FRIDAY
December 26, 2025
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RNI No. TELENG/1976/49963

Vol. 50 • No. 305

Printed at » Chennai » Coimbatore » Bengaluru » Hyderabad » Madurai » Noida » Visakhapatnam » Thiruvananthapuram » Kochi » Vijayawada » Mangaluru » Tiruchirapalli » Kolkata » Hubballi » Mohali » Halappuram » Mumbai » Lucknow » Cuttack » Patna

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SOUTH CENTRAL RAILWAY

Follow us on @SCRailwayindia Details of the Tender Notices of S.C Railway can be seen on our website : www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in

Tender No.Y/SG/36/2025-26/30 Dated: 23.12.2025 PUB/1653

ON BEHALF OF THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SR.DIVISION SIGNAL & TELECOM ENGINEER, HYDERABAD DIVISION, SOUTH CENTRAL RAILWAY, SECUNDERABAD INVITES OPEN TENDERS FOR THE FOLLOWING WORKS THROUGH E-PROCUREMENT UP TO 11.30 HOURS OF **DATED.22.01.2026**.

Sl.No.: 01 **Tender No.:** Y/SG/36/2025-26/30 **Name of the work:** Hyderabad Division: Provision of Aspiration System in Relay room, Equipment Room and Battery Rooms at 67 Locations over Hyderabad division. **Approx value (₹):** 50158746 **EMD (₹):** 400800

Sr. Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer/Hyderabad

E-Tender Notice No. GNT/SG/ 36/357, Dated:18.12.2025 PUB/1654

The undersigned invites e-tenders for the works mentioned below up to **16:00 hrs of 09.01.2026**.

ID No.: 357 **Name of the work:** S&T works in connection with Thick Web Switches(TWS) a) Guntur Division (West) - FS+TWS+WCMSC - 31 Sets, TWS+WCMSC - 28 Sets (Total:59 sets), b) Guntur Division (West) - TWS+WCMSC - 43 sets, FS+TWS+WCMSC - 6 sets (Total: 49 sets), CS - 21 sets, DS - 11 sets, TFR - 5.436 Tkm (Pad), GJ - 21 nos c) Guntur division (North) - FS+TWS+WCMSC - 11 sets, TWS+WCMSC - 22 sets (Total: 33 sets), GJ - 33 Nos, d) Guntur division (North) - TWS+WCMSC - 47 sets. **Advertised Tender Value (₹):** 6,72,96,726.64 **E.M.D/Bid-security (₹):** 4,86,500/- **Cost of Tender Document (₹):** NIL

1. If the date of opening of tenders happens to be declared holiday at later date, the tenders will be opened on the next working day at the stipulated time.
2. Last dates for online submission of E-bids are 09.01.2026 up to 16:00 hrs. For detailed information logon to our website at **www.ireps.gov.in**.
3. Any further communication/ corrigendum shall only be intimated through E-portal **www.ireps.gov.in**.

Sr. Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer, Guntur

Tender No.Y/SG/36/2025-26/31 Dated: 24.12.2025 PUB/1655

ON BEHALF OF THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SR.DIVISION SIGNAL & TELECOM ENGINEER, HYDERABAD DIVISION, SOUTH CENTRAL RAILWAY, SECUNDERABAD INVITES OPEN TENDERS FOR THE FOLLOWING WORKS THROUGH E-PROCUREMENT UP TO 11.30 HOURS OF **DATED.23.01.2026**.

Sl.No.: 01 **Tender No.:** Y/SG/36/2025-26/31 **Name of the work:** Hyderabad Division: Provision of various cables testing Tools to SSE/JE for improving the reliability of cables and maintenance activities in Hyderabad Division-Telecom arrangements **Approx value (₹):** 28808898 **EMD (₹):** 294100

Sr. Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer/Hyderabad

Tender Notice No: G/E.29/Tr./ Tender Notice/36/2025-26 PUB/1656

Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer/ Traction/Guntakal acting for on and behalf of The president of India invites E-Tenders for the following works.

Tender No.: GTL-TRD-29-eTN-64-2025-26 **Name of work:** Guntakal Division - OHE Modifications in connection with the proposed replacement with PSC slabs (Post tensioned) for Steel Girders Bridge No.550 Down (10x9.14) at Km.No.274/28-75/2 between GPY-KPU stations and (Br.Nos. 96 Exg.Span 5X12.20m, 207 Exg Span 4X12.20m, 152 Exg span 1X12.20m, 122 Exg Span 2X12.20m, 121 Exg Span 2X12.20m, 118 Exg Span 2X12.20m, 115 Exg Span 3X12.20m, 113 Exg Span 2X12.20m & 109 Exg Span 3X12.20m) (9 Nos) between GTL-NDL section and Bridge No.251 DN (5X14.85M) at171/4-10 in RU-GY section. **Approximate Value (₹):** 73,93,346/- **EMD (₹):** 1,47,900/-

Tender Closing date & time: 16.01.2026 at 15.00 hrs

Note:

1. Tender Document may be downloaded from **www.ireps.gov.in** by tenderers free of cost.

For Bidding the tender and other details login to http://www.ireps.gov.in. Corrigendum if any will be issued online only.

Sr.Divisional Electrical Engineer, Traction, Guntakal

e-Tender Notice No.DRM/Works/ BZA/44/2025 Dt.24.12.2025 PUB/1657

for and on behalf of the President of India, the undersigned invites E-Tenders for the following works up to 15-00 hours and the date mentioned against each.

S.No.: 01 **Tender No.:** E-40-CENTRAL-BZA-2025 **Name of work:** SWI: BZA Division: BZA-GDR Section: Repairs and Improvements of Approach Roads at LC No.230 to 310 (57 Gates) in SSE/Works/BPP & TEL sections in ADEN/BPP sub-division under the Jurisdiction of DEN/Central/BZA SW II: BZA Division: BZA-VSKP Section: Repairs and Improvements of Approach Roads at LC No.316 to 363B (23 Gates) in SSE/Works/EE sections in ADEN/EE sub-division under the Jurisdiction of DEN/Central/BZA **Tender value (₹):** 4,83,94,312/- **EMD (₹):** 3,92,000/- **Period of completion:** 12 (Twelve Months) **Date of closing:** 07.01.2026

1. Tender conditions/other particulars such as the details of Name of work in full, the similar nature of the above works, eligibility criteria etc., are available in the Tender documents published in website at "**www.ireps.gov.in**".
2. The prospective tenderers are advised to visit website "**www.ireps.gov.in**". before the date of tender closing to note any changes/ corrigenda for any tender.

Divisional Railway Manager (Works), Vijayawada

A2107

For further tender conditions / details and for downloading the tender documents, Please visit website at https://www.ireps.gov.in or www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in

TIRUMALA TIRUPATI DEVASTHANAMS-TIRUPATI

FOREST DEPARTMENT O/o THE DEPUTY CONSERVATOR OF FORESTS

e-TENDER & e- SHORT TENDER NOTICE **ADV.No. 09/DCF/TTD/2025-26 Dt. 23.12.2025**

e-Tenders are invited on e-Procurement platform for the works with the following NIT Nos. 51 to 56/ DCF/TTD-TPT/2025-26 for Six (06) works, For NIT No.55 **REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FOR SELECTION OF ARCHITECTURAL CONSULTANT THROUGH "DESIGN COMPETITION" FOR DEVELOPMENT OF SILATHORANAM AND CHAKRATEERTHAM, TIRUMALA, A.P.**

For tender notice, the tender details and eligibility criteria log on to the web site **https://tender.apeprocurement.gov.in.** For further details, contact phone number: **0877-2264518.**

TTD-40021/10/2025-PRO SEC (Adv.No.336) Date:25-12-2025 **EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

TIRUMALA TIRUPATI DEVASTHANAMS-TIRUPATI

TTD TRANSPORT e-TENDER NOTICE

Proc.Roc.No.TA2/45021(108)/88/2025 | NIT No. 12/GM (T)/TTD/2025 | Tender ID No. 879170

e-Tenders are invited for supply of batteries for maintenance of TTD vehicles from the manufacturers / authorized distributors / authorized dealers i.e., EXIDE, AMARON and SF Sonic makes and any other reputed make with equivalent specifications of batteries. Download tender documents from **https://tender.apeprocurement.gov.in.** For further details contact: **0877-2264346, 4356** on office working days ●**BID DOCUMENT DOWNLOADING START DATE : 26-12-2025 from 1.00 P.M.** ●**BID DOCUMENT DOWNLOADING END DATE : 17-01-2026 up to 1.00 P.M.** ●**LAST DATE AND TIME FOR RECEIPT OF BIDS: 17-01-2026 up to 3.00 P.M.**

TTD-40021/10/2025-PRO SEC (Adv.No.335) Date:25-12-2025 **EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

SOUTH CENTRAL RAILWAY

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No. Y/C. e-Auction/HYB/2025-26 Date 23.12.2025 PUB/1665

For and on behalf of the President of India, the Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Hyderabad Division, South Central Railway invites E-Auction through E-Auction leasing module of IREPS website **www.ireps.gov.in** for Awarding of Commercial contracts of Parking stand, Misc. Static Service Category over Hyderabad Division. The E-Auction schedule is detailed hereunder.

S.No.: 01 **Category:** Parking **Catalogue No.:** HYB-MIXED-055 **Particulars:** Award of Parking lots at 03 locations viz., Malakpet (Main), Alwal (west side) & Gadwal Railway stations **Date of Auction:** 07.01.2026 **Auction Start time:** 11:30 **Auction closing time:** 13:20

S.No.: 02 **Category:** Parking **Catalogue No.:** HYB-MIXED-055 **Particulars:** Award of NFR Parking lot at 02 Nizamabad (Opposite Bus stand) other than Railway stations **Date of Auction:** 07.01.2026 **Auction Start time:** 11:30 **Auction closing time:** 13:20

S.No.: 03 **Category:** MSS-HYB-STPD-EVC-117-25-1(Misc-Static-Services-EV Charging Stations) **Catalogue No.:** HYB-MIXED-055 **Particulars:** EV Charging station in Rail Nilayam Premises **Date of Auction:** 07.01.2026 **Auction Start time:** 11:30 **Auction closing time:** 13:20

S.No.: 04 **Category:** MSS-HYB-STPD-EVC-101-25-1(Misc-Static-Services-EV Charging Stations) **Catalogue No.:** HYB-MIXED-055 **Particulars:** EV Charging station Hyderabad Bhavan Premises **Date of Auction:** 07.01.2026 **Auction Start time:** 11:30 **Auction closing time:** 13:20

S.No.: 05 **Category:** MSS-HYB-UR-GZ-115-25-1(Misc-Static-Services-Gaming Zone) **Catalogue No.:** HYB-MIXED-055 **Particulars:** Gaming Zone with Snacks Bar at Umdanagar Railway Station. **Date of Auction:** 07.01.2026 **Auction Start time:** 11:30 **Auction closing time:** 13:20

S.No.: 06 **Category:** MSS-HYB-SBBJ-STGen-109-25-1 (Misc-Static-Services-Static General) **Catalogue No.:** HYB-MIXED-055 **Particulars:** Operation and Maintenance of AC/Non-AC Retiring Room, Parking and Food Truck at Sri Bala Brahmeswara Jogulamba Halt Station. **Date of Auction:** 07.01.2026 **Auction Start time:** 11:30 **Auction closing time:** 13:20

S.No.: 07 **Category:** MSS-HYB-KCG-PS-116-25-1 (Misc-Static-Services-Premium Stores) **Catalogue No.:** HYB-MIXED-055 **Particulars:** Premium Brand Stores / Stalls / Outlets at Kacheguda Railway Station. **Date of Auction:** 07.01.2026 **Auction Start time:** 11:30 **Auction closing time:** 13:20

A2120 **Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager, Hyderabad**

SOUTH CENTRAL RAILWAY

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E-Auction programme for the month of JANUARY & FEBRUARY-2026 PUB/1668

JANUARY e-Auction-2026		FEBRUARY e-Auction 2026	
DATE	DIVISIONS/DEPOTS	DATE	DIVISIONS/DEPOTS
01.01.26	SECUNDERABAD, RAYANAPADU	02.02.26	SECUNDERABAD, TIRUPATI
02.01.26	HYDERABAD, TIRUPATI	03.02.26	HYDERABAD, RAYANAPADU
05.01.26	GUNTAKAL, LALLAGUDA	04.02.26	GUNTAKAL, LALLAGUDA
06.01.26	GUNTUR, NANDED	05.02.26	GUNTUR, NANDED
07.01.26	VIJAYAWADA	06.02.26	VIJAYAWADA
08.01.26	SECUNDERABD, TIRUPATI	09.02.26	SECUNDERABAD, TIRUPATI
09.01.26	HYDERABAD, RAYANAPADU	10.02.26	HYDERABAD, RAYANAPADU
12.01.26	GUNTAKAL, LALLAGUDA	11.02.26	GUNTAKAL, LALLAGUDA
13.01.26	VIJAYAWADA, GUNTUR	12.02.26	GUNTUR, NANDED
16.01.26	NANDED	13.02.26	VIJAYAWADA
19.01.26	SECUNDERABAD, TIRUPATI	16.02.26	SECUNDERABAD, TIRUPATI
20.01.26	HYDERABAD, RAYANAPADU	17.02.26	HYDERABAD, RAYANAPADU
21.01.26	GUNTAKAL, LALLAGUDA	18.02.26	GUNTAKAL, LALLAGUDA
22.01.26	GUNTUR, NANDED	19.02.26	GUNTUR, NANDED
23.01.26	VIJAYAWADA	20.02.26	VIJAYAWADA
27.01.26	SECUNDERABAD, TIRUPATI	23.02.26	SECUNDERABAD, TIRUPATI
28.01.26	HYDERABAD, RAYANAPADU	24.02.26	HYDERABD, RAYANAPADU
29.01.26	GUNTAKAL, LALLAGUDA	25.02.26	GUNTAKAL, LALLAGDUA
30.01.26	GUNTUR, VIJAYAWADA	26.02.26	GUNTUR, NANDED
		27.02.26	VIJAYAWADA

A2123 **Principal Chief Materials Manager/Secunderabad**

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EXTRAORDINARY

PART-II – Section 3 – Sub-Section (ii)

MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS

(SOUTH CENTRAL RAILWAY)

NOTIFICATION

Secunderabad, the 22nd December, 2025 PUB/1660

S.O.5950(E).- In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (1) of Section 20A of the Railways Act, 1989 (24 of 1989) (hereinafter referred to as the said Act), the Central Government after being satisfied that for the public purpose, the land, the brief description of which is given in the schedule annexed hereto, is required for the execution of The Special Railway Project namely, "Up-gradation work of Electric Traction System from 1x25kV to 2x25KV to meet 3000 MT loading target – Construction of Bonakalu TSS in Khammam - Kondapalli section" in Bonakal Village & Mandal in Khammam District in the state of Telangana, hereby declares its intention to acquire such land.

Any person interested in the said land may, within a period of thirty (30) days from the date of publication of this notification in the Official Gazette, raise objection to the acquisition and use of such land for the aforesaid purpose under sub-section (1) of Section 20D of the said Act.

Every such objection, shall be made to the Competent Authority, namely, Special Deputy Collector(LA) IPT &Railways, Khammam in writing and shall be set out the grounds there of and the Competent Authority Special Deputy Collector(LA) IPT &Railways Khammam shall give the objector an opportunity of being heard, either in person or by legal practitioner and may, after hearing all such objections and after making such further enquiry, if any as the Competent Authority for Land Acquisition(CALA) thinks necessary, by order, either allow or disallow the objections.

Any order made by the Competent Authority for Land Acquisition under sub section (ii) of section 20(D) of the said act shall be final.

The land plans and other details of the land covered under this notification are available and can be inspected by the interested person at the aforesaid office of the Competent Authority (CALA).

SCHEDULE

Description of Lands in Acquisition:Up-gradation work of Electric Traction System from 1x25kV to 2x25KV to meet 3000 MT loading target – Construction of Bonakalu TSS in Khammam - Kondapalli section in Bonakal Village & Mandal to an extent (1.641) Acres in Khammam District.

S. No.	Name of the Mandal	Name of the Village	Sl. No	Survey No	Extent of area (in Acres)	Extent of area (in Hectares)	Type of Land (Govt/ Pvt Land)	Nature of land (Wet/Dry)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Bonakal	Bonakal	1	36/1	1.64	0.664	Patta	Dry
				TOTAL	1.641	0.664		

A2115 **[F. No. W.Con/182/SRP/TSS/BKL/20A] SUNIL KUMAR VERMA, Chief Engineer/Con-IV**

EAST COAST RAILWAY

(1) Tender Notice No. VSKP-ELECTG-25-26-WC-28, Dated: 15.12.2025

NAME OF THE WORK : (1) ILLUMINATION IN CONNECTION WITH "PROVISION OF PEDESTRIAN SUBWAY AT TRESSPASSING LOCATIONS TO FACILITATE CROSSING OF CATTLE, PEDESTRIAN AND SMALLER VEHICLES UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF SENIOR DIVISIONAL ENGINEER / EAST / WALTAIR". (2) MODIFICATIONS OF PANEL ROOM OF STATIONS AND PROVISION OF ACs TO IMPROVE THE PRESERVATION AND RELIABILITY OF EI RELATED EQUIPMENTS OF 36 STATIONS.

Tender Value : ₹ **34,85,484.12,** **EMD :** ₹ **69,700/-**

(2) Tender Notice No. VSKP-ELECTG-25-26-WC-34, Dated: 15.12.2025

NAME OF THE WORK : (1) PROVISION OF STANDBY POWER SUPPLY TO GATE LODGES ETC. OF NON-INTERLOCKED LEVEL CROSSING GATES ON KK LINE, KR LINE & NG LINE IN WALTAIR DIVISION. (2) PROVISION OF SOLAR ROOFTOP 20KWP IN CONNECTION WITH ELECTRIFICATION WORKS IN CONNECTION WITH SIMHACHALAM-PROPOSAL FOR EXTENSION OF 3MTR WIDE FOOT OVER BRIDGE TOWARDS PLATFORM NO. 2 TO CHANDRANGAR VILLAGE UNDER ASSISTANT DIVISIONAL ENGINEER / MYD / WALTAIR.

Tender Value : ₹ **96,99,797.81,** **EMD :** ₹ **1,94,000/-**

Completion Period : 240 Days (for both Sl. Nos.).

Tender Closing Date and Time : At 1500 Hrs. of 07.01.2026 (for both tenders).

Date and Time of Opening of Tender : At 1600 Hrs. of 07.01.2026 (for both tenders).

Complete details and Tender documents will be available at website **www.ireps.gov.in** The tenderers are required to watch the website for any corrigendum's issued.

Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (G), Waltair

PR-933/Q/25-26

ESIC

TENDER NOTICE INVITING EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI) FOR HIRING OF PREMISES ESIC BRANCH OFFICES & DCBO

The Regional Director(I/c), Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC), Regional Office, Telangana invites online/offline Expression of Interest (EOI) from interested parties for hiring of premises (Ground floor only) on rental basis (hire) for Branch Offices and Dispensary Cum Branch Offices (DCBO's) at below mentioned locations in Telangana State for a period of 03 (Three) years which can be extended for a further period on mutual consent. The details of locations are as listed below.

Interested PHCs, Central/State PSU, Govt Offices (Central/State) may apply through e-tender portal **https://www.eprocure.gov.in.** tenders from website: **https://esic.gov.in/tenders.** The Terms and conditions and blank applications may be downloaded and filled.

SL No.	Name of the Office for which premises is required	Area Required (Approximately) (in Sq. Ft)	Location where Premises Required	Remarks
1	DCBO-Mahaboobnagar	2100	Mahaboobnagar	1. Preference will be given to Accommodation on ground floor. 2. The Location should be Preferable on Main Road. 3. Building should be easily accessible by Public Transport and should be Closer to Bus Stand/Railway Station. 4. Building should be Nearer to Medical Hub of the City.
2	DCBO-LB Nagar	2100	LB Nagar	
3	BO-Tarnaka	1500	Tarnaka	
4	BO-Chikkadpally	1500	Chikkadpally	
5	BO-Balanagar	1500	Balanagar	
6	DCBO-Nizamabad	2100	Nizamabad	
7	DCBO-Sirpur kagaznagar	2100	Sirpur kagaznagar	
8	DCBO-Warangal	2100	Warangal	
9	BO-Medak	1000	Medak	
10	BO-Nalgonda	1000	Miryalaguda/Nalgonda	
11	BO-Karimnagar	1000	Karimnagar	
12	BO-Mancherial	1000	Mancherial	
13	BO-Bhadradri Kothagudem	1000	Bhadrachalam/Kothagudem	
14	BO-Warangal (Rural)	1000	Hanumakonda	

Last Date for Submission of Tender: 13.01.2026(5.00PM)

Tender Opening Date: 14.01.2026 (3.30 PM)

Any offer needs to reach this office by: 13.01.2026 (5.00PM)

Any offer received after the above will be treated as late tender.

Sd/- Regional Director(I/c)

BENGALURU NORTH CITY CORPORATION

Office of the Executive Engineer, Zone-2, Dasarahalli Division, MEI Layout, Hesaraghatta Main Road, Bagalagunte, T. Dasarahalli, Bengaluru - 560073.

No: BNCC/EE/DD/TEND/02/2025-26 **Date: 23-12-2025**

INVITATION FOR TENDERS (IFT) - (SHORT TERM)

(Two Cover System) (Through GOK Karnataka Public Procurement Portal only)

The Executive Engineer, Dasarahalli Division, Zone-2, BNCC, Bengaluru invites tenders from eligible Tenderers for the Construction of Works detailed below.

(Standard Tender Document - KW-02)

Sl. No.	Name of the Work / Category
1	Construction of Annex Building Adjacent to Dasarahalli Zonal Office Building at MEI Layout, Bagalagunte. **(Others) - Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 410.14, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 6,16,000.00**
2	Desilting and Maintenance of Drains by Silt and Tractor for the year 2025-26 in Ward No. 15, Kammagondanahalli. **(SC) - Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 24.20, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 24,200.00**
3	Desilting and Maintenance of Drains by Silt and Tractor for the year 2025-26 in Ward No. 16, Mallasandra. **(ST) - Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 24.20, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 24,200.00**
4	Desilting and Maintenance of Drains by Silt and Tractor for the year 2025-26 in Ward No. 17, Chikkasandra. **(Others) - Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 28.41, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 57,000.00**
5	Desilting and Maintenance of Drains by Silt and Tractor for the year 2025-26 in Ward No. 18, Bagalagunte. **(CAT-1) - Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 28.41, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 28,500.00**
6	Desilting and Maintenance of Drains by Silt and Tractor for the year 2025-26 in Ward No. 19, T. Dasarahalli. **(Others) - Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 28.41, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 57,000.00**
7	Improvements to Roads, Drains & Culverts in Mallasandra Village, Ravindra Nagara, Kalyananagara, Prashanthanagar & Surrounding Area in Ward No. 16, Mallasandra. **(Call-2) - (CAT-II(A)) - Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 84.74, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 85,000.00**
8	Improvements to Roads and Drain in Vishveshwariah Layout and Surrounding Area in Ward No. 17, Chikkasandra. **(Call-2) - (CAT-II(A)) - Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 42.37, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 42,500.00**
9	Improvements to Roads and Drain in Sidhedahalli and Surrounding Area in Ward No. 17, Chikkasandra. **(Call-2) - (SC) - Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 42.37, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 42,500.00**
10	Improvements to Roads and Drain in Chikkasandra and Surrounding Area in Ward No. 17, Chikkasandra. **(Call-2) - (SC) - Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 42.37, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 42,500.00**
11	Improvements to Roads and Drain in Manjunatha Nagara and Surrounding Area in Ward No. 18, Bagalagunte. **(Call-2) - (CAT-II(A)) - Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 42.37, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 42,500.00**
12	Improvements to Roads and Drain in Bagalagunte and Surrounding Area in Ward No. 18, Bagalagunte. **(Call-2) - (SC) - Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 42.37, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 42,500.00**
13	Improvements to Roads and Drain in Ashoka Nagara, Munikondappa Layout and Surrounding Area in Ward No. 18, Bagalagunte. **(Call-2) - (Others) - Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 42.37, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 85,000.00**
14	Improvements to Roads and Drain in MTS Colony and Surrounding Area in Ward No. 19, T. Dasarahalli. **(Call-2) - (SC) - Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 42.37, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 42,500.00**
15	Improvements to Roads and Drain in Kempegowda Nagara and Surrounding Area in Ward No. 19, T. Dasarahalli. **(Call-2) - (SC) - Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 42.36, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 42,500.00**
16	Improvements to Roads and Drain in Coconut Garden and Surrounding Area in Ward No. 19, T. Dasarahalli. **(Call-2) - (CAT-II(A)) - Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 42.37, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 42,500.00**
17	Improvements to Roads, Drains and Culverts in Chikkasandra in Ward No. 17 in T. Dasarahalli Sub Division. **(Call-2) - (SC) - Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 84.75, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 84,750.00**
18	Improvements to Roads, Drains and Culverts in Abbigere in Ward No. 15, Shettyhalli Sub Division. **(Call-2) - (Others) - Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 84.70, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 1,69,400.00**
19	Improvements to Roads, Drains and Culverts in Chikkasandra in Ward No. 17 and Bagalagunte in Ward No. 18 in T. Dasarahalli Sub Division. **(Call-2) - (Others) - Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 84.74, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 1,69,480.00**
20	Improvements to Roads, Drains & Culverts in Raghavendra Layout Kammagondanahalli and Surrounding Area in Ward No. 15, Shettyhalli Sub Division. **(Call-2) - (Others) - Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 84.70, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 1,69,400.00**

Calendar of Events: 1) Tender Documents may be Downloaded from the GOK Karnataka Public Procurement Portal Website: **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in from 29-12-2025. 2)** Tenders must be Submitted Online through Karnataka Public Procurement Portal **on or before 16.00 Hours. on 15-01-2026. 3)** Technical Bids will be Opened on the Website: **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in at the Office of the Executive Engineer, Dasarahalli Division, BNCC on 16-01-2026 at 16.30 Hours. 4)** Financial Bids will be Opened on the Website: **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in at the Office of the Executive Engineer, Dasarahalli Division, BNCC on 17-01-2026 at 16.30 Hours (if Possible).** Further details can be had from the above office.

Sd/-
Executive Engineer, Dasarahalli Division, BNCC.

Government of Jharkhand
Rural Works Department
JHARKHAND STATE RURAL ROADS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (JSRRDA)

3rd Floor, F.F.P. Building, Dhurwa, Ranchi 834004

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS

(National Competitive Bidding Through e-Procurement)

Re-eTender **No.- 08/ 2025-26-987 (Encl)** **Ranchi, Dated: 24.12.2025**

PR No- 364457 dated 18.10.2025 (3rd Call)

The undersigned on behalf of Government of Jharkhand invites item rate bids through e-Procurement from the eligible bidders registered* in appropriate class with any State/Central Government/State /Central Government Organization for construction and maintenance for five years of the works (List of schemes shall be displayed in the website pmgsytendersjhr.gov.in) of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna PM-JANMAN (Batch-1, 2025-26).

Sr. No	District Name	Block Name	Tendering Package	Road Name / Bridge Name	Road Length (Kms) (in lakhs)	Sanction Construction Cost (in lakhs)	Sanction Maintenace Cost	Total Sanction Cost with Maint. (in lakhs)	Total Package Cost (in lakhs)	Earnest Money (In Lakh)	Time of Completion (in month)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	Garhwa	Bhandaria	JH-07-PMJANMAN-GAR-01 (2025-26)	L021-Bathan Toli To Kochli (Barkol Kalan)	3.400	275.68	30.01	305.69	1,288.48	25.77	18
	Garhwa	Bhandaria		L023-Madgari Road To Totki	4.300	369.92	36.41	406.33			
	Garhwa	Chinia		L023-Pmgsy Uday More To Parsukhar Road	2.000	177.58	18.25	195.83			
	Garhwa	Ranka		L022-Pwd Main Road To Amhar	3.800	347.95	32.68	380.63			
2	Garhwa	Ramkanda	JH-07-PMJANMAN-GAR-03 (2025-26)	L021-Kuswar To Sarkahi Main Road	1.000	83.89	9.21	93.10	1,199.37	23.99	18
	Garhwa	Chinia		L025-Chapla Alias Chophlo More To Dogwa Khar	2.500	228.65	23.68	252.33			
	Garhwa	Chinia		L021-Rotohi mahua Tola To Chhateliya Road	4.040	365.74	36.92	402.66			
	Garhwa	Chinia		L024-Pmgsy Side To Piahiya village Road	4.750	411.77	39.51	451.28			
		Total			25.79	2261.18	226.67	2487.85	2487.85		

The bid should be submitted online in the website **pmgsytendersjhr.gov.in**. The bidders should have valid Digital Signature Certificate for online submission of bid.

Details of bid submission is as under:

Procurement Officer	Place of Opening	Availability of tender (on-line) for bidding		Last date & time of seeking clarification	Last date and time of bid submission	Date & time of opening (on-line) of tender	
		From	To			Technical bid	Financial bid
1	2	3	4	5	6	8	9
Engineer in Chief, JSRRDA, Ranchi	Engineer in Chief JSRRDA, Ranchi	**26.12.2025 at 10.00 AM**	**09.01.2026 upto 5.00 PM**	**02.01.2026 upto 2.00 PM**	**09.01.2026 upto 5.00 PM**	**09.01.2026 at 05.30 PM**	To be informed later

** Non-registered bidders may also submit bid, however the successful bidders must get registered in appropriate class with appropriate authority before signing the contract.*

*** Cost may change.*

Note :-

1. Amount of Bid Security should be taken as mentioned in the Bid Data Sheet of the Bidding Document.
2. Cost of Bid Document (Rs. 10000) and Bid Security (as mentioned in the Bid Data Sheet) shall be deposited **online** in form as mentioned in Bid Data Sheet failing which the bid will be treated non responsive and action shall be taken as per Sec. 2 of ITB clause 12.2 (d).
3. In case, it is found, even after the award of work that the bidder has submitted/ uploaded any false/erroneous/fraudulent statement/document, he/she is liable for blacklisting and forfeiture of Bid Security.
4. Bidders must submit GST registration certificate without which bid is liable to be rejected.
5. Bidders whose names appear in the Debar/blacklist of RWD or any department of GoJ/GoI (including JSRRDA) shall not be allowed to participate in the above bids.
6. Bids submitted by bidders, who have long pending ATR(s) made inordinate delay in execution of earlier allotted construction/ maintenance works of PMGSY, may be rejected summarily.
7. In case of any discrepancy/dispute about units in BOQ, units as mentioned in Current SOR on which BOQ has been prepared shall prevail.
8. Participating bidders are free to submit grievances, if any, against the decision of technical evaluation within five days from the date of uploading of decision of technical evaluation only through email at **jh-ce@pmgsy.nic.in** Grievance submitted after stipulated period shall not be considered.
9. Bidders must have valid registration with Employee Provident Fund organization under EPF and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1952 failing which the bid shall be rejected.
10. Bidders must not quote rate for routine maintenance. The amount for routine maintenance as indicated in the Bill of Quantities must be acceptable to bidders.
11. For unbalanced bids, extra security will be required to be deposited by the bidder at the time of Agreement.
12. The undersigned reserves the right to cancel the tender at any stage without giving prior notice/reason.

All other details can be seen in the bidding document which is available in website **pmgsytendersjhr.gov.in** as per schedule mentioned above.

Sd/- Engineer-in- Chief
Rural Works Department- Cum- JSRRDA, Ranchi

PR.NO.369321 Rural Work Department(25-26):D

J HY-HYE

FRIDAY
December 26, 2025

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RNI No. TELENG/1976/49963

Vol. 50 • No. 305

Printed at » Chennai » Coimbatore » Bengaluru » Hyderabad » Madurai » Noida » Visakhapatnam » Thiruvananthapuram » Kochi » Vijayawada » Mangaluru » Tiruchirapalli » Kolkata » Hubballi » Mohali » Malappuram » Mumbai » Lucknow » Cuttack » Patna



NATIONALITY QUESTIONED

Bengal worker killed by gang in Odisha

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HIGHWAY TRAGEDY

6 killed as bus catches fire after collision in Karnataka

SOUTH » PAGE 9



'PASSIVE PARTICIPATION'

Army relaxes social media restriction

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INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY

A year of dissipating promises

New Delhi confronts multiple challenges

EDITORIAL » PAGE 10



THIRD T20I TODAY

Harmanpreet's India looks to seal the deal

SPORT » PAGE 17

BNP leader calls for 'secure' Bangladesh at homecoming

Acting Bangladesh Nationalist Party chief Tariq Rahman addresses massive rally in Dhaka after return from the U.K.; calls for 'freedom of expression', cautions against 'spies of hegemonic powers'

Kallol Bhattacherjee
NEW DELHI

Bangladesh should be a "secure" home for all communities cutting across religious and regional differences, said the acting chairman of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Tarique Rahman, on Thursday following his return home after nearly 18 years of exile in the United Kingdom. Addressing a mammoth rally in Dhaka, Mr. Rahman made a strong pitch for restoration of law and order, and cautioned against "spies of the hegemonic powers".

"People from the hills as well as the plains live here. That apart, we have people belonging to Islam, Buddhist, Christian and Hindu faiths and for them we want to build a secure Bangladesh," Mr. Rahman said in a speech delivered in Bengali at a public meeting in Dhaka's Purvachal neighbourhood. His strongest criticism was reserved for deposed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who had fled to India after being ousted in a "student-people" uprising in July-August 2024.



Back home: Tarique Rahman, BNP acting chairman and son of former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, waving to supporters after arriving in Dhaka from the U.K. on Thursday. AFP

"In 2024, people of all sections of society came together to preserve this country's freedom and sovereignty, similar to the way they worked in 1971 to earn our freedom," said Mr. Rahman, announcing that he had a "plan" to place the country – marred by instability after the fall of Ms. Hasina's government – back on track.

"Spies of hegemonic powers are currently engaged in conspiracies in various ways. We must remain patient. We must exercise restraint," Mr. Rahman further said.

Earlier, Mr. Rahman reached Dhaka from London on a Biman Bangladesh flight and was greeted by hundreds of thousands of his supporters on the streets of Dhaka. He called Chief Adviser of the interim government, Mohammed Yunus, and thanked him for his support.

Mr. Rahman did not target the interim government or any other political stakeholders who will compete with his party in the February 2026 election in his speech, but, in an oblique criticism of the prevailing law and order situation, he said, "Today Bangladesh wants to get its freedom of expression back. They want to get their democratic rights."

Mr. Rahman's arrival in Dhaka was preceded by days of violence that intensified after the death of Islamist youth leader Sharif Osman Hadi.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 12

NEARBY



BRS hits back at CM for comments against KCR

HYDERABAD
BRS questioned the 'uncalled for' comments made by CM A. Revanth Reddy against former CM K. Chandrasekhar Rao, and said that such language against the "one who fought for and achieved statehood to Telangana" was unbecoming of a Chief Minister. » Page 8

Delimitation exercise complete, announces GHMC

HYDERABAD
The Commissioner of Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation announced the completion of delimitation of 300 wards. » Page 2

METROPLUS » PAGE 5 & 7

Intel grid linked to NPR with details of 119 crore residents

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

The National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID), a secure platform for the police and other investigating agencies to access government and private databases in real-time, has been linked to the National Population Register (NPR), which has the family-wise details of 119 crore residents in India, government officials have said.

The Union Home Ministry has been pushing for the enhanced use of NATGRID by the State police forces and Central law and security agencies for intelligence gathering and speedy investigation of criminal cases through indigenous and secure platforms.

On December 9, the Ministry informed the Lok Sabha that an Organised Crime Network Database was being developed on NATGRID's IT platform to facilitate secure data-sharing between the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and the State Anti-Terror Squads (ATS). The reply said that upgraded NATGRID tools, particularly "Gandiva", are supporting multi-source data collection and analysis.

Tying it up

Upgraded NATGRID tools support multi-source data collection and analysis

- One such tool is 'Gandiva' used for facial recognition and entity resolution
- Details of all family members of a suspect or a person of interest, if available in NPR, could be accessed through the platform
- **3 categories of access requests:** non-sensitive, sensitive, and highly sensitive

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 12

Senior leader, three other Maoists killed in Odisha

The Hindu Bureau
BHUBANESWAR/HYDERABAD

Paka Hanumanth, alias Ganesh Uike, a CPI (Maoist) central committee member and head of Odisha operations, and three other left-wing extremists were killed in an exchange of fire with security forces in Odisha's Kandhamal district on Thursday. Ganesh was carrying a reward of ₹1.1 crore on his head.

