



Global Summit a huge success, says Mahesh

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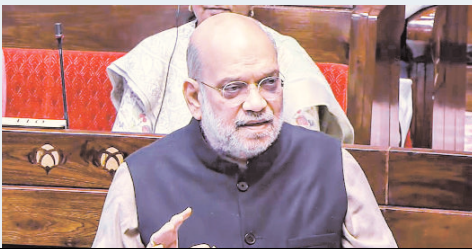


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PIONEER IN SHORT

HYDERABAD EMERGING AS GLOBAL ENTERTAINMENT HUB: KOMATIREDDY

India is on the verge of becoming a global leader in the creative economy, said Telangana Roads, Buildings, and Cinematography Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, addressing delegates at the Global Summit 2025 in Hyderabad. Speaking on the theme "The Creative Century: India's Soft Power & The Future of Entertainment", the Minister said the world is witnessing a new era where imagination drives economies...

FULL REPORT ON P2

CM REVANTH VIRTUALLY UNVEILS TELANGANA THALLI STATUES

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Tuesday virtually unveiled the Telangana Thalli statues that have been installed across the State from the Bharat Future City in Hyderabad. The virtual unveiling was organised as part of Praja Palana (people's governance) celebrations to mark the second anniversary of the Congress government in the state.

FULL REPORT ON P3

LITHUANIA GOVT DECLARES NATIONAL EMERGENCY

Sri Lanka Air Force bid farewell to two IAF helicopters after they ended their rescue mission in cyclone-hit island nation, even as INS Gharial reached Trincomalee with 700 tonnes of essential relief material from Tamil Nadu. The Indian Air Force (IAF) choppers, which departed on Monday, were involved in airlifting immediate relief supplies to distressed...

FULL REPORT ON P5

SACHIN RECALLS GURSHARAN'S GESTURE IN SCORING IRANI CUP TON IN 1989-90

Sachin Tendulkar on Tuesday recalled former India player Gursharan Singh's gesture to walk out at No 10 with a broken hand only to help him score a valiant 103 for the Rest of India in their Irani Cup match against Delhi in 1989-90. A rampant Delhi crushed the Rest of India by 309 runs in the contest played here at the Wankhede Stadium in which Tendulkar waged...

FULL REPORT ON P12

QUOTE OF THE DAY



THE WELFARE DEPARTMENTS ARE PROVIDING BASIC FACILITIES SO THAT INCLUSIVE GROWTH CAN BE SEEN IN INDUSTRIES, IT, PHARMA AND TOURISM. WE WILL GIVE PRIORITY FOR INNOVATIVENESS AMONG STUDENTS.

— PONNAM PRABHAKAR, TG MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT

Telangana is rising to \$3 trillion economy

PNS ■ Hyderabad

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Tuesday unveiled the state government's 'Telangana Rising' vision document, aimed at making the state a USD three trillion economy by 2047.

The document was released in the presence of a host of illustrious personalities and economists, including NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Suman Berry, industrialist Anand Mahindra and cinema superstar Chiranjeevi at the valedictory function of the two-day 'Telangana Rising Global Summit' organised by the state government here.

In tune with the government's futuristic vision, a robot handed over the doc-

CM UNVEILS VISION DOCUMENT



ument to the Chief Minister on stage. Observing that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is pursuing the goal of 'Viksit Bharat 2047' (developed India) and making the

country a USD 30 trillion economy, Reddy said the vision document aims to make Telangana a USD three trillion economy and to contribute 10 per cent national

GDP. The document is not prepared in closed doors, but with the inputs of economists and also common people, he said.

CONTINUED ON >> P2

'TG must grow 8-9 pc yearly to hit \$3 tn goal'



PNS ■ Hyderabad

Telangana needs to grow at 8-9 per cent annually to become a USD 3 trillion economy by 2047, former RBI Governor Duvvuri Subbarao said here on Tuesday.

Speaking at the launch of the Telangana Rising 2047 Vision Document, Subbarao said that economic growth cannot be sustained unless its benefits are widely shared.

"The government must pursue inclusive growth,

which means the benefits of growth must reach the poorest person in Telangana, to the farthest point in the state," he said.

"Today, the GSDP of Telangana is about Rs 16.7 trillion, which roughly translates to USD 250 billion. We are USD 250 billion today; we have to reach USD 3 trillion in 22 years, which means multiplying the GSDP 15 times. Simple arithmetic shows the state must grow at about 8 to 9 per cent, perhaps even faster. That's a tough and challenging goal, difficult but not impossible," Subbarao said.

The former RBI chief stressed the importance of skilling, noting that it cannot be achieved by the government or the private sector alone.

CONTINUED ON >> P2



'Future City to provide jobs to 13L people'

PNS ■ Hyderabad

IT and Industries Minister Duddilla Sridhar Babu has revealed that Bharat Future City will be developed as a world-class city that will attract domestic and international investments. He said that this city, which will be built with excellent infrastructure, will be developed as a zero carbon city on 13,500 acres.

CONTINUED ON >> P2

KCR's fast-unto-death shook the Centre: KTR

PNS ■ Hyderabad

KCR's sacrifice and the martyrdom of hundreds of people led to the first step towards the formation of separate Telangana, recalled BRS working president KT Ramarao on the occasion of Vijay Divas. He said there would not have been December 9 without KCR's fast unto death strike and Without December 9, there would not have been June 2nd, the state formation day.

In all the historic days that marked the formation of Telangana, former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhara



Rao played a significant role. BRS working president K.T. Rama Rao described December as a historic day, which marked the first step for the formation of Telangana. KCR's indefinite

hunger strike shook the then rulers of Delhi, and they had to announce the process for Telangana formation. It had been sixteen years since the Centre's decision to start the process, which we are celebrating as Vijay Divas," KTR said.

Harish slams Revanth

Describing KCR as an embodiment of struggle, commitment and sacrifice, former minister and BRS senior leader Harish Rao asserted that KCR would return as the Chief Minister of Telangana.

CONTINUED ON >> P2

In a first, Australia's social media ban for children takes effect

PNS ■ Sydney

Australia has become the first country to ban social media for children under 16, blocking access to platforms including TikTok, Alphabet's YouTube and Meta's, Instagram and Facebook from midnight.

Ten of the biggest platforms were ordered to block children from mid-

night on Wednesday (1300 GMT on Tuesday) or face fines of up to A\$49.5 million (\$33 million) under the new law, which drew criticism from major technology companies and free speech advocates, but was welcomed by parents and child advocates.

The ban is being closely watched by other countries considering similar



age-based measures amid growing concerns about the impact of social media on children's health and safety.

In a video message that Sky News Australia said would be played in schools this week, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said the ban aimed to support young Australians and ease the

pressure that can come from endless feeds and algorithms.

"Make the most of the school holidays coming up. Rather than spending it scrolling on your phone, start a new sport, learn a new instrument, or read that book that has been sitting there for some time on your shelf," he said.

'Powerful' dominate power deals!

PNS ■ Hyderabad

The Telangana government has made largescale agreements at the Global Summit held at the Future City venue in Hyderabad. Most of the agreements are in the power sector. Apart from these, there are companies from other sectors, but it can be said that this sector has a large share.

But what is another key point here is that Astha Green Energy Ventures India Private Limited signed two agreements on Monday. One of them is a pumped storage project (PSP). This company is going to set up this project with a capacity of 750 MW in Mylavaram village of Nizamabad district with an investment of Rs 4,650 crore.

Along with this, the same company is on the list released by the government that it will set up a 500 MW captive solar park with an



investment of Rs 5,600 crore. This company belongs to Congress senior leader K Jana Reddy along with his close relatives. Not only that, at the time of the establishment of this Astha Green Energy, Jana Reddy's son Kundur Raghuveer was also a board

director. Later, it is said that he resigned from the board. Congress sources say that Keshav Reddy Mareddy, who is currently on the board, is former minister Janareddy's brother-in-law.

Along with this, AM Green India Private Limited has signed an MoU to set up an e-methanol project with an investment of Rs 8,000 crore. It has been revealed that this same company will set up a 2G ethanol plant with an investment of Rs 10,000 crore. This company is none other than Green Co-founders Anil Kumar Chalamala Shetty and others. Another key point here is that Green Co Energies Private Limited has signed an agreement to set up a pumped storage project with a capacity of 3960 MW near Ippagudem in Mulugu district with an investment of Rs 24,000 crore.

CONTINUED ON >> P2

'₹1.5L cr for 'AI 1st Future' MICROSOFT'S MEGA INVESTMENT IN INDIA

PNS ■ New Delhi

Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella met Prime Minister Narendra Modi Wednesday evening and committed the United States-based software giant's largest ever Asia investment – over US\$ 17.5 billion, or Rs 1.5 lakh crore – towards developing Artificial Intelligence-capabilities.

"Thank you PM Narendra Modi for an inspiring conversation on India's AI opportunity. To support the country's ambitions, Microsoft is committing US\$ 17.5 billion – our largest investment ever in Asia – to help build the infrastructure, skills, and sovereign capabilities needed for India's AI-first future," he said.

The Prime Minister responded, "When it comes to AI, the world is optimistic about India!"



"Had a very productive discussion with Satya Nadella. Happy to see India being the place where Microsoft will make its largest-ever investment in Asia. The youth of India will harness this opportunity to innovate and leverage the power of AI for a better planet."

In a press statement released shortly after the two leaders met, Microsoft said

the US\$ 17.5 billion it will invest in India follows an earlier investment of US\$ 3 billion – towards establishing cloud and AI infrastructure in Bengaluru over the next two years, which includes upskilling and new data centres – and will ensure the company has "the largest hyperscale presence in India".

CONTINUED ON >> P2

'Vote chori biggest anti-national act'

Rahul slams 'BJP-EC collusion'

PNS ■ New Delhi

In a no-holds-barred attack, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday accused the BJP of indulging in the "biggest anti-national act" by committing "vote chori" in collusion with the Election Commission and destroying the idea of India.

Participating in a discussion on election reforms in the Lower House, Gandhi posed three questions, which he claimed make it clear that the BJP is "directing and using" the Election Commission (EC) to damage India's democracy.

Making suggestions, Gandhi called for providing a machine-readable voter list to all parties one month before elections, taking back the law that allows destruction of CCTV footage after 45 days, giving access to EVMs, and changing the law that allows the election commissioners "to get away with whatever they want to do".



Sonia's leadership, Manmohan's vision will guide Cong rule: CM

PNS ■ Hyderabad

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Tuesday said the inspiration from Congress leader Sonia Gandhi and former Prime Minister, the late Manmohan Singh's vision would guide the party's rule in the state.

Speaking after virtually inaugurating the statues of 'Telangana Thalli' (Mother Telangana) in district Collectors' offices from here, he said people of the state would forever celebrate the birthday of Sonia Gandhi,



who fulfilled the decades-old dream of Telangana formation, along with the inauguration of 'Telangana Thalli'

on December 9 every year. Sonia Gandhi, the former Congress president, turned 79 on Tuesday.

The CM said the state government had decided to celebrate December 9 as 'Telangana Thalli' inauguration day as it was on this day in 2009 that the then Union Home Minister P Chidambaram had announced initiating the process of the formation of Telangana state from Andhra Pradesh.

He recalled that the state government had installed the statue of Mother Telangana in the Secretariat on December 9 last year.

It is a matter of immense happiness for him, his cabinet

colleagues and other Congress leaders that December 9 is also the birthday of Sonia Gandhi, Reddy said. "Sonia Gandhi's inspiration, Manmohan Singh's vision would be implemented in our welfare and development programmes, in our governance and in our hearts forever," he said.

Sonia Gandhi fulfilled the aspiration of Telangana people for statehood, despite challenges, as per the word given by her (during the UPA regime led by then PM Manmohan Singh), he said.

Global Summit a huge success, says Mahesh

PNS ■ Hyderabad

TPCC President MLC Mahesh Kumar Goud claimed that 90% of Sarpanches elected in the local body polls are from the Congress party and said that the majority of them were elected unanimously. Addressing the media on Tuesday, he congratulated the Chief Minister, Revanth Reddy, and Ministers on the successful completion of Telangana Rising Global Summit. Asserting that the Jubilee Hills by-election win reflected people's trust in the Congress government and the successful imple-



mentation of various welfare schemes, including Sanna Biyyam and Indiramma Houses. As expected, the Global Summit attracted the world, and Telangana has bagged huge investments.

Mahesh Kumar described the influx of investment as a positive development and an indication of the Telangana government's friendly and positive industrial policies. The TPCC chief said under the competent leadership of CM Revanth Reddy, the Congress government has been moving fast on the path of all-around development.

"Telangana is moving towards development under the progressive and development rule after 10 years of destruction under BRS," Mahesh said, adding that the BRS has lost its credibility and its game is over.

Azhar: Future City to feature extensive sports facilities

PNS ■ Hyderabad

Former cricketer and Telangana Minister Mohammad Azharuddin on Tuesday said the proposed Future City on the outskirts of Hyderabad will include extensive facilities for sports development.

Speaking at a panel discussion on sports during the ongoing Telangana Rising Global Summit, Azharuddin, who is also Minister for Minority Affairs, said Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, an avid sports enthusiast, is committed to promoting sports in the state.

"I think Telangana has already done a lot, and it is going to do a lot. With the new Future City coming up, there will be plenty of facilities," Azharuddin said.



'PPPs essential for TG's vision'

PNS ■ Hyderabad

Emphasising that PPPs are indispensable to realising the vision of a USD 3 trillion economy, Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu said the Telangana Rising Summit unveiled the roadmap for Vision 2047 to achieve that goal. Attending the panel discussion on "Innovative PPPs: Harnessing Private Capital Towards Public Goods" at the Telangana Rising Global Summit, he said even though Telangana's USD 200 billion GSDP and 37% investment rate generate USD 70-75 billion annually, the state faces an investment gap of USD 30 billion, and this gap is growing rapidly.

To bridge this gap, the DCM stressed, PPPs will act as the engine for developing the CURE (Core Urban), PURE (Peri-Urban), and RARE (Rural Agri) zones. He explained that PPPs



open the door for private investment in metros, solar parks, and skill hubs while allowing the government to channel public funds toward human development and net-zero goals.

"Hyderabad is a paradise for investors, and the state offers a highly conducive investment climate, cost-effective and skilled labour, strong law and order, and an investor-friendly government," he said.

