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35-ft Hanuman kite to soar at Hyderabad International Kite Festival

Hyderabad: Lord Hanuman will soar over Hyderabad skies, with a 35-foot-tall kite of the revered deity, set to become a centre stage during the International Kite and Sweet festival scheduled to be held here from January 13 to 15. Adding to the spectacle will be Lord Hanuman's mace (Gada), which is commonly known as Kaumodaki, shaped kite, along with Trishul, also taking to the skies at Secunderabad Parade Ground. This year, the festival is centred around spirituality and patriotism.

TPCC chief meets CM, discusses municipal poll strategy

Hyderabad, Jan 7

TPCC President and MLC B Mahesh Kumar Goud met with Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy at the Assembly on Tuesday. The two leaders discussed several key issues for an hour, primarily focusing on the agenda items for the TPCC extended executive committee meeting to be held at Gandhi Bhavan on January 8.

The Chief Minister and PCC President deliberated on protest programmes against the Central government's proposed move to abolish and rename the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGA). They also discussed the recent agreement on Krishna and Godavari river waters. PCC



President Mahesh Kumar Goud stated that the government had provided good information to the public regarding this agreement.

The discussion also focused on the upcoming

municipal elections. It was decided that the selection of division and ward candidates across the state would be conducted in a systematic manner. Proposals for six candidates from each ward and division will be received, followed by surveys to select the most suitable candidates.

The leaders agreed to take all necessary measures to secure a majority of seats in the municipal elections.

TGSRTC to operate 6,431 special bus services during Sankranti

Hyderabad, Jan 7

The Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TGSRTC) will operate 6,431 special bus services to transport passengers during the Sankranti festival season, but will charge a 50 per cent additional fare.

The management announced on Wednesday that the special buses will be operated on January 9, 10, 12, 13, 18 and 19.

The TGSRTC said that it is fully prepared to safely transport people travelling to their hometowns for Sankranti.

The corporation will be operating special buses from busy areas in Hyderabad, such as MGBS, JBS, Uppal Cross Roads, Aramghar, LB Nagar Cross Roads, KPHB, Boipally, Gachibowli, and other locations.

For the convenience of passengers in these areas, the corporation will be setting up pandals, shamianas, and arranging chairs, public address systems, drinking water facilities, and mobile toilets.

During major festivals and special occasions, the RTC management operates special services to ensure that people do not face any transportation difficulties and reach their destinations safely.

Lexus India Sees Growing Preference for Ultra-Luxury Mobility Led by LM and LX in CY 2025

Hyderabad: Lexus India closed the calendar year 2025 on a strong note, driven by robust demand for its ultra-luxury offerings. The LM and LX together recorded a 50% year-on-year increase and contributed approximately 19% to overall sales, highlighting a growing and sustained preference for high-end ultra-luxury mobility. The year was marked by continued interest in Lexus' flagship models, the LM and the LX. Meanwhile, the RX has also emerged as a key growth driver, achieving 18% growth in calendar year 2025 compared to the previous year, with a 22% contribution to overall sales, underscoring its strong market acceptance and its role in expanding the brand's footprint in the luxury SUV segment.

Positioned at the top end of the Lexus portfolio in India, the flagship models—namely the LX and LM—cater to guests seeking unparalleled luxury and refinement. The LM 350h is a meticulously crafted masterpiece, known for its unparalleled grandeur, distinctive design, and exceptional comfort for its guests. The flagship vehicle has already received an overwhelming response in the Indian market, reflecting the growing demand for luxury travel. Since its debut, the new Lexus LM 350h has captivated luxury vehicle enthusiasts nationwide and reflects the increasing desire for a premium travel experience, setting a new benchmark for first-class travel.

The LX 500d has received a strong response in the Indian market, reflecting the rising demand for ultra-luxury SUVs that deliver an exceptional ownership ex-



perience. With its bold presence and unparalleled driving experience, the LX 500d is set to define a new benchmark in mobility. The vehicle features a powerful stance and sophisticated design, combining legendary off-road capability with refined luxury and advanced technology. Engineered for those who seek both adventure and sophistication, the LX 500d offers a powerful and exhilarating driving experience across diverse terrains, while ensuring supreme comfort and control.

Mr. Hikaru Ikeuchi, President, Lexus India, said, "We are immensely thankful to our guests for their trust and support throughout 2025. The strong performance of our halo ultra-luxury models, LX and LM, reflects their confidence in Lexus and our dedication to delivering exceptional products and experiences that continue to push boundaries. As we move into 2026, we are encouraged by the outlook for luxury vehicles in India and will remain focused on delivering even more exciting offerings and memorable experiences."

Five policemen injured as violence erupts during demolition near Delhi mosque

New Delhi: Violence erupted during an anti-encroachment drive near the Syed Faiz Elahi Mosque in Delhi's Ramila Maidan area early Wednesday, leaving at least five police personnel injured.

The clashes broke out when the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) was carrying out a demolition drive on land adjoining the mosque and a nearby graveyard at Turkman Gate, following directions of the Delhi High Court.

Pay Rs 50,000 upfront, Cong tells Assam poll ticket aspirants -

New Delhi, Jan 7

Even as the Congress steps up preparations for the 2026 Assam Assembly elections and brings in Priyanka Gandhi Vadra to oversee ticket screening, aspirants on the ground have been handed a blunt message: deposit Rs 50,000 first if you want to be in the race.

In a circular accessed by The Tribune, the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) has invited applications from party members seeking the party ticket but made submission of a Rs 50,000 demand draft mandatory at the application stage itself, effectively turning entry to the ticket race into a pay-first process.

The directive, issued on the instructions of APCC president Gaurav Gogoi, said applications would be accepted between January 5 and January 20 and would be considered only if accompanied by a demand draft drawn in favour



of the APCC.

While the party has described the amount as an application fee, the move has raised eyebrows within party ranks, particularly when contrasted with party practices in other states. In the 2024 Andhra Pradesh elections, following the Karnataka and

Telangana model, the Congress charged Rs 15,000 from reserved category applicants and Rs 25,000 from others for the Lok Sabha ticket. For the Assembly ticket in Andhra Pradesh, the amount was Rs 10,000 for unreserved category aspirants and Rs 5,000 for those from reserved categories.

Similarly, during the Haryana Assembly elections, the Congress fixed Rs 20,000 per application per constituency for general category aspirants, while applicants from Scheduled Castes, Backward Classes and women categories were told to pay Rs 5,000 each.

EC set to host International conference on poll management on Jan 21-23

New Delhi, Jan 7

The Election Commission is set to host the inaugural India International Conference on Democracy and Election Management (IICDEM)-2026 from January 21 to 23 in New Delhi.

Nearly 100 international delegates representing election management bodies from across the world, including those from the US, Brazil, Bhutan and Mauritius, will participate in the conference. However, there was no response from the organisers when asked whether representatives from Pakistan, Bangladesh and China will also be participating in the conference.

Representatives from international organisations, foreign missions in India, and academic and practising experts in electoral governance would also attend the conference.

The three-day international conference is being organised by the India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM), under the aegis

of the Election Commission of India.

The event is expected to be the largest global conference hosted by India in the field of democracy and election management. It will carry forward the agenda outlined by Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, following India's assumption of the chairship of the Council of Member States of International IDEA for 2026.

The central theme of the conference is 'Democracy for an inclusive, peaceful, resilient and sustainable world'. Director General of IIIDEM, Rakesh Verma, while interacting with the media, said the conference will serve as a global platform for cooperation among election management bodies.

He noted that IICDEM 2026 aims to facilitate the exchange of best practices, innovations and solutions to contemporary electoral challenges. The interaction was followed by the unveiling of the official logo of IICDEM 2026.

Marwadi University to Host Vibrant Gujarat Regional Conference Proposes an MOU with Gujarat Government for Rs1,000 Cr Investment in Education Sector

Hyderabad: Building upon the success of Vibrant Gujarat, Marwadi University is set to become the host venue for the prestigious Vibrant Gujarat Regional Conferences (VGRC). Organised by the Government of Gujarat, the conference will be scheduled from 11th to 12th January 2026. With the objective of taking not only Saurashtra but the entire state of Gujarat to global prominence in the field of education, the university has submitted a proposal of ₹1,000 crore investment MoU to the Education Department, Government of Gujarat. The proposed investment will support the development of state-of-the-art academic infrastructure, including new academic blocks with advanced laboratories, modern sports facilities, and next-generation hostels. Additionally, a dedicated 10,000 square feet centre for innovation and start-ups will be established, along with a separate academic block for continuing education aimed at working professionals and entrepreneurs.

Emphasizing the theme "Vocal for Local", VGRC will be organised across four zones of Gujarat—North, Saurashtra-Kutch, South, and Central Gujarat. The event is also set to witness global participation from countries including Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, and the Netherlands, along with organizations like JETRO, ICBC, USISPF, World Bank, and the Russian Federation. Expressing delight at this auspicious opportunity, Dhruv Marwadi, Trustee, Marwadi University, shared, "It is a matter of great pride for us to host the Vibrant Gujarat Regional Conferences for the Kutch-Saurashtra region. As an institution rooted in innovation, industry engagement, and skill development, we are proud to provide a platform that fosters collaborations between local enterprises, start-ups, government bodies, and global investors. We aim to continuously co-create Gujarat's growth story and con-



tribute to the vision of Viksit Bharat." R.B. Jadeja, Provost, Marwadi University, shared, "We are proud to contribute to Gujarat's progress and the larger vision of Viksit Bharat@2047. VGRC embodies the true spirit of connecting local potential with global opportunities. Hosting this event is our commitment to building these bridges and contributing to Gujarat's emergence as a globally competitive and inclusive growth engine." Over the course of two days, participants will engage in seminars, exhibitions, MoU signings, B2B-B2G meetings, buyer-seller meets, and vendor development programs. The itinerary will cover topics including AI, Digital Marketing, Sustainability, Circular Economy, Auto & Precision Engineering, etc. Inspired by the legacy of 10 successful Vibrant Gujarat Global Summits, the event will position Gujarat as a global investment hub and will give fresh momentum to the state's overall economic development. With a strong focus on key sectors including MSMES, start-ups, skill development, tourism, culture, and food processing, the conference aligns with the visions of Viksit Bharat@2047 and Viksit Gujarat@2047.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

A disappointing Supreme Court verdict

Bail is the rule and jail is an exception. This forms the core principle of the criminal justice system, a position advocated by the Supreme Court itself on several occasions in the past. However, the latest order denying bail to Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam—despite their having spent over five years in prison without trial in the 2020 Delhi riots conspiracy case—contradicts the apex court's own dictum. This raises troubling questions about personal liberty, pre-trial detention, and due process. The SC has split the fate of seven people accused in the Delhi riots case registered under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. It granted bail to five, while denying the same to activists Khalid and Imam on the basis of what it called a "hierarchy of participation". Those who have been denied bail stand on a "qualitatively different footing" from the others, the bench, comprising Justice Aravind Kumar and Justice NV Anjaria, ruled. The apex court held that the statutory restrictions on bail must prevail in the case of these accused when the prosecution material is taken at its face value. However, the key question that arises here is whether it is not a violation of the fundamental right to life and liberty, guaranteed under Article 21, if an accused is allowed to languish in jail for five years without any trial. Unfortunately, the court chose to reject the argument that prolonged incarceration automatically entitled an accused to bail, warning against treating delay as a "trump card". If bail is denied because the accusations are serious, then the trial must proceed with urgency. Ironically, the trial is yet to commence. The trials, especially under extraordinary laws, must be conducted swiftly, because justice delayed is not only justice denied but also justice mocked. The charges against Khalid rest on a sweeping theory of conspiracy, tying together speeches, WhatsApp groups, and a set of witness statements that have repeatedly been challenged for their credibility. No act of violence has been attributed to him. Irrespective of whether one agrees with his political views, it is a national shame that a young doctoral student has been deprived of liberty for half a decade without trial, held under a law with a conviction rate of just two to three per cent, based on evidence that many seasoned jurists, scholars, and civil liberties groups have described as tenuous and speculative. The continued use of UAPA to target dissenting voices reflects a disturbing pattern of repression and selective justice. The denial of bail under such circumstances has justifiably evoked widespread outrage, with several opposition leaders and social activists arguing that it amounted to a violation of principles of natural justice. On the other hand, Dera Sacha Sauda chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim, a rape convict, has been granted parole 15 times since his conviction in 2017.

I will work towards resolving basti problems: Telangana Sampath

"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 7 (Indian Chronicle):"BJYM State leader Telangana Sampath stated that resolving the problems of bastis in the Chiluka Nagar Division is his primary objective. On Wednesday, residents of Road No. 5, Kummar Kunta area under the



Chiluka Nagar Division brought several civic issues to his notice. Responding to their concerns, Telangana Sampath assured that he would coordinate with the concerned officials to ensure solutions. He said that issues related to roads, electricity and drainage would be taken to the notice of Malkajgiri Member of Parliament Etela Rajender and efforts would be made to find appropriate solutions. Speaking on the occasion, Telangana Sampath said that he has been consistently taking the problems raised by the division's residents to the attention of the respective officials and resolving them as far as possible. He added that unresolved issues are being escalated to MP Etela Rajender to seek the necessary funds and administrative support. He reaffirmed that he would always be at the forefront in addressing public issues and working for the welfare of the people.

Grand Inauguration of Krishna Play School at Krishna Nagar

"Nacharam, Indian Chronicle, January 7: "The inauguration ceremony of the newly established "Krishna Play School" was held in a grand manner at Krishna Nagar, within the Meerpeta Housing Board Division. The event was inaugurated by Uppal MLA Shri Bandari Lakshma Reddy, who attended as the chief guest. On this occasion, MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy stated that institutions like these play a vital role in shaping the future of young children by providing strong foundational education. He emphasized that offering quality education and good values at the play school level helps in nurturing responsible and ideal citizens for society. He also appreciated the management of Krishna Group of Institutions for their service-oriented approach in the field of education. The program was attended by former Corporator Srinivas Reddy, representatives of Krishna Group of Institutions Play School & Therapy Center, teachers, parents, local leaders, and other dignitaries.



Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy, Corporators Pay Courtesy Visit to Newly Appointed Additional Commissioner and Zonal Commissioner



"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 7 (Indian Chronicle):"Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy, along with BRS Party corporators and leaders from the constituency, paid a courtesy visit to the newly appointed GHMC Additional Commissioner Vinay Krishna Reddy and Uppal Zonal Commissioner Radhika Gupta, IAS, at the Uppal Zonal Office on Tuesday. On the occasion, the officials were felicitated with shawls and presented with flower bouquets as a mark of respect. The delegation included Chilkanagar Division Corporator Bannala



Geetha Praveen Mudiraj and Nacharam Corporator Shanti Sai Zen Shekhar, along with several BRS Party leaders. BRS State leaders Bannala Praveen Mudiraj, Sai Zen Shekhar, Gandham Nageshwar Rao, Akula Mahender, Pudoori Jitender Reddy, Anya Balakrishna, Jetta Kishore, and Panga Mahender Reddy, among others, participated in large numbers. The leaders extended their best wishes to the newly appointed officials and expressed confidence that coordinated efforts would further strengthen civic administration and development works in the Uppal constituency.

Development Works Worth Rs 13.25 Crore in Uppal Old Village Bharat Nagar

Says Uppal Constituency Congress In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy



"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 7 (Indian Chronicle):"Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy and Uppal Corporator Mandumula Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy stated that development of slums and old colonies is being taken up as a priority, with necessary funds being mobilized to ensure comprehensive infrastructure growth. They said that with the special initiative of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, substantial funds are being sanctioned for the development of the Uppal constituency. Planned and systematic development works are being implemented across slums and old village areas in the constituency. "1.25 Crore Development Works in Old Bharat Nagar" On Wednesday, Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy, along with Division Corporator Mandumula Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy and AE Raj Kumar, inspected development works being carried out at a cost of Rs 1.25 crore in Old Bharat Nagar, Uppal. Speaking on the

occasion, Parameshwar Reddy said that development works including drainage systems, CC roads, and other infrastructure facilities are being executed in Old Bharat Nagar in a planned manner with an overall investment of Rs 1.25 crore. He added that similar development initiatives are being extended to all old colonies and slum areas across various divisions of the Uppal constituency. Several local leaders and residents, including Bhusam Raghunath Reddy, Salla Prabhakar Reddy, Gorige Chiranjeevi, Salla Rajender Reddy, Bingi Ramesh, Pappadi Rakesh Reddy, Narasimha Goud, Balaraju Goud, Annapureddy Venkata Reddy, Doddaraju, Telakala Ram Reddy, Telakala Venkat Reddy, Dasari Kanakaiah, Telakala Sudhakar Reddy, Prashanth Reddy, and others, along with colony residents, participated in the program.

May Lord Ayyappa's Blessings Be Upon All the People of the Constituency: Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy



"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 7 (Indian Chronicle):"Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy participated in the mass Irumudi procession of 100 Ayyappa devotees, held at the Shirdi Saibaba Temple in Dharmapuri Colony of Chilkanagar Division, along with Chilkanagar Division Corporator Bannala Geetha Praveen Mudiraj. The programme included the Ayyappa Maha Padi Puja and a collective Irumudi ritual performed by 100 Ayyappa Swamis. Speaking on the occasion, MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy ex-

pressed his happiness at participating in such a spiritually significant event and stated that he prayed for Lord Ayyappa's blessings to be bestowed upon everyone. Temple committee members Manik Prabhu, Surender, Pravesh Singh, Bhaskar Reddy, ABRS State leader Bannala Praveen Mudiraj, senior leaders Kondal Reddy, Auto Balu, Muddam Srinivas Yadav, Masa Shekhar, Photo Balu, Cheryala Srinivas, Shyam, Birappa Gadda Balu, and several others were present at the programme.



'We Sleep Hungry': Wife Breaks Down as Sanitation Worker's Hunger Strike Continues

"Taj Khan, Kaghaznagar, January 7 (Indian Chronicle):"Sanitation workers have been staging an indefinite hunger strike for the past 17 days in front of the Municipal Office in Kaghaznagar town of Komaram Bheem Asifabad district, protesting the non-payment of their salaries for the last six months and the failure to deposit their ESI and PF contributions. Despite several rounds of dis-



cussions held by public representatives and officials, the talks have failed to yield any concrete results. As a result, the workers have intensified their agitation, expressing deep frustration and despair. On Wednesday, the wife of a sanitation worker, Mallesh, visited the hunger strike camp and broke down emotionally. She said her husband was observing the fast for the sake of their family and children, which had left the entire household in distress. "We are unable to sleep at home. We are going to bed hungry every day," she lamented. She appealed to the authorities and leaders to respond at least now by releasing the monthly salaries without further delay and ensuring that sanitation, drinking water, and electricity services in the town are not disrupted. The woman, Kalavathi, further revealed that the family had been surviving for the past five months by drinking water alone due to the absence of wages. Her emotional outburst and tears at the protest site moved many onlookers to tears, highlighting the severe humanitarian crisis faced by the sanitation workers' families.

Kandi Sravan Kumar Reddy Meets PCC Chief Mahesh Kumar Goud



"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 7 (Indian Chronicle):"Former Medchal-Malkajgiri district president Kandi Sravan Kumar Reddy paid a courtesy visit to Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) president Mahesh Kumar Goud on Wednesday. On the occasion, Kandi Sravan Kumar Reddy felicitated the PCC chief and conveyed New Year

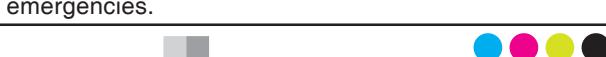


greetings. During the meeting, PCC president Mahesh Kumar Goud assured that due recognition and appropriate positions would be given to hardworking party workers in the upcoming local body elections. He also advised party leaders and activists to undertake necessary programs to effectively take the government's welfare schemes to the people. Emphasizing the importance of public outreach, Mahesh Kumar Goud urged leaders to frequently interact with the people and work towards resolving public issues under the people's government. Amogh Reddy, Sudhakar, Rahul, and others were present at the meeting.