"In a major operation in Kandhamal, Odisha, 6 naxalites, including CC (central committee) member Ganesh Uike, have been neutralised so far," Home Minister Amit Shah wrote on 'X', terming the casualties as a significant milestone towards a 'Naxal-free Bharat'. Thursday's deaths took the toll in the ongoing exchanges of fire since Tuesday to six.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 12

Winter session to witness heated debates

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

The Telangana Legislative Assembly will convene its seventh session from December 29, setting the stage for a politically intense winter session with irrigation and river water-sharing disputes expected to dominate proceedings.

The House will adjourn for a three-day New Year break and resume sittings on January 2. The session comes amid escalating political sparring between the ruling Congress and the Opposition Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS).

The session assumes significance as Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy has signalled an aggressive push to corner the previous BRS regime on irrigation policies, particularly on the sharing of Krishna and Godavari river waters.

He made his intentions clear asking Leader of the Opposition (LoP) K. Chandrasekhar Rao to attend and demand the duration of the sessions to be lengthy so that a meaningful discussion can be held.

The political temperature rose after Mr. Chandrasekhar Rao, addressing a press conference on December 21, accused both the Congress and the BJP of "betraying" Telangana's interests. He alleged that the Congress government had compromised the State's rightful share of Krishna river water in the Palamuru-Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Project.

The sessions will also witness heated debates on the Kaleshwaram project and the controversial phone-tapping case, issues that have become central to the Congress's political offensive against BRS.

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M HY-HYE

INBRIEF

Govt. doctors urge State to address their salary crisis

Citing frequent delays in receiving salaries, doctors demanded the Telangana government introduce a Bill in the forthcoming Assembly session to bring Telangana Vaidya Vidhana Parishad under Directorate of Secondary Health Services. The winter session of the Assembly will commence on December 29. Telangana Government Doctors Association said that several doctors did not receive their salaries yet though the date is 25th of the month. "Any further delay in introducing the Bill would only push thousands of government doctors into continued uncertainty and financial distress. Association leaders said the only permanent solution to the recurring salary crisis is to remove TVVP from the corporation system and bring it under the DSHS. The association said that they hoped that the long-awaited reforms would finally materialise and that doctors working under the TVVP would receive a permanent solution to their salary issues. However, contrary to these expectations, the situation has worsened and become increasingly distressing. They have urged the government to put in place a permanent system to ensure salaries are credited on the first day of the month, failing which it is prepared to initiate further course of action.

Centre approves synthetic athletics track in Jammikunta

The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS) has accorded administrative approval for the setting up of a synthetic athletics track in Jammikunta town of Karimnagar. The Central government has given its nod for the sanction of ₹6.5 crore as its share for the project. It was sanctioned following the initiative of Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar, a press release said. A four-lane, 400-metre state-of-the-art synthetic track will be developed in Jammikunta under the Centre's Khelo India Scheme.

Christmas lights up city with midnight mass and carols

Large number of families and friends throng churches across the city; cafes, malls and tourist establishments embrace season with enthusiasm; local businesses host small events, decorating public spaces and distribute sweets

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD



Christians gather to celebrate Christmas at St. Mary's Church in Secunderabad during early morning prayers on Thursday. RAMAKRISHNA G

Hyderabad eased into the festive spirit on Christmas Eve, as churches, streets and shopping hubs resonated with carols, lively chatter and the familiar aroma of freshly baked ca- ke. Large number of families and friends thronged churches across the city, with several congregations noting a visible increase in attendance this year.

As the clock edged towards midnight, fireworks illuminated the skyline, splashing colour across neighbourhoods and adding to the celebratory mood.

Christmas, which marks the birth of Jesus Christ and symbolises hope, renewal and goodwill, found expression well beyond church premises.

"Christmas is a time to pause and remember the message of love and forgiveness. Coming to church with family and friends makes the celebration feel complete," said Christopher Adams, 25, a resident of Sun City, Bandlaguda.

Meanwhile, cafes, malls and tourist establishments embraced the season with enthusiasm. Some outlets opted for subtle red and green accents, while others transformed their interiors entirely. Several malls installed towering Christmas trees, and one mall in Uppal went a step further with a giant Santa Claus perched on its rooftop, visible from a distance and impossible to ignore.

Across the city, Christmas trees appeared at prominent junctions, while street vendors did brisk business selling decorations, lights and festive knick-knacks. Stalls, set up weeks in advance, glowed in seasonal colours, turning routine evening walks into impromptu festive browsing sessions. "There is a different kind of peace during the midnight service. No matter how busy the year has been, Christmas reminds us to start again with hope," said Steve Abraham, 31, who attended prayers at a church in Kompally.

One of the highlights of the celebrations were performances by Hope Unlimited Church at Telugu Lalitha Kala Thoranam in Nampally. The hour-and-a-half programme, conducted in two services, drew large crowds and featured energetic renditions of traditional Christmas hymns, keeping the audience engaged throughout. "For us, it is not just about decorations or cake. It is about celebrating the birth of Christ and sharing joy with others," said Ruth Ann, 55, a regular churchgoer from Mehdipatnam.

Local businesses and organisations added to the cheer by hosting small events, decorating public spaces and distributing sweets. Hyderabad's well known plum cake makers reported a spike in bulk orders in the days leading up to Christmas, while private sellers set up stalls offering cake hampers paired with festive accessories such as mugs and Santa hats, because apparently cake tastes better with a costume.

On Christmas Day, church premises across the city were filled with people dressed in festive attire, queuing patiently for services, exchanging greetings and gifts, and reflecting on the message of peace and compassion associated with the festival.

GHMC announces finalisation of delimitation exercise

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

The Commissioner of Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation today announced the completion of delimitation of 300 wards.

The Commissioner of Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation also announced through a notification that the details of the boundary descriptions are placed on the notice boards of all circle, zonal and head office buildings.

According to Government Order Ms No. 292 issued on December 24, 2025, the restructuring aims to address the sharp rise in administrative workload following the expansion of Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation limits, which now encompass a population exceeding 1.34 crore.

Officials said decentralisation was necessary to ensure uniform administration, improve service delivery and enhance public convenience across the expanded urban region. Details are also available on the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation website: www.ghmc.gov.in, says the notice.

IAS transfers, key urban and GHMC positions rejigged

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD



Senior IAS officer Jayesh Ranjan has been transferred and posted as Special Chief Secretary to the Government, Metropolitan Area and Urban Development (within HMDA limits).

The government effected a major reshuffle of IAS and non-cadre officers, including key changes in the Metropolitan Area and Urban Development department and a large-scale reorganisation of Zonal Commissioners in the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC).

Senior IAS officer Jayesh Ranjan (1992 batch) has been transferred and posted as Special Chief Secretary to the Government, Metropolitan Area and Urban Development (within HMDA limits). He will, however, continue to hold the additional charge of Special Chief Secretary for Youth Advancement, Tourism and Culture (YAT&C), Sports, and Director of Archaeology.

Chief Secretary K. Ramakrishna Rao will retain full additional charge as Special Chief Secretary and CEO of the Industry and Investment Cell in the Chief Minister's Office, including the Smart Proactive Efficient and Effective Delivery (SPEED) initiative.

The government notified transfers and postings of Zonal Commissioners across GHMC limits. In district administration changes, M. Haritha, Collector of Rajanna Sircilla, has been posted as Secretary, TGPSC, replacing Priyanka Ala. E.V. Narsimha Reddy has been posted as Managing Director of the Musi River Development Corporation Limited (MRDCL).

TG transport: Green initiatives amid rising challenges

Syed Mohammed
HYDERABAD

The year 2025 witnessed a period of churn for the transport sector in Telangana. While the government continued to promote green mobility across privately owned vehicles and State-run bus services, it continued to grapple with the logistical demands of the Mahalakshmi free-travel scheme, even as it significantly hiked the cost of public transport.

The government continued to showcase the flagship Mahalakshmi scheme, which provides free travel to women and transpersons aboard buses operated by the Telangana State Road Transport Corporation. Till December this year, zero-fare tickets worth an estimated ₹8,500 crore had been issued since the scheme's inception. But, as a consequence, this led to a surge in ridership and higher occupancy ratios. While the scheme initially strained the corporation's finances, regular government reimbursements helped ease TGSRTC's long-standing financial stress. However, there were instances of delays in reimbursements to the State-run road transport undertaking.

Parallelly, TGSRTC has sought to improve its position by adopting sustainable mobility measures. This saw the Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy-led government to announce a replacement of diesel-powered buses with 2,800 electric buses till 2027. Transport Minister Ponnam Prabhakar flagged off 65 new low-floor electric buses at the Ranigunj Depot, increasing the number of e-buses operating in TGSRTC's Greater Hyderabad Zone from 300 to 540.

The incentivisation of electric vehicle adoption continued during the year, with the State's EV policy offering 100% exemptions on road tax and registration fees

However, this shift towards electric mobility came at a cost to the end user. In other words, commuting on the city's public buses became more expensive for the regular passenger. To facilitate this transition to sustainable mobility, the transport juggernaut also had to invest substantially in supporting infrastructure. This included the construction of 10 new depots and the upgradation of 19 existing ones, requiring an estimated investment of about ₹392 crore.

As a result, passengers were required to pay ₹5 more for a ride on ordinary buses for the first three stages, with fares rising by ₹10 from the fourth stage onwards. For Metro Deluxe and e-Metro AC services, fares were increased by ₹5 for the first stage and ₹10 thereafter. The prices of student bus passes were also revised upwards.

The incentivisation of electric vehicle adoption continued during the year, with the State's EV policy offering 100% exemptions on road tax and registration fees. This resulted in a rise in private electric vehicle ownership.

Private buses came under scrutiny in October following a gruesome bus fire near Kurnool that claimed the lives of 19 passengers. The incident laid bare how several private operators had registered their buses in States such as Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and, in this case, Odisha, to avoid paying Telangana's higher quarterly taxes. In response, the Transport department cracked the whip, booking dozens of cases, issuing scores of inspection reports and seizing vehicles for alleged violations.

These challenges notwithstanding, 2025 also saw efforts to improve connectivity, with the department identifying hitherto unconnected colonies and neighbourhoods on the outskirts of the city.

Life comes full circle for tsunami survivor Meghana

Ravi Reddy
HYDERABAD

Life has come full circle for 33-year-old Meghana Rajsekhar, whose life reads like a quiet defiance of fate. She was 12 when a 9.3 scale earthquake triggered tsunami waves, erasing her family, neighbourhood and almost all the villages in Car Nicobar, Andaman & Nicobar Islands on December 26, 2004. The waves carried her away from everything she had known, leaving her alone in a world abruptly emptied of familiarity.

For years, water remained her adversary. A reminder of loss, terror, and survival. Yet, in time, the very element that once threatened to consume her became the one through which she learned to breathe again.

In the aftermath of the tsunami, Meghana survived on instinct and resolve. On the fourth day, weakened but alert, she spotted a man standing atop a cliff and called out. He led her to Indian Air Force personnel, who arranged medical care and her return to Hyderabad. There, her father's friend, Group Captain G.J. Rao, ensured her enrolment in a boarding school in Vikarabad at her own request.

Meghana studied architecture at Jawaharlal Nehru Architecture and Fine Arts University, imagining a future shaped by sustainable design. In 2018, as she prepared to leave for the University of Helsinki, her body faltered. A sudden and severe drop in haemoglobin level to a count of 2 forced her to abandon her plans and reckon with mortality once more.

In that fragile interlude, she found herself longing for a reunion with the man who had saved her life years ago.

A chance call from Group Captain Rao set off a search that led her back to Car Nicobar in December 2018. There, hosted by Air Commodore Bhullar, she met Basil, the tribal fisherman who had pulled her from the margins of death. Over weeks that stretched into months, they forged a bond that needed no explanations. She also reconnected with Beula, a schoolmate she had last seen on Christmas 2004.



Basil, the tribal fisherman, who rescued Meghana in the aftermath of the deadly tsunami in December 2004

In an interview with *The Hindu*, Meghana said "you only fear things that you do not understand. Repeated exposure was the only way out." She began returning to it deliberately. One course at a time, one descent at a time starting from 2019. What started as scuba diving slowly evolved into something deeper in the course of 200 dives and countless swims. During the first COVID-19 lockdown, a brief stay on Shaheed Dweep turned into months of isolation as she got stuck there, compelling her to confront both solitude and sea more intimately.

Freediving followed naturally in 2023. To descend on a single breath required more than strength; it demanded stillness within. "You meet yourself there," she would later say. Beneath the surface, stripped of noise, reliant only on calm and trust.

By 2024, she was slipping into the blue alongside sperm whales and humpbacks. Later that year, she swam around the circumference of Car Nicobar with a team led by Group Captain Param Vir, tracing the island's edge with her own steady rhythm in a span of 3 days.

This year, training in Thailand took her deeper still, to 30 metres on one breath. Injuries from last year and this year compounded, withdrawing her from the sea temporarily. For now, she rests, heals, trains in aquatic bodyworks and waits, keen on returning to the ocean by March 2026 ideally.

When she is not in the water, Meghana turns outward. She illustrates her underwater journeys, and works with a handful of orphanages in Hyderabad and Visakhapatnam, offering academic support, teaching soft skills and helping with medical aid. In the second half of this year, she has partnered with Group Captain G.J. Rao to contribute to his suicide prevention mission.

Meghana is also writing about her journey into the sea alongside the stories of those who inspired her forward. Through her words, she hopes to honour children without parents, coastlines without protection, and communities whose survival depends on care for both land and sea. Education, conservation, responsible travel and sustainable livelihoods form the backbone of this vision.

Once, the ocean took everything from her. Now, she enters it by choice, not to escape the past, but to find herself, breath by breath.



Water supply will be disrupted due to repair works. FILE PHOTO

Water supply to be disrupted this weekend

Affected areas

Division I: Miralam, Kishanbagh, Balshetty Khet, Moghalpura, Falaknuma, Bahadurpura, Jahanuma
Division II: Mahabub Mansion, Santosh Nagar, Vinaynagar, Saidabad, Chanchalguda, Asmanguda, Yakutpura
Division IV: Boggulakunta
Division V: Narayanguda, Adikmet Reservoir, Shivam Reservoir, Chilkalguda Reservoir
Division VIII: Aliabad Reservoir, Riyasat Nagar Reservoir
Division X: Some parts of Dilsukhnagar
Division XVIII: Hardware Park, Jalpally, Thukkuguda, Fab City
Division XX: Manneguda

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Water supply by Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board will be disrupted in several parts of Hyderabad for 36 hours, from 6 a.m. on Saturday to 6 p.m. on Sunday, due to pipeline repair and other works. The supply will resume post the works, as per a press release from HMWSSB issued on Thursday.

Two interstate train robbers arrested



Officials from the Government Railway Police and Railway Protection Force along with the accused and seized items on Thursday.

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Gold ornaments weighing about 210 grams and valued at ₹25 lakh, was recovered from the two women

Two members of an interstate gang involved in thefts on long-distance trains were arrested by the Government Railway Police and Railway Protection Force (RPF) at Secunderabad Railway Station on Thursday, leading to the recovery of gold ornaments weighing about 210 grams, valued at ₹25 lakh.

The arrested accused were identified as 39-year-old Kokila Maniraju alias Raju Selvam, a resident of Bengaluru, and 27-year-old S. Dina, from Vellore district in Tamil Nadu. The police said both were apprehended at around 8 a.m. near gate number 2 of the station while loitering allegedly with the intention of committing thefts.

Investigations revealed that Kokila was a habitual offender who was previously jailed in four property offence cases registered at various police stations in Hyderabad. Dina, who was struggling financially, is said to have approached Kokila about a month ago, after which they allegedly decided to commit thefts together.

On the night of December 2, the accused booked tickets in the AC coach of Nanded Express, posing as passengers travelling from Visakhapatnam to Charlapalli.

The Police said that while other passengers were asleep, the duo tactically opened the zips of bags belonging to two women passengers and stole purses containing gold jewellery. After the thefts, they moved to another coach and later got down at Charlapalli station and managed to escape.

Cases have been registered under Section 305(c) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita in connection with the two thefts. Further investigation is underway.

Bridge over Mir Alam Tank sinks hopes of lower footprint of connectivity

The pillars of the 2.4-km conventional bridge with multiple piers will be raised in the lake and more of the water body will be lost affecting the fragile environment near the zoo park

Serish Nanisetti
HYDERABAD



Groundwork begins: Earthmovers inside the Mir Alam Tank for the construction of a conventional bridge over the lake. SERISH NANISETTI

The planned link on the Mir Alam Tank to connect Shastripuram on the Bengaluru Highway to Chintalmet is a 35-metre width, 2.4 kilometre conventional bridge with multiple piers and not a cable-stayed bridge as was being speculated. "It is a normal bridge like the flyover there," informed a supervisor at the site as rows of earthmovers laid a stretch of mud-and-debris road for movement of vehicles. While the bridge is called iconic, the only concession appears to be ornamental lighting and a 1.5-metre footpath giving a bird's eye view over the Nehru Zoological Park and Mir Mahmood ki Pahadi.

"The deepest region we encountered is nearly 12 metres and at other places it is nine metres. The pillars will be raised in the lake and there will be a circular junctions at either end allowing traffic to flow smoothly," informed the official. According to documents hosted on government websites, KNR Constructions has been awarded a letter of approval for the ₹319,24,61,409 or ₹319.24 crore EPC contract for the bridge across Mir Alam Tank in Hyderabad with a deadline of 24 months for its completion. The massive earthen work near the STP plant of HMWS&SB has drawn the dismayed attention of the people and motorists about the nature of work. "Already the lake has shrunk. We were expecting a cable-stayed bridge so that the lake will survive in its current condition. If it is a conventional bridge more of the lake will be lost affecting the ecology and the fragile environment near the landmark zoo park," said S.Q. Masood, a rights activist who frequents the area for his work.

The large waterbody was built as a source of drinking water for Hyderabad by the Nizam's Prime Minister Mir Alam with the spoils of war against Tipu Sultan nearly 220 years ago. Over the years, the lake has shrunk due to encroachments and STP plants built inside it. The water quality assessed by the Telangana State Pollution Control Board in January 2025 showed total coliform count at 540 MPN in 100 ml making it unusable even for recreational purposes.

The area on the other side of the Musi with dense population has seen a massive transformation in terms of traffic movement with the Bahadurpura Flyover and the Aramghar Flyover giving relief to motorists. However, the old bottlenecks of Aramaghar Junction and the Purana Pul junction have not gone away shifting the goalposts. The bridge over the Mir Alam Tank is expected to move part of this traffic to the road under the PVNR Expressway.

INBRIEF

Non-duty paid liquor seized ahead of New Year

Ninety-one bottles of non-duty paid liquor (NDPL) were seized during checks conducted in Pahadi Shareef area jointly by State Task Force (STF) of the Telangana Excise and Prohibition Department, Saroornagar and Maheshwaram police as part of a special drive ahead of New Year celebrations. Officials said the liquor, purchased at lower prices from Goa, Ahmedabad and Rajkot through flights, buses and private vehicles, was being brought into the city.



Six intermediate students injured as bus overturns

Six Intermediate students sustained minor injuries after a private school bus overturned near Balanagar on NH44 on Thursday at around 11 a.m. The bus carrying around 45 students was en route to Jalavihar in Hyderabad. According to police officials, a car suddenly braked in front of the bus, forcing the driver to swerve to the right and apply emergency brakes to avoid a collision. He lost control of the vehicle, which rammed the road divider and overturned. The six injured students were administered first aid and are reported to be stable.

Text & Context and Health

Weekday features on *The Hindu* epaper (epaper.thehindu.com) carry explainers, special articles and quizzes. In the latest issue (December 26, Friday), the following articles are available:

- U.S. naval moves against Venezuela **newsth.live/usnavaltension**
- Rabies: The cruel and expensive disease of India's most impoverished **newsth.live/rabiesind**

You can use your smartphone's inbuilt features to access these articles. If it's an Android phone, use Google Lens to read and tap the url to access an article. If it's an iPhone, use Live Text on camera to do the same.

Man ends life over 'harassment'

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

A 28-year-old man Kavali Anil, a private firm employee, ended his life at his residence in Gopularam village of Rangareddy district on Wednesday allegedly after being threatened for not voting for a candidate during the recent Panchayat elections.

According to a , Anil was allegedly threatened by Thonda Ravi and Cheera Sai Kumar, for not voting for not voting for the latter, who was a candidate in the elections. The family alleged that the harassment caused severe mental distress, leading him to take the extreme step.

(Roshini suicide prevention helpline numbers: 8142020033/44)

MUSIC DANCE DRAMA

SOUTH INDIAN CULTURAL ASSOCIATION (SICA) and BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN organise LIGHT MUSIC PROGRAM by Sridhar Iyer & Party, Today i.e., Friday 26th December 2025 at Bharatiya Vidyabhavan Hall, King kothi road, Basheer Bagh at 6.30 pm. All are welcome. Donations Accepted and are exempt under section 80(G) of Income tax act.

198 traffic supervisor trainee vacancies

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

The Telangana State Level Police Recruitment Board on Thursday issued a notification announcing the direct recruitment of traffic supervisor trainees (TST) and mechanical supervisor trainees (MST). While 84 vacancies for the former, with a payscale between ₹27,080 and ₹81,400, have been notified, there as many as 114 posts with the same payscale for the latter.

Timings
HYDERABAD

FRIDAY, DEC. 26		
RISE	06:44	SET 17:50
RISE	11:09	SET 23:20
SATURDAY, DEC. 27		
RISE	06:44	SET 17:50
RISE	11:45	SET 00:00
SUNDAY, DEC. 28		
RISE	06:45	SET 17:51
RISE	12:22	SET 00:14

Hyderabad Weather	max	min
Sangareddy	28	13
Warangal	30	11
Hyderabad City	28	13

Hyderabad City Today
28°C Morning will be very cool with mist and haze. Day will be comfortable. Night also will be very cool. Dry weather to prevail.

Hyderabad City Tomorrow
29°C The weather will be dry. Day will be slight warm. Night will be very cool.

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THE HINDU
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UKG student dies in freak accident at school

The Hindu Bureau
KHAMMAM

A UKG student of a private school died in a freak accident on the school premises at Nayakangudem in Khammam district on Wednesday.

According to sources, Vihar, 6, a UKG student, reportedly suffered a fatal bleeding injury after the sharp pencil he was holding in his hand suddenly pierced through his throat following an accidental fall on the school premises.

He was immediately rushed to a hospital in the mandal headquarters but was declared dead on arrival.

The tragic death of the little boy left his family devastated.

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT INDORE
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NOTICE FOR ADMISSION INTO THE EXECUTIVE DOCTORAL PROGRAMME IN MANAGEMENT (EDPM) – 2026

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Last date for submission of the online application form is **March 14, 2026.** For detailed information, please visit **www.iimidr.ac.in**

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FORM C
PUBLIC NOTICE

[Under rule 9(1) of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy (Application to Adjudicating Authority for Bankruptcy Process for Personal Guarantors to Corporate Debtors) Rules, 2019]

FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE CREDITORS OF SHRI.TIKKAVARAPU VENKATRAM REDDY (Personal Guarantor of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited -CIN:L22122TG2002PLC040110)

Notice is hereby given that the Hon'ble National Company Law Tribunal in case of bankrupt under section 123 R/W 60(2) of the Code has ordered the commencement of a bankruptcy process against the **SHRI.TIKKAVARAPU VENKATRAM REDDY** residing at # 8-2-703/A/6/C, Road No-12, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad-500 034on 19/12/2025 vide its order in IA.No.534 of 2025 C.P. (IB) NO. 88/95/HDB/2021 filed by L&T Finance Limited for the personal guarantee extended to Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited.

The Creditors of Shri.Tikkavarapu Venkatram Reddy, are hereby called upon to submit their claims with proof on or before **04/01/2026** to the bankruptcy trustee at Arthi House, # 9, Jothi Nagar, 3rd Street, Uppili Palayam Post, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu - 641 015.

The last date for submission of claims of creditors shall be **04/01/2026.** The creditors may submit their claims through electronic means, or by hand or registered post or speed post or courier.

S. No.	PARTICULARS OF PERSONAL GUARANTOR	
1.	Name of Personal Guarantor	**Shri.Tikkavarapu Venkatram Reddy**
2.	Address of Personal Guarantor	#8-2-703/A/6/C, Road No-12, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad-500 034.
3.	Bankruptcy Commencement Date	19-12-2025
4.	Estimated date of closure of Bankruptcy Process	18-12-2026
5.	Last date for submission of claims	04-01-2026
	DETAILS OF THE BANKRUPTCY TRUSTEE	
6.	Name and Registration Number of the Insolvency Professional acting as Bankruptcy Trustee	Name: Renuka Devi Rangaswamy Reg. No : IBBI/IPA-001/IP-P-01863/2019 -2020/12871
7.	Address and E-mail of the as Bankruptcy Trustee, as registered with the Board	**Address:** Arthi House, # 9, Jothi Nagar, 3rd Street, Uppilipalayam Post, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, 641 015. Email Id: jrassociatescbe@gmail.com
8.	Address and E-mail to be used for correspondence with the Bankruptcy Trustee	**Address:** Arthi House, # 9, Jothi Nagar, 3rd Street, Uppilipalayam Post, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, 641 015. Mobile:94430 27751 Email Id: jrassociatescbe@gmail.com

Note: Submission of false or misleading claims with proof shall attract penalties or imprisonment in accordance with the provisions of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 and any other applicable laws.

Date: 26.12.2025
Place: Chennai

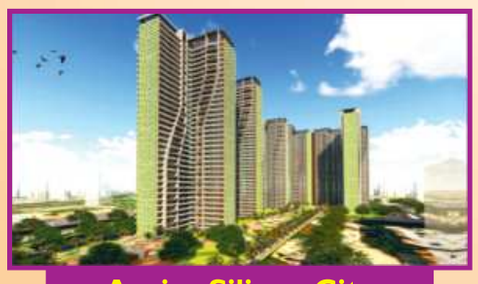
Renuka Devi Rangaswamy
Bankruptcy Trustee of Mr.T.V.Reddy

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Published by N. Ravi at Kasturi Buildings, 859 & 860, Anna Salai, Chennai-600002 and Printed by SDT RAO at Plot No. Z-6 to 8, IDA Uppal, Hyderabad-500007 - 06 on behalf of THG PUBLISHING PVT LTD., Chennai-600002. Editor: Suresh Nambath (Responsible for selection of news under the PRP Act).
ISSN 0971 - 751X

Suspicious death of girl turns out to be murder by parents

The Hindu Bureau
KARIMNAGAR

A case of suspicious death of a 16-year-old girl reported from a village in Saidapur mandal of Karimnagar district on November 14 this year turned out to be a case of 'honour killing' with the arrest of the parents of the minor girl by the police on Thursday.

According to the police, the parents of the girl allegedly strangled her to death last month over her alleged love affair with a married youth of the same village.

They lodged a complaint with the local police stating that their daughter committed suicide due to recurring chronic stomach pain.

A detailed investigation by the police unraveled the 'honour killing' angle, leading to the arrest of the parents of the deceased minor girl. Further investigation is under way.



152 packets of marijuana, each weighing 2 kg, concealed in a specially designed container of a mini lorry was intercepted on the Achyutapuram Road on the Ashwaraopet–Dammapet border.

Five drug offenders held in separate cases

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

The Telangana's EAGLE Force, in coordination with local police units, arrested five persons and seized 304 kg of marijuana and 19 grams of MDMA in two separate cases linked to inter-State drug trafficking.

In the first case, teams from the EAGLE Force-Khammam, along with Dammapet police, intercepted a mini lorry and a car acting as an escort during vehicle checks at Achyutapuram Road on the Ashwaraopet–Dammapet border. The vehicles were travelling from Rajahmundry towards Sathupalli and were found to be using fake registration number plates.

The total quantity seized was 304 kg, valued at about ₹1.52 crore, procured from Chitrakonda in Malkangiri district of Odisha.

In the second case, sleuths of EAGLE Force, along with Neredmet police, apprehended N. Vamshi, 30, of Neredmet, and seized 19 grams of MDMA and a phone from his possession.

Beyond the badge: A human touch to policing in Telangana this year

From transgender traffic cops and reformed offenders to survivors finding stability and the elderly gaining reassurance, a series of initiatives reshaped public service into an instrument of dignity

Lavpreet Kaur
HYDERABAD



A total of 60 reformed history sheeters have been deployed as traffic volunteers at major junctions like Uppal, L.B. Nagar and ECIL, alongside Rachakonda traffic police officials.

The change became clear to Shiva Ram by the end of 2025, when he realised people were finally seeing him beyond the transgender label. "Today, I am not a 'transgender assistant'. I am just a cop and that acceptance healed years of hurt," he says, reflecting a year in which policing in Hyderabad moved beyond enforcement to reshape everyday realities through dignity, inclusion and trust.

Once confined to his home and nearly forced by his family into marrying an older man, Shiva Ram now spends his days regulating traffic at the JBS junction part of the Telangana Police's maiden initiative to induct transgender persons into its traffic force. Looking back, he says the most profound change was how the uniform became a new identity, one that slowly replaced doubt with acceptance.

That change is most evident on his journey home from Secunderabad to Uppal after duty. "People salute me. Neighbours and shopkeepers say, 'The traffic cop is here,'" he says. "They havve seen me in uniform for a year now and accepted me that way. It's a moment of pride every single day."

K Srivalli, who joined the force alongside Shiva Ram, describes the year as a return to self-worth. Before her induction, survival meant begging and sex work at traffic signals where people deliberately looked away. Today, she stands at those same junctions in uniform, directing traffic with authority. "This year has been a wonderful comeback for me," she says. "I used to feel invisible. Now people wait for my signal."

For Srivalli, the most significant change was internal. The job encouraged her to resume her education through Dr. Ambedkar Open University, and she now thinks about a future without hesitation.

The impact of the initiative has extended beyond individual journeys. With other civic departments preparing to induct transgender employees and Cyberabad deploying transgender traffic assistants, the experiment has begun to normalise inclusion within public systems long resistant to change.

In a similar bid to encourage reintegration and reduce stigma, the Rachakonda Police deployed reformed history-sheeters as traffic volunteers at busy junctions, offering them a structured second chance through visible public service and daily interaction with commuters.

Another initiative where Telangana emerged as a first mover was the allotment of 2BHK homes to atrocity victims under the Indiramma Indlu housing scheme. For survivors, the house represented far more than shelter.

Sonal, who dropped out of engineering after surviving sexual assault, says the year helped her close chapters she once believed would define her forever. She cleared Telangana Law Common Entrance Test, enrolled in an LLB through distance education, found work as a teacher, married, and moved into her own home. "I didn't know healing could look like this. Having a safe place made everything else fall into place," she says.

For Kumari Hema, a 32-year-old mother, the year ended a long cycle of uncertainty. After being repeatedly asked to vacate rented homes once her past became known, she finally received a house of her own under the scheme. "I lived in fear of the next eviction. Now my child and I know where we belong," she says.

At the community level, initiatives such as *Vruddhulu Samrakshana* in Hyderabad's North Zone quietly reshaped daily life for over 750 elderly citizens living alone. Regular police visits reduced isolation, fear and vulnerability to fraud, leaving them with a sense of reassurance.

Meanwhile, programmes such as Sanghamitra, Margadarshak and Project Safe Stay strengthened safety frameworks for women and working professionals across Cyberabad, particularly in the IT corridor.

Police invoke PD Act against Rein Bazaar history-sheeter

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Hyderabad police on Thursday invoked the Preventive Detention Act against a 29-year-old youth accused in multiple violent offences, including murder and attempt to murder, and lodged him in Chanchalguda prison.

Mohammed Trabez alias Tabbu, a travel business operator, was active in his area, Bhavani Nagar.

Police said the action was taken on the instructions of the Commissioner of Police, Hyderabad. He is accused in a murder case registered at Rein Bazar, an attempted murder case at Domalguda and a bodily offence case at Adibatla police station.

Police said Trabez has a history of violent criminal activity and continued to pose a threat to public peace despite earlier legal action. Considering his alleged conduct and to prevent further offences, authorities decided to detain him under the PD Act.

21 injured in stray dog biting spree

The Hindu Bureau
RAJANNA SIRCILLA

A pack of stray dogs went on a biting spree injuring 21 persons, including many devotees, in Vemulawada in a span of 24 hours since Wednesday afternoon.

The injured were administered first-aid and anti-rabies vaccines.

Tension at Gandhi Darshan amid dispute over managing committee

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Mild tension prevailed at Gandhi Darshan in Nampally Exhibition Grounds on Thursday amid allegations of trespassing and an ongoing dispute over the facility's management.

The Exhibition Society, in a letter dated December 23, informed the Begum Bazar police that a new managing committee had been constituted for Gandhi Darshan, stating that no authorised committee existed earlier.

It alleged that a man named Prasad Gollanapalli was functioning unilaterally without authorisation from the Sarvodaya Vichar and Prachar Trust and had failed to produce documentary proof despite assurances to the police.

Meanwhile, Gollanapalli claimed that he was the secretary of Gandhi Darshan and alleged that members of the Exhibition Society had forcibly entered Gandhi Darshan on Thursday evening, thrown out Gandhian material, literature and other items, and locked the premises.

He also accused the Society as well as the Telangana Gandhi Smarak Nidhi of vandalism and making attempts to destroy the Gandhian legacy.

The matter was referred to the All India Gandhi Smarak Nidhi in New Delhi, as provided under the agreement governing Gandhi Darshan.

The Nidhi nominated Manish Chaudhary of Domalguda, K. Ranga Ra as secretary of the Telangana Gandhi Smarak Nidhi and Nagasuri Venugopal of Begumpet to the committee.

Following this, the Exhibition Society convened an urgent meeting on December 22 and nominated three of its members, Aditya Margam, Shankar Lal Baldava and Bolla Anand Kumar to the managing committee, completing its constitution.

Mr. Margam, the newly elected chairperson of the committee, denied allegations of vandalisation and said that they had unlocked the premises on Thursday in order to prepare for the upcoming exhibition.

The Society clarified that Gollanapalli had not been nominated by the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi and therefore, he had no authority to represent or act on behalf of Gandhi Darshan.

SOUTH CENTRAL RAILWAY
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Details of the Tender Notices of S.C Railway can be seen on our website : www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in

e-Tender Notice No.DRM/Works/ SC/180-187/2025/OT, Dt: 23.12.2025 PUB/1652

For and on behalf of President of India, the undersigned invites e-tender for the following works up to 14.00 hours on dt: 21.01.2026.

S.No.: 01 **e-Tender No.:** 180_CR_SC_25_OT **Name of the work:** SC-KZJ Section: Proposed safety related yard improvements and upgradation works at various yards under SSE/P.Way/SC section. **Approx. Tender Value in (₹):** 6,47,50,281/- **EMD (₹):** 4,73,800/- **Completion period in Months:** 12 **Maintenance period in Months:** 45 (Days)

S.No.: 02 **e-Tender No.:** 181_CR_SC_25_OT **Name of the work:** WD-SC-KZJ Section: Proposed safety related yard improvements and upgradation works at various yards under SSE/P.Way/SNF section. **Approx. Tender Value in (₹):** 4,51,30,374/- **EMD (₹):** 3,75,700/- **Completion period in Months:** 12 **Maintenance period in Months:** 45 (Days)

S.No.: 03 **e-Tender No.:** 182_CR_SC_25_OT **Name of the work:** SC-KZJ Section: Proposed safety related yard improvements and upgradation works at various yards under SSE/P.Way/CR/KZJ section. **Approx. Tender Value in (₹):** 4,56,06,150/- **EMD (₹):** 3,78,100/- **Completion period in Months:** 12 **Maintenance period in Months:** 45 (Days)

S.No.: 04 **e-Tender No.:** 183_N_SC_25_OT **Name of the work:** KZJ-BPQ Section: SW 1) Proposed ancillary works for LC No. 33 at Km.307/15-13 (RUB 81A) Jacketing of approach retaining walls etc. between KOLR-PTKP stations. SW 2) Proposed ancillary works for LC No. 30 at km. 311/15-17 (RUB 74 A) Jacketing of approach retaining walls etc. between OEA-PTKP stations under Sr.DEN/North/SC Jurisdiction. **Approx. Tender Value in (₹):** 5,38,39,042/- **EMD (₹):** 4,19,200/- **Completion period in Months:** 09 **Maintenance period in Months:** 36

S.No.: 05 **e-Tender No.:** 184_NW_SC_25_OT **Name of the work:** VKB-PRLI Section: SW 1) SSE/P.Way/UDGR jurisdiction - Proposed safety related yard improvement and upgradation works at various yards. SW 2) SSE/P.Way/PRLI jurisdiction - Proposed safety related yard improvement and upgradation works at various yards. **Approx. Tender Value in (₹):** 3,25,14,980/- **EMD (₹):** 3,12,600/- **Completion period in Months:** 12 **Maintenance period in Months:** 45 (Days)

S.No.: 06 **e-Tender No.:** 185_NW_SC_25_OT **Name of the work:** SW 1) VKB-PRLI Section: SSE/P.Way/BIDR jurisdiction - Proposed safety related yard improvement and upgradation works at various yards. SW 2) BIDR-GR Section: SSE/P.Way/HMBD jurisdiction - Proposed safety related yard improvement and upgradation works at various yards. **Approx. Tender Value in (₹):** 2,72,84,458/- **EMD (₹):** 2,86,500/- **Completion period in Months:** 12 **Maintenance period in Months:** 45 (Days)

S.No.: 07 **e-Tender No.:** 186_NW_SC_25_OT **Name of the work:** PDPL-NZB Section: SW 1) SSE/P.Way/ARMU jurisdiction - Proposed safety related yard improvement and upgradation works at various yards. SW 2) SSE/P.Way/KRMR jurisdiction - Proposed safety related yard improvement and upgradation works at various yards. **Approx. Tender Value in (₹):** 3,00,63,943/- **EMD (₹):** 3,00,400/- **Completion period in Months:** 12 **Maintenance period in Months:** 45 (Days)

S.No.: 08 **e-Tender No.:** 187_NW_SC_25_OT **Name of the work:** Repairs to Road surfaces and Service buildings and Painting to FOBs under ADEN/BIDR jurisdiction. **Approx. Tender Value in (₹):** 2,72,02,313/- **EMD (₹):** 2,86,100/- **Completion period in Months:** 09 **Maintenance period in Months:** 06

1. Tenderers should participate through e-tendering only and no manual offers may be considered.
2. Tender conditions/other particulars are available in the Tender documents on IREPS website at **ireps.gov.in** which can be downloaded, can be Participated and can view any modifications if any.
3. All the prospective tenderers are requested to remit EMD through online payments / BG only.
4. All the prospective tenderers are advised to get GSTIN identification Nos. and submit along with their offer.