The government treats investors as members of its own family, he said, inviting them to invest heavily in the state and join hands in building a stronger future.

Case against BJP SM in-charge over posters against CM

PNS ■ Hyderabad

A case was registered against Telangana BJP Social Media In-Charge Sumiran Komarraju and two other team members, and they were detained over a poster depicting allegations on the two-year rule of Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy.

Calling the action "suppression of freedom of speech", BJP leaders strongly condemned it.

The posters titled "Report Card of two-year rule of Revanth Reddy" pasted outside the Congress office here recently by the BJP, showed Revanth Reddy sitting on a chair with robotic arms as the BJP alleged 'land deals by brothers', 'monthly taxes to Delhi', '25 per cent commission in every work'.

Hyderabad emerging as global entertainment hub: Komatireddy

Says the govt will balance rapid expansion with fair working conditions

PNS ■ Hyderabad

India is on the verge of becoming a global leader in the creative economy, said Telangana Roads, Buildings, and Cinematography Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, addressing delegates at the Global Summit 2025 in Hyderabad.

Speaking on the theme "The Creative Century: India's Soft Power & The Future of Entertainment", the Minister said the world is witnessing a new era where imagination drives economies, entertainment shapes diplomacy, and creative industries influence global perception. He stated that Indian cinema, music, gaming, and digital platforms have already crossed borders, with Indian films being watched in more than 170 countries and Indian creative talent powering global



content industries from Los Angeles to Tokyo. Highlighting the rapid rise of Hyderabad as a global entertainment hub, Minister Komatireddy said the city is home to world-class film infrastructure, including Ramoji Film City, major VFX and gaming companies, and a strong, diverse creative workforce.

He reiterated that the Telangana Government is committed to strengthening this ecosystem through

incentive-based film policy reforms, international production facilitation, AVGC-XR innovation centres, and global industry partnerships. "This is not just a vision — it is an execution-ready roadmap," Komatireddy said. The Minister also stressed the importance of industry welfare and sustainable development, announcing measures such as capital subsidies for large investments, production reim-

bursements for companies using local resources, and mandatory contributions from increased ticket pricing towards a film workers' welfare fund. He said the Government aims to balance rapid expansion with fair working conditions for industry contributors.

Calling the future of entertainment a convergence of cinema, OTT, gaming, esports, virtual production, creator economy, and immersive digital storytelling, the Minister noted that technology will transform content creation but human-centred storytelling will remain the soul of entertainment. Inviting global studios, streaming platforms, gaming companies, and investors, he positioned Hyderabad as the gateway to the Indian entertainment market, and India as the gateway to the world.

'Centre talks about bullet train, what about TG rail links?'

PNS ■ New Delhi

The government talks about launching a bullet train, but it has yet to complete the long-pending crucial rail link projects in Telangana despite assurances given to the state during the passage of the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014, Congress MP Renuka Chowdhury said in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday.

Chowdhury, raising the issue during the Zero Hour, stated that ten years after the assurance given on the



floor of this House, a large part of the promise, such as a railway manufacturing unit at Kazipet and several

rail link projects, has remained unfulfilled and awaits meaningful progress.

The Rajya Sabha member from Telangana mentioned 10 railway projects covering 818 km and costing Rs 18,490 crore, and said that all surveys, paper work and detailed project reports have been completed by the concerned South Central Railway zone; however, the Railway Ministry hasn't given any clearance to them.

Godrej Agrovet to invest ₹150 cr in dairy plant

PNS ■ New Delhi

Godrej Agrovet Ltd's dairy unit, Creamline Dairy Products, will invest Rs 150 crore to build a processing facility in Telangana, the company said on Monday.

The plant, to be built on 40 acres, will manufacture value-added dairy products under the Godrej Jersey brand and create more than 300 jobs over three years, the company said in a statement.

The investment was announced through a mem-

orandum of understanding signed at the Telangana Rising Global Summit 2025.

With the new facility, the Godrej Industries Group's total investment commitments in Telangana now exceed Rs 10,000 crore across its various businesses, the company said.

"Consumer demand for value-added dairy products in India and also in the state of Telangana is witnessing a double-digit growth," Godrej Agrovet CEO and Managing Director Sunil Kataria said.

BioVaram, Telangana govt to set up CoE in Life Sciences

PNS ■ Hyderabad

Hyderabad-based biotechnology company BioVaram on Tuesday signed an MoU with the Telangana government to establish a CoE in Life Sciences, focusing on tissue engineering, regenerative medicine, and cell and gene therapy. The Memorandum of Understanding was signed during the ongoing Telangana Rising Global Summit, held on December 8 and 9, the company said in a statement. Under the agreement, the



state government will provide land within Bharat Future City, a proposed development on the outskirts of Hyderabad.

The government is also expected to offer funding assistance for building and operationalising the facility,

the release added. BioVaram has committed to investing Rs 250 crore to build a fully integrated innovation ecosystem dedicated to high-risk, high-impact translational research.

The proposed Centre of Excellence is expected to feature world-class infrastructure supporting AI-integrated development in key areas, including tissue engineering, advanced bio materials, regenerative medicine, cell and gene therapy (CGT), AI-driven bioanalytics, and predictive platforms.

Telangana is...

Quoting Mahatma Gandhi's advice to the first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru that the poor and the helpless should be kept in mind while taking policy decisions, Reddy said Nehru took up education and irrigation as major priority areas.

The government has decided to add communication (connectivity in technology, roads, ports, airports and infrastructure) to the priorities of education and irrigation.

Having been born in a farmer's family in a remote village, he is aware of the life of the poor and aims to eradicate poverty and address other maladies like discrimination in society, the Chief Minister said.

Alleging that "there is no quality and skill in our education system", he said he initiated the Young India Integrated Schools for the poor and also Young India Skills University (headed by Anand Mahindra) and also Young India Sports University.

"All these plans are for the poorest of the poor. They allowed me to work as the chief minister at a young

age. That's why my plans are for the poorest of the poor," he said.

A tsunami of...

Vintage Coffee and Beverages Ltd signed an MoU to expand its Telangana operations by establishing an export-oriented premium freeze-dried coffee (FDC) plant with an investment of Rs 1,100 crore.

JCK Infra Projects Limited will set up data centre facilities and ancillary infrastructure services with an investment of Rs 9,000 crore, generating over 2,000 jobs.

RCT Energy India Pvt Ltd proposes to invest Rs 2,500 crore in the state in three phases, creating more than 1,600 jobs. Hetero Group plans to establish large-scale pharmaceutical formulation facilities in Telangana, enhancing the state's manufacturing capabilities for domestic and global markets.

The proposed investment of Rs 1,800 crore is expected to generate more than 9,000 direct and indirect jobs over the next two years.

Bharat Biotech plans to set up a state-of-the-art contract research, development and

manufacturing organisation (CRDMO) facility in Telangana with an investment of Rs 1,000 crore. Aurobindo Pharma signed an MoU with the state to expand and develop its capabilities in complex generics, injectables, oral solid formulations, biosimilars and biologics.

The proposed investment of Rs 2,000 crore is expected to create more than 3,000 direct and indirect jobs over the next two to three years. Investments finalised on the second day stood at Rs 1,04,350 crore, the release added.

'TG must grow...

"Killing has to be done under a public-private partnership model," he said.

He added that politicians often do not prioritise education and health because these sectors do not yield immediate results, and democratic compulsions tend to force short-term thinking.

'Future City to...

He explained the government's plans on the topic 'Bharat Future City, as a

Magnet for 3 Trillion Dollars Telangana' at the Global Summit on Tuesday. He said that the future city will be developed into six urban districts. Sridhar Babu said that a total of six districts will be established for Artificial Intelligence, Health City, Entertainment, Sports, Data Centres and International Level Higher Education Institutions.

Various research institutes, green pharma, manufacturing and entertainment zones established here will provide jobs to a total of 13 lakh people. Residential complexes will be established for a population of 9 lakh. Those in the construction sector will develop the complexes.

"Young India Skills University programmes will start next month. We are allocating 400 acres for data centres. Construction will begin here by the end of next February," the Minister said and added that international standard convention centres will be established in the Entertainment Zone (District). Adventure centres and star hotels will also be built.

"The entire Future City will stand out as an architectural marvel. We will establish a

state-of-the-art transport system that meets the needs of the future. Everything will look green with urban forests.

Reliance Foundation has signed an agreement to establish Vantara Wildlife Sanctuary. In line with the aspirations of CM Revanth Reddy, this zero carbon city will become a famous city in the world, he said.

"Rain harvesting will be done so that every drop of rain that falls here will be absorbed here. We will ensure that there is no shortage of groundwater. There will be new research and manufacturing centres in the fields of life sciences and electric vehicles, the Minister added.

'Powerful' dominate...

Green Co TG 01 IREP Private Limited has signed an agreement to set up two PSP projects in Jari village of Adilabad district with an investment of Rs 5,800 crore.

This means that through a total of four companies, companies belonging to Green Co promoters have signed agreements with the Revanth Reddy government for investments of Rs 48,000 crore. On the one hand, the Telangana

government has accused Green Co companies of providing funds to the BRS party under quid pro quo in the Formula E car race, and now they have signed four MoUs with several companies belonging to the same group. Looking at these agreements, the leaders of that party are commenting that doubts are arising as to the extent of the investigation into the Formula E car race and the action to be taken in the coming days.

One of these agreements is with the family company of a key leader of the Congress party, two agreements and four agreements with another group have become a topic of discussion. There is also a discussion among the authorities that a syndicate worked behind all these agreements. It remains to be seen how many more things related to these will come to light in the coming days.

KCR's fast-unto...

Speaking on the occasion of Vijay Divas on Tuesday, he slammed Chief Minister Revanth Reddy for his latest decisions, which he termed as an insult to the identity of

Telangana. Accusing the Chief Minister of betraying the people of Telangana and following the path of United Andhra proponents, Harish questioned the reason behind the change in the Telangana Talli statue design. Stating that the former and BRS boss K. Chandrasekhar Rao played a significant and very crucial role in the formation of Telangana.

Harish said, "There wouldn't have been December 9 and state formation day on June 2nd had KCR not undertaken fast unto death on November 29 in 2009". Stressing the Telangana Talli statue is the symbol of the emotions and sentiments that formed part of the Telangana movement, altering the design of the statue amounts to dishonouring the spirit of Telangana movement as people voluntarily installed the idol, Harish said.

'₹1.5L cr for 'AI...

"India stands at a pivotal moment in its AI journey... one defined by impact at scale, determined to lead. As technology becomes a catalyst for inclusive growth and economic transforma-

tion, the country is emerging as a frontier AI nation. Against this backdrop... today we are announcing our largest investment in Asia - US\$17.5 billion over four years..." the company statement said.

Microsoft's nearly US\$20 billion investment across four years underlines India's position as an uber-valuable market for global software behemoths racing to build digital infrastructure. In October Google boss Sundar Pichai said he spoke to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and shared the US tech giant's plans for its artificial intelligence hub in Andhra Pradesh's Visakhapatnam, the US company's biggest ever investment in the country.

Google partnered with the Adani Group for a data centre and AI base in Visakhapatnam, its largest hub outside the US, and said it has plan to invest \$15 billion over the next five years.

Amazon has also invested billions into building data centres in India, while the Prime Minister met chip-maker Qualcomm's CEO, Cristiano R Amon, in October to discussed India's advancements in AI, innovation, and skills.

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Temple tourism to be developed through four major circuits: Min

PNS ■ Hyderabad

The Telangana government aims to develop temple tourism through four major circuits linking important temples, state Minister Konda Surekha said on Tuesday.

Speaking at the Telangana Rising Global Summit here, the Minister for Forests, Environmental and Endowments said the master plans are being prepared under Vision 2047 to improve facilities, boost tourism and preserve spiritual heritage.

"The government aims to develop temple tourism through four major circuits, linking important temples such as Jogulamba,

Manyamkonda, Vikarabad Ananthagiri, Yadagirigutta, Ramappa, Bhadrachalam, Vemulawada, Medaram, Kaleshwaram and others," an official release quoting the Minister said.

She announced a new eco-tourism framework under the Tourism Policy 2025-30, with nodal agency by the Telangana Forest Development Corporation, based on the principle of "Less structures, more experiences." Currently, the state has 13 eco-tourism circuits, and a new brand "Deccan Woods and Trails" has been launched to promote nature-based tourism, she said.

The Amrabad Tiger Reserve now has 36 tigers, a



significant increase in 2024, she said, adding new destinations like Nandipet, Tadwai and Pakhal are being developed with trekking routes and visitor facilities. An online booking system is being planned to improve tourist experience. These

initiatives are aligned with the state's goal of achieving net-zero emissions by 2047, Surekha said.

Telangana has 19 per cent forest area, and with tree cover outside forests, the total green cover has reached 22 per cent. The

government is committed to protecting forests, expanding green cover and addressing climate challenges, she said.

Speaking on temple management, the Minister said the Endowments department oversees over 12,000 temples. While 695 temples generate income, and 3,500 temples run on land revenues and with the support of Endowment department, the government is supporting more than 6,400 temples that lack resources for basic rituals, she said.

Initiatives in forests, eco-tourism and temple development are investments in people, culture and sustainable growth, the Minister added.

‘Affordable housing for all between Outer and Regional Ring Road’

PNS ■ Hyderabad

The government's resolution is to provide every family in the State with a suitable home to live in with high standards, said State Revenue, Housing, Information and Public Relations Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy.

He said that Telangana Rising 2047 - Global Summit is a good platform for formulating a comprehensive policy that is affordable for all sections of the people. The Minister delivered a keynote speech at a conference on 'Affordable Housing Policy for Urban Future - Telangana Model 2047' held as part of the Global Summit being held at Bharat Future City on Tuesday. He explained that along with increasing urbanisation and keeping in mind the expanding housing needs, a comprehensive policy is being formulated that is economically feasible, environmentally friendly and technologically based to be an ideal for the country.

He expressed confidence that the policies to be followed by the Congress government under the leadership of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy for the comprehensive development of



Telangana will stand as a role model at the national and international levels.

Explaining the progress achieved through the housing programmes implemented in the State so far, the Minister said that while about 42 lakh houses were built under the Indiramma Housing Scheme in the past, about 3.5 lakh houses are currently under various stages of construction.

