



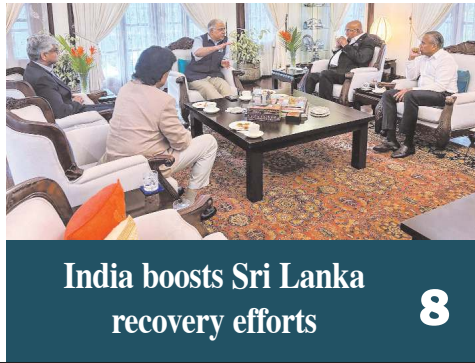
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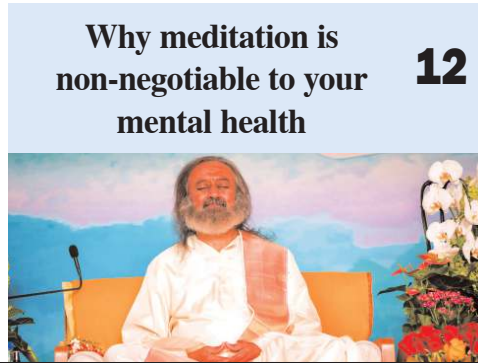
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## PIONEER IN SHORT

### OWAISI TAKES EXCEPTION TO PM MODI'S 'CENTURIES-OLD WOUNDS HEALING' COMMENTS

AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi on Saturday took exception to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent comments in Ayodhya that centuries-old wounds were healing. He said the Supreme Court, in its judgment, had said there is no evidence that the Babri mosque was erected after demolishing any temple. "The Prime Minister said wounds of 500 years are being healed."

FULL REPORT ON P2

### SCR TO RUN SPL TRAINS TO CLEAR PASSENGER RUSH

The South Central Railway on Saturday announced that it would run four special trains to manage the surge in passengers resulting from the large-scale cancellation of IndiGo flights here. The move comes as flyers face significant disruption and long queues at the airport due to the cancellation.

FULL REPORT ON P3

### GAZA CEASEFIRE AT CRITICAL MOMENT: QATAR

Qatar's Prime Minister on Saturday said the Gaza ceasefire has reached a "critical moment" as its first phase winds down, with the remains of just one Israeli hostage still held by militants. Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani told an international conference in the Qatari capital that international mediators, led by the US, are working "to force the way forward" to the second phase to cement the deal.

FULL REPORT ON P8

## QUOTE OF THE DAY



THE WELFARE BENEFITS GIVEN BY KCR WON'T BE FORGOTTEN BY THE PEOPLE. YOU'RE TELLING BLATANT LIES, SAYING NO RATION CARDS WERE ISSUED DURING THE BRS RULE. IS IT A LIE THAT 6,47,479 RATION CARDS WERE ISSUED?

T HARISH RAO, BRS MLA

### MASS SHOOTING AT A SOUTH AFRICAN BAR LEAVES 12 DEAD

2

## OBTUSE ANGLE



TO CLARIFY DOUBTS, THEY ARE DISPLAYING CERTIFICATE THAT, PILOT HAD ADEQUATE REST ..

# Will make TG a role model: CM

**Says the State tops in paddy production, maintaining law and order**  
**'Bad days again if BRS comes to power'**

PNS ■ Hyderabad

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Saturday said Telangana ranks first in the country in paddy production and in maintaining law and order, including curbing the drug menace.

Addressing a public meeting at Devarakonda in Nalgonda district as part of the Congress government's second-anniversary celebrations, he said no other state in the country, including BJP-ruled states, distributes fine-quality rice under the Public Distribution System (PDS).

"Some say it is available in other states. I challenge those who make such comments. Whether it is Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh or Rajasthan—any state under Narendra Modi ji's rule—only in Telangana are we giving fine rice. The poor are not getting fine rice even in Gujarat," he said.

He said the government aims to make Telangana a national role model and develop a 'Telangana model' of growth.

In a sharp attack on the opposition BRS, he dismissed party president K Chandrasekhar Rao's remarks that the party would see "good days" ahead.



**NO OTHER STATE IN THE COUNTRY, INCLUDING BJP-RULED STATES, DISTRIBUTES FINE-QUALITY RICE UNDER THE PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM (PDS)**

Telangana would face difficulties if the BRS returned to power, he claimed.

"You (KCR), your son, nephew and daughter looted Telangana. Is your hunger not satisfied? You have placed a burden of Rs 8 lakh crore of debt on the state. If your hunger is still

**REDDY NOTED THAT THE BRS LOST POWER IN 2023, DREW A BLANK IN THE 2024 LOK SABHA POLLS AND WAS DEFEATED IN THE RECENT JUBILEE HILLS BY POLL**

not satisfied, then only God will punish you. People have already punished you," he said.

Reddy noted that the BRS lost power in 2023, drew a blank in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls and was defeated in the recent Jubilee Hills bypoll.

He also criticised KCR's

son and BRS working president K T Rama Rao, calling him a 'burden' on the party. Reddy said people in Telangana were already witnessing "good days" with the Congress government implementing welfare schemes, including fine rice distribution, farm loan waiver, Rs 27,000 crore zero-interest loans for women, and free bus travel for women.

Taking a swipe at KCR, he said the former chief minister rarely gave appointments to his own ministers, but was now holding meetings with village sarpanches and ward members.

CONTINUED ON >> P2

# Will lead nationwide stir against labour codes: KTR

**KTR warns against forceful implementation**  
**Blames Union govt for Indigo crisis**

PNS ■ Hyderabad

Warning the state government not to implement the four labour codes forcefully in the state, the BRS working president, KTR said that his party is ready to launch a nationwide fight against the labour codes, saying that they are against the social realities.

Highlighting the dangers of power concentration in a few hands, the BRS working president, KTR, strongly criticised the Centre for the chaos at airports across the country. He said the present situation is the result of what he said concentration of the aviation sector in the hands of a few.

He also warned against the forceful implementation of new labour codes and said their forceful



enforcement would result in the same kind of crisis in other sectors. He was speaking at a round-table conference of Telangana Trade Unions at Telangana Bhavan on Saturday. The meeting was organised on the death anniversary of BR Ambedkar.

He said the Indigo crisis is a striking example of the forceful implementation of

the labour codes, which he said would lead to exploitation. He said that the airports across the nation resemble railway stations and bus stations with the disruption of flight operations. He stressed that there should be ease of doing business, and that no imposition of anything forcefully would work.

CONTINUED ON >> P2



# Jaiswal, Kohli lead India to 2-1 series win over SA

PNS ■ Visakhapatnam

Yashasvi Jaiswal reeled off an unbeaten maiden ODI hundred, carrying India to a nine-wicket victory in the third and final one-day and a 2-1 series win against South Africa here on Saturday. It was always a case of the margin of victory once Jaiswal (116 not out, 121 balls) and his senior opening partner Rohit Sharma (75, 73 balls) stitched 155 runs in 25.5 overs, and it turned precisely so as India finished with 271 for one in 39.5 overs, chasing 271. Virat Kohli contributed a classy 65 not out off 45 deliveries.

Quinton de Kock made a refined 106 off 89 balls, his 23rd ton in ODIs, but it remained a shiny footnote as Indian batters dictated the course with authority.

Jaiswal was not comfortable initially in his innings,



**Jaiswal 116\* 121 balls**

but the assured presence of Rohit at the other end was a massive blessing for him. Rohit guided the understudy, who was playing only his fourth ODI, through some early turbulent phases, and also did the bulk of the scoring.

The 38-year-old reached his fifty in 54 balls, tranquil by his standards, but those patent-

ed, magical swivel pull shots, three of them sailed for sixes, lent the innings a touch of aggression. It enabled Jaiswal to collect runs unhurriedly, and he walked to fifty in 75 balls. But once he reached his fifty, the left-hander grew in confidence and opened a lot more, unbuckling some of those drives and cuts that he carefully avoided in the early phase of his innings.

Rohit, who became the fourth Indian batter to reach 20000 international runs during his knock after Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid and Kohli, looked set for another hundred.

But an ill-timed sweep off left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj cut short his stay. But that didn't deter Jaiswal, who, accompanied by Kohli, kept India's innings moving.

CONTINUED ON >> P2



# Ready to face no-trust motion: K'taka CM

PNS ■ Hassan (Karnataka)

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Saturday said that the Congress government led by him was ready to face the no-confidence motion if moved by the opposition during the legislature session from December 8.

With Deputy CM D K Shivakumar by his side, he reiterated that they would both abide by the high command's decision on the leadership issue.

"Let them (opposition) bring in a no-confidence

motion or adjournment motion or any other motion. We are ready to face it. Ours is an open book, transparent government. We are ready to face anything," Siddaramaiah said in response to a question.

However, BJP state President BY Vijayendra and Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Assembly R Ashoka clarified that the party, along with the JD(S) has not discussed or decided anything so far regarding moving a no-confidence motion against the government.

CONTINUED ON >> P2

# Global Summit: Leveraging Hyderabad's growth potential

By Rajeswara Prasad Buddhavarapu

Whatever you do, critics will always be there. But what matters is the clarity of your perception and an impeccable roadmap for achieving the goals you set. Irrespective of the party in power, comprehensive progress and well-being of everyone should be and ought to be to the primary goal. Organising a global event aimed at leveraging everything that helps the future development of the state should be appreciated and supported, sans ideological differences.

It is the power that makes things happen. Political parties that may be or may

not be in power should not object to anything that helps the state to go ahead on the path of progress, and the future expansion and development needs of the people. Development is a continuous process which cannot or should not be halted, as it enhances the stature and prospects of any state.

Countries all over the world and states across the nation developed not because of objections but because of the strong pursuit of the leaders who were in power at that time. Nothing happens unless you make it happen.

Nothing sustains unless you lay a strong foundation for its sustenance. So

**HYDERABAD IS ENDOWED WITH EVERYTHING FROM INFRASTRUCTURE TO A CONGENIAL ECOSYSTEM AND HAS COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES THAT MANY CAPITAL CITIES LACK**

development takes place and progress surges on the strength of the political leadership. The much-acclaimed, much-publicised and gigantic on every count Telangana Rising Summit is on the cards and is about to change the development perception of the state, which is aiming to become a 3 trillion dollar economy by 2047, a goal very ambitious but needs strong and purposeful pursuit.

Since assuming power, the Congress government led by Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has been very clear about its development ambitions and has been doing everything to make thing happen as it visualised particularly focusing on boosting agriculture, attracting global tech/pharma/semiconductor investments, fostering rural prosperity via its RARE strategy, and aiming for women's economic

empowerment, all while unveiling the detailed "Telangana Rising 2047 Vision Document".

The summit brings together global leaders, CEOs (Google, AWS, etc.), and organisations (World Bank, WHO) to build partnerships and chart future growth across IT, Genome Valley, manufacturing (PURE), and rural economies (RARE).

It is the vision that is essential for things to happen. The government is so clear about the targets to be achieved and investments to be bagged.

Hyderabad is endowed with everything from infrastructure to a congenial ecosystem and has com-

petitive advantages that many capital cities lack. Under the Telangana Rising Summit the government leveraging the competitive advantages to build a Bharat Future City on par with Singapore, Tokyo and New York.

Launching the \$3 trillion economy vision by 2047, with the current economy at \$200 billion, is quite ambitious but not beyond the achievable aims given the pace of development that has been taking place. Based on the economic progress ambitions, the government has clearly outlined the development strategies for holistic growth.

CONTINUED ON >> P2



WHEN STATE POWER AND STAR POWER MEET...



Chief Minister Revanth Reddy with Bollywood star Salman Khan at the inaugural event of Cross Racing League Season 2 at Gachibowli Stadium on Saturday

Mass shooting at a South African bar leaves 12 dead

PNS ■ Cape Town

A mass shooting carried out Saturday by multiple suspects in an unlicensed bar near the South African capital left at least 12 people dead, police said. The victims included three children aged 3, 12 and 16.

Another 13 people were wounded and are being treated in the hospital. Police didn't give details of the ages of those who were injured or their conditions.

Police adjusted the death toll after they said a 12th victim died in the hospital.

The shooting happened at a bar inside a hostel in the Saulsville township, west of the administrative capital of Pretoria in the early hours of Saturday. Ten of the victims died at the scene and two others died at the hospital, police said.

The children killed were a 3-year-old boy, a 12-year-old boy and a 16-year-old girl. Police said they were searching for three male suspects.

"We are told that at least three unknown gunmen entered this hostel where a group of people were drinking, and they started randomly shooting," police spokesperson Brig. Athlenda Mathe told national broadcaster SABC. She said the motive for the killings was not clear. The shootings happened at around 4.15 am, she said, but police were only alerted at 6 am.

South Africa has one of the highest homicide rates in the world and recorded more than 26,000 homicides in 2024 — an average of more than 70 a day. Firearms are by far the leading cause of death in homicides.

Will make TG a...

Hitting out at BRS leaders for not completing the Srisailem Left Bank Canal (SLBC) project in Nalgonda district, he alleged that KCR and his nephew and former Irrigation Minister T Harish Rao were "dancing in joy" when eight workers died in a tunnel collapse during the project works.

Jaiswal, Kohli...

The 23-year-old reached the coveted three-figure mark in 111 balls with a single off pacer Corbin Bosch and immediately wore his helmet away to slip into an energetic celebration — a combination of sprint, jump, roar, and punch in the air.

Jaiswal and a typically assertive Kohli added 156 runs for the second wicket as India calmly went past the target to whip some frenzy among a nearly 27000-strong crowd.

Earlier, a largely disciplined bowling effort also played its part in keeping South Africa to a manageable total, an

effort led by pacer Prasidh Krishna (4/66) and Kuldeep Yadav (4/41).

After Arshdeep Singh sent back Ryan Rickelton early, De Kock (106, 89 balls, 8x4, 6x4) struck his seventh century against India and put on 113 runs off 124 balls with skipper Temba Bavuma (48, 67 balls) as the visitors moved to a healthy position.

De Kock was severe on Prasidh (4/66), who erred on length continuously in his first spell (2-0-27-0). The left-hander biffed the pacer for 6, 6, 4 in his second over to milk 18 runs. The 32-year-old quickly pounced on anything that was short, and pacers Prasidh and Harshit Rana offered him plenty of feed on his pet areas.

De Kock moved to fifty in 42 balls and never let the tempo down, reaching his hundred in 79 balls.

India found temporary relief when Ravindra Jadeja induced a false slash from Bavuma (48, 67 balls) to get caught by Kohli at point.

But the tourists got another move on through a 54-run partnership between De Kock

and Matthew Breetzke for the third wicket, and at 168 for two in 28 overs they were in a good position to press on.

But Breetzke's punishment of part-time spinner Tilak Varma forced a rethink in the Indian camp, as skipper KL Rahul brought back Prasidh for a second spell.

What a masterstroke it turned out to be! The Karnataka man broke the back of South Africa's top and middle-order in an exceptional second spell (4-0-11-3).

Breetzke was the first to go, trapped plumb in front and four balls later Aiden Markram chipped a fuller delivery to Kohli at short covers.

Prasidh then castled De Kock, whose ugly cross-batted swipe failed to connect a full-length delivery.

All of a sudden, South Africa found themselves at a shaky 199 for five, losing three wickets in three overs.

Once Prasidh was done away with the top and middle-order, left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep (4/41) took over and mopped up the tail

Marble chess from Agra reaches Kremlin

PNS ■ Agra

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has gifted a hand-crafted marble chess set from Agra to Russian President Vladimir Putin, bringing immense pride to the city's artisans and exporters.

Agra, known globally for its marble handicrafts, has a thriving industry with several major exporters, and PM Modi's gesture has sent a wave of excitement through the community. Marble craftsman Umar, who has been in the trade for nearly 20 years, described the Prime Minister's move as historic. "India's traditional art is now gaining recognition on the international stage," he said.

MADE MATARAM DEBATE  
Cong likely to field Gogoi, Priyanka

PNS ■ New Delhi

Congress' deputy leader in the Lok Sabha, Gaurav Gogoi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Deepender Hooda and A Bimol Akoijam are likely to be among the party's speakers during the debate on the 150th anniversary of Vande Mataram in the Lok Sabha on Monday, party sources said.

The party is also likely to field Praniti Shinde, Prashant Padole, Chamala Reddy and Jyotsana Mahant during the debate, they said on Saturday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will initiate the debate on the 150th anniversary of Vande Mataram in the Lok Sabha on December 8, while Home Minister Amit Shah will begin the discussion



in the Rajya Sabha on December 9.

According to sources, Prime Minister Modi will initiate the debate on the national song at noon in the Lower House, while Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and several other min-



isters will also participate in the day-long debate. The last speaker in the Lok Sabha debate will be someone from the ruling BJP, they said. A meeting of the Union Cabinet, chaired by Modi on October 1, approved nationwide celebrations to com-

Cong, BRS failed to utilise central funds, slams Kishan

PNS ■ Hyderabad

Union Minister Kishan Reddy said that the Central government has spent Rs. 12 lakh crores on projects and schemes in Telangana over the past 11 years, focusing on rural development and the welfare of the poor.

He stated that the government has prioritised national highway development, railway projects, and support for farmers.

Saying that the BRS and Congress have failed to utilise Central funds for rural development, leaving it to the 15th Finance Commission and employment guarantee schemes.

He clarified that the



Central government provides funds directly to villages for infrastructure development, including roads, streetlights, and sanitation workers' salaries and ensured uninterrupted elec-

tricity supply, supported farmers with subsidies, and provided free rice to 83 crore people.

He revealed that the government has increased procurement prices for crops,

spending Rs. 26,000 crores on paddy procurement and Rs. 60,000 crores on cotton procurement. He said Telangana's financial situation has deteriorated under BRS and Congress rule, with the state facing bankruptcy. Evaluating the achievements of the union government, the central minister said that Rs. 35,000 crores have been allocated for railway development in Telangana, and 42 railway stations are being developed. The government has set up 800 MW power generation units under NTPC and is willing to support more projects, but the state government needs to come forward with a DPR.

What did you achieve in two years?

HARISH RAO QUESTIONS CM REVANTH

PNS ■ Hyderabad

Severely castigating the Chief Minister Revanth Reddy for his claims on the development of Telangana, BRS MLA Harish Rao said the Congress government achieved nothing except blaming and crying over KCR and BRS. The Congress leaders spent the two years in power by blaming the previous government for their failures in implementing the promises given during the election campaign, Harish Rao said.

Rao accused Revanth Reddy of spreading lies and said, "The welfare benefits given by KCR won't be forgotten by the people. You're



telling blatant lies, saying no ration cards were issued during the BRS rule. Is it a lie that 6,47,479 ration cards were issued?"

He questioned Revanth Reddy's intentions, asking, "Who has a grudge against Nalgonda people? Who designed the SLBC project as a never-ending project? Who stopped the project?"

Rao said, "Your reckless decisions and negligence led to the SLBC tunnel tragedy, killing 8 people. You can't even retrieve the bodies. You're playing football while people suffer."

He added, "You're not a CM, you're a world-class player. Get out of your delusions, Revanth Reddy. People see through your lies and incompetence. You're loathing and corrupt, with no vision except loot and commissions."

Rao advised Revanth Reddy to focus on governance instead of spreading lies and playing games. "Stop making fools of people and focus on solving problems. You're a CM, not a clown," he said.

SC: Establish grievance redressal mechanism for prisoners with disabilities

PNS ■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court has directed all the states and Union territories to establish a robust, independent, and accessible grievance redressal mechanism specifically designed for prisoners with disabilities. The apex court said the mechanism shall ensure prompt registration, effective monitoring, and timely resolution of complaints to safeguard the inmates from "systemic neglect, abuse, and discriminatory practices".

A bench of justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta said appropriate facilities should be created to ensure

that prisoners with disabilities have meaningful access to inclusive education within the jail system. "No inmate shall be deprived of the opportunity to pursue educational programmes solely on account of disability, and suitable adjustments shall be made to facilitate their effective participation," the bench said in its December 2 order.