Sr.DEN/Co-ordination/ Secunderabad

No.NW/148/WIII/Tender notice/ 2025-26 Date: 22.12.2025 PUB/1653

The details of the tender which is already uploaded at **www.ireps.gov.in**

S.No.: 01 **Tender No.:** T-202526-2-093 **Authority:** Co-ord **Description of the work:** Provision of Ballast less Track 03 Nos. at Nanded station (Road 1-720m, Road 2-720m and Road 3 - 700m). **Tender value in (₹):** 195551147.64 **Earnest money in (₹):** 1127800.00 **Cost of tender form in (₹):** 0 **Completion period:** Eighteen Months

S.No.: 02 **Tender No.:** T-202526-2-094 **Authority:** Co-ord **Description of the work:** Nanded Division SW-I-Akola - Purna (SL) - TRR (P) - 11.213 Tkm. (sanctioned locations enclosed as Annexure) (IRPSM ID : 11.04.31.25.3.53.012 & PWP of 2025-26) SW-II-Manmad - Mudkhed (UP) - TRR (P) -5.721 Tkm. (sanctioned locations enclosed as Annexure) (IRPSM ID: 11.04.31.25.3.53.023 & PWP of 2025-26) SW-III -Mudkhed - Pimpalkuti (SL) - :TRR(P) 5.716 Tkm (sanctioned locations enclosed as Annexure) (IRPSM ID: 11.04.31.25.3.53.017) SW-IV-Akola - Purna (SL) - TRR(P) - 1.500 km Single Line: 758.300-759.800 = 1.500 Tkm (sanctioned locations enclosed as Annexure) (IRPSM ID: 11.04.31.24.4.53.006 & LSWP of 2024-25) SWV-Manmad-Mudkhed(UP Line)-TRR(P)-1.300 Tkm(Up Line 337.600 - 338.9000 1.300 Tkm. (sanctioned locations enclosed as Annexure) (IRPSM ID: 11.04.31.24.4.53.011 & LSWP of 2024-25) Total TRR(P): 25.450 TKms undr DEN/NE/NED's Jurisdiction. **Tender value in (₹):** 11609042.70 **Earnest money in (₹):** 208100.00 **Cost of tender form in (₹):**0 **Completion period:** Twelve Months

SL.NO.: 1 **Tender No.:** T-202526-2-093 **Similar nature of work (for costing above 50 lakhs):** "Any Civil Engineering work comprising of Construction of Ballast less track (BLT) on Passenger running lines either on Indian Railways or on World Railway Systems or in Metro Railway Projects."

SL.NO.: 2 **Tender No.:** T-202526-2-094 **Similar nature of work (for costing above 50 lakhs):** Any Railway track work including track maintenance work.

All above tenders will be closed 16.01.2026 at 15:00 hrs.

Sr.DEN/Co-ord/Nanded

Tender Notice No.NED/E-36, 37 & 38/2025-26 Dt.23.12.2025 PUB/1659

Offers are invited for the following E-Tenders @www.ireps.gov.in

S.No.: 01 **Tender No.:** NED/E-36/2025-26 **Name of the work:** Nanded division: 1. Provision of Hot Axle and Hot Wheel Detector system (HAHD) at UMM station-Electrical Arrangements. 2. Provision of Hot Axle and Hot Wheel Detector system (HAHD) at MQL station-Electrical Arrangements. **Approximate cost (₹):** 10,76,086.80/- **Bid Security (₹):** 21,500/- **Validity of offer:** 60 days **Period of completion:** 6 Months **Available at :** www.ireps.gov.in, under Nanded Division Administration **Date and time of closing:** 15.00 hrs of 15.01.2026

S.No.: 02 **Tender No.:** NED/E-37/2025-26 **Name of the work:** Nanded division: Provision of Ballast less Track 03 Nos. at Nanded station (Road 1-720m, Road 2-720m and Road 3-700m) Electrical Arrangements. **Approximate cost (₹):** 57,86,168.00/- **Bid Security (₹):** 1,15,700/- **Validity of offer:** 60 days **Period of completion:** 12 Months **Available at :** www.ireps.gov.in, under Nanded Division Administration **Date and time of closing:** 15.00 hrs of 15.01.2026

S.No.: 03 **Tender No.:** NED/E-38/2025-26 **Name of the work:** Provision of Solar Panels on COP area of Amrit stations in Nanded Division-Electrical Arrangements. **Approximate cost (₹):** 9,09,39,577.00/- **Bid Security (₹):** 6,04,700/- **Validity of offer:** 60 days **Period of completion:** 12 Months **Available at :** www.ireps.gov.in, under Nanded Division Administration **Date and time of closing:** 15.00 hrs of 15.01.2026

For Tender document, details of eligibility criteria, special conditions, etc. go to our web site as mentioned above. It is advised to check if there is any corrigendum published online before submission of offer.

Divisional Railway Manager (Elec.), Nanded
A2100

For further tender conditions / details and for downloading the tender documents, Please visit website at https://www.ireps.gov.in or www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH DEPARTMENT OF MINES AND GEOLOGY
Sri Anjaneya Towers, Ibrahimpatnam, Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh - 521456
Email - mines-eauction@ap.gov.in 24-12-2025

TENDER NOTICE

Department of Mines & Geology, Government of Andhra Pradesh invite tenders for "Engagement of a Technical Agency for Identification and Delineation of Mineral Potential Areas (MPAs) in the State of Andhra Pradesh" through electronic tender (e-tender). The eligible and experienced agencies who are desirous to participate in the tenders may visit **https://www.mines.ap.gov.in/** mining portal/for further details. Detailed RFP, including information on eligibility criteria, scope of services, time schedule, bid processing fee, EMD/bid security, bidding parameters, submission and evaluation process, terms and conditions, and other relevant details will be available on the website of AP e-Procurement portal **(https://tender.apeprocurement.gov.in/)** from **26.12.2025** onwards. Last date for submission of bids is **01.01.2026.**

For further queries, please contact,
G. Sreenivas Chowdary, DD (Mines), **Ph: 9100688811.**

DIPR 4702PP/CL, Dt: 24/12/2025 **BALA CHANDRA SEKHAR W, DIRECTOR**

SOUTH CENTRAL RAILWAY
Follow us on @SCRailwayindia Details of the Tender Notices of S.C Railway can be seen on our website : www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in

CORRIGENDUM No.01 Dated 24.12.2025 Tender No.:31_2025-26_Sr.DEE_TRD_HYB PUB/1670

Name of Work: Hyderabad Division - outsourcing of TSS operators (Monitoring & Data Recording of TSS) at Divitipally (DTP) & Talmadla (TMD) Traction Sub Station (TSS) for a period of 02 years.

The following Corrigendum is hereby issued to the above-mentioned Tender, which was published on IREPS on **19.12.2025**. This Corrigendum shall form an integral part of the Tender Documents issued earlier.

Sl. No	Reference/Page No.	As existing (Now Available)	As proposed (to be read as)
1	**Clause:** 2 **A. Single Packet system** in **REGULATIONS FOR TENDERS AND CONTRACTS** in **Page 8 of 99 of uploaded tender booklet.**	"This shall be based on the eligibility criteria as per clause 2.6.1.1 and **26.1.2** of GCC for Services. Clause **2.6.13** of GCC for Services shall not be applicable here."	"This shall be based on the eligibility criteria as per clause 2.6.1.1 and **2.6.1.2** of GCC for Services. Clause **2.6.1.3** of GCC for Services shall not be applicable here."
2	**Clause:** 4.1.1 in **Evaluation of Technical Bid** in **REGULATIONS FOR TENDERS AND CONTRACTS** in **Page 10 of 99 of uploaded tender booklet.**		
3	**Clause:** 3.1.1 **in Bidder's Credentials** in **Page 29 of 99 of uploaded tender booklet.**		
4	**Clause:** 4 A in **Bid Evaluation System** in **Page 34 of 99 of uploaded tender booklet.**		
5	**Clause:** 4.1.1 in **Bidder's Credentials in Page 36 of 99 of uploaded tender booklet.**		
6	**Clause;** a) in **Bidder's Credentials** in **Page 37 of 99 of uploaded tender booklet.**		

All other terms and conditions of the Tender shall remain unchanged. Bidders are advised to take note of the above changes while submitting their bids.

This Corrigendum has been uploaded on IREPS and the same shall be treated as part of the Tender Documents.

A2125 **Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer/TrD/Hyderabad**

Jharkhand Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (JIIDCO)
(A Govt. of Jharkhand Undertaking)
5th Floor, Udyog Bhawan, Ratu Road, Ranchi – 834001 (Jharkhand)
e-mail- jiidcoltd@gmail.com www.jiidco.co.in Phone no. 0651-3512851
CIN U45208JH2004GOI011078

Letter no: -710 dated: -24.12.2025
NOTICE INVITING TENDER
(through e-procurement mode only-www.jharkhandtenders.gov.in)
NIT No.- JIIDCO/24/Women Hostel/SBD/2025-2026

Designation and Address of the Advertiser: - Chief Engineer, JIIDCO, 5th Floor, Udyog Bhawan, Ratu Road, Ranchi-834001
1. Mode of submission of tender :- Online through www.jharkhandtenders.gov.in
2. Date of publishing on portal and website :- 31.12.2025
3. Start date for downloading of the Bid Documents :- 31.12.2025, 11:00 A.M onwards
4. Date of Pre-bid meeting :- 05.01.2026 at 12:30 P.M.
5. Last date for submission of Bidding Documents :- 20.01.2026 up to 4:00 P.M.
6. Bid opening date (Technical) :- 21.01.2026 at 5:00 P.M.
7. Details of works: -

Bid No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost/ ECV (Rupees)	Amount of Earnest money (E.M.D) (Rupees)	Cost of BOQ (Non-refundable in Rupees)	Time of completion of work (Months)
1	2	3	4	5	6
01	Construction of 500 Bedded Working Women Hostel at Giridih Industrial Area, Giridih, Jharkhand	22,16,34,721.00	22,20,000.00	11,800.00	24 months
02	Construction of 500 Bedded Working Women Hostel at Tatisil wai Industrial Area, Ranchi, Jharkhand	22,16,34,721.00	22,20,000.00	11,800.00	24 months
03	Construction of 500 Bedded Working Women Hostel at Barahi Industrial Area, Hazaribagh, Jharkhand	22,16,34,721.00	22,20,000.00	11,800.00	24 months
04	Construction of 500 Bedded Working Women Hostel at Aasangi, Gamaharia, Jamshedpur, Jharkhand	22,16,34,721.00	22,20,000.00	11,800.00	24 months
05	Construction of 500 Bedded Working Women Hostel at Balidih Industrial Area, Bokaro, Jharkhand	22,16,34,721.00	22,20,000.00	11,800.00	24 months

8. Tender fee (non-refundable) & EMD is to be received through online mode only. Bidders can use internet banking facility for faster processing of Tender fee Alternatively, Bidders can use NEFT/RTGS challan generated for the tender from http://jharkhandtenders.gov.in**. portal.**
Refund will only be issued to Originated bank account used for the payment of EMD. So, bidders are advised NOT to close the above Bank Account used for online payment NEFT/RTGS of EMD.
No Hardcopy/Physical copy is required to be submitted for tender opening/evaluation. However, Department may ask original documents for verification before award of contract.
9. Bid Validity :- 180 days
10. Place of opening of Technical Bid: - JIIDCO, 5th Floor, Udyog Bhawan, Ratu Road, Ranchi-834001
11. For any information/complaints the department helpline no. M.b.no. 7004785102 may be contacted.
12. Further details can be seen on website- www.jharkhandtenders.gov.in.
13. Any Corrigendum or Addendum will be notified on website: - www.jharkhandtenders.gov.in only.
Note: (i) Any change can be seen on website www.jharkhandtenders.gov.in
(ii) Any other information can be seen on www.jharkhandtenders.gov.in
(iii) **The estimated cost mentioned above in sl. No.7 column no. 3 is approximate which may increase or decrease.**

PR.NO.369353 Jharkhand Industrial Infrastructure Dev Co Ltd(25-26):D **Sd/- Chief Engineer JIIDCO Ranchi**



The clutter breakers

2025 was a dull year for Telugu cinema, with a few comedies and fresh voices offering a silver lining

Sangeetha Devi Dundoo
sangeethadevi.k@thehindu.co.in

A glance at 2025 shows that the story for Telugu cinema is not very different from that of the previous year. The industry produced more than 200 films of which only a handful succeeded at the box office. With a few films, including *Champion*, *Dhandoraa*, *Eesha*, *Shambala* and *Patang* arriving on Christmas, here's a recap.

The roaring response to *Sankranthiki Vasthunam* in mid January 2025 indicated that the audience craved a hearty laugh after an overdose of action dramas. Viewed through a critical lens, its story and a few gags may appear lame. However, writer-director Anil Ravipudi proved yet again that he knew the audiences' pulse. His streak of success in collaboration with actor Venkatesh Daggubati continued.

New voices

Some of 2025's memorable films came from newer directors. *Court*, written by debut director Ram Jagadeesh, opted for simple storytelling. The courtroom drama discussed the ramifications of a powerful law like POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences) being misused by a person of wealth and influence.

Ram did extensive research to fictionalise the story which is based on true events. Priyadarshi's sincere turn as a lawyer, actors Harsh Roshan and Sridevi as the teens caught in the crossroads of class and caste, and Vijai Bulganin's music, with the marketing push by actor-producer Nani helped the film soar. The surprise factor was the second coming of actor Sivaji as a controlling patriarch who needed to be shown his place.

Debut director Sailu Kampati's *Raju Weds Rambai*, produced by Venu Udugula and Rahul Mopidevi, based on true incidents in rural Telangana, found its audiences thanks to word-of-mouth publicity.

Director Koushik Pegallapalli's horror thriller *Kishkindapuri,* starring Anupama Parameswaran and Bellamkonda Sai Sreenivas, and *K-Ramp* starring Kiran Abbavaram also found acceptance.

Compact budgets, big wins

Among the films that gained traction through organic buzz, Sunny Sanjay's *Anaganaga* is worth a mention. *Anaganaga* featured Sumanth as a teacher who believes in the power of storytelling. A quiet, heartwarming film backed by ETV Win.

A clear winner of 2025 was director Sai Marthand's *Little Hearts*, produced by Aditya Hassan who spearheaded the ETV Win web series *90s: A Middle Class Biopic*.

Made with a budget of around ₹2 crore, the film starring Mouli Tanuj Prasanth and Shivani Nagaram, earned more than ₹35 crore. It catered to the 15 to 25 age group that still frequents cinema halls, as well as their parents. When families can share a good laugh, seeing some of their quirks on screen, a film is bound to be a winner.

The other comedies that worked include the sequel, *MAD Square*, *The Great Pre-Wedding Show*, *Single* and *Gurram Paapi Reddy*.

All the action

The success of comedies did not mean action entertainers were forgotten. The favourable opening weekend reception for *They Call Him OG*, *HIT: The Third Case*, and *Kingdom*, showed that star power and action dramas are still a draw.

However, a few films that attracted the audiences initially, witnessed a drop in footfalls if the storytelling was not rivetting.

Director Sailesh Kolanu's *HIT 3* headlined by Nani, and director Chandoo Mondeti's *Thandel* featuring Naga Chaitanya and Sai Pallavi, were victims of movie piracy, though they brought some cheer to the box office.

The arrest of a few movie piracy masterminds made headlines, but tackling the problem requires sustained efforts.

Director Shekhar Kammula's social drama *Kuberaa,* starring Dhanush, Nagarjuna Akkineni and Rashmika Mandanna, stood out for exploring a story of wealth disparity, greed and exploitation.

Stories inspired by Indian epics continued to capture attention. Again, unless the storytelling was engaging enough, the films withered on the vine. Director Kartik Ghattameni's *Mirai* made a mark for its storyline and cutting edge visual effects within a modest budget.

Gender perspectives

A significant clutter breaker was director Rahul Ravindran's *The Girlfriend*. The layered storytelling showed how childhood experiences shape adult relationships.

The film starring Rashmika Mandanna and Dheekshith Shetty was a departure from the alpha-male narratives that have been flooding Indian cinema in recent years.

The Girlfriend dispelled notions that women do not buy tickets and script theatrical successes.

Director Praveen Kandregula's horror comedy *Subham*, produced by Samantha, addressed gender equations through the lens of humour. Praveen also directed *Paradha*, a folklore-meets-travel tale featuring Anupama Parameswaran, Darshana Rajendran and Sangitha.

Sarangapani Jathakam, Gandhi Thatha Chettu, 23-Iravai Moodu, 8 Vasanthalu, and *Kanya Kumari* were among the films that had a tough time in theatres but found their audiences on digital platforms.

The trend of re-releasing older blockbusters continued, with the notable ones being *Jagadeka Veerudu Athiloka Sundari* and *Shiva*. A re-edited version of the *Baahubali* films arrived as *Baahubali: The Epic*.

As 2025 comes to a close, the primary challenge for filmmakers is to draw people away from digital platforms and mobile phone screens to the theatres.

Watch list (Clockwise from left) Stills from *Court, Little Hearts, Sankranthiki Vasthunam, and The Girlfriend.* SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT











T. Sharath Reddy, Deputy General Manager (Engineering) of Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (left), explaining the design and operational scheme of a newly-constructed injection borewell at an apartment in Kavuri Hills, Durgam Cheruvu division, on Thursday. NAGARA GOPAL

The long road to a water-secure future

Hyderabad is chasing rain, literally. With the Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply & Sewerage Board rolling out citywide rainwater harvesting, the goal is to refill aquifers and curb dependence on tankers. But cultural apathy, poor upkeep and fragmented community action threaten to drain these efforts dry, finds **B. Pradeep**

Every January, just after the Sankranthi cheer ebbs, residents of Czech Colony in Sanathnagar, Hyderabad, brace for an annual test, watching their water taps a little more closely. The borewell serving their 40-flat apartment still runs twice a day, but not for long. Its yield starts thinning and within a month, there is nothing left to draw. What follows is a familiar routine: they must depend on water tankers, repeatedly checking the HMWS&SB app, tracking a slow crawl up the waiting list.

That ritual, however, has quietly ended. T. Srinivas, a member of the apartment association, says the turning point came with the construction of an injection borewell. The change was immediate. "Our borewell improved and a few nearby apartments that opted for percolation pits saw a difference too."

He details the consultations that went into the project, the pit collection system, annual rainwater estimates and how the intervention eased everyday life in the building.

Experiences such as this are shaping a broader rethink of water use and conservation across Hyderabad. At Kavuri Hills, in the upscale Kakatiya Hills residential colony, a 16-flat apartment complex built on a 1,000-square yard plot also constructed an injection borewell with technical assistance from the Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWS&SB) and WaterAid, an NGO facilitating such projects through corporate social responsibility funds in select localities.

Suneel, an IT professional and resident of the apartment, recalls how the building's mandated rainwater harvesting structure was once ignored. "We were blessed with water. During monsoon, the borewell would overflow, and we would flush excess water out of the cellar through a hose," he says.

That sense of abundance, however, faded rapidly as construction activity surged in the neighbourhood. Between January and May this year, the apartment complex purchased two 10-kilolitre water tankers a day for the first time, paying about ₹1,000 per load, often with some waiting period. "We got about 100 tankers," says Suneel, his eyebrows raised.

The response came in the form of a 200-foot injection borewell. Built with a contribution of just ₹20,000 from residents, it has the capacity to harvest around 509 cubic metres, or 5.09 lakh litres, of rainwater annually.

According to HMWS&SB managing director K. Ashok Reddy, building injection borewells and harvesting pits is a key focus area for the Board. He recently grabbed headlines by stating, "If every house has a rainwater harvesting (RWH) pit, the city may not even need Krishna Phase IV for the 5 tmcft additional water supply".

> How many can say they collect rainwater and are not contributing to urban flooding? How many would prioritise an RWH pit over interior design? How many speak of duties, not just rights? The key is collective stewardship, where everyone is responsible and collaborative.
>
> **KALPANA RAMESH,** Founder of The Rainwater Project

Yet, success stories like Czech Colony and Kavuri Hills remain exceptions in a city as large as Hyderabad. They offer a glimpse of the possibilities but do not capture the full picture.

A city that cannot hold its rain

Hyderabad receives an annual rainfall of 700-900 mm. But in 2025, it recorded around 1,060 mm between June and December alone, nearly 40% above normal, according to the Telangana State Development Planning Society.

But the city sits on crystalline formations such as granite, gneiss and compact basalt, which have very low permeability. As a result, groundwater storage depends entirely on fractures, joints, and weathered zones within these rocks. Even in a year of excess rainfall, Hyderabad failed to retain much of it. The absence of harvesting pits and collection systems meant runoff rushed into drains, flowed into the Musi river, and eventually discharged into the Krishna river via Nalgonda district.

The result? Growing dependence on water tankers and deep borewells. Hyderabad is now the most groundwater-extracting district in the State. With extraction exceeding 100% of recharge, the city is classified as both 'over-exploited' and 'critical'. The pressure extends to Rangareddy and Medchal-Malkajgiri districts, which together form the contiguous Greater Hyderabad region, as well as neighbouring Yadadri-Bhuvanagiri. By contrast, Telangana as a whole is in a relatively better position, with an annual groundwater recharge of 20.4 billion cubic metres and average extraction of 45.91%, according to the Central Ground Water Board's Groundwater Resource Assessment 2024.

To understand why only 42,784 residents in Hyderabad, those in households measuring more than 300 sq. metres, frequently book water tankers, HMWS&SB conducted a citywide survey in 2024. It found that 17,382 of these households either lacked an RWH pit or had borewells that had dried up. Others had pits but did not use them. Advisory notices were issued, but compliance remained limited. Broadly, Hyderabad's water stress can be traced to these tens of thousands of properties, compounded by rapid urban expansion that stretches the Board's reach.

Parallelly, HMWS&SB launched another survey of borewells installed by the Board and other civic authorities in public offices and community spaces. Eighteen NGOs advocating water conservation were roped in for the exercise. So far, 3,435 surveys have identified 8,285 borewells, of which 4,569 are non-functional. These would now be converted into injection borewells.

Separately, a survey under Jal Sanchay Jan Bhagidari of the Ministry of Jal Shakti, an initiative aimed at constructing one million recharge structures nationwide, began on December 7 this year. Preliminary findings show 7,043 users already have rainwater harvesting structures. These will be linked to the Board's unique Customer Account Number (CAN). The survey is ongoing.

When water becomes a commodity

If sustainability is a long-term pursuit, tanker supply is an immediate race against time. From February to May, the gap between booking and delivery often determines whether Hyderabad edges towards a water emergency.

> Public attitude is: I can pay for water, use influence to get a tanker even in summer, and wash my luxury car with piped water. This is 100% literacy with ignorance and lack of common sense to use a limited resource wisely.
>
> **T. SHARATH REDDY,** DGM (Engineering), HMWS&SB

The summer of 2024 was a turning point. HMWS&SB expanded its tanker fleet from 604 to 1,000 almost overnight as bookings surged to an average of 2,000 a day. Demand was concentrated in western and northwestern growth corridors – Manikonda, Gachibowli, Kondapur, Madhapur, Kukatpally, Jubilee Hills and Banjara Hills.

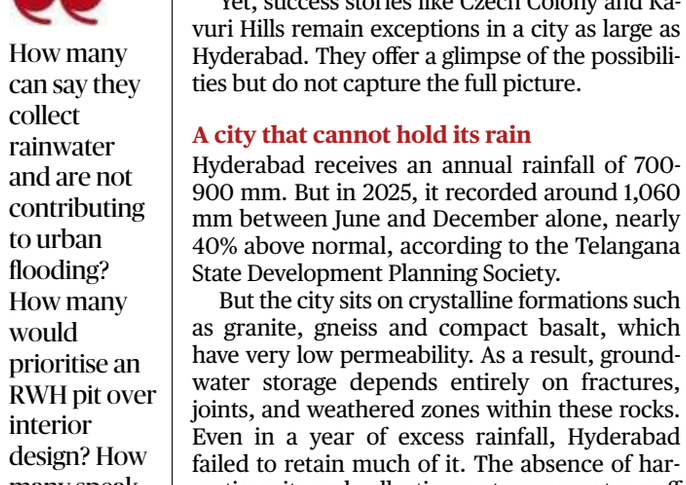
In April 2024, Principal Secretary (Municipal Administration and Urban Development) M.Dana Kishore acknowledged a sudden drying up of borewells in western Hyderabad and a shortage of tankers, drivers and filling points, while maintaining that the city was not in the grip of a water crisis.

Under the Board's service level agreement, tankers are to be delivered within 24 hours. But in peak summers, the target was reduced to 12 hours or less, with round-the-clock deliveries. Filling stations and points were expanded, and even tanker-filling designs were improvised such as single filler-to-T-joint pipes that could load two tankers simultaneously. Currently, the Board operates 1,150 tankers, supported by 90 filling stations and 150 filling points across the city.

Data on tanker deliveries between January and July over five years, from 2021 to 2025, shows a steady year-on-year increase, mirroring falling groundwater levels and the pace of Hyderabad's urban expansion.

The escalation is stark. Peak deliveries in April rose from 85,880 tanker trips in 2021 to 2,90,180 in 2025, an exponential 238% jump. Even January, once considered a relatively stable month, saw a 127% rise, from 52,778 trips in 2021 to 1,19,752 this year.

The contrast is visible year-on-year. Between 2024 and 2025, tanker trips in February and March climbed by a steady 58%. April registered a further 22% increase, marking the highest monthly tanker movement in the Board's history – 2,90,180 trips – followed by 2,77,415 in June.



A water tanker of the HMWS&SB delivering water to a commercial building in Banjara Hills, Hyderabad, on Thursday. NAGARA GOPAL

The big push

In this context, HMWS&SB's recent announcement marks a decisive shift in Hyderabad's groundwater conservation strategy. As part of its 100-day action plan, the Board plans to construct 15,000 RWH pits across Greater Hyderabad, extending up to the Outer Ring Road.

While rainwater harvesting structures are mandated for all houses measuring 200 square yards, the requirement will now be enforced strictly for properties of 300 square yards and above.

The Board has also secured approval from the School Education Department to build rainwater harvesting structures in 1,200 government school premises across Hyderabad and neighbouring districts.

Reiterating the larger ambition, Mr.Ashok Reddy says the city could do without Krishna Phase IV if it creates 50,000 rainwater harvesting structures over the next three years. "Yes, that's my slogan. Why should Hyderabad's water flood into the Musi and Krishna rivers, only to be pumped back into the city," he argues.

He explains that the proposed project would require an outlay of ₹3,000 crore, with recurring annual operations and maintenance expenses of ₹20 crore. By comparison, investing ₹100 crore in rainwater harvesting structures would be far more efficient and sustainable, and could even help check urban flooding.

A key component of the plan is converting dried-up borewells in public spaces across the city into injection borewells. For the immediate construction of 700 RWH pits, the Board has already floated a tender.

HMWS&SB's push for rainwater conservation is not new. Over the past decade, it has taken multiple forms, with mixed outcomes. A similar 100-day action plan was rolled out in May 2016, during which 2,200 rainwater harvesting structures were built in common public spaces. The effort, however, fell short over time as resident welfare associations failed to maintain the structures.

This was followed by the launch of Jalabhagyam in 2017 and Jala Jeevam in 2018. These programmes empanelled NGOs to educate residents on rainwater harvesting, maintenance practices and technical aspects. Jala Jeevam went further by making RWH structures mandatory for all households, expanding NGO involvement and constituting an expert committee on rainwater conservation.

Moreover, 1,600 Jalavaarasathvam clubs were formed, involving grandparents and children, along with resident welfare associations and self-help groups, to revive a culture of water conservation. That same year, the Board developed a Rainwater Harvesting Theme Park on Road No. 51 in Jubilee Hills, showcasing around 40 water conservation interventions. The facility remains operational and is free for public use.

Another initiative, Water Leadership and Conservation, was launched in 2019 as a Sanathnagar-specific programme aimed at driving behavioural change and reducing water wastage.

Government policy and intent, however, have not fully translated into active public participation. The data reflects this gap. In 2025, average demand for water tankers rose by 36.37% over 2024, while year-on-year projections estimate a further 22% increase. On rainwater harvesting, the Board continues to issue advisory notices to non-compliant properties under provisions of the Water, Land and Trees (WALTA) Act.

The missing link?

What stands in the way, officials argue, is mindset. "The attitude is: I can pay for water, use influence to get a tanker even in summer, and wash my luxury car with piped water. This is 100% literacy with ignorance and lack of common sense to use a limited resource wisely," says T. Sharath Reddy, Deputy General Manager (Engineering), HMWS&SB, one of the two senior officers supervising Durgam Cheruvu, a high water tanker-dependent division.

Jala Satyanarayana, Assistant Director (Rainwater Harvesting), HMWS&SB, whose phone number features on notices issued to households without RWH structures, recounts the responses he receives. "Some even threatened me, thinking it was a legal notice. I explain, visit their premises, and help design the structure. They do understand and want to build one. But, in general, people value water only when they experience scarcity."

For Kalpana Ramesh, designer-environmentalist and founder of The Rainwater Project, the missing piece is community ownership. Even well-crafted policies, she argues, fail without local engagement and upkeep.

"How many can say they collect rainwater and are not contributing to urban flooding? How many would prioritise an RWH pit over interior design? How many speak of duties, not just rights? The key is collective stewardship, where everyone is responsible and collaborative," she says.

According to officials, where resident welfare associations and NGOs are active, a mix of awareness, community involvement, and what Kalpana Ramesh calls "penalties and harsher action" can act as effective deterrents.

However, social fault lines complicate conservation efforts. In Malkajgiri, V. Sushmitha, a school-teacher living in a 16-unit apartment complex, points to a common obstacle. "There is a lack of unity among residents," she says. "Tenants don't want to get involved, owners live elsewhere and nobody wants to bother. The space meant for RWH gets converted to parking. Any discussion leads to petty quarrels – and personal egos."

(Names of the residents have been changed to protect privacy)



Art tests new waters

In 2025, Hyderabad witnessed art exhibitions at non-traditional venues, to attract new buyers

Sangeetha Devi Dundoo
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Last weekend, EON Hyderabad, a new high-rise office space in the Financial District, hosted HYD.ART 2025, positioning itself as one of Hyderabad's largest art showcases. On view were artworks by contemporary Indian masters, emerging artists, with a spotlight on yesteryear Telugu artists. There were workshops, panel discussions and documentary screenings.

Annapurna Madipadiga, curator of HYD.ART 2025 and founder of EkChitra, who has conducted exhibitions in art galleries and offbeat venues such as Spirit Connect film production house and T-Works, says she is on the lookout for venues that can make art accessible to people in different parts of the city. "I look for spaces that can make art interesting and spark curiosity."

In February 2025, she curated Living Temple, a three-day festival of art, heritage and architecture at T-Works, Rai Durg, and observed how IT sector



employees as well as the housekeeping staff were taken in by the paintings, sculptures, installations and interactive exhibits. "A few corporates said they came to see the show instead of attending meetings," she laughs. "The staff was also enthusiastic and asked when we would organise another show."

This November, India Art Fair hosted IAF EDI+IONS Hyderabad, its first in the city at RMZ The Loft, Rai Durg. Jaya Asokan, director of the fair, says the choice of venue at the heart of Hyderabad's IT hub, was intentional. "We wanted younger professionals working here to consider art as a meaningful long-term investment, and to see themselves as the next generation of collectors."

The team observed how a few enthusiasts spent nearly a day at the art fair. This, Jaya observes, was easier since visitors could step out for lunch at the several dining



On view (Left) HYD.ART 2025; India Art Fair Hyderabad. NAGARA GOPAL; INDIA ART FAIR

options within the campus and re-enter the exhibition. "That ease encouraged sustained engagement rather than rushed consumption."

Less intimidating

Miheeka Daggubati, who founded Art Connect and hosted shows at Spirit Connect, says unusual venues make art less intimidating. "Those who are not clued into art may hesitate to walk into a gallery, thinking they do not know enough. I started Art Connect to make art accessible to more people. In the exhibitions we have hosted, the effort has been to showcase different formats – paintings, sculptures, installations, and assemblage. The stories that accompany each artwork help visitors understand and appreciate art better."

Miheeka notes that offering ancillary sessions, such as talks on investing in art, is also beneficial. "In addition, viewing an artwork in a space that is not a traditional gallery helps potential buyers imagine how it would look at their office or home."

Art showcases beyond galleries is not a new idea. An example would be the curated shows and public art installations at the annual Hyderabad Literary Festival (HLF) in its several venues – Hyderabad Public School, Vidyaranya High School, Saptaparni, or Sattva Knowledge City. The HLF 2026 will be held late January at Sattva Knowledge City.

Established galleries and the Salar Jung Museum will always hold pride of place among art enthusiasts. However, the trend of art reaching out to newer enthusiasts through unusual venues will continue to thrive.



Form, light and shadows

Kalakriti Art Gallery's exhibition Sculpting with Light & Darkness, curated by Ina Puri, features sculptures by LN Tallur, Sumakshi Singh and KS Radhakrishnan.

The artworks examine the dialogue between light and shadow, as physical conditions and as metaphors for perception, presence and passage of time. *On view till January 5, at Kalakriti, road no.4, Banjara Hills.*

Come for the coffee, stay for the desserts

Karafa balances craft coffee with signature desserts and comfort-food classics

Prabalika M Borah
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Karafa in Banjara Hills takes its coffee seriously. The coffee island – sleek glass and steel, sharp lines, is an unapologetically modern centrepiece. Coffee may be the heart of Karafa, but it has not overlooked the food that should go with it. Their line-up of classic tea cakes leans into nostalgia: vanilla chiffon, marble cake, and a simple chocolate slice. Karafa's clutter-free look keeps everything easy to the eye.

Despite Hyderabad's coffee-friendly weather, I found myself tempted by a cold brew, mostly because the flavour – spiced apple – felt new. Chef Anuhya Narne invited me upstairs to see their dessert kitchen. Strawberry season's trifle was being assembled on one counter. On another, a giant coffee bean – almost the size of a kiwi fruit – was being lightly torched to create glossy streaks over its matte surface. It is one of Karafa's signatures, a layered dessert built with coffee gel and more.

As for the spiced apple coffee, it turned out to be a refreshing surprise – lightly tangy, with the freshness of coffee lifted by a hint of nutmeg.

The coffee bean dessert is essentially several desserts in one, but without feeling muddled. Each layer



Table for two French toast (above), poached egg with hollandaise. DINESH KAKOLLU

reveals something different: the outer chocolate shell, reminiscent of a classic chocobar; a tiramisu-like creaminess beneath it; a thin, soft sponge; and finally a chocolate-coffee centre. Somewhere within, a smooth coffee gel makes an appearance. If you enjoy coffee, chocolate and tiramisu, this dessert is in your lane.

After a dessert that good, I postponed food trials for another day.

A couple of days later, I found myself back at Karafa – this time to focus on the food. I ordered a burrata salad, because no matter what follows, a bowl of greens helps soften the guilt. Then came a pizza and a portion of kimchi fried chicken. I would happily return for the pizza; the kimchi fried chicken, however, was nothing remarkable beyond fulfilling the day's protein quota.