He also explained that about one lakh houses have been built for middle class families through the Housing Board, Rajiv Swagruha Corporation and other organisations. However, there is a huge gap between the demand and supply of houses in the State, and to bridge this gap, he announced that Telangana-

2047, which is the cornerstone of the government's goal, is not limited to individual schemes, but is a comprehensive housing construction policy regardless of income. "With special focus on the needs of urban areas, we are taking a historic step towards a balanced "Telangana Model of Housing 2047". He said that his government has resolved that this model must be economically profitable, socially inclusive, environmentally responsible and technology-based.

"We are planning to build houses on the lines of Kukatpally Housing Board for the poor and middle class people between the Outer Ring Road and the Regional Ring Road with the government-private partnership.

Net Zero stall a special attraction at the Global Summit

PNS ■ Hyderabad

As part of the Telangana Rising 2047 Summit, the Net Zero Stall set up by the Electricity Department at the Expo, showcasing green energy production, is drawing tremendous attention. The stall features models of electric vehicles, waste-to-energy systems, wind power, pumped-storage power generation, battery energy storage systems, and solar-panel-based power-generation plants.

On Tuesday, Deputy Chief Minister of the State Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, Director General of Police Shivadhar Reddy, several dignitaries, and students from various colleges visited the stall and closely examined the models on display. The exhibition of power-generation plant models has made this stall one of the most visited. The real-time



The stall features models of electric vehicles, waste-to-energy systems, wind power, pumped-storage power generation, battery energy storage systems, and solar-panel-based power-generation plants

demonstration of the functioning of the pumped-storage plant particularly captivated many visitors.

A Net Zero Quiz software has also been developed to create awareness about the environment and green energy. Many visitors enthusiastically participated in the

quiz and received Net Zero Certificates. The Deputy Chief Minister and the DGP also took part in the quiz with great interest. TGSPDCL CMD Musharraf Faruqui, REDCO VC & MD Anila, TGSPDCL Directors, and other senior officials explained the miniatures to the visitors.

Full support assured to film industry



PNS ■ Hyderabad

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has made it clear to Tollywood celebrities that the State government is ready to encourage the film industry to complete the film if it comes with a script.

Several celebrities from the Tollywood film industry met with CM Revanth Reddy at the Telangana Rising Global Summit 2025 being held at Future City on Tuesday. Speaking on the occasion, CM Revanth Reddy said that his government is ready to provide all kinds of facilities required for the development of the film industry in the State. The CM explained to them on this occasion that a Skills University has been set up

in Future City.

CM Revanth suggested them to consider the issue of training locals in 24 crafts as per the needs of the film industry. He explained to them that the State government will provide all kinds of support and cooperation to set up studios in Future City.

Among those who met with CM Revanth were Chiranjeevi, Ajay Devgan, Allu Aravind, Suresh Babu, Dil Raju, actors Genelia, Akkineni Amala and many other Tollywood and Bollywood celebrities. Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka, Minister Komati Venkat Reddy and many other high-ranking officials were present in this meeting.

CM Revanth virtually unveils Telangana Thalli statues

PNS ■ Hyderabad

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Tuesday virtually unveiled the Telangana Thalli statues that have been installed across the State from the Bharat Future City in Hyderabad. The virtual unveiling was organised as part of Praja Palana (people's governance) celebrations to mark the second anniversary of the Congress government in the state. As part of the celebrations, the Telangana Thalli statues have been installed at a cost of Rs 5.8 crore at all 33 district collectorates.



Unveiling the statues during the second day of the Telangana Rising Global Summit, Reddy recalled that Congress leader Sonia Gandhi announced the start of the official process for Telangana state formation on December 9, 2009.

"The announcement brought cheers and upheld the self respect of the Telangana people. Commemorating December 9, we decided to celebrate the day as an unveiling day of Telangana Thalli statue in the people's government," he added. Reddy further said that one statue of the Telangana Thalli has been installed at the Telangana secretariat adding that the statue has been unveiled in district collectorates across the state. He lauded Sonia Gandhi for delivering the promise regarding creation of Telangana.

Development possible only through welfare: Ponnam

PNS ■ Hyderabad

"Under the leadership of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, we are moving forward with special plans for good education and skill development for SC, ST, BC and minorities," said Minister Ponnam Prabhakar at a panel discussion on the welfare department.

The Telangana government believes that development is impossible without the welfare of the SC, ST, BC and minorities, who constitute more than 80% of the population in Vision 2047, he said. The government will provide all kinds of priorities for good quality education, skill training pro-

grammes, improving employment opportunities, implementation of reservations, higher education and foreign education for the SC, ST, BC minorities in the future, he added.

"We will accept the suggestions and recommendations of the intellectuals who participated in the Global Summit and take them into action. The welfare departments are providing basic facilities so that inclusive growth can be seen in industries, IT, pharma and tourism. We will give priority for innovativeness among students," he added. The government will bring radical reforms in education. It will increase diet charges and provide



quality meals to students. It will build Young India Integrated Schools across the State. As the Chief Minister says, in the past, lands were distributed to the poor. But now the gov-

ernment can only provide quality education to the poor. Only when quality education is provided, the society will reach higher peaks, the Minister said.

"If we look at the report of the caste survey conducted by the State government recently, which family is in a good position, only the family with higher education is in a high position. Lands, financial benefits and castes cannot bring families to a high position," he added. The government will give first priority to education to shape the future generations of tomorrow. Our duty now is to provide quality education to students, he concluded.

AI dominates global conversations, often accompanied by fear: Anand Mahindra

PNS ■ Hyderabad

The more digital the world becomes, the more valuable the human touch will be, Anand Mahindra, Chairman of the Mahindra Group, said on Tuesday, highlighting the transformative impact of AI amid what he called a "digital tsunami".

At the launch of the Telangana Rising 2047 Vision Document, Mahindra said many developed economies today are grappling not with a lack of capital or technology, but with a shortage of skilled,

real-world talent.

"We are living through a digital tsunami. Artificial Intelligence dominates global conversations, often accompanied by fear. But I take a contrarian view: the more digital the world becomes, the more valuable the human touch will be," he said.

As AI increasingly absorbs repetitive and routine tasks, Mahindra noted, value shifts to what machines cannot replace—the skill of the hand, the intuition of the craftsman, the empathy of the caregiver, and the



problem-solving grit of the technician.

He observed that developed nations have a surplus of managers but a shortage of makers, stressing that nations are built not only in the cloud but firmly on the ground.

Mahindra further said that through the Young India Skill University, for which he serves as chairman, a workforce is being prepared that is not threatened by AI, but remains indispensable despite it.

He added that the Young India Skills University is not just about Telangana, but represents a vision for India's future.

65 new electric buses to hit Hyd roads today

TGSRCTC to launch services from Ranigunj depot



PNS ■ Hyderabad

A fleet of 65 new electric buses will be rolled out on to Hyderabad roads on Wednesday, marking a significant addition to the city's eco-friendly public transport network. These buses, which will be operated by Eveytrans, will be formally launched at the Ranigunj bus depot.

The inauguration ceremony will be attended by Union Minister G Kishan Reddy, Telangana Transport Minister Ponnam Prabhakar, Hyderabad Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi, TGSRCTC

Managing Director Y Nagireddy, along with local public representatives, officials and dignitaries. The event is scheduled to begin at 10:00 am.

TGSRCTC has already been running electric buses across several routes in Hyderabad city. The addition of these 65 new buses is expected to further strengthen the city's electric mobility ecosystem. The initiative is aimed at reducing the rising pollution levels in the city and providing clean, efficient and sustainable transport options to commuters.

Civic wards in GHMC increased to 300

PNS ■ Hyderabad

The Telangana government has issued an order increasing the number of wards in GHMC to 300 from 150.

The number of wards rose following the merger of 27 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) on the periphery of Hyderabad with the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC).

The state government



treats the GHMC, including the 27 ULBs, as Telangana Core Urban Region for purposes of planning and devel-

opment. "... the Government hereby declare and notify the number of wards and

the number of elected members of the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation, Hyderabad, shall be at three hundred (300)," a notification regarding the re-fixation of wards said on late December 8.

The expansion of the GHMC makes it a civic behemoth and increases its political significance. The term of the present GHMC elected body ends in February, 2026.

City to host curated art show 'HYD.Art 2025' on Dec 19

PNS ■ Hyderabad

Hyderabad is set to host a 3-day curated art show "HYD.Art 2025" from December 19-25. The cultural event will be conducted at EON Hyderabad, Nanakramguda. The event will feature 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.

The concept of the event is designed by 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.

A special Masters of India gallery will present rare and




significant works by modern

Indian legends such as MF

Husain and SH Raza. The showcase also includes 30 leading contemporary artists from Hyderabad and 30 emerging artists from across the country. Speaking of the event, Founder and Managing Director, Navanaami Projects Venkat Naveen Gadda said, "At Navanaami, we believe that great cities are shaped not only by infrastructure, but by imagination. Our support for the HYD.ART show from 19-21 Dec 2025 reflects our commitment to fostering a cultural

legacy for Hyderabad, where architecture, business and art come together to inspire new worlds of expression."

A highlight of the event is Keerthanam, a Tribute to Telugu legends, an exclusive showcase honouring the works of revered old Telugu artists. Another key feature is a vibrant curation of three generations of Mithila artists, tracing the lineage, evolution, and contemporary expressions of this celebrated art form.



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CBI arrests senior passport superintendent for influencing witnesses



The CBI has arrested a senior passport superintendent posted in Mumbai in a disproportionate assets case against him for allegedly trying to influence witnesses and mislead the investigation, officials said Tuesday.

The accused officer, Deepak Chandra, was booked in March this year for allegedly amassing illicit assets worth ₹85 lakh during his tenure at the regional passport office, Ghaziabad, from July 30, 2018, to September 30, 2024.

"During the course of investigation, a search was conducted at the residential premises of the accused, which led to the recovery of huge unaccounted cash of around ₹60.00 lakh, details of investments in immovable properties as well as details of various expenses of high magnitude," a CBI spokesperson said.

The CBI arrested Chandra on Tuesday night from Mumbai, where he is currently posted, when the agency found that he was allegedly influencing witnesses and deliberately, with malafide intention, tried to mislead the investigation, she said. He was produced before a special court in Ghaziabad, which sent him to CBI custody till December 12. "On the application of CBI, Special Judge, Anti-Corruption, CBI Court, Ghaziabad vide its order dated 17.09.2025 had also issued an ad-interim attachment order for attachment of his properties, including one residential flat and one commercial shop," she said.

Shoegate fame lawyer thrashed in Karkardooma court



A lawyer who almost hurled a shoe at former Chief Justice of India BR Gavai was allegedly attacked inside Karkardooma district court premises on Tuesday. The video showed a group attacking 71-year-old Rakesh Kishore with a slipper, while the lawyer defended himself. The clip also showed the lawyer asking the attacker why he was beating him and then shouting several times, "Sanatan Dharm ki jai ho."

"There was a huge ruckus. We rushed to the spot on hearing the commotion," said advocates. On October 6, Rakesh Kishore approached the dais when a bench led by the ex-CJI was hearing the mentioning of cases by lawyers, removed his shoe, and tried to throw it at the judge. Later, the SC refused to initiate contempt action against him, though the Bar Council of India suspended him from practice.

Thirupparankundram lamp lighting row: HC asks Chief Secretary, ADGP to appear on Dec 17

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Madurai

The Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court on Tuesday directed Tamil Nadu Chief Secretary and ADGP (L&O) to appear before the court through video conference on December 17 in the Thirupparankundram lamp lighting row case.

The Union Home Secretary has been included as a party to the proceedings.

During the hearing of a contempt plea, Additional Advocate General Veera Kathiravan, appearing for the State, informed that a special leave petition filed by the Tamil Nadu authorities challenging the single judge order on lighting the lamp atop the Thirupparankundram hill was pending before the Supreme Court.

Justice G R Swaminathan, hearing the contempt petition filed by Rama Ravikumar, directed the Chief Secretary and Additional Director General of Police (Law and



Order) to appear via video conference on December 17. Ravikumar, represented by Advocate MR Venakatesh had moved the court seeking proceedings against the Madurai District Collector,

Sonia redefined politics by shunning power Gandhi



As Sonia Gandhi turned 80 on December 9, 2025, it marked a creditable milestone in her long and illustrious political career. Sonia Gandhi gifted the rights-based architecture, which has changed the very face of politics.

Sonia Gandhi established that basic needs no longer remain an act of magnanimity or charity of the State, but constitute a statutory right of the people. Right to Work (MGNREGA); Right to Food; and Right to Education are symbols of a new political agenda. The Adivasis Forest-Rights Act, Removal of Manual Scavengers Act and Land Acquisition Act are among

the landmark legislations brought in by Sonia Gandhi. She gave the decisive push to the Women's Reservation Bill by getting it passed in the Rajya Sabha. She also brought Right to Information, which the present government is trying to throttle.

She has made people-centric politics. She sought to reach out to people and deliver benefits in the form of guarantees in Karnataka and Telangana that has now become the new norm. Following her example, all political parties are focusing on delivering benefits to the people.

A pivotal figure in Indian politics, Sonia Gandhi has the distinction of being the longest-serving Congress President from 1998 to 2017 and again from 2019 to 2022. Under her leadership, the Congress party won two consecutive general elections and governed 16 States. She stands out for her enormous contribution to galvanizing and strengthening the party and strengthening its ideological moorings.

Sonia Gandhi redefined politics. By personal example, she proved that politics is not pelf, position and power, but service and sacrifice. After Mahatma Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi is the one, who steered clear of power politics and made social reform an essential part of politics.

Renunciation of power by Sonia Gandhi set her apart in the world of politics. This is something unparalleled in the world history. After receiving the Presidential Invite to form the government, to step back and decline it, seems something just out of this world. There is no example of Prime Minister-Designate politely, but firmly, declining the post.

It was no case of sour-grapes. After the general election in 2004, where Sonia Gandhi defeated a seemingly-invincible Atal Behari Vajpayee, she was elected Congress Parliamentary Party (CPP) leader, followed by her election as UPA Parliamentary Party leader, leading to Presidential Invite to form the government.

After Rajiv Gandhi's assassination, she refused to be drawn into politics, as she always equated power with poison. In 1997, when the nation was on the brink of a grave situation, it set her thinking. The values and ideals, for which Mahatma Gandhi, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi sacrificed their lives, were threatened to be destroyed, in an hour of folly and failure of its greatest guardians and guarantors, the people. She felt her decision to stay away from politics could endanger the hallowed national legacy for which Mahatma Gandhi, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi laid down their lives.