The bench passed the order on a petition seeking exhaustive directions for providing an appropriate legal framework and facilities to persons with disabilities who are undergoing incarceration in jails, either as undertrials or convicts.

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as South Africa fell short of even a par total on this track.

PM: We all must...

This term was made part of books and research papers during their time," he said.

Asserting that India is a model of high growth and low inflation, he said the country's 8.2 per cent growth in the second quarter of this fiscal year shows that it is becoming the growth driver of the global economy.

Modi said that at a time when the world is full of uncertainties, India is seen in a different league.

The changes happening in India are not just about possibilities but are a saga of changing thinking and direction, he said.

"We are standing at a juncture where one fourth of the 21st century has passed. The world has seen many ups and downs: financial crisis, global pandemic, technological disruptions, world falling apart. We are seeing wars; these situations in one way or the other are challenging the world," Modi said.

The world is full of uncertainties, but India is being seen in a different league altogether, he said.

"India is full of self-confidence. When there is talk of a slowdown, India writes the story of growth. When there is a trust deficit in the world, India is becoming a pillar of trust; when the world is moving towards fragmentation, India is becoming a bridge builder," Modi said.

Pointing out Q2 GDP figures being more than 8 per cent, he said it is the symbol of our pace.

"This is not just a number but is a strong macroeconomic signal. It is a message that India is becoming the growth driver of the global economy," Modi said.

Global growth is around 3 per cent while G7 economies are growing at an average of about 1.5 per cent, he pointed out.

"At such a time, India is a model of high growth and low inflation," Modi said.

There was a time when people, especially economists in our country, used to express concern over high

inflation, but the same people now talk of inflation being low, he said in his address.

India's achievements are not ordinary; it is not about numbers but about fundamental change brought about in the last decade, Modi asserted.

Will lead nation...

He warned that there would be Indigo-like crises if the new labour codes were implemented ruthlessly. He alleged that the Congress and the BJP parties were conspiring to pass the Bills, taking advantage of the absence of the BRS in the Lok Sabha.

Ready to face...

The winter session of the Karnataka legislature will begin in Belagavi, bordering Maharashtra, on December 8 and will go on till the 19th of this month.

Not wanting to react to a question on the leadership issue, the CM said the Congress high command is very strong.

"D K Shivakumar and I will

be committed to whatever the high command decides," he said.

Earlier in the day in Bengaluru, Shivakumar accompanied AICC Mallikarjun Kharge to the airport from Vidhana Soudha, after paying tributes to B R Ambedkar on his 69th death anniversary, which had led to some speculation about a possible discussion between the two on the leadership issue.

The power tussle within the ruling party had intensified amid speculation about a change in chief minister in the state, after the Congress government reached the halfway mark of its five-year term on November 20.

However, both the CM and Deputy CM had recently held breakfast meetings at each other's residences, on the instructions of the high command, which is seen as a move to pause the leadership tussle between the two and to signal Siddaramaiah's continuation as the CM for the time being, especially ahead of the Belagavi legislature session.

Global Summit...

With strong international and pan-India attendance at the Global Summit, things are certain to fall in line with the proposed agreements and investments across all key sectors of the rising Telangana, including agriculture, technology and IT manufacturing and above all, investments and partnerships. The Global Summit is an apt platform for the government to showcase the investment potential of Hyderabad. The added advantage of the immense success potential of the Summit is the readiness of the government to bring in policy reforms to leverage the ever-expanding investment opportunities. Every government wants to leave a mark on its own. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's ambitious plan of turning Hyderabad into a global city, keeping in view the future needs of the generations to come, will remain as a towering example of a visionary zeal coupled with implementable goals and meeting future needs.

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# State gearing up for Telangana Rising Summit

TO HOST INTERNATIONAL DELEGATES, EXPERTS ACROSS SECTORS

PNS ■ Hyderabad

Global leaders, top industrialists, experts from various fields, and representatives of international organisations from India and abroad will attend the Telangana Rising Global Summit 2025, scheduled to be held here on December 8 and 9, the state government said on Saturday. The two-day summit, to be held at a site earmarked for the proposed 'Bharat Future City', will feature 27 special panel discussions, the press release said.

National and international delegates and experts from sectors including energy, green mobility, IT and semiconductors, health, and education will make presentations on the growth potential in their fields.

Other sectors represented at the summit include tourism, urban infrastructure, agriculture, industry, the promotion of women entrepreneurs, the gig



economy, social welfare, and startups. Representatives from international organisations such as the WHO, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and UNICEF will participate in the summit.

Industry and institutional participants include TERI, BCG, Micron India, Hitachi Energy, O2 Power, Greenko, Apollo Hospitals, IIT Hyderabad, NASSCOM, Safran,

DRDO, Skyroot, Dhruva Space, Amul, Laurus Labs, GMR, and Tata Realty. Financial and corporate participants include Kotak Bank, Goldman Sachs, Blackstone, Deloitte, Capitaland, Swiggy, AWS, Taj Hotels, and others, the release added.

Prominent sports personalities, including PV Sindhu, Anil Kumble, Pullela Gopichand, Gagan Narang, and Jwala

Gutta, will attend the 'Olympic Gold Quest' session.

From the film industry, filmmaker SS Rajamouli, actor Riteish Deshmukh, director Sukumar, producer Guneet Monga and author-journalist Anupama Chopra will speak in the panel discussion on 'Creative Century-Soft Power & Entertainment'.

Under the leadership of Chief Minister A Revanth

Reddy, state ministers and senior officials from all departments are coordinating arrangements to ensure a high-profile event and provide world-class hospitality for the delegates.

The Chief Minister has been reviewing the summit arrangements, which the government said is being organised "on par with the World Economic Forum (WEF)" held annually in Davos. He is holding a series of meetings with officials to ensure foolproof arrangements at the venue.

The state government will unveil its 'Telangana Rising 2047 Vision Document' on the second day of the summit, December 9. The vision document outlines a roadmap to achieve a USD three trillion economy by 2047.

It will also include comprehensive plans for the future development of Telangana across all sectors, investments, technology partnerships, and innovations, the release added.



6 CONTINENTS - 44 COUNTRIES

## Special and strategic: DCM

Says 154 delegates to participate in Global Summit

PNS ■ Hyderabad

Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka stated that 154 delegates from 44 countries across 6 continents are participating in the Telangana Rising Global Summit. Of these, 46 delegates are from the United States alone. All political parties in the state are being invited to the event, and officials are personally reaching out to extend invitations. The Chief Minister, Deputy Chief Minister, and other Ministers have already visited key leaders to invite them, he said. Invitations have also been extended to all states. He said that the objective of the summit is to build a 3-trillion-dollar Telangana economy by 2047.

He said the summit will commence at 1:30 PM on December 8, inaugurated by Governor Dr C. V. Ananda Bose (Jishnu Dev Varma). Conducting such a significant event at Bharat Future City is a matter of great pride, he added. He further said that the Vision Document was drafted collectively by the entire

subject experts. Similar sessions will continue on the second day, December 9, starting at 9 AM and concluding with the closing ceremony at 6 PM. Details of the dignitaries attending the closing ceremony will be announced shortly.

The Telangana Rising Global Summit - 2025 is special and strategic, he explained. It is being conducted with the intention of attracting new investors to Telangana. He described it as a summit that is directly connected to Telangana's future. This Economic Summit will significantly benefit the state's long-term interests, he added. He appealed to everyone to contribute in their respective capacities toward making the summit a success.

Expressing hope that airline connectivity issues would ease by then, he said alternative arrangements would be made if any challenges arise. If important dignitaries face travel difficulties, special flights will be arranged, Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka assured.

Cabinet under the leadership of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy. Many world-renowned economists will address the summit.

On the first day, December 8, speakers include Abhijit Banerjee, Eric Swider (Trump Media & Technology Group), Minister Sridhar Babu, Karnataka Deputy CM D. K. Shivakumar, Nobel Laureate Kailash Satyarthi, Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, Union Minister Kishan Reddy, and Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka himself. The Chief Minister will deliver a keynote address at 2:30 PM.

He said that following the inaugural session, multiple department-specific sessions will be held. Sessions will run from 3 PM to 4 PM, featuring the respective Ministers, Principal Secretaries, and

### Send feedback on the draft Seed Bill

PJTAU VC urges farmers

PNS ■ Hyderabad

Jayashankar Telangana Agricultural University (PJTAU) Vice-Chancellor, Professor Aldas Janaiah, has urged farmers and stakeholders to send their suggestions and feedback on the draft Seed Bill 2025 to the Central Government by December 11th. Janaiah emphasized the importance of protecting farmers' interests and urged everyone to participate in the process to avoid potential losses in the next 50 years. He mentioned that PJTAU has already sent 13 suggested amendments to the Central Government and shared copies of the amendments in Telugu and English with the media.

The amendments aim to address concerns and issues related to the Seed Bill 2025, and Janaiah encouraged farmers, scientists, and other stakeholders to share their thoughts and suggestions to make the bill more effective and beneficial for the agricultural community.



INDIGO FLIGHTS CHAOS

## SCR to run special trains to clear passenger rush

PNS ■ Hyderabad

The South Central Railway on Saturday announced that it would run four special trains to manage the surge in passengers resulting from the large-scale cancellation of Indigo flights here. The move comes as flyers face significant disruption and long queues at the airport due to the cancellation.

A press release from the SCR said it is running the special trains to clear the extra rush of passengers to Chennai, Mumbai and Shalimar (Kolkata) from Hyderabad today.

According to Rajiv Gandhi International Airport sources, as many as 74 out-

bound Indigo flights are expected to be cancelled from here on Saturday.

Similarly, 70 incoming flights are also likely to be cancelled during the day.

The flight cancellations drew ire from passengers, who thronged the Indigo counters at the airport, demanding to know the exact situation.

"This is utter nonsense! Digiyaatra done, message received that departure has been rescheduled ahead of the scheduled departure, and now upon arriving at Hyderabad airport, I came to know at the security checkpoint that Indigo flight is cancelled," Tarun Singha, former Ministry of Defence

spokesperson, said in a post on X. "But the thing is, if you don't shout, they do nothing. For example, at Hyderabad Airport, there was no staff no flight information for an hour. Then a fellow passenger started shouting on the mic and an Indigo staff member finally appeared," a netizen said in a post.

On Friday, when IndiGo cancelled over 1,000 flights from across airports, its CEO Pieter Elbers apologised in a video message for the major inconvenience caused to passengers due to the disruptions. In the one-way video communication, Elbers also said that the airline was expecting fewer than 1,000 flights on Saturday.

### Cyber crime police book case over morphed video of Owaisi

PNS ■ Hyderabad

The cybercrime police of Hyderabad have registered a case following a complaint made by an AIMIM functionary over fabricated videos of party president Asaduddin Owaisi being posted on social media platforms. The morphed video shows Owaisi standing in front of an idol of Lord Hanuman and reciting Hanuman Chalisa, police said, quoting the complaint made on December 5. A case was registered, and an investigation was in progress, police added.

## Cyber security professional from TG dies in a fire accident in US

PNS ■ Hyderabad

A 24-year-old cybersecurity professional from Telangana died in a fire accident in the United States, her family said on Saturday.

Sahaja Reddy Udumala completed her Master's in Cyber Security in the US and began working there a few months ago, her uncle Udumala Bala, Archbishop of Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh, told PTI.

She returned home from work and was asleep in her room in Albany in New



York state when the fire broke out at around 11 AM on December 4 (US time), he said.

While she suffered severe burns in the incident, two other occupants of the build-



ing escaped with minor injuries, he said.

She was shifted to a hospital in New York after receiving first aid at Albany. She succumbed after undergoing treatment for about 15

hours. Several Telugu students were also staying in the same building.

Sahaja Reddy had moved to the US three years ago. Her family hails from Jangaon district in Telangana.

Her father is an IT professional, and her mother is a teacher. Bala requested the state government to assist in repatriating the mortal remains to India.

The Telugu community in the US is actively supporting the family during this difficult time, he added.

## Jan Dhan accounts hold ₹2.75 lakh crore in banks: Official



PNS ■ Hyderabad

Jan Dhan accounts across the country currently hold balances of about Rs 2.75 lakh crore, translating to an average of Rs 4,815 per account, M Nagaraju, Secretary, Department of Financial Services, said on Saturday.

Delivering the 69th Foundation Day Lecture on India's Financial Inclusion Journey at the Administrative Staff College of India (ASCI) here, Nagaraju said a total of Rs 3.67 lakh crore has been transferred through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) in the current financial year.

He said India's financial inclu-

sion journey has been "nothing short of a miracle", noting that the launch of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) in 2014 marked a watershed moment by bringing more than 57 crore people into the formal banking system.

"Jan Dhan accounts hold balances of about Rs 2.75 lakh crore as of today, which translates to approximately Rs 4,815 per account. About 78.2 per cent of Jan Dhan accounts are in rural or semi-urban areas, and 50 per cent are held by women," he said.

He added that India's Financial Inclusion Index stood at 67 as of March 2025, reflecting steady improvement in access, usage and quality of financial services, supported by initiatives such as PMJDY.

Replying to a query, Nagaraju said LIC is in the process of fully digitising its product purchase and benefits disbursement systems and that these services will be available to consumers "in a couple of months".



PNS ■ Visakhapatnam

Indian batting mainstay Virat Kohli on Saturday said he is "feeling really free" mentally after producing another match-winning effort to help India clinch the three-match ODI series, in which he finished as the leading run-scorer with 302 runs.

Kohli scored a rapid 45-ball 65 not out in the third ODI after hitting centuries in the first two games to extend his tally to a record 53, as India crushed South Africa by nine wickets to win the third ODI comprehensively.

"Honestly, playing the way I have in the series is the most satisfying thing for me. I feel really free in my mind. I haven't played like this in 2-3 years," Kohli told the broadcaster after the match. "I know when I can bat like that in the middle, it helps the team a long way. Makes me confident, any situation in the middle, I can handle that and bring it in favour of the team," he added. Kohli said self-doubt is inevitable for a batter, irrespective of experience, but felt it helps in overall improvement.

"When you play for that long — 15-16 years — you do doubt yourself. Especially as a batter, when one mistake can get you out. It's a whole journey of getting better and getting better as a person along the way. It improves you as a person, and it improves temperament as well," he said.

"I'm just glad that I'm still able to contribute to the team. When I play freely, I know I can hit sixes. There are always levels you can unlock," he added.

Adjusted the player of the series, Kohli, who topped the batting charts with 302 runs at an average of 151 with two tons and a fifty, said the hundred at Ranchi was the most special knock among the three.

"The first one at Ranchi, because I hadn't played a game since Australia. Just how your energy is on the day, Ranchi is very special for me, and I'm very grateful for how these three games have gone," he said.

India captain KL Rahul said it was important for bowlers to get a break from bowling in a wet outfield after the dew factor influenced the play in the first two matches.

"We got tough conditions in the first two games. So, it was good to give the bowlers a break in a wet outfield. (The surface) was still a really good wicket. What we were able to do was pick up

wickets in bunches," he said after India bowled out South Africa for 270.

India's win was set up by Prasidh Krishna (4/66) and Kuldeep Yadav (4/41) in the first half of the game.

"We were able to squeeze in the middle. Prasidh picked up those two or three wickets in a spell, which was really crucial and then Kuldeep came in, picking two wickets in an over. In ODI cricket, that's how you try and contain teams," he said.

South Africa captain Temba Bavuma said his side "gifted" wickets to India as they slipped from 168 for two to 270 all-out.

"We would have wanted to make it a lot more exciting today. From a batting point of view, we didn't have enough runs. It tends to get easier under lights. Probably should have been smarter as we gifted wickets," he said.

"The Indian team showed their quality - kudos to them. We could have been a lot smarter; if you look at the first two ODIs, we did that. Probably today, the conditions were different. You never want to get bowled out in a 50-over game."

Bavuma, however, was happy to see that South Africa was able to put pressure on the Indian spinners in the ODI series.

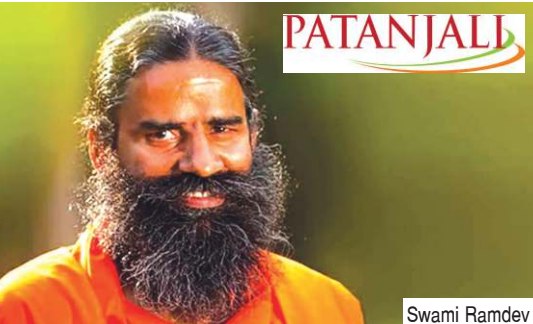
"We have definitely grown, we speak a lot about how we want to play," he said. "India has quality spinners, and it's never easy to put them under pressure. For large parts of the series, we did that. I think if there were 10 boxes, we ticked 6 or 7 of them."

I'M JUST GLAD THAT I'M STILL ABLE TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE TEAM. WHEN I PLAY FREELY, I KNOW I CAN HIT SIXES. THERE ARE ALWAYS LEVELS YOU CAN UNLOCK



PROSPECT

Patanjali Group signs MoU to enter Russia with its Ayurveda products



Swami Ramdev

Yoga Guru Baba Ramdev-led Patanjali Group on Saturday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Russian Government that will facilitate its entry into the country. The MoU aims to promote health and wellness, health tourism, exchange of skilled human resources and research-related initiatives, as per a statement. The MoU was signed here by Ramdev on behalf of the Patanjali Group and Sergey Cheremin, Chairman of the Indo-Russia Business Council and Minister of Commerce of Russia.

The Patanjali Group, founded by Baba Ramdev and Acharya Balkrishna, is an Indian conglomerate known for its Ayurvedic and FMCG products, encompassing Patanjali Ayurved and Patanjali Foods (formerly Ruchi Soya). Ramdev, addressing the programme, said people in Russia appreciate and actively practice yoga, Ayurveda, and naturopathy. He further said "our foremost goal is to take this wellness science of the sages to nearly 200 countries across the world, with Russia serving as the entry point".

"The first major objective of this MoU is to expand Patanjali's wellness services in Russia. The second objective is to share India's spiritual knowledge, culture, yoga, Ayurveda and invaluable heritage with Russia.

For this purpose, India's cultural and sage traditions will be taken to Russia," he said. Additionally, under this MoU, leading Indian brands will be promoted in Russia and Russian brands in India. While Sergey Cheremin said they will strengthen their partnership with Patanjali. By adopting Patanjali's yoga, Ayurveda and naturopathy, they aim to transform the lifestyle of the people of Russia and make them healthier and disease-free, he said.

Install rooftop solar panels on all Govt buildings: Haryana CM to officials



Nayab Singh Saini

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Saturday directed that all Government buildings like schools, colleges, hospitals, offices, etc, be equipped with rooftop solar systems to accelerate the State's transition towards clean and green energy. He was chairing a high-level review meeting on the budget announcements of the power sector at the civil secretariat here, according to an official statement. uring the meeting, Saini reviewed the progress of the PM Suryaghar: *Muft Bijli Yojana* and instructed officials to expedite rooftop solar installations across households in the State. He also examined the month-wise achievements under the scheme and emphasised strict monitoring and accountability.

In addition, the CM directed the creation of solar parks across the State to harness Haryana's renewable energy potential. He also ordered immediate removal of old and defunct electricity poles from major State roads and highways to enhance public safety and improve road aesthetics. Chairman, Haryana Power Generation Corporation Ltd (HPGCL), Shyamal Misra said 42,486 rooftop solar installations have been completed in the State as of November 20, 2025. A target has been set to install 2,22,000 rooftop solar systems in the state by March 31, 2027. He said power distribution companies have also formulated a new scheme, 'Saur Urja Protsahan Yojana' and it has been submitted to the State Government for approval.

Assam CM launches seed capital cheque distribution for women of Hailakandi and Dholai

TONY DAS  
Guwahati

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday launched the distribution of seed capital cheques under the *Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan* for women beneficiaries across Hailakandi and Dholai Legislative Assembly Constituencies (LACs) in the Barak Valley.