Ajitha Challa, Karafa's founder, urged me to try the poached egg with hollandaise and the French toast. I am not a fan of runny eggs, yet I found myself enjoying the poached egg.

The French toast was piled with fruit and berries and lightly drizzled with honey. Made with brioche, it brings a different richness to the dish.



A coffee, a dessert and one small eat will cost ₹1,800.



A retrospective

Srishti Art Gallery's ongoing exhibition, Celebrating Dashrath Patel (1927–2010), curated by Sadanand Menon, showcases master artist Dasrath Patel's early paintings. *On view at Srishti art gallery, Jubilee Hills, till February 7.*







In memory: On his birth anniversary, former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's statue is being unveiled by Tripura Governor N. Indrasena Reddy and TG BJP leaders at LB Nagar on Thursday.

Vajpayee practised value-based politics, says Telangana BJP

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's statesmanship and value-based politics were recalled on his birth anniversary, as BJP leaders attended the inauguration of his statue, which was unveiled by Tripura Governor N. Indrasena Reddy at LB Nagar on Thursday.

BJP TG president N. Ramchander Rao described him as a leader whose entire life stood as a living testament to ethical and effective governance.

Recalling the formative years of BJP after its establishment in 1980, Mr. Rao said that Vajpayee served as the party's first national president and laid a strong ideological and organisational foundation. During that period, N. Indrasena Reddy was the Yuva Morcha president in the then united Andhra Pradesh, while he himself served as a party secretary.

"We were fortunate to serve the party during its formative phase under the leadership of Vajpayee," Mr. Rao said.

He said Vajpayee proved that it was possible to be a fierce and effective critic in Parliament without resorting to personal attacks or abusive language. He recalled an anecdote from the early years of Parliament when the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was deeply impressed by Vajpayee's oratory and later openly appreciated him at a public function.

Drawing a contrast with the present political climate in Telangana, Mr. Rao expressed concern over the declining standards of public discourse.

The event was attended by BJP MP Eatala Rajender and others.

BRS leaders hit back at Revanth for 'abusive' language against KCR

One cannot expect better language given the now Chief Minister's political journey, he is known for horse-trading legislators and was caught red-handed with money while trying to bribe an MLC in the past for enlisting his support in the Council election, says Harish Rao

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

The Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) questioned the 'uncalled for' comments made by Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy against party founder and former CM K. Chandrasekhar Rao, and said that such language against the "one who fought for and achieved statehood to Telangana" was unbecoming of a Chief Minister.

Speaking in Siddipet on Thursday, BRS leader and former minister T. Harish Rao said that Mr. Revanth Reddy was using 'street language' against Mr. Rao, who achieved Telangana. But for Mr. Rao, Mr. Revanth Reddy would not even have become a Minister, let alone becoming the Chief Minister.

"One can't expect better language given the political journey of Mr. Reddy so far and he's known for horse-trading the legislators as he was caught red-handed with money while trying to bribe an MLC in the past for enlisting his support in the Legislative Council election to a candidate fielded by the party with which Mr. Reddy was associated with then," Mr. Harish Rao said.

He alleged that Mr. Reddy was doing real estate business with the lands acquired for the Pharma City project and his government was clearing bills only to those who were giving 20% commission.

At Suryapet, another former Minister, G. Jagadish Reddy, said with his cheap comments Mr. Revanth Reddy had proved again that he was only a 'low-level' leader.

He sought to know whether Mr. Chandrasekhar Rao had ever taken Mr. Revanth Reddy's name during the last two years. Instead of speaking on the issues raised by Mr. Chandrasekhar Rao, the Chief Minister was getting personal as he had nothing to claim or tell about.

Whip of BRS Legislature Party K.P. Vivekanand said at the meeting on Thursday that it was unfortunate that the State was being headed by a person whose language was worsening against opponents and that his two-year rule had proved he had learnt nothing even after getting elected as ZPTC member, MLC, MLA, MP and becoming Chief Minister. Party leaders Rasamayi Balakishan, Chirumarthi Lingaiah and others also reacted.



Clear stance: BRS leader and former minister Harish Rao addresses the cadre at a party meeting in Hyderabad. FILE PHOTO

CM must maintain dignity, says Bandi

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Union Minister of State for Home Bandi Sanjay Kumar found fault with Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy's recent remarks against former CM K. Chandrasekhar Rao, saying that the language used was inappropriate and unbecoming of the office he holds.

Interacting with the media at the BJP state office on Thursday, Mr. Sanjay stressed that the Chief Minister must maintain dignity and restraint in public speech and urged him to refrain from using such expressions in the future.

KCR responsible

Meanwhile, holding KCR responsible for injustice to Telangana in Krishna river water allocation, he claimed that it was KCR who agreed to accept 299 tmc out of 575 tmc. He said this was stated by then Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy in an Apex Committee meeting and asserted that the BJP was ready to make the agreements public if necessary.

Referring to the Kaleshwaram project, he questioned why investigations were limited to ₹9,000 crore when the alleged scam ran into ₹1 lakh crore. He also criticised the handling of the phone tapping case, alleging that over 6,000 phones were tapped during the BRS regime and claimed the involvement of KCR's family.

On civic politics, he dismissed claims by Congress over recent by-election victories and asserted that the absence of party symbols in Panchayat polls made attribution of results misleading. He claimed BJP's vote share and number of seats had increased significantly, particularly in Karimnagar Parliamentary constituency.

On GHMC elections, he said BJP would contest independently and confident of winning the Mayor's post. He accused Congress of planning an alliance with MIM and asserted that BJP's objective was to make Hyderabad "MIM-free."

Foul language introduced by KCR: Cong. MP

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Bhongir MP Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy accused BRS leaders, including party president K. Chandrashekar Rao, working president K.T. Rama Rao and former minister Harish Rao, of promoting an abusive political culture, and now, blaming the Chief Minister.

Responding to recent remarks by Mr. Harish Rao, he said that his behaviour resembled 'demons chanting the Vedas', alleging that Mr. Rao spoke about morality as if ethical standards applied only to opponents. He advised Mr. Harish Rao to first reflect on Mr. Rao's own history of foul language.

"Mr. Rao introduced abusive language into politics. He even holds the patent rights for it," he remarked, adding that during the agitation period and later as CM, Mr. Rao spoke without restraint or responsibility. If BRS leaders resort to personal abuse, the CM is equally capable of responding in the same tone, he said.

INBRIEF

Four from Kagaznagar killed in Maharashtra road accident

Gloom has engulfed Nizamuddin Colony in Kagaznagar town of Kumram Bheem Asifabad district on Thursday morning as the news of the tragic death of four residents of the colony in a ghastly road accident at Sondo village in Chandrapur district of Maharashtra in the small hours of the day, unfolded. Four women, including the wife and daughter of Zakir, an autorickshaw driver of Nizamuddin Colony, and their two relatives, were reportedly killed in the accident. Four other occupants of the car suffered grievous injuries, sources said. The incident occurred when the car they were travelling in fell off a bridge and plunged into a dried-up stream near Sondo village, shortly after Wednesday midnight. Sources said that Zakir's family members, along with their relatives, had gone to Nagpur on Wednesday morning for treatment of one of their relatives at a local hospital. They were on their way back when the accident took place.



State continues to record single digit temperatures

Various parts of Telangana continued to record single digit temperatures on Thursday, though cold wave alert has not been in effect for the past few days. The India Meteorological Department (IMD), in its bulletin on Thursday, said that the minimum temperatures are likely to be below normal by 3°C to 4°C, at isolated pockets in the State in the next two days. The lowest of 6.9°C was recorded in Tiryani of Kumram Bheem Asifabad on Thursday morning, according to the Telangana Development Planning Society (TGDPS). This was followed by 7.4°C in Kohir of Sangareddy and 8.5°C in Moinabad of Ranga Reddy district. The lowest temperature recorded this winter so far was 4.5°C from December 20 to 22. Meanwhile, the TGDPS meteorologists earlier said that the cold conditions are likely to ease in the State by December 27.

Budding talent



Shining stars: Kuchipudi dancers pose for a photo at the 11th International Dance, Music and Award festival, organised by Sree Surabhi Academy of Performing Arts, in association with the Department of Language and Culture, in Hyderabad on Thursday. RAMAKRISHNA G

High Court sets aside Collector's order over Kothapally land

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Justice K. Lakshman of the Telangana High Court had set aside the proceedings issued by Karimnagar District Collector in May this year, cancelling registered sale deeds executed in favour of some persons relating to some lands falling under survey numbers 197 and 198 of Kothapally on Karimnagar's outskirts.

The Collector cancelled the sale deeds on the ground that the properties formed part of the prohibited list maintained under Section 22A of the Telangana Registration Act 1908. Questioning the validity of this section, many individuals moved the High Court by filing writ petitions earlier pertaining to different properties.

The judge observed that there was inconsistency between the rulings passed by two Division Benches of the HC vis-a-vis the binding nature of the decision of the Full Bench of the erstwhile High Court of the Andhra Pradesh at Hyderabad in Vinjamuri Rajagopala Chary vs Revenue Department matter.

This inconsistency raised pertinent questions regarding the interpretation of Section 22 A of the 1908 Act. To clarify the position of the law in this matter, a Bench of appropriate strength needed to be constituted, the judge said in the order.

He directed the Registry to place the order before the Chief Justice for appropriate orders.

'Govt. to boost ryots' income to ₹12.53L by 2047'

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

The Telangana government is going to undertake several measures to increase the per capita income of farmers in the State to ₹12,53,733 per annum by 2047.

It is planning to expand fruit cultivation from the current 4.5 lakh acres to 12 lakh acres, vegetable cultivation to 10 lakh acres, and spice crop cultivation to 6 lakh acres, said K. Surendra Mohan, Secretary, Telangana State Agriculture and Cooperation Department.

During a visit to Sri Konda Laxman Telangana Horticultural University in Siddipet district on Thursday, he spoke about setting up facilities to augment farming, agricultural produce, storage, cleaning and other facilities.

To promote vegetable cultivation, the government will establish collection centres to procure vegetables directly from farmers, and also enhance marketing infrastructure. It will provide facilities with a cold chain capacity of 50 lakh tonnes and an additional warehousing capacity of 50 lakh metric tonnes.

Mr. Surendra said that they are preparing to set up vapour heat treatment near the airport to increase the export of mangoes and other fruits primarily cultivated in the State.

Citing increase in consumption, the Agriculture Secretary said that there is a need to increase cultivation area of millets by 10 lakh acres and pulses by another seven lakh acres.

And, the target for oil palm cultivation area is to increase it from the current 2.7 lakh acres to 12 lakh acres by 2047, and also to achieve a five-fold increase in mulberry production and an eight-fold increase in tussar silk production.

The government is ready to support the plans by expanding micro-irrigation to 40 lakh acres and increasing farm power capacity to 9 kilowatts per hectare.

Vice-Chancellor of the Horticultural University Danda Raji Reddy said that establishing a local market every 50 km would increase the area under vegetable cultivation. He explained the plans to extensively promote grafted vegetable plants and trellis-based vegetable cultivation.

The programme on Thursday was attended by TG Oil Fed Officer on Special Duty Kiran Kumar; University Consultant K. Veeranjaneyulu; Technical Advisor Sunandini; Head of the Vegetable Research Station, D. Anita Kumari; Professor Pidiga Saidiah; Horticulture Department Joint Director, Sarojini; Siddipet District Horticulture Officer Suvarna; scientists, and students.



Secretary of Telangana State Agriculture and Cooperation Department K. Surendra Mohan and VC of Horticultural University Danda Raji Reddy in Siddipet on Thursday.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

He fought the good fight, finished the race and kept the faith - 2 Tim. 4:7



D Benjamin Thomas
(Retd Chief Manager UCO Bank)
22-7-1936 to 25-12-2025

His body kept for viewing: 27th Dec 11am to 2pm, DCC Hall, St. Andrew's Kirk, Egmore, Chennai
Funeral service: 27th Dec, 3pm, St. Andrew's Kirk Church
Burial: 4:30pm, Kilpauk Cemetery

Contact No : 8870900132

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Proposed AHINDA convention may add to leadership tussle

Satish Kumar B. S.
BENGALURU/BELAGAVI


D.K. Shivakumar

Amid the tussle over leadership in the Congress, a planned AHINDA convention in January is threatening to open up another front between Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, who have been jostling over the leadership issue.

While the Chief Ministerial aspirant Mr. Shivakumar on Wednesday wished the organisers good luck, one of the senior leaders in AHINDA politics and Public Works Minister Satish Jarkiholi told presspersons on Thursday that the organisers need not require anyone's certificate to hold the AHINDA convention on January 25.

"It is a social movement and not a political show of strength. It can also bring political benefits to the party. The success of the AHINDA convention in Davanagere was one of the reasons for the party coming to power [in 2023]," Mr. Jarkiholi, a staunch supporter of Mr. Siddaramaiah, said.

The supporters of the Chief Minister want to hold the convention outside the Congress platform, and it is learnt that Mr. Shivakumar as KPCC president is opposed to the idea. In the past too, an OBC convention in Hassan sought to be held independently, and later a convention of SC/STs were both opposed since they did not have the stamp of the party.

It is learnt that Mr. Siddaramaiah has been invited to the Congress Working Committee meeting. When asked about the invitation to the CWC, Mr. Shivakumar said that he had not been invited since the invitation has been extended only to the Chief Minister and not the Deputy Chief Minister.

'Hard work'

Meanwhile, Mr. Shivakumar, who failed to meet Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday, said: "I have not sat on stage delivering speeches only. I have done every work in the party."

Mr. Shivakumar also met Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge here on Thursday. When asked if leadership issues figured in the meeting, he said: "None of these figured in the meeting. I will not discuss it and there is no need to discuss it. Both Mr. Siddaramaiah and I have said that we will abide by the high command's decision. We will follow what they say."

Six killed as bus catches fire after collision in Karnataka

Over 25 passengers injured in accident at Hiriyur taluk in Chitradurga district; police say a truck crossed median and rammed private bus heading to Gokarna from Bengaluru, causing the fire

Sathish G.T.
JAVANAGONDANAHLLI (CHITRADURGA)


Fatal collision: Six people died and several suffered injuries in an accident in Hiriyur taluk early morning on Thursday. S. K. DINESH

Six persons, one of them a five-year-old girl, were killed when a truck rammed a private sleeper bus on National Highway no. 48 in Hiriyur taluk in Chitradurga district of Karnataka in the early hours of Thursday.

More than 25 people, all passengers heading to Gokarna from Bengaluru, were injured, and one of them is in a critical condition.

Around 2 a.m., the driver of the truck, carrying beverages from Supa in Maharashtra to Nelamangala near Bengaluru, lost control over his vehicle. The vehicle crossed over the median and hit the sleeper bus.

As the truck hit the bus, the fuel tank was impacted, resulting in a fire. Most passengers were asleep when the accident occurred. Those who could get up and jump off the bus survived with injuries. However, five people, including a five-year-old, could not make it.

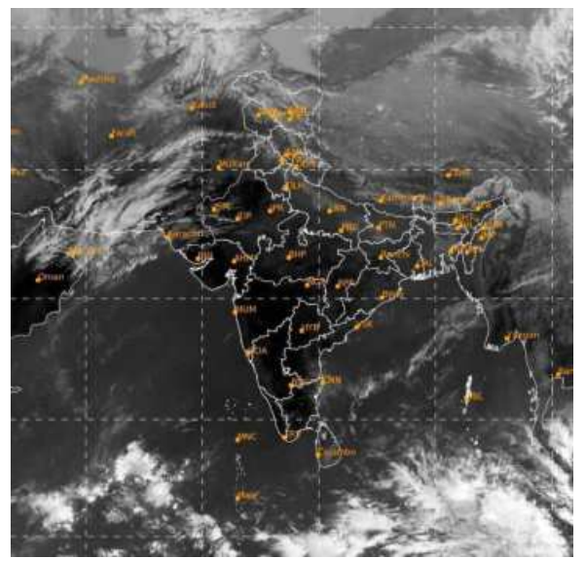
The Chitradurga Police, who filed a case, identified the deceased as Bindu, her daughter Greya, Manasa, Navya and Rashmi Mahale. The truck driver, Kuldeep, a native of Uttar Pradesh, was also killed.

The Hiriyur Rural Police registered the case based on the eyewitness account of Sachin, who was driving a private bus carrying schoolchildren on the highway at the same time.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Siddaramaiah condoled the accident and announced ex-gratia.

WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17.00 HRS)

Forecast for Friday: Cold wave conditions very likely at isolated places over Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Jharkhand, Punjab and Rajasthan. Dense fog very likely at isolated places over Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, East Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Odisha and West Bengal and Sikkim.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	19.0	14.2	Kozhikode	—	33.4	22.1
Ahmedabad	—	29.6	16.4	Kurnool	—	31.6	16.3
Aizawl	—	21.6	11.8	Lucknow	—	21.2	9.0
Allahabad	—	21.5	8.5	Madurai	—	32.5	20.5
Bengaluru	—	26.0	14.5	Mangaluru	—	31.8	20.0
Bhopal	—	23.7	8.4	Mumbai	—	32.1	17.4
Bhubaneswar	—	25.8	13.6	Mysuru	—	28.0	11.4
Chandigarh	—	23.2	9.0	New Delhi	—	23.1	6.4
Chennai	—	28.5	21.8	Patna	—	18.4	12.6
Coimbatore	—	30.8	18.0	Port Blair	—	30.1	23.6
23.6Dehradun	—	18.0	7.8	Puducherry	—	30.1	19.8
Gangtok	—	14.4	7.9	Pune	—	29.4	14.3
Goa	—	—	—	Raipur	—	27.5	11.3
Guwahati	—	21.5	14.5	Ranchi	—	21.4	10.6
Hubballi	—	27.7	12.7	Shillong	—	—	—
Hyderabad	—	28.0	13.5	Shimla	—	18.4	6.6
Imphal	—	24.5	8.1	Srinagar	—	21.8	5.6
Jaipur	—	24.0	8.8	Thiruvananthapuram	—	31.3	22.8
Kochi	—	30.8	22.8	Tiruchi	—	31.5	19.6
Kohima	—	—	17.6	Vijayawada	—	31.4	18.0
Kolkata	—	23.0	12.4	Visakhapatnam	—	27.8	19.8

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	.28	..64	49	... 302	...208	
Bengaluru	...8	..—	26	... 143	...157	
Chennai	...8	..26	43	... 215	...135	
Delhi	.38	..79	71	... 324	...326	
Hyderabad	.15	..21	38	... 141	...141	
Kolkata	...8	..21	62	... 300	...179	
Lucknow	...6	..38	68	... 144	...228	
Mumbai	.19	..12	41	... 122	...136	
Pune	..—	..35	67	... 259	...214	
Visakhapatnam	.28	..65	69	... 302	...207	

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Rohtak, Haryana recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 340 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Damoh, Madhya Pradesh recorded a healthy AQI score of 22

Air Quality Code: Poor | Moderate | Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Photos of Sabarimala gold theft case accused with Sonia Gandhi stirs row

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Congress and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI(M)] wrangled on Thursday over the political affiliations of the suspects in the Sabarimala gold theft case.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan sparked the row on Wednesday by seeking answers from the Congress leadership, showing the prime suspect, Unnikrishnan Potti, and his "accomplice" in the offence, Govardhan, a jeweller from Bengaluru, alongside Sonia Gandhi at her high-security residence in Delhi on an unspecified date.

Mr. Vijayan had said it was unusual that the suspects could breeze into Ms. Gandhi's residence, which was inaccessible even to senior Congress leaders.

The photographs showed the current United Democratic Front (UDF) convener, Adoor Prakash, then Travancore Devaswom Board president, Prayar Gopalakrishnan, and Congress leader Anto Antony, alongside Ms. Gandhi and the accused.

Mr. Vijayan highlighted the photograph showing Mr. Potti tying a thread on Ms. Gandhi's wrist. Mr. Prakash said that he would have distanced himself and Ms. Gandhi from Mr. Potti had he had known about his "criminal intentions."

In contrast, Mr. Prakash alleged that the photographs of Mr. Potti with Mr. Vijayan showed a close bond. "Mr. Vijayan is seen whispering into Mr. Potti's ear, possibly giving him *carte blanche* to run Sabarimala affairs, he said.

The CPI(M) State Secretary M.V. Govindan said the photograph circulated by the Congress, showing Mr. Vijayan whispering in Mr. Potti's ear, was "fabricated" using AI.

"The UDF gave free rein to Mr. Potti and his likes in Sabarimala," Mr. Govindan added.

BJP fields V.V. Rajesh for Mayor of Kerala capital

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The BJP on Thursday decided to field V.V. Rajesh, former Thiruvananthapuram district president of the party, as its Mayor candidate in the Thiruvananthapuram Corporation. Three-time councillor G.S. Asha Nath will be standing for the deputy mayor position from the party.

The announcement comes just a day ahead of the Mayor election, after several rounds of talks within the party.

R. Sreelekha, former Director-General of Police, who won from Sasthamangalam ward, was also in contention for the Mayor post. However, a section of leaders stood firm for Mr.Rajesh, considering his long years of experience in the party.

Ending over four decades of the Left Democratic Front (LDF)'s hold over the Thiruvananthapuram Corporation, the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) secured power in Thiruvananthapuram Corporation, perhaps the most important civic body in Kerala, by winning 50 out of the 101-seats, one short of the majority figure.

Two days ago, the Left Democratic Front (LDF) had decided to field R.P. Sivaji, long-time councillor and Vilappil area secretary of the party, for the Mayor post.

The United Democratic Front (UDF) on Wednesday declared K.S. Sabarinathan as its candidate.

The UDF will field Mary Pushpam, who has served as a councillor in the past few terms, for the Deputy Mayor post.

Children air their needs at special gram sabha in Karnataka

The Hindu Bureau
MYSURU


The Children's Special Gram Sabha being inaugurated at Managalli village in Chamarajanagar district on Wednesday.

The Children's Special Gram Sabha was held at Managalli Gram Panchayat in Chamarajanagar district's Hanur taluk on Wednesday, providing children with a platform to present their demands and suggestions before authorities.

Described as a model initiative, the gram sabha was virtually inaugurated by Priyank Kharge, Minister for Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, who also held a video interaction with the children.

The gram sabha was organised by the Chamarajanagar Zilla Panchayat and Department of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj. The children highlighted several issues, including the need for an 'Akshara Dasoha' (midday meals) room, a dining hall, a playground, sports equipment kits, toilets, drinking water, and prevention of drainage water flowing in front of the school.

They also pushed for the improvement of village roads and the addressal of problems caused by wildlife intrusion.

Mr. Kharge said the issues and demands raised by the children in the gram sabha should be taken seriously and immediate action must be taken in this regard. He said immediate proposals for road works should be submitted, apart from allocating a dining hall and separate room for Akshara Dasoha. He also promised to provide the sports equipment and other facilities through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) support.

Mr. Kharge also issued directions that a list of books useful for competitive exams be stocked in school libraries.

M.R. Manjunath, Hanur MLA, who inaugurated the Children's Gram Sabha, said programmes like this act as spaces for children to air their demands. Such efforts will promote transparency, accountability, and rural development, he added.

15-foot statue of Vajpayee inaugurated in Amaravati

The Hindu Bureau
AMARAVATI


Shivraj Singh Chouhan, N. Chandrababu Naidu and other leaders unveil the statue of Atal Bihari Vajpayee. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Union Agriculture and Rural Development Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan unveiled a 15-foot bronze statue of Atal Bihari Vajpayee at Venkatapalem in Amaravati on the latter's 101st birth anniversary on Thursday, saying that the former Prime Minister was his lifelong inspiration.

A special commemorative postal stamp on Vajpayee was also released during the programme organised as part of the Good Governance Day celebrations. The site where the statue was erected will be developed as Atal Bihari Vajpayee Smriti Vanam.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Chouhan heaped praises on Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, saying that the latter had developed Hyderabad as an IT hub and was now focusing on Amaravati to make it a 'Quantum Valley'.

Mr. Naidu said Amaravati would be shaped into a future-ready capital that reflects Vajpayee's vision of inclusive development and strong infrastructure.

Union Minister of State for Communications Pemmasani Chandra Sekhar said Vajpayee had ignited national consciousness through efficient governance, global diplomatic vision and humility in power.

Naidu misusing power, 'closing all cases' against him: YSRCP

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA


Ponnavolu Sudhakar Reddy

The YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) has accused Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu of "closing all cases against him within a month by misusing institutional powers".

"The party will pursue the issue, including taking it to the notice of the Supreme Court," said party general secretary and former Additional Advocate-General Ponnavolu Sudhakar Reddy while addressing the media in Hyderabad on Thursday.

"Mr. Naidu has been breaching his bail conditions by influencing institutions to close cases against him," he said.

"The police who filed cases against Mr. Naidu are now clearing him, citing 'mistake of fact', and this clearly indicates his influence over institutions," the YSRCP leader alleged.

"Mr. Naidu had been jailed for 53 days in the skill development case. The police filed a chargesheet after questioning 150 witnesses in the alleged ₹371-crore scam. The Central agencies were also involved, and some of the accused served jail term. Despite a quash petition pending before the Supreme Court, the case has been closed," the YSRCP leader alleged.

He also alleged that Mr. Naidu was involved in cases such as Inner Ring Road, assigned lands, and liquor scam, all running into crores of rupees. "We will knock on the doors of the apex court and take the matter to its logical conclusion," he said.

Narsapuram crochet lace regains its mojo

Two years after craft was paralysed by pandemic, product exports cross ₹150-crore mark; GI tag, design and development by International Lace Trade Centre are driving forces for the recovery

The Hindu Bureau
NARSAPURAM


Intricate design: K.N. Tulasi Rao, convener of EPCH, interacting with a crochet lace artisan in Narsapuram. T. APPALA NAIDU

The exports of Narsapuram crochet lace products crossed the ₹150-crore mark in the present fiscal year till December-end, two years after the craft was paralysed with the economic impact of the COVID-19.

Nearly 15,000 artisans are involved in the craft, which received the Geographical Indication tag in March. The craft is now back on track in the 19 mandals in West Godavari and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Konaseema districts in Andhra Pradesh. Nearly 60% of craftspeople are women.

"The exports of Narsapuram crochet lace, crafted by the artisans of our region, have crossed ₹150 crore by the end of December. Europe, U.S., France and the Middle East remain the major importers of the crochet lace products from Narsapuram," said K.N. Tulasi Rao, convener of South Region Exports Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH, Ministry of Textiles).

"The Geographical Indication tag, exhibitions, design and development being done in the International Lace Trade Centre (ILTC-Narsapuram), quality of products compared with crochet lace products of Panipat and Meerut have been driving forces," Mr. Rao added.

Fragile attractiveness

India's best efforts to bring in investment can be upended by the U.S.

The latest foreign direct investment (FDI) data show how India's attractiveness as an investment destination is not yet cemented and remains fragile. Net FDI remained negative for the third consecutive month in October 2025, which means that more direct investment was taken out of India than invested in it. The timing reveals a lot. At the end of July, U.S. President Donald Trump revealed that he would be levying a 25% tariff on India. A week later, he raised this to 50%. That is when investment began to leave India. Prior to August, India's net FDI position in 2025-26 had been quite comfortable. In the April-July 2025 period, net FDI totalled $10.7 billion, more than triple what it was in the same period of the previous year. However, in August 2025, investors pulled out $622 million more than they put in, followed by $1.7 billion in September, and $1.5 billion in October. India's cumulative net FDI position in 2025-26 by the end of October 2025 had fallen to $6.2 billion. This is still nearly double what it was in April-October 2024, but the point is that the direction has changed. One defence of the FDI numbers has been that the net FDI figure looks poor because outflows are simply exceeding robust inflows. However, in both August and October, gross inflows themselves were lower on a year-on-year basis. This contrasts against an average growth rate of about 33% in April-July 2025. In addition, this financial year has shown that the increase in outflows has been driven by Indian companies looking to invest abroad. One way to look at this is with satisfaction – that Indian companies are increasingly becoming internationally competitive in scale and resources. However, with the Indian economy far from saturated in terms of supply, the question to be asked is why these companies are not investing here. This is not merely a shifting of profits abroad in the form of repatriation. It reveals a deeper issue.

From the 2019 corporate tax rate cuts, to Production Linked Incentives, to trying to boost demand through income-tax and Goods and Services Tax cuts, the government has done a lot to encourage the private sector to invest. These were all welcomed by Indian and foreign corporations, who touted them as "structural reforms". Yet, it took just one episode of tariffs by one country to rock India's image as a good investment destination. Even the Reserve Bank of India said that uncertainty over the U.S. trade deal was pushing foreign portfolio investors to exit Indian equities. This goes to show that shiny headlines of 'fastest-growing', 'largest market', and 'third-fastest' do not cut much ice with investors. They work in fair weather, but are flimsy in the face of the slightest headwinds. Such claims need real structural reforms to bolster them.

Doping menace

India must make National Anti-Doping Agency well-funded and independent

One of the biggest impediments for India in achieving the status of a global sports power is strongly rooted in its dubious distinction of being the table topper in dope positive cases for the third consecutive year. As the country is set to host the 2029 World Police and Fire Games and the 2030 Centenary Commonwealth Games in Ahmedabad, the low-on-performance and high-on-doping trend may prove detrimental to its aspirations of bidding for the 2036 Olympic Games. As in the 2024 figures by the global watchdog, the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), India logged 260 adverse analytical findings (AAFs) out of 7,113 tests, at 3.6%. France (91) and Italy (85) were second and third in terms of numbers. India, far behind China (24,214), was seventh in terms of overall testing figures. Nevertheless, the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) looks at the brighter side of the picture, claiming that the higher positivity rate is due to bigger testing numbers. In the post-COVID-19 era, the AAFs and total number of samples were 125 and 3,865 (at 3.2%), respectively, in 2022, and 213 and 5,606 (at 3.8%), respectively, in 2023.

NADA takes pride in stating that up to December 16 this year, it has carried out 7,068 tests with fewer number of positive cases (110), at 1.5%. It has adopted several measures, including awareness drives and encouraging the use of 'Know Your Medicine' app, to curb doping. There are many instances of NADA officials pursuing athletes and them trying to escape to avoid testing. Such cat-and-mouse stories point a finger at the sorry state of affairs and a deeper malaise within the sports ecosystem that includes support staff, who have been suspended for abetting doping. Even as the Sports Ministry is addressing the concern, it acknowledges that government jobs through sports quota are a big lure for the athletes to take shortcuts. It cannot be denied that lucrative cash awards for big international medals may also be prompting elite athletes to take banned performance-enhancing drugs, despite the risks of adverse effects on one's health, over the years. India has passed the National Anti-Doping (Amendment) Bill, 2025, to add muscle to its anti-doping efforts. Whether doping is triggered by need or greed or ignorance, the country, under pressure from the International Olympic Committee over the issue, should make NADA a truly independent entity and provide more funds to put up a stronger fight against this menace, which has kept pace with modern scientific developments.

A year of dissipating promises for Indian foreign policy



Suhasini Haidar

The year 2025 began as one of considerable promise for Indian foreign policy. After 2024, a year that was dominated by national elections and political recalibration, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was expected to resume active diplomacy, with a full calendar of bilateral visits and multilateral engagements. Relations with the United States were expected to be reset under the second term of the Trump administration, continuing from Donald Trump's first term. Long-running Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) negotiations with partners such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and the European Union (EU) seemed imminent, with commitments to complete them by the end of the year.

Across the geopolitical divide, a new engagement appeared to be taking shape with China after years of a stand-off along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), especially after Mr. Modi's visit to China. Economic ties with Russia were also at a high point: India's oil imports from Russia had surged to $52 billion, with U.S. and EU sanctions pressure having eased. Regionally, the government attempted to repair frayed relationships by reaching out to the Yunus administration in Bangladesh with a visit, in December 2024, by the Foreign Secretary, Vikram Misri, sending External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar to Pakistan (October 2024), engaging the Taliban leadership in Dubai (January 2025), and preparing for regional visits from Nepal, Sri Lanka, and others. Five years after the Balakot strikes and the reorganisation of Jammu and Kashmir, New Delhi was also projecting confidence in its security posture and its deterrent capacity for terrorism from Pakistan.

However, many of those expectations for 2025 dissipated by the end of the year. India's foreign policy planners found themselves wrestling with profound challenges across four interconnected domains: economic security, energy security, global strategic stability and regional security.

Economic and energy security

Instead of resetting India-U.S. ties, 2025 proved to be the most difficult year of this century. Actions by the Trump administration on tariffs, immigration and sanctions pushed trust levels back by decades. Washington's decision to levy a steep 25% reciprocal tariff on Indian goods hit key labour-intensive sectors such as apparel, gems and jewellery, and seafood. This followed from the Trump first term, where India's Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) trade privileges were withdrawn.

To compound matters, the U.S. introduced a 25% surcharge on Indian imports of Russian oil, effectively making India the most heavily tariffed trading partner. Even if a forthcoming BTA softens the blow, the losses in contracts mean that factory-line closures and the retrenchment of workers remain. Immigration restrictions, particularly on H-1B visas, further undermined remittances, a key pillar of India's foreign exchange inflows. Of all the trade deals on the anvil, India signed FTAs with the U.K., Oman and New Zealand. But the big prizes that leaders had committed to signing in 2025, with the U.S. and the EU, are still pending.

Ties with China and Russia remained tenuous despite the iconic photo-moment of Mr. Modi-President Xi-President Putin holding hands at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Summit (September 2025) and the Modi-Putin bear hug on the tarmac of New Delhi airport earlier this month. While India-China flight-visa-pilgrimage links were restored, more fundamental security guarantees for the LAC were not. Neither have economic investment regulations been removed. The hours-long detention of an Indian air passenger from Arunachal Pradesh at Shanghai (November 2025) has raised new concerns.

New Delhi confronts challenges that concern economic and energy security, global strategic stability, and regional security

After three years of resisting western pressure over Russian Ural energy imports, New Delhi appeared to bend, after a new wave of U.S. sanctions. Whether India will be compelled to zero out its Ural imports – similar to how it halted Iranian and Venezuelan oil imports under U.S. pressure in the past – remains uncertain, but the choice carries economic and reputational costs. The India-Russia summit, that ended without any major agreements in strategic spheres such as defence, energy, nuclear and space cooperation, disappointed all the hype preceding it.

Global and regional security

A central challenge for Indian strategists in 2025 has been the rise in global unpredictability. In its 2017 National Security Strategy (NSS), Washington identified China and Russia as "revisionist powers" seeking to undermine U.S. influence and global stability. In contrast, the 2025 NSS presents a softened, more ambiguous stance – avoiding direct mentions of China's aggression in the South China Sea and toward Taiwan, and treating Russia with more caution than criticism. The 2017 NSS hailed India's rise as a "leading global power" and "major defense partner", but the 2025 version offers only a limited articulation of India's role, primarily in the context of Indo-Pacific security and critical minerals. Given the short shrift to traditional U.S. allies in Europe and Asia, any deeper alignment with Washington, as had earlier been envisaged, seems risky now. Mr. Trump's references to his meeting with Xi Jinping as a potential "G-2" only intensify concerns about India's position in the Asian power balance.

At the same time, global acceptance of the Gaza and Ukraine peace proposals – both of which critics argue favour the aggressors – signals a weakening of the international rules-based order. China's rollout of a framework for "Global Governance" reflects its ambition to shape an alternative international architecture. For India, this requires serious thought about its own vision for a future global order, especially as the UN's failures at controlling conflict grow.

India's immediate neighbourhood, which initially appeared stable in early 2025, became more volatile as the year progressed. The terror attack in Pahalgam (April) was a grim reminder that even with the security crackdown in Jammu and Kashmir and past cross-border operations in 2016 and 2019, threats remain embedded. That terrorists came hundreds of kilometres inside the Valley to carry out the killings and escaped should merit serious introspection. India's retaliatory Operation Sindoor was militarily effective, but New Delhi's diplomatic campaign following the strike encountered setbacks. While countries condemned the terror attack, few openly supported India's cross-border response. Persistent questions – particularly regarding speculation about the loss of Indian jets – damaged India's credibility, as the government neither confirmed nor denied the reports.

Complicating matters were claims that other countries supported Pakistan's military actions. While India set aside concerns over China's role in Pakistan Air Force strikes, ties with Türkiye and Azerbaijan have nose-dived. The announcement of a Saudi-Pakistan mutual defence pact was an additional blow to India's regional calculus.

Mr. Modi's declaration of a "new normal" after the Pahalgam attack led to international worries over rapid escalation of the next conflict in South Asia. India's restrained handling of the Delhi blasts conspiracy (November 2025) eased some of those worries, but the broader issue remains: how will New Delhi respond to the next major attack, especially with Pakistan's political landscape increasingly shaped by the ultra-hawkish Field Marshal Asim Munir?