That was the time when she felt impelled to step into politics, not just to save the Congress, but to save the idea of India. Sonia Gandhi plunged headlong into politics, to rescue, protect and uphold the Gandhian ideals. Rest, as they say, is history.

She is a great leader in the galaxy of Congress leadership and worthy of her mother-in-law Indira Gandhi. Sonia

Gandhi's marriage with Rajiv Gandhi also brought her in close contact with Indira Gandhi. She had the privilege of being under the tutelage of her mother-in-law. When Indira Gandhi was out of power in 1977, Sonia Gandhi came to personally look after her mother-in-law. Nothing more exemplifies her innate Indianness.

Sonia Gandhi has come to enjoy pan-Indian stature, as she established personal connect with people across the States. This helped her to galvanize the Congress party and bring it back to power.

Quickly, she grappled with the nitty-gritty of parliamentary practices. There are at least two examples where she put to shame the indomitable Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee. Staying within the confines of parliamentary decorum, Sonia Gandhi came up with the most trenchant criticism of the Vajpayee government that still remains etched in the memory of the people.

She slammed the Vajpayee government for the shameful

spectacle of External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh escorting dreaded terrorists to Kandahar. Secondly, during the debate on draconian POTA law, Sonia Gandhi slammed Prime Minister Vajpayee, saying it was his "moment of reckoning" and that he had to choose between the duty of his high office and the internal pressures of his party and its sister organisations.

Stung by the criticism of Sonia Gandhi, Prime Minister Vajpayee exercised the right to reply close to midnight in the Central Hall of Parliament in the first-ever Joint Session of Parliament to pass POTA. Vajpayee struggled to respond to her always and hardly proved himself to be a match to her, whenever she on her feet on issues.

People still look up to her because she enjoys highest credibility, for matching her precept with practice.

(Author is a special invitee to Congress Working Committee and former APCC president)

Retired judges object to 'motivated campaign' against CJI Surya Kant

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Several retired judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts issued a statement on Tuesday expressing "strong objection to the motivated campaign targeting Chief Justice of India Surya Kant in the wake of his remarks in proceedings concerning Rohingya migrants".

The statement noted that an open letter was issued on December 5 by some former judges, lawyers and the Campaign for Judicial Accountability and Reforms (CJAR), raising "deep concern at certain unconscionable remarks made about Rohingya refugees on December 2" by a top court bench that was hearing a plea alleging custodial disappearance of Rohingya refugees in India.

Underlining that "disparagement of the Supreme Court is unacceptable", the statement said judicial proceedings should only be subject to fair and reasoned criticism.

"What we are witnessing, however, is not principled disagreement but an attempt to delegitimise the judiciary by mischaracterising a routine courtroom proceeding as an act of prejudice.

"The Chief Justice is being attacked for asking the most basic legal question: who, in law, has granted the status that is being claimed before the court? No adjudication on rights or entitlements can proceed unless this threshold is first addressed," the statement said.

It said the campaign against the CJI omitted the bench's clear affirmation during the proceedings that no human



Chief Justice of India Surya Kant

being on Indian soil, citizen or foreigner, can be subjected to torture, disappearance or inhuman treatment, and that every person's dignity must be respected.

"To suppress this and then accuse the court of 'dehumanisation' is a serious distortion of what was actually said," the statement signed by more than 40 judges said.

It said if every "searching judicial question" on nationality, migration, documentation or border security is accused of hate or prejudice, judicial independence itself would be at risk. "We therefore affirm our full confidence in the Supreme Court and in the CJI, condemn motivated attempts to distort

the court's remarks and personalise disagreement into attacks on individual judges; and support consideration of a court-monitored SIT into the illegal procurement of Indian identity and welfare documents by foreign nationals who have entered Bharat in violation of law," said the statement signed by 44 retired judges.

It said the country's constitutional order require both humanity and vigilance.

"In upholding human dignity while safeguarding national integrity, the judiciary has acted in accordance with its oath. It merits principled support, not vilification," the statement said.

Curtail litigation, not generate it, SC on revenue map case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday stressed that any unnecessary remand of a matter for fresh consideration by a higher court should be avoided as it generates fresh round of litigation.

The idea is to curtail the litigation and not generate it, a bench of Justices Rajesh Bindal and Manmohan said, as it set aside an order of the Allahabad High Court, which had remanded back a matter — related to authorities rejecting a man's application for correction of a revenue map — for fresh consideration after hearing all parties concerned.

While dealing with the appeal, the top court noted that court had taken the wrong premise and interpretation of Section 30 of the Uttar Pradesh Revenue Code, 2006, which deals with maintenance of map and the field book. The bench said this could have generated unnecessary further litigation.

"We may also add that earlier view by this court was that in case there were violations of principles of natural justice, the matter was to be remanded for affording opportunity of hearing to the party concerned. However, with the passage of time, the view changed," the bench said. It further said, "The idea is to curtail the litigation and not generate it. Any unnecessary remand by a higher court generates fresh round of litigation, which should be avoided."

Initially, the application filed before the collector seeking correction of map for a plot was

dismissed. Later, the Additional Commissioner also dismissed the appeal against the collector's order. After around 17 years, again an application was filed seeking correction of revenue map but the same was rejected by the concerned authority.

The matter had then reached the High Court which remanded the issue for fresh consideration after affording due opportunity of hearing to all concerned.

Referring to Section 30 of the Code, the apex court bench noted the collector is duty-bound to maintain, in the manner prescribed, a map and a field book for each village and any changes made in it have to be recorded annually or after such longer intervals as may be prescribed. "If the facts of this case are examined, the issue regarding the correction of map stood settled between the parties when the appeal filed by the private respondents against the order passed by the Collector was dismissed on September 4, 2001. The maps were already final," the bench said.

It said after the purchase of the land, an effort made by the private respondents to get the revenue map corrected had failed and they could not be permitted to raise the same issue after a gap of over 17 years. The bench said it was not a case where any error was found in the revenue record which deserved correction under Section 30 of the Code. While allowing the appeal, the bench set aside the order passed by the High Court.

SC examines grant of 'personal hearing' to those with bank accounts declared fraud

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday wondered what purpose the grant of "personal hearing" would serve to the bank account holders whose accounts were declared as fraud after following due diligence prescribed by the Reserve Bank of India in 2017.

A bench of Justices JB Pardiwala and KV Viswanathan was hearing a plea of the State Bank of India challenging a decision of the Calcutta High Court which directed giving personal hearing by following the principle of natural justice to such bank account holders.

"How do you justify the grant of personal hearing to you when the banks what they are actually doing as per the RBI circular is due diligence at the back end and providing you an opportunity to put your point forward in writing after issuance of a show cause notice," the

bench told senior advocate K Parameshwar, appearing for private firm Amit Iron Pvt Ltd.

At the outset, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the country's largest bank SBI, said that insisting on a personal hearing causes concrete prejudice to the banks and to the integrity of the regulatory regime, while the borrower suffers no real prejudice so long as it has had a full and effective opportunity to place its case in writing and have that case duly considered.

He said the circular (Master Directions on Fraud, 2017) relating to declaration of fraud was required for two essential purposes — the sheer magnitude of the number of banking frauds in the country has shown a demonstrable rise, requiring the RBI to step in and provide a mechanism to be followed by the entire banking sector. Also, any impact on any bank or banking sector has a direct effect on the nation-

al economy; therefore, the financial strength of the banking sector is always a prime consideration.

Giving figures for banking frauds and the amounts involved from 2022 to 2025, according to the RBI's latest Annual report for 2024-2025, Mehta said the number of frauds for 2022-23 was 13,494 involving ₹18,981 crore, in 2023-24 there were 36,060 bank frauds involving amount 12,230 crore and in 2024-25 there were 23,953 bank fraud cases involving 36,014 crore.

He submitted that these increased incidences of banking fraud and malpractices led the RBI to constitute multiple committees and working groups, including the Amitava Ghosh Committee in 1991, and the NL Mitra Committee in August 2003. "Based on the recommendations of these committees and working groups, the RBI issued circulars/directions from time to time advising banks on major fraud-prone areas,

new modus operandi detected earlier, and necessary safeguards to be adopted for the prevention of fraud.

"However, despite this, there were problems, including delays in the detection of fraud, inadequate reporting to the RBI, and delays in reporting and alerting other banks on fraud by borrowers," Mehta submitted.

He said that the experience of RBI and deliberation before the expert committees revealed why such frauds take place and are perpetrated and one of the most important problems was the inevitable lack of coordination between various banks.

"This resulted in a borrower committing fraud with one bank, and they would approach another bank and avail huge finances, due to the delay in detection and fraud reporting. This would result in a chain reaction and, therefore, the RBI Directions, inter alia, elaborated on the said issues," the SBI said.

Enhanced education funding shows results: Meghalaya CM



Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma said on Tuesday that the State education department's annual budget has been increased from ₹2,000 crore to ₹3,500 crore in recent years, the highest so far, and the impact of this investment is "becoming visible".

Navy Chief begins four-day visit to Brazil

Navy Chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi on Tuesday began a four-day visit to Brazil to consolidate the bilateral maritime security cooperation. Admiral Tripathi will hold discussions with Brazilian Defence Minister Jose Mucio, Chief of the Joint Staff of the Brazilian Armed Forces Admiral Renato Rodrigues de Aguiar Freire and Commander of the Brazilian Navy Admiral Marcos Sampaio Olsen.



JP Nadda to lay foundation of BJP State office in Shimla



The BJP national president and Union Health and Family Welfare minister Jagat Prakash Nadda would lay the foundation stone and perform Bhoomi Pujan of the proposed BJP State-level party office in Shimla on Saturday, a statement here said on Tuesday.

Karnataka lost ₹5,474 crore to cyber frauds in three years

Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara on Tuesday said that over the last three years, people in the State have lost ₹5,474 crore to cyber frauds, of which the police have managed to recover ₹627 crore so far. The minister was responding to a question from Sakleshpur BJP MLA Cement Manju in the Legislative Assembly.



Left-wing extremism districts drop from 126 to 11: Centre

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

The Centre on Tuesday said the number of districts affected by left-wing extremism has decreased from 126 in April 2018 to 90 in July 2021, 70 in April 2024, 38 in April 2025, and further to 11 in October 2025, with only three districts now considered to be the "most affected" by left-wing extremism. The Pioneer carried a report on December 8, 2025 that only three districts are now most affected by Naxalism in Chhattisgarh.

Responding to a supplementary during the Question Hour in Lok Sabha, Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai said the number of affected States have gone down from 10 in 2014 to five in 2025 (till October) showing a reduction of 50 per cent under the number of districts affected by Left Wing Extremism (LWE) has witnessed a sharp decline of 91 per cent from 126 to 11 during the period.

"However, to prevent the

Only three districts now most-affected by Naxalism in Chhattisgarh

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

The number of Naxalism-affected districts in India have reduced to 38 from 46 across nine States, according to a recent Government review. An updated review by the Government now narrows down the most affected districts to three and districts of concern to four. All three most affected districts — Bijapur, Narayanpur and Sukma — remain in Chhattisgarh, the State historically at the heart of Naxal activity.

The four districts of concern are Kanker in Chhattisgarh, West Singhbhum in Jharkhand, Balaghat in Madhya Pradesh, and Gadchiroli in Maharashtra, where Naxal influence is waning but targeted development is still required. Districts under the concern category are those where Naxal activity has sharply declined but continued development efforts are needed to consolidate peace and stability. The review was undertaken as part of the National



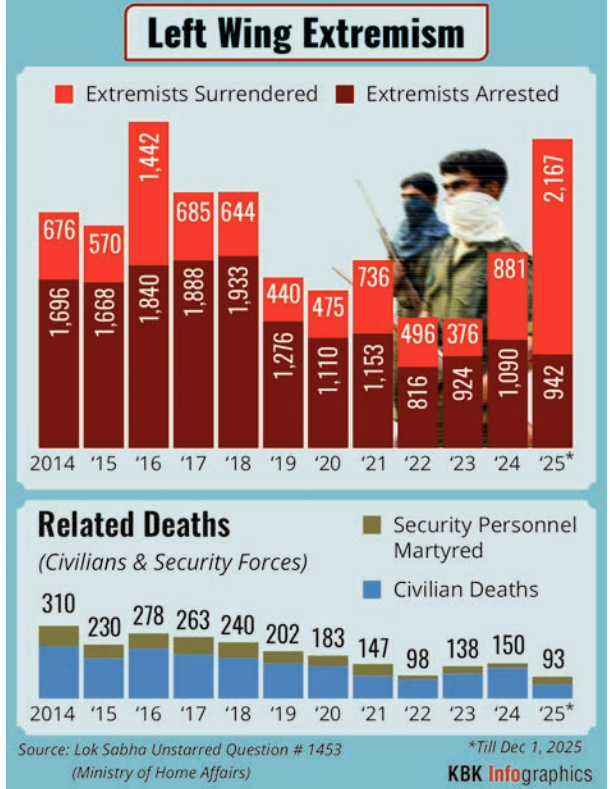
Representative photo of a tribal village. >

Policy and Action Plan to Address Left Wing Extremism (LWE), 2015, under which the Union and State Governments work together. Officials said the subcategory of most affected districts was created in 2015 with 35 districts to ensure focused deployment of resources. Following periodic reviews, the number was reduced to six in April 2025. Districts under the Security Related Expenditure (SRE) scheme — one of the key financial support programmes for combating

Naxal influence — are classified as either LWE-affected or Legacy and Thrust (L&T) districts. The latest review places 27 districts under the L&T category. These include eight districts from Odisha, six from Chhattisgarh, four from Bihar, three each from Jharkhand and Telangana, and one each from Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and West Bengal.

These districts have largely witnessed the end of Naxalism but remain

prospective sites for its expansion. Hence, continued government support is required for capacity building, according to official records. The districts covered under the SRE scheme were last revised on April 1, 2025. After the review, 46 districts were listed as SRE districts — six categorised as "most affected," six as "districts of concern" (DOC), and six as "other LWE-affected." In the subset category of "Legacy & Thrust" districts, 28 were included.



CPI (Maoist) from re-establishing itself in areas recently freed from the influence of left-wing extremism, 27 districts have been included under the Security Related Expenditure (SRE) scheme as 'Legacy and Thrust Districts,' the minister said.