A total of 17,774 beneficiaries from Hailakandi LAC and 20,045 from Dholai LAC each received cheques of ₹10,000 under the initiative, aimed at ensuring sustainable economic empowerment for women in Assam.

Speaking at the Hailakandi distribution event, the Chief Minister noted that cheque distribution has already been completed in 50 constituencies in the past two months, benefiting 12 lakh women across the State.



CM Himanta Biswa Sarma is distributing seed capital cheque to women beneficiary during the *Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan* programme in Hailakandi on Saturday

Pioneer photo

He highlighted Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision to transform three crore women into "*Lakshpati Didis*," stating the State Government aims to transform 40 lakh women associated with Self-Help Groups (SHGs) into "*Lakshpati Baideus*" (elder sisters).

CM Sarma urged beneficiaries to make the best use of the initial ₹10,000 seed fund, explaining that depositing it in their SHGs could create a working capital of ₹1 lakh for enterprises or business expansion.

Following a six-month assessment of fund utilisation,

beneficiaries will be eligible for subsequent support of ₹25,000 and ₹50,000. Eligibility for these subsequent benefits is restricted to beneficiaries with up to three children. The CM also announced that under Orunodoi 3.0, two to three thousand new beneficiaries will be included from Hailakandi LAC. Further-more, from January 1, ration card holders will be able to purchase dal, salt and sugar at Rs. 100 per kg, a reduction from the existing ₹117.

On development, CM Sarma announced the installation of an MRI machine at Hailakandi Civil Hospital and directed the District Commissioner to identify land for a medical college.

Earlier, the Chief Minister laid the foundation stone for the statue of Bharat Kesari Dr Syama Prasad Mukherjee on Puranibazar Road, Hailakandi.

Customs simplification next big reform: FM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

Ahead of Budget 2026, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday said the simplification of customs would be the next big reform agenda for the Government. During the current financial year, the Government undertook reforms such as rate rationalisation and simplification of the income tax and Goods and Services Tax (GST) in a bid to boost consumption by providing more cash in the hands of the common man.

"We need a complete overhaul of customs... We need to have customs simplified for people to feel that it is not cumbersome to comply... Need to make it more transparent," Sitharaman said while speaking at the HT Leadership Summit here.

There is a need to bring the virtues of income tax to the customs side in terms of transparency, she said, adding that the proposed reforms will be comprehensive and entail customs duty rate rationalisation. The announcements to this effect can be made in the upcoming Budget, likely to be presented on February 1. "We have brought down



ARAMAN

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman

customs duty over the last two years steadily. But in those few items where our rates are considered to be over the optimal level, we have to bring them down as well. Customs is my next big cleaning-up

assignment," she said.

In this year's Budget, among other measures announced, the Government proposed eliminating seven additional customs tariff rates on industrial goods, following

the removal of seven tariffs in 2023-24 (announced in the previous budget speech on July 23, 2024). This reduces the total number of tariff slabs to eight, including a zero rate. On the depreciating rupee

Circular economy to boost dairy farmers' income by 20% in 5 years: Amit Shah



Union Minister for Home Affairs and Cooperation, Amit Shah inaugurates the newly constructed Bio-CNG and Fertiliser Plant by Banas Dairy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Ahmedabad

Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah on Saturday expressed confidence that implementation of the circular economy model across the country will increase dairy farmers' income by 20 per cent in the next five years. Shah was addressing cattle rearers associated with Banas Dairy at an event held at Sanadar village in Gujarat's Vav-Tharad district to mark the inauguration of the dairy's bio-CNG and fertiliser plant and ground-breaking of its milk powder plant.

He praised Banas Dairy's management for successfully developing a model for a circular economy in the dairy sector, which includes generating extra income for farmers through various means, such as converting cattle dung into biogas and

bio-fertiliser. Shah informed the audience that he has brought several members of Parliament to Banaskantha to understand the circular economy model of Banas Dairy.

"So far, our cooperative dairies have received huge success in procuring milk from farmers and giving back the income generated from selling milk products. Now, the time has come to focus on the circular economy. You will get your share from the income generated by the dairy by selling biogas and fertiliser produced from cattle dung procured from farmers," he said. A concrete plan for the implementation of this circular economy model across the country will emerge from the meeting of MPs in Banaskantha in the evening, the minister said.

Shah also informed the gathering that chairpersons and managing directors of all

the major cooperative dairies will visit Banas Dairy in January 2026 to understand more about the initiatives taken by the dairy, considered Asia's largest dairy with a turnover of ₹24,000 crore.

"Apart from the usual milk products like paneer and curd, there are many products that are in demand across the globe, but they are not produced in India. If we focus on those products, dairy farmers can earn extra income," he said.

Shah said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has created a system wherein dairies will get the required finance and technology to adopt this circular economy model, which also includes leather production from the hide harvested from the cattle that died naturally. "Our Government has created three cooperatives for the agriculture sector and three for the dairy sector. I want to

assure you that the circular economy will increase dairy farmers' income by 20 per cent in the next five years," he said. Shah said his ministry and the Centre have done detailed planning for implementing the circular economy model in the dairy sector. He expressed confidence that targets set by PM Modi under the 'White Revolution 2.0' initiative will be achieved through collective efforts.

On the occasion, Shah praised women dairy farmers for their contribution and efforts in strengthening the sector in this arid region of Gujarat. "Women dairy farmers of this region sent a message to NGOs around the world that advocate for women's empowerment. Without any agitation, you worked hard to create a system where your earnings are deposited directly into your bank account," he noted.

Need stronger arbitral institutions for infrastructure sector: Justice Rajesh Bindal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

Supreme Court judge Justice Rajesh Bindal has underlined the need for strong arbitral institutions, stating that the country's booming infrastructure sector requires expert involvement and problem-solving approaches to prevent disputes from stalling projects.

The Supreme court judge was speaking at the 5th Biennial International Conference on Construction Law and Arbitration organised by the Society of Construction Law here on Friday evening, in collaboration with Khaitan and Co, Larsen and Toubro, JSA Advocates and Solicitors, among others. Justice Bindal said construction law is a highly specialised field.

He said the rapid growth of India's infrastructure, including power, roads, metro, ports and dams, has naturally increased disputes.

"Activity is increasing, so percentage of disputes will go up — some genuine, some creative.

"We should solve them at each stage, instead of taking the entire dispute to the end and stalling the project," Justice Bindal said.

He endorsed institutional arbitration in construction disputes, to combat its current issues of inflated costs and delayed proceedings by ensuring the availability of technical experts, proper record-keeping, and structured case management.

He also stressed contract drafting as a key area for reducing disputes.

"The best form of agreement is where all relevant laws and terms are incorporated in a single document, avoiding overlaps and patho-



Justice Rajesh Bindal

logical clauses," he said.

Justice Bindal warned about challenges posed by Artificial Intelligence (AI) in arbitration and litigation, including fabricated evidence, non-existent judgments, and confidentiality risks on open AI platforms.

Speaking at the event, Attorney General R Venkataramani called for dedicated legislation for the construction sector, underlining its current fragmented nature.

He urged law schools to play a larger role in shaping the future of construction law and regulatory frameworks.

Delhi High Court judge Justice Tejas Karia highlighted the rapid evolution and complexity of India's infrastructure sector and emphasised the need for specialised dispute resolution frameworks.

"The future of construction disputes is clear. It will be faster, more data-driven and supported by technology. It will be less adversarial and more collaborative and rely on early resolution structures and enforcement.

If we build a dispute resolution system that is clear, predictable, economically enabled and globally trusted, we can position India as a hub for infrastructure arbitration," he said.

MP Manoj Tiwari flags off FICCI-CASCADE anti-smuggling auto rally

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

FICCI-CASCADE (Committee Against Smuggling and Counterfeiting Destroying the Economy), on Saturday organised the third edition of its Annual Auto Rally. The event was flagged off by Lok Sabha Member of Parliament Manoj Tiwari. The aim of the rally was to raise large scale awareness on the impact of smuggled and counterfeit goods on India's economy, public health and national security.

On the occasion Tiwari made a passionate appeal during the flag-off ceremony and urged citizens to act as informed consumers and join the nation's collective crusade against smuggling, which continues to drain Government revenue and undermine legitimate industry.

"Smuggling is not just an economic offence, it is a silent threat that fuels criminal networks and even terrorism. A bomb blast shocks the nation in a single moment, but the funding for such acts often begins quietly through the sale of smuggled and illegal goods. Many citizens do not realise that when



Manoj Tiwari, Member of Parliament and Anil Rajput, Chairman, FICCI CASCADE, flagging off the Anti-Smuggling Auto Rally in Delhi, with over 300 auto-rickshaws participating to raise awareness on the rising threat of smuggling and counterfeiting

Pioneer photo

they buy products without a bill or choose cheaper, smuggled items, they unintentionally strengthen the very forces that work against India's safety and stability.

Today, I appeal to every Indian: let us take a clear and conscious pledge that we will never purchase goods that come through illegal channels.

Even if it costs a little more, let us always choose rightful, tax-paid, bill-certified products.

This is not only about supporting honest businesses — it is about protecting our nation, safeguarding our people, and weakening the networks that misuse our hard-earned money against us," he said.



# Five arrested for gold heist in Delhi posing as officials

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

The Delhi Police have arrested five persons for allegedly looting around one kg of gold from a jewellery workshop in central Delhi by impersonating enforcement officials conducting a 'raid'. The accused — inspired by the Bollywood film 'Special 26' — staged a raid at the workshop on November 27 by posing as Delhi Police and income tax officials, and 'confiscated' around one kg of gold before fleeing. The investigation — stretching across Delhi, Rohtak, Hisar, Hansi and other parts of Haryana — culminated in a 1,200-kilometre pursuit.

According to the police, the gang, inspired by the Bollywood heist film Special 26, carried out the robbery on November 27 after entering the workshop disguised as law-enforcement officials. One of the men wore a police uniform, while the others claimed to be Income Tax officers conducting an "inspec-

tion". The group seized mobile phones from workers, announced a search operation, uprooted the CCTV DVR, and fled with approximately 1 kg of gold. Five men — including a Delhi Government's public relations department — were arrested following a 72-hour chase across Delhi-NCR and several districts of Haryana, police said. A case was registered immediately at the Prasad Nagar police station, and a team began cross-checking every possible route the suspects might have taken.

During the staged raid, one accused wore a fake police uniform while others acted as income tax officers, seizing mobile phones of workers, wiping CCTV footage, and escaping with the gold, the senior officer said. Subsequently, the police launched a massive operation spanning over 1,200 km



across Bahadurgarh, Gurugram, Sonapat, Panipat, Rohtak, Jhajjar, Hisar and Jind. The officer said footage from over 250 CCTV cameras were scanned and advanced technical surveillance was mounted to track the movement of the gang across multiple cities. Based on technical leads, police first apprehended Sandeep (30), a native of Jind and currently living in Bhopal, from Bahadurgarh on December 2. He claims to be an OSD in the Madhya Pradesh Government, which is being verified, police said.

His interrogation led to the arrest of four other accused — Rakesh Sharma (41) from Rohtak, Shaminder Pal Singh (43) and Lavpreet Singh (30) from Hisar, and Parvinder (42) from Delhi. Police recovered 435.03 grams of the stolen gold, ₹3.97 lakh in cash, three cars used in the crime — including an SUV — and five fake ID card holders and lanyards (piece of uniform) bearing 'Delhi Police' markings. The disguises worn during the 'raid' were also

seized. According to investigators, Parvinder, a Delhi Government employee, and Sandeep devised the plan after learning from an associate that jewellery workshops in the Karol Bagh-Dev Nagar belt handled large quantities of gold.

The gang then acquired ID cards, lanyards, and a fake police uniform and conducted the raid on November 27.

Police say that immediately after the robbery, the gold was divided. Parvinder allegedly took 500 grams, Sandeep kept 500 grams out of which 428 grams were sold. He reportedly handed ₹25.5 lakh to Rakesh for further distribution among the team. The rest of the proceeds, police say, were used by Sandeep to settle personal debts.

Efforts are underway to trace the remaining stolen gold and arrest the absconding accused — identified as Akram, Suresh alias Jammal, and Naveen alias Kala, they added.

## Pollution nearly doubles in November: CREA

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

Delhi's air pollution nearly doubled in November, pushing the national Capital to the fourth spot among the most polluted cities in the country.

A report released by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) on Saturday highlighted that while the impact of stubble burning on Delhi's air quality was significantly lower compared to last year, pollution levels in the city remained severe. Delhi ranked as the fourth most polluted city in the country in November, recording a monthly average PM2.5 level of 215 micrograms per cubic metre — nearly double its October average of 107 micrograms per cubic metre.

The national Capital witnessed 23 'very poor' days, six 'severe' days and one 'poor' day during the month. Despite the deteriorating air quality, the contribution of stubble burning averaged only 7 per cent in November, compared to 20 per cent last year.

Peak stubble-burning contribution touched 22 per cent, significantly lower than the 38 per cent recorded in November 2024, the report said.

Meanwhile, air quality across India deteriorated sharply in November, with nine of the country's ten



most polluted cities recording higher pollution levels than the previous year, according to the analysis.

The report revealed that all but one of the top ten polluted cities failed to record even a single day within the safe daily National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) limit throughout the entire month.

Ghaziabad emerged as the most polluted city in India, with a monthly average PM2.5 concentration of 224 micrograms per cubic metre, breaching the NAAQS on every single day in November. The city recorded 19 'very poor' days, 10 'severe' days and one 'poor' day.

Noida, Bahadurgarh, Delhi, Hapur, Greater Noida, Baghpat, Sonapat,

Meerut and Rohtak also featured among the ten most polluted cities.

Uttar Pradesh accounted for six of these cities, followed by Haryana with three and Delhi with one. Except for Bahadurgarh, none of the top ten cities recorded even a single day within the safe NAAQS threshold.

Several other NCR cities, including Charkhi Dadri, Bulandshahr, Jind, Muzaffarnagar, Gurgaon, Khurja, Bhiwani, Karnal, Yamunanagar and Faridabad, also remained above safe pollution levels throughout the month.

"Despite a significant reduction in stubble-burning influence, 20 out of 29 NCR cities recorded higher pollution levels than the previous year. This clearly indicates

that the dominant drivers are year-round sources such as transport, industry, power plants and other combustion sources. Without sector-specific emission cuts, cities will continue to breach standards," said Manoj Kumar, Analyst at CREA.

At the state level, Rajasthan recorded the highest number of polluted cities, with 23 out of 34 exceeding the NAAQS in November.

Haryana followed with 22 out of 25 cities breaching safe limits, while Uttar Pradesh had 14 out of 20 cities above the standard. High pollution levels were also recorded across Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Punjab.

In contrast, Shillong in Meghalaya emerged as the cleanest city in India in November, with a monthly average PM2.5 concentration of just 7 micrograms per cubic metre. The list of the ten cleanest cities included six from Karnataka, and one each from Meghalaya, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Out of 255 cities with sufficient monitoring data, only 114 complied with India's NAAQS of 60 micrograms per cubic metre.

Compliance with the World Health Organisation's daily safe guideline of 15 micrograms per cubic metre remained extremely low, with just two cities meeting the benchmark, the report noted.

## Govt forms expert group to tackle air quality

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

The Delhi Government has constituted an "Expert Group on Air Pollution Mitigation" to provide evidence-based guidance on prevention, control and long-term management of air quality.

The expert body has been set up to advise the Delhi Government on sector-specific interventions, emerging technologies and policy reforms needed to address the pollution caused by multiple anthropogenic and natural factors.

The group will function as a high-level advisory panel to guide, evaluate and strengthen Delhi's air quality management strategy.

As per the order, retired IAS officer and former Union environment secretary Leena Nandan will chair the expert group.

Other members include former Central Pollution Control Board member secretary Dr JS Kamyotra, IIT Delhi professor emeritus Mukesh Khare, IIT Kanpur professor emeritus Mukesh Sharma, TERI's Circular Economy and Waste Management director Dr Suneel Pandey, and representatives from the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM), India Meteorological Department (IMD), APAG and PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI).



The secretary (environment and forest), Delhi Government, will also be a member, while the chairman of the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) will act as the member secretary.

The primary objective of the group will be to provide independent, science-based and actionable advice to the Delhi Government on air pollution mitigation, including short-term emergency responses and long-term structural reforms.

It will also monitor and review air pollution control programmes being implemented by various departments, suggest policy measures aligned with best global practices and offer corrective inputs on air quality-related decisions and initiatives.

The expert group will meet at least once every month and may hold meetings in physical or virtual mode. The DPCC will provide secretarial and logistical support to the panel.

The group has been constituted for an initial period of six months, with the Government retaining the power to extend its tenure or modify its composition as required.

All members have also been directed to maintain confidentiality of internal discussions, unpublished assessments and Government documents.

The order states the constitution of the group has been approved by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta.

## Govt fines over ₹7 crore for construction site violations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

Delhi Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa on Saturday said the Government imposed more than ₹7 crore in penalties on construction sites violating pollution norms this year.

"A total of 1,750 sites were inspected, 556 notices were issued and 48 units were ordered shut for violating pollution control norms, he said. In the last two days, the Delhi Pollution Control Committee officials carried out 230 road and garbage inspections, 110 by Municipal Corporation of Delhi officials, 36 by the Public Works Department, 32 by the Delhi Development Authority, 17 by the Delhi State Industrial and Infrastructure

Development Corporation, and eight by the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation, resulting in a show-cause penalty of around ₹1 crore, the minister said.

He said the agencies issued 7.97 lakh Pollution Under Control challans this year, compared to 4.33 lakh challans in 2024. A total of 42,017 potholes were fixed this year, against 18,000 repaired a year ago.

Sirsa said the number of electric vehicles registered in Delhi has risen to 4.54 lakh on November 15 this year, up from 3.46 lakh on December 31, 2024.

He said DPCC will appoint 100 surveyors for door-to-door and road-to-road assessments to strengthen on-ground checks. Currently, 1,823 enforcement teams are deployed, includ-



ing 536 for dust control and 633 for action against open burning.

Around 350 new mist-spray poles have been installed across Delhi, while 3,377 electric heaters have

been supplied to 1,407 resident welfare associations as part of a plan to distribute 10,000 heaters city-wide, the environment minister added.

The Delhi Government is

soon to sign an MoU with IIT Delhi and IITM for a Pollution Source Apportionment Study to scientifically identify and address city-specific pollution sources. This will further strengthen the Government's data-backed approach to air quality management, Sirsa said. The Government has issued strict directions for retrofitting all BS-IV and below generators with anti-pollution devices. "No generator — domestic or commercial — will be allowed to operate without retrofitting. Violators will face heavy penalties," the Minister warned. Earlier in the day, the minister inspected the Saidulajab ward area as part of the ongoing mega cleanliness drive across all parts of Delhi.

## AQI remains very poor settling at 330

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

A thick blanket of Pollution hung over the capital on Saturday as Delhi's air quality stayed locked in the 'very poor' category, with the 24-hour average AQI settling at 330.

Among the 40 monitoring stations, 31 stations remained in the 'very poor' levels in the evening, with Nehru Nagar reporting the highest AQI at 369, according to CPCB's Sameer App.

Earlier, Delhi woke to another choking morning with the AQI at 335 at 9 am. A total of 36 stations were in the 'very poor' category, with Mundka recording the worst levels at 387.

According to the Decision Support System for Delhi's air

quality management, transport within the city remained the highest local contributor at 14.8 per cent, followed by industries in Delhi and surrounding areas at 7.3 per cent, residential sources at 3.6 per cent and construction at 2 per cent.

Among neighbouring NCR districts, Jhajjar contributed 13.9 per cent, while Rohtak accounted for 5.2 per cent.