The 2024 regime-change protests in Bangladesh and the 2025 Gen-Z demonstrations in Nepal have created fragile transitional governments, reducing predictability in India's periphery. With elections in both countries scheduled for early 2026, New Delhi must prepare to engage with new leadership that is not necessarily positively disposed to it. With Bangladesh in particular, the end of the year has seen relations at their lowest ebb yet. The elections in Myanmar, on December 28, will be held on the Junta's terms, despite New Delhi's best attempts at fostering talks with the deposed NUG members and to ask for the more humane treatment of Aung San Suu Kyi.

Lessons for 2026

Several lessons from 2025 stand out clearly. India must recognise the limits of performative diplomacy – warm embraces, highly publicised summits and symbolic gestures such as awards and leaders driving together in the same car do not necessarily translate into tangible gains. Performative aggression – threats to isolate or boycott countries only mean something if other countries join in. The government was sensible in shifting its projection of India as "Vishwaguru" (global teacher) during the G-20 year in 2023 to "Vishwamitra" (global friend). But it must now avoid slipping into the narrative of a "Vishwa-victim", blaming all others – American sanctions, Chinese manoeuvring, Pakistan's machinations, or the "ingratitude" of neighbouring states – for its disappointments.

New Delhi must stop being blind to its own double standards too – concerns over the lynching of a minority member in Bangladesh can only ring true only if the Modi government is prepared to condemn and stop similar attacks on minorities in India. The same is true for concerns about democracy and inclusive elections in the neighbourhood. If rising Islamism in the region is an issue, then how does the government sanguinely sup with the Taliban? In 2026, with a world turning increasingly transactional, India can only bring up principles if it follows them consistently, regardless of whether they pertain to ties with geopolitical powers, or its own neighbours.

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The urban future with cities as dynamic ecosystems



Aruna Bhattacharya

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Cities stand at the epicentre of global discourse, driving development, policymaking, science, and technology. Yet, amidst all the planning and progress, we often overlook the most fundamental element: the diverse people who inhabit these urban spaces and make them home. The disconnect between the cities we design, the cities we wish to inhabit, and the cities we live in is the critical missing link in our tale of interconnected realities.

The invisible tax of exclusion

When individuals migrate, there is an unspoken expectation of assimilation, often summarised as "do what the Romans do". Language emerges as the primary, non-negotiable standard for integration, necessary for communication and alignment with the city's linguistic identity. The failure to meet this linguistic standard often results in an invisible tax paid by "new residents" and migrants from different linguistic zones.

This marginalisation reflects a systemic tension between the vibrant, multi-lingual reality of major metropolitan hubs and the emotional, cultural and political expectations placed upon those seeking a better life within them. The core issue is about the validation of belonging within the city that a resident calls home.

This "linguistic tax" translates directly into economic disadvantage. Navigating a job search, negotiating complex housing agreements, or accessing essential government benefits or health care becomes a bureaucratic maze when official documents and primary communication channels are monolingual.

This cultural and linguistic friction serves as an economic roadblock. It often channels migrants into the informal economy, where exploitation is higher and opportunities for formal social mobility are curtailed. Ironically, the city, which relies heavily on the labour, skills and taxes contributed by these new residents, structurally denies them full and equal access to the very opportunities and services they were promised. The failure to integrate them linguistically and culturally is a self-inflicted wound that undermines the long-term social and economic resilience of the city itself.

Merely designing better infrastructure will not deliver the desired outcome if the human element of belonging is ignored

The fundamental flaw in modern urban planning is the assumption of a static, homogenous user base. Urban infrastructure – the actual blueprint of the designed city – is often conceived for the established resident, rendering the new resident invisible. We design 'smart' cities, but they are often only smart for those who already speak the right language and possess the right documents.

This invisibility is compounded by a lack of culturally diverse governance. When local bodies and planning committees fail to reflect on the cosmopolitan reality of the metropolis, homogeneous perspectives inevitably dominate plans for profoundly heterogeneous spaces. Planning for schools, transport hubs or public parks often misses the mark when planners do not recognise, or account for, the needs of recent, diverse demographic shifts.

Designing cities 'for all'

The urban future we wish to reimagine must be layered. Simply designing better infrastructure will not deliver the desired outcome if the human element of belonging is ignored. Cities are not static blueprints; they are dynamic ecosystems. We need to stop viewing them as spaces defined by fixed, hard boundaries and start seeing them as fluid entities with an infinite capacity to expand, reconfigure and include.

To proactively bridge the cultural divide, city planners must anticipate potential friction – the clash between the 'known' and the 'new', the 'us' and the 'them'. A small, targeted investment in cultural sensitisation training for public-facing staff could be the essential ingredient. This training is not just about politeness; it is about operational efficiency and upholding democratic rights.

For any truly transformative change to succeed, we must prepare for temporary commotion on the path to greater development and a better social outcome.

A city must be imagined, designed and governed with all the inhabitants who call it home: those who were born here, those who have lived here for decades, and those who will arrive tomorrow. We must design a city that is dynamic enough to embrace future growth, welcome diversity and encourage amalgamation and regeneration.

The missing link

For an inclusive, sustainable, urban future, let us commit to designing cities – not just for the infrastructure they contain but for the people that they are built to serve. The true missing link in the tale of our interconnected realities is empathy: the recognition that the comfort, security and validated belonging of the lived experience is the ultimate measure of successful urban design.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Environment under siege

The government of the day appears to be systematically diluting environmental protection laws. In the mindless pursuit of development, favouring industries and business houses, the damage that is being caused to the environment is also endangering the quality of life of citizens. There needs to be a mass movement to stop this madness before irreversible damage is done.

V. Padmanabhan,
Bengaluru

Aspirants, their plight

There are 92,000 Group-2 candidates in Andhra Pradesh whose plight needs to be highlighted. For over five years, we have worked very hard, spending our money on coaching classes and buying books. We are young people, many from middle class families and lower, just waiting for a job. Most Group-2 aspirants are facing financial problems but the greater worry is of being "age barred". The arguments for the Group-2 roster case were concluded and the judgment was reserved nearly three months ago (September 23, 2025). But the final judgment is still pending.

Sunkari Narayanarao,
Hyderabad

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the postal address.

Can propaganda be great art?



Asim Siddiqui

teaches English Literature at Aligarh Muslim University, writes opinion pieces on Hindi cinema, and is the author of Muslim Identity in Hindi Cinema: Poetics and Politics of Genre and Representation



Sudhanva Deshpande

Theatre personality, author, and film actor

PARLEY

Can propaganda be art? This question has divided critics, artists and audiences. Leni Riefenstahl's films glorifying Nazism and Soviet poster art are often cited as propaganda that transcended their purpose to become enduring art. Recently, this debate has resurfaced with the success of Aditya Dhar's Hindi film *Dhurandar*. While critics have panned it for blending real-life events with fiction to push an ultra-nationalist narrative, defenders praise its technical finesse, immersive storytelling and raw intensity, suggesting it goes beyond mere messaging. Asim Siddiqui and Sudhanva Deshpande discuss art and propaganda in a conversation moderated by **Anuj Kumar**. Edited excerpts:

Several works of art, books, theatre, and films are often called propaganda. How exactly would you define propaganda?

Asim Siddiqui: In an absolute sense, you can say that all art is propaganda. That means whether it is cinematic art, literature, or poetry, it is talking about certain ideas. But these days, when we use the word 'propaganda', we are using the word in a very specific sense where a filmmaker, writer, or artist has a clear agenda to make a selective use of facts, ideas, and maybe images to try and persuade a group of people to accept a particular point of view. It nakedly panders to raw emotions. And by doing that, it tries to mold public opinion.

Sudhanva Deshpande: Propaganda must be seen in the context of a broader ecosystem. Propaganda is typically not something that one person does alone. There are organised forces behind the work that is seen as propaganda.

Would you say *Dhurandhar* is well done propaganda, as many believe? How does it compare with *The Kashmir Files* and *The Kerala Story,* which are seen as explicit propaganda?

AS: It is certainly better than those films. It tries to narrate a story and create characters, but I would place it within that broader ecosystem of which the other two films are part.

SD: In the Hindi film industry, there has been a concerted effort by forces of Hindutva to take control of the film industry in some ways, and this is done both officially as well as through non-state actors – trolls and vigilantes on the ground, institutions of the state, and networks of funding, financing, exhibiting films.

For instance, when *The Kashmir Files* came out, in several BJP States, government institutions gave their employees the day off or bought them tickets. Social media too was promoting the film. So the commercial success of the film was orchestrated.

However, despite this orchestration, films such as *The Kashmir Files* and now *Dhurandhar* are still exceptions commercially, in the sense that many films that do propagate the Hindutva point of view don't do well.



A still from Dhurandhar.

AS: Also, earlier, you would not have imagined that many of these films would get a National Award. [*The Kashmir Files]* got an award for national integration, which appears ironic.

What is the difference between propaganda in the service of power and that which questions power?

SD: Every artist and work of art must decide where they stand in the larger scheme of things. Do they think that the existing status quo, the power relationships in society, are fine and need to be strengthened? Or do they believe that the status quo needs to change? In other words, do the poor and those who have been marginalised for centuries also need to become stakeholders in society? Now, if you believe that, then of course your art will also argue that. But that is not propaganda; you are going against the grain of power and against values and beliefs that are entrenched in society. On the other hand, if you believe that, say, caste is fine, that the vast majority should be treated as somewhat less than human, you are working in favour of the entrenched ideology.

There is no Indian Muslim character in *Dhurandhar*. Is the film still addressing them in some sense?

> Every artist and work of art must decide where they stand in the larger scheme of things. Do they believe that the status quo needs to change? If they do, that is not propaganda; they are going against the grain of power and against values and beliefs that are entrenched in society.
> SUDHANVA DESHPANDE

AS: There are certain dog whistles in the film. At one moment in the film, one character talks about Pakistan and says it is not our 'enemy number one'. It says you have many enemies within India, and, of course, there are different terms for them as well. In that sense, it is also part of the ecosystem we have discussed. There is no Muslim character who is positive, and you can also consider the absent characters; they are not named, but you can hear those dog whistles.

SD: The othering of Muslims and the depiction of Muslims as kind of enemies within or as negative characters is not new per se. In *Angaar* (1992), the Muslim don's family is shown as less than human. There is a clear connection between the depiction and the overall atmosphere of Islamophobia that started building up with the Ram Janmabhoomi movement and the demand for the demolition of the Babri Masjid from the mid-1980s onwards. And as it reached a crescendo, you find more and more such films being made.

There is a section that feels that the present nationalist propaganda is a counter to the cinema of the 1950s to 1970s, which was inspired by the progressive writers' movement. And if Mehboob Khan and Raj Kapoor pushed the idea of a Nehruvian India, films such as *Uri* and *Dhurandhar* represent the 'new' India.

SD: It is completely misplaced, a false equivalence drawn by the right wing. I can't think of a single film inspired by the progressive writers' movement that actively went out to encourage or make its audience feel hatred towards a particular caste or community. I don't remember anybody in the 1950s saying he was afraid to make a film because of the attacks he would face from the state or society. Yes, there was Emergency in the 1970s. That was a dark period in Indian history when films such as *Kissa Kursi Ka* were banned, and that was terrible. But by and large, that was an exception.

The other aspect of the propaganda of this moment is about everything that is prevented from being made. For instance, in a film on Jyotirao Phule, there was a need to remove caste names of caste groups.

My filmmaker and writer friends tell me that now you have to deliberately include scenes and dialogue that incite rage-baiting, to create a social media storm around the film. This is done so that people who would ordinarily not have gone to see the film end up watching it.

Some people say that they have enjoyed a work of propaganda even while being sceptical of its message. Would you say that it is ethical to appreciate a work's artistic qualities, given that it aims to manipulate your beliefs?

AS: There may be certain parts in a film or book which you may like. It is not unusual for viewers to clap for a bad guy in a film. Sometimes a film can also hold a kind of sinister charm. When you are engrossed in a film, you can enjoy the visuals, songs, images, and acting. The discourse that arises from a film comes later. I liked *Raees* in parts, but also found it deeply problematic.

SD: Art is a complex business that operates on many levels. I grew up with *Sholay*. I love the film, but I don't endorse the idea of the benevolent, patriarchal feudalism at its heart: the character of the Thakur and his being the saviour of the village. I didn't particularly like *Tezaab*, but I found *'Ek Do Teen'* terrific and Madhuri Dixit's performance absolutely amazing. Having said that, you might watch a film whose message you agree with but still find the film somewhat boring.

Does propaganda inspire critical thinking?

AS: Critical thinking can never be dead. It makes us discover old films and books, watch and read them afresh, wonder why we liked them and, sometimes, question why we rejected them in the first place.

SD: The more you argue against something, the more there is curiosity about it. I come from a family where nobody reads or speaks Urdu. The language was never part of my world as I was growing up. But by the time I was in college, there was a whole anti-Urdu sentiment being stoked. I became curious about the language and started reading Urdu poets and writers in the Devanagari script.

To listen to the full interview
Scan the code or go to the link
www.thehindu.com

NOTEBOOK

A snapshot of Rajan who broke stories but never saw a byline

Grassroots activists are often journalists' best friends

M. Kalyanaraman

It was the year 1997. A Ramanathapuram taluk office press release was terse. It merely said some 10 people in a Dalit village called Palkarai near Ramanathapuram town had converted to Islam. For a city-bred rookie reporter like me, it seemed like a juicy story to dig into. But a religious conversion story was a bit beyond me. I consulted senior journalists in Chennai and was directed to Rajan of Madurai. Rajan came to Ramanathapuram to be my chaperone during my field trip to Palkarai.

Rajan was an apt candidate for Marxian theorist Antonio Gramsci's idea of an organic intellectual. Born in a Pariar family, Rajan learned political theory from his milieu and from books. He knew the terrain and the people and, more importantly, the needs of journalists.

Grassroots activists are often journalists' best friends but they typically have organisational agendas. Rajan knew his Marx and Ambedkar but never really sought to be an organiser, let alone a leader. He did not have the self-importance to drive him. Although the issues mattered to him, he was anarchic and represented no organisation. He was an honest interlocutor for upcountry English language journalists.

Rajan got by on a day-to-day basis. One good meal and drinks made his day. His pockets were often empty and he would ask for just enough money from friends to take him to his next stop by bus where he would crash at a verandah.

Like the academic intellectual, and unlike the organic intellectual, Rajan often preferred to be an objective observer, not a participant. The foibles of the Left and the activists amused him endlessly. He would roar with laughter describing them to me.

At Palkarai though, the Dalit villagers refused to engage with us. They were angry and suspicious of journalists. To break the ice, Rajan asked, "Can you get us some water? We are thirsty."

Rajan took a few gulps from the jug the villagers brought. I said I wasn't thirsty, but he insisted that I also drink the water. He later explained that for Dalits, this meant breaking untouchability barriers.

I asked them why some of them became Muslim. They had a counter question: "Why did the police put a case against our boys and let them out only on conditional bail?"

Rajan loudly explained to me, so the villagers could also hear. A police case meant entering police records permanently. This in turn meant losing any chance of landing government jobs through reservation as Hindu Scheduled Castes. Conversion was, among other things, an act of protest for these Dalits who had nothing to lose, he implied. And Rajan was lending a sympathetic ear, which opened up the Dalit villagers even more to us.

The case had been slapped on the youth for rioting during the caste riots that raged in Tamil Nadu at that time.

Palkarai Dalits then spoke about the Thevar village next door and how Thevar youth would often call them names and harass them. No public bus stopped at their village. "If I sported a beard and wore a Muslim cap, no one would dare to humiliate me. Buses would stop to pick us up," said one youth who had converted. Rajan had broken another granular story bearing brilliant insights. But his name was never in the bylines. And he did not seek any other personal benefit either.

Twenty years later, I visited Palkarai during elections. The Muslim converts had moved to the edge of the village, closer to the main road. Aazan chimed out of a new, shining mosque that had come up.

Years of vagrant living took a toll on Rajan. He married and had children but never really held a steady job. Alcohol consumed him and a stroke followed, confining him to the bed for some 10 years. He passed away recently.

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PICTURE OF THE WEEK

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas



Devotees visit the St. Michael and All Angels Church on the eve of Christmas in New Delhi. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

FROM THE ARCHIVES The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO DECEMBER 26, 1975

Chinese oil for U.S.: deal in the offing

Tokyo, Dec. 25: China will soon start exporting substantial quantities of crude oil to the United States under a contract it is now negotiating with a major American oil interest, according to reports received here to-day from Peking.

This new but not unexpected development in Sino-American trade relations was disclosed yesterday by Mr. Yao Yilin, Chinese Vice-Minister of Foreign Trade, during a meeting with a high level Japanese trade and economic mission led by the former Foreign Minister, Mr. Aiichiro Fujiyama, which is now visiting Peking.

Japanese correspondents in Peking quoting mission sources said Mr. Yao did not give the name of the American oil company with which the negotiations were taking place but indicated that the negotiations were now in the final stage. Executives of various American oil companies such as Exxon, Caltex and Gulf Oil as well as the Commerce Secretary, Mr. Roger Morton, have visited Peking earlier this year to discuss oil problems but this is the first time that negotiations on an actual oil deal are reported to have taken place between the two countries.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO DECEMBER 26, 1925

Prohibition for Madras

Salam, Dec. 25: A public meeting of the citizens of Salem was held last evening at the Victoria Market, Salem, under the presidency of Janab Sowear Ghouse Mehideen Sabib, a zealous non-co-operator. Mr. C. Rajagopalachariar delivered an interesting lecture on "Legislative Council Election and Total Prohibition". Mr. Achariar explained how much the country was drained by people indulging in drink habits. He asked the electorate to give their votes only to those who solemnly declare that they would carry on the movement of total prohibition.

From Page One

BNP leader calls for 'secure' Bangladesh

The death of Hadi on December 18 was followed by escalating attacks on minority Hindu community of the country. Offices of two prominent newspapers were also burnt down. The BNP had strongly condemned the attacks, especially the brutal lynching of Dipu Chandra Das that took place in Mymensingh hours after Mr. Hadi's death.

In view of the worsening security situation in the country, Mr. Rahman called for protecting the administrative machinery of Bangladesh and said, "We must preserve law and order in this country at any cost and must remain calm and composed in the face of any provocation." Mr. Rahman was accompanied from the Hazrat Shah Jalal International Airport till the venue of the rally at July 36 Expressway by the members of the BNP Standing Committee – Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, Amir Khosru Mahmud Choudhury, Gayeshwar Chandra Roy, Salauddin Ahmed and Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku.

Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami's Ameer Shafiqur Rahman and leader of Islami Andolan Bangladesh, Mufti Syed Mohammed Rezaul Karim have welcomed Mr. Rahman's return to Bangladesh's political landscape. Leaders of the newly launched National Citizen Party (NCP) have also greeted Mr. Rahman on his return home.

On his return, the BNP launched the campaign for the February 12, 2026 election highlighting the role of Mr. Rahman's father General Ziaur Rahman in introducing major economic initiatives and foreign policy changes during his tenure in the late 1970s.

The BNP narrative gave General Zia the credit for announcing the Independence of Bangladesh on March 26, 1971 hours after the Pakistani forces launched Operation Searchlight on March 25, 1971 to kill freedom fighters.

Intel grid linked to NPR with details of residents

The Hindu reported on December 7 that NATGRID is, on an average, getting nearly 45,000 requests a month. The platform, accessible only to security agencies, became operational last year after being conceptualised in 2009 in the aftermath of the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks.

The data for NPR, which stores information family-wise, were first collected in 2010 with the first phase of the 2011 Census and was last updated in 2015 through door-to-door enumeration. It was to be updated further during the 2021 Census, which has been delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

On December 12, when the Union Cabinet approved the proposal for conducting Census 2027 at a cost of ₹11,718 crore, there was no separate allocation for the NPR. Earlier on July 29, the government informed the Lok Sabha that no decision had been taken to update the NPR during the forthcoming Census exercise.

The NPR is the first step for the creation of a countrywide National Register of Citizens (NRC).

Elaborating about "Gandiva", a State police official said the details of all family members of a suspect or a person of interest, if available in the NPR, could be accessed through the platform. Gandiva can be used for facial recognition and entity resolution.

"If the image of a suspect is available, it can be fed into Gandiva. If any photo identity document such as telecom KYC or vehicle registration or driving licence matches with the photo, Gandiva can provide the details, thereby saving time and resources of an investigator," said the official.

Senior leader, 3 other Maoists killed in Odisha

With this major breakthrough, Odisha stands at the threshold of becoming completely free from Naxalism. We are resolved to eliminate Naxalism before March 31, 2026," Mr. Shah asserted. The Maoist violence, which had once affected more than 13 districts in Odisha, is now confined to regions around Kandhamal district and its bordering district.

"Since the last three days, the Odisha Government has been carrying out a big operation at Ganjam-Kandhamal border. Today, we have been successful in our efforts. Since morning, there have been repeated exchanges of fire at different locations, in which four Maoists have been neutralised. Firearms have been seized. Central committee member Ganesh Uike, the head of Odisha operations, has been neutralised," said Y. B. Khurania, Director General of Police, on Thursday.

Ganesh (69), a native of Pullemla in Chandur Mandal of Nalgonda district in Telangana, was among a few active Maoist central committee (CC) members. "This is a huge success for security forces. The death of Ganesh has broken the backbone of Maoists in Odisha," said Mr. Khurania. Two INSAS and one .303 rifles have been seized.

Over the past three years, security forces, acting on intelligence inputs, have targeted senior leaders of the CPI (Maoist). The outfit, which once had 21 CC members, now has fewer than five, said a top police officer here.

According to top sources, the role of Ganesh was to guide Divisional Committee Members, Area Committee Members and Primary Members to start fresh recruitments for CPI (Maoist).

The Odisha DGP said there were no reports of any casualties on the part of security forces.

Migrant worker from Bengal killed in Odisha

Police say the murder was triggered by a 'sudden provocation'; the labour contractor alleges that local miscreants asked workers for Aadhaar proof to establish nationality and attacked suddenly

Satyasundar Barik
BHUBANESWAR

A construction worker from Murshidabad district in West Bengal was killed on Wednesday evening after miscreants attacked him and two other workers after allegedly demanding their Aadhaar cards in the western Odisha town of Sambalpur.

The Sambalpur police said six people have been arrested in connection with the murder.



Police have arrested six people in connection with the killing of a construction worker in Odisha's Sambalpur. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

'No targeted attack'

A statement issued by Inspector-General of Police (northern range) Himansu Lal said, "All the accused have been arrested in the murder case registered at Ainthapali police station of Sambalpur. Further investigations are underway. The murder was related to a sudden provocation and did not involve targeting anyone."

While the Odisha Police said the murder was triggered by a "sudden provocation", the contractor who engaged the workers in Sambalpur said, "The miscreants called the workers Bangladeshis, demanded Aadhaar cards to prove their nationality, and launched a sudden attack from behind."

"Juyel Rana, 19, and two other workers in their early twenties had gone to a tea stall around 7 p.m. when a group of four or five people accused them of being Bangladeshi and demanded Aadhaar proof. When my workers were going to bring their respective Aadhaar cards, the gang started beating them with sticks. Rana was hit on his head and died of injuries while being rushed to a hospital," said Haque Saheb, a labour contractor from the Jungipur area of Murshidabad.

Additional Superintendent of Police Srimant Barik said, "The workers had befriended a group of locals in Sambalpur and often used to have food together. Under the influence of alcohol, a quarrel broke out when the locals asked for a *bidi*. One person was attacked out of the sudden provocation. A head injury due to the attack led to his death."

Sources said migrant labourers from West Bengal working at construction sites in Sambalpur have started leaving the town.

In August, the police in Jharsuguda had picked up 444 people under suspicion of being illegal immigrats. After verification, most of them were found to be from West Bengal.

Migrant worker killed for speaking Bengali: Trinamool

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

The killing of a migrant worker from Murshidabad in West Bengal in Sambalpur of Odisha drew a strong reaction from the Trinamool Congress leadership on Thursday. The party said the worker was "murdered for speaking Bengali".

Juyel Rana, who had gone to Odisha for work with a group of youth, was allegedly attacked by a group of people who wanted to see his identity documents. Rana's family members said he had gone to work on December 20 and was killed for no fault of his own.

The local police and Trinamool leaders visited Rana's house. Suti MLA Emani Biswas said the youth had been killed in the BJP-ruled State for speaking Bengali and on suspicion of being a Bangladeshi.

Senior Trinamool leader and Minister Shashi Panja held a press conference in Kolkata and asked, "How long will Bengalis be punished just because Bengal did not bow down to the BJP? How many lives will this politics of hatred claim? Is the only crime of those who work hard, with honour, and demand civil rights that they speak Bengali?"

West Bengal Migrant Welfare Board Chairperson Samirul Islam said the migrant worker was "lynched to death and two others were injured after BJP's goons attacked them and labelled them as Bangladeshi infiltrators".

Murshidabad BJP MLA Gaurishankar Ghosh said the Chief Minister had tarnished the image of the State nationwide by "patronising infiltrators", and held her responsible for what he claimed lack of trust towards Bengalis.

West Bengal Pradesh Congress President Subhankar Sarkar said the government should immediately open a department to prevent harassment of migrant workers from Bengal and protect livelihoods.

Schoolteacher shot dead inside Aligarh Muslim University

Mayank Kumar
LUCKNOW

Opposition Congress lashed out at the State government, alleging collapse of the law and order

Rao Danish Ali, a teacher working at the ABK High School inside Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), was shot dead by unidentified assailants in Aligarh on Wednesday, the police and university officials said. Mr. Ali, a computer science teacher, had been working at the school for the past 11 years. The shooting took place around 9 p.m. near the Maulana Azad Library area. Mr. Ali was out on his routine evening walk when two men on a scooter stopped him and allegedly threatened him with pistols. "You don't know me yet, now you will," said one of the attackers.

"Danish Rao, a teacher at the ABK School, was shot in the head and later died at the medical college," said Mohammad Wasim Ali, Proctor of the university.

The Opposition Congress lashed out at the State government over the incident, alleging that the law and order situation had collapsed with the ruling dispensation busy exploiting the social fault lines. "Law and order situation in the State has fully collapsed. Murder inside a prestigious campus like AMU is a dangerous matter. The priority of the police is not policing as they work like a caste group acting in a discriminatory way," said Congress national secretary Shahnawaz Alam.

Unnao case: appeal in SC against suspension of Sengar's sentence

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

An appeal has been filed in the Supreme Court on Thursday challenging the suspension of prison sentence of expelled BJP leader Kuldeep Singh Sengar by the Delhi High Court in the 2017 Unnao rape case.

The petition was filed by advocates Anjale Patel and Pooja Shilpkar, represented by advocate Sanjeev Malhotra. It has urged the court to stay the High Court order.

"The moot question for consideration before the Supreme Court is whether the High Court was justified in entertaining and allowing the application for suspension of sentence and grant of bail when the trial court, after appreciating the entire evidence on record, had not only awarded life imprisonment but also directed that the accused shall undergo incarceration for the remainder of his natural life, thereby reflecting the gravity and heinous nature of the offence," the appeal challenged the High Court order of December 23.



Sengar's sentence was put on hold till the pendency of his appeal challenging his conviction and sentence in the rape case. FILE PHOTO

The plea argued that the High Court erred without adequately appreciating the findings and observations of the trial judge while "ignoring the seriousness of the offence, and solely relying upon the period of custody of approximately seven years and five months".

The High Court order did not follow any settled principles of criminal jurisprudence or binding precedents, and shook the foundations of public belief in fair criminal justice administration, the plea submitted.

Sengar's sentence was put on hold by the High Court till the pendency of his appeal challenging his conviction and sentence in the rape case. He has challenged the December 2019 trial court verdict in the case.

He would however remain in jail since he was also serving 10 years' imprisonment in the custodial death case of the victim's father. He has not been granted bail in that case. The former BJP leader had however separately appealed against his conviction in this case also on the ground that he had already spent a substantial time in jail.

Sengar was found guilty of kidnapping and raping the survivor when she was a minor.

In August 2019, the apex court had transferred a total of five cases of crimes committed against the Unnao rape survivor and her family from a CBI court in Lucknow to its counterpart in Delhi.

Indian Army relaxes social media policy, allows 'passive participation'

Saurabh Trivedi
NEW DELHI

Active engagement, including posting, commenting, sharing, or sending messages, remains prohibited

After years of stringent restrictions on social media use, the Indian Army has revised its policy to allow "passive participation" by its personnel on select platforms, while maintaining strict safeguards to protect operational security.

According to an Army Headquarters order accessed by *The Hindu*, personnel are now permitted to access platforms such as Instagram and X solely for viewing and monitoring content.

Any form of active engagement, including posting, commenting, sharing, reacting or sending messages, remains strictly prohibited.

The revised guidelines, issued by the Army Headquarters through the Directorate General of Military Intelligence (DGMI), have come into effect immediately.



Personnel can now access platforms such as Instagram and X, only to view content.

As part of the update, Instagram has been formally included in the list of restricted-use social media platforms.

The policy allows access to applications such as Instagram only for "purposes of viewing and monitoring". "No comments or views will be communicated on Instagram," the order stated, reiterating the Army's emphasis on protecting sensitive information.

The guidelines further permit limited use of communication platforms such as Skype, Telegram, WhatsApp and Signal, but only for the exchange of unclassified information of a general nature. Such communication is allowed exclusively with known individuals, with the responsibility of verifying the recipient resting entirely with the user.

For platforms including YouTube, X, Quora and Instagram, only passive use to access information or gain knowledge has been authorised. Uploading user-generated content or engaging in any form of active participation remains prohibited.

LinkedIn may be used only for professional purposes such as uploading résumés or seeking information related to prospective employers or employees.

The revised policy also advises personnel to avoid generic websites, portals offering cracked or pirated software, free movie platforms, torrent and VPN services, web proxies, anonymised websites, chat rooms and file-sharing platforms. It further cautions that cloud-based data storage services should be used only with extreme care.

In July 2020, amid heightened security concerns, the Indian Army had directed all officers and soldiers to delete their Facebook and Instagram accounts, along with 89 mobile applications, warning of strict action for non-compliance.

The banned list included 59 applications with links to China, which were also prohibited by the Union government at the time.

Railway Ministry notifies fare hike

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The Railway Ministry on Thursday officially notified a hike in train ticket prices by 1 paise per km for ordinary class beyond a journey of 215 km, and 2 paise per km for non-AC classes of mail/express trains and AC classes of all trains.

On December 21, the Ministry announced its decision to increase the passenger fares from December 26.

Justifying its decision, the Ministry stated that the rationalising of fares has "the objective of balancing affordability for passengers and sustainability of operations".

"Under the revised fare structure, there is no change in fares for suburban services and season tickets, including both suburban and non-suburban routes. For ordinary non-AC (non-suburban) services, fares have been rationalised in a graded manner across second class ordinary, sleeper class ordinary, and first class ordinary," the Ministry said.

APPEAL



Master Mohammad Zeeshan, Health 1 Super Speciality Hospital Code No. INM23035, 8 years son of Mr.Mohammad Imran is suffering from Thalassemia Major and has been on Regular Blood Transfusion from 6 Months of age. The only curative option for this condition is Bone Marrow Transplantation (B.M.T.). The overall cost for the Transplant would be about Rs.10, 00,000/-

Please send donation however small by Cheque/D.D/M.O Fav. **Save Poor Lives** A/c Mohammad Zeeshan, **Our A/c Details:** S/B A/c No. 20000913487. S.B.I. R.A.Puram, IFSC CODE:SBIN0001855. Please Donate by G-pay No.9884607377, UPI Id: savepoorlives@oksbi. Donations are exempted under 80G of I.T. ACT.

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Christmas service in a church in New Delhi on Thursday. ANI

Modi attends Christmas service in Delhi church

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Marking Christmas, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday attended the Christmas morning service at the Cathedral Church of the Redemption in New Delhi. The service included prayers, carols, hymns and a special prayer for the Prime Minister by the Rt. Rev. Dr. Paul Swarup, Bishop of Delhi.

"Attended the Christmas morning service at the Cathedral Church of the Redemption in Delhi. The service reflected the timeless message of love, peace and compassion. May the spirit of Christmas inspire harmony and goodwill in our society," Mr. Modi said in a post on X.

The Prime Minister also extended Christmas greetings to citizens. "Wishing everyone a joyous Christmas filled with peace, compassion and hope. May the teachings of Jesus Christ strengthen harmony in our society," he said in another post on X.

PM inaugurates Rashtra Prerna Sthal in Lucknow

Spread over 65 acres, the lotus-shaped memorial has three towering bronze statues of ex-PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee, and Hindutva ideologues Deen Dayal Upadhyay and Shyama Prasad Mookerjee

Mayank Kumar
LUCKNOW

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday inaugurated the Rashtra Prerna Sthal to honour the life and ideals of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and two other Bharatiya Janata Party icons in Lucknow on Thursday.

Spread over 65 acres, close to the banks of the Gomti river on Hardoi Road, the Rashtra Prerna Sthal is dedicated to Vajpayee, and Hindutva ideologues Deen Dayal Upadhyay and Shyama Prasad Mookerjee. Shaped like a lotus, reflecting the BJP's election symbol, the memorial has three towering bronze statues of the late leaders.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with U.P. Governor Anandiben Patel, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, U.P. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and others at the inauguration in Lucknow on Thursday. PTI

Historic event: Modi

Describing the event marking the late Prime Minister's 101st birth anniversary as historic, Mr. Modi said Lucknow was witnessing a new inspiration. He further said "birth anniversaries of two great sons of our country", Vajpayee and Mahamana Madan Mohan Malaviya, "who had left an ineradicable mark on nation-building through their contributions", fell on the day. "The Rashtriya Prerna Sthal is an inspirational memorial dedicated to the lives, ideals, and invaluable heritage of our country's greatest figures. I felt immense pride and spiritual satisfaction inaugurating it in Lucknow on Good Governance Day. Atal *ji*'s birth anniversary is also a day to celebrate good governance. Today, we are expanding the legacy of good governance created by the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance government. The National Prerna Sthal embodies the spirit that has guided India to self-respect, unity, and service. The statues of Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya, and Atal Bihari Vajpayee give us the message that every step and every effort should be dedicated to nation-building," Mr. Modi said.

He said the state-of-the-art lotus-shaped museum at the venue brings to life the spirit of selfless leadership and good governance. "It will continue to inspire future generations to embrace and embody the ideals of our leaders," he said. The Prime Minister said the land on which the Prerna Sthal has been built had, for decades, accumulated a mountain of garbage across over 30 acres, which had been cleared in the past three years.

Addressing the gathering, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said the country's progress over the past decade was guided by the principle of taking pride in India's leadership, heritage and values, a theme consistently emphasised by the Prime Minister.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said "the legacies of Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee *ji*, Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya *ji* and Atal *ji* had provided India with a new national vision".

Aravallis row: BJP, Cong. trade charges over mining data

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The war of words between the government and the Opposition over the Aravalli hills continued on Thursday, with the Congress alleging that a redefinition of the Aravallis would leave more than 90% of the hill range unprotected and open to mining and other activities.

Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav countered the charge, saying the Forest Survey of India (FSI) had not conducted any study measuring the height of the Aravalli hills.

In a post on X, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said there was a contradiction between the Prime Minister's "global talk and local walk" on environmental issues. Citing FSI data, Mr. Ramesh said, "If we take all Aravalli hills identified by FSI, not even 1% exceeds 100 metres. The FSI believes, and rightly so, that height limits are dubious and all of the Aravallis irrespective of height should be protected."

Responding to the charge, Mr. Yadav said the claim was incorrect and that no such study had been conducted by the FSI. "I know why you are spreading these lies despite FSI issuing a categorical denial," he said, sharing an FSI post on X that rejected the assertion that it had undertaken any such survey.



Bhupender Yadav

The Minister added that Mr. Ramesh's criticism lacked credibility and said, "Maybe your 'environmentalist hat' would be credible if you questioned your party colleague Ashok Gehlot about who destroyed the Aravallis."

Mr. Yadav also rejected the Congress claim that over 90% of the Aravallis would lose protection under the redefinition. "You and your coterie are rattled because we have issued a total ban on mining in the Aravallis from Gujarat to Delhi."

Responding to this, Mr. Ramesh accused the Minister of continuing to "mislead" and "misinform" on the issue. He alleged that the FSI, now under the administrative control of the Ministry, would say "whatever the Minister wants and is directed to".



Jethabhai Bharwad

BJP veteran quits as Deputy Speaker of Gujarat House

Press Trust of India
AHMEDABAD

Gujarat Assembly Deputy Speaker Jethabhai Bharwad resigned from his post on Thursday, citing his "busy schedule" and other responsibilities, the State government said in a release.

Mr. Bharwad, accompanied by Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel and BJP State president Jagdish Vishwakarma, handed over his resignation to Speaker Shankar Chaudhary at the latter's official residence in Gandhinagar.

Mr. Chaudhary has accepted the resignation, it said.