In the Dark: Doctors Treat Snakebite Victim and Pregnant Woman by Mobile Torchlight

"Taj Khan, Kaghaznagar, January 7 (Indian Chronicle):"In a glaring example of inadequate healthcare infrastructure, doctors at a Primary Health Centre (PHC) in Koutala mandal of Komaram Bheem Asifabad district were forced to treat patients using mobile phone torchlights following a power outage and the absence of a generator. The incident occurred on Tuesday evening when Nagapuri Lav Kush, a resident of Thumidihetti village, was brought to the Koutala PHC after suffering a snakebite. Around 6:30 p.m., while he was being treated in the inpatient ward by a medical officer and nursing staff, the power supply was inter-

rupted, plunging the ward into darkness. With no generator available at the facility, attendants accompanying the patient switched on torchlights on their mobile phones, enabling doctors to administer injections. The patient was later referred to Kagaznagar for further treatment. Around the same time, Mesram Sunita of Gangapur village in Chintalamanepalli mandal arrived at the PHC with labour pains. She too was attended to under mobile phone light due to the power failure. Shortly after electricity was restored, she went to the bathroom, where she delivered a baby boy. The incident has sparked concern among local residents, who pointed out that despite the district being ranked highly on certain performance indicators, the lack of basic facilities such as a standby generator at a government health centre reflects poorly on emergency preparedness. They said such conditions were eroding public confidence and discouraging people from approaching government hospitals even during medical emergencies.



MLA Calls on Deputy Chief Minister, Seeks Redressal of District Issues

"Taj Khan, Kagaznagar, January 7 (Indian Chronicle):" "MLA Kova Lakshmi on Wednesday met Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka at Pragati Bhavan and submitted a memorandum on various issues concerning the district. The MLA pointed out that although the district medical college had been named after Konda Laxman Bapuji, no name board had been installed at the institution so far. She urged the government to ensure that a board bearing his name is erected and that the same is reflected on the official website of the medical college. Ms. Lakshmi also requested the Deputy Chief Minister to consider organising Chhatrapati Shivaji Jayanti celebrations officially. Besides these, she brought several constituency-related issues to the notice of the Minister and sought appropriate action.



Ramanthapur RTC Colony Tour by Ramanthapur Division Congress President Mohammed Rafiq



"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 7 (Indian Chronicle):" "Ramanthapur Division Congress Party President Mohammed Rafiq stated that he would always be accessible to the people like a member of their own family, sharing both their joys and hardships. On Wednesday, Mohammed Rafiq toured the RTC Colony in Ramanthapur Division along with local residents and party leaders. The visit received an overwhelming response. Residents shared their concerns and day-to-day problems with him and requested the laying of proper drainage facilities and roads in the colony. Speaking on the occasion, Mohammed Rafiq assured that he would bring all the issues to the notice of Uppal Congress Party In-

charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy and, after holding discussions with the concerned officials, would strive to ensure permanent solutions to all the problems. Residents of RTC Colony and Congress leaders including TPCC Member Tofeek, Poosa Sattaiah, Bestha Bhaskar, Mogili Lingam, Lagusani Srinivas Goud, Bestha MD Nayeem, Bestha Ashok, Chotu Bhai, Shiva, Sadan, NSUI Sai, Surya, Icon Madhu, Sai, Mohammed Jangir, and others participated in the programme.

Former Minister Tanneeru Harish Rao Unveils BLR Cricket Tournament Poster



"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 7 (Indian Chronicle):" "Under the leadership of former Ramantapur Division Corporator Gantham Jyothsna Nageswara Rao, the poster of the BLR Cricket Tournament, scheduled to be held on January 23, 24, and 25, was unveiled by former

Minister Tanneeru Harish Rao along with Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy. The event was attended by BRS leaders Pasula Prabhakar Reddy, Bannala Praveen, Chand Pasha, K.N. Chari, Srinivas, Vamsi, and several others.

Former Uppal MLA N.V.S.S. Prabhakar Cleans Statues of Great Leaders



"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 7 (Indian Chronicle):" "As part of the Ramantapur Mini Tank Bund beautification programme, former Uppal MLA and popularly known as the "Uppal Tiger," N.V.S.S. Prabhakar, personally washed and cleaned the statues of eminent leaders Babu Jagiyan Ram, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Bharat Mata, Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, Swami Vivekananda, and Mahatma Sri Basaveshwara using water. The initiative was aimed at preserving the dignity of national icons and enhancing the aesthetic appeal of the Mini Tank Bund area. Several BJP leaders and party workers participated in the programme, including Habsiguda Division President Kakkireni Harish, Ramantapur Division President Vangala Santhosh Gupta, former Division President Vallapu Jagan Yadav, Bandaru Venkat Rao, and senior BJP leaders Burrab Rajeshwar, Muttineni Jagadish, Somasekhar Goud, Thalla Balakrishna Goud, Vempati Srinivas, Kompally Upender, G. Suresh, Adi Satyanarayana, Venkanna Goud, Sankuri Kumaraswamy, Sanjay Patel, Darsanala Sudhakar, Palugula Anjaiah Patel, Upender Yadav, Chintakinda Praveen, Pentalavalli Venkanna, Poojari Somaiah, Laxman, Nasu Satish, Narayanasadu, Boddapalli Anand, Maheshwar Reddy, Ramesh, Sainath, A.V. Chari, Poola Krishna, Boddapalli Balaraj, Nursing Rao Babai, Suresh, Murali, and others. Women leaders Bandi Padma and Konderu Sravanti, along with several party activists and local residents, were also present and extended their support to the initiative.



Director of School Education Felicitates M. Swapna for Exemplary Leadership and Outstanding Service

"PSASHOKANKARINAGAR BUREAU: "A rare state-level honour was conferred upon M. Swapna, Special Officer of the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) at Bhupathipur, Sultanabad Mandal, Peddapalli District, in recognition of her exceptional commitment and transformative leadership in girls' education. Since assuming charge as Special Officer in 2013, Ms. Swapna has rendered dedicated and impactful service with unwavering commitment. In appreciation of her sustained contributions, she was felicitated today in Hyderabad by the Director of the School Education Department and the State Project Director, Samagra Shiksha, in a grand ceremony. On this occasion, the Director of School Education, E. Naveen Nicholas, along with Joint Director Venkata Narsamma, specially commended Ms. Swapna for her steadfast dedication, consistency, and visionary leadership in advancing girls' education and welfare. They observed that under her leadership, the institution has progressed remarkably across academics, sports, and holistic development, emerging as one of the most dynamic and high-performing KGBVs in the district. From a modest enrolment of just 56 students in the 2013-14 academic year, the school has achieved 100% enrolment consistently in subsequent years—a testament



to her effective outreach and community engagement. Ms. Swapna was also praised for building strong parental trust through door-to-door awareness campaigns and strategic use of social media, yielding excellent outcomes. In the 2024-25 academic year, the school recorded a 100% pass rate in SSC examinations, while its students secured top positions at both district and state levels in Intermediate education. Beyond academics, students excelled in INSPIRE programmes, science fairs, talent tests, and multiple co-curricular platforms. Under her supervision, vocational education initiatives—such as food processing and craft bakery—delivered commendable results, opening pathways for internships, industrial exposure, employability skills, and future employment opportunities. The Director further lauded the school's student-led KGBV Bank initiative and achievements at the national level in sports such as floorball and karate, alongside active participation in Scouts and Guides, Kalaripayattu, Heartfulness Yoga, and diverse cultural programmes. With the support of NGOs, Ms. Swapna also facilitated significant infrastructure upgrades, including the construction of new toilets, installation of solar power systems, upgraded laboratories, improved nutrition-focused learning environments, and the development of nutri-gardens. Recognising her unwavering dedication, perseverance, and student-centric approach, the Director stated that this honour was a fitting tribute to Ms. Swapna's exemplary service and her enduring commitment to the holistic development and well-being of girls.

Indiramma Housing Scheme beneficiaries should complete the construction work quickly and perform housewarming ceremonies in a festive atmosphere: Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Collector Hanumantha Rao



"(Mandava Srisailam, Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau, Indian Chronicle, January 7): Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Collector Hanumantha Rao said that beneficiaries of the Indiramma Housing Scheme should complete the construction work quickly and perform housewarming ceremonies in a festive atmosphere. On Wednesday, the District Collector inspected the ongoing construction work of Indiramma houses in Akuthotabai Thanda and Bollepalli villages of Bhuvanagiri mandal. On this occasion, the District Collector inquired about the number of Indiramma house beneficiaries in the village. He asked how many houses have been completed and whether the money has been received for the completed

houses. He also inquired about the stage of construction of the houses sanctioned in the village. He instructed the Panchayat Secretaries to supervise the beneficiaries to ensure that the house construction is completed quickly. He said that necessary materials such as sand and bricks should be provided to the beneficiaries at a low price to ensure that the constructions are completed quickly. He said that as soon as the construction of the houses is completed up to the extent of the funds provided, new houses will be sanctioned in the second phase. He also suggested that the newly formed governing bodies should undertake development works in the village. He ordered that sanitation work should be carried out in every ward. The concerned officials participated in the program.

Necessary arrangements must be made for the upcoming municipal elections: State Election Commissioner Rani Kumudini



"(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... January 7): State Election Commissioner Rani Kumudini said that necessary arrangements should be made for the conduct of the upcoming municipal elections. On Wednesday, she held a review meeting via video conference from Hyderabad with election officials from all districts – Collectors, Additional Collectors, and Municipal Commissioners – regarding the announcement of the voter list, announcement of polling station lists, necessary arrangements at nomination centers, and arrangements at polling and counting centers. On this occasion, the State Election Commissioner stated that transparent elections should be conducted without any irregularities in the conduct of the municipal elections. As part of this, she said that every aspect, including the allocation of duties to election officials, polling stations, counting centers, and the implementation of the election code of conduct, should be monitored. She stated that the rules must be strictly

followed within the polling station area and that special attention should be paid to the revision of the photo voter list, the announcement of polling station details, and the announcement of photo voter lists polling station-wise. She said that it should be ensured that every eligible person is included in the list and that eligible voters from the same family fall under the same polling station. He stated that thorough preparations should be made for conducting the municipal elections, ensuring the accuracy of ward-wise voter lists, setting up polling stations, appointing election staff, managing logistics, implementing security measures, and strictly adhering to the election code of conduct. District Collector Hanumantha Rao, Additional Collector for Local Bodies and Additional Revenue Collector Bhaskar Rao, Revenue Divisional Officers of Bhongir and Choutuppal, Krishna Reddy and Shekhar Reddy, and others participated in this program.



Care should be taken to ensure there are no errors in the municipal ward voter lists: Additional Collector for Local Bodies and Revenue, Bhaskar Rao



“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... January 7): Additional Collector for Local Bodies and Revenue, Bhaskar Rao, said that care should be taken to ensure there are no errors in the municipal ward voter lists. On Wednesday, the Additional Collector visited the municipality in Bhuvanagiri and, as part of the municipal elections, in-

spected the draft voter list. He instructed the concerned officials to immediately resolve any complaints received regarding changes or additions to the draft voter list. He said that if any citizen has any objections or complaints regarding the draft voter list, their applications should be accepted and the objections resolved. Bhuvanagiri Municipal Commissioner Ramalingam and staff participated in this program.

KTR has lost his mind... he is talking like a deranged beggar: Former Municipal Chairman Barre Jahangir



“(Mandava Srisailam, Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau, Indian Chronicle, January 7): Former Municipal Chairman Barre Jahangir lashed out, saying that former minister KTR is hissing like a snake without fangs. He, along with Congress party leaders, burned an effigy of KTR in Bhongir district center in protest against KTR's remarks on Rahul Gandhi. Speaking on the occasion, he said that it is not right to talk about hanging Rahul Gandhi, and that KTR is merely an opportunistic leader, while Rahul Gandhi is an honest leader. He said that Rahul Gandhi is an honest leader who even gave up the opportunity to become Prime Minister, and it is not right to say that such a leader should be hanged. He stated that KTR's

father, KCR, had promised that if Telangana was formed, a Dalit would be made the Chief Minister and each Dalit family would be given three acres of land, and that KCR, who broke that promise, should also be hanged. In this program, Pittala Balaraj, State Service Secretary, Padigela Pradeep, Youth Congress leader, Vadicherla Krishna Yadav, Congress leader, Siripanga Chandu, Deputy Sarpanch and NSUI District Vice President, Dakuri Prakash, Kalia Nagaraj, OBC Town President, Nagaram Shankar, MD Asaduddin, NSUI leaders, Nallamasa Ravi Goud, Nayini Praveen Kumar Mudiraj, Srisailam, Balaraju, Nuvvula Raju and others participated and raised slogans.

State Congress Seva Dal Secretary Pittala Balaraj's 50th Birthday Celebration: Guests: Former Municipal Chairmen Pothamshetty Venkateshwarlu and Barre Jangir



“(Mandava Srisailam, Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau, Indian Chronicle, January 7): The 50th birthday celebration of State Congress Seva Dal Secretary Pittala Balaraj was held grandly. Former Municipal Chairmen Pothamshetty Venkateshwarlu and Barre Jangir participated in the program, felicitated Balaraj with a shawl, and extended their birthday wishes. On this occasion, former Municipal Chairmen Barre Jangir and Pothamshetty Venkateshwarlu, Revanth Sena District President MD Nazir, former Municipal Floor Leader Pothamshetty Manjula, former Councillor Padigala Pradeep, local Councillor Vadicherla Krishna Yadav, Town Seva Dal President Dakuri Prakal, and Chaitanya Mitra Mandali President Mandava Srisailam participated and conveyed their birthday wishes to Balaraj. Later, bread and fruits were distributed to the elderly at the old

age home in Rayagiri's third ward. Speaking on this occasion, Pittala Balaraj said that in the upcoming municipal elections, two seats should be allocated to the Seva Dal. He urged everyone to work towards taking the state government's welfare schemes to the people under the leadership of our Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, PCC President Mahesh Kumar Goud, and District Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, and to strive for the victory of the Congress-backed candidates in the municipal elections. He asserted that they would demonstrate their strength in the municipal elections and, under the leadership of DCC President and Government Whip MLA Beerla Ilaiah, MP Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy, and local MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy, they would hoist the Congress flag in the municipality and work for the victory of the Congress Seva Dal candidate. The event was attended by Yadadri District Congress Seva Dal President Samala Ravinder, State SC Cell Convenor Nagaram Shankar, Ramachandrapuram Deputy Sarpanch and District General Secretary Sheikh Wajid, Block Seva Dal leader Bathini Jitender Goud, Youth Congress leader Balaraj, Congress Seva Dal district leader Nallamasa Ravi, and others. On this occasion, District Congress Seva Dal President Samala Ravinder said that he wished everyone the blessings of Lord Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy, Goddess Renuka Yellamma, and Lord Venkateswara Swamy, and prayed for long life, good health, and success in achieving high positions.

Return as national champions



“Secunderabad Cantonment, January 7 (Indian Chronicle): Jampa Pratap, chairman of Fistball Association and vice-president of All India Cantonment Boards, said that they should perform well at the national level and return as fistball champions. The 16th Junior National Fistball Championship will be held at KV Campus, Chikkaballapur, Karnataka from January 9 to 11. Telangana State boys and girls teams were selected for this competition at Bowenpally Cantonment Play Ground, Secunderabad. The selected teams left for the National

Games on Wednesday. Chairman Jampa Pratap and President Sneha congratulated the players and wished them the best performance at the national level and come back as champions. After sports kits are distributed to state team in the program, Siddu from Hyderabad for the boys team. Rabia is leading the girls team as captain. Cantonment Sports Association Vice President Satyanarayana Mukesh Yadav Fistball Association General Secretary Venkatesh Coach of both teams Lunawat Santosh. Saloni. Assistant coach is Ayesha. Naresh Banoth participated

Inauguration of MVS SC-ST Association Calendar.



“Secunderabad Cantonment, January 7 (Indian Chronicle): SC-ST Association New Year Calendar Inauguration Program was held on Wednesday under the auspices of MVS Complex Mood Fort. On this occasion, the cake was cut and greetings were exchanged. CW Army and Air Force officers who attended the program were felicitated by the committee members. After that a

lunch program was organized for the guests, members and workers. SC-ST Association President Yadagiri, Central Vice President Tirumala Rao, General Secretary Uma Mahesh, Assistant General Secretary Raj Kumar, Treasurer Vijay Kumar, Advisor Narayana, Satyanarayana also participated in this program. Also Working President Ravi, Karthik Kiran, Laxman, Harikrishna, Sunil Kumar and others participated

Government land in Survey Number 700 in Bhongir town should be leveled and allocated as house plots: CPM State Committee member Battupalli Anuradha

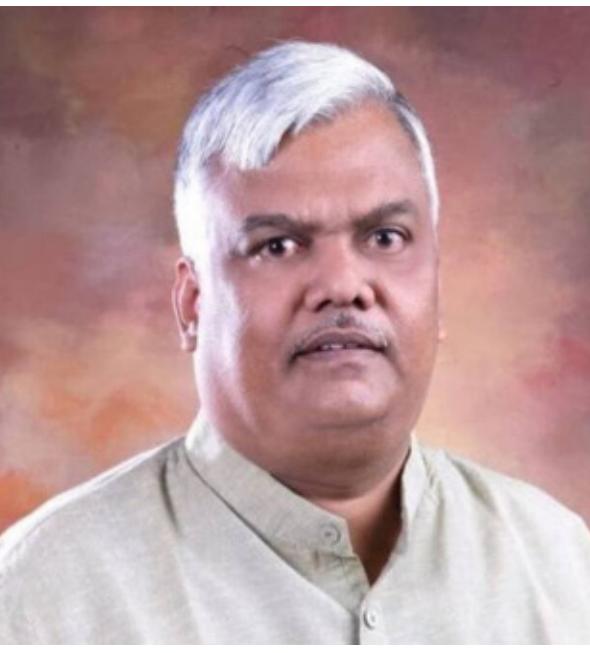


“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhongir District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... January 7): CPM State Committee member Battupalli Anuradha stated that the government land in Survey Number 700 on the outskirts of Bhongir town should be leveled, divided into plots, and given to the poor for houses and house plots. She said that on Wednesday, under the auspices of the CPM town committee, a rally was held from Banjara Hills to the local MRO office with poor people who do not have houses, followed by a protest. Speaking on the occasion, she said that recently, as a result of the struggle by the CPM town committee, officials conducted a survey in Survey Number 700 and informed that there are a total of 38 acres of land, with 20 acres as ceiling land and 18 acres as patta land. She alleged that the Congress government is neglecting to level the land, divide it into plots, and give it to the poor. She said that poor people are facing difficulties due to not having houses or house plots and being unable to pay rent. She added that the pain of someone dying in a rented house without owning a home is indescribable. She said that despite conducting struggles for the past 20 years, they have only received patta papers, but no houses or house plots have been allocated. She stated that this government, which claims to be a people's government, is not even in a position to understand the suffering of the people. They demanded

that the government level the government land in survey number 700, divide it into plots, and provide houses and house sites to the poor people of the town. They warned that otherwise, they would intensify the land struggle of the slum dwellers. CPM town secretary Maya Krishna, town committee members Bandela Ellaya and Vanam Raju, CPM town leaders Dandagiri, Kotagiri Veerabrahman, Kotha Lakshmaiah, Narala Narasimha, Pallerla Gangayya, and slum dwellers' committee members Doddi Shankar, Nari Kalamma, Aruna, Sravanti, Mounika, Manjula, Swami, Yadagiri, Hemalatha, and Anjaiah participated in this program.