Delhi's air quality has swung sharply through the week. The city recorded an AQI of 279 on Sunday, 304 on Monday, rose to 372 on Tuesday, and stood at 342 on Wednesday. It remained in the 'very poor' category at 304 on Thursday and 327 on Friday. According to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), an AQI between 0 and 50 is 'good', 51 to 100

'satisfactory', 101 to 200 'moderate', 201 to 300 'poor', 301 to 400 'very poor' and 401 to 500 'severe'.

On the weather front, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said the maximum temperature settled at 24.6 degrees Celsius, 0.7 notches below normal, while the minimum was 6.8 degrees Celsius, 2.7 notches below normal.

Evening relative humidity stood at 56 per cent, while morning humidity climbed to 95 per cent. The weather department predicted shallow fog for Sunday morning.

For Sunday, the IMD has forecast a minimum temperature of 9 degrees Celsius and a maximum of 24 degrees Celsius, with a partly cloudy sky.

# CM Rekha Gupta leads cleaning and washing drive amid pollution rise

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

Amid concerns of a rise in Pollution in the national capital, Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta led a cleaning and washing drive on the Ring Road at Khyber Pass Chowk in Civil Lines, and personally participated in sweeping and water-sprinkling operations. The Chief Minister said that this campaign is a significant step towards making Delhi pollution-free and ensuring effective dust control. She added that regular road washing,

mechanical sweeping, and on-ground monitoring across the city are being undertaken with great speed and seriousness. She said that for the first time in Delhi's history, a washing campaign has been carried out across the entire Ring Road.

She added that dust is a major contributor to pollution. To address this permanently, roads are being constructed wall-to-wall. She alleged that previous Governments neither took interest in road construction nor ensured that roads were built wall-to-wall, resulting in

dust being blown across Delhi throughout the year. However, her Government has now ensured a permanent solution.

The Chief Minister further informed that elected representatives are being given adequate budget allocations to construct such strong and dust-resistant roads. She said that each MLA is being allocated Rs 10 crore so that they can initiate the construction of these roads in their constituencies. The Chief Minister stated that the Delhi Government is working to stop the use of coal and wood

in the open, alongside addressing pollution on a long-term basis. For this, the Government has begun providing electric heaters to security guards and electric irons to those who iron clothes, so that reliance on traditional fuels can end. She appealed to all sections of society and companies to contribute through CSR funds to help provide electric heaters and electric irons to citizens in need, enabling them to adopt cleaner alternatives.

Sharing details of the Government's efforts to control pollution, the Chief



Minister said that the Government is rapidly moving towards its target of fully transitioning public transport to electric vehicles (EVs). Currently, around 3,500 electric buses are operating on Delhi's roads, and the Government aims to convert the city's entire public transport system to EVs by the end of 2026. The Chief Minister urged the public to use carpooling and public transport more frequently.

Speaking on dust control, the Chief Minister said that extensive cleaning operations are underway across

Delhi. Around 200 water-sprinkler vehicles are deployed daily on the Ring Road to clear dust from trees, remove roadside silt, and carry out regular watering along the central verge.

She said the Government is taking a new step every day to reduce pollution. Appealing to the public, she said that citizens must also contribute to this campaign. She emphasised that Governmental efforts will only succeed when people understand their responsibility and actively participate in this movement.





States Focus



CM NITISH LAUNCHES JD(U)'S MEMBERSHIP DRIVE IN BIHAR

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Saturday inaugurated the membership drive of the JD(U), the party headed by him, for the period between 2025 and 2028. The drive began with Kumar assuming the membership of the party, followed by JD(U) national working president Sanjay Jha, senior leader Bashishtha Narain Singh and State unit president Umesh Kushwaha, among others. "It was only natural that our national president Nitish Kumar first assumed the membership. This time around, we have set a target of 1 crore, which is higher than the target of the previous membership drive," Jha told reporters.



JAGANNATH TEMPLE OWNS OVER 60,000 ACRES IN ODISHA

Shree Jagannath Temple in Puri owns over 60,426 acres of land in Odisha, and nearly 400 acres in six other States, Law minister Prithiviraj Harichandan said in the Assembly on Saturday. Harichandan said this while replying to a written question of BJD MLA Sudarshan Haripal in the Assembly. The 12th century shrine in Puri is governed by the Law department as per the Shree Jagannath Temple Act, 1956. While 60,426.943 acres of land in the name of Lord Jagannath are located across 24 districts of Odisha, another 395.252 acres of temple land were traced in six States – West Bengal (322.930 acres), Maharashtra (28.21 acres), Madhya Pradesh (25.11 acres), Andhra Pradesh (17.02 acres), Chhattisgarh (1.7 acres) and Bihar (0.27 acres).

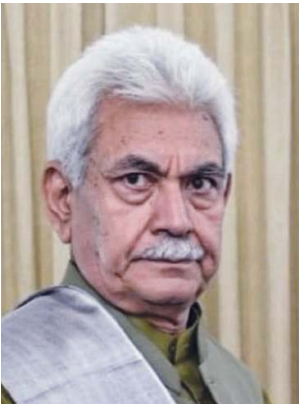
J&K CM, LG offices lock horns over CCE age relief

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ Jammu

Despite maintaining a cordial working relationship, a fresh round of 'war of words' has broken out on social media between the office of Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and the Lieutenant Governor (LG) Manoj Sinha over the issue of age relaxation to the aspirants of the Jammu and Kashmir Combined Competitive (Preliminary) Examination-2025 (CCE).

The day-long confrontation between the two sides prompted Chief Minister Omar Abdullah to write a letter to the Chairman of the Jammu and Kashmir Public Service Commission, seeking postponement of the exam, which is scheduled to be held on December 7.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, in a letter to Arun Kumar Choudhary, Chairman JKPSK Saturday said: "I am writing in the context of the extraordinary situation presently confronting the aspirants of the Jammu and Kashmir Combined Competitive (Preliminary)



Examination-2025, scheduled to be conducted by the Jammu and Kashmir Public Service Commission. The ongoing disruption in the air services has caused widespread travel chaos across the region. This is further compounded by the prevailing uncertainty arising due to the delay in the proposal regarding age relaxation – an enabling provision that has been extended multiple times in the past. Together, these factors have placed unprecedented mental and logistical stress on the competing candidates.



In view of the above, and keeping in mind the principles of fairness, equity and equal opportunity for all aspirants, I would urge the Commission to take cognizance of the prevailing circumstances and consider postponement of the forthcoming examination by a reasonable duration, purely in the interest of the candidates.

I am confident that the Commission as always, will take a compassionate and balanced view of the matter in the larger public interest". Earlier in the day, the Office

of the Lieutenant Governor (Lok Bhavan) said that several social media posts circulating about the JKPSK Prelims examination were "misleading," asserting that the age-relaxation file sent by the Government was promptly returned the same day with a key query, but no response has been received since.

In a post on X, the Office of LG Jammu and Kashmir, said: "Social media posts with regard to JKPSK exam are misleading. Lok Bhavan had received the file on 2nd December, 2025, which was categorically related to age relaxation only. The file was returned the same day, 2nd December, 2025, with a query whether it is logistically possible to conduct the exam on 7th December, by incorporating modifications in eligibility criteria at such a belated stage. Despite a lapse of 4 days, Lok Bhavan did not receive any response. I fully sympathise with young aspirants.

The advertisement notice for the examination was published by the Jammu and Kashmir Public Service

Commission on 22/08/2025. The exam was notified to be conducted on 07/12/2025 through a notice on 06/11/2025".

Reacting to the ongoing tussle, the Peoples Democratic Party Chief Mehbooba Mufti, in a post on X, said, "Aspirants of the JKPSK CCE are caught in a tussle between the LG and the CM. In this cold, they are out on the streets asking for nothing more than basic fairness - age relaxation and a reasonable exam schedule. I urge @OfficeOfLGJandK and @OmarAbdullah to step in and resolve this issue without any further delay".

The ruling National Conference accused the BJP-PDP alliance Government for reducing the age limit during their tenure in power.

"Which Government permanently reduced the age limit for all students of Jammu and Kashmir to apply for Government services? It was the PDP-BJP Government in 2018, said a post of the JNC handle on X (earlier Twitter). Hitting back, PDP wrote back on X, "Excuses and finger-

pointing at a Government that ceased to exist seven years ago cannot wash away the responsibility you carry today. NC sought votes in the name of resolving people's issues, sort this out".

People's Conference Chairman Sajad Lone in a post on X said, "The JKAS age relaxation issue is turning out to be yet another classical case of passing the buck at the cost of young aspirants. First CM posted, suggesting that he had no role in the scuttling of the age relaxation file. And now the LG has suggested that they had sent the file back on the 2nd of December.

For heaven's sake, can the CM put something in writing? The CMs office cannot be run through TV bytes. What stops him from issuing written orders? Let them defy written orders. If the other side is falsifying facts. Let us call their bluff. Every single day we have a moaning CM complaining about his file being turned down. Yet nothing in the form of written communication".

Female Greylag Goose tagged for migration study

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Patna

In a bid to track and study its migratory movements, the Bird Ringing and Monitoring Station (BRMS) in Bihar's Bhagalpur district has tagged a female Greylag Goose, which breeds across northern Europe, Central Asia and South Asia, with a solar-powered GPS-GSM transmitter.

GPS tracking will help map its migration route, timing, stopover patterns and habitat use – critical information for wetland conservation across Bihar, a senior officer said. The tagged bird has been named 'Sonbarsa', after the village in Bhagalpur district where it



was recently captured.

Officials said the name reflects the area's identity, with Sonbarsa signifying a fertile, gold-toned landscape shaped by riverine soils, symbolising abundance and harmony with nature.

"BRMS, Bhagalpur, a joint venture of the State Government's Department of Environment, Forest and

Climate Change and the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), tagged a female Greylag Goose on Friday at the Ghatora wetland near Sonbarsa village with a solar-powered GPS-GSM transmitter to study its migratory movements.

"This is the first-ever GPS tagging of a bird in Bhagalpur district, marking a significant milestone in Bihar's migratory bird research," Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF), Prabhat Kumar Gupta, said on Saturday.

Greylag Goose, which travels thousands of kilometres along the Central Asian Flyway, uses wetlands like Ghatora as stopover or wintering sites.

He said this tagging marks a major step toward advancing scientific understanding and safeguarding migratory birds that depend on the State's wetlands.

This effort follows the GPS-GSM tagging of two Bar-headed Geese in Jamui district in February this year, strengthening Bihar's contribution to waterbird monitoring under the Central Asian Flyway.

Earlier, BRMS, Bhagalpur had documented a juvenile Greater Flamingo in the Ganga near Sultanganj on December 8, 2024. It marked the first documented appearance of the species in the Bhagalpur district, the PCCF said.

Ayodhya under heavy security on Babri demolition anniversary

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Lucknow/Ayodhya

Ayodhya remained under an extensive security blanket on the 33rd anniversary of the demolition of the Babri mosque organised political or religious mobilisations – a sharp contrast to earlier years when rival groups marked the day with symbolic demonstrations.

Security personnel were on high alert and carried out checking drives across the holy town, especially around the newly constructed Ram temple, railway station, bus stands and major roads, and other sensitive areas in Uttar Pradesh, including Varanasi and Mathura, with mosque-temple disputes, stopping vehicles at multiple checkpoints, verifying IDs and strengthening vigil.

"December 6 is

always a sensitive date for Ayodhya. This year, we are ensuring no breach of peace or security," said Superintendent of Police (City) Chakrapani Tripathi.

He said that strict directives had been issued prohibiting public gatherings or rallies, while hotels had been asked to maintain detailed visitors' records. Bomb squads and dog squads also carried out checks at railway station parking areas along with Railway Protection Force (RPF) and Government Railway Police (GRP) personnel, he said.

Unlike previous years, there were no organised political or religious mobilisations. Local activists and residents said it reflects both the administrative curbs imposed after the Supreme Court's 2019 verdict and the passing away of the once-key



Security personnel stand guard near Beldanga Railway station in Murshidabad on Saturday

PTI

leaders from both sides of the dispute. "The Government has banned observing 'Black Day' or 'Victory Day' (Shaurya Diwas) after the final verdict," said Indu Bhushan Pandey, a social activist in Ayodhya.

The BJP posted messages on its X handles paying tributes to those associated with

the Ram Temple movement on "Shaurya Diwas" – observed by Hindu outfits to mark the demolition in 1992.

"Jai Shri Ram, On Shaurya Diwas, a hundred salutations to the Sanatanis who, by offering their lives in the Shri Ram Mandir movement, paved the way for the cultural renaissance of the nation," a post on the official handle of the BJP's Uttar Pradesh unit said.

Many prominent figures associated with the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, including Ashok Singhal, Kalyan Singh, Bal Thackeray and Mahant Avaidyanath, have either passed away or faded from public life. Leaders from the Babri mosque Action Committee, such as Zafaryab Jilani, Syed Shahabuddin, Abdullah Bukhari and Sultan Salahuddin Owaisi, are also no longer alive.

Even the main litigants, including Hashim Ansari and Triloki Nath Pandey, in whose name the court decree for the Ram temple was issued, have passed away. Meanwhile, the five-acre plot allotted by the Supreme Court to the Sunni Central Waqf Board for building a mosque remains barren.

The Ayodhya Development Authority had rejected the initial plan submitted for the proposed mosque, and no revised map has since been filed.

The new mosque project rollout at Dhannipur, around 25 km from the holy city, could begin around April 2026, the head of the trust tasked with the project said.

"If all fits in place, and of course, subject to the Ayodhya Development Authority's (ADA) approval of the revised layout plan of the mosque that we hope to submit by December-end, a tentative timeline of the mosque project rollout could be around April 2026," Zufar Faruqi, chairman of the Indo-Islamic Cultural Foundation (IICF), which will undertake the construction of the mosque-complex project, said.

Rajasthan 1st State to digitise 100% of voter rolls under SIR

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Jaipur

Rajasthan on Saturday completed 100 per cent digitisation of its electoral roll under the Special Intensive Revision (SIR), becoming the first State in the country to do so, Chief Electoral Officer Navin Mahajan said.

He said that coordinated effort and meticulous execution by BLOs, assistant staff, supervisors, district election

officers and other staff engaged in the exercise were behind this success.

"Rajasthan now also leads the country in voter mapping, with more than 97 per cent of the mapping work completed. As a result, only 3 per cent of voters will need to furnish documents during the claims-objections phase," he said.

On average, he said, only about 30 voters per booth will be required to submit documents.

He said high-quality mapping has made the SIR process simpler, more transparent and greatly reduced repeated verification for voters.

Mahajan said that the dedication of field staff, especially BLOs and panchayat-level employees, was central to this achievement.

He said the success reflects not just statistical progress but the collective spirit that enabled the State to set a new benchmark.

The chief electoral officer said that the draft electoral roll will be published on December 16, adding that claims and objections can be filed from December 16 to January 15, 2026.

Hearings, verification and decisions on claims and objections will be conducted from December 16 to February 7, 2026. The final electoral roll will be published on February 14, 2026, the officer said.

TNCC chief denies reports of Praveen, Vijay meeting

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Chennai

TNCC chief K Selvaperunthagai on Saturday denied any knowledge about Congress functionary Praveen Chakravarty's meeting with actor-politician Vijay on alliance and said this claim appeared illogical.

The Congress high command had already constituted a five-member committee under Girish Chodankar (AICC TN incharge) to hold discussions with DMK president and Chief Minister MK Stalin on seat-sharing, he

stressed. The panel had called on Stalin, the leader of the Secular Progressive Alliance, on December 4 and informally commenced the process of discussing seat-sharing.

Selvaperunthagai, Congress Legislature Party leader Rajesh Kumar, and AICC secretaries Suraj MN Hegde and Nivedith Alva were the other members of the committee led by Chodankar.

The Congress, which won 18 out of 25 seats it contested in alliance with the DMK in the 2021 Assembly election, is aiming to contest more seats



this time.

Responding to a question on the reported meeting between Chakravarty and Vijay, who heads the Tamilaga Vettri Kahagam, Selvaperunthagai replied, "I

don't know about it. The AICC has nominated a five-member committee under Girish Chodankar. What you say is astonishing. We are with the DMK."

When the reporter persisted, the Congress leader said, "I really don't know what to say. There was no coverage in the media to say the meeting took place. I can't react to speculation." He exuded the hope that the DMK would not underestimate the strength of Congress and that it would allot them a modest number of seats this time.

Adhikari slams Mamata after Kabir lays down foundation stone of Babri mosque

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ Kolkata

Bengal Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari on Saturday slammed Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for allowing "communal elements" like former – Trinamool Congress MLA – Humayun Kabir to thrive in the State by providing them political patronage.

Adhikari's Statement came soon after Kabir – who was on Thursday suspended from his party – laid the foundation stone of a proposed Babri Mosque at Beldanga in Murshidabad district bordering Bangladesh.

"It is a very dangerous step we have no problem if anyone constructs a mosque or a temple or a church anywhere but where the name of Babar is being used it becomes really dangerous because everyone knows that Pathans and Mughals invaded India, tortured the Hindus and converted thousands of them, looted their wealth and women, we have problem not with the mosque but with the name he was not Indian. He was a



Former TMC MLA Humayun Kabir (left) waves to the gathering, he laid the foundation stone for a mosque, modelled on Ayodhya's Babri Masjid in West Bengal's Murshidabad district on Saturday

PTI

rapist and a robber. His name was invoked without any permission," Adhikari said blaming the Chief Minister for making what Kabir had become today. Adhikari was taking part in a rally on the occasion of "Saurya Diwas" that started in front of Swami Vivekananda's residence and marched a few kms till Shyambazar crossing in North Kolkata.

Wondering why the Chief

Minister would not take action against Kabir when he during the last general elections threatened to cut and throw the 30 per cent population (Hindus) of Murshidabad in River Bhagirathi (Ganges), Adhikari said, "Mamata Banerjee provided police protection to men like Humayun Kabir where as one has to approach the court to celebrate Saraswati Puja, a few days ago, the police transported Goddess Kali in a prison

van, instead of taking action against a section of the population who were disturbing the Puja today's development will not bring any peace."

However, Kabir who managed to draw many thousand people to witness the foundation stone laying ceremony said that he was not doing anything unconstitutional by setting up a mosque.

"I am not doing anything unconstitutional. Anyone can build a temple, church I will build a mosque It is not written anywhere that I cannot build the Babri mosque if a Ram Temple can be built at Sagardighi why cannot a Babri Mosque be build here." A Hindu religious organisation has been building a replica of Ayodhya Ram Temple at Sagardighi which is also in Murshidabad district.

Meanwhile, even as the Trinamool Congress on Saturday observed a Sanhati Diwas (Solidarity Day) the Chief Minister took to the social media saying her struggle to contain communal hatred would continue.



# Sudanese paramilitary drone attack kills 50

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
■ Cairo

A drone attack by the Sudanese paramilitary forces hit a kindergarten in south-central Sudan, killing 50 people, including 33 children, a doctors' group said. Paramedics on the scene in the town of Kalogi in South Kordofan state were targeted in "a second unexpected attack," Sudan Doctors' Network said in a statement late Friday. Emergency Lawyers, a rights group tracking violence against civilians in Sudan reported in a statement Saturday the second strike on paramedics treating survivors in Kalogi and said "a third civilian site near the previous two" was also attacked. The group condemned the attack, blaming the paramilitary group, the Rapid



Support Forces, or RSF, for the strikes, calling them "a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians, especially children, and vital civilian infrastruc-

ture." The death toll is expected to be higher, but communication blackouts in the area have made it difficult to report casualties. Thursday's attack is the latest in the fighting

between the RSF, and the Sudanese military, who have been at war for over two years. It is now concentrating in the oil-rich Kordofan states."Killing children in their school is a horrific vio-

lation of children's rights," said UNICEF Representative for Sudan Sheldon Yett in a statement Friday. "Children should never pay the price of conflict," said Yett. He said UNICEF urges all parties "to stop these attacks immediately and allow safe, unhindered access for humanitarian assistance to reach those in desperate need." Hundreds of civilians were killed throughout the Kordofan states in the last few weeks as intensified fighting shifted from Darfur after the RSF took over the besieged city of el-Fasher. Sudanese military aerial strikes on Sunday killed at least 48 people, mostly civilians, in Kauda, South Kordofan. UN Human Rights Chief Volker Türk warned that Kordofan could face new atrocities like those in el-Fasher. Separately, the RSF con-

demned in a statement Friday a drone strike on the Chad-Sudan border, accusing the Sudanese military of being behind it and posted a video showing billowing black smoke. This couldn't be independently verified and it is unclear whether there were casualties in this strike. There was no immediate comment from the Sudanese military. RSF's violent takeover of el-Fasher was marked with executions of civilians, rapes and sexual assaults, and other atrocities. Thousands escaped and thousands more are feared killed or trapped in the city. The RSF and the Sudanese military have been fighting for power over Sudan since 2023. More than 40,000 people were killed in the war, according to the World Health Organization, and 12 million displaced.