Mr. Bharwad (75), who also goes by the name Jethabhai Ahir, is a six-time MLA for the Shehra constituency in Panchmahal district. The veteran BJP legislator was elected Deputy Speaker for the first time in September 2021 and was re-elected to the post after the Assembly election in 2022.

Carrying the red flag into the next century

As the Communist Party of India marks a century of political engagement, its legacy invites reflection on the task to rebuild India on the foundations of equality, secularism, and justice



D. Raja
General secretary of the Communist Party of India

On December 26, 2025, the Communist Party of India turns 100. This centenary is not merely the marking of time for a political party but a moment of historical reflection on a movement that profoundly shaped India's freedom struggle, its vision for the future of the nation, and its social and economic vision. From its earliest years, the CPI gave voice to the revolutionary slogan "Inquilab Zindabad", coined by Maulana Hasrat Mohani – who chaired the Reception Committee of the historic Kanpur Conference – and immortalised by Bhagat Singh and his comrades. Through communist activists, this call for revolutionary transformation travelled to every nook and corner of the country, becoming a living expression of resistance, hope and patriotism. The CPI emerged confronting colonial rule and sought to answer a fundamental question confronting the national movement: freedom for whom and to what end. Over a century, the CPI has consistently argued that political independence without social and economic transformation would leave the masses trapped in old and new forms of exploitation.

The historical roots of the CPI lie in its uncompromising struggle against colonial capitalism. British imperialism subordinated India's economy to the needs of foreign capital, destroyed indigenous industries, imposed exploitative land relations, and produced widespread poverty. At the same time, it created a modern working class and exposed Indian revolutionaries to global currents of socialist thought, particularly after the Russian Revolution of 1917. Indian activists and revolutionaries who encountered Marxism abroad or through international networks began to see that national liberation and social emancipation were inseparable. This understanding matured into organisational form with the founding of the CPI in December 1925 at Kanpur.

Marxist theory, Indian realities

The Kanpur conference brought together revolutionaries, trade unionists, and anti-imperialist activists committed to building a revolutionary party rooted in Marxist theory and Indian realities.

The CPI's role in the fight against colonial rule was uncompromising and profoundly patriotic. Unlike strands of nationalism that sought accommodation with imperial power, the communists understood colonialism as a system of economic exploitation sustained by political domination. They fought British rule through trade union struggles, peasant movements, underground resistance, and ideological battles. Their patriotism was rooted not in elite negotiations but in the lives and struggles of ordinary Indians.

One of the CPI's most enduring contributions was its emphasis on building mass organisations. The party recognised that political emancipation could not be achieved without mobilising society in all its diversity. It helped build and strengthen platforms such as the All India Trade Union Congress, the All India Kisan Sabha, the All India Students' Federation, cultural and writers' organisations like the Progressive Writers' Association and the Indian People's Theatre Association, and, later, organisations of women and youth.



Social emancipation: It was through mass struggles that communist politics acquired its deepest roots. G. RAMAKRISHNA

Through these formations, the CPI united workers, peasants, students, intellectuals, and artists around shared struggles.

It was through mass struggles that communist politics acquired its deepest roots. The CPI led historic movements for land and dignity, including the Telangana armed struggle against feudal oppression, the Tebhaga movement in Bengal that asserted peasants' rights over their produce, the Punnapra-Vayalar struggle in Kerala against landlord tyranny, and the militant land struggles of the Thanjavur delta. In industrial centres such as Kanpur, Bombay, Calcutta, and Puducherry, the trade union movement under communist leadership won major labour victories, securing rights, wages, and dignity for workers.

The CPI decisively radicalised the agenda of the national struggle. At a time when dominion status was being debated as a possible compromise, the communists insisted on complete independence. They were among the earliest and most consistent advocates of the demand for a Constituent Assembly, arguing that only a sovereign body elected by the people could frame a democratic Constitution. This demand later became central to India's transition to independence. The party placed structural reforms at the centre of the freedom struggle, arguing that independence without land reforms, labour rights, and social equality would merely replace foreign rulers with indigenous elites.

Land redistribution, abolition of landlordism, protection of tenants, trade union rights, minimum wages, and social security were pushed into the national agenda through communist-led movements. The CPI articulated the vision of a classless and casteless India, recognising caste not as a cultural residue but as a material system deeply intertwined with class exploitation. By linking caste oppression to economic structures, the party broadened the meaning of social justice and gave the freedom struggle a transformative content. Many of these demands found reflection in the Constitution and in post-independence policy debates.

Independence in 1947 did not end the CPI's struggle. It marked the beginning of a new phase focused on dismantling feudal structures, resisting monopolistic capitalism, and deepening democracy. The party led historic peasant struggles against landlordism and played a decisive role in advancing land reforms in States such as Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Tripura, and Bihar. In parliamentary and extra-parliamentary arenas, the CPI championed public ownership of key sectors of the economy and consistently advocated the nationalisation of banks, coal, insurance, and other core industries, arguing that strategic resources must serve national development and social welfare rather than private accumulation.

Defender of federalism

The CPI was also a strong defender of federalism and linguistic and cultural diversity, strengthening India's democratic fabric. Its commitment to social justice found expression in its defence of the rights of Dalits, Adivasis, minorities, and women, as well as its steadfast adherence to secularism and rational thought. Across decades, the red flag symbolised reform, progress, and resistance to reactionary forces.

Today, as the CPI enters its second century, India confronts grave challenges. Communalism and emerging fascism threaten the foundations of the Republic. Economic growth has been accompanied by massive unemployment, precarity, and widening inequalities.

For the Left, the challenge is to once again become synonymous with the aspirations of the masses. This requires renewing its understanding of contemporary capitalism while remaining anchored in its core values of equality, democracy and justice.

At this critical juncture in our history, the centenary of the CPI is not merely a moment of remembrance but a call to action. Democracy itself is under assault, people's rights and livelihoods are being systematically eroded, and the achievements of the freedom movement are being deliberately undone. The RSS-BJP combine seeks to dismantle our social solidarity, hollow out our economic sovereignty, and subvert the Constitution to impose an authoritarian, exclusionary order. This danger cannot be resisted in fragments. The CPI and the Left must be strengthened and brought closer together to form a broad democratic resistance. Class exploitation, caste oppression, and patriarchy remain formidable structures of domination, demanding organised and uncompromising struggle. The task before us is clear: cleanse institutions of their corrosive influence, reclaim the Republic, and rebuild India on the foundations of equality, secularism, and justice. United we must resist. United we must advance. United we must create a new India: egalitarian, democratic, and prosperous. The red flag must rise higher. The people must prevail. The future must be ours.

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INBRIEF



Constitution of India released in Santhali language

President Droupadi Murmu on Thursday released the Constitution of India in the Santhali language at a function held at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. The Santhali language is spoken by a significant number of tribal people in Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal, and Bihar. The President said it is a matter of pride for all the Santhali people that the Constitution of India is now available in their language, written in the *Ol Chiki* script. It will enable them to understand the Constitution in their own language, she added. Vice President C.P. Radhakrishnan and Union Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal were present on the occasion. PTI

FSSAI bars food firms from terming herbal infusions 'tea'

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has issued a stern warning to food business operators against using the word 'tea' for herbal infusions and plant-based blends not derived from *Camellia sinensis*, terming it a case of misbranding and misleading practices under the law. The directive comes after the regulator found several food business operators (FBOs) marketing products, such as 'herbal tea' and 'flower tea', none of which are obtained from the *Camellia sinensis* plant. According to FSSAI regulations, the term 'tea' can only be used on packaging and labelling if the beverage is derived from *Camellia sinensis*. PTI

Allahabad HC quashes case against shooter Vartika Singh

The Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court has quashed criminal proceedings against international shooter Vartika Singh in a case alleging preparation of forged letters at the behest of a Union Cabinet minister. A Bench headed by Justice Rajeev Singh on December 19 observed, "There is no evidence of cheating against the applicant in the entire material available before the court. No enquiry was made as to who had prepared the fake documents." The incident occurred in April 2020, when Rajneesh Singh, known to Smriti Irani, allegedly promised Ms. Singh to nominate her as a member of the National Commission for Women. PTI

Anti-terror conference to be inaugurated by Amit Shah

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will inaugurate the Anti-Terror Conference being organised by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Friday. The two-day conference includes sessions on collecting evidence from foreign jurisdictions, digital forensics and data analysis in counter-terrorism investigations, effective trial management, and emerging hybrid threats to national security, among other topics related to terrorism. The conference is being attended by senior police officers from States, officers from Central agencies dealing with counter-terrorism and experts from related fields such as law, forensics, technology among others.

915 Maharashtra villages back dignified life for widows

Vinaya Deshpande Pandit
NASHIK

Last week, an official of the Masal gram panchayat of the tribal taluka of Surgana in Nashik district passed away at a private hospital in Beed during treatment. Within hours, the message of his last rites was circulated among the villagers. As it informed the fellow villagers of his demise, it also gave one key message.

"In consonance with the idea of maintaining the dignity of our women, it was decided that the evil tradition of wiping away of vermilion, removal of bangles, toe rings and *mangalsutra* (akin to *thaali* worn by married women), will not be followed," the message said about the family's decision to not let the widow of the official face the social humiliation.

"We are sad about his unfortunate demise, but this is the first response to our effort in stopping the evil traditions which humiliate our women," the message read further.

For centuries now, the tradition of publicly removing the ornaments considered to be the symbols of marriage for a woman has been prevalent in Maharashtra.

This includes the villagers coming together and gathering around the widowed woman to strip her off her bindi, her necklace, her toe rings, her bangles. The tradition is humiliating for the widows who are made to socially realise the lack of their status.

While it is not openly followed in many urban areas anymore, it is still a common practice in the rural areas.

Defying societal norms

But now, 915 villages in Maharashtra's Nashik district have passed a resolution that they will not follow this evil tradition in their villages anymore. Moreover, over 1,100 couples have also signed an affidavit saying they will not let their spouse face this humiliation after their death. The women have signed the affidavit saying they will not follow this tradition, and that they will not let the society strip them off their dignity.



Couples and gram panchayat members of Chandshi Gram Panchayat after passing the resolution. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The affidavit, signed on a bond paper of ₹100 by each couple, is named *'Saubhagyache Shapathpatra'*. It states, "We follow the progressive ideas of Mahatma Phule and Gopal Ganesh Agarkar. As a responsible part of the society, we have complete faith in equality, freedom and dignity enshrined in our Constitution. Even today, a woman is subjected to humiliation after the demise of her husband. Evil traditions like the stripping of her ornaments, wiping off her vermilion, stopping her from wearing certain coloured clothes, are among the social and religious restrictions placed on her. They are painful and unscientific, and are in complete contravention of her fundamental rights. So, we pledge that we will not follow any such evil traditions. We will work to spread social awareness against them. We will not impose anything on women against their own will."

A single village in Sinnar named Gulwanch has given 250 affidavits so far. Schoolchildren have also started spreading awareness of the evil tradition, performing street plays and convincing their parents to sign the affidavits.

A woman from Chandshi had tears in her eyes as her gram panchayat passed the resolution against it.

"Don't let anyone remove these ornaments. There should be a law against it. As women, we are in full support of this move," she said.

The move is a part of the Navchetana programme being implemented by the Nashik Zilla Parishad for the past three months. The programme aims at spreading social awareness against the ill-treatment to widows and empowering them with workshops, self-employment opportunities, loans, education for their children.

"Maharashtra is a progressive State which has always been at the forefront of social reforms. These practices not only strip the women of their dignity, they also make them feel inferior in the social setup after they lose their spouses. That is why we decided to implement this programme. For the social assimilation of the widows, we also organise '*haldi-kunku*' programme at each village. The idea is, there should be no social discrimination against widows," said Omkar Pawar, Chief Executive Officer of Nashik Zilla Parishad.

Rajasthan to set education requirements for local polls

The Hindu Bureau
JAIPUR

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in Rajasthan is considering reintroduction of a requirement for educational qualification for the candidates fighting the Panchayati Raj and urban local body elections to be held in 2026. The previous Congress government had waived the rule in 2019.

The provision for compulsory education for candidates was introduced in the State in 2015 during the tenure of the then Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje. The Congress had strongly opposed the move, and made it an issue during the 2018 Assembly election campaign.

Minister of State for Local Self-Government Jhabar Singh Kharra said here on Thursday that a proposal to implement educational qualifications for various positions had been sent to Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma.

According to the proposal, the candidates for the position of Sarpanch should have at least secondary grade education. For candidates contesting the post of ward councillors, a minimum qualification of either secondary or senior secondary should be required.

Circulatory system ailments caused most deaths in 2023: report

Such diseases accounted for 36.4% of all medically certified deaths in the country, says report released by Office of the Registrar-General of India

Abhinay Lakshman
NEW DELHI



According to the report, deaths due to circulatory system diseases were highest for people aged above 70. FILE PHOTO

Diseases of the circulatory system remained the leading cause of medically certified deaths across India in 2023, a report released this week by the Office of the Registrar-General of India said. Such diseases accounted for 36.4% of all medically certified deaths in the country, says the "Annual report on medical certification of cause of death, 2023" of the RGI.

The figure was four percentage points lower than that of 2022, when over 40% of certified deaths were caused by these diseases.

The report looked at causes of deaths that were medically certified out of the total registered deaths across the country. For 2023, the report noted that 22% of all deaths registered in the Civil Registration System had been medically certified, which was 0.3 percentage points below that of the previous year (2022).

According to the report, diseases of the circulatory system were the leading cause of death in medically certified cases, with diseases of pulmonary circulation or other heart diseases causing more than half of these deaths. A breakdown by age showed that deaths due to circulatory system diseases were highest for people aged above 70. People aged between 55 and 64 had the second highest incidence of such deaths.

However, the report noted that in age cohorts starting from 15 years of age, diseases of the circulatory system were the leading cause of death reported.

The release of the data comes amid academic journals reporting an increase in heart attacks among younger people in India, with a study quoting Indian Heart Association data that half of all heart attacks in Indian men occur under the age of 50.

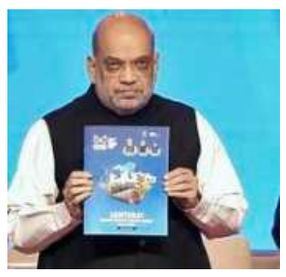
The report further noted that the medical certification of cause of deaths occurs in different States and Union Territories with different levels of efficiency, noting that only Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, Delhi, Goa, Lakshadweep were medically certifying more than half of registered deaths.

'India will soon become self-reliant in semiconductors'

Mehul Malpani
BHOPAL

Union Home Minister Amit Shah is confident that India will soon become self-reliant in the semiconductor industry and start exporting despite making a "late entry" into the sector.

Addressing the "Abhyudaya: Madhya Pradesh Growth Summit" in Gwalior on Thursday, Mr. Shah said, "We have made a late but a spectacular entry into the semiconductor industry. We not only will become self-reliant in the sector in no time but also start exporting."



Amit Shah at the Abhyudaya Madhya Pradesh Growth Summit held in Gwalior.

Mr. Shah inaugurated industrial projects worth more than ₹2 lakh crore across the State, while marking the 101st birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who was born in Gwalior.

The Minister praised Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav for conducting regional investment summits in different parts of the State to attract businesses in the regions. He said that the tradition of structured industrial conclaves was started by Prime Minister Narendra Modi when he was the Chief Minister of Gujarat.

"Investment used to come into the State through the Vibrant Gujarat Summit. This was a successful effort, but Mohan Yadav *ji* took a new initiative of holding regional investment conclaves for a balanced development of the State. This initiative will greatly benefit all States in the future for their balanced development," Mr. Shah said, while praising the State's geographical location for the potential of its industrial growth.

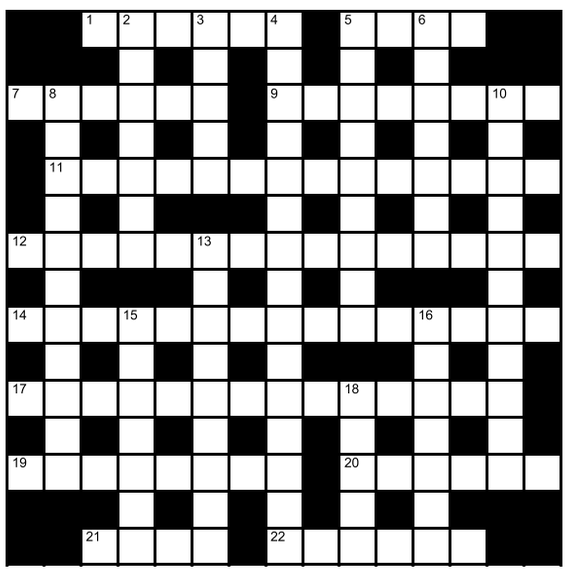
"If a State does not develop in a balanced manner, it cannot progress, as immense potential lies hidden in every region. Cotton has been a traditional crop for farmers in the Malwa and Chambal regions, but due to lack of fair prices, cotton cultivation had declined significantly. Now, through the PM MITRA Park, cotton has once again become a profitable crop," he said.

TH CROSSWORD + 14675

(set by Crescent)

Solve this puzzle online and access more puzzles at *https://crossword.thehindu.com*

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

1 Sacking friend, difficulty arises (6)
5 Piece of sausage in rolled wraps, baloney? (4)
7 Duck is tipped by game bird (6)
9 Receivers have one each on one end of receiver to rest on the phone (8)
11 Nobles taken in by spoof with dim, deceptively sage utterances (6,2,6)
12 Let's focus on card played, the diamond nine (5,2,8)
14 About time to follow beach crowds with right article at home - bucket? (4,4,3,4)
17 Uncomplicated version of India limits panic abroad (14)
19 Irritating counter, say not available on call (8)
20 Weak insect folds in one millisecond (6)
21 King inspired by silly questions (4)
22 One piping hot spilt by assistant following final in play (6)

Down

2 Rackets favouring a Republican in America (7)
3 Aluminium seen later in brass perhaps? True (5)
4 Busy, sly gossip preens attractively (15)
5 Challenge hospital leads to fight onset of disease in urban area (9)
6 Scrap metal from disc is selectively sampled (7)
8 Drink before turning up to share matter in gathering (11)
10 Representatives for overseas commerce start war with Government consent (5,6)
13 Names one probes after operation are those not transparent? (9)
15 Retracted nail heads by means of special claws (7)
16 Divine execution independent boards judge (7)
18 Just out of line, foul (5)

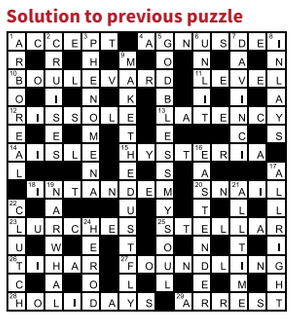
SUDOKU

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3					2	1		
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5				9				8
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No.SS6742 Distribution: www.knightfeatures.com

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Solution to previous puzzle



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

4	5	1	3	6	2	7	9	8
7	6	3	9	8	1	4	5	2
8	2	9	5	7	4	1	6	3
9	7	6	2	3	5	8	4	1
2	4	8	6	1	9	5	3	7
1	3	5	8	4	7	6	2	9
3	8	2	1	5	6	9	7	4
6	9	7	4	2	8	3	1	5
5	1	4	7	9	3	2	8	6

FAITH

Goal to aspire for

In answer to Pareekshit's question about what he should meditate on, sage Suka says that first of all he must meditate on the Virat form of Vishnu. Lord Brahma was able to create only because Lord Mahavishnu taught him to. And this came about after Brahma did dhyana of Virat Purusha, said Valayapet Ramachariar in a discourse.

During the *mahapralaya* (great deluge) everything is dissolved, and Brahma's life too ends. When the Lord brings forth the world again, He teaches Brahma the Vedas, so that the latter can go about his task of creating. The Vedas contain a lot of information, including what we should do to destroy our enemies. There are also portions which tell us about how to reach svarga. But we must not pay attention to any of these. We must turn our attention only to the philosophical portions of the Vedas, which will eventually lead us to Sri Vaikuntha. But if the Vedas are extolled as divine, then how and why should some portions be ignored? The Vedas give according to what we seek from them. Suppose there is a large river, and you are thirsty. You need just a jug of water to quench your thirst. The fields in the area naturally need more water for irrigation. So each takes from the same river according to their needs. Likewise, not everyone aspires for moksha. There may be people who do not know the significance of liberation, and who may be quite content with being in svarga. So they take from the Vedas what they need. But the best goal to aspire for is moksha, and for such aspirants, those parts of the Vedas that deal with svarga and other such matters are of no use. They must focus on what will lead them to the Lord's feet.

INBRIEF



Sun unit recalls 17,000 units of antifungal shampoo in U.S.

Taro Pharmaceutical Industries, a unit of Sun Pharma, is recalling over 17,000 units of an antifungal medication in the U.S. due to manufacturing issues, as per the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (U.S.FDA). As per its latest Enforcement Report, U.S.FDA stated that Hawthorne-based Sun Pharma/Taro is recalling 17,664 units of Ciclopirox Shampoo, an antifungal medication that treats seborrheic dermatitis, a condition causing dry, flaky and itchy skin. PTI

Indian exporters can help NZ cut China dependence: GTRI

Indian exporters in various sectors like agriculture, petroleum, pharma, apparel, electronics and auto have the potential not only to scale up shipments to New Zealand but also help the island nation reduce its dependence on China. According to think tank GTRI, in 2024-25, New Zealand imported goods worth over $10 billion from China compared to just $711 million from New Delhi. Wellington's total imports in that fiscal year were $50 billion. PTI

'Institutional reforms, fiscal consolidation key to growth'

Industry body CII on Thursday urged the government to push institutional reforms and fiscal consolidation in the forthcoming budget to maintain India's growth momentum. These suggestions formed part of the strategy outlined by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) for strengthening India's macroeconomic stability, based on key pillars including debt sustainability, fiscal transparency, revenue mobilisation and expenditure efficiency. PTI

Navi Mumbai International Airport starts operations

In initial phase, NMIA is designed to handle 20 million passengers per annum (MPPA), with future expansion planned to scale capacity up to 90 MPPA, supported by dedicated cargo terminals

Lalatendu Mishra
MUMBAI

Adding a new aviation gateway to the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA), developed and operated by Adani Airports, on Thursday commenced commercial flight operations making an over-30-year dream and planning a reality.

This greenfield airport, established to take the load off the existing Mumbai airport, is being built in phases. In its initial phase, NMIA is designed to handle 20 million passengers per annum (MPPA), with future expansion planned to scale capacity up to 90 MPPA, supported by dedicated cargo terminals and multi-modal connectivity.


Taking flight: The airport, built to take the load off Mumbai airport, is being constructed in phases. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The launch positions Mumbai toward a distributed, multi-airport model seen in global city-regions such as London, New York, Moscow, Tokyo and Shanghai.

New gateway

The opening adds a critical new gateway for a region that has faced sustained congestion for over a decade. Planned as part of a distributed aviation framework, NMIA supports Mumbai's transition to a multi-airport system aimed at improving capacity, operational resilience and long-term scalability, the airport operator said.

On the first day, domestic services were operated by IndiGo, Air India Express, Akasa Air and Star Air, connecting NMIA to nine destinations across India.

NMIA handled 48 flights connecting nine domestic destinations, serving over 4,000 passengers, with peak traffic recorded between 05:00 and 07:00 hours.

Navi Mumbai region may head for rapid infra, realty growth

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI


Navi Mumbai International Airport SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The commencement of commercial flight from the Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA) is expected to speed up infrastructure and real estate development across Navi Mumbai and surrounding regions, according to analysts and industry executives.

Several major infrastructure projects have gained pace. These include the Atal Setu (Mumbai Trans Harbour Link), the Alibaug-Virar Multimodal Corridor, the Mumbai-Navi Mumbai Metro and improved connectivity to the Mumbai-Pune Expressway.

This enhanced infrastructure network is directly boosting demand for residential as well as luxury housing in the region, officials said.

"While micro-markets closest to NMIA will benefit immediately, its larger impact will unfold across strategically connected locations such as Khopoli," said Mohit Malhotra, founder & CEO, NeoLiv.

GCCs keep India's technology job market alive as IT lags

Mini Tejaswi
BENGALURU

Global Capability Centres, (GCCs), offshore subsidiaries set up by multinational corporations, are now the primary engine sustaining India's technology job market, contrasting sharply with the hiring slowdown witnessed by large IT firms in the country.

In the October-December quarter of FY26, GCCs demonstrated resilience logging 5-7% sequential growth and 48% of GCCs planning workforce expansion in the coming year, signalling strategic growth, driven by a pivot to high-value, specialised work, as per data exclusively shared by Tholons, a New York-based advisory firm.


GCC roles are being created to support AI adoption.

'Pivot to high value'

"This people's growth is strategic, driven by a pivot to high-value and specialised work. The current hyperactivity in GCC space is a second wave of capability, not just cost-arbitrage, and it is about positioning the GCC as the strategic core for high-end talent and R&D," Avinash Vashishtha, CEO and Chairman of Tholons Inc., and former chairman and CEO of Accenture India, told *The Hindu*.

As per Tholons, India now hosts 1,850 GCCs employing almost two million professionals and projected to have more than 2,400 GCCs by 2030 and employ more than three million workers to achieve a $125 billion market size, signalling transition into strategic 'enterprise AI brains.'

On GCC jobs coming up even in non metros, Mr. Vashishtha said GCC growth had been widespread as Tier II and Tier III cities such as Nagpur, Indore, Coimbatore and Kochi recorded 8-9% quarterly growth, decentralising the tech workforce beyond major metros.

"A specialised nature of this growth commands a premium salary. GCCs offer 12-20% higher salaries compared with traditional IT services firms," he said.

Quantum growth

Xpheno, a specialist staffing firm in Bengaluru, conducted a comparative study of the leadership talent growth between IT services and the GCC sector. The IT services expanded leadership talent pool from 88,600 to 90,700 from December 2024 to December 2025 and this net addition of 2100 leaders translated into 2.4% growth. In comparison, high-growth GCCs logged a net addition of 3,400 leaders to move from 44,000 to 47,400, at a high 7.7% growth rate.

Kamal Karanth, co-founder, Xpheno, said the growth trends of the leadership talent pool are a reflection of the overall growth patterns and prospects of the GCC sector.

India to head conflict-free diamond body Kimberley Process from January

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Through a consensus, the Kimberley Process (KP) Plenary has selected India to be its chairperson from January 1, 2026. This is the third time India will chair the Kimberly Process, a tripartite initiative involving governments, the international diamond industry and the civil society to prevent the trade in "conflict diamonds"–rough diamonds used by rebel groups or allies to finance conflicts undermining legitimate governments, as defined in UN Security Council resolutions.

"India's selection reflects global trust in the government's commitment to fostering integrity and transparency in international trade," Commerce & Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said in a statement.

The Gem & Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC), the nodal agency for the Kimberley Process (KP) in India, has welcomed India's selection.

'Risk of AI-led disruptions to white-collar jobs lower in India than in West'

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

India faces a lower risk of AI-driven disruption to cognitive jobs compared to Western economies, IT Secretary S. Krishnan has said, citing the country's relatively lower proportion of white-collar roles in the overall workforce and highlighted that the dominance of STEM-based employment can yield newer opportunities.

He said AI's (Artificial Intelligence) real impact will come from building and deploying sector and use-specific applications, a process requiring large numbers of trained professionals. He added this is where India's strength lies and where new AI-driven job opportunities will emerge.

"... For India, where the number of white-collar jobs relative to other jobs is much lower than in the West, this risk to cognitive jobs, I don't think, is as serious as it is in other places," he said in an interview.

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252623 003793	Procurement of Latex - 2 (Pre Coat - SBR Binder) for Board Machine (CCK) of TNPL Unit - II.	09.01.2026
252623 003794	Procurement of Acrylic Binder - 1 for TNPL Unit - II.	08.01.2026

Corrigendum if any will be issued in TNPL Website and NIC Portal only. For further details, please visit websites : **www.tnpl.com / https://tntenders.gov.in/nicgep/app**

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DINDIGUL DISTRICT
Roc No: 007108/ 2023/ E4 — E-Tendering Tender Notice — Date: 24.12.2025

Dindigul City Municipal Corporation invites Bids from eligible Bidders through e-procurement portal for **"Construction of New Bus Terminal at Dindigul City Municipal Corporation with Operation and Maintenance for the period of 5 years"**. Bidders shall submit their Bids through online e-procurement portal **https://tntenders.gov.in** upto **03.00 PM** (as per the time in the server clock of the tender portal) on **12.02.2026.** The Bids will be opened through online at **3.30 PM.** on the same day **(12.02.2026)**

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Bid Value (Rs. in lakh)	Bid Security (Rs. in lakh)	Period of availability of bid document	Date and time of Bid opening	Period of Completion
1.	Construction of New Bus Terminal at Dindigul City Municipal Corporation with Operation and Maintenance for the period of 5 years		65.29	27.12.2025 to 12.02.2026 upto 3.00 PM	12.02.2026 at 3.30 PM	18 Months
	Estimated cost for Construction	5502.00				
	Estimated cost for Operation and Maintenance for the period of 5 Years (Excluding electricity charges)	1027.00				

1. The Bid documents shall be made available from **27.12.2025.**
2. The Bid documents may be downloaded from the website **(https://tntenders.gov.in)** at free of cost upto **3.00 PM** on **12.02.2026.**
3. Bids through e-submission shall only be accepted.
4. Pre-bid meeting will be held on **09.01.2026** at **11.00 AM** in the Office of the **Dindigul City Municipal Corporation, Main Road, Dindigul – 624 001.**

DIPR / 6843 / TENDER / 2025 — **Commissioner, Dindigul City Municipal Corporation**

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU
RAMANATHAPURAM DISTRICT
RAMANATHAPURAM MUNICIPALITY
Roc No: 3172 / 2025 / E1 — **E-Tendering Tender Notice** — Dated: 24.12.2025

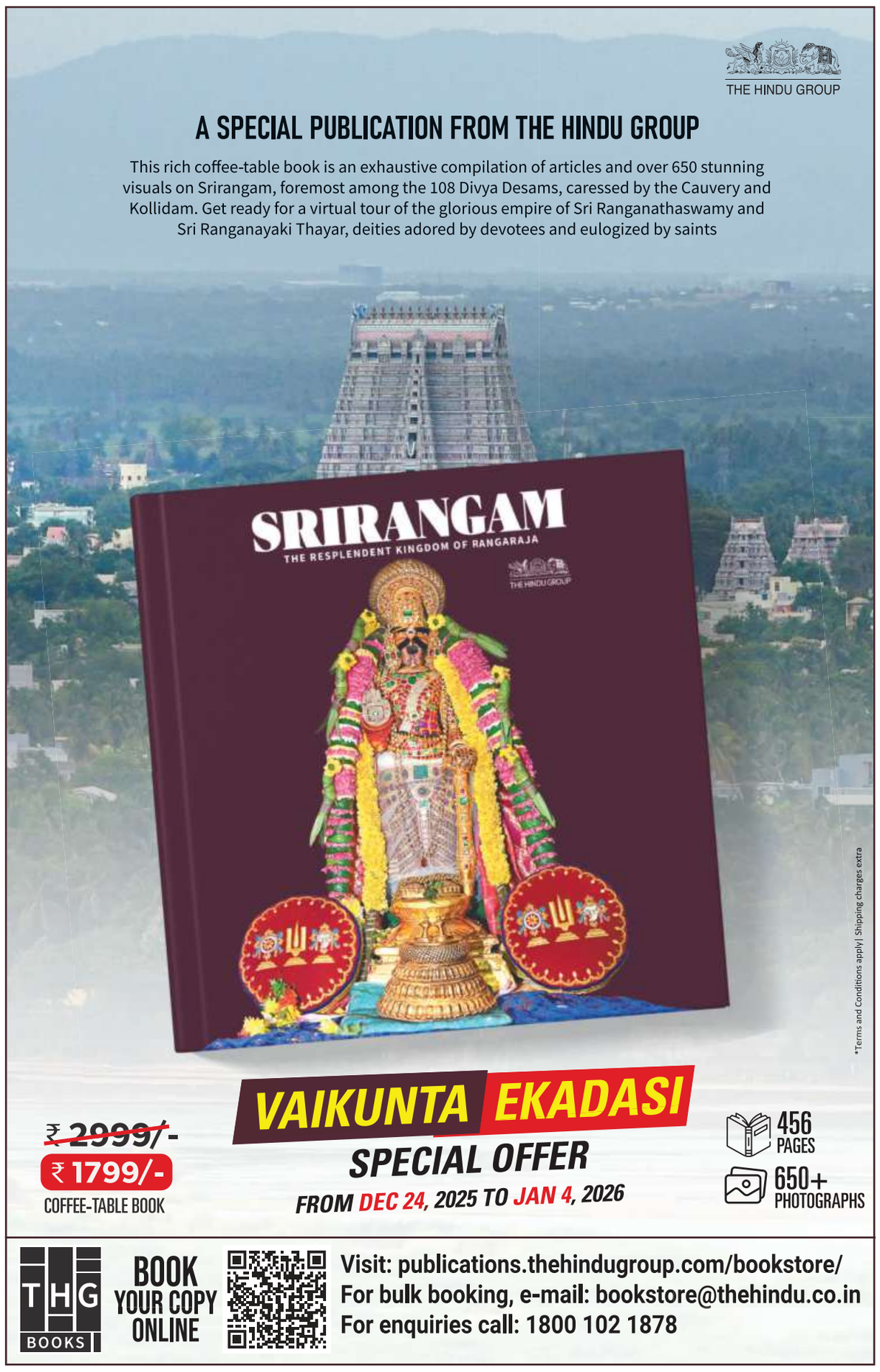
Ramanathapuram Municipality invites Bids from eligible Bidders through e-procurement portal for "Restoration, Development, Interlinking and protection of 25 Water Bodies in Ramanathapuram Municipality with Operation and Maintenance for the period of five years". Bidders shall submit their Bids through online e-procurement portal **https://tntenders.gov.in** up to **03.00 PM** (as per the time in the server clock of the tender portal) on **10.02.2026.** The Bids will be opened through online at **3.30 PM.** on the same day **(10.02.2026).**

Sl No	Name of Work	Bid Value (Rs. In lakh)	Bid Security (Rs. In lakh)	Period of availability of bid document	Date and time of Bid opening	Period of Completion
1	Restoration, Development, Interlinking and protection of 25 Water Bodies in Ramanathapuram Municipality with Operation and Maintenance for the period of five years		47.78	26.12.2025 to 10.02.2026 up to 3.00 PM	10.02.2026 at 3.30 PM	12 Months
	Estimated cost for Restoration, Development, Interlinking and protection of 25 Water Bodies	3966.00				
	Estimated cost for Operation and maintenance for the period of 5 Years (Excluding electricity charges)	812.00				

1. The Bid documents shall be made available from **26.12.2025.**
2. The Bid documents may be downloaded from the website **(https://tntenders.gov.in)** at free of cost up to **3.00 PM on 10.02.2026.**
3. Bids through e-submission shall only be accepted.
4. Pre-bid meeting will be held on **07.01.2026 at 11.00 AM** in the Office of the Ramanathapuram Municipality, Annal Gandhi adigal Salai, Ramanathapuram - 623504.

DIPR / 6844 / TENDER / 2025 — **Commissioner, Ramanathapuram Municipality**

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MOSCOW

Russia downs 16 Moscow-bound Ukrainian drones, says mayor



AFP

Russian air defence units downed 16 Moscow-bound Ukrainian drones throughout the day on Wednesday, Moscow mayor Sergei Sobyanin said. The Russian Defence Ministry said its air defence units destroyed 172 Ukrainian drones overnight, nearly half of them over regions bordering Ukraine. REUTERS

DHAKA

Another Hindu man lynched in Bangladesh over alleged extortion



PTI

A Hindu man, identified as Amrit Mondal, was lynched in Bangladesh over an extortion allegation, media reports said on Thursday, days after another man was lynched in the country. The incident took place on Wednesday in Rajbari town's Pangsha upazila, *The Daily Star* newspaper quoted police as saying. PTI

DUBAI

Saudi Arabia urges separatists in Yemen to cede seized territory



AP

Saudi Arabia's Foreign Ministry on Thursday formally called on Emirati-backed separatists in Yemen to withdraw from two governorates their forces now control in the country, a move that threatens sparking a confrontation within a fragile coalition battling the Houthi militants. AP

WASHINGTON

DOJ says it may need a 'few more weeks' to fully release Epstein files



REUTERS

The Justice Department said on Wednesday that it may need a "few more weeks" to release all of its records on the late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein after suddenly discovering more than a million potentially relevant documents, further delaying compliance with last Friday's congressionally mandated deadline. AP

U.S. military ordered to focus on 'quarantine' of Venezuela oil: official

The move signals a preference for economic sanctions rather than military intervention to pressure Caracas; U.S. President had earlier stated it would be 'smart' for Maduro to leave power; Coast Guard is reportedly pursuing a third vessel, *Bella-1*

Reuters
WASHINGTON



A Security Council meeting to discuss 'ongoing U.S. aggression' against Venezuela being held in New York on Tuesday. REUTERS

The White House has ordered U.S. military forces to focus almost exclusively on enforcing a "quarantine" of Venezuelan oil for at least the next two months, a U.S. official told Reuters, indicating Washington is currently more interested in using economic rather than military means to pressure Caracas.