He said under the leadership of the Prime Minister and the successful guidance of the Home Minister, left-wing extremism will be "eradicated by March 2026, and there is no

escape for them now".

Underlining the outcome of the zero-tolerance policy of the central Government against Naxals, Rai said that from the highest level of Maoist violence witnessed in 2010, the incidents have seen a massive decline of 81 per cent in 2024.

The minister said Maoist violence had resulted in 6,508 deaths from 2004 to 2014 (till May that year), which included 4,684 civilians and 1,824 security personnel. Rai said in

the following decade, between 2015 and 25 (till May), the number of deaths dropped by 71 per cent to 1,868, which included 1,404 civilians and 464 security personnel. He said 44 deaths have been reported between May and November this year.

The minister added that left-wing extremists who surrender are being provided with immediate grants and other financial assistance, such as ₹5 lakh for high-

ranking cadres, ₹2.50 lakh for other cadres, additional financial incentives for surrendering with weapons, and a monthly stipend of ₹10,000 for three years for training.

He said that besides improving security infrastructure in such States, schools, ITIs, Kaushal Vikas Kendras, banks, and ATMs have been set up as part of the overall development. To ensure all-round development, the Modi Government adopted a

"Whole of Government" approach in 2015 and formulated a comprehensive policy and action plan, Rai said.

Under this plan, various security and development measures have been undertaken, with States being provided with CAPF (Central Armed Police Forces) battalions as needed, he added. "Currently, 574 companies are deployed in the Left-Wing Extremism-affected areas," he said.

No law should burden citizens, reforms to ease life: PM Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said no law should be a burden on any citizen, and rules and regulations should always be for people's convenience. Addressing an NDA parliamentary party meeting, Modi also said the country is now in a full-fledged "Reform Express" phase, where reforms are happening rapidly and with clear intent.

The Government's reforms are completely citizen-centric and not just economic or revenue-focused. The goal is to remove everyday hurdles of people so that they can grow to their full potential, the prime minister emphasised. Briefing reporters after the meeting, which was attended by all NDA MPs, Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said Prime Minister Modi gave very good guidelines for the lawmakers and conveyed that the most significant issue in the third term of his Government is the "Reform Express".

"I want to stress that the Narendra Modi Government's 'Reform Express' has started to move. It will not stop. This reform is to change the life of every citizen. When we talk about reform, some people will think of it as economic reform, some people will think of it as political reform,



PM Narendra Modi being felicitated by MPs for the alliance' victory in Bihar Assembly elections during the NDA Parliamentary Party meeting at Parliament premises in New Delhi on Tuesday. Union Ministers Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh, JP Nadda and others also seen

administrative reform or cultural reform. Reform means improvement in the life of every citizen.

"The prime minister has stressed that whatever law is framed, it should have no provision which is harmful or causes inconvenience to any citizen. The rules and laws should not become a burden on the life of a common citizen. Everyone must ensure

that rules and regulations are for the convenience of the common people and improve their lives," Rijiju said.

Quoting Modi, Rijiju said rules and regulations must be for improving the system, not to harass people, and there should be no law which harasses people without any reason. "Now we will work in this direction. The central Government, the State

Governments and the local self-governing bodies like the municipalities and panchayats, all should work in (this) direction," he said.

Sources said Modi urged the MPs to actively share real problems faced by ordinary people, so that the "Reform Express" can reach every household and remove day-to-day hardships. Modi also said he wants to end the

culture of 30-40 page forms and unnecessary paperwork, stressing that there is a need to provide services at citizens' doorsteps and eliminate repeated data submissions, the sources said.

The prime minister recalled that the Government trusted citizens by allowing self-certification, and this has worked successfully for 10 years without misuse.

Modi stressed that both ease of life and ease of doing business are the top priorities of his Government, the sources said.

At the outset of the meeting, Modi was felicitated for the NDA's massive victory in the recent Bihar elections.

Union ministers Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah and JP Nadda, who is also the BJP president, were among those present at the meeting held at the Parliament House complex. Modi was garlanded by JD(U) leader Sanjay Jha and Rashtriya Lok Morcha chief Upendra Kushwaha — both Rajya Sabha members.

In the 243-member Bihar Assembly, which went to polls last month, the NDA secured 202 seats, paving the way for JD(U) supremo Nitish Kumar to return as chief minister for the 10th time. Among the alliance partners, BJP won 89 seats, JD(U) 85, LJP (Ram Vilas) 19, Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular) five, and Rashtriya Lok Morcha four.

Muslims cannot sing Vande Mataram: Maulana Arshad

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ New Delhi

Amid the debate on Vande Mataram in Parliament, Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind on Tuesday said it had no objection to anyone singing the national song, but the poem carries polytheistic beliefs, and Muslims cannot associate anyone else with worship.

Maulana Arshad, the outfit's president, said love for one's country is one thing, and worshipping it is another.

He said Muslims do not need a certificate from anyone to prove their love for this nation.

"We have no objection to anyone reading or singing Vande Mataram. However, we want to make it clear once again that a Muslim worships only one God, and

cannot associate anyone else with this worship," Madani said in a statement.

He said that the contents of the poem Vande Mataram are based on polytheistic beliefs and ideas, particularly four of its verses where the homeland is explicitly likened to a deity and words of worship are used for it.

This is against the fundamental belief and faith of any Muslim, he said.

The Constitution of India grants every citizen freedom of religion (Article 25) and freedom of expression (Article 19), Madani said.

Under these provisions, no citizen can be forced to adopt any slogan, song, or ideology that goes against their religious beliefs or sentiments, he said.

"The unparalleled sacrifices of Muslims and the elders of Jamiat Ulama-i-

Hind in the freedom struggle, especially their efforts against the partition of the country, are as clear as daylight."

"Their struggle for the unity and safety of this nation after independence can never be forgotten," he said.

Madani emphasised that the debate on Vande Mataram must take place within the framework of respect for religious beliefs and constitutional freedoms, not in a manner of political blame-game.

"Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind appeals to all national leaders not to use such sensitive religious and historical issues for political gain, but to fulfil their constitutional responsibility by promoting mutual respect, tolerance, and unity in the country," he said.

Allahabad HC directs UP DGP on prevention of corruption cases

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ Prayagraj

Observing that matters relating to the Prevention of Corruption Act are being conducted most casually, the Allahabad High Court has directed the principal secretary (home) and the DGP of Uttar Pradesh to look into them and issue necessary directions.

The above direction was passed by Justice Samir Jain allowing a bail application of one Suresh Prakash Gautam, against whom an FIR was lodged under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 in Saharanpur district. After going through the record, the court found that according to the allegations, Gautam was posted as a labour enforcement officer. He demanded a bribe from the complainant to settle his claim. Gautam was apprehended

red-handed by the trap team and the bribe money was recovered from his possession. About ₹21.50 lakh were also recovered from his house.

The court said, "But it reflects that neither the hands of the applicant nor of the complainant were washed at the spot where the trap was made," adding that the alleged recovered bribe money was not sealed at the spot.

The court said the record also suggests that the recovery memo of the alleged bribe has also not been prepared on the spot and it appears that all these proceedings have been conducted at the police station. "Considering these facts, the argument advanced by the counsel for the applicant that the trap proceeding appears to be doubtful cannot be completely brushed aside at this stage," the court added.

Delhi car blast: NIA arrests one more doctor who harboured Dr Umar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ New Delhi

The National Investigation Agency (NIA), probing the "white-collar" terror module linked to the Delhi car blast, arrested one more doctor for allegedly harbouring Dr Umar-un-Nabi, the suicide bomber, and destroying evidence in the conspiracy hatched by banned Jaish-e-Mohammed group, officials said on Tuesday.

According to a statement issued by the federal agency, Dr Bilal Naseer Malla, hailing from Baramulla in north Kashmir, has been arrested. He is the eighth person to be arrested in the case.

The NIA has alleged that Bilal was involved in the "conspiracy behind the terrorist attack" that killed 15 people and injured several others in the Red Fort area on November 10. According to NIA investi-

gations, Bilal had knowingly harboured Dr Umar-un-Nabi, the man who was driving the explosive-laden car that blasted outside the Red Fort area. He is also alleged to have provided him logistical support besides being involved in destruction of evidence related to the terror attack. Bilal was produced before a designated court of Principal District and Sessions Judge Anju Bajaj Chandra here who remanded him to NIA custody for seven days.

The court also extended the NIA custody of Amir Rashid Ali, another accused in the Red Fort blast case, who was produced alongside Bilal, by seven days.

The NIA said in its statement on Tuesday that its investigation into the conspiracy behind the deadly terror act continues with the help of various central and State

agencies to unravel all the threads of the conspiracy.

After taking over the investigation, the NIA took the custody of seven people, including three doctors Dr Muzzamil Ganaie, Dr Adeel RATHER, and Dr Shaheena Sayeed and a religious preacher Maulvi Irfan.

The NIA had arrested two people Amir Rashid Ali and Jasir Bilal Wani alias Danish. Ali is the one in whose name suicide bomber Umar had purchased the car that was loaded with explosives including ammonium nitrate. The same car exploded outside the Red Fort.

The "white collar" terror module was busted by the Jammu and Kashmir Police along with their counterparts in Uttar Pradesh and Haryana and it led the investigators to Faridabad's Al Falah University where 2,900 kg of explosives was recovered.



Editor's TAKE

The politics of heritage and beyond

As parties clash over the meaning of Vande Mataram in Parliament, a deeper question emerges: should a symbol of unity be pulled into the realm of partisan politics?

Vande Mataram. Sujalam suphalam malayaja-sitalam, sasya-syamalam mataram! The first stanza of the national song translates to: "I bow to thee, Mother-rich with waters, rich with fruits, cool with the southern breeze, verdant with crops and fields-Mother!" This heartfelt ode to Mother India by the great poet Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya is once again at the centre of a political storm. The political class across the country agrees with and bows to its sentiment, yet it is being fiercely debated in Parliament. The debate over Vande Mataram in Parliament on December 8 was more than an exchange of rhetoric; it revealed the complicated intersections of heritage, nationalism, and electoral politics in contemporary India.

When Prime Minister Narendra Modi invoked Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya's iconic hymn, it carried enormous symbolism-drawing upon a century of collective memory, pride, and sacrifice. Yet it also raised an uncomfortable question: should such a sacred piece of India's freedom struggle become the subject of partisan debate? Should not our freedom struggle and its symbols remain sacrosanct? Vande Mataram occupies a sacred space in India's national imagination. Born out of Bankim's Anandamath, it emerged as the rallying cry of the freedom struggle, uniting Indians across communities during the anti-colonial movement. Tagore's voice at the 1896 Congress session, Bhikaji Cama's flag in Stuttgart bearing its words, and the chants during the 1905 anti-Partition protests all cemented its status as a symbol of resistance and aspiration. It was never merely a poem; it was an emotional force field. This is why its invocation in Parliament is both powerful and fraught with the danger of the song itself being drawn into political crossfire.

Prime Minister Modi's speech wove together strands of spirituality, nationalism, and cultural pride. He recalled Gandhi's admiration for Vande Mataram and used it to position his government as the custodian of a nationalist legacy. But, coming ahead of the 2026 Bengal elections, it can also be construed as an electoral plank. As observers noted, cultural symbolism served not just as homage but as political strategy. Bengal's pride in Bankim, Tagore, and its reformist icons makes any such invocation deeply consequential in the state's political arena. India's cultural symbols belong to the nation, not to any party-neither the Congress nor the BJP. When political actors selectively elevate one icon while denigrating others-such as the recent remarks against Raja Ram Mohan Roy-they risk distorting the pluralistic, composite spirit that animated the Bengali renaissance and the freedom movement.

Bankim, Tagore, Roy, Vivekananda, and many others did not belong to a party; they belonged to the nation at large. They represented an expanding universe of ideas that shaped modern India. Appropriating or diminishing them harms the national cause-the nation loses more than it gains. When symbols like Vande Mataram become contested rather than cherished, their universal appeal and their power to unite-dissipates. That is a loss not just for politics, but for the nation.

From grid burden to green power: Goa's solar-powered water supply

The future of India's renewable strategy will depend on striking the right balance between utility-scale projects and widespread community-level solarisation



SHRIPAD YESSO NAIK

India stands at a defining juncture in its clean-energy transformation. Guided by the Panchamrit commitments announced by Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji at COP26, the country has set for itself some of the world's most ambitious climate goals: 500 GW of non-fossil fuel capacity by 2030, meeting half of its energy requirements from renewables by the same year, reducing projected carbon emissions by one billion tonnes, cutting carbon intensity by 45 per cent, and ultimately achieving Net Zero by 2070. These targets are not distant aspirations; they form the backbone of a nationwide movement that is steadily gathering momentum.

India's progress in renewable energy over the past few years has been nothing short of remarkable. The country has already crossed the milestone of achieving 50 per cent of its total installed power capacity from renewable sources, with the renewable energy portfolio now reaching an impressive 259 GW. Solar and wind continue to drive this growth with record annual capacity additions. The rise of ultra-mega solar parks, hybrid renewable corridors, offshore wind zones and floating solar plants reflects a sector in rapid evolution. Yet, complementing these large-scale investments is an equally important push for distributed solar, one that brings clean energy directly to households, farmers and communities.

Two flagship programmes of the Government of India underscore this vision. The PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana, launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister, is propelling rooftop solar to an unprecedented scale. With a target of one crore household installations and subsidies streamlined through a single national portal, residential solar has moved from novelty to mainstream, easing electricity bills and empowering families to become producers of clean energy.