Vijay Kumbhar alleges irregularities on Shivajinagar land where NCP inaugurated new office



further remarked that persons involved in the Mundhwa land irregularity case were also involved in this deal. The NCP office was inaugurated on the ground floor of the same building.

Kumbhar said MahaRERA had prevented any transactions on the said piece of land and its account had been seized. When the registration number, allegedly belonging to the Ananta One project, is entered on the MahaRERA website, a warning pops up saying, "This project is kept in Abeyance, bank account of this project is frozen, and promoter is prohibited to execute agreement for sale/sale deed with buyers, till further compliances done by the promoter."

Kumbhar said the tendering process for leasing the land from the charitable Deccan Sugar Technologies Association was flawed as firms having common directors were involved in it. Kalpa Vruksha Plantations Pvt. Ltd., a company with connections to Parth Pawar, according to Kumbhar, won the lease. "There is a social organisation Deccan Sugar Technologies Association, which owned the land in Shivajinagar. This land was later leased by Kalpavruksha Plantation Pvt. Ltd. The directors of this company are also directors in other companies associated with Parth Pawar (Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar's son). If the land of any organisation has to be sold, then the Charity Commissioner's permission has to be sought. However, the permission here was only to lease it for seven years... yet many pieces of land have been sold." Kumbhar also added that a witness in the Mundhwa land deal case, Sahil Pradhan's name, also appears in various land documents of Shivajinagar. He demanded an investigation into the legality of the project and the involvement of any of the persons involved in the Mundhwa land deal case.

Activist Vijay Kumar on Monday alleged irregularities in land transactions in the Ananta One building in Shivajinagar, where Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) inaugurated its new office in August last year. In a press conference, Kumbhar said the land originally belonged to an NGO and raised questions over the tendering process for its leasing. He added that after the land was leased, a firm developed the land and sold some floors to another private company, against the Charity Commissioner rules. Kumbhar

Delhi dairy owner pumped with 69 bullets: Two accused nabbed in Dwarka shootout



May 2025 near Chattarpur Metro Station. Ratan's elder son Deepak Lohiya was arrested in this case. The two accused shooters were caught following a brief exchange of fire in Southwest Delhi's Dwarka on Tuesday morning. Express The two accused shooters were caught following a brief exchange of fire in Southwest Delhi's Dwarka on Tuesday morning. ExpressPolice claimed their investigation revealed that Kamal, who is Arun's uncle, is facing at least eight criminal cases in Faridabad, Haryana. Police claimed he sought help from US-based Neeraj Faridpuri-Himanshu Bhau gang and the Western UP Randeep Bhati gang to take revenge for his nephew's killing. Police said Narender is believed to be a member of the Faridpuri-Bhau gang. He faces around half a dozen cases in Faridabad. Anuj, police claimed, is a shooter with the Bhati gang. Police said they recovered two sophisticated .30-bore pistols and 40 rounds of live cartridges from the accused. The motorcycle on which the duo were travelling was stolen, they added.

According to police, Ratan's murder was a fallout over the killing of Arun Lohiya (25), who lived in the same locality, over a property and financial dispute. Arun was killed in

Country that used to carry rockets & satellites on bicycles, bullock carts now ranked first in many fields globally: ISRO chairman



the duty of responsible youth who are going to the society after getting a degree to be active in protecting the environment. Education is not just a means of getting a degree, but it is the power to solve the problems of society," he said. As many as 40,245 students were awarded degrees, diplomas and certificates and 342 medals and 66 students scholarships in the convocation ceremony.

Former minister Ramanna detained during bandh over soybean procurement in Adilabad

Adilabad: Former minister Jogi Ramanna flayed the State government for failing to address the challenges faced by farmers. He was detained for taking part in a protest against the government, demanding procurement of soybean produce and the resolution of other farmers' issues here early on Tuesday morning.

Ramanna, along with cadres of the Bharatiya Rashtra Samithi (BRS), staged a sit-in in front of the TGRRTC depot as part of the bandh. They raised slogans against the government, accusing it of neglecting the problems of the agrarian community. Ramanna said farmers were facing a slew of challenges and urged the government to take steps to ensure smooth procurement of soybean produce. On learning about the protest, police rushed to the spot and attempted to prevent the cadres from stopping buses.

Gujarat ACB forms SIT to probe Surendranagar bribery case involving IAS officer Rajendra Patel, 3 others



GNS News Agency, Jan 7

Forensic department staff shortage, ACB probe, Forensic pending cases, corruption cases, acb, gujarat, forensic job delays, forensic dept staff shortages, Indian express newsGujarat ACB forms six member SIT to probe alleged corruption in Surendranagar Collectorate CLU applications involving senior officials. The Gujarat Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Monday formed a six-member Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe allegedly large scale corruption in the Surendranagar District Collectorate in Charge of Land Use (CLU) applications, that has already led to the Enforcement Directorate arresting the former Collector Rajendrakumar Mahendra Patel and Deputy Mamlatdar Chandrasinh Mori.

The ACB in a statement on Monday said it had on December 23, 2025, in an FIR at Surendranagar ACB police station, booked four officers including Deputy Mamlatdar and Executive Magistrate Chandrasinh Bhupatsinh Mori (Class-3), Collector Rajendrakumar Mahendra Patel (Class-1), Clerk Mayur Gohil (Class-3), and PA to Collector Jayrajsinh Vala (Class-3), under sections 12, 13(1)(b), and 13(2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act. Following this, ACB Director Piyush Patel on Monday formed an SIT under the supervision of Additional Director Bipin Ahire, who will in-

vestigate the allegations of bribery and disproportionate assets against the accused.

The six members of the SIT include Deputy Director (Admin) Bharti J Pandya, KH Gohil who is in-charge Assistant Director (Rajkot), RB Desai who is Assistant Director (HQ), ACB Inspector DN Patel of Ahmedabad, ACB Inspector MD Patel of Surendranagar, and ACB Inspector PA Dekavadiya of Morbi. This is the first action taken by the Gujarat ACB after filing the FIR on December 23, 2025. Meanwhile, the ED has, since then, arrested Chandrasinh Mori, received seven days' remand and sent him back to judicial custody on January 7. The ED then, also arrested Rajendrakumar Patel and received five-days' remand from the court.

Notably, an order by the General Administration Department (GAD) of Gujarat on January 4, 2026, stated that 2015-batch IAS officer Rajendrakumar Mahendra Patel was "deemed to have been placed under suspension" under sub rule 3 of rule 2 of the All India Services (Discipline and Appeal) Rules, 1969, from January 2, 2026. This order followed the former Surendranagar Collector's arrest by the ED and subsequent five-day remand granted by the Special PMLA court of Ahmedabad (Rural), on January 2. The suspension order was effected as his remand order by the court exceeded 48 hours. On the same day as the FIR by Surendranagar ACB police station, since the sections mentioned in the FIR also constitute scheduled offences under section 2(1)(y) of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), the ED filed an Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR) 43/2025 on the same day, and began its investigation against Patel and others. Patel had on December 24, 2025, been transferred out of Surendranagar and placed his services at the disposal of the General Administration Department (GAD) until further orders. He had been serving as Collector of Surendranagar since February 1, 2025, before which, he was Deputy Municipal Commissioner in Surat City.

Kolkata shivers under severe cold spell; temperature likely to plunge further across state, says IMD



Bengal Weather Update: Bengal is reeling under an intense cold wave. Due to northerly winds, temperatures have plunged sharply across the state. On Monday, Kolkata recorded a minimum temperature of 10.2 degrees Celsius, which was 3.7 degrees below normal. The India Meteorological Department's Regional Meteorological Centre at Alipore said there would be no immediate relief from the biting cold. Instead, a strong cold spell is expected to persist across South Bengal for the next seven days, with the temperature dropping another two notches by Wednesday. Cold day conditions in sub-Himalayan West Bengal during is likely till Wednesday. Meteorologists said temperatures may drop further in the coming days. In the hilly regions of North Bengal, especially Darjeeling, there is a strong possibility of snowfall.

Bengal cold spell warningAccording to the weather department, Bengal is witnessing record cold this season. The chill is expected to be most intense in around 9-10 districts of the state. In North Bengal, Malda, North Dinajpur and South Dinajpur will be severely affected. In South Bengal, the western districts of Bankura, Birbhum and West Burdwan will experience intense cold conditions. Apart from these, Nadia, Murshidabad and East Burdwan are also likely to feel the biting chill. In several districts of South Bengal, temperatures may plunge by up to five degrees below normal. There is also a possibility of dense fog in many districts during the early morning hours.

Weather in South BengalThe Alipore Meteorological Department said that with no obstruction to the dry northerly winds, temperatures are dropping rapidly in South Bengal. This situation is likely to continue for the next five days. In particular, temperatures in Purulia, Bankura and Birbhum

may fall below 11 degrees Celsius.

Kolkata weather forecastKolkata is also experiencing intense winter conditions. On Tuesday, the city's minimum temperature stood at 10.2 degrees Celsius. According to the weather forecast, while there may not be any major change in temperatures over the next few days, a slight further drop is highly likely. The cold spell is set to intensify further across North Bengal. In the hilly district of Darjeeling, there is a chance of snowfall accompanied by light rain. The weather department has also predicted rainfall in Kalimpong district. Additionally, dense fog may be seen in several districts of North Bengal during the morning hours over the next few days. Overall, the state is set to witness plunging temperatures and persistent biting cold in the days ahead. Dense fog reducing visibility (199 – 50 m) is very likely to prevail in the morning hours at one or two places over Coochbehar, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling and North Dinajpur districts of North Bengal. Cold day Conditions are very likely to prevail over North & South Dinajpur and Malda districts of North Bengal.

Lucknow varsity doctor's parents arrested for 'conversion' after two women allege coercion

GNS News Agency, Jan 7

During questioning of the parents, police said the names of a Muslim cleric who allegedly solemnised the nikah and a witness have come into light. During questioning of the parents, police said the names of a Muslim cleric who allegedly solemnised the nikah and a witness have come into light. (King George's Medical University (KGMU) /Photo Credit: kgmu.org) The Lucknow Police on Monday arrested the parents of a resident doctor, Rameezuddin, at King George's Medical University (KGMU) on charges of alleged forced religious conversion.

Police said the case relates to the alleged conversion of a resident doctor at Agra Medical College for marriage and an attempt to pressure a KGMU resident doctor to convert so she could marry their son. Police said the parents, Salimuddin (70) and Khadija (60) were held after questioning. They lived in a rented house in the Old City area in Lucknow. Police have also increased the reward on the doctor, who is on the run, from Rs 25,000 to Rs 50,000.

DCP Vishwajeet Srivastava told The Indian Express that the arrests were made after the statements of both victims were recorded before a magistrate, in which they alleged the parents' role in forcing them to convert and causing a miscarriage. Rameezuddin faces charges of sexual exploitation of the two victims besides conversion and forcible miscarriage charges, the DCP added. During questioning of the parents, police said the names of a Muslim cleric who allegedly solemnised the nikah and a witness have come into light. Police said they will verify their roles to ascertain if they should be made accused in the case. In the meantime, police teams have been dispatched to different places to trace the resident doctor after obtaining a non-bailable warrant. They also have decided to approach court seeking directions to attach his property. Police have conducted raids at his house in Uttarakhand and his ancestral house in Pilibhit but have yet to gather any information about his whereabouts.

The medical university had earlier suspended the accused doctor after his colleague at KGMU, on December 23, lodged a complaint. Police had booked the accused under BNS sections 69 (sexual intercourse by employing deceitful means etc), 89 (causing miscarriage without woman's consent) and 351 (criminal intimidation) besides

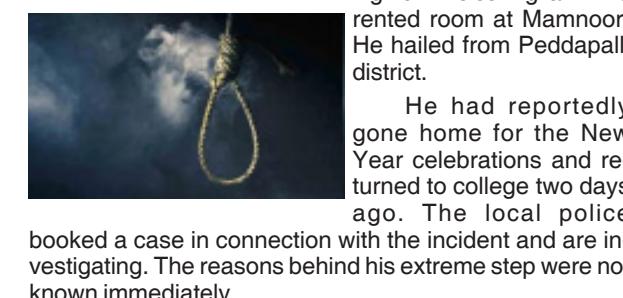


religious conversion charges. Police said the KGMU complainant claimed that she came in contact with another woman, who identified herself as Rameezuddin's wife. According to the complainant, the woman told her she had converted for the marriage, which was solemnised last February.

Final year engineering student dies by suicide in Warangal

Warangal: An engineering student died, allegedly by suicide, in the district late on Monday. The student, Vamsi Varma, was studying B Tech final year at Vaagdevi Engineering College in Bolikunta in the city. He was found hanging from the ceiling fan in his rented room at Mamnoor. He hailed from Peddapalli district.

He had reportedly gone home for the New Year celebrations and returned to college two days ago. The local police booked a case in connection with the incident and are investigating. The reasons behind his extreme step were not known immediately.



Soon, mega cancer hospital in Ayodhya: Tata Group to build, erstwhile royal family okays 8 acres



GNS News Agency, Jan 7

With the erstwhile royal family agreeing to donate about eight acres of prime land near the Surajkund area, Ayodhya is set to get a major cancer hospital which will be set up by Tata Group in collaboration with the Uttar Pradesh government, it is learnt. Nipendra Mishra, a member of Ayodhya's erstwhile royal family, told The Indian Express that the land on Ayodhya-Ambedkar Nagar road near Suraj Kund area would be donated in memory of his father, Bimlendra Mohan Mishra, a scion of the Ayodhya royal family and also a trustee of the Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, who passed away in August last year.

"My great-grandfather donated land for Saket College as well as 52 other colleges in Ayodhya. My father donated land for the Karyashala at Karsevak Puram, and my family also contributed funds to KGMU (King George's Medical University) in 1904. So, when we were approached for land for a good cause, my uncle and I discussed it and agreed to donate about eight acres of our land near Suraj Kund," Mishra said. Sources said the cancer treatment hub is part of a broader plan of the state government, in collaboration with private players to develop Ayodhya as a healthcare hub. The initiatives include setting up of a 300-bed hospital and the upgradation of the existing Shri Ram Hospital, in addition to the cancer facility, to cater not only to Ayodhya but the wider region.

Chairman of the construction committee of the Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, Nipendra Mishra, who was in Ayodhya for a two-day committee meeting, said that several decisions have already been taken by the Uttar Pradesh Health Department. "For the upgradation of health facilities, Cabinet approval will also be sought, though the broad decisions have already been taken. The first step will be the upgradation of Shri Ram Hospital to enable it to provide emergency services and proper diagnostic facilities for serious diseases," he said.

He added that approval from the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) is required for the proposed 300-bed hospital. "The tender process has been completed, the construction agency has been finalised, and we hope ASI approval will be granted soon," he said. About the cancer treatment hub, Nipendra Mishra said that Namo Cancer Care Trust from the private sector would establish the facility. "The primary requirement for construction, including a no-objection certificate from the district administration, has already been fulfilled. Following the request for land from the royal family, construction work will begin," he said. He added that an agreement would be signed between the implementing organisation and the Raja of Ayodhya. "Most likely, a local trust will be formed, in which the Raja of Ayodhya will be a trustee in perpetuity, ensuring that a member of the royal family remains part of the trust," he said, adding that the aim is to start OPD services within two years. Nipendra Mishra further said that a preliminary project report has been prepared and that the final detailed project report, including procurement plans—some of which may involve imports—will be ready within the next three months. Ayodhya Divisional Commissioner Rakesh Kumar said the cancer treatment centre would function on a "hub-and-spoke" model, with the facility acting as a "hub" and hospitals across the region serving as "spokes", referring patients for specialised treatment. "With rising cases of oral and throat cancers in Uttar Pradesh and neighbouring Bihar, the centre will also focus on research and the development of targeted treatment for these diseases," he said.

Man beaten to death in Greater Noida, friend critical after they objected to group drinking alcohol by roadside



GNS News Agency, Jan 7

On the way back home from work, a 26-year-old man was beaten to death and his 27-year-old colleague was critically injured in the early hours of Monday after they objected to some men drinking alcohol by the roadside in Greater Noida's Karnala village, police said on Monday. Two men have been arrested in connection with the case, officers added. According to police, the incident occurred in Karnala village under the Dadri police station area between 1 to 1:30 am on Monday. "The victims identified as Harkesh and Mohit were returning home in their car when they got into a fight with some men from Karnala village who had been drinking," said Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (ADCP), Greater Noida, Sudheer Kumar.

During initial questioning of the accused, it was disclosed that the fight escalated into a scuffle between both the sides, the ADCP added. "Both of them were admitted to the hospital, where Harkesh succumbed to his injuries and Mohit is currently undergoing treatment.... The attackers fled the scene, leaving both men in a critical condition. With the help of people from nearby villagers, the injured were admitted to a nearby hospital, where Harkesh died during treatment," an officer said. According to police, Harkesh worked as a recovery agent in Greater Noida, and his friend Mohit also worked with him. "They were both returning

home after finishing their duty when they encountered two men on the road who were drinking alcohol. When Harkesh objected to them drinking, an argument ensued, and the accused jointly attacked them with sticks and rods. The sudden attack left both men unable to defend themselves, and they were seriously injured," the Station House Officer (SHO), Dadri, Jitendra Kumar told The Indian Express. Based on a complaint filed by Harkesh's father, Jatin, the police have registered a case against seven people from the village for murder. Kumar said that the police have sent the body for a post-mortem examination. "Thorough investigation into the case is underway. We are also probing the angle of old enmity.

Mamata to move Supreme Court today against SIR, says will plead as an ordinary citizen and not as a lawyer or CM



GNS News Agency, Jan 7

Escalating her confrontation with the Election Commission and the Centre over the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday said she would move the Supreme Court "as an ordinary citizen" to protect the democratic rights of citizens. Addressing a massive public gathering at Gangasagar in South 24 Parganas district, the chief minister said she would seek special permission to appear before the Supreme Court. "If necessary, I will go to the Supreme Court and plead for the people. I will speak for the people," she said.

"I will not go as a lawyer, although I am a lawyer. As an ordinary citizen, I can certainly speak my mind. I will take permission to speak my mind and try to show clearly what is happening at the grassroots level, what is happening on the ground, and how people are being harassed. No matter how much the BJP tries, they won't succeed," she said.

Urging everyone to check their names on the SIR draft list, the TMC supremo said, "It might be a bit troublesome, but this is a struggle to protect your rights. This is a fight for existence. One must survive in this struggle. We are seeking legal help. So many people have died due to SIR. We are moving court tomorrow against the inhumane treatment and the death of so many people due to the SIR," she said, adding that she was prepared to escalate the legal battle if necessary.