"While military options still exist, the focus is to first use economic pressure by enforcing sanctions to reach the outcome the White House is looking (for)," the official said on Wednesday, speaking on condition of anonymity.

While President Donald Trump has been publicly coy about his precise aims regarding Venezuela, he has privately pressured Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro to flee the nation. Mr. Trump said on Monday it would be smart for Mr. Maduro to leave power.

"The efforts so far have put tremendous pressure on Mr. Maduro, and the belief is that by late January, Venezuela will be facing an economic calamity unless it agrees to make significant concessions to the U.S.," the official said.

Mr. Trump has accused the South American country of flooding the U.S. with drugs, and his administration has for months been bombing boats originating in South America that it alleges were carrying drugs. Many nations have condemned the attacks as extrajudicial killings.

Mr. Trump has also frequently threatened to start bombing drug infrastructure on land, and has authorised covert CIA activity directed at Caracas. So far this month, the U.S. Coast Guard has intercepted two tankers in the Caribbean Sea, both fully loaded with Venezuelan crude.

The comments by the official come after it was reported that Coast Guard was waiting for additional forces to carry out a third seizure, first attempted on Sunday, against an empty sanctioned vessel known as the *Bella-1*.

Venezuela's UN Ambassador Samuel Moncada said on Tuesday: "The threat is not Venezuela. The threat is the U.S. government."

Trump-backed candidate wins Honduras presidency

Associated Press
TEGUCIGALPA

Trump-backed candidate Nasry Asfura won Honduras's presidential election, electoral authorities said on Wednesday afternoon, ending a weeks-long count that has whittled away at the credibility of the Central American nation's fragile electoral system.

The election is continuing Latin America's swing to the right, coming just a week after Chile chose the far-right politician José Antonio Kast as its next President.

Mr. Asfura, of the conservative National Party, received 40.27% of the vote in the November 30 vote, edging out four-time candidate Salvador Nasralla of the conservative Liberal Party, who finished



Nasry Asfura

with 39.53% of the vote.

The former mayor of Honduras' capital Tegucigalpa, won in his second bid for the presidency, after he and Mr. Nasralla were neck-and-neck during a weeks-long vote count that fuelled international concern.

On Tuesday night, a number of electoral officials and candidates were already fighting and contesting the results of the election. Meanwhile, followers in Mr. Asfura's campaign headquarters erupted into cheers.

Mr. Asfura, in a video statement released late Wednesday night, promised to be a unifying force for the Central American nation.

"Today, with deep gratitude, I accept the honour of being able to work for you. I extend my hand so we can walk together with determination to work tirelessly for Honduras. I will not fail you," he said.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio congratulated Mr. Asfura, writing on a post on X: "The people of Honduras have spoken ... (the Trump administration) looks forward to working with his administration to advance prosperity and security in our hemisphere."

China flays Pentagon report alleging bid to weaken U.S.-India ties

Press Trust of India
BEIJING



Lin Jian

China on Thursday denounced a Pentagon report, which accused Beijing of leveraging reduced border tensions with India to undermine U.S.-India ties while deepening defence ties with Pakistan as an attempt to sow discord with false narratives.

"The Pentagon's report distorts China's defence policy, sows discord between China and other countries, and aims at finding a pretext for the U.S. to maintain its military supremacy," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian told a media briefing here when asked about the U.S. Department of War report submitted to the American Congress.

On the references to the Line of Actual Control in the U.S. report, Mr. Lin said, "The current border situation between the two countries is generally stable with smooth communication channels".

Israel slams countries over new West Bank settlement criticism

Agence France-Presse
JERUSALEM

Israel reacted furiously on Thursday to a condemnation by 14 countries including France and Britain of its approval of new settlements in the occupied West Bank, calling the criticism discriminatory against Jews.

"Foreign governments will not restrict the right of Jews to live in the Land of Israel, and any such call is morally wrong and discriminatory against Jews," Foreign Minister Gideon Saar said.

"The Cabinet decision to establish 11 new settlements and to formalise eight additional settlements is intended, among other things, to help address the security threats Israel is facing."

On Sunday, Israel's far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich announced that authorities had green-lit the settlements, saying the move was aimed at preventing the establishment of a Palestinian state.

"On the ground, we are blocking the establishment of a Palestinian terror state," Mr. Smotrich said.

Excluding east Jerusalem, which was occupied and annexed by Israel in 1967, more than 5,00,000 Israelis live in the West Bank, along with about three million Palestinian residents.

Myanmar junta sets late January date for final round of widely criticised poll

Agence France-Presse
YANGON



Supporters of military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party dance during election campaign in Pyawbwe Township. AP

Myanmar's junta will stage the third and final round of its heavily restricted elections on January 25, a statement said on Thursday, just days before polls open for the first batch of ballots.

Democracy watchdogs say the junta-run vote is a charade to rebrand the rule of the military, which snatched power in a 2021 coup triggering a civil war that has seen much of the country captured by rebel factions.

Democratic figurehead Aung San Suu Kyi remains jailed since the putsch, her massively popular party dissolved, and the United Nations has slated the junta for a sweeping pre-election dissent crackdown.

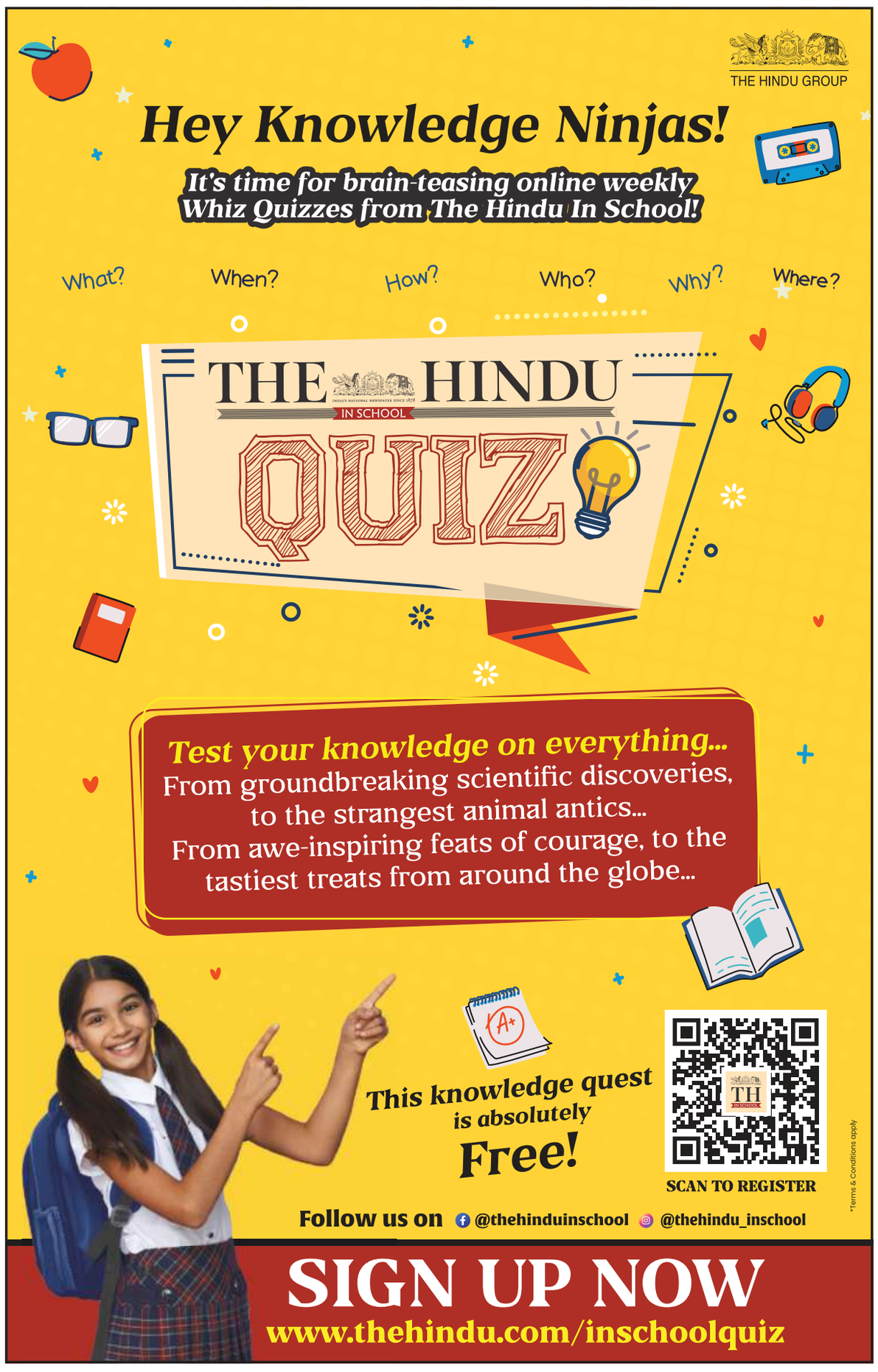
The first round of voting is due on Sunday, with a second bout of ballots due to be cast on January 11.

The junta-stacked Union Election Commission said in a statement a third round will take place in 63 of the country's 330 townships on January 25.

Myanmar's military has ruled the Southeast Asian country for most of its post-Independence history, before a 10-year interlude saw a civilian government take the reins in a burst of optimism and reform. But after Ms. Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party trounced pro-military opponents in 2020 elections, military chief Min Aung Hlaing snatched power, alleging widespread voter fraud.

Gen. Min Aung Hlaing touts the upcoming polls as a return to democracy and a chance for rebels opposing the military to make peace.

Monitors say the ballot is stacked with a curated list of military allies, while the junta has introduced stark legislation punishing protest or criticism of the vote with up to a decade in prison.



RECORD BECKONS

Deepti in sight of 150th T20I scalp, closes in on the format's leader



FILE PHOTO: EMMANUAL YOGINI

Deepti Sharma, who missed the second T20I, is two short of 150 scalps and will hope to reach the milestone in the third match of the series against Sri Lanka. Australia's Megan Schutt (151) is the leading wicket-taker. Deepti, couldn't break the record for most consecutive appearances — Rwanda's Henriette Ishimwe (117).

TWO TO TANGO

Smriti and Shafali on the cusp of a partnership milestone



FILE PHOTO: EMMANUAL YOGINI

Smriti Mandhana and Shafali Verma need to make 82 runs together to take their tally to 3000 runs, something no women have done in partnership in T20I cricket. They are already on top of the list with 2918 from 84 matches. In second place is Australian duo of Alyssa Healy and Beth Mooney (2720, 84 games).

FASTEST FINGERS FIRST

Online ticket sales for fourth edition of WPL go live from today



FILE PHOTO: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

The online ticket sale for Women's Premier League (WPL) 2026 will will go live from December 26. The tickets can be purchased from the official WPL website, and also on District site. The fourth edition of the WPL will be played across two venues – DY Patil stadium in Mumbai and the BCA Stadium in Vadodara – from January 9.

SOLID SUPPORT

My grandfather encouraged me to play for Algeria: Luca Zidane



AFP

Luca Zidane, son of French World Cup-winner Zinedine, said his grandfather had supported him in switching international allegiance to Algeria, after playing for France at the junior level. The decision to switch nationalities came as a surprise. "Being able to honour my grandfather by joining the national team is important."

India hopes to seal series; Lanka looks to fight back

The home team, high on confidence after two emphatic wins, will be keen to continue the dominant run; visiting captain Chamari will need the fellow batters to show more intent and urgency

SRI LANKA IN INDIA

P.K. Ajith Kumar
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

There is a new spring in their steps. The kind of spring that only ultimate success brings.

You could sense it as Harmanpreet Kaur and Harleen Deol stepped out of the team bus, chatted animatedly, and smiled heartily as they headed towards the Greenfield Stadium on a pleasant Thursday evening in a city that was celebrating Christmas quietly. The Women in Blue have several reasons to celebrate these days, of course.

At the start of the week, the BCCI has increased the match fee in women's domestic by more than two times. On the field, they have been absolutely dominant against Sri Lanka. The ODI World champion side has slipped into T20I mode with ease.

Harmanrpreet and Co. should be hoping to carry their form from Visakhapatnam to the third match of the series here on Friday. India had won the first T20I with eight wickets and 32 balls to spare and the second with seven wickets and 49 balls to spare.

In the first match, the Lankans crawled to 121 for six, while in the second they managed 128 for nine. If they want to keep the series alive, they surely need to bat a lot better. And they need their captain to make a big score.

Chamari Athapaththu has been a fantastic servant of Sri Lanka for long. Rarely has her young team needed more from her. She could win a game with her own bat, but she would want other batters to show more intent and urgency than they have shown in the first two matches.

Vishmi Gunaratne scored 39 (43b) in the first game and Harshitha Samarawickrama made 33 (32b) in the second. And they got run-out.

The host's bowlers will be hoping to smother the Lankan batting yet again, though they will be playing on a different surface.

The young seamer Kranti Goud continues to grow in stature, while the depth in India's spin is becoming more and more obvious. The latest tweaker to wear the blue shirt, Vaishnavi Sharma, has impressed, as she claimed two wickets in the last match.

The fans in Thiruvananthapuram, which is hosting its first ever women's international cricket match, would rather want India to bat for more overs than they did in Visakhapatnam and see some sparkling strokeplay from the likes of Smriti Mandhana, Shafali Verma, Harmanpreet, Jemimah Rodrigues – coach Amol Muzumdar said she was resting 'with bit of an issue but is fine' – and Richa Ghosh.







Practice makes perfect: The Indian team left no stone unturned in its preparations for the third match of the series despite breezing through the first two games. NIRMAL HARINDRAN

The teams (from): India: Harmanpreet Kaur (Capt.), Smriti Mandhana, Deepti Sharma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Shafali Verma, Harleen Deol, Sneh Rana, Richa Ghosh, Amanjot Kaur, Arundhati Reddy, Kranti Gaud, Renuka Singh, G. Kamalini, Shree Charani and Vaishnavi Sharma.

Sri Lanka: Chamari Athapaththu (Capt.), Harshitha Samarawickrama, Hasini Perera, Vishmi Gunaratne, Nilakshika Silva, Kavisha Dilhari, Imesha Dulani, Kaushini Nuthyangana, Malsha Shehani, Inoka Ranaweera, Shashini Gimhani, Nimesha Madushani, Kawya Kavindi, Rashmika Sewwandi and Malki Madara.

Match starts at 7 p.m.

'Our power game is not good enough for this format'

P.K. Ajith Kumar
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Chamari Athapaththu didn't quite look like a woman who has had to oversee two crushing defeats in back-to-back-two T20I matches.

She smiled constantly as she spoke of the horrors at Visakhapatnam and the desperate need to bounce back, in Friday's third match against a powerful Indian side.

"I feel we need to improve our batting a little bit, especially in our middle-order and how we finish the game as a batting unit," said the Sri Lankan captain. "Our power game is not good enough for this format."

She was all praise for her counterpart Harmanpreet Kaur and said, "We are good friends."

"We talk about cricket and other things as well. As a cricketer I know she is one of the best leaders because she is the girl who changed Indian cricket. As an Asian, I am really proud of her."

She recalled playing alongside Harmanpreet in the Women's T20 Challenge, the precursor to the WPL.

"We shared the same dressing room when we played for Supernovas," she said.

"I know how she handled situations and how she managed the people in the dressing room."



Eye on the ball: Shafali hones her catching skills ahead of the third T20I. NIRMAL HARINDRAN

'Need to improve in all facets of the game'

P.K. Ajith Kumar
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

It is nice, Amol Muzumdar admits, having this tag of the World champion. The Women in Blue have played like one, too, crushing Sri Lanka in the first two matches of the T20I series.

"They will always carry that now, as they have been, from November 2," the Indian coach said here on Thursday. "It was a fantastic effort in the first two matches. After the World Cup victory, there is a pleasant change in the team. They seem to be happier on the ground as well."

Amol is also happy with the way Vaishnavi Sharma has bowled. The 20-year-old left-arm spinner, making her debut in the series, took two wickets in the last match.

"I think she responded really well to the challenge," he said. "She did what we had asked for. Credit to her that she comes from the under-19 set up. I would like to stress that domestic performance was rewarded by the selectors, so great credit to them."

He said he liked Vaishnavi's control. "Not just her skills," he said. "She showed her mental control, too, out there. She is calm, collected. She looks promising."

The coach said there was a need to speak about improving all the three facets of the game. "Not just fielding," he stressed. "In fact, there is a fourth one now. It is fitness. Batting, bowling, fielding and fitness.

"We consistently talk about all the facets. There is nothing in particular about one facet of the game. We are a progressing side. We want to be a progressing side."

About batting first after India had won the toss, he said, "If we feel that bowling first is a good option, then so be it. And if we feel that batting first would be a better option on this ground, then we will".

Sarfaraz, Musheer keep chasing dreams

HAZARE TROPHY

Shayan Acharya
JAIPUR

It was an optional training session for Mumbai, but Sarfaraz Khan and his younger brother Musheer Khan were among the first few players to hit the nets at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium, here on Thursday.

After starting their Vijay Hazare Trophy campaign with a win over Sikkim courtesy Rohit Sharma's 155, the Mumbai players took it a bit easy ahead of the second fixture against Uttarakhand. But not Sarfaraz and Musheer.

Having made his List-A debut on Wednesday, and forging an 85-run partnership for the second wicket with Rohit, Musheer is brimming with confidence, while for Sarfaraz, the tournament is an opportunity to stay in contention for a comeback to the Indian team.

The road ahead is tough for sure, but riding on a memorable outing in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, where he amassed 329 runs, Sarfaraz not only earned himself an IPL contract with Chennai Super Kings, but also proved that he, indeed, is an all-format player.

With a range of shots in his arsenal, Sarfaraz has also worked on his fitness over the last few months, and admittedly, cutting out the noise has helped him bounce back after a slump in form in the initial phase of the Ranji Trophy.

For Musheer, it has been about "learning as much as possible". Despite some big scores in the Ranji Trophy, Musheer had to warm the bench in SMAT as Mumbai accommodated Yashasvi Jaiswal, Suryakumar Yadav and Shivam Dube.

But following the words of captain Shardul Thakur that "whenever the (India) players come and play, the guys who are slightly junior will have to make way for these guys", Musheer did not lose hope. Rather, he kept himself ready.

It's this indomitable spirit that has got the brothers thus far, and they want to keep chasing their dreams.



Brothers in arms: Musheer and Sarfaraz's indomitable spirit has got them this far. R.V. MOORTHY

FRIDAY'S FIXTURES

Elite: Group A (Ahmedabad): Madhya Pradesh vs. Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand vs. Rajasthan, Pondicherry vs. Tripura, Karnataka vs. Kerala.
Group B (Rajkot): Assam vs. Jammu & Kashmir, Baroda vs. Bengal, Hyderabad vs. Vidarbha, Chandigarh vs. Uttar Pradesh.
Group C (Jaipur): Maharashtra vs. Sikkim, Goa vs. Himachal Pradesh, Mumbai vs. Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh vs. Punjab.
Group D (Bengaluru): Haryana vs. Saurashtra, Andhra vs. Railways, Odisha vs. Services, Delhi vs. Gujarat.
Plate (Ranchi): Bihar vs. Manipur, Meghalaya vs. Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh vs. Mizoram.

I want to live up to CSK's trust: Prashant

Anish Pathiyil
RAJKOT

The last 30 days in young Prashant Veer's career truly embody the essence of the expression 'whirlwind'.

Hectic

The Uttar Pradesh cricketer shuttled between Kolkata and Mumbai to participate in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy and the men's under-23 State A Trophy Elite, respectively, playing seven matches in eight days.

On the evening of December 16, the 20-year-old was picked up for a jaw-dropping sum of ₹14.2 crore by Chennai Super Kings in the IPL mini-auction.

A week later, he made his List-A debut in the ongoing Vijay Hazare Trophy, recording figures of three for 47 along with a four-ball seven with the bat.

Prashant first made headlines in 2025 when he bagged the Emerging Player award in the UPT20 league.

He followed it up with a Player-of-the-Tournament performance in the domestic under-23 one-day tournament. He was expected to attract at least a base price bid at the auction, but destiny had something else in store. He is now the joint-most expensive uncapped recruit along with Kartik Sharma.

"It was quite unexpected for me. Now my focus should be on the game and how to win matches for the team. They have shown trust and I must live up to it," he said.

Big shoes to fill

At CSK, Prashant will be stepping into the shoes of franchise legend Ravindra Jadeja, who left after 13 seasons with the team. However, the southpaw insisted that he wanted to veer away from such comparisons.

"If I think of such things, I might lose focus. Giving my best will be the priority," he explained.

Prashant is still adapting to the demands of elite cricket. The influence of Super Kings' experienced coaching group, and M.S. Dhoni in particular, could be decisive in turning the promise he has shown into something substantial.



Huge expectations: Prashant will be eager to justify his price tag. PRASHANT_RITIK12

INBRIEF



FC Goa players pause play during loss to Istiklol

FC Goa players paused play during the opening seconds of their AFC Champions League Two match against FC Istiklol of Tajikistan in Margao on Wednesday as a symbolic gesture to highlight the uncertainty in the ISL. Goa lost 1-2 to end its campaign with six defeats in six games. Dejan Drazic opened the scoring for the home team in the eight minute, only to see Paul Komolafe equalise in the 53rd minute and Amirbek Dzhuraboev make it 2-1 in Istiklol's favour with a penalty three minutes later.

Shruti, Parul, and Tanvi advance to pre-quarterfinals

Shruti Mundada, Parul Choudhary and Tanvi Patri reached the women's pre-quarterfinals in the senior National badminton in Vijayawada on Thursday. Shruti packed off seventh seed Jiya Rawat 21-14, 21-9, while Tanvi beat eighth seed Isharani Baruah 22-20, 21-19. Unnati Hooda, second-ranked Anupama Upadhyaya, third seed Anmol Kharb and Tanvi Sharma also advanced to the next round. In men's singles, Aryaman Tandon upset third seed M. Raghu 17-21, 21-11, 21-14 in round-of-32. Abhinav Garg and Rithvik S. Sanjeevi also secured spots in pre-quarterfinals.



City Football Group pulls out of its association with MCFC

City Football Group, which owns several top clubs worldwide including English Premier League giant Manchester City, has pulled out of its association with Mumbai City FC amid uncertainty over the future of the ISL, according to sources. The City group acquired a 65% stake in Mumbai City FC in 2019. "Mumbai City FC have bought over the shares of City Football Group," a reliable source privy to the development told. With the latest development, MCFC's ownership may return to Bollywood star Ranbir Kapoor and businessman Bimal Parekh.

LIVE TELECAST

Vijay Hazare Trophy: JioHotstar, 9 a.m.

India Women vs Sri Lanka Women: 3rd T20I, JioHotstar, 7 p.m.

Premier League: SS Select 1 & JioHotstar, 1.30 a.m. (Saturday)

The Ashes: 4th Test, day 2, Star Sports 1 & JioHotstar, 5 a.m. (Saturday)

England eyes a miracle as Australia seeks to extend dominance

The host opts for an all-pace attack for the Boxing Day Test; Smith back to lead in the absence of Cummins; Khawaja gets the nod ahead of Inglis; Richardson back in the mix; the visitors pick Bethell in place of a struggling Pope; Atkinson steps in for injured pacer Archer

THE ASHES

Agencies
MELBOURNE

Australia will take an all-pace attack into the fourth Ashes Test, skipper Steve Smith said Thursday, while Josh Inglis was dropped with selectors preferring Usman Khawaja. Meanwhile, with the Ashes now officially lost, England will be looking to salvage what they can from the remaining Tests.

The hosts head into the Boxing Day Test with an unassailable 3-0 lead over England, but are without pace spearhead Pat Cummins and veteran spinner Nathan Lyon.

Cummins is being managed after his return in the third Adelaide Test after a lengthy lay-off with a lower back injury and will play no further part in the Ashes. Lyon had surgery this week for a torn hamstring and faces a long recovery.



Time to step up: Bethell, who has been included in the XI, will hope to grab the opportunity with both hands. AFP

Todd Murphy was called up as cover for Lyon, but Smith said they had opted for a pace attack given the "quite furry" surface at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

"We're going to be playing four quicks and no spinner. (The pitch) has 10 millimetres of grass, quite furry, quite green," he said.

Smith, who captained Australia in the first two Tests during Cummins' absence, said he was fully recovered and feeling "100 percent" fit.

"I was watching in the hotel those first two days (in Adelaide) and wished I could have been out there, but it was the right call at that stage because I was struggling," he said of his vertigo, an issue that has plagued him before.

England named its XI with the big news the loss of star bowler Jofra Archer for the rest of the series. The visiting team included Jacob Bethell in place of a struggling Ollie Pope.

The teams:
Australia (from): Steve Smith (Capt.), Travis Head, Jake Weatherald, Marnus Labuschagne, Usman Khawaja, Alex Carey, Cameron Green, Mitchell Starc, Scott Boland, Brendan Doggett, Michael Neser, and Jhye Richardson.
England (XI): Ben Stokes (Capt.), Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Jacob Bethell, Joe Root, Harry Brook, Jamie Smith, Will Jacks, Gus Atkinson, Brydon Carse, and Josh Tongue.
Match starts at 5 a.m. IST

Minz relishing the role of a finisher for Jharkhand

CRICKET

M.R. Praveen Chandran
AHMEDABAD

The Ishan Kishan-inspired Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy triumph was the biggest moment in the fledgling career of wicketkeeper-batter Robin Minz. The 23-year-old was a part of an explosive and destructive Jharkhand batting unit that won the SMAT title last week in Pune.

Minz did his reputation, as a fearless and aggressive hitter, no harm by smashing a 14-ball 31 not out in the final against Haryana. His unbeaten fourth wicket stand of 75 runs (off 29 balls) with Anukul Roy (40 not out) was significant in the contest as it powered Jharkhand to a formidable total 262 for three in the final.

Minz's returns during the SMAT campaign were 166 runs with a strike rate of 166.74, may not be breathtaking by the slam-bang standards, but was decisive for the team. His top-score (58 off 27 balls) came in the crunch match against Rajasthan in the league.



Minz... looking to be more consistent. VIJAY SONEJI

"As the designated finisher I'm happy to have played a small but impactful part in the team's win," Minz said.

"Batting in the home stretch is challenging but you have to accept it if you want to be part of this team. There is healthy competition especially with two wicket-keepers in the squad and the only way I could fit in was as a finisher. I was mentally prepared for that role. Some days, like in the final against Haryana, you are in a zone and you middle the ball from the word go. But I am looking for more consistency while enjoying the role," he added.

"The SMAT triumph was unbelievable and was easily the biggest moment in my career. Ishan bhai's jovial personality made a lot of difference. There was never a dull moment in the dressing room when he was around. On the field we were all on the same page and pushed ourselves to succeed," he added.

Minz is now eyeing strong performances in the Vijay Hazare Trophy and, ultimately, in the IPL.

After breaking even in season three, GCL set to expand: Dubey

CHESS

P.K. Ajith Kumar
MUMBAI

The Global Chess League has broken even in just the third season, beating the expectations of the organiser Tech Mahindra. "When we started the league, we were hoping to do it in five to seven years, but we have done it even sooner," the GCL's chairperson Peeyush Dubey told the *The Hindu*. "One of the reasons is that chess has grown much more popular during the last three years."

He said the league could interest the world's major tech companies. "Even in Season two last year, we had some initial interest from sponsors," said Dubey. "But this year, if you look at the sponsor slate, it is like any other league in the world. Yeah, it is thrilling. IBM, AMD, Microsoft, Google... they are all here."



Dubey. GCL

The third season, which ended in Mumbai on Tuesday, was the first in India for GCL, after travelling Dubai and London. Dubey said already four cities had expressed interest to host the fourth edition, to be held from September 2 to 13, next year. "We were surprised by the response from the audience in Mumbai," he said. "I think for any game, it is important to be where the fans are."

Dubey said there were plans to expand the league. "If we continue to see the kind of response that we are getting, we do not think that we will only have to contend with one big league in the year," he said. "It is possible for us to have some other formats, like a minor league with the same teams in a different country and then bring it back to the key location. Unlike most other sports, it is possible for us to create a league which has multiple engagements throughout the year rather than only one big thing."

Dubey said chess never received the recognition and the commercial success that some of the other games received. "We believe that is primarily because the sport is seen as a solitary game, which does not make it very exciting for the spectators to watch, and that is what we wanted to change with the GCL," he said. "We felt there was a good opportunity. We are glad that GCL is delivering on that promise."

Sriram Balaji could be considered for the next Davis Cup tie: Rajpal

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

India's Davis Cup captain Rohit Rajpal on Thursday said experienced doubles specialist N. Sriram Balaji remains very much in the national reckoning despite being left out of the squad for the tie against Netherlands on February 7 and 8, 2026, in Bengaluru, stressing that team combinations dictated the selection.



Balaji. FILE PHOTO: SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

Rajpal explained that the choice was influenced by the need for a deuce-court specialist in the doubles pairing, with Rithvik Bollipalli fitting that role alongside Yuki Bhambri, who prefers to play from the ad court. "Looking at combinations, we were searching for a deuce-court player. Yuki plays only from the ad court, so Rithvik is a deuce-court specialist. Balaji will remain in the fray."

It has been learnt that reserve player Aryan Shah has pulled out of the tie, a development that has irked the All India Tennis Association (AITA).

"He made himself available for the tie but after the team announcement, he wrote to the AITA that he was not available for the match. This is not appreciated," said an AITA source.

Third-placed Villa takes on Chelsea, leader Arsenal clashes with Brighton

PREMIER LEAGUE

Agence France-Presse
LONDON

Aston Villa faces a tough challenge against Chelsea on Saturday after muscling its way into the Premier League title race alongside Arsenal and Manchester City.

The Gunners, on top of the tree at Christmas, host Brighton, while Pep Guardiola's in-form City travels to Nottingham Forest.

Liverpool manager Arne Slot is grappling with a striker crisis after Alexander Isak fractured his leg, while Manchester United captain Bruno Fernandes also faces a spell on the sidelines.

Rank outsider

Unai Emery's third-placed Villa is still considered a rank outsider for the title even if it is just three points behind leader Arsenal.



Finding his feet: Rogers, after a poor start, has been involved in 11 goals in his past 15 appearances for Villa. AFP

Villa's 2-1 home win over Manchester United was its 10th consecutive victory in all competitions – the first time it has achieved the feat as a top-flight team since 1914.

One of the major reasons for the recent success is the form of England midfielder Morgan Rogers, who failed to register a single goal involvement in his first seven matches in all competitions.

Now it is a different story. He has recorded 11 goal involvements in his past 15 appearances and the quality of his goals has been striking.

Shining light

Meanwhile, Bruno Fernandes has been a shining light and virtually ever-present during Manchester United's recent lean years.

But manager Ruben Amorim is going to have to plan for a period without his talisman after the Portugal midfielder pulled up with an apparent hamstring injury in United's defeat last Sunday.

While the prognosis is unclear, Amorim has already ruled Fernandes out of the clash against Newcastle at Old Trafford on Friday, among a list of absentees, with the Portuguese boss urging the rest of his squad to "step up" in the absence of his "impossible to replace" captain.

Jeev ends 13-year title drought; IGPL Order of Merit for Pukhraj

GOLF

Press Trust of India
COLOMBO

India's Jeev Milkha Singh ended a 13-year title drought after securing the IGPL Invitational Sri Lanka with a perfect finish to the inaugural season of the IGPL here on Thursday.

The 54-year-old, who has not won a pro event since 2012, gave his young rivals a perfect lesson, producing a closing six-under 65 to total 15-under and outwit Aryan Roopa Anand (68) by one shot.

"I had never played in Sri Lanka before. It is an emotional moment for me. Because this is where my parents fell in love and began their relationship," said an emotional Jeev.

Needing an eagle on the par-4 18th to force a playoff, Aryan managed only a birdie and was sole second at 14-under.



Jeev. FILE PHOTO

Pukhraj Singh Gill, despite finishing T-12th, won the IGPL Order of Merit by a narrow margin over Aman Raj and Gaganjeet Bhullar.

Gill's benefits include a spot on $2 million International Series in India early next year, and he will also get a place in an event with Open Qualifying berths on the Asian Tour.



Centrestage to wilderness and back again – the Kishan saga

Freed up in the mind and more driven than he has ever been, the flamboyant batter will be chomping at the bit, hoping for a chance to light up the international scene once more

VIJAY SONEJI

R. Kaushik

This time two years back, Ishan Kishan's international career was at a crossroads. Despite having done precious little wrong, the little wicketkeeper-batter was out of favour in each of the three formats when it came to the playing XI on the long tour of South Africa in 2023-24.

While his Twenty20 International career wasn't quite extraordinary, he boasted an average of 78 (admittedly in only two games) in Test cricket and was one of the few batters worldwide to have cracked an ODI double-century. Having acquitted himself with credit on his Test debut in the Caribbean in July 2023, he would realistically have expected to don the big gloves during the two Tests in South Africa, what with Rishabh Pant still recovering from his horrific car accident of the previous December and K.S. Bharat not grabbing his chances against Australia at the beginning of 2023.

Jitesh Sharma was the preferred stumper for the T20I series in early December in the land of the Protea while K.L. Rahul slotted in as the ODI keeper, a role he had performed with aplomb for most of the World Cup in October-November. Kishan's chance lay with the Test side, but given that a plethora of top-order batters - Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shubman Gill and Shreyas Iyer - were on their first Test tour of South Africa, the think-tank decided to employ Rahul at No. 6, doubling up as a specialist wicketkeeper in Tests for the first time.

Mental fatigue

It all became too much for Kishan; on December 17, a little over a week before the start of the Boxing Day Test in Centurion, Kishan requested the Board of Control for Cricket in India to be released from the Test squad for 'personal reasons.' It appears he informed the team management that he was experiencing 'mental fatigue' and needed a break from the sport due to continuous travel and limited playing opportunities across formats.

So far so good. Having cited mental fatigue, Kishan continued to train with an eye on IPL 2024, stubbornly and stupidly disregarding a directive from the BCCI and skipping playing for Jharkhand in the Ranji Trophy. It wasn't taken kindly; while there was sympathy for Kishan because he wasn't able to break into the national side, his obstinate refusal to obey the board diktat was met with disapproval. The powers that be were so incensed that they left him out of the list of centrally contracted players for the 2023-24 season.

The unsavoury situation could have been avoided, one felt, had there been clearer lines of communication between the leadership group (captain Rohit Sharma and head coach Rahul Dravid) and Kishan. After all, the player was only 25 at the time and his frustration was understandable. One isn't sure what the messaging was, but as he continued to ignore orders to play domestic cricket, sympathy gradually dried up.

Kishan returned to action at IPL 2024, seemingly chastened and having learnt his lessons the hard way. He knew he had lost ground in the race to the Indian side. The doors hadn't been comprehensively shut on him, but they weren't ajar either. He had to knock hard and furiously through the weight of impactful runs at the domestic level to reiterate his claims. In his absence and with Pant still on the rehabilitation path, Dhruv Jurel had stolen a march in Test cricket while Sanju Samson and Jitesh had become the preferred T20 flavours and Rahul continued to make the 50-over spot his own. To say that Kishan had his work cut out was stating the obvious.

That Kishan had served his punishment was evident from his inclusion, in Grade C, in the list of centrally contracted players for the 2024-25 season released in April. There was light at the end of the tunnel. It didn't mean Kishan had a free pass, but he was in the mix, and that is more than what he could have hoped for 12 months previously.

By then, the explosive batter had moved to Sunrisers Hyderabad ahead of IPL 2025. In the Pat Cummins-Daniel Vettori leadership era, the 2016 champions had embraced an ultra-aggressive approach, bolstered by the presence of such unabashed ball-bashers as Travis Head, Abhishek Sharma, Heinrich Klaasen, Nitish Kumar and Abhinav Manohar. Kishan was right at home. On his SRH debut at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium in Uppal, he immediately endeared himself to the home faithfuls with a spectacular 106 (47b, 11x4, 6x6) against Rajasthan Royals while batting at No. 3. Among those who felt the full brunt of his fury was Jofra Archer, the tearaway England bowler whose four overs leaked 76 as SRH amassed 286 for six. Kishan and SRH seemed a match made in heaven though it didn't quite pan out that way. Kishan ended the season with 354 runs in 14 matches, average 35.40, strike-rate 152.58. Good numbers, undoubtedly, but in his next 12 innings after that hundred on his first appearance, he managed just a solitary half-century as his side finished sixth, and that only because of a late surge after elimination had been guaranteed.