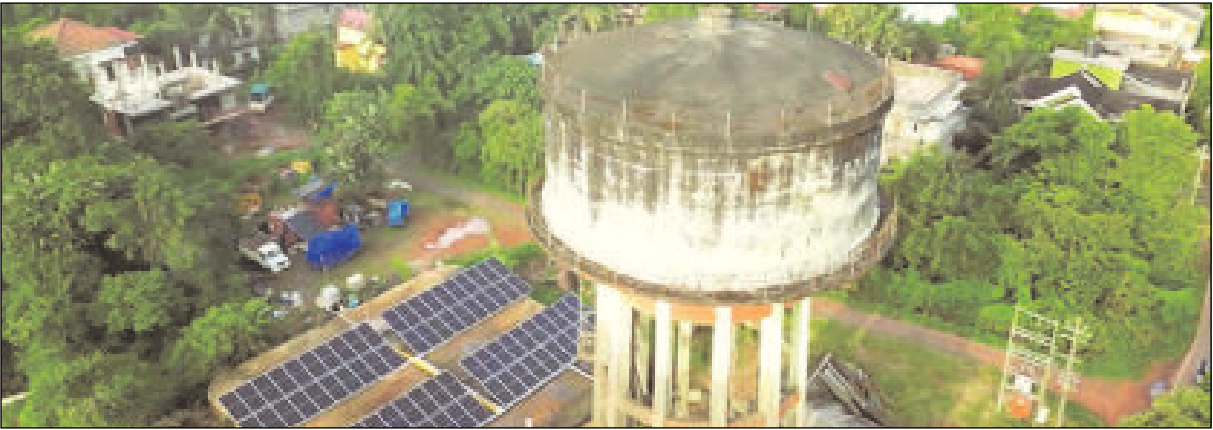
Similarly, the PM-KUSUM scheme has emerged as a transformative initiative for India's farmers. By solarising agricultural pumps, both standalone and grid-connected, and enabling decentralised renewable plants in rural areas, the scheme reduces diesel dependence, stabilises farm incomes and supports climate-resilient agriculture. Thousands of farmers across the country have already benefited, turning agricultural fields into clean-energy hubs.

However, as India accelerates renewable capacity growth, the challenges associated with bulk RE-intermittency, long-distance transmission requirements, land availability and rising grid congestion-highlight the need for innovative, decentralised energy models.

INDIA'S PROGRESS IN RENEWABLE ENERGY OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS HAS BEEN NOTHING SHORT OF REMARKABLE. THE COUNTRY HAS ALREADY CROSSED THE MILESTONE OF ACHIEVING 50 PER CENT OF ITS TOTAL INSTALLED POWER CAPACITY FROM RENEWABLE SOURCES, WITH THE RENEWABLE ENERGY PORTFOLIO NOW REACHING AN IMPRESSIVE 259 GW

The writer is the Union Minister of State for Power and New and Renewable Energy, Government of India

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Distributed generation, especially rooftop and community-level solar, is proving to be a powerful solution. By producing electricity where it is consumed, it reduces network stress, improves voltage stability, cuts transmission losses and significantly lowers infrastructure costs for power utilities. The future of India's renewable strategy will depend on striking the right balance between utility-scale projects and widespread community-level solarisation.

This becomes particularly relevant for missions such as the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), which aims to ensure clean tap water for every rural household. Water supply systems depend heavily on energy-intensive pumping infrastructure. Solarising these assets offers dual benefits: substantial cost savings for departments and uninterrupted service delivery for communities. It is against this backdrop that a noteworthy clean-energy initiative has emerged from Old Goa, showcasing how renewable power can strengthen essential public utilities.

At the pumping station near Podar School in Old Goa, a pioneering solar project has been implemented under the CSR support of IREDA, a PSU under the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy. The facility, which operates 60 HP pumps to lift water from a ground-level sump to an overhead tank, generally functions between 9 am and 1 pm, coinciding perfectly with peak solar generation hours. By integrating a 45 kW solar plant with net-metering capability, the station not only meets its daytime energy needs but also exports surplus clean power to the grid.

The impact has been significant. The Drinking Water Department now saves nearly ₹4.0 lakh annually in electricity expenditure, while revenue from surplus energy generation further strengthens its operational budget. Environmentally, the system offsets close to 45 tonnes of CO2 every year, equivalent to the

carbon absorption of more than 2,050 mature trees. Nearly 650 residents now rely on a water supply system powered substantially by renewable energy. With a project cost of ₹28 lakh, a payback period of seven years and a system life of around 25 years, the initiative will continue delivering free, clean electricity for nearly two decades after cost recovery — an exemplary model of sustainable public infrastructure.

The success of this project reflects the foresight and commitment that guide my efforts to strengthen essential public services through clean and sustainable energy solutions. These efforts are deeply inspired by the broader national vision shaped by Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji, under whose guidance India has emerged as a global front-runner in renewable energy adoption. At a time when cities across the world struggle with deteriorating air quality, such grassroots initiatives demonstrate how local innovation can drive both environmental protection and community development.

The solarisation of the Old Goa pumping station is more than a technical upgrade; it is a blueprint for India's sustainable future. As the nation marches towards its Net Zero commitment, the next phase of growth must lie in harnessing renewable energy for unconventional, often overlooked applications such as water supply systems, government buildings, rural institutions, agricultural infrastructure and community assets. Each such project not only reduces the burden on the grid but also brings clean energy closer to the people it serves.

India's clean-energy journey is ultimately a collective one. With the right blend of visionary leadership, technological innovation and community participation, projects like the one in Old Goa will become the cornerstone of a greener, more resilient and more inclusive future.

The Pioneer SINCE 1865

A spiritual path to ending gender inequality



RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJ JI

2ND OPINION THE PIONEER

The Constitution of India not only guarantees equality for women but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination to offset the cumulative social, economic, educational and political disadvantages they have historically faced. Yet, despite such strong constitutional safeguards, women continue to struggle for dignity, independence and equal opportunity. This compels us to ask why gender inequality remains so deeply embedded in our society.

Although India has made significant progress over decades of reform and development, our core mindset regarding gender has remained largely unchanged. For centuries, society has believed that the roles, characteristics and status of men and women are determined solely by biological sex-natural, fixed and therefore unquestionable. Gender thus became tied to predetermined behaviours and expectations assigned to boys and girls.

From the moment a child is born, society begins the subtle but powerful process of gendering. The birth of a son is often celebrated, while the birth of a daughter is still viewed with hesitation or sorrow in many households. As children grow, boys are encouraged to be assertive, bold and independent, while girls are conditioned to be quiet, obedient and confined to domestic spaces. These distinctions are not inherent differences; they are social constructs created and perpetuated by all of us. Within this rigid framework, we overlook a fundamental truth: men and women are not meant to be adversaries. Instead, they are meant to play complementary roles that create harmony and balance in society.

At the spiritual level, the human soul-regardless of whether it resides in a male or female body-possesses both sets of qualities. Courage, determination and resilience coexist naturally with compassion, nurturing and gentleness. What we often label as "male" or "female" qualities are, in reality, learned traits rather than innate ones. True empowerment therefore requires a shift in consciousness. It calls for moving beyond body consciousness to soul consciousness, where we recognise that our identity is not confined to gendered expectations. By connecting the self with the supreme source-the highest and purest form of energy-we awaken the inherent balance within us. This spiritual connection restores self-respect, self-confidence and self-reliance. It nurtures holistic growth, enabling individuals to embody both strength and empathy, both willpower and compassion. Our scriptures remind us that the Almighty embodies the complete spectrum of these qualities. When we anchor ourselves to this supreme source, we too receive this wholeness.

When we identify solely with the physical body and its gendered limitations, we develop only partially. Spirituality thus becomes not an escape from reality but a prerequisite for social harmony. It dissolves hostility and division, replacing conflict with integration, equality and unity. It opens the "third eye" of wisdom, allowing us to access an inner reservoir of strength and purity. The real solution to gender inequality does not lie in replacing male dominance with female dominance. It lies in freeing both men and women from the chains of gender bias rooted in body consciousness. When individuals rise to higher awareness, society becomes more just, balanced and compassionate. Let us therefore empower ourselves spiritually and work together to ensure that every individual, regardless of gender, can live with dignity, equality and purpose.

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The writer is a spiritual educator & popular columnist

The Pioneer SINCE 1865

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Passengers deserve fair compensation

This refers to recent news concerning IndiGo's fiasco, which is presently under the scrutiny of the Prime Minister's Office. The airline's conduct appears to have violated regulations framed in accordance with international aviation standards. Large-scale flight cancellations caused severe inconvenience to passengers, while other airlines took advantage of the situation by sharply increasing airfares. Many travellers, compelled by urgency, were forced to make expensive last-minute bookings to reach their destinations.

Compensation for the loss of valuable time, financial resources, and mental peace resulting from such lapses is a legal imperative. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation has failed to discharge its responsibilities effectively, leading to reputational damage. Operating aircraft beyond stipulated terms and conditions results in physical and psychological fatigue among pilots, thereby increasing safety risks.

The Consumer Protection Act, 2019, allows for class-action proceedings against companies providing deficient or misleading services. Although the Ministry of Civil Aviation issued fare-cap orders and regulatory directions, the evident negligence of both IndiGo and the DGCA warrants strict penalties.

YUGAL KISHORE SHARMA | HARYANA

Reactive regulation threatens aviation trust

The recent IndiGo airline imbroglio exposes how reactive regulatory oversight, combined with a market duopoly, leaves passengers vulnerable and weakens confidence in the aviation sector's long-term prospects. The spillover effects of mismanagement have also cast a shadow over airline privatisation plans in the post-pandemic era. India's domestic aviation market is dominated by IndiGo and Air India, making it particularly sensitive to disruptions. Swift regulation and delayed intervention undermine operational credibility and investor confidence alike. In contrast, mature aviation markets such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia enforce strict consumer protection laws. Airlines in these countries are mandated to compensate passengers for cancellations and delays.

The 2022 Southwest Airlines crisis led to legal action, government investigation, and substantial reimbursements, reinforcing accountability and consumer trust. Indian aviation, however, continues to rely on ad hoc measures during crises rather than preventive oversight.

The IndiGo episode highlights how market concentration amplifies systemic risk. India must shift from reaction to anticipation by enforcing accountability and safeguarding passenger trust.

VIJAY SINGH ADHIKARI | UTTARAKHAND

Switch off stress, switch on life

With the rapid expansion of the digital revolution worldwide-through information technology, the internet, and smartphones-the practice of employers contacting employees beyond official working hours has increased sharply. Emails, phone calls, and instant messages now intrude into personal time, blurring the boundary between work and rest. This constant connectivity has resulted in rising levels of mental and physical stress among employees. To address this growing concern, the concept of the "Right to Disconnect" was first discussed in Europe and has since gained global attention. Even after completing their daily tasks, many employees feel compelled to respond to work-related communications, often out of fear of professional repercussions.

To provide legal protection and work-life balance, discussions on this right have been underway for several years. In a Bill presented in Parliament, MP Supriya Sule proposed the establishment of an Employee Welfare Authority. The Bill grants employees the right not to respond to work-related emails or calls beyond official working hours. Its objective is to reduce stress in both personal and professional life. As work increasingly shifts online, such legislation is timely and necessary to protect employee well-being.

DATTAPRASAD SHIRODKAR | MUMBAI

PIC TALK



Employees wearing Santa Claus costumes perform during a parade celebrating Christmas at Lotte World Adventure in Seoul, South Korea.

PHOTO: PTI

DIGITAL EXPERIENCE



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WORLD HUMAN RIGHTS DAY AND ITS GROWING GLOBAL RELEVANCE

Since 1948, the United Nations has observed 10 December each year as World Human Rights Day. The primary objective of this observance is to promote and protect the fundamental human rights of people across all nations. The theme for Human Rights Day 2025, "Human Rights, Our Everyday Essentials," highlights how basic rights such as clean air, food, shelter, dignity, and personal safety are inseparable from everyday life.

At present, the world is witnessing widespread geopolitical turbulence. Prolonged conflicts such as the Israel-Palestine crisis and the Russia-Ukraine war continue to destabilise regions, displace populations, and deprive millions of their basic rights. Tensions and internal unrest in several other parts of the world

further deepen humanitarian suffering. It increasingly appears that global peace has become fragile and uncertain.

Despite the devastation caused by two world wars, humanity continues to resort to armed conflict rather than dialogue, cooperation, and mutual respect. The consequences are borne not by leaders but by ordinary citizens, who lose their rights to life, security, health, and freedom.

All religions advocate peace, compassion, and coexistence. Yet these principles are often ignored in practice. Upholding human rights is essential for lasting peace.

Without their protection, societies may increasingly descend into conflict in pursuit of dignity and justice.

JITHES MORI | GUJARAT

Please send your letter to the info@dailypioneer.com. In not more than 250 words. We appreciate your feedback.

Water warriors lead the water revolution in countryside

As the world is literally sitting on a hot spot, notwithstanding these CoPs, which are hilariously optimistic without any substance of change, we in India need to take drastic action at the level of civil society as well as within the government, with a bottom-up innovative approach right from village level to national level

FIRST
Column



VK
BAHUGUNA

Amidst when the world climate change negotiators are busy pulling wires in Brazil at the UNFCCC CoP 30 summit, the world, especially those suffering most from climatic vagaries, is watching to see if there is a thaw between the divergent positions of developed and developing countries, especially in truly adhering to the cardinal principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. But this is a matter to be dealt with separately.

As this writer has been repeatedly warning government negotiators and policy makers about charting out South-South climate-resilient developmental planning to ward off the deleterious effects of climate change on the environment, especially on food, nutrition and water security of billions of people, Brazil's Tropical Forest Forever Facility (TFFF) climate change fund of \$125 billion to support tropical forests through government and private contributions, spending \$4 per hectare on improving forests, is a welcome move. Brazil herself has committed \$1 billion to this fund. India has supported it in principle. The fund may help in water and biodiversity conservation.

However, India should take the lead in focusing on creating a fund in collaboration with China and the Group of 77 to conserve and manage water for better climate management, as the temperature has already crossed the 1.5 degree Celsius threshold this year, as reported by Carlo Buontempo, the Director of the European Climate Agency Copernicus, and this is going to severely impact world hydrology. If India can take a lead as it did in creating the 'Solar Alliance' by creating a water conservation fund, forests will automatically be taken care of.

As the world is literally sitting on a hot spot, notwithstanding these CoPs, which are hilariously optimistic without any substance of change, we in India need to take drastic action at the level of civil society as well as in government, with a bottom-up innovative approach from the village level to the national level.

Already, the Water for Every Household scheme launched in 2019 by the Prime Minister is a resounding success with community participation and has provided



THE NATIONAL WATER AWARDS, RECOGNISING INNOVATIONS, HAVE GALVANISED ACTION, PROVING THAT LOCAL INGENUITY CAN RECHARGE ECOSYSTEMS AND EMPOWER MARGINALISED SECTIONS FACING ACUTE WATER STRESS

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almost 78.58 per cent (15.56 crore out of 18 crore) households access to tap water connections, compared to around 7 crore earlier, before 2019. Let us substantiate water conservation from the examples created by our civil society.