The TMC chief's decision to move the Supreme Court against the SIR exercise comes a day after she expressed "grave concerns" over what she described as a "fundamentally flawed" SIR of electoral rolls. In a letter to Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar on Sunday, the

chief minister said if the "unplanned, arbitrary, and ad hoc" exercise is not immediately rectified, it must be halted to prevent a "direct assault on the foundational principles of democratic governance". Last week, Banerjee wrote a sharply worded letter to the CEC, accusing the Election Commission of reducing the democratic process to a "farce." The chief minister alleged a "technological conspiracy" where Artificial Intelligence (AI) and informal messaging platforms are being weaponised to "disenfranchise millions of voters" ahead of the 2026 Assembly elections in the state.

"Listen, Artificial Intelligence has emerged now. Often, you'll see it's not me. But using my image and voice, they can spread many lies. There are fake videos. Discern with your own intelligence what to accept and what not to. There is no task in the world that the BJP cannot do. Remember, the names of 54 lakh people have been removed," she said. "Even if a murderer doesn't get a lawyer, he can still defend himself. And here, they have used AI to remove names. AI is deciding whose surname has changed, who got married, and which girl has gone to her in-laws' house. Names have been removed using AI," the TMC chief further said. "The Election Commission is being run on WhatsApp. Who knows if they have bought WhatsApp or not... I'm sorry to say that people's names are being removed from the voter list... If people's rights are removed, you will vanish too. Keep this much in mind," Banerjee said.

She said that elderly citizens, pregnant women, and voters on oxygen support were being called for hearings.

"After living in this country for so long, do they still need to prove that they are voters and citizens?" Banerjee asked, claiming that nearly 70 people had died since the exercise began and several others had attempted suicide.

"If people's rights are taken away, you too will vanish," she warned Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar. On December 16, the Election Commission published the draft electoral roll after the first phase of the SIR, with the electorate dropping from 7.66 crore to 7.08 crore following the deletion of over 58 lakh names.

The second phase, which began on December 27, involves hearings of 1.67 crore electors under scrutiny, including 1.36 crore flagged for logical discrepancies and 31 lakh whose records lack mapping.

The election to the 294-member Assembly is due in three months, and TMC is seeking a straight fourth term.

Power Mech Projects outbids Adani for operations and maintenance of monorail



GNS News Agency, Jan 7

Power Mech Projects emerges lowest bidder to handle operations and maintenance of Mumbai monorail with Rs 296.4 crore offer. Power Mech Projects emerges lowest bidder to handle operations and maintenance of Mumbai monorail with Rs 296.4 crore offer. In a step ahead for Mumbai's monorail, Power Mech Projects Ltd has emerged as the lowest bidder for the task for handling the operations and maintenance of the line. With a bid of Rs 296.4 crore, the company outbid Adani Infrastructure Management Services Limited with a bid of Rs 308.4 crore. While the monorail still has a way to go till regular functioning begins again, the

decision to appoint a single-point for O&M for the line was made to reduce technical malfunctions and improve coordination.

Initially, the monorail was being looked after by a consortium of Scomi Engineering and Larsen & Toubro, till it was cancelled by the MMRDA on claims of poor maintenance. But on taking over and shifting to annual and separate contracts for operations and maintenance, technical issues and complaints continued. The MMRDA then made the decision to outsource O&M to a single private entity in March 2025, inviting tenders for it. The process of opening the bids has then been on since November. Bids by the other two companies, Indwell Constructions Private Limited and Konkan Railway Corporation Limited, were rejected due to technical reasons; Indwell due to not meeting the qualification criteria of the tender, and Konkan due to its failure to get the minimum technical score needed. While this makes arrangements for the monorail's eventual functioning, the fate of the 19.5km line from Sant Gadge Maharaj Chowk to Chembur remains in a state of limbo after it was shut in September. The MMRDA continues to tackle the deployment of new rakes and overhauling the CBTC signalling system, with a clear deadline not in sight. There is also the larger issue of the line bleeding money, as it made a loss of Rs 524 crore in 2023-24.

Former CM, Sule, AAP seek thorough probe into 'unopposed elections', asks SEC to intervene immediately



GNS News Agency, Jan 7

Former Chief Minister and Congress leader Prithviraj Chavan, NCP (S-P) MP Supriya Sule and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) have demanded a thorough investigation by the State Election Commission into the "unopposed election" of 68 candidates belonging to the BJP-led Mahayati. There is uproar everywhere over unopposed elections. The Opposition parties have raised objections to the unopposed elections. In such a situation, the State Election Commission is duty bound to conduct a thorough investigation into the allegations of threat and bribery that have facilitated the unopposed elections of some candidates," said Chavan.

The former Chief Minister said, "I have already demanded countermanding of the polls in Colaba, where threats have been issued to Opposition candidates and whose CCTV footage has also been found. Similarly, there is also a need to probe how so many candidates have got elected unopposed." Lok Sabha MP from Baramati Supriya Sule, who is also NCP (SP)'s working president, said, "All this is a threat to a strong democracy... Such large number of candidates getting elected unopposed is unimaginable, whichever party they maybe from... The State Election Commission should immediately intervene and launch a thorough investigation. Merely asking municipal commissioners to send a report won't bring out the facts. A thorough probe is needed to restore public faith in the election process."

AAP spokesperson Mukund Kirdat, who had first raised objections to the unopposed election of BJP candidate Ravi Landge from Bhosari ward of PCMC, said, "Our objection has been proven right. Now it is come to light that 68 candidates have been elected by so-called system of unopposed election. When such a huge number of candidates are in fray and when there was so much enthusiasm among them to contest the elections, it is impossible to believe that they have withdrawn from the polls on their own. We strongly believe either they have been either threatened to withdraw or offered a huge sum of money. Since the Election Commission has been harping on free and fair elections, now the ball is in the EC's court to prove that the polls are indeed free and fair." The AAP said till a thorough probe is conducted, the so-called results of the unopposed elections should not be declared. "All those candidates who withdrew from the race should be called and investigated. Their phone records should be checked and their bank accounts should also be checked to find out the truth," said Kirdat, adding that SEC should immediately hold a press conference in this connection and clear the doubts.

Meanwhile, speaking at a press conference at Tilak Bhavan in Mumbai, Maharashtra Congress chief Harshavardhan Sapkal said, "In the cabinet of India's first

Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, there were six non-Congress ministers—this is our culture and tradition. However, the BJP and the Mahayati have developed a mindset that does not want any Opposition at all, and to ensure unopposed victories, those in power are going to any extent. Preventing opposition candidates from filing nominations, issuing threats, using pressure tactics, and shamelessly playing this game with the help of the police and the administration is underway—while the Election Commission has become a mute spectator." Sapkal said. Taking potshots at Maharashtra Assembly Speaker Rahul Narvekar, the MPCC chief alleged, "Those holding constitutional posts are expected to keep aside political bias. The Speaker of the Lok Sabha, the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, Governors, Speakers of Legislative Assemblies and Chairpersons of Councils are constitutional positions and are referred to with respect. However, Maharashtra Assembly Speaker Rahul Narvekar has undermined the dignity of his office. In his first tenure as Speaker, Narvekar dismantled the anti-defection law and stabbed democracy and the Constitution in the chest; that is why he was given a second chance. Now, in municipal elections, this gentleman has stooped to an extremely low level for the sake of his relatives. He has obstructed Opposition candidates from filing nominations, threatened them, and misused his position. Strict action against him is necessary. The Hon'ble President should take serious note of this and remove Narvekar from office." The Congress had written to demand an inquiry and action against Narvekar in connection with threats issued to the Opposition candidates, but the Election Commission sought evidence, said Sapkal. "CCTV footage from the spot exists; action should be taken by recording complaints of those who were obstructed and threatened. Although an inquiry report has now come, it merely indulges in wordplay. In municipal elections, the three parties in power are standing against each other and criticising one another. If the matter is truly so serious, then Ajit Pawar should step out of power, or the BJP should show Ajit Pawar the door," the Congress state president added.

'He has been targeted': Patidar community throws weight behind IAS officer Rajendra Patel facing corruption charges



'He has been targeted': Patidar community throws weight behind IAS officer Rajendra Patel facing corruption charges. The group, led by Varun Patel, also one of the leading members of the 2015 Patidar quota agitation, held a public rally in Ahmedabad district's Mandal in support of Patel. A group of Patidar community members on Monday came out in support of IAS officer and former Surendranagar Collector Rajendrakumar Patel while alleging that "he has been targeted in the case".

Patel, who was born in Dumana village of Viramgam taluka in Ahmedabad district had ranked 70 in the country in the UPSC exams in 2014. Qualified as a Bachelor in Dental Surgery, Patel took the exam with Gujarati Literature as a subject in the mains. The group, led by Varun Patel, also one of the leading members of the 2015 Patidar quota agitation, held a public rally in Ahmedabad district's Mandal in support of Patel and also submitted a memorandum to the local Mamilatdars. In Mandal on Monday, Varun was also accompanied by other noted members of the Patidar quota agitation like Manoj Panara and Gita Patel, among others. Addressing the rally, Varun said, "The government may say anything, Rajendra Patel is respectable and the pride of our clan and our community."

'He has been targeted': Patidar community throws weight behind IAS officer Rajendra Patel facing corruption charges. Express photoSpeaking with The Indian Express, Varun said, "The government has taken action as if Rajendra Patel is a culprit and has taken money for granting change of land use applications. In Gujarat, every collector takes money for granting non-agriculture use (applications). Same ED action should be taken against all the (district) collectors." Varun claimed that the survey numbers mentioned in the complaint against Rajendrakumar were

granted NA permission during the tenure of his predecessor. "Rajendra Patel has been purely targeted. Earlier, a conspiracy was on to eliminate Patidars from the politics of Gujarat and now a conspiracy is on to eliminate Patidars and Gujaratis from the administration," he said. Varun said they are going to carry out a campaign in support of Rajendrakumar by meeting top four Patidar organisations in the state, hence involving them in the issue. After the rally, the group submitted a memorandum to the Mamilatdars seeking a law to check marriages after elopement and "to stop biased behaviour towards Gujarati officers" in various departments of the state government.

Israel to introduce electronic tagging in West Bank



GNS News Agency, Jan 7

The Israeli army said on Monday (January 5, 2026) it was introducing a new technological system to enforce movement restrictions in the occupied West Bank for both Israelis and Palestinians, in a move Israeli media said aims to rein in surging settler violence. The decision allows security forces "to install a technological monitoring device on individuals subject to an administrative order restricting their movement within the (West Bank)," the army said in a statement.

The system would allow for monitoring of "violations of these restriction orders accordingly," it added. The measure was adopted after a request by head of the domestic Shin Bet security agency David Zini in response to rising violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinians in the West Bank, Israel's Channel 12 reported. The monitoring devices used will be electronic bracelets, according to the Israeli broadcaster. In response to an AFP query, the army said the measure will be applied to Israelis and Palestinians

alike. Israel has occupied the Palestinian territory since 1967, and now more than 500,000 Israelis live there, along with about three million Palestinian residents. The army said removing any monitoring device "constitutes an offense, for which criminal proceedings may be initiated". Honenu, an Israeli legal aid organisation that assists detainees from right-wing settler communities, slammed the decision and said it would appeal.

In a post on X, it quoted one of its lawyers saying it was an "undemocratic move that reminds of the conduct of oppressive regimes". Administrative restrictive orders bar suspects residing in the West Bank from going to certain areas or communicating with certain people. A more draconian measure, known as administrative detention, allowed Israeli security forces to detain West Bank suspects, both Israelis and Palestinian, for up to six months without charges. Upon taking office in November 2024, Defence Minister Israel Katz abolished the use of that measure against Israelis, but it is still enforced against Palestinians. Since the start of the war in Gaza following Hamas's attack on Israel in October 2023, violence has also surged in the West Bank. Despite the delicate truce between Israel and Hamas that came into effect in October, the violence has not ceased. Israeli troops and settlers have killed more than 1,000 Palestinians in the territory, including many militants as well as dozens of civilians, according to an AFP tally based on figures from the Palestinian Health Ministry. Almost none of the perpetrators of dozens of attacks carried out by settlers have been held to account by the Israeli authorities. According to official Israeli figures, at least 44 Israelis, both soldiers and civilians, have also been killed in Palestinian attacks or Israeli military operations in the same period in the West Bank.

Iran says no leniency for 'rioters' as protests persist

GNS News Agency, Jan 7

Iran will offer no leniency to "rioters", though the public has a right to demonstrate, the head of the country's judiciary said on Monday, following more than a week of sometimes-deadly protests. The remarks came after U.S. President Donald Trump warned Iran would "get hit very hard by the United States" if the authorities killed more demonstrators.

The protests began on December 28 when shopkeepers in Tehran staged a strike over high prices and economic stagnation, but they have since spread to other places and expanded to include political demands. "I instruct the attorney general and prosecutors across the country to act in accordance with the law and with resolve against the rioters and those who support them... and to show no leniency or indulgence," Gholamhosseini Mohseni Ejei said, according to the judiciary's Mizan news agency. He went on to add that Iran "listens to the protesters and their criticism, and distinguishes between them and rioters". Demonstrations have taken place in 25 of Iran's 31 provinces and affected, to varying degrees, at least 45 different cities, most of them small or medium-sized and concentrated in the west, according to an AFP tally based on official statements and media reports. At least 12 people have been killed since December 30 in localised clashes, including members of the security forces, according to official announcements.

Since the protests began, officials have publicly struck a conciliatory tone when it comes to protesters' economic demands, while vowing to take a hard line against any chaos or destabilisation. Iran's economy has been hit hard by tough international sanctions, with the national currency, the rial, losing more than a third of its value against the U.S. dollar over the past year and inflation in double digits.

On Sunday (January 4), the government announced a monthly allowance for every citizen to alleviate economic pressure, equivalent to around 3.5% of the average monthly wage. The reformist newspaper Arman Melli said on Monday (January 5) that the authorities had "heard the voices of the protesters", while the conservative papers Javan and Kayhan accused the United States and Israel of financially supporting rioters. Speaking to reporters aboard Air Force One, Mr. Trump said the U.S. was watching the situation "very closely".

"If they start killing people like they have in the past, I think they're going to get hit very hard by the United States," he said on Sunday (January 4). Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, meanwhile, said his country stood "in solidi-

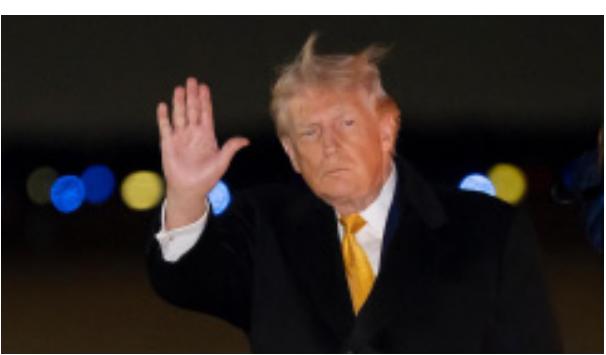


darity with the struggle of the Iranian people and with their aspirations for freedom". On Monday (January 5), Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said at a press conference attended by AFP journalists that Israel was trying "to exploit the slightest opportunity to sow division and undermine our national unity". Iran's prosecutor general Mohammad Movahedi-Azad last week warned against "externally designed scenarios" to harness the protests, promising a "decisive response". Israel fought a 12-day war with Iran in June, which the U.S. briefly joined with limited strikes on nuclear facilities. "Movement by movement" The Fars news agency said on Monday (January 5) that "the trend observed on Sunday (January 4) night shows a notable decrease in the number of gatherings and their geographic reach compared to previous nights".

Local media's accounting of the protests is not exhaustive, and state-run outlets have downplayed their coverage of the demonstrations, while videos flooding social media are often impossible to verify. On Monday (January 5), most shops in Tehran were open, and residents were going about their business after the end of a four-day weekend on Sunday (January 4), according to AFP reporters in the capital. However, riot police were deployed at major intersections and officers were stationed in front of some schools. Several universities have resumed classes, but only online.

Protests have also taken place among the Iranian diasporas. At a demonstration in Paris on Sunday (January 4), 29-year-old French-Iranian translator Sahar Aghakhani told AFP, "With each new protest, Iranian men and women gain ground. Movement by movement, we're getting closer to the end of the regime." Iran has experienced several outbreaks of nationwide protests in recent years, most notably in 2022 over the death in custody of Mahsa Amini over the alleged breach of Iran's Islamic dress laws for women. So far, the current protests have not reached the same scale.

U.S. will receive \$600 billion in tariffs: Trump



GNS News Agency, Jan 7

President Donald Trump said on Monday (January 5, 2026) that the U.S. will be receiving more than \$600 billion in tariffs, asserting that America is "far stronger" in national

security and financially because of the levies it has imposed on countries around the world. "We have taken in, and will soon be receiving, more than 600 Billion Dollars in Tariffs, but the Fake News Media refuses to talk about it because they hate and disrespect our Country, and want to interfere with the upcoming Tariff decision, one of the most important ever, of the United States Supreme Court," Mr. Trump said in a post on Truth Social. He said that the U.S. is financially and from a national security standpoint "far stronger" and more respected than ever before because of tariffs.

The U.S. tariff shock, India's pharma future Within months of his second term in the White House, Mr. Trump had last year announced a slew of tariffs on imports from countries around the world, saying the U.S. had been unfairly treated and other nations were charging far higher tariffs on American products. Mr. Trump has imposed 50% tariffs on India, including 25% for its purchases of Russian oil.

India urges citizens to avoid non-essential travel to Iran

India on Monday (January 5, 2026) urged its nationals to avoid non-essential travel to Iran as the country has been rocked by a wave of protests over inflation and currency devaluation. New Delhi also advised Indian citizens in Iran to exercise due caution and avoid travelling to areas witnessing protests or demonstrations. "In view of recent developments, Indian nationals are advised to avoid non-essential travel to the Islamic Republic of Iran until further notice," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said. "Indian citizens and PIOs (Persons of Indian Origin), currently in Iran,

should exercise due caution, avoid areas of protests or demonstrations, and closely monitor news as well as the website and social media handles of the embassy of India in Tehran," it said. The MEA also advised Indian nationals living in Iran on resident-visas to register with the Embassy, if not already done so. The protests against worsening economic conditions began in Tehran around nine days back. Now, around 25 provinces out of 31 have witnessed the protests in which over 10 people have been killed.

Progress for Ukraine talks in Paris uncertain with U.S. focus shifting to Venezuela



GNS News Agency, Jan 7

Ukraine's allies are meeting on Tuesday (January 6, 2026) in Paris for key talks that could help determine the country's security after a potential ceasefire with Russia. But prospects for progress are uncertain with the Trump administration's focus shifting to Venezuela. Before the U.S. capture of Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro, French President Emmanuel Macron had expressed optimism about the latest gathering of so-called "coalition of the willing" nations. For months, they have been exploring how to deter any future Russian aggression should it agree to stop fighting Ukraine.

In a December 31, 2025, address, Mr. Macron said that allies would "make concrete commitments" at the summit "to protect Ukraine and ensure a just and lasting peace." Mr. Macron's office said Tuesday's (January 6, 2026) meeting will gather an unprecedented number of officials attending in person, with 35 participants including 27 heads of state and government. The U.S. will be represented by President Donald Trump's envoys, Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner. Mr. Macron's office said the U.S. delegation was initially set to be led by Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who changed his plans for reasons related to the military intervention in Venezuela.

Participants seek concrete outcomes on five key priorities once fighting ends: ways to monitor a ceasefire; support for Ukraine's armed forces; deployment of a multinational force on land, at sea and in the air; commitments in case there's another Russian aggression; and long-term defence cooperation with Ukraine. But whether that's still

achievable Tuesday (January 6, 2026) isn't so clear now, as Mr. Trump deals with the aftermath of his decision to effect leadership change in Venezuela. Ukraine seeks firm guarantees from Washington of military and other support seen as crucial to securing similar commitments from other allies. Kyiv has been wary of any ceasefire that it fears could provide time for Russia to regroup and attack again. Before the U.S. military operation targeting Mr. Maduro, Mr. Witkoff had indicated progress in talks about protecting and reassuring Ukraine.