# Protesters held for smearing custard on King Charles jewels



ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ London

Four protesters were arrested on Saturday after splattering food on the case of a priceless diamond-encrusted crown at the Tower of London. The Crown Jewels display was closed after members of a group called Take Back Power smeared apple crumble and poured yellow custard – two staples on British dessert menus – on the display case containing the Imperial State Crown worn by King Charles III during his coronation in 2023 and during his speech to open Parliament in 2024. The Metropolitan Police said the protesters were arrested on suspicion of criminal damage. The group that advocates for a permanent citizens' assembly and wants to tax extreme wealth said two of its members

had thrown the food and two others were also arrested and taken into "custody." The act of civil disobedience is one of many that has targeted prized treasures and artworks to draw attention to a political cause. Petroleum protesters were imprisoned last year for tossing a can of tomato soup on glass protecting Van Gogh's "Sunflowers" at London's National Gallery. Video of the stunt at the Tower of London, once a royal palace also known as the prison where Anne Boleyn, Thomas More and others were executed, showed two protesters attacking the case as other visitors stepped back in shock. After an employee intervened and radioed for help, the two demonstrators unfurled a sign saying, "Democracy has crumbled."

# Doctors postpone ex-PM Zia's travel abroad for treatment



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
■ Dhaka

The medical board treating critically ill Bangladesh's former prime minister Khaleda Zia on Saturday postponed her planned travel to London for an indefinite period, her personal physician said. The three-time premier Zia was scheduled to depart for London on Sunday after her plan to leave on Friday was postponed as an air ambulance offered by Qatar could not reach Dhaka due to technical issues. Media reports suggested Doha later rented an alternative aircraft from Germany. "The medical board thinks it is not appropriate for her to travel abroad at this moment," Dr AZM Zahid Hossain her personal physi-

cian and also a member of the party's policy-making standing committee, told reporters. He added that doctors continued their "highest-level efforts" to arrange Zia's treatment abroad, while a medical ambulance was fully ready to fly her abroad whenever the situation suits her travel. "Allah has cured her from even more serious conditions in the past. The medical board is confident that Begum Khaleda Zia will overcome her current physical complications," he said. BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir on Friday had said if everything went well, the air ambulance provided by Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani would arrive on Saturday to fly her to London on Sunday.

# 11 killed in mass shooting at South African bar

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
■ Cape town

A mass shooting carried out on Saturday by multiple suspects in an unlicensed bar near the South African capital left at least 11 people dead, police said. The victims included three children aged 3, 12 and 16. Another 14 people were wounded and taken to the hospital, according to a statement from the South African Police Services. Police didn't give details on the ages of those who were injured or their conditions. The shooting happened at a bar inside a hostel in the Saulsville township west of the administrative capital of Pretoria in the early hours of Saturday. Ten of the victims died at the scene and the 11th died at the hospital, police said. The children killed were a 3-year-old boy, a 12-year-old boy and a 16-year-old girl. Police said they were searching for three male suspects. "We are told that at least three unknown gunmen entered this hostel where a group of people were drinking and they started randomly shooting," police spokesperson Brig Athlenda Mathe told national broadcaster SABC. She said the motive for the killings was not clear. The shootings happened at around 4.15 am, she said, but police



were only alerted at 6 am South Africa has one of the highest homicide rates in the world and recorded more than 26,000 homicides in 2024 – an average of more than 70 a day. Firearms are by far the leading cause of death in homicides. The country of 62 million people has relatively strict gun ownership laws, but many killings are committed with illegal guns, authorities say. There have been several mass shootings at bars – sometimes called shebeens or taverns

in South Africa – in recent years, including one that killed 16 people in the Johannesburg township of Soweto in 2022. On the same day, four people were killed in a mass shooting at a bar in another province. Mathe said that mass shootings at unlicensed bars were becoming a serious problem and police had shut down more than 11,000 illegal taverns between April and September this year and arrested more than 18,000 people for involvement in

illegal liquor sales. Recent mass killings in South Africa have not been confined to bars, however. Police said 18 people were killed, 15 of them women, in mass shootings minutes apart at two houses on the same road in a rural part of Eastern Cape province in September last year. Seven men were arrested for those shootings and face multiple charges of murder, while police recovered three AK-style assault rifles they believe were used in the shootings.

# 12 arrests in Minneapolis as part of immigration operation

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
■ Minneapolis

Federal agents have arrested a dozen people in Minneapolis since launching an enforcement operation this week primarily focused on Somali immigrants living unlawfully in the US, but fewer than half of those detained are Somali. US Immigration and Customs Enforcement said Thursday that agents had arrested 12 people. Of those, six are Mexican nationals, five are from Somalia and one is from El Salvador. Minneapolis-St. Paul, which has the nation's largest Somali community, is the latest area targeted by the Trump administration for mass deportations, following operations in Chicago, Los Angeles and Charlotte, North Carolina.

CRACKDOWN SPARKS CRITICISM; OFFICIALS DENOUNCE RHETORIC, VOW SOMALI COMMUNITY PROTECTION This week, immigration authorities have also arrived in New Orleans, where officials said they intend to arrest up to 5,000 people. A statement from DHS Assistant Secretary Tricia McLaughlin called the 12 people federal agents arrested some of the "worst of the worst criminal illegal aliens". Eight of them had been charged or convicted of crimes, including assault, fraud, domestic violence and driving under the influence, according to ICE. President Donald Trump

recently targeted Somali immigrants in public remarks, calling them "garbage" and saying "they contribute nothing". He also blamed Democratic Governor Tim Walz for allowing alleged fraud in government programs to happen on his watch, which a conservative publication claimed was funnelling money to a Somali militant group. The crackdown has drawn intense criticism from local and state officials who have denounced Trump's rhetoric and pledged to protect the Somali community. Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey said city police would not participate in federal immigration enforcement. DHS McLaughlin accused Frey and Walz of not enforcing immigration laws and endangering citizens.

# Russia unleashes a massive drone, missile attack on Ukraine

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
■ Kyiv

Russia unleashed a major missile and drone barrage on Ukraine overnight into Saturday, after US and Ukrainian officials said they'll meet on Saturday for a third day of talks aimed at ending the nearly four-year-old war. Following talks that made progress on a security framework for postwar Ukraine, the two sides also offered the sober assessment that any "real progress toward any agreement" ultimately will depend "on Russia's readiness to show serious commitment to long-term peace." The statement from US special envoy Steve Witkoff, Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner as well as Ukrainian negotiators Rustem Umerov and Andriy Hnatov came after they met for a second day in Florida on Friday. They offered only broad brushstrokes about the



progress they say has been made as Trump pushes Kyiv and Moscow to agree to a US-mediated proposal to end the war. Russia used 653 drones and 51 missiles in the wide-reaching overnight attack on Ukraine, which triggered air raid alerts across the country and came as Ukraine marked Armed Forces Day, the country's air

force said Saturday morning. Ukrainian forces shot down and neutralized 585 drones and 30 missiles, the air force said, adding that 29 locations were struck. At least eight people were wounded in the attacks, Ukrainian Minister of Internal Affairs Ihor Klymenko said. Among these, at least

three people were wounded in the Kyiv region, according to local officials. Drone sightings were reported as far west as Ukraine's Lviv region. Russia carried out a "massive missile-drone attack" on power stations and other energy infrastructure in several Ukrainian regions, Ukraine's national energy operator, Ukrenergo,

wrote on Telegram. Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant temporarily lost all off-site power overnight, the International Atomic Energy Agency said Saturday, citing its Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi. The plant is in an area under Russian control since early in Moscow's invasion of Ukraine and is not in service, but it needs reliable power to cool its six shut-down reactors and spent fuel, to avoid any catastrophic nuclear incidents. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that energy facilities were the main targets of the attacks, also noting that a drone strike had "burned down" the train station in the city of Fastiv, located in the Kyiv region. Russia's Ministry of Defence said its air defences had shot down 116 Ukrainian drones over Russian territory overnight into Saturday.



# Mexico freezes Miss Universe co-owner's bank accounts

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Mexico City

Mexico's anti-money laundering office has frozen the bank accounts of the Mexican co-owner of Miss Universe as part of an investigation into drugs, fuel and arms trafficking, an official said. The country's Financial Intelligence Unit, which oversees the fight against money laundering, froze Mexican businessman Raúl Rocha Cantú's bank accounts in Mexico, a federal official told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to comment on the investigation. The action against Rocha Cantú adds to mounting controversies for the Miss Universe organization. Last week, a court in Thailand issued an arrest warrant for the Thai co-owner of the Miss Universe Organization in connection with a fraud case and this year's competition.



# US to expand travel ban to more than 30 countries

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Washington

The Trump administration will be expanding its ban on travel for citizens of certain countries to more than 30, Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said, in the latest restriction to come since a man from Afghanistan was accused of shooting two National Guard members. The expansion would build on a travel ban already announced in June by the Republican administration, which barred travel to the U.S. for citizens from 12 countries and restricted access to the U.S. for people from seven others. In a social media post earlier this week, Noem had suggested more countries would be included. Noem, who spoke late Thursday in an interview with Fox News Channel host Laura Ingraham, would not provide further details, saying President Donald Trump was considering which countries would be included.



FROM THE WORLD  
USA  
Woman charged with smuggling

A 42-year-old woman has been charged for her role in an international smuggling conspiracy under which individuals primarily from India were brought illegally to the US across the border from Canada. Stacey Taylor of Plattsburgh, New York, appeared for an arraignment this week after a federal grand jury in Albany returned an indictment in October charging her for her role in the smuggling conspiracy, according to an official statement on Friday. Court records show that US Border Patrol agents interdicted Taylor's vehicle near Churubusco, New York, near the Quebec border in the early morning hours in January, and found four foreign nationals inside her vehicle. The four men - three Indian nationals and one Canadian national - had crossed the US-Canadian border illegally, without inspection.

PAKISTAN  
Nine terrorists gunned down

Security forces have gunned down nine terrorists belonging to the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in two separate intelligence-based operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in northwest Pakistan, military's media wing said on Saturday. The operations were conducted in Khyber, Tank and Lakki Marwat districts of the province on Friday, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the media wing of the Pakistan Army said in a statement. An intelligence-based operation was conducted in Tank on the reported presence of terrorists. After an intense fire exchange, seven terrorists were killed, the ISPR statement said. In a separate IBO conducted in Lakki Marwat, "two more khawarij were effectively neutralised by security forces."

India boosts Sri Lanka recovery efforts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
■ Colombo

A top Indian diplomat on Saturday briefed Sri Lankan corporate leaders about New Delhi's "response and continued commitment" to the cyclone-hit island nation in its resurgence from the disaster that has claimed over 600 lives so far.

Indian High Commissioner Santosh Jha met Sri Lankan corporate leaders associated with the 'Rebuilding Sri Lanka Fund' as the island nation is grappling with widespread flooding, landslides and severe infrastructure collapse following Cyclone Ditwah.

Till Saturday noon, as many as 611 people had died because of the disaster, which also left several districts isolated and acutely strained the country's disaster-response capacity.

During his meeting with the corporate leaders, Jha discussed the "way ahead for rehabilitation and recovery", the Indian High Commission said in an X post.

He also briefed them on the elements of "India's response and continued commitment to stand by Sri Lanka in its resurgence from this crisis," it added.

India was the first country to respond to Sri Lanka's international appeal for assistance under its Operation Sagar Bandhu.

Its humanitarian assistance has continued across land and air, focusing on both emergency response and sustained medical care, the Indian mission here said in a press release. Since the launch of Operation Sagar Bandhu on November 28,



High Commissioner Santosh Jha during a meeting with Sri Lanka's corporate leaders associated with Rebuilding Sri Lanka Fund

PTI

India has provided more than 58 tonnes of relief material including dry rations, tents, tarpaulins, hygiene kits, water purification kits and around 4.5 tonnes of medicines and surgical equipment.

Another 50 tonnes of equipment including generators, inflatable rescue boats, and Outboard Motors have been provided, and 130 tonnes of Bailey Bridge units have been airlifted along with 31 engineers to restore critical connectivity.

The Indian Engineer Corps is conducting surveys and reconnaissance for the construction of Bailey Bridges on vital road routes to restore connectivity in flood-hit

areas. On Saturday, a ship laden with 950 tonnes of essential goods including 300 MT rice was dispatched by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin.

It is carrying clothes and food to be distributed among those affected by the cyclone following a request made by the Sri Lankan Deputy High Commission in Chennai, according to the Sri Lankan Foreign Ministry.

"India was the first country to respond. India sent helicopters and rescue teams. They sent food and medicine very quickly," Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath said, calling the response received from the international community to Sri Lanka's appeal

"overwhelming". Under Operation Sagar Bandhu, two columns of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), comprising 80 experts and K9 units with specially trained dogs, conducted rescue and relief operations, evacuating around 150 stranded persons. A full-fledged field hospital with 78 medical personnel from India is now providing life-saving care in Mahiyanganaya near Kandy.

It was airlifted by the Indian Air Force on Wednesday. In its first 24 hours, the facility provided much-needed medical care to around 400 patients affected by the cyclone, conducted 55 minor procedures and

an operation, the High Commission said in an X post. Commander of the Sri Lanka Army Lieutenant General Lasantha Rodrigo reviewed the field hospital and thanked the Indian Government for its swift response and for ensuring that critical medical care reaches those in need.

Medical centres have also been set up using the BHISHM (Bharat Health Initiative for Sahyog Hita and Maitri) Arogya Maitri cubes in the badly hit Ja-Ela and Negombo. "India's medical teams continue to stand beside Sri Lanka, ensuring that timely care reaches those in need," the X post said.

Major terror bid foiled in Pak, 24 terrorists arrested

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
■ Lahore

Law enforcement agencies have foiled a major terror plot in Pakistan's Punjab province and arrested 24 terrorists, most of whom belong to the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), police said on Saturday.

The terrorists were arrested during operations in different areas of the province this week, the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) of Punjab said in a statement.

It said the CTD Punjab conducted 364 intelligence-based operations in different districts, in which 24 terrorists were arrested along with weapons, explosives and other prohibited materials. Eleven of those arrested belong to the outlawed TTP. Around 5 kg of explosives, 24 detona-



tors and four bombs were recovered from those arrested.

The CTD said that the terrorists had planned to target important buildings in different cities. As many as 24 cases have been registered against the arrested terrorists and further investigation is being carried out against them, it said. Since there has been a rise in terror incidents in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, Punjab has been put on high alert.

Following last month's suicide attack in Islamabad that claimed 12 lives, Punjab police have been put on high alert with instructions to heighten arrangements for the security, especially of judges, courts and bars across the province.

The police officers were instructed to ensure daily and weekly inspections of the security arrangements.

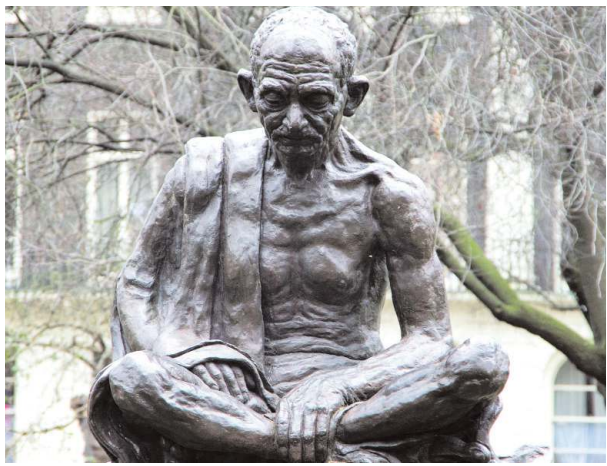
Miniature model of Gandhi statue set for UK auction

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
■ London

A miniature model of an iconic sculpture of Mahatma Gandhi from a central London square is set to go under the hammer at an auction in England next week, with a guide price estimate between 6,000 and 8,000 pounds.

The 27-cm tall bronze maquette is said to be the earliest complete vision of the statue by Polish sculptor Freda Brilliant that has been installed at Tavistock Square in London's Bloomsbury since 1968. In September, its plinth was targeted with "racially aggravated" graffiti and had a spruce up in time for Gandhi Jayanti on October 2.

"Freda Brilliant first conceived of the idea of a sculpture of Mahatma Gandhi in 1949, but it was not until the early 1960s that she was commissioned to make the memorial in Tavistock Square,



London," Woolley & Wallis auction house from Wiltshire said in a statement.

"She initially explored three poses, one of Gandhi standing, one of him walking, and the final one offered here, sitting cross-legged, a pose she described as 'traditional and intimate, suited to the small but beautiful [Tavistock] square,'" it stated. Once the

sculptor had settled on the pose, she created a customary metal miniature. It is the first of two of these maquettes that is being offered at auction next Thursday. A second maquette sold back in June 2019 for 65,000 pounds to a private collector. "Given Freda's growing reputation and the fierce bidding we've seen for her Gandhi works in the past,

the emergence of this first maquette from a private London collection is significant," said Victor Fauvel, Woolley & Wallis specialist.

"It offers collectors an exceptional chance to secure the piece that set one of Freda's most internationally recognised monuments and sculptures in motion," he said.

The bronze sculpture, created with the backing of India League, was unveiled at the square as a nod to Mahatma Gandhi's days as a law student at the nearby University College London.

The sculpture depicts Gandhi in a classic meditative pose, with the inscription on the plinth saying: "Mahatma Gandhi, 1869-1948." Gandhi Jayanti, designated as International Day of Non-Violence by the United Nations, is commemorated with floral tributes and Gandhi's favourite bhajans at the monument in London annually on October 2.

Israeli defence firm says it plans to supply first batch of LMGs to India early next year

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
■ Jerusalem

A leading Israeli defence firm has said it intends to supply the first batch of 40,000 light machine guns (LMGs) to India starting early next year, while it is in the final stages of signing a contract to supply nearly 1,70,000 new-age carbines.

Shuki Schwartz, CEO of Israel Weapon Industries (IWI), also said that his firm is currently collaborating with various agencies within India's Ministry of Home Affairs to market their products, including pistols, rifles, and machine guns.

"We're now involved in three significant programmes. First is the contract for 40,000 light machine guns, which was signed last year. We have completed all tests, trials, and Government checks, and we have received the license for production. We intend to supply the first batch at the beginning of the year," Schwartz told.

LMGs supply is for five

FINAL STAGES OF SIGNING A CONTRACT TO SUPPLY NEARLY 1,70,000 NEW-AGE CARBINES

years. We can do it faster, but the first supply will be at the beginning of the year," he said when asked about the timeline of the supply.

Schwartz said the second programme involves the CQB (Close Quarters Battle) carbines tender, where the firm was the second bidder. Bharat Forge is the primary bidder. "We intend to supply 40 per cent of the contract. We are in the stage of pre-signing of the contract, and I believe it will be finalised by the end of this year or the beginning of next year," he said. Sixty per cent of the CQB carbines supply will be sourced from Bharat Forge, while the remaining 40 per cent (170,000 units) will be delivered by PLR Systems, a subsidiary

of the Adani Group. On Arbel technology, the first computerised weapon system that uses a complex algorithm to determine when a soldier is on target and quickly strikes with high precision, Schwartz said that they are in the early stages of talks with India about integrating this technology into the country. "We are in the initial stages of discussions with different agencies to adopt the Arbel systems. Once they take it, we will supply it through co-production in Israel and India," he said.