The water availability study done by the Central Water Commission using space inputs (2019) assessed the average annual per capita water availability for the years 2021 and 2031 as 1,486 cubic metres and 1,367 cubic metres respectively. Annual per capita water availability of less than 1,700 cubic metres is considered a water-stressed condition, whereas annual per capita water availability below 1,000 cubic metres is considered a water-scarcity condition. The country's rivers run dry, aquifers deplete, and millions face seasonal scarcity, underscoring the urgency of sustainable practices.

So, we need to look into our countryside to search for water warriors beyond government programmes. The country has shown time and again that our society produces leaders from the grassroots level, from the freedom struggle to tree conservation through the world-famous Chipko Movement, to now "sow seed to get water" (pani bao pani pao) launched successfully in Uttarakhand by Mr Mohan Kandpal and others elsewhere in the country. This has become amply clear in the 2025 Water Awards announced by the

Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India. These water warriors brought to fame this year have shown how a public movement can change the countryside scenario drastically.

This writer, while in the Planning Commission, had in 2010 assessed the great work done by Popat Pawar in the Hiware Bazar village in Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra, turning a ghost village into one bubbling with prosperity solely due to water harvesting in adjoining forests under the joint Forest Management programme, resulting in huge agricultural and milk production.

In this context, water conservation awards serve as beacons of hope, spotlighting grassroots innovators, communities and institutions that transform despair into resilience. These examples celebrate individual and collective triumphs but also produce scalable models, fostering a culture of stewardship. The National Water Awards, recognising innovations, have galvanised action, proving that local ingenuity can recharge ecosystems and empower marginalised sections who have been facing acute water stress.

This year's awards were announced and conferred by President Droupadi Murmu on November 18, 2025 at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi, and honoured 46 winners — a 30 per cent increase from prior years. These honours were backed by field

verifications from the Central Water Commission and the Central Ground Water Board.

At the heart of this narrative stands Mohan Chandra Kandpal, a 59-year-old chemistry teacher from Kande village in Uttarakhand's Almora district, whose lifelong crusade earned him the Best Individual (North Zone) award. For 36 years, Kandpal has traversed the fragile Himalayan foothills, where deforestation and erratic monsoons have rendered ancient springs and traditional stone reservoirs dry. Fate struck him in 1990 when he observed the Riskan River's tributaries dwindling amid drought coupled with soil erosion. He resolved to act and launched "Pani Bao-Pani Uggao" (Sow Water-Grow Water), a masterstroke that charged women and youth into action, blending this rhetoric with indigenous community wisdom and mobilisation.

Kandpal's strategy hinges on khals and chaals-shallow percolation pits that capture runoff, allowing rainwater to recharge aquifers. Between 1990 and 2012, he spearheaded the digging of thousands, coupled with afforestation drives planting over 100,000 saplings of native species like oak and rhododendron. People changed ploughing techniques in agricul-

The Pioneer
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tural fields to till perpendicular to slopes, creating furrows that channel water deeper into the earth rather than letting it run off. This low-cost tweak, disseminated through farmer workshops, amplified recharge efficiency. By 2025, over 5,000 such structures dotted 40 villages, reviving 27 depleted sources in hamlets like Valna, Bitholi, Kande and Ganoli. Complementing this is the "Woh Pani Hoga" (That Water Will Be There) initiative, which has bolstered the Riskan River's flow, turning seasonal streams perennial. It was purely a public programme, though MGNREGA funds might have been dovetailed.

Another well-known example is Dr Rajendra Singh, the original "Waterman of India", whose 50-year odyssey in Rajasthan's arid heartland earned the 2001 Ramon Magsaysay Award and the 2015 Stockholm Water Prize-the "Nobel of Water". Singh revived over 1,000 villages by resurrecting more than 8,600 johads (earthen check dams) and bamboo drip systems in the Aravalli hills, and by targeting the parched Alwar district he started "Pani Panchayats" — village water parliaments-thus democratising resource governance. The results are visible: five rivers now flow perennially across 6,500 sq km, enabling afforestation of 1.5 million trees and the repopulation of ghost villages.

Yet another example is from Bihar's flood-prone plains, where Kishore Jaiswal, a Munger-based activist, bagged the Best Individual (Eastern Zone) award for desilting the Ganga's tributaries. He, with the NGO Jalsrot Vikas Sansthan, mobilised 20,000 volunteers to remove five lakh cubic metres of silt from the Chandan River, restoring flow to 100 villages.

In another example of social institutions, the Art of Living Social Projects received two awards for reviving more than 50 lakes in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu through yoga-integrated clean-ups, impacting one million lives. The Barmer district administration also bagged the rainwater harvesting award, which was received by the District Collector, Tina Dabi. If each block of the country does this, prosperity and progress with climatic adaptation will be at our doors and happiness on the faces of millions of rural masses. These people have shown, in a much better manner, how to tackle climate change in tandem with communities than the big CoPs of the UNFCCC.

The end does not justify the means



BALRAJ
MEHTA

"Though no one can go back and make a brand new start, anyone can start and make a brand new ending": Carl Bard

A few days ago, I came across a news item about a young married woman from a prominent business family being found hanging in her room. This was utterly shocking because such an incident is least expected to occur in well-established, educated, and successful business families. I have no access to intimate details about the personalities involved or the circumstances, other than the published news reports. We will have to await the completion of investigations to know why such a drastic step was taken by this lady.

My mind went back to 1985 when, unfortunately, a young mother in our family circle died of 90 per cent burns suffered while cooking on a kerosene stove. It was a suicide-plain and simple — but this angle was deliberately not pursued by the family because she had two small children who were to be brought up by her husband. It was no small matter that a few months earlier she had expressed a strong desire to permanently return to her maternal home. Her father had not accepted this and forced her to go back and "adjust" in her marital home. She obviously could not, and found no other way out of her unhappy life.

Later, in 2004, I witnessed another tragedy unfold in our residential colony in Delhi Cantt when a schoolboy from Class 12 consumed poison and his body was found behind the complex near the railway tracks. We came to know that the boy had been forced by his father to take up the PCM stream, while his own interests lay in the arts. He was regularly shamed and harshly treated at home due to his inattention to studies and poor grades, which led to the extinguishing of a promising young life.

Globally, over 7,27,000 people die by suicide every year, as per the WHO report of March 2025. In India, the National Crime Records Bureau pegged suicides at 1,53,052 in 2020, 1,64,033 in 2021, 1,70,924 in 2022, and 1,71,418 in 2023. Some key trends and demographics are listed below:

- Gender disparity: Males account for 72-73 per cent of suicides.
- Age groups: Young adults aged 18-30 years and people aged 30-45 years account for the largest share-about two-thirds.
- Major causes: Family problems, illnesses, mental health issues, bankruptcy or indebted-

- ness, and other work-related problems.
- Professional groups: Daily wagers constitute the largest group, followed by housewives and the self-employed.
- Academics: Students facing academic pressure and family expectations are the most vulnerable strata.
- Risk factors: Access to firearms, sleeping pills, pesticides, drug addiction, and/or previous suicide attempts.

It has been established by various studies that a large percentage of people with mental disorders do not receive proper treatment due to lack of awareness, attached social stigma, and an acute shortage of professionals. The WHO has assessed an ideal requirement of three psychiatrists per one lakh population, whereas availability worldwide is 1.7 and, in India, only 0.75 per one lakh.

Admittedly, the social stigma attached to mental ill health is very strong, leading to facts being hidden from society, friends, and even family members. The indicators may be visible much before full-blown symptoms appear, but are not understood, acknowledged, or accepted. In my experience, about half of us have one or another quirk or kink in our personality that needs sorting out, but we cannot see our blind spots, and even if we do, we do not accept them comfortably. Parents are often unaware of the warning signs in their children and do not realise the grave consequences of ignoring

these red flags until it is too late. If proper preventive and curative measures are taken for emerging symptoms at an initial stage, much damage can be prevented. Warning signs of an upcoming mental storm could include one or more of the following:

- Sleep or appetite changes
- Decline in personal care and hygiene
- Mood changes
- Social withdrawal and absenteeism
- Difficulty in managing bodily pain
- Unusual drop in academic or professional performance
- Unexplained problems in coherent thinking or speech
- Increased sensitivity to sound, light, touch, or smells
- Apathy towards surroundings
- Fear or nervousness
- Any other unusual behaviour

As brought out earlier, a suicidal impulse can be triggered by mental illness, physical disease, relationship stress, heartbreak, loss of loved ones, or major financial, professional, or personal setbacks. Any person behaving abnormally will usually give sufficient indications that can be picked up by a concerned friend or family member.

The American Society for the Prevention of Suicide lists the following warning signs:

- 1. **Talk:** If a person talks about
 - Killing themselves
 - Feeling helpless

- Having no reason to live
- Being a burden to others
- Unbearable pain
- 2. **Behaviour:** Indicated by
 - Increased use of alcohol or drugs
 - Online searches for ways to end their life
 - Withdrawal from activities
 - Isolation from family and friends
 - Sleeping too much or too little
 - Visiting or calling people to say goodbye
 - Giving away prized possessions
 - Unnatural aggression
 - Constant fatigue
- 3. **Mood:**
 - Depression
 - Anxiety
 - Loss of interest
 - Irritability
 - Humiliation or shame
 - Agitation or anger
 - Sudden relief or improvement

Admittedly, significant efforts are being made by governments and social organisations to spread awareness, but incidents do not seem to be declining. Regular sensitisation of teachers, parents, and business managers must be ensured by the concerned authorities. Dignity of labour and respect for the workforce need to be inculcated from school onwards. The newly instituted labour laws should help address issues faced by the salaried class in the private sector, but effective monitoring of remuneration for domestic staff and gig workers is essential. A grievance redressal mechanism must be established at various levels. Creating awareness about cybercrimes and the harmful effects of digital addiction also needs focused attention.

Ultimately, as a society, we must reorient our sensitivities away from material pursuits and refocus on respect for life and care for fellow human beings-especially the disadvantaged. Family units must remain cohesive while respecting individual choices. Parents must realise that a present artist son is far better than a forever-lost engineer son, and that a divorced daughter is far better than a dead daughter.

We need to talk more openly about mental health and remove the shame associated with it. When we are physically unwell, we go to a hospital for treatment, and once better, we exercise to remain fit. Similarly, to deal with day-to-day stress, we should not hesitate to seek counselling or therapy when required, treating it as joining a "mental gym". It is not a shame, but simply a set of exercises to become mentally stronger.

As someone said, "It is not weak to ask for help. It is like using a flashlight when you are lost in the dark."

The writer is a Major General and has been decorated with Sena Medal

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T SENTHIL SIVA
SUBRAMANIAN



N
MANIKANDAN

The 21st century is a promising era for India, which has achieved global recognition in attaining a meaningful economy. In fact, this year, 2025, India has touched 8.2 per cent GDP growth during the period from July to September, which demonstrates the capability of several factors, including consumer demand and the supply chain. The present need of the hour is rare earth permanent magnets. The Government of India has strongly emphasised their significant role, which has led to the launch of the Rare Earth Permanent Magnets (REPM) scheme. The scheme would revolutionise India's advanced manufacturing ecosystem. This scheme envisions the creation of a rare earth valley and manufacturing zones in India, thereby boosting the electronic economy. This initiative would bring together several stakeholders-government, industry, start-ups and academia, especially Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs)-to collaborate with localised manufacturing industries and the Government of India, thereby transforming products from lab to market. REPM would encourage HEIs to partner with UGC and AICTE to develop a model curriculum on rare earth permanent magnets, minor degree programmes, electives, minor capstone projects and internships on rare earth permanent magnets. The REPM scheme would facilitate HEIs to develop MOOC courses in collaboration with industries on rare earth permanent magnets. There is ample opportunity for HEIs to partner with Sector Skill Councils under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Government of India, to develop skill enhancement courses on rare earth permanent magnets, which could be aligned with NEP 2020 and the National Credit Framework (NCF) across different job roles from Level 4 to Level 8, fulfilling skill mission objectives.

REPM would allow and provide opportunities, especially for women students, to collaborate with the National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development (NIESBUD) and the Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDI), Gujarat, under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and the Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India, respectively, to explore and start their own ventures under the Swavalambini Programme scheme in the field of rare earth permanent magnets. The REPM scheme would drive HEIs to interface with localised manufacturing industries, with a special focus on SMEs working on rare earth magnets. This activity

would enhance community-based learning under the Government set-up known as MY Bharat.

HEIs can selectively work on different manufacturing problem ideas and concepts of local industries and thereby ideally develop:

1. Idea-to-business models
2. Proofs of concept (PoCs) for rare earth permanent magnets

The collaboration would provide a significant opportunity for HEIs to design and develop Minimum Viable Products (MVPs), which would lead to Swadeshi designs on rare earth permanent magnet products. This, in turn, would further enhance India's autonomy and self-reliance and thereby meet the objectives of "Viksit Bharat" / "Amrit Kaal". HEIs would get a platform to develop design simulation tools and technology frameworks for rare earth permanent magnet products.

Research explorations on REPM would receive a significant boost at the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), and Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC). The scheme is expected to bring tangible and intangible investments to the nation. It would also promote HEIs to create design-thinking-based products and process solutions, simulation software tools and techniques. Additionally, REPM would add value to responsible research innovation, leading to intellectual property rights such as trademarks and copyrights in rare earth permanent magnets. These innovations would give a major push to Higher Educational Institutions to reinvent technologies using rare earth permanent magnets that could be applied across different sectors, especially the Electronic Manufacturing Services (EMS) and Electronics System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM) sector — an industry initiative under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India.

This will be a boon for boosting the electronic economy, leading to the development of Vocal for Local products, processes and solutions. The products developed in laboratories will reach the market through a lab-to-market approach, achieving Technology Readiness Levels (TRL), Manufacturing Readiness Levels (MRL), Consumer Readiness Levels (CRL) and Investment Readiness Levels (IRL). Best practices in rare earth permanent magnets would strengthen partnerships with the Global South in knowledge transfer, capacity building and R&D, while enabling inclusive growth through links with rural development and women entrepreneurship.