In a December 31 post, Mr. Witkoff tweeted that "productive" discussions with him, Mr. Rubio, and Mr. Kushner on the U.S. side and, on the other, national security advisers of Britain, France, Germany and Ukraine had focused on "strengthening security guarantees and developing effective deconfliction mechanisms to help end the war and ensure it does not restart." France, which with the United Kingdom has coordinated the monthlong, multinational effort to shore up a ceasefire, has only given broad-brush details about the plan's scope. It says Ukraine's first line of defence against a Russian resumption of war would be the Ukrainian military and that the coalition intends to strengthen it with training, weaponry and other support. Mr. Macron has also spoken of European forces potentially being deployed away from Ukraine's front lines to help deter future Russian aggression. Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky said during the weekend that potential European troop deployments still face hurdles, important details remain unfinalised, and "not everyone is ready" to commit forces. He noted that many countries would need approval from Parliament even if leaders agreed to military support for Ukraine. But he recognised that support could come in forms other than troops, such as "through weapons, technologies and intelligence." Mr. Zelensky said that post-ceasefire deployments in Ukraine by Britain and France, Western Europe's only nuclear-armed nations, would be "essential" because some other coalition members "cannot provide military assistance in the form of troops, but they do provide support through sanctions, financial assistance, humanitarian aid and so on." Speaking frankly as President, even the very existence of the coalition depends on whether certain countries are ready to step up their presence," Mr. Zelensky said. "If they are not ready at all, then it is not really a 'coalition of the willing'."

U.S. invades Venezuela



If 2025 was marked by bloodshed and global turbulence, 2026 has begun with an outright invasion. "The United States will run Venezuela," President Donald Trump said on Saturday, after American forces captured President Nicolas Maduro in a crude and audacious intervention that it called a "special operation" and flew the Venezuelan leader and his wife to New York on drug-trafficking charges. At least 40 people are believed to have been killed in Venezuela in the U.S.'s military aggression. Follow The Hindu's live coverage, where we closely track news updates from the U.S., Venezuela, and the rest of the world watching the development from their vantage points. The U.S.'s invasion of Venezuela, led by Mr. Trump, is illegal. It is a gross violation of international law and flouts Article 2 of the UN Charter. While Mr. Trump's maverick leadership style — or thuggery and gangsterism, as some commentators have rightly called it — and sinister motives are hard to conceal, the act is also a continuation of U.S. imperialism, and its latest manifestation.

The Hindu editorial today takes a strong position on Mr. Trump's actions. "Tragedy has followed every act of imperialism by the U.S., but under President Donald Trump, the consequences have also taken on a farcical character, typical of the Theatre of the Absurd. In 2003, the invasion of Iraq, on false premises to depose a dictator and "export" democracy, instead rendered the nation asunder, birthed outfits such as ISIS, and destabilised West Asia. The same playbook was used later in north Africa. In 2026, the world is witness to another tragedy that is also a farce: a repeat of the imperial script in Venezuela, orchestrated by a Trump administration that has traded coercive diplomacy for bombing campaigns and naval blockades," it noted. "If the international community remains silent, it ratifies a world order where sovereignty exists at Washington's pleasure," it argued, even as many governments are reacting with complicit silences or on-the-fence comments.

Why did Mr. Trump bomb Venezuela? Stanly Johny unpacks Washington's apparent motives, outlining three main reasons for its desire for regime change. Mr. Trump wishes to reimpose American primacy in the Western Hemisphere; keep the Chinese and Russian influence in the region under check; and target the country's rich oil reserves. The move is also not unrelated to the U.S. establishment's enduring aversion to any leadership that it sees as part of a broader socialist project in Latin America. Who is Nicolas Maduro? Read this 2024 profile by Srinivasan Ramani, writ-

ten just before the Latin American leader won a third term amid allegations of irregularities. "After presiding over an authoritarian regime amid a severe economic crisis, exacerbated by debilitating U.S. sanctions, the Venezuelan leader stares at mounting challenges while seeking a third presidential term," Ramani wrote then. As The Hindu editorial today observed: "While Maduro's governance was authoritarian, the United Socialist Party of Venezuela retains a strong support base. The Bolivarian movement rose to tackle the rampant inequality fostered by previous U.S.-backed elite regimes. By forcibly installing a new order, the U.S. is not liberating the people but validating their fears of colonial looting. The hypocrisy is stark." Had another power, and not the U.S., invaded Venezuela, much of the world would have responded very differently, instead of effectively issuing endorsements of U.S. actions cloaked in pretentious strategy talk or spineless diplomatic spiel. When a powerful leader abducts the sitting president of another sovereign state and declares he will govern it, many bemoan the collapse of the "rules-based world order" they firmly believed in. But isn't this how the liberal "rules-based world order" worked at the best of times — a game with different rules for different players, and "order" and "chaos" construed in ways that best suit the powerful? Its proponents are, predictably, silent. Just as they have been on Gaza, where Israeli forces continue killing innocent civilians, repeatedly violating a "ceasefire" its leader Benjamin Netanyahu had agreed to. Governments and foreign policy experts who don't miss a chance to call out Russian aggression in Ukraine, or highlight the threat of China's possible intervention in Taiwan, now have little to say, be it on Gaza or now, on Venezuela.

In Telengana, a brewing storm over 'defections'

The office of the Speaker is held in highest respect and esteem in parliamentary traditions. The robes of the Speaker do change and elevate the man inside." This observation by the Telengana Assembly Speaker, G. Prasad Kumar, was made while dealing with the disqualification petition filed against Bharat Rashtra Samiti (BRS) MLA Arikapudi Gandhi, who is facing the charge of having defected to the ruling Congress. The Speaker also dismissed the petitions filed against four other BRS MLAs, Tellam Venkat Rao, Gudem Mahipal Reddy, T. Prakash Goud and Bandla Krishnamohanan Reddy.

The Speaker was acting as the chairman of the Tribunal to deal with the disqualification petitions filed by the BRS leadership against 10 of its MLAs, who allegedly defected to the Congress, after winning in the December 2023 elections. The Speaker has kept in abeyance the decision on three MLAs. He has not conducted hearings for two other MLAs despite repeated requests by the BRS. The Speaker made an interesting observation about the petition which claimed that the respondent (Mr. Gandhi) had "voluntarily gave up his membership of the BRS by joining the Indian National Congress". Here, the Speaker dealt with the locus standi of the petitioners (the BRS legislators) to file the disqualification petitions. This concerned the issue whether a disqualification petition against a sitting MLA alleging defection must be filed only by a person duly authorised to do so and in writing by the party on whose B-Form the legislator was elected, or whether any other person too has the locus standi to file such a petition even without specifying the capacity in which it is filed. The Speaker said that since

objections around the issue repeatedly arise during disqualification proceedings, particularly where one MLA sought the disqualification of another who had allegedly defected on grounds that were more out of political vendetta or over internal differences, it was appropriate that the Tribunal settled this issue first before proceeding to answer other questions. Citing Rule 3(1)(a) of the Rules, 1986 and Rule 3(4), he said: "Admittedly, the petitioner did not state in what capacity he filed the petition or how he acquired the right of action, as he is neither a voter of the constituency from which the respondent was elected nor specifically authorised in writing by the BRS party."

The Speaker did not factor in the observation made by the Supreme Court of India, in the Speaker of Odisha Legislative Assembly vs Utkal Keshari Parida which raised the locus standi of a non-member of the House in submitting a petition for disqualification. The Court had held that "not only a member of the House, but any person interested would also be entitled to bring to the notice of the Speaker the fact that a Member of the House had incurred disqualification under the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution of India." The observation assumes importance as all the petitioners who filed their disqualification pleas with the Speaker are Members of the Assembly representing the BRS. The manner in which the petitions have been dismissed has drawn the ire of the BRS and the Bharatiya Janata Party (which described the verdict as "unilateral"). The parties have alleged that the Speaker was acting at the behest of the Chief Minister,

The parallel track that keeps U.S.-India ties going



In 2025, despite political strains and the postponement of the much-anticipated Quad Leaders' Summit hosted by India, the underlying machinery of India-United States cooperation remains vigorous and steadily advancing. While political engagement appears low, notably amid U.S. trade sanctions on India and its warming ties with Pakistan, the institutional collaboration between the two democracies continues to expand, particularly in defence and technology cooperation. The visits of India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's and the Indian Navy Chief to the U.S. must be seen in this framework.

The Quad Leaders' Summit, which New Delhi was supposed to host, has been delayed amid opaque communication from officials, reflecting current bilateral tensions that have been marked by challenges such as worsening trade relations. The U.S. tariff regime levied on Indian goods and New Delhi's recalibration of its diplomatic posture amid perceptions of a "G-2" style rapprochement between the U.S. and China have some underlying factors. India's exports to the U.S., which dropped sharply in 2025, are a stark indicator of these tensions. Economic frictions persist, especially with U.S. tariffs on India's purchase of Russian crude oil, while China and Pakistan enjoy lower tariffs and even strengthened relations with the U.S. In return, Islamabad's offering, highlighted by port access to the U.S. and critical minerals shipments to American firms, is an economic decision with geopolitical imperatives. Washington's balance-of-interest pragmatism manifests itself in signals from U.S. officials that relations with New Delhi remain vital despite transactional pressures. Continuing institutional cooperation

In contrast to strained political signals, institutional engagement has accelerated. The July 2025 Quad Foreign Ministers' meeting in Washington unveiled new initiatives that spanned maritime security, transnational threats, economic cooperation, critical technologies and humanitarian efforts. On similar lines, Quad's Counterterrorism Working group also held its third meeting in December 2025, all demonstrating the Quad's continued operational relevance beyond high-level political optics. Defence cooperation forms the backbone of this resilience. Since the 2008 India-U.S. civil nuclear deal, defence and technology agreements have steadily deepened. The landmark signing of a decade-long Defence Framework Agreement in 2025 marks a new chapter, enhancing joint coordination, information sharing and technological collaboration that is designed to buttress Indo-Pacific regional stability. This is exemplified through regular bilateral military exercises, such as Yudh Abhyas ('War Practice'), Tiger Claw and Malabar, which promote interoperability and trust among forces. Oiled by defence and technology agreements, the political upheaval brought by the India-U.S. nuclear deal, bilateral ties have been predominantly driven by defence and technology agreements. Over the years, the two countries have signed various agree-

ments, including the 2023 India-US Defence Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X) and foundational defence agreements such as the Logistics Exchange Memorandum Of Agreement (LEMOA) in 2016, the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA, 2018) and the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA, 2020) and the Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (2023) to provide and promote logistical support, cooperation and information sharing between the two militaries. India's Ministry of Defence and the U.S. Department of Defence also signed the Security of Supply Arrangement (SOSA) in 2024. Despite political challenges, defence cooperation remains strong.

In October 2025, a significant 10-year defence framework agreement was signed by U.S. Secretary of War Pete Hegseth and India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. This long-awaited pact aims to enhance coordination, information sharing and technological collaboration to promote regional stability and deterrence. Building on years of growing strategic convergence, the agreement reinforces defence as a core pillar of India-U.S. relations. Further bolstering defence ties, Indian aerospace giant, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited signed a billion-dollar deal, in November 2025, with the U.S.'s General Electric for fighter jet engines. Similarly the joint U.S.-India NASA ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) satellite, launched in July 2025 for disaster resilience, agriculture and infrastructure planning requirements adds to the technological jointmanship. At the infrastructural and regional levels, the inaugural Quad Ports of the Future Conference, held around India Maritime Week in Mumbai in early November 2025, brought together delegates from 24 Indo-Pacific partners, focusing on developing resilient and secure ports that leverage shared expertise and investments. Co-organised by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways and the Ministry of External Affairs, it emphasised that quality infrastructure development is a crucial dimension of Quad cooperation, underlining the broader regional connectivity.

Despite political challenges, this enduring institutional engagement reveals the India-U.S. relationship's dual-track dynamic. While political leaders manage strategic diplomacy with and national interests, the bureaucratic and institutional frameworks continue to sustain and evolve core collaborations. Despite institutional challenges such as domestic regulatory frameworks and concerns about technology interoperability, mutual regional interests drive this continuity. Such institutional continuity may well be the relationship's greatest strength, fostering trust while shielding essential cooperation from political volatility. However, analysts have cautioned that bilateral ties may struggle to regain full momentum, even if trade disputes are resolved. Looking ahead to 2026, both nations must invest in a deeper institutional understanding — defence and beyond. Learning about structures and institutions, appreciating the processes, and developing resilient relationships with other countries require continuous efforts. Expanding cooperation into broader sectors can build the mutual trust essential during political lows. The resilience of the India-U.S. partnership will depend heavily on these parallel institutional tracks, which have so far, quietly but effectively, maintained the alliance's robustness and strategic relevance in an ever-evolving geopolitical landscape. While political summits may pause, institutions keep the dialogue alive, working together on mutual areas, and having long-term partnerships that can survive the short and medium-term headwinds.



Its rockets, especially the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV), have sustained reliable access to orbit, rendering operations with multiple satellite classes almost a matter of routine today. And ISRO is attempting even more technically demanding missions. The soft landing of the Chandrayaan-3 lander on the moon on August 23, 2023, placed India in a coterie of countries with demonstrated lunar-landing capability. The Aditya-L1 probe reached its intended halo orbit around the first sun-earth Lagrange point on January 6, 2024, adding a dedicated solar observatory mission to ISRO's portfolio. In July 2025, ISRO executed a prominent international collaboration by launching the billion-dollar NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) mission, an earth-observation platform for climate and hazard monitoring.

The thing about succeeding in such a consistent way is that it also raises the bar for future accomplishments. It is no longer matters that ISRO had humble beginnings or that it transported parts of its first rocket on a block cart. Even launching the PSLV or the GSLV flawlessly the first dozen or so times is awesome, but being able to do that also changes what comes next. And it will be good for ISRO to be able to access that new opportunity space, and without taking too long to do so. Otherwise it will have some difficult questions to answer. Today, on the cusp of Gaganyaan, Chandrayaan-4, and the Next-Generation Launch Vehicle (NGLV), among others, ISRO's major challenges can be distilled to three: (i) its capacity to execute more complex missions; (ii) questions about how clearly the space programme is and can be governed in a newly liberalised sector; and (iii) constraints on ISRO's competitiveness that are as industrial and financial as they're technological. First, ISRO currently confronts a deceptively structural prioritisation problem. Specifically as the organisation prepares in parallel for the human spaceflight mission, complex science missions, satellite replenishment, and the development of NGLV, a more powerful launch vehicle (GSLV may be 'Bahubali' but it's still only in the medium-lift category), its annual launch cadence and project timelines have become an increasingly obvious bottleneck. Experts have linked its low number of launches in 2025 — only five against the then ISRO chairman V. Somanath's projection of an also-low eight — to project delays and to the organisation shifting towards big-ticket programmes. At the same time private launch providers still depend heavily on ISRO facilities and infrastructure, meaning the system can't yet offload work at scale. The implication is that when a mission suffers an anomaly, it has cascading effects.

To prevent this ISRO needs more integration capacity, better access to test stands, industrial supply chains for structures and avionics, and a workflow that can absorb setbacks without freezing unrelated programmes or cramping their timelines. Perhaps the first step could be an inter-

nal scheme to help scientists and engineers determine which mission's timelines are allowed to slip and for what particular reasons, together with separate resource allocations for R&D vehicles and operational vehicles and creating new capacity in the industrial base. The ultimate aim should be for ISRO to not simultaneously be the designer, the integrator, and the bottleneck for all missions. Second, ISRO's role in India's liberalised space and spaceflight ecosystem — since the national government's 2020 reforms — is conceptually clear only on paper. The principal issue here is that India still lacks a comprehensive national space law. The Indian Space Policy framework, the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe) and New Space India, Ltd. (NSIL), created in 2019-2020, were meant to separate functions. Research and advanced capability development would lie with ISRO, authorisation and promotion with IN-SPACe, and commercialisation with NSIL. But for all of them to execute those functions efficiently, they need statutory authority and clearer legal allocations of obligations, especially those pertaining to authorisation, liability, insurance, and resolving disputes. A national space law wouldn't merely help startups: it would also protect ISRO by reducing the ad hoc demands placed on it because it's still perceived as a fallback regulator and technical certifier for everything. If IN-SPACe is to be the authorising body, it needs to have legal authority. If NSIL is to be the commercial arm, it shouldn't be in a situation where, if a commercial mission fails, creates third-party liabilities or whatever, nobody can say in advance who's responsible for what, leaving ISRO to be pulled in by 'default' because it's the most capable state actor. And if ISRO is to focus on frontier capabilities, it needs to be insulated from routine tasks, like booking and operating test stands or coordinating spectrum allocation, that actually should be performed by an industrial and regulatory ecosystem. Finally, like most laws, a space law — and thus the activities it supports — would also survive political and administrative changes.

Sustained performance Third, ISRO's competitiveness increasingly resembles an ecosystem problem. The world is moving towards more frequent launches by providers, partially reusable launch vehicles, and rapid satellite manufacturing, and India needs to respond with more than by expanding its engineering ambitions. The Indian government's own framing of the NGLV, linking the space programme's future goals to its "high payload capability" and "reusability", including a reusable first stage and the ability to lift up to 30 tonnes to low-earth orbit, acknowledges that economic launches and agility are now central, rather than optional, features of enterprises that operate launch vehicles. And building such systems and operating them in turn requires more production depth, advanced manufacturing capabilities, higher qualification capacity, and much more capital. Investment in India's space sector fell sharply in 2024, reflecting both global headwinds and the specific difficulties of financing hardware that's developed and deployed on long horizons. IN-SPACe has in response launched a technology adoption fund aimed at helping firms bridge prototypes with scalable products and at reducing import dependence, among other funding instruments. ISRO's past accomplishments have earned it political capital and public trust but the next phase depends less on individual feats and more on sustained institutional performance. The capacity to execute will determine whether the Indian space programme will also be able to deliver ambitious missions in a routine way. And within this context, governance and law will say whether the government's efforts to liberalise the sector will reduce ISRO's burden or, counterintuitively, expand it.

What does the SHANTI Bill change? | Explained

Parliament has cleared the Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy in India (SHANTI) Bill, despite Opposition demands for amendments and review by a Select Committee. To achieve India's energy security needs, the government has boosted the Nuclear Energy Mission with ₹20,000 crore dedicated to Small Modular Reactors and advanced pressurised water reactors. India's nuclear power sector has remained State-controlled and unchanged since 1956. The private and foreign partnership has been restricted under earlier laws — the Atomic Energy Act, 1962, and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damages Act, 2010. Private and Foreign companies avoided India due to its strict liability laws.

What is the SHANTI Bill?

The SHANTI Bill is an overarching legislation that opens India's nuclear power sector to private and foreign participation, which was earlier entirely State-controlled and deeply regulated. Under the Bill, private Indian companies can seek licences to own, build, and operate nuclear power plants. It is also open for foreign supplier participation. The SHANTI Bill allows up to 49% private participation, while maintaining 51% government control over sensitive activities such as nuclear fuel production, heavy water manufacturing, radioactive waste management, safety mechanisms, licensing, and strategic oversight.