He added that PLR Systems will handle the co-production locally in India. "We are also collaborating with the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and various agencies within MHA to sell our complete range of products, which includes pistols, rifles, and light machine guns. Our dealings involve smaller quantities across many contracts, and we have been working in this area for several years," he said. When asked about annual

supply numbers, he mentioned it could be "tens of thousands of weapons a year."

He acknowledged that while the two major contracts will last for a few years, there is a demand for quicker delivery due to the current situation.

Schwartz emphasised that IWI was among the first companies to support the 'Make in India' initiative, contributing to the growth of local production and expansion in the Indian market.

He also highlighted a strong partnership with the Adani Group through PLR Systems, focusing on light weapons manufacturing and the integration of Arbel systems locally. When asked about the recent ban on the supply of some equipment by European countries, he said, "Israel needs to enhance its self-reliance for this reason, and we have our supply chain to support defence forces globally. We have developed this supply chain to further our mission."

When asked about annual



Indian student dies from injuries in US house fire

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
■ New York

A 24-year-old Indian student in the US has died after suffering severe injuries in a house fire, according to the Indian mission. Sahaja Reddy Udamala was pursuing a Master's degree in Albany, New York. The Consulate General of India in New York said in a post on X on Friday (local time) that it is "deeply saddened by the untimely demise" of Udamala, who lost her life in the house fire incident in Albany. "Our thoughts and heartfelt condolences to her family during this difficult time," the Consulate said, adding that it is in touch with Udamala's family and is extending all possible assistance. The Albany Police Department said in a statement that its personnel and the Albany Fire Department responded to the house fire on the morning of December 4.

Bolsonaro's son says he will run for presidency of Brazil

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
■ Sao Paulo

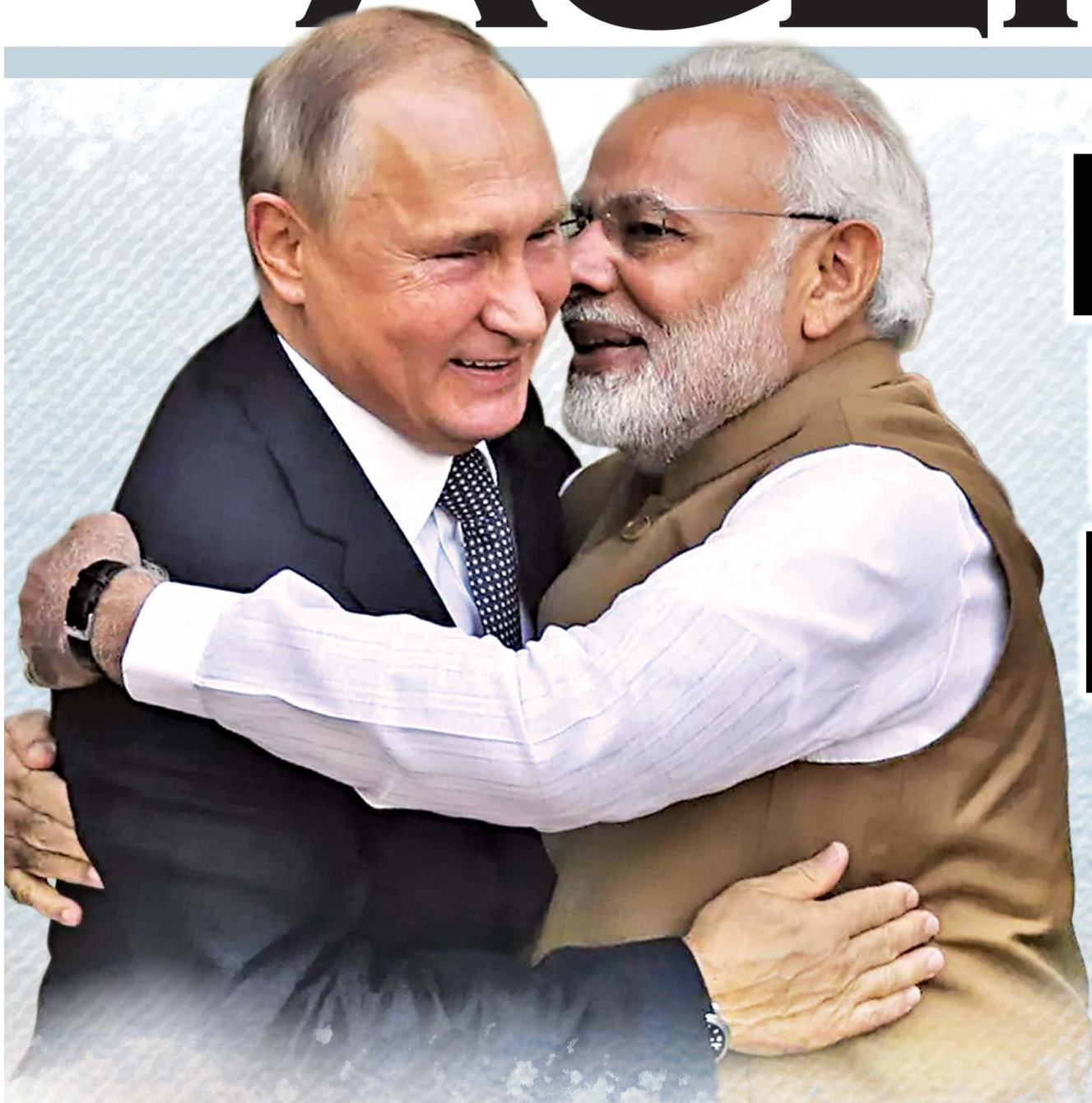
Brazilian Senator Flávio Bolsonaro, the eldest son of former President Jair Bolsonaro, said on Friday that his father decided he should represent their political group and run for president in 2026. Bolsonaro was arrested last month and began serving a 27-year prison sentence after being convicted of attempting a coup.

**GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION**

**e-Procurement Notice**

NIT No.39/EE-30 /SDZ/GHMC/2025-26, platform: Dt:06-12-2025 published on 'e' procurement platform. The details can be seen by logging @ <https://tender.eprocurement.gov.in>. The date of events is detailed below: **Name of the Work** : 1. Cutting and Carting of Boulders at Vaddera Basthi in Mondla Market -1 work. **Estimate Amount in lakhs** : 5.00. **Bid Document Download Start Date & Time/ Bid Submission Closing Date & Time** : 08-12-2025, 12.00 PM to 11-12-2025, 12.00 PM. **Name & Address of officer** Cell. No.: E. E., Circle-30, GHMC, Secbad, Cell No. 7331181426 /795468066. Address of the officer concerned Sri. Subramanya SVRNRD, Executive Engineer, Circle-30, Begumpet, Sec-bad Zone, GHMC. Further details can be seen at e-Procurement @ <https://tender.telangana.gov.in> Sd/- Executive Engineer, Circle-30, GHMC. DIPR.No. 11789-PP/CL/ADVT/11/2025-26, Dt: 06.12.2025





# Putin Dials Delhi

New Delhi's red-carpet welcome to the Russian President, despite pressure from Western powers, shows that the two countries assert their autonomy and commitment to independent foreign-policy choices



## Indo-Russia: Cementing strategic ties

Russian President Vladimir Putin's state visit to India on December 4-5 for the 23rd India-Russia Annual Summit marked a significant diplomatic moment, demonstrating the resilience of one of the world's most enduring strategic partnerships. The visit, Putin's first to India since the Ukraine conflict began in 2022, was laden with symbolism, from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's personal reception at the airport to the ceremonial guard of honour at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

The optics were deliberate and unmistakable. At a time when Western nations have sought to isolate Russia diplomatically, India's warm embrace sent a clear message about the independent trajectory of its foreign policy. The traditional Modi hug at the airport, extended only to very select visiting dignitaries, underscored the personal rapport between the two leaders and India's commitment to its time-tested partnership with Moscow.

### Beyond Ceremony: Practical Priorities

While the pomp and pageantry captured headlines, the substance of the visit revealed a relationship recalibrating itself for contemporary challenges. Trade and economic cooperation emerged as the central theme, reflecting both nations' pressing economic needs. Russia, reeling under Western sanctions, and India, facing 50 per cent tariffs from Washington, see in each other vital alternative markets.

The leaders endorsed the Programme for the Development of Strategic Areas of India-Russia Economic Cooperation till 2030, setting an ambitious bilateral trade target of \$100 billion by the decade's end. This represents a significant



VIKAS SWARUP  
Ambassador

leap from the current \$68.7 billion, though much of the recent growth stems from India's purchases of discounted Russian oil, a factor now under American scrutiny. The joint statement emphasised developing bilateral settlement systems using national currencies, a strategic move to insulate trade from dollar-dependent mechanisms. Both nations agreed to enhance interoperability of national payment systems and explore central bank digital currency platforms. This financial architecture aims to ensure "uninterrupted maintenance of bilateral trade" despite external pressures.

### The Energy Equation

The elephant in the room was oil. India's purchase of Russian crude has surged since 2022, providing crucial revenue to Moscow's sanctions-hit economy while offering Delhi energy security at competitive prices. Putin emphasised Russia's readiness to ensure "uninterrupted oil supplies" to India, but conspicuously, no specific agreements were announced.

This silence is telling. India faces mounting pressure from the Trump administration to curtail Russian oil imports, while its energy security imperatives pull in the opposite direction. The absence of concrete commitments suggests Delhi is keeping its options open, attempting the delicate balancing act of maintaining strategic autonomy while managing great power pressures.

### Defence: The Unspoken Dimension

Equally notable was what wasn't announced. Despite speculation about

major defence acquisitions—including the advanced Su-57 fifth-generation fighter aircraft and additional S-400 air defence systems—no blockbuster defence deal materialised.

This reflects India's careful calibration between its defence relationship with Russia, which supplies approximately 60 per cent of its military equipment, and its growing strategic ties with the United States.

The joint statement emphasised reorienting military-technical cooperation toward "joint research and development, co-development and co-production" under the Make-in-India initiative. Both nations agreed to encourage joint manufacturing of spare parts and components for Russian-origin equipment, with potential exports to friendly third countries.

However, Russia's capacity to deliver on existing orders remains questionable, with its defence industrial base stretched by the Ukraine conflict. The delayed delivery of remaining S-400 units serves as a reminder of these constraints.

### Expanding Horizons

Beyond traditional pillars, the visit yielded progress in emerging areas. Both nations are committed to regular consultations on Arctic-related issues and cooperation on the Northern Sea Route, with India training seafarers for polar water operations. The opening of Indian consulates in Yekaterinburg and Kazan signals intent to deepen regional connections beyond traditional centres.

CONTINUED ON >> P11

## The most reliable partnership in the world

As an Indian-born Russian citizen who has made Russia his home for decades and now serves as a two-time elected legislator in the Kursk State under President Vladimir Putin's United Russia Party, I occupy a rare vantage point. I am rooted in Indian heritage yet deeply committed to the Russian state and people. This dual identity allows me to see the India-Russia partnership not only through the lens of geopolitics and diplomacy but also through civilisational continuity, cultural warmth, and human connection.

President Putin's visit to India is a vivid reminder that the relationship between our two nations does not depend on fluctuating global winds. It is grounded in trust accumulated over decades and reinforced by genuine goodwill between the leaders guiding both countries today.

Despite global turbulence, shifting alliances, and emerging rivalries, the deep mutual respect between India and Russia remains one of the least disrupted relationships in modern international affairs.

One of the most compelling aspects of our bilateral relationship today is the personal chemistry between President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Personal diplomacy is often underestimated by those who



ABHAY KUMAR SINGH  
Legislator, Kursk State, United Russia Party, Russia

view the world only through structural or strategic frameworks. But anyone who has witnessed these leaders together knows that personal warmth and trust can accelerate cooperation in ways that formal channels alone cannot.

I recall the recent Shanghai Cooperation summit in China, where both leaders travelled in the same car — an unusual gesture in diplomatic practice. Before that, Prime Minister Modi broke strict protocol by personally receiving President Putin at the airport, accompanying him to the red carpet. These are not mere symbolic acts. They reflect instinctive comfort and mutual respect cultivated over years. Their relationship predates their rise to the highest offices and is built on familiarity, clear communication, and confidence in each other's intentions. Such gestures cannot be choreographed or fabricated.

They demonstrate genuine rapport between two leaders who understand their historical responsibility. This personal trust has tangible policy consequences: negotiations move faster, uncertainties shrink, and long-term projects gain continuity. In a time of global uncertainty, such a relationship is not just beneficial — it is essential.

A crucial aspect of our cooperation is defence. One example is the Su-57 fighter jet, which offers India a strategic advantage. The Su-57 is not only technologically advanced but also far more cost-effective than Western alternatives such as the French Rafale. For the price of one Rafale, India can acquire two Su-57s, significantly strengthening its defence capabilities.

Moreover, the deal with Russia includes licenses for 'local manufacturing, operation, and production in India', supporting domestic defence production and self-reliance. Such agreements highlight how the India-Russia partnership goes beyond diplomacy into tangible national security benefits.

What makes the India-Russia relationship exceptional is that it is not dependent on any single pair of leaders. Our shared history stretches back nearly eight decades in its modern form, and even further in cultural and civilisational terms. India and Russia have never been adversaries—never fought a war, never clashed over territory or ideology, never confronted each other even indirectly. This absence of conflict is rare in international affairs. Many nations today struggle with difficult pasts: colonial legacies, border disputes, ideological confrontations. India and Russia, however, have maintained goodwill consistently, across generations and governments.

This friendship is enriched by historical stories that may be lesser-known but are deeply telling. During the Soviet period, one of the world's most closed political environments — Stalin's daughter, Svetlana, was allowed to travel to India and live there. Such permission was nearly impossible to obtain at the time. Her visit was not just a personal journey; it symbolised the trust and respect the USSR extended toward India.

CONTINUED ON >> P11







● Meghna



● Huzefa Rangwala and Jasem Pirani



● Suman



● Supraja Rao



● Monika



● Shraya



● Richa Gupta

## BRIDGE summit 2025: india's media and technology sectors step into a unified global arena

BRIDGE Summit 2025, the world's largest debut media and technology gathering, will bring together the industries that shape how the world sees, hears, and understands itself. Hosted at the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Center (ADNEC) - December 8-10, the three-day global summit will bring together 60,000 participants from 132 countries for an in-depth examination of the fast-evolving global content economy. While the media, entertainment, gaming, technology, and digital platforms are growing rapidly and yet are becoming increasingly fragmented and isolated, BRIDGE Summit 2025 offers a unified setting. The Summit's core tracks are Media, Music, Picture,



Gaming, Technology, Marketing, and Creator Economy, and each one is aimed at discovering how these sectors intersect and influence each other. producer, and entrepreneur; Monisha Advani, a leading film and OTT producer; Namit Malhotra, CEO of DNEG; Amit Sharma, one of India's top YouTube creators (Crazy XYZ) with a 42-million-strong creator community; senior journalists Barun Jha (PTI) and Nikhil Kumar (TIME); and global innovators such as Anu Duggal and Saurabh Doshi, contributing perspectives on digital business models, venture capital, and the emerging AI ecosystem. For India in particular, the BRIDGE Summit 2025 offers timely relevance. Indian media houses navigating revenue transitions, creators seeking durable business models, VFX studios looking to expand.

## Hyderabad to host the biggest curated Art

The city is all set to welcome one of its most anticipated cultural celebrations - HYD ART 2025, the biggest curated art showcase. The three-day art and cultural extravaganza will take place from December 19-21, 2025, at EON Hyderabad by Navanaami Group, 200 artists, galleries, and artworks from Hyderabad and across India, the Show presents a rich blend of masterworks, contemporary art, emerging talent, folk traditions, curated galleries, workshops, and conversations. Curated by renowned curator Annapurna Madipadiga in collaboration with Hasan, and presented by the Navanaami Group, at their prime landmark property, EON Hyderabad, HYD ART 2025 builds a rich, multi-dimensional narrative of Indian art by placing historic, contemporary, and experimental expressions side by side.

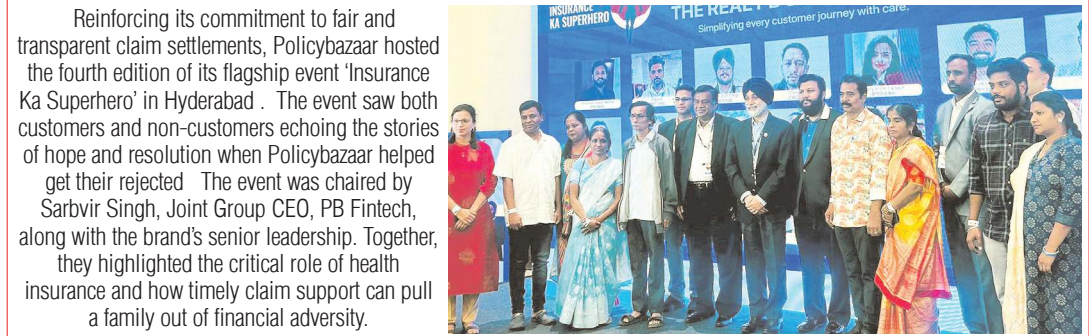


## PARTY

Photos by- SV Chary



stronger industry collaborations, and enhanced placement support to improve student employability. Speakers stressed that India's youth must be equipped with skills for emerging sectors such as maritime, aviation, space, and advanced technologies, supported through meaningful MOUs, modern training practices, and proactive placement strategies. Sponsored by Vignan Institutions, the program featured Chief Guest Krishnadevarayalu, MP who reinforced the significance of giving employment to students Summit headed by Dr Jayram, President, Telangana TPO Association in collaboration with ALL INDIA TPO Association.



Reinforcing its commitment to fair and transparent claim settlements, Policybazaar hosted the fourth edition of its flagship event 'Insurance Ka Superhero' in Hyderabad. The event saw both customers and non-customers echoing the stories of hope and resolution when Policybazaar helped get their rejected. The event was chaired by Sarbvir Singh, Joint Group CEO, PB Fintech, along with the brand's senior leadership. Together, they highlighted the critical role of health insurance and how timely claim support can pull a family out of financial adversity.



The 30th edition of the European Union Film Festival (EUFF) opened in Hyderabad with the Dutch film Memory Lane, directed by Jelle de Jonge, receiving an enthusiastic response from the audience. This year, the Hyderabad chapter presents the festival's largest and most diverse selection of European cinema in India, featuring films in multiple languages that delve into themes of identity, family, courage, shared humanity, and hope. EUFF 2025 in Hyderabad runs from December 5 to 14 across three venues, Prasad Lab Preview Theatre, Sri Sarathi Studios, and Alliance Française Hyderabad

## SmartWinnr launches medical simulation center of excellence to advance

SmartWinnr, a leading sales enablement and readiness platform, today announced the launch of a specialized medical simulation center of excellence to strengthen the accuracy, relevance and compliance readiness of its AI-driven learning solutions for the pharmaceutical and medtech sectors. The company headquartered in Hyderabad, India, with its global headquarters in California, USA, currently works with over 70 life sciences organizations across more than 30 countries. The new center brings together experienced life sciences professionals and AI specialists to ensure that every simulation reflects real-world medical conversations and field conditions. It is designed to continuously enhance



scientific, emotional and ethical dimensions that shape how customer-facing teams engage with healthcare professionals. Speaking on the initiative, Keats K Das, Chief of Staff and Director of Sales at SmartWinnr, said, "We decided to invest in domain-specific AI because that is where meaningful intelligence truly begins. Generic models can simulate conversations, but they cannot fully understand the science, context or compliance responsibilities that define how pharma and medtech teams interact with healthcare professionals. Our goal is to build AI that communicates with accuracy, empathy and regulatory awareness." leader in enterprise-grade, compliant AI training.



