celebrity dining in the city. Scarlett House has a food (vegetarian and non-vegetarian) and beverages (non-alcohol and alcohol) menu with high-end prices — from Masala Khichdi costing Rs 550, champagne priced at Rs 20,900, and a Rs 350 bottle of 'anti-ageing' infused water.

Malaika Arora's Scarlett House restaurant. Malaika is the co-owner, along with her son Arhaan, restaurateur Dhaval Udeshi, and Malaya Nagpal. The lifestyle-driven restaurant is situated in a posh vintage bungalow. The design of the charming space has been inspired by rustic simplicity and old-school interior. Scarlett House has a timeless magic of nostalgia and history. Spread across a 2,500 sqft, it has separate areas, including, a coffee bar, wine room, and dining spaces. With Victorian touches and a warm decor, the restaurant opened its doors for a cosy experience in December, last year. Inside Malaika Arora's restaurant Scarlett House, Mumbai. Inside Malaika Arora's restaurant Scarlett House, Mumbai.

While talking to Architectural Digest in a recent interview, Malaika spoke about the idea to open this restaurant and said, "It all started with the germ of an idea about building the next coolest café, and it was love at first sight with the first site we visited. We were enthralled by the charm of this quaint red Portuguese gem in the winding lanes of

Bandra — visually and emotionally, it couldn't be better for us. And needless to say, this structure became the inspiration for the name Scarlett House." Malaika Arora introduced India's first Hydration Bar at her restaurant, Scarlett House. A hydration bar offers special drinks and smoothies, that targets issues like fatigue, low immunity, skin dullness, recovery, and more. From an anti-ageing infused water costing Rs 350 per bottle to a hangover remedy drink priced at the same price, the menu offers several such options. Inside Malaika Arora's restaurant Scarlett House, Mumbai. Inside Malaika Arora's restaurant Scarlett House, Mumbai. There is also a cold press juice available which helps in promoting healthy hair — with ingredients beetroot, kokum, pomegranate, watermelon, curry leaves, and lime, which costs Rs 450. The non-alcoholic drinks ranged from Rs 650 to Rs 700. On the other hand, there is a wide variety of alcoholic beverages. From fancy cocktails to their highest-priced champagne at Rs 20,900, Scarlett House has an element for everyone.

Masala Khichdi at Rs 550. The eatery menu of the place offers comfort food items to fancy dishes experiences. The 100-seater restaurant has a masala khichdi costing Rs 550, avocado toast at Rs 625, and a vegetarian fig & burrata bliss salad priced at Rs 720. The Ludhiana-style white butter chicken at Malaika's Scarlett House is valued at Rs 750. In a video posted on Instagram earlier, Malaika Arora had revealed, "The food is inspired by things I love to eat in my kitchen and on my travels. In fact, my team is convinced it should be called Mala's Specialist. They have curated a cocktail menu that's fun, thoughtful, and full of stories in every sip. We also have India's first hydration bar that you must check out. Scarlett House is rooted in community, with Arhaan bringing in energy and shaping our coffee progress." The ambitious sunlit living room with a stunning, open glass house roof, in the huge bungalow has different mismatched furniture pieces, paired with vintage crockery. The white walls and warm wooden finishing comes together to give a retro vibe. The cafe also has handmade, artisanal craftsmanship that enhances the interior of the beautiful space. Malaika's friends Kareena Kapoor Khan and Karisma Kapoor, and even actor Kajol has been spotted visiting Scarlett House. Speaking about her vision for the restaurant's interior, she expressed, "It was one of quiet and warm luxury. The place is embracing, such that once you enter, you stay on for hours without wanting to leave — while we take care of all your needs, right from breakfast all the way to you savouring a warm plate of food at supper."

Kangana Ranaut completes pilgrimage to all 12 Jyotirlingas

Mumbai: Actress-politician Kangana Ranaut recently shared a heartfelt moment as she completed a decade-long spiritual journey visiting all 12 Jyotirlingas, with Bheema Shankar being the final stop. The 'Tanu Weds Manu' actress expressed her joy and gratitude, attributing her accomplishment to the blessings of Mahadev and the punya karma of her ancestors. On Sunday, Kangana posted a couple of her images and shared the spiritual significance of completing her pilgrimage to all 12 Jyotirlingas, a journey that spanned over a decade.

In the caption of her post, the actress highlighted Bheema Shankar as her final stop. Kangana Ranaut wrote, "By the grace of Mahadev and my ancestors punya karma today I completed all 12 jyotirlinga, Last being Bheema Shankar, it was a journey of more than a decade, initially it was happening all by travel coincidences." "But recently I made it a conscious choice and decided to complete the all 12 Darshans, last being Bheema Shankar for me, is the only Jyotirling that has Shiv and Shakti both consecrated in the same linga as Ardhnatishwara, it's covered for the most



part of the day under a silver cast very little opening of hardly 10 mins to see the ancient linga underneath, I managed to make it for that as well, Har Har Mahadev."