The Bill ends the monopoly of Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) in plant operations. It allows private companies and joint ventures to build, own, and operate nuclear power plants. The private sector will be involved in fuel fabrication, equipment manufacturing, plant operations, and research and development. It will essentially be a public-private partnership model aimed at attracting private capital with government oversight. The Bill facilitates advanced nuclear technologies by enabling private participation and regulatory clarity. It supports the deployment of Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) and indigenous reactor designs, contributing to the clean energy transition and long-term energy security. What is the role of AERB?

The Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB), constituted in 1983 under the Atomic Energy Act, has now been given statutory status and is answerable to Parliament rather than solely to the executive. The AERB is responsible for ensuring nuclear safety, radiation protection, emergency preparedness, and quality assurance across civilian nuclear installations. It issues safety measures, licences and standards; administers industrial safety provisions of the Factories Act, 1948, for units under the Department of Atomic Energy as per Section 23 of the Atomic Energy Act and conducts inspections to prevent radiation hazards. It plays a crucial role in strengthening regulatory oversight under the SHANTI Bill due to increased private sector participation. However, the Bill has been criticised for concentrating power in one institution.

What safeguards are in place?

The Bill does not explicitly permit foreign direct investment in the nuclear power sector. The private companies will have to seek authorisation from the AERB. Authorisations are required for setting up a plant range from production, possession, to disposal of radioactive material and radiation generation equipment, as well as for establishing, operating, or withdrawing radioactive facilities. The

government controls the reprocessing and management of spent fuel and high-level radioactive waste; production and upgradation of heavy water; enrichment and isotopic separation of radioactive substances. The law also provides for the establishment of a nuclear liability fund to meet compensation needs in case of nuclear accidents.

What has changed with respect to liability?

Compared to the earlier regime, the SHANTI Bill ensures that the liability aspect is transparent and predictable for operators. Liability caps are fixed as follows: ₹3,000 crore for large plants of 3,600 MW capacity; ₹1,500 crore for medium plants of 1,500-3,600 MW; and ₹100 crore for Small Modular Reactors of 150 MW capacity. Penalties for legal violations in cases of severe breach are capped at ₹1 crore. The Union government will bear liability beyond the operator's cap, with additional support from the proposed nuclear liability fund. Earlier, operators could hold suppliers liable for defective parts, faulty equipment, design inefficiency, and deliberate acts causing damage. The current Bill removes supplier accountability completely.

What is the government's viewpoint?

The Centre aims to strengthen India's energy security by diversifying the power mix, reducing dependence on fossil fuels and fuel imports, and expanding atomic energy capacity. Energy security is one of the main aims for boosting India's development index. It ensures 24x7 baseload power as compared to solar energy and wind energy, which are subject to geographical conditions. It will be a boost for the energy sector, which is still heavily dependent on coal. It also ensures an enhancement for technology and the economy. Nuclear power ensures clean energy with very low carbon emissions. It facilitates achieving India's net-zero targets for 2070. The Bill may also revive the stalled civil nuclear deals with the U.S., France, and Japan, reduce dependence on Russia alone, and enhance India's image as a responsible global nuclear player.

Why does India need nuclear energy?

India struggles with solar, wind, and hydro energy due to its geographical and climate variables and still majorly relies on coal for electricity generation. Storage and grid integration costs for renewables remain high.

Thus, having sufficient baseload generation capacity is mandatory for an affordable and unrestricted supply. In order to achieve energy security for the growing economy, India has to strengthen and expand its nuclear energy sector. Moreover, the electricity mix must have enough baseload generation capacity in order to make it affordable and reliable for consumers. Nuclear power plants are one of the most effective in ensuring this.

What is India's nuclear energy mission?

India has a largely indigenous nuclear power programme based on a fuel cycle that aims to utilise India's vast thorium reserves. Currently, India manages 25 nuclear reactors in seven power plants — 21 pressurised heavy water reactors and four light water reactors — all managed by NPCIL.

According to R.B. Grover, distinguished Professor Emeritus at the Homi Bhabha National Institute and member of the Atomic Energy Commission, as India does not

have enough uranium, the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited has mastered the design and operation of pressurised heavy water reactors. The Bhabha Atomic Research Centre has developed technologies to reprocess spent fuel to recover valuable materials and handle nuclear waste. In that sense, India is independent and self-sufficient in its nuclear power generation. India has operationalised the fast breeder reactor for thorium use.

Why has the Opposition strongly criticised the Bill?

The Opposition argues that the Bill dilutes accountability by allowing profit-driven private participation while placing liability on the State and society. There is a fear of repeating incidents like the Bhopal Gas tragedy, where accountability and remuneration were evaded by the foreign firms in spite of recourse to civil courts; moreover, such recourse is unavailable according to the new Law. Removing supplier liability and capping operator liability and penalties at a nominal cost, as compared to the actual volume and expense of damages, is considered unreasonable. The 'polluter pays' principle has been undermined, and this compromises public safety. Private firms have no liability for accident costs, public safety issues and long-term risks. The cap on operator liability does not change in 15 years despite inflation or long-term assessment of health, environment, livelihood cost of any serious accident. The cases such as Fukushima and Chernobyl point out the huge expense of liability. In the case of the Fukushima disaster, the actual civil damages were 700 times more than the cap proposed by the SHANTI Bill.

Section 39 of the Bill seeks to override the RTI Act of 2005. It has raised several concerns as it seeks to remove public interest review and public appeal mechanisms. This will make the most crucial nuclear sector-related information — including plant details, operations, mechanisms, regulatory submissions and data on nuclear materials — 'restricted'. This dilutes the transparency and questions the public accountability of the proposed system. The RTI Act 2005, in its wisdom, already exempts revealing information regarding India's security, national interest, commercial in-

formation, and personal data. But these exemptions are subject to justification in cases of public accountability and public interest. Section 42 overrides occupational safety, health and working conditions for nuclear facilities. Nuclear workers are removed from the country's general labour safety framework. This has triggered opposition from ten central trade unions, including the Samyukt Kisan Morcha and the National Coordination Committee of Electricity Employees and Engineers, who have termed the Bill "draconian."

The Opposition insists that the Bill is vendor-driven despite India's self-reliance in nuclear technology. It argues that India has deep thorium reserves, around which nuclear reactors were built, which should be utilised. The Opposition demands that the private companies be compelled to install India's technology. The Bill lacks provisions for mandatory public hearings, environmental impact assessment disclosures, community consent mechanisms, regular public reporting of safety inspections, or Parliamentary scrutiny.

The Opposition also cited the example of France, where all nuclear reactors are under government control. The Bill is criticised for being pro-profit, pro-oligarch, catering to the crony capitalists while gambling with public safety.

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Billionaire's Toy or Brain Breakthrough? The science behind Deepinder Goyal's 'Temple' wearable

Hyderabad: Is it a fancy toy of a billionaire, or a bold experiment in the field of longevity tech? A small metallic device seen stuck to the temple of Zomato founder Deepinder Goyal during a podcast has sparked a firestorm of online speculation. The gadget, aptly named 'Temple', is a wearable sensor designed to track Cerebral Blood Flow (CBF) in real-time, a metric Goyal believes is the 'holy grail' of anti-ageing.

Developed under Goyal's personal health-tech venture, Eternal (formerly the parent of Zomato), the device is the cornerstone of his "Gravity Ageing Hypothesis." Goyal argues that because humans spend most of their lives upright, gravity constantly pulls blood away from the brain. Over decades, this subtle 'starvation' of blood flow

reportedly accelerates cognitive decline. By monitoring this flow, Goyal aims to validate the benefits of inversion therapy, literally hanging upside down, to 'reset' the brain's circulation. The explanation and theory behind 'Gravity Ageing Hypothesis' has not gone down well among the community of doctors. Dr Suvrankar Datta, a senior radiologist and an AI researcher at AIIMS Delhi took to X and posted "As a physician-scientist and one of the earliest researchers in India in Arterial Stiffness and Pulse Wave Velocity (2017) which predicts cardiovascular mortality, I can assure you that this device currently has no scientific standing as a useful device and do not waste your hard-earned money to buy fancy toys billionaires can afford to waste money on. If you are one, then go ahead."

Fraudsters used 6,500 bank accounts to split Rs 58 crore they cheated from 72-year old Mumbai share trader and his wife to avoid money getting tracked



An official said that the 6,500 accounts that have been used in the fraud are all within the country.

After Maharashtra cyber police was alerted about the scam, they began a probe and started looking through details of the various bank accounts where the money had been transferred. After Maharashtra cyber police was alerted about the scam, they began a probe and started looking through details of the various bank accounts where the money had been transferred. Maharashtra Cyber police, probing one of the largest cyber cons in the country, where a 72-year-old share trader lost Rs 58 crore in a 'digital arrest' fraud, have found that the fraudsters used 6,500 bank accounts across the country to stagger the ill-gotten gains in a bid to avoid it being tracked. An officer said that cyber fraudsters strategised carefully to ensure that the money is spread out immediately after the crime so that it could not be blocked in one or few accounts. So far, seven account holders and their handlers have been arrested by the police.

An official said that the 6,500 accounts that have been used in the fraud are all within the country. "In some cases, withdrawals have been made by fraudsters from a bank using a cheque to break the link of accounts across which the money has been transferred," a senior official said. The official added that after withdrawing the money by cheque, they deposit the money in another account of the same bank which is unlinked to the other accounts and thus, is not traced by cops. "Earlier they would withdraw money from ATMs where we could identify them from the CCTV cam-

era as it would be one person at one time. Now when we try checking bank CCTVs, it is outsourced to a third party and nabbing them becomes difficult. Even if we do, it becomes difficult to identify the accused as many people are present at one time in the bank," the official said. "As we learn about their various modus operandi, fraudsters too keep evolving their methods. After they realised we managed to block particular accounts, they used tricks like spreading the money across hundreds... or in this case thousands of accounts," the official added. He added that so far they have arrested five persons whose accounts were used or who used others bank accounts to move the money. "Usually in digital arrest cases, we find that calls are made from countries like Laos and Cambodia while money is moved across accounts, converted into cryptocurrency and sent outside the country to the masterminds," the official added.

In this particular case, the 72-year-old complainant was first called by the accused on August 19 who claimed to be from the ED and CBI. The accused told the complainant that there was "illegal funds" in his bank account and that they were placing him under digital arrest. The accused also sent some documents to prove that they were "genuine officers". The accused asked the complainant and his wife to transfer funds to their account so that they can verify the money was genuine following which they were told that the money would be transferred back to their accounts. Between August 19 and October 8, the complainant and his wife transferred Rs 58.13 crore through RTGS to various bank accounts provided by the accused. The police found that the money was transferred through 18 bank accounts across Maharashtra and other states. After Maharashtra cyber police was alerted about the scam, they began a probe and started looking through details of the various bank accounts where the money had been transferred. Accordingly, they identified three male account holders who had provided their accounts identified as Abdul Khulli (47) from Malad, Arjun Kadwasara (55) from Chira Bazaar and his brother Jetharam (35) from Mumbai Central who were placed under arrest on Wednesday. Four others were arrested on Thursday. The cyber police are currently interrogating the accused to get some details about the main accused who carried out the scam.

Karnataka govt approves occupancy certificate exemption for buildings on small plots in municipalities

GNS News Agency, Jan 7

The Karnataka government on Thursday decided to issue notifications to exempt buildings built on properties measuring 1,200 square feet, and going up to three floors, from the mandate of occupancy certificates if the building plan has an approval in areas under state municipalities and municipal corporation laws. Cabinet has decided to exempt from obtaining Occupancy Certificate (OCC) for buildings up to 1,200 sq ft in area constructed with the approval of the Government on plots up to 1,200 sq ft in area under the authority of the Karnataka Municipalities Act, 1964," the cabinet noted.

The cabinet also decided to issue a notification under the Karnataka Municipal Corporations Act, 1976, to exempt buildings going up to three floors on plots with areas of 1,200 sq feet from obtaining an occupancy certificate, subject to the plan approvals for the buildings. "Keeping in mind the convenience of the public, it is appropriate to exempt buildings of this scale from the requirement of obtaining an Occupancy Certificate," the cabinet noted. Greater Bengaluru Authority region OC exemption

Last month, the Karnataka government had issued a notification exempting small-scale residential buildings in the Greater Bengaluru area from obtaining occupancy certificates. The government order issued by the Urban Development Department provided relief to homeowners constructing residential buildings on plots up to 1,200 sq ft. Under the directive, buildings with ground plus two floors or three floors constructed on plots not exceeding 1,200 sq ft within the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) jurisdiction will not require occupancy certificates. The exemption in Bengaluru was under Section 241(7) of the GBA Act, which came into force earlier this year. This section specifically empowers the government to "notify the category of building which shall be exempted from obtaining occupancy certificate".

The Karnataka government has been deliberating decisions for creating "equal opportunities in all applicable laws regarding the functioning of local bodies across the state" for building possession certificates. The move is expected to benefit the construction sector, particularly small-scale residential projects. According to official data, approximately 4,000 buildings on sites smaller than 1,200 sq ft receive plan approvals annually from Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palika zonal offices. Currently, building plan approvals are processed through the automated 'Namibike Map' system. Draft plans are provided the same day upon application, and the final plan approval is granted within 15 days. According to government officials, the traditional oc-



cupancy certificate process involved extensive site inspections and comparative verification between constructed buildings and approved plans, creating a substantial workload for local body officers, leading to potential delays and a lack of transparency. By eliminating the occupancy certificate requirement for small buildings, the government aims to reduce bureaucratic bottlenecks.

Meanwhile, the Karnataka government has postponed a decision on providing electricity and water connections to existing buildings constructed without obtaining completion certificates and occupancy certificates. A large number of these buildings are in Bengaluru. Many buildings are in limbo as electricity and water supply agencies have refused to provide connections without these certificates following a December 2024 Supreme Court order that bars public utility providers from granting connections to unapproved structures. Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has directed officials to examine whether other states were uniformly implementing the apex court's order. The chief minister's office said that the state, while respecting court orders, must also find a solution to the problems faced by the public. A meeting chaired by the state chief secretary with Siddaramaiah and senior ministers on October 8 remained inconclusive. During a previous cabinet meeting, the state advocate-general had cited sections of the Greater Bengaluru Governance Act, which provides for exemptions for buildings without occupancy certificates. Section 241 of the Act allows the government to notify a category of buildings to be exempted from obtaining OCCs, the advocate-general said. "The Government may notify a category of buildings which can be exempted if there is proper justification and application of mind for doing the same. There cannot be general exemption of any sort; it can only be for a category and based on cogent reasons, keeping in mind the larger public interest and orderly urban development," the advocate-general said.

High Court adjourns plea seeking CBI probe into IPS officer Y Puran Kumar's death

GNS News Agency, Jan 7

The Punjab and Haryana High Court on Friday adjourned the hearing of a public interest litigation (PIL) seeking a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into the suicide of senior IPS officer Y Puran Kumar, after observing that the petitioner's counsel was not prepared with arguments. Chief Justice Sheel Nagu, who was heading the bench, expressed displeasure over the lack of readiness and listed the matter for a later date.

During the hearing, the bench posed a series of pointed questions. "What are the guidelines laid down by the Supreme Court for a CBI probe?" the Chief Justice asked, to which the counsel sought time to respond. Chief Justice Nagu then remarked, "Why did you start arguments when you are not ready?" before asking, "How do we decide that the case is fit for transfer?" The counsel again requested additional time, prompting the court to adjourn the case. The counsel representing the Union Territory (UT) of Chandigarh opposed the plea, submitting that a Special Investigation Team (SIT) has already been set up to probe the incident.

He pointed out that the First Information Report was registered on October 9, two days after the incident, and the PIL was filed on October 13. The UT counsel argued that the petitioner, Navneet Kumar of Ludhiana, had no personal connection to the matter and approached the court merely after reading newspaper reports. "There is no allegation of bias or political interference," he said, questioning the maintainability of the petition. The PIL, filed under Articles 226 and 227 of the Constitution, seeks a CBI probe into the alleged suicide of Kumar, a Haryana-cadre IPS officer found dead on October 7 at his official residence in Chandigarh with a gunshot wound to the head. Multiple suicide notes were reportedly recovered, including one dated September 7, allegedly naming eight IPS officers and two IAS officers as responsible for his mental distress and alleging abetment, caste-based harassment, and conspiracy. The petitioner, a 43-year-old NGO president, claims that the Chandigarh Police investigation is compromised due to institutional overlap, as the deceased served under the Haryana government while the UT administration has ties with both Haryana and central establishments.

Months after Bengaluru cricket stadium stampede, Karnataka Govt begins process to set up new 80,000-capacity stadium at cost of Rs 2,350 crore



GNS News Agency, Jan 7

The Karnataka Cabinet Thursday decided to consider clearances for a new cricket stadium after a Detailed Project Report (DPR) is prepared, following an in-principle approval by the Karnataka Housing Board (KHB) to facilitate the construction of a stadium for 80,000 spectators in rural Bengaluru. The new cricket stadium has been projected as being necessary for Bengaluru, as the existing M Chinnaswamy Stadium, operated by the Karnataka State Cricket Association, has a capacity of only 33,000 spectators. The Cabinet mentioned in a note on Thursday, "The Karnataka Housing Board has given in-principle approval to the implementation of the project of an international-level cricket stadium and complex on a 75-acre plot of land in Indlavadi village under the Comprehensive Development Plan in Suryanagar-4th Phase Layout, Bangalore City, at a cost of Rs 2,350 crore. The KHB has been asked to present it again before the Cabinet for a decision after a detailed project report." "The Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru is old and has a capacity of only 38,000. Many cities, both big and small, have stadiums that are bigger than Bengaluru. A Bengaluru Stadium, which meets the needs of the city with all the modern facilities, is a must for the city," it further said. In arguments in the Karnataka High Court in a suo motu case taken up by the court over the stampede deaths, the state advocate general told the court that the cause of the stampede was the nearly 2.5 lakh fans trying to access the stadium, which can accommodate 33,000 fans.

"The event (at the stadium) was organised on behalf of RCB by DNA Event Management. KSCA is in charge of the stadium. All the security is provided by them in the stadium. All the deaths happened at the entry gates of the sta-

dium. The problem is that 33,000 people were expected – which is the capacity of the stadium – but 2.5 lakh people turned out," Advocate General K M Shashikiran Shetty told the Karnataka High Court. Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, who is an avid cricket enthusiast and often watches matches at the KSCA stadium in Bengaluru, was also asked after the stampede regarding the capacity and traffic problems linked to the present stadium, and he responded, saying, "The government will look into this matter." According to senior state officials, including those from the police department, "the long-term solution to prevent incidents like the stampede is the relocation of the cricket stadium to a higher capacity facility somewhere on the outskirts of the city." The Justice John Michael D'Cunha judicial commission set up to probe the June 4 stampede at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium has recommended that no major public events should be held at the stadium till safety measures are installed. The commission recommended the introduction of several measures at the stadium – including adequate entry and exit gates, integration with public transport facilities, and infrastructure for emergency responses – before conducting any future public event.

"Until such infrastructural changes are made, continuing to host high-attendance events at the current location poses unacceptable risks to public safety, urban mobility and emergency preparedness," the judicial commission has said in a recommendation made in a report submitted to CM Siddaramaiah on July 11. The commission stated in its report that without addressing "systemic limitations" at the Bengaluru cricket stadium – located in the heart of the city on the MG Road – it would not be appropriate to hold large public events at the stadium. Given the systematic limitations, "the commission strongly recommends that stadium authorities consider relocating events that are expected to attract large crowds to venues that are better suited for such large gatherings," the report has stated. "The design and structure of the stadium were unsuitable and unsafe for mass gathering. All the entry and exit gates were directly opening into the public footpath. Spacious and organised holding area for crowd were not provided at the entry, as a result, the audience were forced to queue up on the footpath or the road abstracting and endangering the pedestrians and vehicular movements as well as giving scope for the miscreants to join the crowd aggravating the risk especially in the absence of proper security management," the Justice D'Cunha commission report said.