Global TPO & HR Leadership Excellence Summit 2025, Balakista Reddy, Chairman Higher Education Government Of Telangana that there's no dearth of opportunities for jobs from Marine (deep sea) to outer space. However there was still a need to update curriculum to industry requirements. Speaking as a Chief guest at the Global Training and Placement Officers (TPO) Association & HR Leadership Excellence Summit 2025 organized by Telangana Training & Placement Officers Association in collaboration with AllIndia TPO association New Delhi held at T Hub Hyderabad.



## FUN

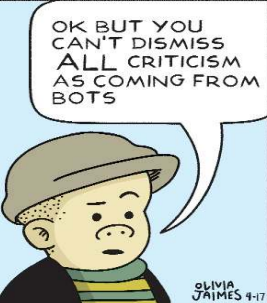
### ARCHIE



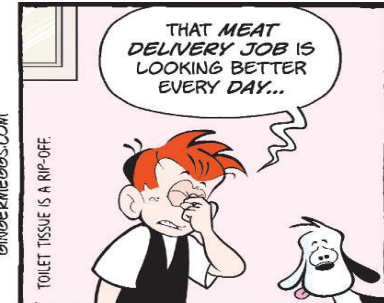
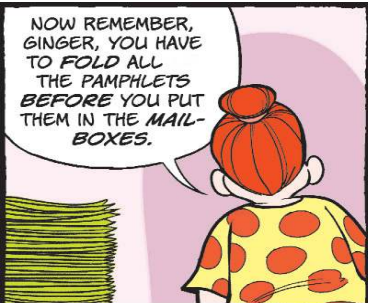
### GARFIELD



### NANCY



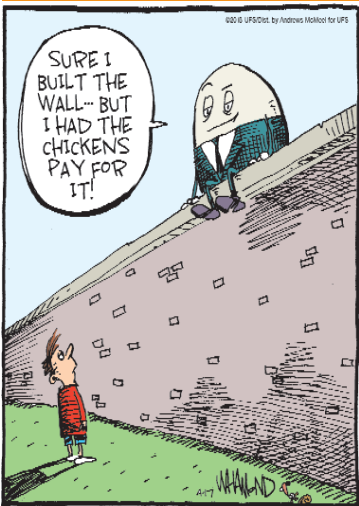
### GINGER MEGGS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS



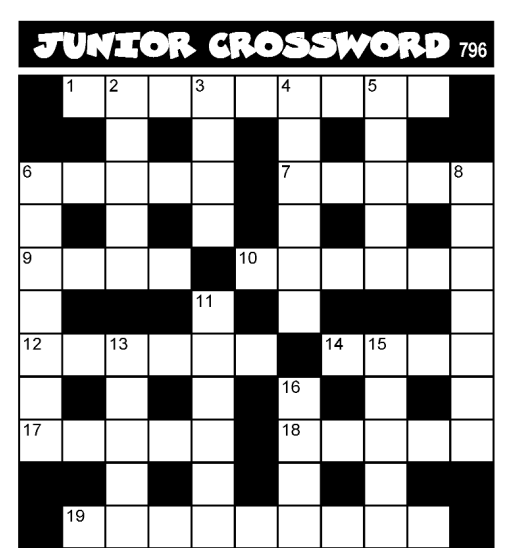
### REALITY CHECK



### SPEED BUMP



### CROSSWORD



### ACROSS

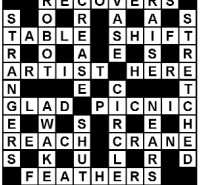
- People in jail
- The centre of your eye
- Have a quarrel
- Things to play with
- Flat dishes
- Mistakes
- The part along the side or end of something
- A boat with sails
- Flour is made from this
- Scientific study of the sun, moon, planets and stars

### DOWN

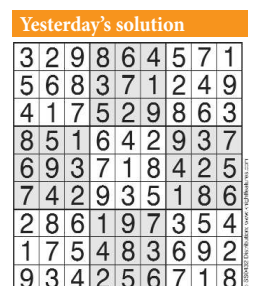
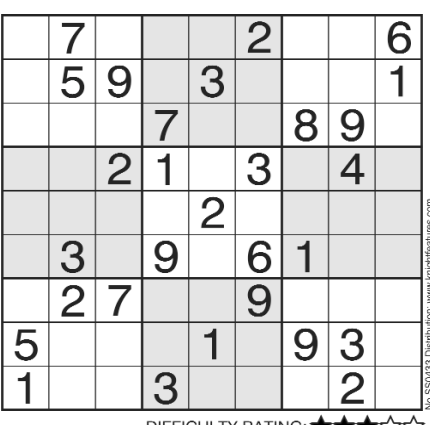
- Answer
- A fine glossy fabric
- Almost
- Correct

- Mugs and other things made of baked clay
- The least difficult
- Author
- Speed competitions
- Something you imagine while asleep
- A brother or sister the same age as you

### SOLUTION 795



### SUDOKU



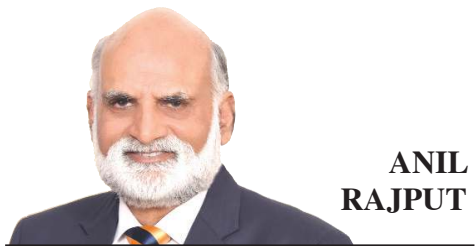
### Rules

- Each row and column can contain each number (1 to 9) exactly once.
- The sum of all numbers in any row or column must equal 45.

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★



# Manipur: Timeless beauty and a cuisine rooted in nature



ANIL  
RAJPUT

Manipur, one of the Seven Sister States of North-East India, is often called The Jeweled Land. The name derives from the Sanskrit word mani (jewel) and pur (land or city) because of the region's natural beauty, culture and dance traditions. Its landscape is marked by serene valleys and gentle hills and surrounded by majestic mountain ranges that encompass it. The state shares a long boundary with Myanmar and shares borders with Nagaland, Mizoram and Assam facilitating an active interaction in the eastern Himalayas. Imphal, the capital of Manipur is located in a valley at an elevation of nearly 2,600 feet above sea level, which influences its agreeable weather throughout the year. The Loktak Lake, located in the Bishnupur district, has the distinction of being the largest freshwater lake in the north-east, and is famous for its floating biomass known as phumdis, besides being the world's only floating national park. This geography of rich water bodies, cool hills and plentiful vegetation, shaped the habitation patterns and agricultural practices of Manipur's people, defining not only their identity but their cuisine, rituals and relationship with nature.

Human settlement in Manipur began in the fertile Imphal Valley, where early clans and proto-Meitei groups set up small farming communities along the rivers. Over time, these villages grew into organized chiefdoms and eventually formed the base of the Meitei kingdom that took shape in the first century CE. As the valley communities developed, Tibeto-Burman groups migrated into both the Imphal Valley and the surrounding hills. Each brought its own language and rituals, adding to the region's growing mix of cultures. Kangla Fort, on the banks of the Imphal River, became the seat of the Meitei kings and served for centuries as the center of political authority, ritual life, and administration. It played a key role in holding the various clans together. Meanwhile, hill communities such as the Tangkhul, Mao, Maram, Thadou, Hmar, Paite, Zou, Kuki, and others kept their distinct identities while staying closely connected to the valley. Trade in salt, forest products, woven textiles, bamboo goods, and dried meats helped maintain these ties and supported a long history of interaction and mutual dependence.

The Anglo-Manipur conflict of 1891 marked a turning point, bringing the region under British influence and new administrative systems besides exposure to the world outside its hills and valleys. Yet the cultural depth of the Manipuri people remained resilient despite the changes and its deeply rooted traditions endured. Manipur's strategic location also provided an ideal gateway for trade and cultural exchanges with Southeast Asia and they enriched each other with their trade, culture and cuisines. This region continues to be an important element in India's Look East policy that seeks closer and mutually beneficial ties with the rest of East Asia.

Religion in Manipur revolved, like in neighboring states, around animism (forces of nature), ancestor reverence and local cosmologies. Early Meitei spiritual life was centred on Sanamahi worship that was believed to ensure protection, prosperity and the well-being of the family. Leimarel Sidabi, considered the Mother Earth figure, and other deities representing forests,



lakes and skies formed a spiritual constellation that guided moral conduct, agricultural cycles and community life. Lai Haraoba, an ancient and popular Meitei festival honours the Umang Lai, the ancestral forest deities of Manipur, through rituals, songs, and dance sequences performed by priestesses. It brings together different clans in worship and serves as one of the oldest unifying traditions of Meitei civilization.

The spread of Vaishnavism in the eighteenth century during the reign of King Pamheiba (Garib Niwaz) introduced another set of transformations in the valley. Hymns, devotional poetry and the Ras Leela dance form gave Manipur's society the depth of the bhakti tradition that blended seamlessly with earlier beliefs. The emergence of this new devotional identity did not erase the earlier beliefs but created a harmony of philosophies where rituals for ancestors, forest spirits and Vaishnava beliefs coexist even today.

Cuisine in Manipur, one of the most intricate food cultures of the region, is mostly inspired by its geography and reflects its religious and social traditions. Much like the varied tribal cuisines of the north-east, Manipuri cuisine cannot be generalized because it is created on a foundation of ecological diversity, traditional methods of cooking and nuances of subtle flavours. An abundance of local produce provides diverse ingredients that are native to the region's ecology. Fresh herbs, seasonal greens, fermented ingredients, and fresh water fish form the basis of everyday meals, while techniques such as steaming, slow-cooking, and light seasoning bring out natural flavours rather than being overpowering. Manipuri food reflects a long tradition of using what the land and waters provide and is prepared in ways that preserve both nutrition and taste.

The cuisine of Manipur's valley regions is characterised by fresh, seasonal ingredients especially herbs, greens, and river fish and prepared with

minimal oil to preserve natural flavours. Light fermentation, gentle spicing, and simple cooking methods like boiling and steaming give the food an earthy taste and ensures nutritional value. Ngari, fermented fresh water fish that is sun-dried, forms the base of many local dishes and is known for its strong aroma and deep flavour. It is a key ingredient in popular dishes such as iromba and kangsoi and various chutneys, adding a punch to everyday meals. Iromba is made by combining boiled vegetables with mashed ngari and hara mirch (green chilli) with vegetables such as yongchak, seasonal beans, colocasia stems, and lai, a leafy green, that are stirred together into a delicious dish to be eaten with steamed rice. Iromba varies from one household to another, with some preferring it milder and others enhancing its sharpness with additional chillies. Another celebrated valley dish is singju, a spicy and crunchy salad of shredded vegetables, lotus stems, cabbage and herbs mixed with ngari. The use of roasted til (sesame) and a hint of lemon lends the salad its nutritious and nutty character.

A signature preparation of the Meitei culinary repertoire is chak hao, the famed black rice of Manipur, cooked during festivals and special occasions. It is often transformed into a sweet pudding with doodh (milk) and a touch of gur (jaggery), creating a rich and irresistible dessert. Another preferred dish is kangsoi, a boiled vegetable stew flavoured with adrak (ginger), hara mirch and a few herbs, cooked gently until the vegetables release their natural juices. This dish is an almost daily fare across the valley because of its lightness and nourishment, especially when the seasons are changing since it has properties that enhance immunity. Paaknam,



a savoury cake made of besan (gram flour), herbs, vegetables and sometimes fish, and wrapped in banana leaves and steamed, creates a fragrant dish served during festive periods. To top it all, Morok metpa, a fiery chutney made from roasted mirch (chilli), onions and herbs, along with ngari accompanies nearly every meal and reflects the local preference for heat balanced with freshness.

The valley also has a unique relationship with freshwater fish. Loktak Lake provides a wide variety that feature in dishes such as nga thongba, a fish stew prepared with adrak, pyaaz (onion), tomatoes, potatoes and herbs simmered slowly until the fish becomes tender. Nga atoiba, a fresh water fish stew, cooked with ingredients such as colocasia stems (paangkho), yong-chak, mustard leaves, chilli, turmeric, and sometimes herbs like maroi. Unlike spicier dishes, nga atoiba keeps the seasoning minimal to let the natural flavour of the fish stand out. The harmony between the natural sweetness of vegetables and the depth of ngari forms the heart of daily meals, creating a palette that is distinct, refined and deeply rooted in the land.

In the hill districts to the north, east, west, and south, tribal communities like the Tangkhul, Mao, Paite, Kuki, and Thadou have their own unique cuisines. These cuisines rely on forest produce, smoked meats, and traditional preservation methods. In the northern hills where the Tangkhuls live, the food is richer and often includes smoked or dried meats. Smoking happens carefully at home, allowing the meat to take in the aroma of firewood. This process creates flavors that fit well with the cool monsoon season. One beloved dish is hentak, made from a blend of sun-dried fish powder and a paste of edible Alocasia petioles, shaped into small balls and left to ferment. Hentak has a mildly pungent smell and is rich in protein. It is often used to add flavor to everyday meals, especially in stews, vegetable dishes, and chutneys. In the valley region, it is a household essential, valued for its long shelf life and the deep flavor it brings to home-style Manipuri cooking.

In the western hills, where the Mao Nagas live, the cuisine emphasises ginger, yam, fermented bamboo shoots and leafy vegetables. Smoked pork cooked with bastenga, fermented bamboo shoot, is a common delicacy symbolic of their reliance on preservation methods perfected over generations. The dish combines pork, bamboo shoot, mirch and adrak, simmered long enough to merge flavours yet still preserve the natural textures. Another traditional western hill dish is anishi made from fermented taro leaves cooked with pork. The slow cooking brings out an inten-

sity that pairs well with steamed rice and seasonal vegetables.

In the southern hills inhabited by Kuki and Paite groups, cuisine shifts toward heartier stews, dried meats and dishes cooked with a greater amount of pyaaz and tomatoes. Pork and chicken are central to many dishes, where meat is stewed with bamboo shoots, lai and seasonal herbs collected from nearby forests. One popular preparation is sai bhaji, where pork is simmered with beans, vegetables and adrak until it becomes tender and richly flavoured and is eaten during family gatherings or community feasts. The southern tribes also prepare dried fish broths that combine dried river fish with mirch and herbs to create warming meals suited to the cooler hill climate.

In the eastern districts bordering Myanmar, cross cultural influences emerge more prominently. Here, communities prepare rice noodles used in broth-based dishes enriched with vegetables, herbs and sometimes fish. The technique of boiling, steaming and using minimal spices reflects a shared culinary heritage shaped by both Manipuri and Southeast Asian practices. Seasonal greens feature in broths that are mild but nourishing, providing comfort during rainy months. Bamboo shoot curries, steamed fish seasoned with adrak and hara mirch, and boiled yam preparations are widespread across the eastern settlements, reinforcing a shared culinary identity that is both local and trans-regional.

As can be seen from the above recipes, fermentation holds deep significance in Manipuri gastronomy across both valley and hills. Ngari in the valley and hentak or bastenga in the hills reflect a deep understanding of natural preservation techniques. Rice also plays an essential role, not only as a staple but a cultural symbol. The valley's sticky rice, known as chak-hao (black aromatic rice) and other varieties in white, are staple in daily diets. Local beverages made through natural fermentation are also popular during rituals, reflecting the continuity of age-old practices linked to changing seasons.

Manipuri cuisine is being kept alive in contemporary times by the increasing numbers of cafes and restaurants that reinterpret traditional dishes while taking care to preserve their basic flavors. Indeed, this trend is welcome and calls for applause. Chefs are presenting classics like iromba, singju, chak-hao kheer, and ngari-based stews by reinventing them in lighter textures to suit the taste of modern times. Every care is undertaken to get farm-to-table sourcing that appeals to the health-conscious young. Ingredients hitherto confined to home kitchens-like hawaijar, wild herbs, black rice, and seasonal greens-now feature in curated menus and fusion dishes. Community-led food festivals and local entrepreneurs ensure authentic cooking ingredients and methods using family recipes remain central, allowing Manipuri food to evolve without losing its original character.

It is my belief that we have an obligation to protect these culinary traditions and keep them alive for future generations. The flavours of Manipur are not simply recipes but an expression of a people's tradition shaped by their land, their beliefs and their ancestral wisdom. They are the collective repository of the knowledge of generations who worked with forests, rivers, hills and fields, understanding nature and its importance for nourishment. Preserving this heritage is therefore an act of cultural responsibility that we must assume for ourselves. By valuing these traditions today, we affirm that the cuisine of Manipur will continue to nourish, teach and inspire the generations to come.

(The writer is Secretary, Cuisine India Society)

## Naples comes calling with its Sourdough legacy



### TEAM AGENDA

The aroma of rested sourdough and blistered tomatoes has finally found its way to Delhi. For a city that takes its food seriously, the arrival of Si Nonna's feels timely and assured. Celebrated across continents, it brings with it the legacy of Naples-five centuries of Neapolitan sourdough tradition and the distinction of being the world's largest AVPN-certified pizzeria network.

At Si Nonna's, the emphasis remains firmly on craft and discipline. Dough rests patiently for 24 hours, flour is thoughtfully sourced, cheese stays fresh, and every step-from fermentation to firing-follows methods shaped long before pizza became global currency. The result is flavour built on balance and restraint, confident without excess.

That philosophy runs through the menu. Pizza No. 2, topped with tomato sauce, buffalo mozzarella, basil and olive oil, achieves quiet harmony. Pizza No. 3 deepens the profile with garlic, olives, capers, basil and Fior di Latte, delivering layered flavour that remains

light on the palate. Other selections-numbers 6, 8 and beyond-continue this careful conversation between crust and topping, where nothing competes and everything belongs. Paired with a cup of strong hot coffee, the experience feels satisfying and complete.

Beyond pizzas, the menu reflects the comfort of a Neapolitan table. *Panuozzo sandwiches*, *Eggplant Parmigiana*, *fresh gelatos*, *kombuchas*, cooling beverages and a *classic Tiramisu* add depth and variety. Vegetarian, vegan and Jain-friendly options sit naturally alongside the rest, without implication or afterthought.

The space reinforces the experience. An open kitchen allows diners to watch dough being stretched, topped and eased into the oven. Guests — both children and adults — are invited to participate, crafting sourdough pizzas with aprons, chef hats and gentle guidance, creating a shared

family tradition rather than a staged performance.

Ayush Jatia, the force behind Si Nonna's, describes Delhi as a city "curious, energetic and deeply passionate about food" — a fitting stage for its presence. With GK2 as its home, Si Nonna's presents a revival of Neapolitan heritage, blending Italian kitchen traditions with Delhi's appreciation for authentic flavours.



## Chronicles of Deccan delights



### TEAM AGENDA

There are food festivals, and then there are culinary experiences that feel like stepping into someone's home, where the air is fragrant with slow-cooked spices and every bite carries memory. Hyderabad's Rasoi, hosted at Hyatt Place Gurgaon, firmly belonged to the latter. Across a week-long celebration, the hotel revived a culinary legacy rooted in warmth, patience and tradition, led by the quietly formidable Nizami Dilnaz Baig.

Hyderabad's cuisine reflects centuries of cultural dialogue — Nizami opulence shaped by Persian finesse, Mughlai richness, Turkish depth and Deccan earthiness. At this festival, those influences unfolded with rare authenticity. Dilnaz Baig, 74 and fiercely passionate, brought to Gurgaon the flavours of Hyderabad's home kitchens rather than theatrical interpretations. Her presence transformed the event into an intimate cultural exchange. Having travelled through Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Thailand and Europe, Dilnaz absorbed global influences without losing sight of her culinary origins. Her cooking draws from memory and instinct, both shaped by generations of practice.



"Hyderabad's cuisine is about heritage," she explained. "Every dish carries a story from the royal kitchens of the Nizams, where spice, aroma and time work together."

The menu honoured that philosophy. *Khatti Dal* set a comforting tone, while *Hyderabad Dum Biryani*, *Haleem*, *Mirchi ka Salan* and *Bagara Baingan* showcased depth, balance and restraint. *Pathar ka Gosht* and *Shikampuri Kebabs* impressed with simplicity and technique, while thoughtful vegetarian options ensured inclusivity.