But all through the IPL, Kishan showed that he had lost none of the flair and aggression that had taken him to 210, off just 131 deliveries (24x4, 10x6), in an ODI against Bangladesh in Chattogram in December 2022. He was still the same dynamic package, but had become more dangerous because he had gone from a borderline slogger to a more complete batter who didn't lose shape in trying to hit the cover off the ball, who didn't premeditate and charge wildly, and whose stroke-making all around the ground was beginning to manifest itself. A return to the Indian side was still some distance away - why, even Pant, who was a key member of the T20 World Cup-winning XI of June 2024 was no longer in the 20-over running - but Kishan knew, like chief selector Ajit Agarkar, T20I skipper Suryakumar Yadav and head coach Gautam Gambhir, that he had done everything he could to stay relevant and in the reckoning.

A recall remained elusive with India placing their 20-over eggs in the Samson-Jitesh basket. Then, out of the blue, so to speak, the decision-makers brought Gill back into the T20 setup after 13 months in hibernation at the Asia Cup this September, inadvertently setting off a chain of events culminating in the unexpected return of Kishan. Not just a return, but also a shot at World Cup glory, after the 27-year-old was also picked in the 15-strong party tasked with defending the title at home in February-March.

Gill's comeback, as Suryakumar's deputy, had forced a batting order reshuffle. Samson was in the process of forging a lethal opening combination with Abhishek - in five innings between October 12 and November 15 last year, the right-hander from Kerala slammed three international centuries as well - when he was pushed down the order to accommodate Gill. Samson expectedly struggled in the middle-order and eventually lost his place to Jitesh, and it appeared as if India had shot themselves in the foot, especially with Gill failing repeatedly to justify his inclusion.

On a scoring spree

Independent of all this, Kishan embarked on a furious run-making spree in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy T20 tournament in November-December. After warming up with 27 against Delhi in the first Group D tie in Ahmedabad, he produced scores of 15, 113 n.o., 93, 21, 2, 47, 63, 35 and 101, the last against Haryana in the final. Riding on the captain's 49-ball carnage that contained six fours and 10 sixes, Jharkhand amassed 262 to bat their opponents out of the title clash and emerge first-time champions.

Kishan's breathtaking run of scores, all conjured at breakneck speed, coincided with a change of mind (heart?) as the primary deciding authorities made a dramatic Gill U-turn. All of a sudden, with just five matches (against New Zealand) left for the World Cup, they decided that the ideal combination for the big bash would necessitate a wicketkeeper opening the batting alongside Abhishek. What led to this sudden dawning of wisdom is anyone's guess; the consensus is that they were letting Gill down gently, but because of the insistence that only a stumper would open, they had to perforce move beyond Jitesh who, it must be said, help up his end of the middle-order/finisher bargain for the most part.

Samson suddenly re-emerged as the first-choice wicketkeeper and Kishan became the beneficiary of the altered mindset of the leadership group. For all practical purposes, he is the reserve wicketkeeper for the World Cup (and for the five matches against the Kiwis next month) behind the senior pro from Kerala, though by having gone on record that a left-right combination is overrated, Suryakumar has left the door open for Kishan too to slot into the XI at some stage if the need so arises. Those who construe Kishan's return as through the backdoor must keep in mind that he hasn't 'sneaked' back into the Indian side but has made a compelling case for himself with the weight of his performances. Just to show that the national call-up has done little to blunt his instincts and his hunger for runs, Kishan smashed an extraordinary 125 against Karnataka in the 50-over Vijay Hazare Trophy in Ahmedabad on Wednesday. Extraordinary, because he only came out to bat at No. 6 after 38 overs, blazing to 50 in 20 deliveries and taking just 13 more to go from 50 to 100. His second fifty contained a scarcely believable two fours and seven sixes, all 50 runs coming in boundaries. Really, what's this pocket rocket made of? Even when he was on the outer, looking for a way back into the inner circle, Kishan retained his cheerful demeanour, ever the prankster blessed with the rare ability to mimic others without riling them. Freed up in the mind and more driven than he has ever been, Kishan will be chomping at the bit, hoping for a chance to light up the international scene again. Kishan has already smashed 511 sixes in 395 representative matches. Hard hats in the stands will not be a bad idea.

THE GIST

- Having acquitted himself with credit on his Test debut in the Caribbean in July 2023, he would realistically have expected to don the big gloves during the two Tests in South Africa
- But all through the IPL in 2025, Kishan showed that he had lost none of the flair and aggression that had taken him to 210 in an ODI against Bangladesh in Chattogram in December 2022
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Rabies: the cruel and expensive disease of India's most impoverished

Of the 59,000 rabies-mediated human deaths in the world every year, India represents a third, around 20,000, and more than any other country, according to a paper; besides a lack of awareness of the disease, poor accessibility, affordability, and availability of PEP makes it a serious public health problem

Divya Gandhi
Afshan Yasmeen



Need for care: Controlling street dog population involves birth control surgeries, anti-rabies vaccination, and establishment of shelters. H. VIBHU

There is a ward at the government Epidemic Diseases Hospital in Bengaluru from where every single patient is wheeled out dead. The windows are blackened, the room is airless, the only piece of furniture is a solitary cot. This room is not a punitive space: on the contrary, it is refuge for rabies patients who suffer hydrophobia, the fear of light, even of air.

Recently, a 50-year-old construction worker from Delhi was brought in after a rabid dog bit him months ago. "He will be dead by tonight," says Suresh N.V., Bengaluru district surgeon, who is also the medical superintendent of the hospital. This was patient number 17 this year, just in this one hospital. "Some patients can be sedated to stop them from hallucinating and for hyperactivity, but others can get very aggressive," he says.

One patient, the doctor recalls, lay crumpled with fear that the army was out to get him. Death by rabies is frightening, painful, and inexorably cruel.

Of the 59,000 rabies-mediated human deaths in the world every year, India represents a third, around 20,000, and more than any other country, according to a paper published in *One Health* in December 2024. Rabies is endemic to India, with the main reservoir of the virus being dogs, and the poorest, the majority of the patients.

Days, weeks or months after a rabid dog bite, if the victim is not vaccinated, death is inevitable. The symptoms begin with paralysis from the feet upwards, typically followed by cardio-respiratory failure that finally strikes the victims down. Rabies is a neurotropic virus, and unlike other pathogens, travels via the peripheral nerves (not blood) to the spinal chord, and then to the brain. Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) involves immediately washing the wound under running water with soap for 15 minutes, followed by the anti-rabies vaccination (ARV), rabies immunoglobulin (RIG) and a tetanus shot.

Who is at risk? "Human populations inhabiting areas that sustain free-roaming dogs are at the high risk of being bitten," says Harish Kumar Tiwari, of the Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati, and co-author of the *One Health* paper, describing rabies as being a disease of the poor and vulnerable. These are usually daily wage workers, often living on the margins of the society: brick kiln workers, waste collectors, rural and remote populations, farming communities. "Besides a lack of awareness of the disease, there is poor accessibility, affordability, and availability of PEP," he points out.

In November 2025, the Supreme Court directed all States to remove stray dogs from hospital premises, educational institutions, railway stations and other spaces of public use and place them in shelters after they are sterilised and vaccinated. Animal rights activists have, ever since the court order, claimed that this prospective programme is "impractical" and "cruel". According to data available, there are 80 million free roaming dogs in India and 20 million dog bites per year, making rabies a large public health problem.

Economics at play

Access to good quality, affordable healthcare continues to remain unavailable to large parts of the country, out-of-pocket expenditure on health is high, and families, to date, are pushed into poverty due to medical costs. But with rabies, finances play a role even before health is compromised.

Take the case of a 59-year-old man in a village in Assam (as recounted by the *One Health* paper researchers), who died of rabies after being bitten by a neighbour's pup. The pup was not immunised by the family because of financial constraints. In May 2023, the pup "attacked the victim unprovoked, causing deep bite wounds." Even though he was administered PEP and RIG (at a private hospital because the government one refused to hospitalise him citing "unsatisfactory care by the staff") he soon developed a headache, high fever, began drooling saliva and experienced difficulty in drinking or swallowing one month later. He then became violent, and eventually died.

"In the order of significance of the actions that led to rabies death, the lack of seriousness on the part of the hospital staff to attend to dog bite injury, prompting the patient to approach a local private nursing home, ranks foremost," states the *One Health* paper.

While the patient in this case faced unacceptable delays in treatment, the treatment itself – PEP and RIG – continues to remain out of reach for many dog bite victims. A January 2025 study in *The Lancet Infectious Diseases,* which surveyed 3,37,808 individuals in 60 districts in 15 Indian States, found that among those who had been bitten by a dog, 20.5% did not receive ARV and nearly half (49%) of those who received one dose "did not complete their full course of vaccination", says M. K. Sudarshan, member of the National Technical Advisory Committee on Rabies, one of the authors of the paper.

Doctors note that when it comes to a small bleed or severe dog / animal bite, the rabies vaccine alone is not enough. An RIG that is injected into the dog bite wounds is needed: RIG is life saving. But the country suffers from a severe shortage of RIG, and it is only used for bites that bleed, not for a lick on a scratch, which could cause rabies too, says Aniruddha Belsare, assistant professor of disease ecology at Auburn University, U.S. "Most public health hospitals do not even have doctors, leave alone RIG for bite victims," he says, forcing families to run from pillar to post to try and obtain it. RIG is also prohibitively expensive: costing anywhere between ₹5,000 and ₹20,000. As a result, dog bite victims, mainly children under 15 (forming 40% of cases in India), are taken to local quacks who use substances such as chilli powder and chalk to 'cure' the disease, Dr. Belsare says.

RIG apart, even ARV, is in short supply. "We need 60 million doses of ARV vaccinations. But India produces only 50 million, out of which 15 million are exported," he adds.

Hearteningly, recently, two novel rabies monoclonal antibodies have been produced in India. RmAbs are cheaper than human rabies immunoglobulin, but being new drugs, are currently under pharmacovigilance and are yet to be included in the national guidelines, says Dr. Sudarshan, who is also the founder president and mentor of the Association for Prevention and Control of Rabies in India.

Tackling the source

Even though India has one of the highest populations globally of free-ranging dogs (FRD) and the highest incidence of dog-mediated human rabies, it "only deploys Catch-Neuter-Vaccinate-Release for FRD control as a humane alternative to lethal methods, without evidence of it working successfully," the *One Health* paper states.

So what is the solution?

"My advice would be that dog lovers, who feed strays on the roads, should fully support 20 dogs in their area, have them neutered and regularly vaccinated," says Dr. Belsare. Every city, municipality, gram panchayat has to ensure a dog bite is attended to with PEP and and also that families are compensated for the expenses they bear, he says. Dr. Tiwari adds that we need "good quality shelters, with closed and enclosed spaces for homeless dogs." Increasing awareness about washing wounds from animals and seeking immediate medical help, ensuring the vaccine and immunoglobulin are available and speeding up processes to make cheaper, indigenous drugs available, are all crucial.

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THE GIST

Rabies is endemic to India, with the main reservoir of the virus being dogs, and the poorest, the majority of the patients. Days, weeks or months after a rabid dog bite, if the victim is not vaccinated, death is inevitable. The symptoms begin with paralysis from the feet upwards, typically followed by cardio-respiratory failure that finally strikes the victims down

Doctors note that when it comes to a small bleed or severe dog / animal bite, the rabies vaccine alone is not enough. An RIG that is injected into the dog bite wounds is needed. But the country suffers from a severe shortage of RIG

Increasing awareness about washing wounds from animals and seeking immediate medical help, ensuring the vaccine and immunoglobulin are available across the length and breath of the country and speeding up processes to make cheaper, indigenous drugs available, are all crucial

HUMERUS



Indian-origin physician appointed to U.S. panel

Press Trust of India
HOUSTON

Indian-origin physician Padmaja Patel has been appointed to the Texas Nutrition Advisory Committee by Governor Greg Abbott.

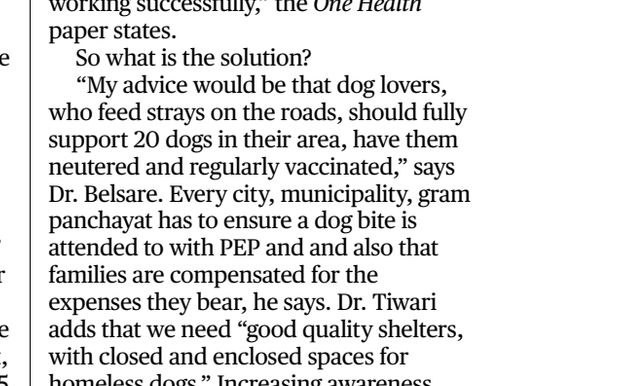
The Midland-based physician will serve on the committee through September 1, 2029. The panel advises the state on diet and nutrition and examines the role of food in preventing and managing chronic diseases, according to a press release.

Members are appointed by the governor for staggered terms and represent a range of health disciplines, it said.

Ms. Patel earned her medical degree from the Medical College of Baroda and completed her medical training in the U.S.. The release said she serves as chief medical officer at Nudj Health and is president of the American College of Lifestyle Medicine.

New experimental obesity drugs targeting energy production process of cell developed

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI



New discovery: The team focused on "mitochondrial uncouplers", molecules that make cells burn energy less efficiently and release fuel as heat instead of converting it into energy. GETTY IMAGES

While the work is still at an early stage, the research offers a framework for designing a new generation of drugs

Researchers have developed experimental drugs targeting mitochondria – the energy powerhouse of a cell – to work harder and burn more calories, which may make way for new treatments for obesity.

The team, led by researchers from the University of Technology Sydney in Australia, focused on "mitochondrial uncouplers" – molecules that make cells burn energy less efficiently and release fuel as heat instead of converting it into energy the body can use.

"Mitochondria are often called the powerhouses of the cell. They turn the food you eat into chemical energy, called ATP or adenosine triphosphate. Mitochondrial uncouplers disrupt this process, triggering cells to consume more fats to meet their energy needs," lead researcher Tristan Rawling, associate professor of medicinal chemistry at the University of Technology Sydney, said. Compounds inducing mitochondrial uncoupling were first discovered about a century ago, but the drugs were lethal poisons that induced overheating and death, the researchers explained.

In a paper published in the journal *Chemical Science*, the team has described safer 'mild' mitochondrial uncouplers by precisely adjusting the chemical structure of experimental molecules, allowing for a fine-tuning of how strongly the molecules boost the use of a cell's energy.

Better understanding

The discovery allowed the researchers to better understand why the safer molecules behave differently – the mild mitochondrial uncouplers slow the energy-burning process to a level that cells can handle, protecting against adverse effects, they said.

The mild mitochondrial uncouplers also reduce oxidative stress in the cell, which is another advantage of the molecules – this could improve metabolic health, provide anti-aging effects and protect against neurodegenerative diseases such as dementia, the team said.

While the work is still at an early stage, the research offers a framework for designing a new generation of drugs that could induce mild mitochondrial uncoupling and harness the benefits without the dangers, the researchers said.

Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Number of flights cancelled by Indigo from multiple airports

67 Domestic carrier IndiGo on Thursday cancelled 67 flights from multiple airports due to "forecasted" bad weather and operational reasons, according to the airline's website. Of the cancelled flights, only four were for operational reasons, and the rest were due to "forecasted" bad weather at airports, including Agartala, Chandigarh, Dehradun, Varanasi, Bengaluru, among others. PTI

Alleged IS members detained by Turkiye for planning attacks

115 Some 115 alleged members of the Islamic State group suspected of planning attacks during the end of year holidays have been arrested in Turkiye, Istanbul's prosecutor general said on Thursday. Turkiye shares a 900-kilometre border with Syria, where the IS was accused of an attack in mid-December that killed two U.S. soldiers and one civilian. AFP

Migrants rescued by the coastguards off Greece

52 Greek coastguards were searching on Thursday for a missing child off the island of Farmakonisi after rescuing 52 migrants in two separate incidents in the Aegean Sea, local media reported. They found 13 migrants, but one boy was reported missing from the group, said a news agency. Another 39 migrants were found on board an inflatable boat. AFP

Drug smugglers arrested in Punjab's Statewide raids

115 Punjab Police on Thursday arrested 115 drug smugglers during raids at 285 places across the State under the ongoing anti-drug campaign '*Yudh Nashian Virudh*', officials said. A total of 87 FIRs were registered during the operation. With this, the total number of drug smugglers arrested in the last 299 days has risen to 41,775. PTI

Number of petrol pumps in India, as of November 2025

1 lakh. India's petrol pump network has crossed the 1,00,000-mark, doubling since 2015 as State-owned fuel retailers aggressively expanded outlets to defend market share and push fuel access deeper into rural and highway corridors amid a sustained boom in vehicle ownership. Over 90% of the pumps are owned by State-owned firms. PTI

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U.S. naval moves against Venezuela

Which tankers did the U.S. target near Venezuela? How does the U.S. use financial systems to enforce sanctions? What role do insurance and classification societies play? What role does the Office of Foreign Assets Control have?

EXPLAINER

M. Kalyanaraman

The story so far:
U.S. President Donald Trump has announced a "total and complete blockade of all sanctioned oil tankers going into and out of Venezuela."

What were the three merchant ships that faced action?
During the week of December 8, the U.S. seized the oil tanker "*Skipper*" off the coast of Venezuela, carrying nearly two million barrels of crude oil. The U.S. government has indicated it shipped oil at subsidised rates to Cuba, which has been helping the government of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro.

Last weekend, the U.S. Coast Guard stopped and boarded *Centuries*, a Panamanian-flagged tanker carrying Venezuelan oil. The Venezuelan Navy had escorted the ship to the limit of Venezuela's Exclusive Economic Zone, after which the U.S. Coast Guard stopped it.

During the same day, the Coast Guard attempted to intercept *Bella 1*, a tanker enroute to pick up crude oil in Venezuela. The U.S. had previously sanctioned the ship for trading Iranian oil.

What are U.S. sanctions?
As a global body, the United Nations can impose international sanctions that are binding and legally enforceable. These can be military, economic, or a combination of both.

On the other hand, U.S. sanctions can be said to be a type of unilateral, inexpensive economic warfare to achieve foreign policy objectives. Physical enforcement of sanctions is costly and often not effective. A physical blockade of ports and ships after the First Gulf War under the Oil for Food Programme for Iraq cost billions of dollars and did not deter Saddam Hussein from trading oil outside the framework.

Since the Second Gulf War, however, the U.S. has sought to use its leverage in the global financial system to enforce sanctions. The U.S. has direct leverage over the dollar, which is the currency of practically all global financial transactions and certainly all oil. The petrodollar is a tool the U.S. wields to enforce its writ.

The U.S. has direct control over its companies and prohibits them from doing business with nations it has sanctioned. Banks and companies headquartered outside the U.S. also comply with these sanctions to continue using the global financial system, which has the U.S. as the hub, and do business in the large U.S. market.

Non-U.S. banks such as HSBC were, for instance, wary of re-entering Iran even after the Barack Obama administration asked them to do so following the nuclear deal. Companies that had cut ties with Iran were fearful since U.S. companies were still forbidden from doing business with Iran.

In 2014, BNP Paribas agreed to pay $9 billion in fines for sanctions violations. To curb North Korea's nuclear build-up and other activities, the U.S. threatened to keep a small bank in Macau, Banco Delta Asia, through which North Korea was doing business, out of the U.S. system. This was enough to make the bank pull back, which had its intended effect.

Many global financial transactions that do not involve the U.S. still need to be routed through American intermediaries of the primary entities. This gives the U.S. government leverage over those transactions and it can block them.

What other shipping sanctions does the U.S. have in place?
Although ship owning, shipbuilding, repair, and operations are spread across various countries, insurance remains in the hands of Western nations, especially the U.K. Shipping is a high-risk business and insurance coverage of ships is an absolute requirement for importers, exporters, and ports.

Reputed insurance companies with deep pockets provide cover once the ship is certified as safe and seaworthy by a few well-known classification societies, which are typically members of the International Association of Classification Societies (IACS). India's Indian Register of Shipping is a member of the IACS.

Once the U.S. slaps sanctions, classification societies withdraw their certification and major insurers withdraw their cover. Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Russian ships were held up in the Bosphorus because the protection and indemnity (P&I) club companies that cover liabilities for loss of life and environmental damage withdrew their cover. The ships were too risky to handle for Turkiye. The Black Sea is the most important shipping route for Russian ships in the West.

Following sanctions on ships and shipping companies, some nations that allow ships to register with them may choose to withdraw registration for fear of angering the U.S. Such ships or those that have lost their flag registration can be boarded by navies, as per international law, called the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

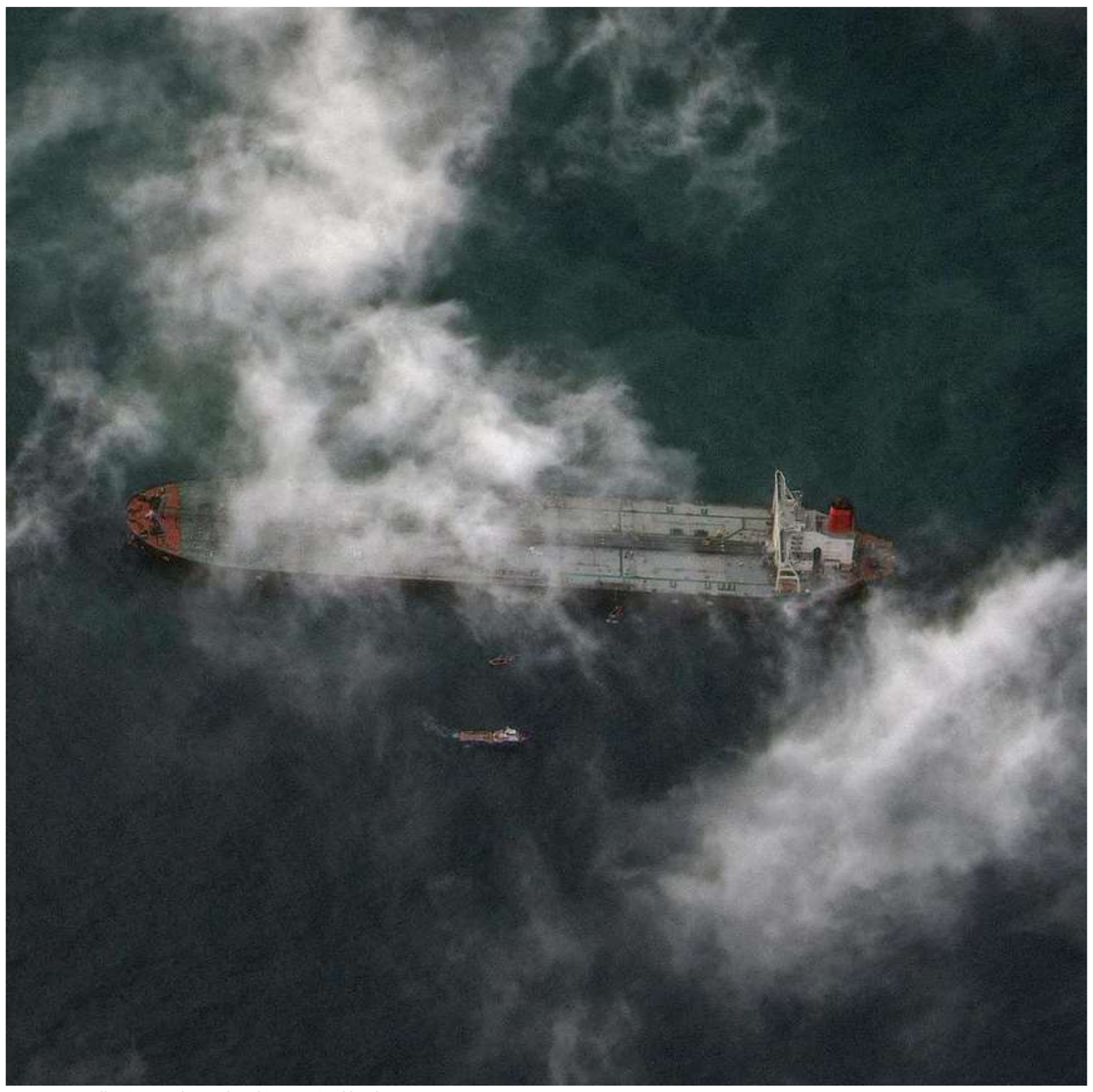
Are U.S. sanctions effective in shipping?
The U.S. has sanctioned companies involved in the trade of Iranian or Russian oil. But Iran is an energy giant and has been able to find alternatives despite losing the cover of big insurers and certification. Russia, too, has been successful to a certain extent in bypassing sanctions that sought to cap the price of Russian oil. The U.S. agency that investigates using its own intelligence service and sanctions individuals and companies that are acting against U.S. foreign policy interests is the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) of the Treasury Department. It periodically puts out lists of sanctioned individuals and companies.

In June 2024, OFAC sanctioned *Bella 1* for allegedly carrying cargo for a Hezbollah-owned company. At that time, the U.S. termed it Panama-registered, but shipping databases now say its flag or nationality is unknown. Ships can be boarded by warships for not flying their flag of registration, on suspicion of piracy, indulging in the slave trade, and so on. After evading the U.S. Coast Guard, *Bella 1* has apparently given out distress signals.

Centuries' registered owner is in Hong Kong. *Centuries* was once certified by the American Bureau of Shipping, a big classification society and member of the IACS. In July of this year, the relatively smaller Overseas Marine Classification Society, which is not a member of the IACS and has a presence in China and some of the flags of convenience, stepped in to give certification. *Centuries* is now not listed as having the P&I cover provided by big insurers. Originally Greek-owned, *Centuries* had called on U.S. ports initially under another name, but after a change of hands has been calling on ports in the Middle America, Africa, China and so on.

Skipper was once owned by the Japanese NYK and later by a Greek company. It changed hands in 2019 to the present owner, which is headquartered in Nigeria. Shipping databases show that it had been classified by IACS members, but the last such certification was withdrawn in 2022. U.S. authorities said it flew the flag of Guyana falsely, which could make it legal for them to detain the vessel as per international law.

The above three ships are examples of what Western nations have dubbed the shadow fleet. They also show how countries such as Russia, Iran, Venezuela, and likely China have been collaborating to break the hold that the U.S. has on global finance and merchant shipping. That the U.S. government had to order a physical blockade in Venezuela would seem to indicate that they have been able to succeed to an extent.



At sea: A satellite image shows the *Skipper* seized by the U.S. REUTERS

THE GIST

- The U.S. seized or intercepted three Venezuelan oil tankers — *Skipper, Centuries*, and *Bella 1* — for carrying crude or trading with sanctioned entities.
- *Skipper* was shipping oil to Cuba at subsidised rates, aiding the Maduro government; *Centuries* was stopped after a Venezuelan Navy escort; *Bella 1* had been previously sanctioned for trading Iranian oil.
- These ships are examples of the shadow fleet, showing how countries like Venezuela bypass sanctions, prompting the U.S. to order a physical blockade.

IN THE LIMELIGHT



A still from *Phule*. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

A mixed bag of spectacle and thoughtful storytelling in Hindi cinema

Bollywood in 2025 thrived on hyper-nationalist tropes, bombastic action, and overt communal messaging; films such as *Dhurandhar*, *War 2*, and *Udaipur Files* prioritised spectacle over creative artistry; cinema became an instrument for political advocacy rather than sensitive storytelling

Harish S. Wankhede

In the glittering, high-octane world of contemporary Bollywood, a dominant strain of populism took centre stage in 2025, characterised by hyper-nationalist tropes (*Dhurandhar* and *War 2*), bombastic action sequences (*Sikandar* and *Jaat*), and overt communal messaging (*Udaipur Files* and *The Taj Story*). The arrival of the Hindutva genre (with films such as *Kesari Veer*, *The Bengal Files*, and *Ajey: the Untold Story of a Yogi*) has further tilted the idea of cinema as an ideological instrument for political advocacy, neglecting its capacity to provide its audience with sensitive and critical stories that can elevate their intellectual capacities.

This brand of cinema has witnessed significant commercial success. However, it risks reducing cinema into a populist medium that fosters a culture of loud jingoism, neglecting creative nuance and social empathy expected from cinematic art. Instead, these films often prioritise spectacle over creative artistry, weaving narratives that glorify patriarchal heroism and stir up divisive communal sentiments under the guise of entertainment. Yet, 2025 has quietly offered a counter-narrative through a slate of films that champion critical social messaging, artistic creativity, and a model of intellectual storytelling.

There has been a small stream of good cinema this year that delves into personal struggles, social injustices, and human resilience without resorting to sensationalism. For example, *Superboys of Malegaon* was a brilliant attempt to highlight the tragedies that engulfed young creative minds in a mofussil town. Inspired by real events, the film shows how a few unemployed youth create their own brand of cinema, capturing the joy of amateur creativity amid everyday hardships. It's a celebration of creative passion, contrasting sharply with the manufactured heroism of populist blockbusters. Similarly, *Sitaare Zameen Par* stands as a heartfelt sports drama about a team of neurodivergent adults participating in a tournament. We see how they confront social prejudices and discover profound lessons in empathy and perseverance. This narrative supplements themes of redemption and inclusion, far removed from the conventional cinematic model that Bollywood offers.

Such films prove that thoughtful cinema is not only possible but can appeal to a good audience. The box-office success of *Jolly LLB 3* further inspires such a trend. It showcases a courtroom drama about a poor farmer's land grabbed by a powerful industrialist, exposing corruption and judicial absurdities with wit and heart. Regrettably, many of the other gems of good Hindi cinema have been overlooked by the audience, leaving innovative filmmakers with a modest viewership and critical acclaim alone. The best example of such neglect is Neeraj Ghaywan's *Homebound* (now shortlisted for the Oscars), that draws from the tragic background of the COVID-19 lockdown, following two childhood friends on a gruelling journey home as migrant workers. The story explores the plight of caste discrimination that has often been overlooked in Hindi cinema, showcasing raw social truth over fictional spectacles.

In this popular cinematic culture, the stories about caste-based social ills, especially around the experiences of Dalits and Adivasis, have a negligible space. This year witnessed a few good films that revolved around the neglect of society towards the downtrodden and their struggles to survive with dignity. *Phule*, for example, is a biographical drama chronicling the lives of social reformers Jyotirao and Savitribai Phule, who battled caste discrimination, child marriage, and gender inequality to champion education for the marginalised. By focusing on historical figures who fought systemic oppression through intellect and activism, it offers a subtle critique of ongoing societal divides without inflammatory rhetoric. Similarly, *Dhadak 2* tackles inter-caste romance head-on, portraying the forbidden love between a Dalit student and an upper-caste woman, demonstrating the threats, violence and Brahmanical societal control even in the space of higher learning. It boldly addresses caste-based injustice, promoting dialogue over division.

The Adivasi question in Hindi films hardly receives mainstream space. *The Humans in the Loop* confronts such apathy and weaves a modern tale of an Adivasi woman who, after divorcing her husband, takes up AI data-labelling work to secure custody of her children while reconnecting with her tribal roots and exposing tech biases. This film intelligently blends technology, identity, and family, highlighting marginalised voices in a digital age. In addition to such a creative, nuanced tale, the thriller *Stolen* follows two urban brothers who stumble into a child trafficking racket while searching for a kidnapped infant, unravelling a web of corruption that has engulfed the tribal habitats. Its intense, grounded exploration of crime and morality provides a new look about the deprivation and destitution in which the Adivasis are surviving.

Whither cinematic art?

These films collectively demonstrate Bollywood's capacity for profound, creative storytelling that engages the intellectual credentials of the audience and promotes cinema as a creative enterprise. I also wish to highlight *Agra*, another cinematic gem of this year that explores the class-based tragedies of a young man burdened to live under sexual repression. It exposes everyday patriarchal social controls over our desire and how the urban low-class life is dysfunctional and tragic. It is ironic that such sensitive cinema struggled to find exhibitors and found only a few shows.

These films in 2025 tackled sensitive subjects around social ills, class-based tragedies, corruption and personal freedom with nuance, elevating the capacity of cinema to influence the critical credentials of its audience. This parallel genre of "good cinema" shall also thrive alongside mainstream populist cinema. However, there is a relative neglect of this genre by audiences as they are overtly bewitched by the spectacles and extravaganza of entertaining cinema. A creative and intellectual genre of filmmaking will survive if the regular cinema audience equally supports, reviews, and highlights its presence. Good, creative, and socially sensitive cinema must survive so that cinema shall not become a soulless instrument for profit and political propaganda.

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Views expressed are personal

THE DAILY QUIZ

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

Born on December 26, 1893, Mao Zedong was a Chinese communist revolutionary and the long-time Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party. A quiz on the man and his times

Prathmesh Kher

QUESTION 1
In which village and province was Mao Zedong born?

QUESTION 2
Which influential early essay by Mao examined physical education and national strength?

QUESTION 3
What was the name of the arduous 1934-35 retreat that became symbolic of Chinese communist endurance?

QUESTION 4
Which poetic work was written by Mao in 1936, soon after the Long March?

QUESTION 5
How old was Mao at the time of his death in 1976?



Visual Question:
This 1971 painting by Tang Xiao calls back to Mao's famous 1966 swim across China's longest river. Identify this river. LANDSBERGER COLLECTION, AMSTERDAM

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. Name the Charles Dickens novella telling the story of the transformation of Ebenezer Scrooge? **Ans: *Christmas Carol***
2. What well-known Christmas carol in 1965 became the first song ever broadcast from space? **Ans: *Jingle Bells***
3. In which country can one see a 'karavaki' or a traditionally decorated boat during Christmas? **Ans: Greece**
4. Name the malevolent half-goat, half-man anti-Santa that originated from Austro-Bavarian folklore? **Ans: Krampus**
5. Which country marks Christmas with la quema del diablo, or the burning of the devil? **Ans: Guatemala**
Visual: Name this 2019 animated movie serving as a fictionalised origin story of Santa Claus revolving around a postman stationed in an island town to the Far North who befriends a reclusive toymaker? **Ans: *Klaus***
Early Birds: C. Saravanan | K.N. Viswanathan | Tom Alan Faith | Sonali Das | Tito Shiladitya



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

S. Upendran

"Hello there! How was the movie? Did you enjoy it?"
"Oh Yes! I enjoyed very much."
"What was...."
".... you should have come too. You would have enjoyed very much too."
"When you use the word 'enjoy', don't put 'very much' immediately after it."
".... but I have heard many people say, 'I enjoyed very much'."
"Many people do say it, but it's wrong. You don't 'enjoy very much' or 'enjoy very much something'. Instead, you 'enjoy something very much'. For example. I enjoyed myself very much. I enjoyed the party very much."
"I see. So, in my case. I have to say. 'I enjoyed the movie very much'!"
"That's right. Here are a few more examples. Saritha enjoys being with her children very much. Rahul..."
".... Rahul Dravid enjoys playing in New Zealand very much."
"That's a good example. But what I was going to say was Rahul enjoys eating jam very much."
"I enjoy eating hot vadai's and idlis."
"Many people do. I am not very fond of idlis though. Now, tell me about the movie. What was the story about?"
"It's a story about a woman who is very jealous about her friend's achievements."
"Why is she jealous of her friend?"
"She's jealous about her friend because..."
"...not 'jealous about', but 'jealous of'. There are many people who are jealous of his talent."
"There's nobody who is jealous of my talent. I'm sure."
"You don't have any talent!"
"That's true. How about this example? My cousin is jealous of my neighbour."
"I try not to be jealous of anyone."
"It's easier said than done."
"I know. Now, getting back to the movie. Was the theatre crowded?"
"It certainly was. There were more number of people than I had expected."
"More number of people?"
"Yes. that's right. You see. ..."
"... you don't say 'more number of people', you say 'more people'."
"You mean it's wrong..."
"...you don't say 'more number'."
"But..."
"... it's wrong to say, the college has more number of students this year than last year."
"Instead you say, the college has more students this year than last year."
"Exactly! We often hear people say, there are more number of smokers today than there were ten years ago."
"We should say, there are more smokers today than there were ten years ago. But what if I want to use the word 'number' in that sentence? What do I say then?"
"Well, you could say, the number of smokers has increased in the past ten years."
"I see. We have a small number of students enrolled this year. Does that sound OK?"
"It does. Now, can you give me more information about the movie?"
"I enjoyed it very much. Other than that, I don't want to give you any more information."
"But...."
"... If I open my mouth, you are going to find more faults. And I don't want you to find more number of... I mean. I don't want you to find any more faults."
"That seems fair enough."
Published in The Hindu on February 9, 1999

Word of the day

Lugubrious:
excessively mournful

Synonyms: gloomy, unhappy, miserable

Usage: *His face looked lugubrious after hearing the sad news.*

Pronunciation:
newsth.live/lugubriouspro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /lugubriəs/

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