'Appreciation I received motivated me to keep running': Meet the 55-year-old cop who won the Delhi Half Marathon

GNS News Agency, Jan 7

Singh participated in the Airtel Delhi Half Marathon for the first time in 2015, finishing first in the Delhi Police Cup category. Singh participated in the Airtel Delhi Half Marathon for the first time in 2015, finishing first in the Delhi Police Cup category. Subhash Singh has been running half marathons since 2015 and has won several. Last Sunday, the 55-year-old Delhi Police head constable took part in the Delhi Half Marathon — and came first in the 55-59 category. He completed the 21-km race in 1 hour, 26 minutes, and 54 seconds — the fastest time recorded in the age category. Congratulating him on his success, the Delhi Police, through its official X account, stated, "Your dedication and determination are truly inspiring." Singh, who hails from Rajasthan's Jhunjhunu, is posted at the Delhi Police Academy (DPA) in Jhunroda Kalan, where he provides sports training to new recruits. He runs daily to maintain his fitness and plays basketball and other sports. Head constable Subhash Singh (Express Photo) Head constable Subhash Singh (Express Photo) Speaking to The Indian Express, Singh said, "Except the Covid period when it was paused, I have participated in every marathon organised in Delhi and other cities since 2015. Singh participated in the Airtel Delhi Half Marathon for the first time in 2015, finishing first in the Delhi Police Cup category. "I was posted in the New Delhi district at the time. The appreciation I received from my seniors after that victory motivated me to keep running for the force," Singh said. "My dream is to participate in the Procam Slam run in the future. I have already



registered for upcoming races in Kolkata and Mumbai, and I hope to make my force proud," Singh added. Having retired from the Indian Army from the post of Havildar, Singh joined the Delhi Police as a constable in 2007. He was promoted to head constable three years ago. He lives with his wife and two sons in a rented accommodation in Delhi's Rohini. In 2024, Singh secured the first prize in the Tata Mumbai Marathon in the 50+ age category, completing the 21-km race. "Our whole family has always believed in staying fit. My younger son plays basketball alongside his studies," he added. Over 40,000 runners participated in the Vedanta Delhi Half Marathon 2025 at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium. Among them were 600 Delhi Police personnel, ranging from constables to DCPs. The marathon featured three race categories: 5 km, 10 km, and 21 km.

Video of Punjab AAP MLA's son firing gunshots at a party goes viral; 'it's a toy gun', claims Jiwan Singh Sangowal

GNS News Agency, Jan 7

Sangowal Video Harjinder Singh, Ludhiana Assistant Commissioner of Police (South) said that the MLA's son has been called for questioning with the weapon seen in the video. A purported video of the son of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLA Jiwan Singh Sangowal allegedly firing gunshots in the air during a party in Punjab's Ludhiana district went viral Friday, prompting the police to launch an investigation into the incident. In the video, Jagpal Singh, the younger son of AAP's Gill MLA Jiwan Singh Sangowal, is purportedly seen firing multiple times in the air using a weapon. Police sources said that the incident happened during a pre-wedding party at Gill village of Ludhiana district a few days ago. In the video, MLA Sangowal's elder son Davinder Singh alias Laadi is also seen in attendance with his brother. As Jagpal purportedly fires from the weapon multiple times on the dance floor, his brother, Davinder, then puts his hand on his shoulder and asks him to stop. Ruling AAP MLA Jiwan Singh Sangowal's son Jagpal Singh allegedly opened fire multiple times at a party some days ago in Gill village of Ludhiana district. Police says investigation has started and the son has been called for questioning with the weapon. Harjinder Singh, Ludhiana Assistant Commissioner of Police (South) said that Jiwan Singh Sangowal's son has been called for questioning with the weapon seen in the video to verify facts. "We have called him for questioning and to verify details. Action will be taken accordingly," said the ACP. MLA Jiwan Singh Sangowal confirmed to The Indian Express that the man seen firing in the video was his son. He, however,



claimed that his son Jagpal was firing from a "toy gun." "It is the handiwork of Opposition parties, including Congress and Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) to defame us. They have made the video viral to defame me, our party and the AAP government. In the video, the weapon from which my son is seen firing is a toy gun, and not an original one. It's a sort of air gun that children play with on Diwali and is commonly available in homes," claimed the MLA. Divya Goyal is a Principal Correspondent with The Indian Express, based in Punjab. Her interest lies in exploring both news and feature stories, with an effort to reflect human interest at the heart of each piece. She writes on gender issues, education, politics, Sikh diaspora, heritage, the Partition among other subjects. She has also extensively covered issues of minority communities in Pakistan and Afghanistan. She also explores the legacy of India's partition and distinct stories from both West and East Punjab.

Stabilisation of Venezuela's oil sector could help India's complex refineries, crude sourcing strategy in medium to long term



The potential stabilisation of Venezuela's oil sector with American intervention could lead to some volumes of Caracas's discounted crude oil making their way into India's oil import mix over the medium to long term to the benefit to the more complex refineries in India, even as any material impact in the near term appears highly unlikely, according to industry experts. After US forces captured Venezuela's President Nicolás Maduro on Saturday, US President Donald Trump said that Washington would take control of Caracas's oil sector and that American majors would pump in billions of dollars to revive the struggling Venezuelan oil industry and fix its broken oil infrastructure. Venezuela has the world's largest oil reserves, but accounts for less than 1 per cent of global production. If Trump can get Caracas to agree to its terms going forward, it could potentially make the Venezuelan oil industry sanctions-free and open for business, bringing more Venezuelan oil to the international market. Meaningfully increasing Venezuela's oil production, however, would take years and billions of dollars in investment.

"Venezuelan crude is predominantly heavy to extra-heavy and can be processed on a sustained basis by only a handful of Indian refineries, constraining system-wide intake. Any impact is likely to be incremental and dependent on sanctions policy and the pace of production recovery," commodity market analytics firm Kpler said in a note on Monday. "The US intervention in Venezuela on 3 January 2026 does not materially alter India's oil market dynamics in the near term. Still, it introduces a potential inflection point for medium- to long-term crude supply, refining, and upstream considerations. Venezuelan crude had already been largely excluded from India's import mix due to sanctions and logistics, and initial U.S. oversight has not disrupted existing flows. However, the change in control increases the likelihood of sanctions recalibration and a gradual re-integration of Venezuelan barrels into global markets," it added. Any recovery in Venezuelan oil exports would be positive for India. But Venezuelan heavy and extra-heavy crude oil grades are not suitable for all Indian refineries, and can be processed at only the most complex and advanced units. Heavy crudes are a lot more viscous, or thick, as compared to light crude grades. Heavier crudes are a lot more difficult to process than light crudes, and require complex and more capital-intensive refineries. This is one of the reasons why heavy crudes usually trade at a discount to lighter grades.

In India, private sector behemoth Reliance Industries (RIL) and Nayara Energy (NEL) have been the biggest processors of heavy crudes. Limited heavy crude volumes

are also processed occasionally by a few public sector refineries like Indian Oil's Paradip refinery and Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals (MRPL) unit in Mangalore. HPCL-Mittal Energy (HMEL), a joint venture of public sector refiner Hindustan Petroleum Corporation (HPCL) and Mittal Energy, also processes heavy crudes from time to time. According to Kpler, planned investments aimed at increasing refinery complexity—such as upgrades at HPCL's Visakhapatnam and a few other refineries—could expand India's ability to process Venezuelan heavy crudes, gradually broadening system-wide intake capacity. Till then, any Venezuelan supply coming to India would largely support only a few Indian refineries, "constraining aggregate intake potential despite improved availability". India—specifically private sector refining giant Reliance Industries (RIL)—was a regular buyer of Venezuelan crude prior to the imposition of US sanctions on Caracas in 2019. Following the sanctions, oil imports from Venezuela stopped within a few months. As per India's official trade data, Caracas was New Delhi's fifth-largest supplier of oil in 2019, providing close to 16 million tonnes of crude to Indian refiners. In October 2023, the US eased sanctions on Venezuela's petroleum sector, authorising oil exports without limitation for six months. This led to RIL and a few other Indian refiners restarting oil imports from Venezuela. But imports then stopped as the sanction waiver was not extended by Washington after its understanding with Caracas on the conduct of free and fair presidential elections in Venezuela broke down. A few months later, RIL was able to restart Venezuelan oil imports after obtaining a sanctions waiver from the US. But in the summer of 2025, the company halted oil imports from Venezuela after the Trump administration threatened higher tariffs on countries buying Venezuelan crude. No Venezuelan oil has been imported into India for months now. How the situation evolves over the next few weeks and months would be crucial from India's perspective as well. If the US and Venezuela's new leadership can negotiate an easing or suspension of sanctions, it could open the doors for Venezuelan oil to flow more freely in the international market, including to India.

"While Indian refiners can substitute barrels from the Middle East and the Americas, such alternatives often carry higher delivered costs and tighter economics. As a result, Venezuelan crude is expected to re-enter the market at a discount, reinforcing its attractiveness for compatible refineries. Renewed access would improve feedstock optionality, enhance procurement flexibility, and strengthen India's negotiating leverage with other suppliers, even if total volumes remain concentrated among a few players," Kpler said. Experts also believe that Venezuelan crude offers India a politically acceptable diversification option amid American pressure on India's Russian oil imports. Any increase in Venezuelan crude imports is also expected to increase India's negotiating leverage with its traditional West Asian oil suppliers. "Overall, the impact of Venezuela's transition is more structural than immediate. If political stabilisation leads to sustained investment and production recovery, the outcome is broadly supportive for India's crude sourcing flexibility, refining economics for complex assets, and upstream value realisation. However, the benefits will accrue unevenly across refiners and will remain contingent on sanctions policy, operational execution, and the pace of Venezuela's production recovery," Kpler said.

Exports hurt: States flag facility and testing gaps at Board of Trade meeting

IT'S not just high US tariffs that are hurting exports. Costlier raw materials, shortage of testing facilities to ensure products meet global quality standards, and lack of adequate shipping containers are all leading to loss of competitiveness of goods exports, Union Commerce and Industry Ministry said in response to an Right to Information (RTI) application. These challenges were flagged by exporters in a meeting of the Board of Trade chaired by Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on November 25. The BoT is an advisory body and suggests measures related to foreign trade policy and procedural simplifications to boost trade. The Indian Express had sought the details of the BoT meeting in its RTI application.

The BoT meeting happened in the backdrop of slowing exports due to the steep US tariffs of 50 per cent, and both countries failing to conclude a trade deal till the fall of 2025. India was one of the first countries to initiate trade talks with the US when Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Washington in February last year. The steep US tariffs, which came into effect on August 27, 2025, have damped exports, and have triggered cancellations in orders and delayed payment. There are also worries that these could result in orders moving to its competitors such as Bangladesh, Vietnam and China. Exports dipped in October, but jumped 19 per cent in November driven by growth in exports of products that remain outside the tariff net. Labour-intensive goods, however, risk losing market share as shipments of garments, footwear and other products are being replaced. New Delhi is aggressively pushing for newer markets and has signed as many as three free trade agreements, with Oman, New Zealand and the UK, in 2025.

Tariff & anti-dumping duty imposed by USAs per the minutes of the BoT meeting, Rajasthan said US tariffs have resulted in the "cancellation of orders" in the gems and jewellery sector and that "payments were also not coming". The Spices Board said that "US tariffs had created a crisis with a 50 per cent duty on oleoresin". Oleoresins help manufacturers achieve flavour and aroma in their final products. Even as US tariffs have left out generic drugs, representatives from Goa flagged that "pharma exports had been affected due to tariffs. The Seafood Exporters Association also flagged a "significant drop in exports" to the US. While the representative from Tirupur Exporters Association (TEA) stated that the government should subsidise the difference in the US tariffs on India and those with its competitors, the Engineering Export Promotion Council of India said that Market Access Initiative was not available for the last nine months and the utilisation of funds under Export Promotion Mission (EMP) would need to be expedited. EMP was announced in the Budget last year, with the Commerce and Industry Ministry announcing the modalities of the scheme only on December 31, 2025. Beyond US tariffs, representatives also broached concerns over anti-dumping duties imposed by the US. Gujarat's representative expressed apprehension of an impact on exports due to the imposition of anti-dumping duty by the US. The Spices Board also raised concerns due to "anti-dumping and Countervailing Duties (CVDs)". While the US has initiated most anti-dumping investigations against China, it has launched as many as nine probes on industrial items ex-

ported from India since July last year, including products such as hexamine, oleoresin paprika, certain freight rail couplers, and overhead door counterbalance torsion springs.

IN THE Board of Trade meeting, representatives from states and the industry, as well as key Central ministries, provide the Commerce Ministry with specific inputs to boost exports and trade. In November, more than 120 representatives provided suggestions on the hurdles they faced.

Container shortages & lack of testing facilities Assam's representative said tea exports from the state face hurdles due to "shipping line levies for empty containers" in the context of the state being landlocked. The representative highlighted the need for taking suitable action to ensure "competitive freight rates" from Inland Container Depot (ICD) Amingaon to Kolkata and urged the Department of Commerce to "engage with exporters so that they could use Amingaon as the preferred point of exports". Gujarat's representative also flagged the shortage of shipping containers and its impact on exporters. Shortages of testing facilities were also flagged by a number of labour-intensive sectors and states. While Rajasthan said that "export samples go to Surat and other places for testing and therefore, there is a need for testing labs in the state", Uttarakhand said that "there was no testing lab and exporters have to go to UP for testing". Testing labs are crucial for exporters to ensure products meet international quality, safety, and regulatory standards and prevent costly shipment rejections. The Seafood Exporters Association sought "Marine Products Export Development Authority and National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories accredited labs since the Export Inspection Council (EIC) did not have the requisite number of labs for testing. EIC is the official export certification body of India, which ensures the quality and safety of products exported from India. The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) also reiterated the need for testing labs. While a MSME representative said prices of domestic raw materials remain 15-20 per cent higher than international prices, representatives from the textiles sector said that "the energy costs for spinning and manufacturing were higher by around 15-20 per cent, which needed to be compensated". An industry representative indicated that the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) standards were being made applicable even for products, which are being exported to the US and the European Union, in line with their standards, as in respect of certain items, BIS standards are more complex," the minutes of the meeting showed.

The Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC) said restrictions on gold, platinum and silver were a source of concern. GJEPC sought an automatic route where duty benefits are not available. The council pointed out that the restriction has "made component imports more expensive". The representative from the ceramics industry in Morbi mentioned that the District Export Committees need to be monitored since the meetings were not being held regularly," minutes of the meeting showed. Another industry representative said: "MSMEs had challenges with quality control orders (QCOs), stating that QC inspectors must be facilitatory."

Arthroscopy expert clarifies whether extra body fat can trap vitamin D and reduce its availability



Can losing even a slight amount of weight improve vitamin D levels?

Absolutely, remarked Dr Zambare, quoting research that shows even a 5 to 7 per cent reduction in body weight can improve circulating vitamin D levels. "When fat mass drops, the stored vitamin becomes more available in the bloodstream. This supports better bone density, improved muscle strength, and a reduced risk of falls or sports injuries," said Dr Zambare. Just taking a supplement may not work (Photo: Freepik) Apart from weight, what else affects Vitamin D absorption?

- Limited sun exposure
- Darker skin tone
- Long hours indoors
- Poor gut health
- Low protein intake
- Excessive use of sunscreen
- Winter months or high pollution zones

These factors lower vitamin D absorption, regardless of weight.

What lifestyle steps help maintain a healthy vitamin D level?

- Story continues below this ad
- Aim for 15 to 20 minutes of morning sunlight.
- Keep waist measurement in check through regular exercise.
- Include eggs, fatty fish, and fortified foods.
- Add strength training twice a week.
- Prioritise sleep and reduce stress.
- Take supplements only after receiving medical advice, said Dr Zambare.

Jackky Bhagnani praises wife Rakul Preet Singh for not demanding 'anything extra' professionally, 'when she can clearly'; expert on finding balance

Balancing personal and professional dynamics in a relationship is no easy feat, especially when both partners work in the same industry. But actor-producer Jackky Bhagnani believes mutual respect, space, and shared values are the cornerstones of his successful relationship with actor Rakul Preet Singh. The couple, who got married last year, have maintained a clear boundary between their work and personal lives— even when collaborating professionally.

Speaking to Moneycontrol, Jackky shared, "I must have done something amazing in my life to have Rakul as my partner. She is one of the most balanced, one of the most sorted human beings on this earth. She never ever expects anything extra, even at times when she can clearly demand as a partner, she never does that. And we both really respect each other's space. We don't interfere in each other's work." Citing an example, he added, "Even recently, the film which I released called Mere Husband Ki Biwi, there was a budget set for everyone during promotions. And she followed that. I told her that you could have asked me for it, but she didn't budge. I got to know later. I said, if that's the rule for everyone, it should be for me. So she's amazing."

Talking about their professional relationship, he said, "Actually, it's no problem at all. Working with her is actually

very, very easy. We both have decided that we are there

for each other. Whenever we need each other, we are always there. Invisibly, we are both there for each other. But at any given point, both of us don't make the other feel that we are compelled to do this for each other."

How can couples who work together maintain professional boundaries while also supporting each other emotionally?

Psychologist Anjali Gursahane mentions, "Maintaining clear boundaries is essential to ensure professional productivity and emotional intimacy remain intact. Defining each person's role in the work setup helps reduce power struggles or confusion." As Jackky says, not interfering in each other's



work fosters a sense of competence and trust. Even if working together, it's vital to separate work from relationship—e.g., discussing emotional needs after work hours. "Agreeing on how to handle disagreements (e.g., not escalating at work, debriefing later) helps maintain harmony. Allowing one another mental and physical space for solo work preserves individuality within togetherness," notes Gursahane.

How important is it for long-term relationship health to maintain fairness and equality even when personal dynamics could blur lines?

Gursahane stresses, it's critical for sustainability as it:

Avoids resentment: One-sided privileges (even if unspoken) can lead to hidden frustration over time. Preserves individuality: Equality ensures both partners retain their own identity, ambitions, and dignity. Encourages honest communication: When there's fairness, people feel safer to speak openly without fear of judgment or power imbalance. Models mutual respect: As in Jackky's example, Rakul's refusal to demand special treatment reflects a deeper commitment to professionalism and equality, which keeps both grounded and respected in each other's eyes.

Why diabetologist warns against regular consumption of sugar-free erythritol containing diet drinks, protein bars and desserts

Erythritol is a sugar alcohol, a low-calorie sweetener commonly used in diet drinks, protein bars, and "zero-sugar" desserts. It has the sweetness of sugar but contains almost no calories, making it attractive to those who closely monitor their weight or blood sugar. But according to experts, new research shows that large amounts of erythritol in the blood could increase the risk for heart attacks and strokes. "It is not that it is toxic when used occasionally, but when taken regularly in considerable amounts, it may contribute to cardiovascular problems," said Dr Pranav Ghody, consultant endocrinologist and diabetologist, Wockhardt Hospitals, Mumbai Central.