Guests could choose a relaxed table d'hôte lunch or a generous buffet dinner. What stayed was a sense of belonging. As General Manager Neha Kapoor observed, this was food steeped in familiarity and tradition. For one memorable week, Hyderabad arrived — alive on every plate.



‘JUST BE IN THE SIMPLE, INNOCENT STATE OF  
“I DON’T KNOW!” WHEN WE LIVE THE  
BEAUTIFUL MYSTERY OF LIFE SO TOTALLY, JOY  
DAWNS.’

# Why meditation is non-negotiable to your mental health

GURUDEV SRI SRI RAVI SHANKAR

See, in schools, teachers often tell children not to get angry or not to feel sad. But nobody teaches you how not to get angry or how to handle this restless mind or negative emotions. We teach dental hygiene to our children, but forget to teach them about mental hygiene. What is mental hygiene? Taking care of your mind is mental hygiene. Everybody likes to wear clean clothes; everybody takes a shower daily. In the same way, we need to learn how to keep our minds free from the impressions we gather in the course of daily life.

Mental hygiene is necessary, and you can maintain it through practices like meditation. Taking some time out every day to consciously relax the mind and repose in your Self is like pressing the delete button on all the unnecessary files on your computer. It lets you start afresh with a clear slate. We teach children to brush their teeth when they are very young, so their teeth remain healthy and their smiles intact. But a smile comes not only from healthy teeth, but from a pleasant state of the mind, which you get from meditation to begin with. And then where does it lead us? Is it limited only to hygiene or wellness of the mind? No, it leads us to another dimension deep within us, which is a field of all possibilities.

## The Antidote to Stress

A primary mental health concern today is stress, which does not go away just by talking or advising alone. We need to learn some techniques and tools to get rid of stress and calm the mind. Meditation is for those who have a lot to do in the world. It helps those with responsibilities, deadlines, challenges, and pressure. It gives you inner stability. It makes you peaceful within and dynamic outside. The quality of your life depends on the quality of your mind. If the mind is not centred, external influences can easily disturb it. Meditation helps you achieve that centredness.

The formula for stress is too much to do, too little time, and no energy to do it. Now, you cannot reduce your workload, nor can you have more time; you are left with only one thing to do, which is to increase your energy level. And this is where meditation can be of immense help.

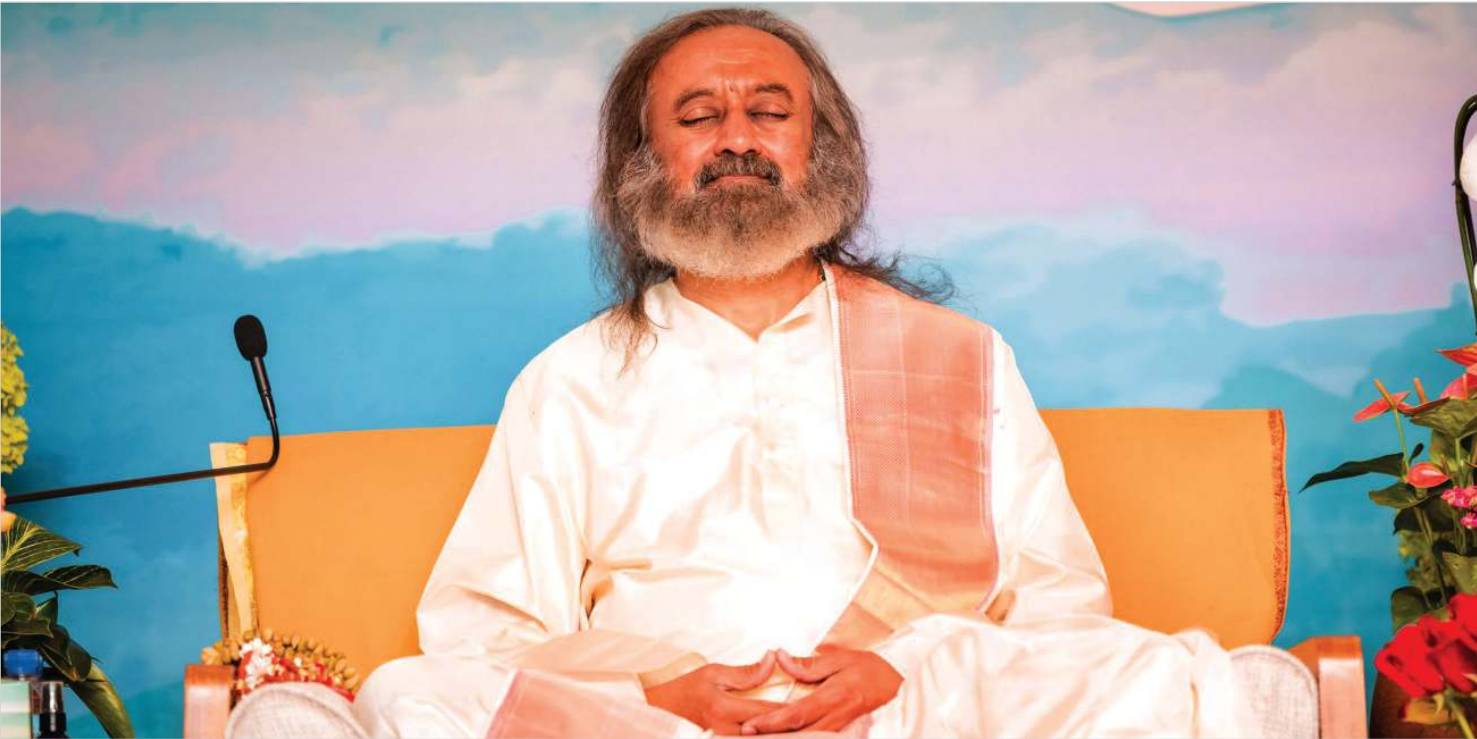
Meditation gives you deep rest, deeper than the deepest sleep. When the mind becomes calm and centred, it gains access to the enormous intelligence and energy that reside within us. Meditation is a way to take that deep rest, and yet remain alert and conscious.

People have a common misconception that meditation is about focusing the mind. No, meditation is effortless and fun. It is what your soul has been looking for. When the mind becomes calmer with practice, you make better decisions and create a positive, harmonious atmosphere around you. When the mind is disturbed, your perception is disturbed, and any decision you take from that place is one you end up regretting.

## What Does Science Say About Meditation and Stress?

Today, there are more than enough scientific

A primary mental health concern today is stress, which does not go away just by talking or advising alone. We need to learn some techniques and tools to get rid of stress and calm the mind



studies on how meditation benefits both body and mind. Studies show that stress, anxiety, and negative feelings create lesions in the hippocampus of the brain. When these lesions are removed through deep conscious relaxation, you begin to feel better, fresher, and more alert. Meditation empowers you to be in the present moment — not worried about the future or brooding over the past.

Another study shows that the amygdala, the central part of the brain, starts shrinking when you begin meditating. When the amygdala is larger, you are more prone to nervousness and other emotional imbalances. Scientists also say that grey matter increases in the brain with meditation. Grey matter processes information and controls muscles, memory, and emotions.

Researchers at Harvard Medical School have found that under stress, the brain may shift from cognitive to survival mode, which can cause memory loss over time, as more energy goes into surviving than cognition.

Chronic stress can lead to atrophy of brain mass and a decrease in its weight. These structural changes impact how you respond to stress, cognition, and memory. Stress can lead to irritability, moodiness, anxiety, and depression. Meditation works at the root of this by calming the system and restoring balance. Through meditation and breathing techniques, we can cleanse the mind of negative emotions and address mental stress effectively.

Modern medicine also supports these spiritual practices in reducing stress hormones. Psychiatrists at the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences have found that cor-

tisol levels — the stress hormone — are significantly lower among practitioners of SudarshanKriya, a powerful breathing technique and meditation practice. Research from Sweden shows that SudarshanKriya reduces stress and anxiety and increases optimism and well-being. It is as effective as standard drug therapy, free of side effects, and does not strain the wallet. You can also increase your energy levels by chanting, which is a path to meditation. These chants have existed in human consciousness for thousands of years. When you chant, the deepest level of consciousness begins vibrating, energising you while calming your mind at the same time. It is because of these practices — singing bhajans and chanting — that people in ancient times did not experience many instances of depression, despite living modest lives in India. People chanted often, so the subtle energy remained high.

## Meditation and Sleep

The biggest casualty of a stressful lifestyle is the quality of sleep. Every night when you sleep, you wake up energised and rejuvenated because the mind, body, and breath come together into one rhythm, eliminating the stress of the day. But there is another way of resting that is far superior to natural sleep — meditation. In meditation, you relax consciously.

With conscious meditation, or conscious rest, and this state of restful alertness, you can remove stress from the body-mind system in a very short period of time. It brings clarity to the mind, makes your skin glow, and your heart glow as well.

## Power of Intention

There are more than 400 benefits of meditation; over 100 have been proven and documented. Meditation enhances intuition, creativity, decision-making, work-life balance, and interpersonal relationships. It also boosts immunity. Beyond these benefits, it strengthens the power of intention.

When there is disturbance in the world, if you can remain calm and maintain equanimity, ideas arise in your mind about what to do. Peace becomes possible when the mind is serene. When we are disturbed, we are of little help to ourselves or to others. People seek altered states of consciousness through harmful means because they want relief, but the state they seek is already present in their breath. Sit and meditate for a few minutes, and you experience joy within. Millions have emerged from harmful habits, violence, and extreme stress through meditation.

## Is Meditation for Everybody?

It is a natural human tendency to seek joy that does not diminish and love that does not distort or turn into negative emotions such as anger, hate, or jealousy. Wanting comfort is natural because you once experienced that unmatched state of comfort in your mother's womb. There, you had to do nothing. Food was supplied effortlessly, and you floated peacefully. That is meditation, and meditation is absolute comfort. Meditation is an art. Just as everyone has ten fingers and only needs to learn how to use them to create something melodious with



IN SANSKRIT, IT IS SAID, “MANANATRAYATEITI MANTRA.” A MANTRA PROTECTS THE MIND FROM REPETITIVE THOUGHTS AND WORRIES. MANTRA-BASED MEDITATION TECHNIQUES SUCH AS SAHAJ SAMADHI HELP FREE THE MIND FROM THIS CYCLE

an instrument, similarly, as long as you have a mind with which you can think, you can meditate. Often, people complain that it is difficult to focus the mind or relax, but meditation does not require renunciation or drastic lifestyle changes. You do not need to go to the Himalayas or practise extreme penance. To meditate, you simply need to know how to relax — like making an effort to catch a train, but once you are on it, you can rest. You can begin meditation with the help of a qualified instructor who uses a mantra — a specific sound. In Sanskrit, it is said, “Mananatrayateiti mantra.” A mantra protects the mind from repetitive thoughts and worries. Mantra-based meditation techniques such as Sahaj Samadhi help free the mind from this cycle.

To meditate effortlessly, I offer three principles. First, *Achah* — “I want nothing.” Put all desires aside temporarily. Second, *Aprayatna* — “I do nothing.” Meditation is not about effort, focus, or control. Just let go. Third, *Akinchan* — “I am nothing.” Drop all labels you associate with yourself. For those moments, simply be nobody.

In the very first sitting, you experience something beautiful. With regular practice, once or twice a day, a transformation begins within you — one that others around you will also begin to notice, recognising the calm and positive energy you carry. No, enjoy the ride for a while. Be on it! Never mind! But see that your goal, or what you set as a goal, is already there where you are. And knowing this brings you serenity, beyond any words or explanation.

# Former colonies demand reparations: Britain owes a debt – moral & otherwise

GYANESHWAR DAYAL

A few years ago, when ShashiTharoor stood at Oxford and argued that Britain owed a moral debt to India and its former colonies, his words were treated as an eloquent aside rather than a rallying cry. He suggested that even a simple apology would signal remorse for centuries of plunder and subjugation. At the time, he was largely a solitary voice. That is no longer the case. What was once an academic argument has now consolidated into the largest global demand for reparations in recorded history?

In an extraordinary development, former colonies of the British Empire have jointly advanced claims amounting to an estimated \$180 trillion. This unprecedented figure transforms decades of moral debate into a concrete economic reckoning-one that directly challenges a powerful imperial legacy that continues to shape global inequalities.

Momentum has gathered across continents. In Yemen, Sana'a University recently held an intellectual seminar examining British colonial crimes in southern Yemen. Timed with Independence Day, the event formed part of the ongoing Academics Toward al-Quds series. University President Dr Mohammed al-Bukhaiti emphasised the institution's responsibility to preserve national memory and expose the lasting impact of colonial domination, particularly in an era shaped by contested narratives and information warfare. Dr Zaid al-Warith, Assistant Rector for Centres Affairs, reminded participants that such anniversaries are not ceremonial markers; they carry the weight of generations who resisted British rule with persistence and resolve. The seminar underscored the enduring relevance of colonial history to contemporary political and economic struggles.

The staggering global claim of \$180 trillion is a composite of demands emerging from nations across the Caribbean, Africa and Asia. It reflects decades of research, the maturation of reparatory discourse, and a coordinated diplomatic realignment. African



leaders, meeting in Algiers for their second major summit this year, advanced the movement into a decisive phase. Preliminary assessments from the African Union estimate damages inflicted by British colonial rule on the continent at \$100-120 trillion, while Nigeria has independently lodged a \$5 trillion claim.

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) has also intensified its efforts. During a visit to London in mid-November, its leaders pressed Prime Minister Sir KeirStarmer directly, reiterating collective claims valued at \$24 trillion, including Barbados's assessment of \$4.9 trillion. Their arguments draw upon extensive documentation of long-term social and economic harm rooted in slavery and indenture.

India's position lends considerable weight to the global claim. A major Oxfam study published in 2024 estimated Britain's economic extraction from India at \$65 trillion-a figure now widely cited in international legal and academic circles. Scholars and legal experts in London note that while the scale of these demands is unprecedented, the depth and credibility of the underlying research give the claims a seriousness that international courts cannot easily dismiss. The documentary From Slaves

to Bond has further highlighted the difficulty of quantifying generational trauma, structural impoverishment and the enduring economic architecture of empire.

The debate arrives at a sensitive moment in British politics. A 2024 declaration signed by Sir KeirStarmer and 55 Commonwealth leaders acknowledged the need to address “reparatory justice” for the “abhorrent” transatlantic slave trade. Now, as Prime Minister, Starmer faces a formalised global demand that extends far beyond symbolic recognition. His government, however, continues to reject financial reparations, insisting that contemporary partnerships and development assistance remain the appropriate mechanisms for redress.

With \$180 trillion proposed as the starting point for negotiation, Britain is no longer confronted with abstract historical guilt, but with a detailed accounting of imperial extraction. The months ahead will determine whether this coordinated international push reshapes global frameworks of justice-or whether it stands as an unresolved reminder of a history the world is no longer prepared to ignore.

(The writer is a Senior Editor with The Pioneer)

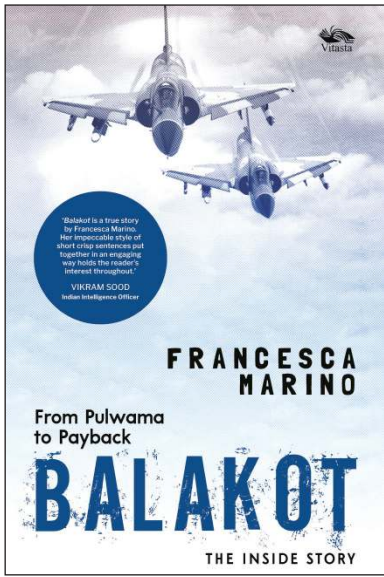
# What really happened at Balakot: Unravelling Pakistan’s terror facade

REENA SINGH

More than six years after the Balakot air strikes, Italian journalist Francesca Marino brings readers a sharp, meticulously documented account of what really happened on the night of 26 February 2019. *Balakot: From Pulwama to Payback* cuts through political noise, propaganda, and deliberate misinformation to present one of the clearest factual narratives of the Indian Air Force's strike on a major Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) training camp deep inside Pakistan. The result is a book that is simple in its language but uncompromising in detail-a rare combination in reporting on the India-Pakistan conflict.

The core claim established in the book is unmistakable: the Indian strike hit its intended target, a functioning JeM training facility, killing between 150 and 170 terrorists, including trainers from outside Pakistan. Marino's evidence is neither speculative nor second-hand. She presents eyewitness testimony from a man who was at the camp that night — an account that describes the immediate chaos after the strike, the rapid arrival of Pakistani soldiers, and the urgent evacuation of bodies and injured militants to a nearby military hospital. According to this witness, the site was thereafter swiftly sanitised. Debris was removed overnight and dumped in a river; families of the dead were summoned and paid off-and silenced with threats. It is rare to find such direct testimony from inside a terror camp, and Marino uses it appropriately.

Where Pakistan attempted to weave a narrative of “missed targets”, “fallen trees”, and “dead crows”, Marino demonstrates how that story was constructed for Western media consumption. Pakistan insisted that Indian aircraft intruded and then fled, dropping bombs in empty fields. Marino's book dismantles this narrative with satellite imagery, independent intelligence, and on-ground reports from her long-established network in Pakistan-built over thirty years of reporting on South Asia. Her work exposes how Pakistan's establishment produced a



Title: Balakot: From Pulwama to Payback  
Author: Francesca Marino  
MRP: ₹495  
Publisher: Vitasta Publishing



REENA SINGH

coordinated cover-up to hide the scale of the damage, even going so far as to rebuild structures with the same rubble material to ensure that nothing looked new when the foreign press visited weeks later.

But *Balakot* is more than an investigation into one night's events. Marino places the strike against the long, grim history of Pakistan's terror machinery. She traces the origins of JeM, profiles its leadership and trainers in meticulous detail, and explains its links with Pakistan's shadowy power centres and the ISI. Through biographies, funding trails, and the mapping of multiple training camps, she shows how deeply the Pakistani state — not just its rogue elements — has been invested in terrorism. These sections sometimes read like intelligence dossiers, but they enrich the reader's understanding of the larger ecosystem in which Balakot occurred.

A key strength of the book lies in its laying out of how ordinary Pakistani cit-

izens — many of them migrants in Europe — are drawn into this system. Marino documents how money is channelled from overseas to keep the terror infrastructure running, and how networks of mosques and religious schools contribute to ideological recruitment. She also discusses the use of social media platforms by these terror outfits-Twitter, Facebook, and X — as tools of propaganda, radicalisation, and fund-raising. The book does not exaggerate these points; it presents them plainly, supported by sources and patterns that have been observed for years.

One of the most important sections in Balakot is Marino's exclusive interview with Air Chief Marshal Birender Singh Dhanoa, who was heading the Indian Air Force at the time of the strike. Dhanoa offers a clear, jargon-free explanation of the operation: the choice of bombs, the precision of the targeting, and the unique method of triggering explosives inside a cavity to maximise shrapnel and contain the blast radius. His account stands in stark contrast to the Pakistani narrative — it is measured, technical, and evidence-based. For readers trying to understand what exactly happened that night, this interview alone is worth the price of the book.

Some parts of the narrative read with the pace and tension of detective fiction-Marino pieces together movements, timelines, intelligence inputs, reactions, and cover-up operations with the skill of a storyteller. Other chapters, listing camps, biographies, and funding chains, are more sober and documentary in tone. Together, they form a comprehensive picture of the terror apparatus, the international media's frequent gullibility, and the geopolitical stakes that continue to define India-Pakistan relations.

Marino is a journalist who has taken risks that few foreign reporters have been willing to take in Pakistan. Her access to both official sources and ordinary locals, especially those wary of the Pakistani state, gives the book its depth. This combination of high-level interviews and grassroots testimony-allows her to connect dots across borders and institutions in a way that few journalists can.

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