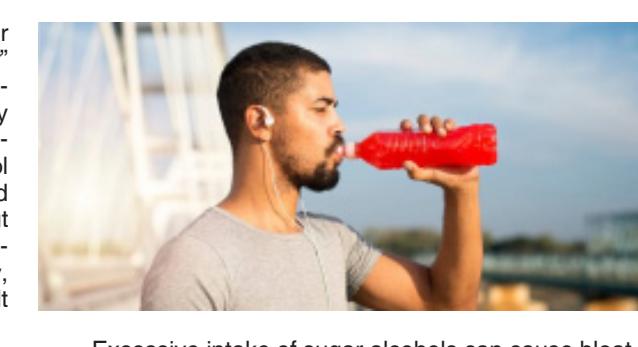
Excessive intake of sugar alcohols can cause bloating, gas, and diarrhoea due to their incomplete absorption in the intestine, said Dr Deepali Sharma, clinical nutritionist, CK Birla Hospital®, Delhi. "They can also disrupt the balance of good bacteria in the gut, affecting digestion and slowing down metabolism, which may eventually contribute to weight gain rather than weight loss," added Sharma.

Why does erythritol pose a heart risk if it's marketed as safe and natural?

Dr Ghody noted that our bodies naturally produce tiny amounts of erythritol. "But when we ingest it through processed foods or sweeteners, blood levels rise dramatically. Research has shown that erythritol can make platelets—the cells that help blood clot—more likely to clump together. This can increase the risk of clot formation, which blocks blood vessels, causing cardiac or stroke events, especially in those who are already at risk," described Dr Ghody.

Is it still safer than sugar for diabetics?

For short-term blood sugar control, erythritol doesn't spike glucose or insulin levels the way sugar does. "But



Excessive intake of sugar alcohols can cause bloating, gas, and diarrhoea due to their incomplete absorption in the intestine, said Dr Deepali Sharma, clinical nutritionist, CK Birla Hospital®, Delhi.

diabetics are also at higher risk for heart disease. So, if a sweetener is increasing the risk of clotting, that trade-off isn't worth it. I advise my patients to use natural alternatives like stevia or monk fruit that are low in their glycemic index, and most importantly, reduce their dependence on sweet-tasting foods altogether," said Dr Ghody.

How can one safely satisfy a sweet tooth?

The healthiest approach is to retrain the taste buds. Dr Ghody advised keeping ultra-processed "sugar-free" snacks to a minimum and getting your sweetness from whole fruits, which provide fibre, antioxidants, and vitamins. "Stay well-hydrated, sleep well, and manage stress—these factors influence sugar cravings too," said Dr Ghody. Sugar-free does not equate to risk-free, Dr Ghody affirmed. "Always read labels, use in moderation, and remember: the best sweetener is balance, not a chemical shortcut," said Dr Ghody.



Thalapathy Vijay needed a film like Rajinikanth's Sivaji as his 'last' outing to fully satisfy fans; can Jana Nayagan be a worthy alternative?



Even before the movie's release, there's growing fear among fans that Jana Nayagan may not be great or deliver the ultimate "Thalapathy Thiruvizha" experience. Marking Vijay's final film appearance before his complete foray into politics, the movie is set to hit screens on January 9, coinciding with Pongal. While Vijay's fans are excited to celebrate him once again, they are also emotional, as by the end of the movie, they must bid goodbye to the star who has been an integral part of their lives for the past three decades. At a time when fears that the poignant moment will be too overwhelming are already plaguing the masses, the recently released trailer for Jana Nayagan, which left many unimpressed, has only added to the worry that they might have to say their goodbyes to Thalapathy dissatisfied. Of course, the wish of any Vijay fan at this point will be to get more of him going forward, or at least as much as they have till now, but the fear of parting ways with him while unsatisfied with his "last" film is chilling. But what's causing that fear? Is Jana Nayagan's trailer truly that overwhelming? And even if the rumours are true and it's a remake of director Anil Ravipudi's Nandamuri Balakrishna-starrer Bhagavanth Kesari (2023), or even loosely based on it, what's the big deal? It's not like Vijay's movies are mostly known for innovative ideas, or he is renowned as an actor extraordinaire. We are talking about a performer who made a fortune by mostly doing mindless commercial masala actioners for much of his career. Although Jana Nayagan's director H Vinoth's last couple of movies were underwhelming, it's not like Vijay has worked only with filmmaking legends throughout his career. Considering that it's the same Vinoth who made widely acclaimed movies like Sathuranga Vettai (2014) and Theeran Adhigaaram Ondru (2017), it's also unfair to blindly assume that Jana Nayagan may not hit the mark.

Then why are Thalapathy fans, in a sense, scared? Why do they feel that Jana Nayagan may not have all that's required for them to celebrate Vijay – one of the finest entertainers in 21st-century Tamil cinema, even if his acting abilities are strictly average most of the time – to the fullest, despite the political actioner's trailer showing that it has pretty much all the ingredients typically found in his movies? For this, let's first take a look back and ascertain which was his last film that opened to widely favourable responses from fans. Although films like Leo (2023), Master (2021), Mersal (2017) and Theri (2016) did impress a good chunk of his fan base, it's impossible to say they were universally well received. Arguably, the last Thalapathy film to capture the hearts of a lion's share of his fans was AR Murugadoss' Kaththi (2014). Although some expressed dissatisfaction with Kaththi's ending, the movie largely entertained Vijay's fans. One of its biggest strengths was that the action drama had everything people look for in a Thalapathy film. It was as if Murugadoss had cracked the Vijay formula by understanding the exact quantities of each ingredient needed to ensure a proper Thalapathy Thiruvizha.

From a tear-jerking and dramatic storyline centred on food-givers (farmers) and their struggle for a person's most basic need (water), to Vijay rising as the saviour of the down-trodden against a ruthless rich villain, a romantic subplot with him cast opposite a gorgeous heroine (Samantha Ruth Prabhu) and them dancing to groovy tracks occasionally, multiple well-choreographed action sequences, and Vijay appearing in pretty much every frame (thanks to him playing a dual role), Kaththi was the whole package. While it had a proper, heartening storyline, Kaththi was also crafted in a peculiar way where almost all the scenes functioned like short films on their own, with a start, mid, and end, but all revolving around Vijay. It was as if each scene was designed to showcase Vijay in his element. Be it romantic, comedic, action-packed, or emotional moments,

Murugadoss adhered to this style, offering the audience a high at every turn. It was, in a way, similar to what directors Prabhu Deva and Dharani did in Pokkiri (2007) and Ghilli (2004), respectively, which were themselves remakes of the Mahesh Babu-starrers Pokiri (2006) and Okkudu (2003). This, however, has largely been the template that many mass masala filmmakers have been following since the 2000s, wherein the whole is irrelevant and only the parts matter. What is the entire movie about or how does it make one feel? Pointless questions. The only thing that matters in such films is how many scenes delivered an adrenaline rush. In a way, mainstream Indian cinema has been chained to the misconception that "for the audience to feel paisa vasool (value for money), the number of such scenes should be high" for quite some time, and Vijay is arguably one of the biggest stars to profit from such films.

While Vijay's fans are excited to celebrate him once again in Jana Nayagan, they are also emotional, as by the end of the movie, they must bid goodbye to the star who has been an integral part of their lives for the past three decades. Vijay at Jana Nayagan's audio launch in Malaysia. (Credit: Facebook/ @kvnpproductions) While the audience's choice to love such movies can in no way be questioned, the burden it creates often falls squarely on the makers, particularly the writers and directors. The biggest examples from Vijay's career that underscore how difficult it is to ace a Thalapathy Thiruvizha movie are Mersal and Bigil (2019). Despite following the same formula as Kaththi, director Atlee Kumar couldn't replicate Murugadoss' success on a cinematic level. In fact, even Murugadoss couldn't achieve the same success when he reunited with Vijay in Sarkar (2018).

One of the major reasons behind this is that, although Vijay rose to fame doing heartwarming dramas like Kadhalukku Mariyadhai (1997), Thullatha Manamum Thullum (1999), Kushi (2000), Priyamaanavale (2000) and Friends (2001), among others, it's the mindless mass masalas that catapulted him to superstardom and further fortified his position there. Most such movies were packed with his signature elements, such as dance numbers, mass dialogues, high-octane action sequences, monologues on right and wrong, swagger, style, and fun comedy, along with splashes of misogyny for incel fans. In other words, that was all those movies had. His admirers, or the audience in general, primarily tuned in to his films to catch him acing these elements. For them, the more the "Vijay-ness," the better the movie.

However, filmmakers have the additional responsibility of ensuring that, while incorporating all these ingredients, their films don't look like replicas of past Vijay movies. When making a film focused on everything that contributed to an actor's superstardom, the creative freedom available to the helmer can be limited. Now, imagine what happens if every movie the actor/star does centres around his theatrics? Not every filmmaker can be a genius like Pa Ranjith and create something as extraordinary as Kaala (2018) while staying true to the kind of films he aspires to make and the superstardom that defines Rajinikanth. Although Lokesh Kanagaraj attempted to do something similar with Vijay in Leo, and he excelled in it in the first half, the movie fell off track when he began tapping into Vijay's superstardom. A similar issue can be seen in Vijay's intro or hype-up songs as well, where everything revolves around "Annan," "Thalaiva" and "Thalapathy," almost as if he has no identity beyond these sobriquets.

In a way, it can be said that Vijay's stardom has grown too big to be contained in a film. For Vijay and his fans, each movie is a celebration of "Vijay-ness," but for the makers, it's a high-stakes test that defines their future in the industry. Even though people might still enjoy watching Pokkiri, Thiruppaachi (2005), or Azhagiya Tamil Magan (2007) on TV, a similar movie can't be made today. The innate "Vijay-ness" that defined his superstardom belongs to the 2000s, when filmmaking did not matter as much, and all directors focused on was using formulas and clichés to tell a story in the "most entertaining" manner. Unfortunately, this approach cannot be resurrected now, as audiences would label it as lazy on the part of the creators. Had Vijay received — or H Vinoth managed to create — something like S Shankar's Rajinikanth-starrer Sivaji: The Boss (2007), where every frame was built around and deeply rooted in Rajinism, it would have been the perfect goodbye for the star. But again, that stylistic approach also belongs in the 2000s, and a similar film would likely be mocked mercilessly by audiences if released today. As a result, no matter who directs Vijay's last film, there's a high chance it could leave the audience underwhelmed because their expectations for a Vijay movie — where every moment is crafted for Thalapathy Thiruvizha — are so high that even Vijay may struggle to meet them. It's amidst all this that Vinoth and Vijay are bringing Jana Nayagan. As the clock ticks down to its release, fans worldwide are eagerly anticipating their last ride with Thalapathy. Let's hope it doesn't disappoint.

Sudha Chandran responds to trolls after viral video of her 'trance-like state', says 'I don't care about those people'

Actor and dancer Sudha Chandran found herself embroiled in a controversy when a video of her during a prayer meet went viral. In the video, Sudha could be seen emotionally overwhelmed and distressed, and it soon found its way onto every social media page. Many trolled the actor, while others showed concern, but now the actor has decided to speak up and set the record straight. She made it clear in her statement that she doesn't feel the need to justify anything to anyone and that it was devotion that drove her like this.

The Naagin actor explained to Times Now that she felt blessed in that moment and that she doesn't mind the fact that the video went viral. She said, "It is a moment everyone wants to live in. Maa Shakti aapke andar aake voh energy de rahi hai (Goddess Shakti enters your body and gives you energy). I am one of those blessed souls, and mere zariye logon ko voh blessings mil rahe hai (people are getting blessed through me); it is the happiest moment in my life."

She addressed the people who were trolling her on the internet and calling her trance-like state an oversell. "I am not here to justify. I have my perception towards life. I have certain connections that I respect. Mujhe logon se koi lena dena nahi hai. Joh troll karte hai, acchi baat hai, khush raha apne zindagi mein (I don't care about those people. The ones who are trolling, good for them. Be happy. What



about those millions of people who could connect and resonate with it? Mere liye voh important hai (For me, that is important)."

Sudha recalled her horrific accident which wounded her legs as a teenager and said, "In my life, I have never thought about log ka bolenge. Even after my accident, logon ne kaha tha ki kya bewakoofi kar rahi ho tum (Even after my accident, people said I was being foolish for the activities I did). Lekin jab vahi ek success story ban jata hai, log usi ke baare mein charcha karte hai (But once it becomes a success story, people only talk about it)." She also clarified that "devotion is personal" and said that "I don't judge or criticise anyone's devotion."

Stranger Things Conformity Gate explained as fans believe Netflix is releasing Season 5 Episode 9: Was this all Vecna's master plan?



Upside Down in order to ensure that her friends stay safe in the real world. The emotional sacrifice proves to be one of the most heartbreak moments in the series, but fans soon get some good news as well. All the kids and their young adult contemporaries end up doing good for themselves. Valedictorian plaques, new jobs, and fresh opportunities all come knocking, and that is when the fans start doubting the story. They believe that all this is a little too perfect to happen and that this is just an illusion created by Vecna. Screenshots of the graduation ceremony started going around the internet, where most of the actors in frame can be seen sitting just like the character of Henry (Vecna) used to sit. Other hints include the shorter hairstyles that the Wheeler family was rocking, which is again similar to Henry. Blank posters, radio tower dials that shift colours, and the last shot spelling out "X A LIE" (Dimension X is a lie) are all details that have further fuelled the theory. Many fans also argued that the characters who Henry didn't know were missing from the final episode.

I think Mike is keeping the party "happy" and distracted from what is really happening, especially since even the graduation felt strange. Everyone, including the people in the back, was positioned the same way as Henry. At this point, Netflix or the show's creators, the Duffer Brothers, have not addressed these claims. There has been no confirmation about the show having another episode on January 7, like so many online forums argue. The Duffer brothers are currently busy dealing with two separate spinoff series; one is animated, and the other is live-action with a completely different cast. So, at this point, it appears Stranger Things is finally done and dusted. Created by Ross and Matt Duffer, the cast of Stranger Things includes Millie Bobby Brown, Finn Wolfhard, Gaten Matarazzo, Caleb McLaughlin, Winona Ryder, David Harbour, Noah Schnapp, Joe Keery and Sadie Sink.

Angry Anupam Mittal warns 'fraud' pitcher of jail time, Kunal Bahl urges no one to invest



According to him, this success inspired him to start a brand based on his knowledge. He eventually launched four brands under Lewisia Wellness. Who were on the judges' panel?

The new season of Shark Tank India has begun with Season 5, and it has already delivered high drama. One of the most controversial moments, perhaps of the entire Shark Tank India, so far came with a pitch by Dr Manoj Das, the founder of an aromatherapy and naturopathy brand Lewisia Wellness, whose claims left the entire panel of 'Sharks' visibly upset. During his pitch, Manoj claimed to be a doctor and asserted that his products could cure every disease faced by his customers. He further claimed that his brand's products could treat skin and hair problems and were extracted from natural ingredients, completely chemical-free. Manoj Das asked for Rs 1 crore in exchange for 1 percent equity in his company. However, the panel of 'Sharks' including Anupam Mittal, Aman Gupta, Kunal Bahl, Namita Thapar and the new entrant Mohit Yadav questioned his practices and claims. Manoj was openly called a "fraud" by the panel, with the Sharks calling out what they termed as his malpractices and misleading claims, eventually shutting him down for allegedly deceiving customers. Here's everything that unfolded during this dramatic pitch at the Tank.

Who is the pitcher Dr Manoj Das?

Before becoming a founder, Manoj Das was a content creator. He introduced himself as an aromatherapist, a practitioner who uses essential oils and aromatic plant extracts to support physical and emotional well-being. He went on to launch Lewisia Wellness, which he claimed uses only natural ingredients to make skin, hair, and healthcare solutions. He has over 6,00,000 followers on Instagram and 3.7 million subscribers on YouTube.

Manoj said he had completed a beauty culture certification course and trained beauticians across India through seminars. He then started making videos online, which helped him gain lakhs of followers and crores of views.

Manoj's pitch was a "fraud" and he was warned by the panel.

"Your reels are very provocative and which is why your business has grown," Anupam remarked as they watched clips of Manoj's social media content where he promised to regrow hair or get blemish-free skin. Anupam added, "Your big claims are baseless. You are provoking viewers and using their need to look good." He further asked, "Can you write doctor if you are a aromatherapist and naturopath?"

When the founder insisted that he could, Anupam shot back, "I will change my name if you can add doctor to yours."

Aman also reacted strongly, saying, "This is a fraud case if you can't put doctor in your name." After noticing the brand's low ratings on Amazon, Anupam remarked, "Kya kand karne aai ho? (What scandal have you come to commit?)"

Kunal Bahl also grilled the founder and questioned, "How can you claim that we will cure all diseases?" Aman added bluntly, "Very bad." Namita Thapar and Mohit Yadav were among the first two Sharks to opt out. Explaining his decision, Mohit said, "You are creating clickbait content based on users insecurity. You are trying to sell unscientific products and using doctor before your name is fraud." Namita Thapar called the brand "unethical" and opted out as well.

She said, "You can't declare so many sales here, you should be ashamed not proud." Kunal Bahl also declared, "I am out," and delivered a strong dressing down to the founder, adding, "I hope nobody else invests in this company." Aman Gupta opted out next, saying, "I will do wrong with the country if I invest in this." Anupam Mittal called the pitch a "dis-service" and warned Manoj bluntly, "You will go to jail if you come under scanner." He also told him thrice that he is out, later telling other Sharks, "Sometimes you want to exit a pitch multiple times".

Agastya Nanda starrer witnesses lowest earning day, mints Rs 1.35 crore

Ikkis Box Office Collection Day 5: Director Sriram Raghavan has attempted to tackle the war epic genre with Ikkis, but it seems that the film is struggling at the box office. Right after its opening weekend, the Agastya Nanda-led film had a tough day at the office. According to industry tracker Sacnilk, the film earned Rs 1.35 crore on day 5 of its theatrical run, earning Rs 21.5 crore in India in total. It was a sharp decline from its weekend performance, and the makers will be hoping for a quick bounce back.

It's important to note that Ikkis was released right when Dhurandhar was dominating screens across the country. But the Aditya Dhar directorial can't shoulder all the blame, as it started slowing down in its tracks right after the start of this year. Other competitors include James Cameron's Avatar: Fire and Ash and Sameer Vidwans's Tu Meri Main Tera. One is an international sensation, and the other is still trying to find any kind of footing in the theatres.

Ikkis has amassed Rs 21.5 crore until now, which is a decent amount in 5 days. Agastya himself doesn't have a

bar to compare this with, as Ikkis happens to be his theatrical debut. He previously starred in Zoya Akhtar's Archies, but it was a Netflix film and never saw a day at the big screen. This is also Dharmendra's last film, as the stalwart actor unfortunately passed away on November 24. Hence, a lot of hopes are riding on this film to work. Dharmendra's fans and family would want this to be successful to honour his legacy, and the Bachchan family would want it to work so that Agastya can start building his own. The occupancy rates for the film averaged out at 9.17%, with the morning and afternoon shows achieving rates of 4.78% and 8.58%. The evening and night shows couldn't do much better and achieved rates of 11.21% and 12.11%. Ikkis needs to start bringing in more money before it starts bleeding shows, rendering it impossible to earn more money. Directed by Sriram Raghavan, Ikkis follows the real-life story of Late Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal PVC. The cast of the film includes Agastya Nanda, Dharmendra, Jaideep Ahlawat, Simar Bhatia, Rahul Dev, Zakir Hussain and Suhasini Mulay.