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FROM THE WORLD

MEXICO
Ex-Governor taken into custody

Mexican federal authorities took a former governor of the northern border state of Chihuahua into custody in preparation for charging him with laundering money diverted from state coffers while in office, the Attorney General's Office said Monday. Ex-Chihuahua Gov. César Duarte – identified in a statement only as “César N” in keeping with rules over the protecting the identity of the accused – was extradited by the United States three years ago to face state charges of embezzlement and was under house arrest. Juan Carlos Mendoza Luján, a lawyer representing Duarte, told the newspaper El Heraldo de Chihuahua that Duarte had been detained and that his lawyers were still gathering information, but that his detention appeared unlawful.

PAKISTAN
Hindu woman, daughter abducted

A Pakistani Hindu woman and her minor daughter have been reportedly kidnapped by unknown gunmen in Pakistan's Sindh province, officials said. The incident took place on Saturday in the Sindh Mohalla in Sher Shah, Karachi. According to initial accounts provided by the family, the woman was taken away by three armed individuals who forced her into a white Alto car moments after she stepped out of her home. The case has sparked a wave of fear and concern within the local community.

Shiva Kaachi, a civil rights activist for the Hindu community in the Sindh province, said Rani and her minor daughter were still missing, and her family feared she would be forcibly converted to Islam and then married off to one of the abductors.

Cambodia vows fierce fight against Thailand

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Surin

Cambodia's powerful Senate President Hun Sen on Tuesday vowed that his country would carry out a fierce fight against Thailand as a second day of widespread renewed combat between the Southeast Asian neighbours drove tens of thousands of people to flee border areas.

Fighting broke out following a skirmish in which one Thai soldier was killed on Sunday night, despite a ceasefire that ended fighting in July over competing territorial claims. The five days of fighting then left dozens dead on both sides, and forced the evacuation of over 100,000 civilians. In a sign that neither side was willing to back down, Thai Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul said Tuesday that Cambodia had not yet contacted Thailand about possible negotiations and the fighting would continue. “We've got to do what we've got to do,” he said.

“The Government will support all kinds of military operations as planned earlier.” He had said on Monday that military action



Local people taking refuge in Prey Chamkar Ta Doak market in Banteay Meanchey province in Cambodia, near the border with Thailand

PTI

was necessary to safeguard the nation's sovereignty and ensure public safety.

In a statement posted to Facebook and Telegram, Hun Sen claimed that his country had refrained from retaliating on Monday, but overnight began to fire

back at Thai forces, saying Cambodia would “weaken and destroy enemy forces through counterattacks.”

Thailand's military said Cambodia attacked Thai positions with artillery, rocket and drone attacks on Tuesday. Thailand says that

Cambodian forces also fired at its troops Sunday and Monday, but each side blames the other for firing the first shots. “Cambodia wants peace, but Cambodia is forced to fight back to defend its territory,” Hun Sen wrote. He was Cambodia's long-

serving prime minister until 2023, when he was succeeded by his son Hun Manet, but is still widely seen as the country's de facto leader.

Cambodia's military announced on Tuesday that the new fighting had killed seven civilians and wounded

20. A Thai military spokesperson announced Tuesday that three soldiers have been killed in the new fighting.

Thailand on Monday carried out airstrikes along the frontier, which it said were a defensive action targeting military installations. Thai military spokesperson Rear Adm. Surasant Kongsiri said Tuesday that such operations would continue “until attacks stop.”

Ordinary citizens, meanwhile, had to deal with life after being relocated from the danger zones. An evacuation shelter at a university in Thailand's northeastern city of Surin is hosting more than 3,600 people. Evacuees sit or lie on thin mats spread across the floor, and several have set up small tents in their allotted areas as sleeping spaces.

At lunchtime, some line up with their own plates to receive cooked rice, while others wait in place to be served ready-to-eat meals packed in small plastic bags. An army band plays for their entertainment. Portable fans cool them during the day.

Blankets, in piles beside them, keep them warm at night, when temperatures can fall to as low as 18°C

(64°F). “We were preparing to evacuate. We hadn't left yet. But when we heard shots, we hurried out immediately,” cassava farmer Pan-ngam Kanchangthong told.

“I was scared. Who wouldn't be scared of shelling?” The Thai army said almost 500 temporary shelters have been set up in four border provinces, accommodating 125,838 people. Additional refugees from the fighting are expected to stay with relatives in safe areas.

Evacuees on the Cambodian side had similar experiences. “I felt terrified when I heard the sound of the explosion from the shelling. At that time, I was working at the garment factory,” said 44-year-old Vach Neang, a father of seven.

“I called my wife and my kids but couldn't reach them, and by that time the sound of explosions was getting louder, so the factory owner let us go home,” said Vach Neang, speaking at a former market in Cambodia's northwestern province of Banteay Meanchey that has been repurposed as a shelter. He added that he packed just a few clothes before leaving his home.

Sri Lanka bids farewell to 2 IAF choppers involved in relief work

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Colombo

Sri Lanka Air Force bid farewell to two IAF helicopters after they ended their rescue mission in cyclone-hit island nation, even as INS Gharial reached Trincomalee with 700 tonnes of essential relief material from Tamil Nadu.

The Indian Air Force (IAF) choppers, which departed on Monday, were involved in airlifting immediate relief supplies to distressed communities, evacuating those affected and providing air cover for those involved in rescue missions in the aftermath of havoc caused by Cyclone Ditwah and adverse weather conditions.

“Their contribution significantly enhanced Sri Lanka's national disaster response during a period of urgent need,” the Sri Lankan Air Force said in a statement issued on their official website on Monday.

The Indian High Commission in Colombo said the helicopters evacuated



264 survivors and airlifted about 50 tonnes of relief material, adding that more Indian relief action was due.

Meanwhile, the Indian Navy Ship (INS) Gharial reached Trincomalee on Monday, with 700 tonnes of food items, essentials and clothing from Tamil Nadu.

“The consignment was formally received by Deputy Foreign Minister Hon Arun Hemachandra, who appreciated India's swift and sustained assistance,” the

mission posted on social media on Tuesday.

Tamil Nadu has sent about 1,000 tonnes of essential food items and clothes to Sri Lanka under Operation Sagar Bandhu. Of these, about 300 tonnes reached Colombo in 3 Indian Naval Ships on Sunday. Additionally, the fully operational Indian field hospital Mahiyanaganaya near Kandy, is delivering life-saving treatment to flood-affected communities.

“Equipped for trauma care, surgeries, ambulance support and critical medical services, the facility ensures urgent healthcare reaches where it matters most,” it added. Indian Army's Engineering Task Force is also working alongside Sri Lankan authorities to restore connectivity along the main road arteries of Sri Lanka in the wake of devastation caused by Cyclone Ditwah, it said. Indian High Commissioner Santosh Jha on Monday met Nalinda

jayatissa, Minister of Health and Mass Media and discussed the ongoing efforts to bolster healthcare in Sri Lanka. The two discussed “deployment of field hospitals and BHISHM Cube, providing urgent and quality health care to the people of Sri Lanka in the wake of #CycloneDitwah. They also discussed next steps to strengthen these efforts,” it said. As of Tuesday, 9 am, 638 people have been killed, with 191 missing, in catastrophic floods and landslides caused by extreme weather conditions since November 16. India was the first country to respond to Sri Lanka's international appeal for assistance under its Operation Sagar Bandhu.

A UNDP analysis released on Sunday said out of the estimated 2.3 million affected by Ditwah, more than half were women, and it hit 1.1 million hectares or almost 20 per cent of the island's land area.

The cyclone triggered 1200 landslides in the hill country, where the impact of devas-

tation was severe.

“The floodwaters reached nearly 720,000 buildings, about one in every twelve buildings in the country.

Over 16,000 kilometres of roads, enough to circle the island's coastline more than twelve times, were exposed to flooding. Similarly, over 278 km of railway tracks and 480 bridges were located in flooded areas,” Azusa Kubota, UNDP Resident Representative in Sri Lanka, said.

Cyclone Ditwah struck regions already weakened by years of economic stress, he added. “After one of its worst economic crises and a slow but steady recovery underway, Sri Lanka cannot shoulder more debt to cover the costs of a rebuild from this massive natural disaster,” he said.

International partners must step up with affordable financing and innovative instruments that enable a rapid recovery and rebuilding with greater resilience, without the country falling off the debt cliff, he added.

Lithuania Govt declares national emergency

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Vilnius

Lithuania's Government on Tuesday declared a national emergency over security risks posed by meteorological balloons from Russia-allied Belarus that have violated its airspace in recent weeks. Tensions between Lithuania and Belarus have escalated after the balloons forced Lithuania to repeatedly shut down its main airport, leaving thousands of people stranded. “In combating the Belarusian hybrid attack, we must take the strictest measures and defend the areas most affected by this attack,” Prime Minister Inga Ruginiene said. The announcement followed a Cabinet meeting of the Baltic state, which is a NATO member and strongbacker of Ukraine in its fight against the Russian forces who launched a full-scale invasion in February 2022.

TENSIONS BETWEEN TWO NATIONS ROSE AFTER BALLOONS FORCED LITHUANIA TO SHUT DOWN ITS AIRPORT

Interior Minister Vladislav Kondratovic said that the state of emergency means the army would be given the possibility to patrol in the border area, together with police and other uniformed services or alone, in order to detect the balloons.

He promised the impact on civilians would be limited. While the balloons are used to smuggle cigarettes into Lithuania, officials in Vilnius see their numbers and trajectories as deliberate acts of disruption orchestrated by Belarus. Kondratovic said Lithuanian prosecutors

launched an investigation into the balloons and that the secret services would provide information about the connection with the Minsk regime. “I have no information that the Belarusian side is trying to curb the senders of the balloons,” the minister said. “And this is one of the proofs that this is a hybrid attack.” In October, Lithuanian authorities closed two border crossings in response to the airspace violations by the balloons.

Belarus' authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko denounced Lithuania's move to close the border as a “mad scam” and part of a “hybrid war” against his country. He suggested that Vilnius itself needs to combat the smuggling of contraband.

Lithuania, Poland, and other European Union coun-

tries in the region have in recent years accused Belarus of other activities aimed at triggering instability, including with cyberattacks. They also accuse Minsk of directing a large influx of migrants from the Middle East and Africa to their borders to create a migration crisis. “Belarus is signalling to Lithuania that it can raise the price at any moment,” Linas Kojala, head of the Geopolitics and Security Studies Centre in Vilnius, told. “Yesterday with weaponised migration, today with balloons that are hardly separable from regime control.” Europe overall has been on high alert since drone intrusions into NATO's airspace reached an unprecedented scale in September and the Russian invasion of Ukraine nears its fourth year.

Pakistan, Indonesia ink seven MoUs to bolster cooperation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Islamabad

Pakistan and Indonesia on Tuesday inked seven agreements to further bolster bilateral cooperation in diverse fields as Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif held “productive” talks with Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto here.

This is Subianto's maiden visit to Pakistan. The last presidential visit from Indonesia to Pakistan was undertaken by President Joko Widodo in 2018. According to State-run Radio Pakistan, the MoUs include cooperation in higher education, a grant program for Indonesian state scholarships, and facilitation of business development for small and medium enterprises. It also includes collaboration

between national archives, narcotics control and cooperation in combating illicit drug trafficking, cooperation in Halal trade and certification, and in the field of health.

Addressing a joint press meet after talks, Prime Minister Shehbaz assured to work collectively with the Indonesian President to achieve the targets set for collaboration in different fields. “What we have decided is to promote our bilateral trade, culture, and interact in the field of medical health, education, and vocational training,” he said. He further said that Pakistan will also send its doctors, dentists, medical professionals and other related experts to Indonesia to fulfil requirements in the field of medicine.

He said that bilateral trade

of \$4.5 billion between the two nations largely comprised palm oil imported by Pakistan and added that the two sides discussed ways to take collective measures to balance the trade through exports of agricultural products and IT services from Pakistan.

“We have discussed how to take corrective measures to balance this balance of trade through agricultural exports from Pakistan, through exports of IT-led initiatives,” and the visit of the Indonesian President coincided with the anniversary of the establishment of their diplomatic ties. “Let us agree to celebrate these 75 years with great fanfare in Jakarta and in Islamabad simultaneously, that will convey a very loud and clear message to all and sundry,” he said.



Mexican National Guardsman kills 3 fellow service members

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Mexico

A Mexican National Guardsman shot and killed three fellow service members at a barracks over the weekend in the western Mexican state of Michoacan, where the Government has surged security forces in the wake of recent high-profile killings. A federal official confirmed the shooting Monday to The Associated Press, requesting anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss it publicly. The shooting, which wounded a fourth service member, was under investigation, the official said. The suspect was in custody in Michoacan. The shooting occurred Saturday hours after a car bomb exploded in Coahuayana, Michoacan, killing five people outside a local police station. President Claudia Sheinbaum declined to give more details Monday. The explosion and National Guard shooting came as the federal Government has stepped up security activities in the state, sending in additional troops after two recent high-profile assassinations.

ICC sentences Sudanese militia leader for Darfur crimes

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ The Hague

Judges at the International Criminal Court (ICC) sentenced a leader of the feared Sudanese Janjaweed militia to 20 years imprisonment Tuesday for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in the catastrophic conflict in Darfur more than two decades ago. At a hearing last month, prosecutors sought a life sentence for Ali Muhammad Ali Abd-Al-Rahman, who was convicted in October of 27 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity that included ordering mass executions and bludgeoning two prisoners to death with an axe in 2003-2004. “He committed these crimes knowingly, willfully, and with the evidence shows, enthusiasm and vigour,” prosecutor Julian Nicholls told judges at the sentencing hearing in November.

Abd-Al-Rahman, 76, stood and listened, but showed no reaction as Presiding Judge Joanna Korner passed the sentence.

GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

SHORT TENDER NOTICE

NO.Engg-24/GHMC/PTC-C-22/2025-26 Dated: 09.12.2025

Name of work : 5 Nos. Supply & Installation of Open Gyms and Play Equipments. Estimate Amount/ECV: 94.00 Lakhs. Download Start Date: 11.12.2025, 10.30 A.M. Last Date & Time for Receipt of Bids : 17.12.2025, 3.00PM. Name & Address Of E.E: Executive Engineer, Patancheru Circle-22 Phone No.7995007417. Further Details can be seen at e - procurement @ https://www.tender.telenangana.gov.in Sd/-, Executive Engineer, DIPR.NO. 11840-PP/CU/ADVT/1/2025-26, Dt. 09.12.2025 Patancheru Circle-11, Slp Zone, GHMC.

GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

NIT No & Date : 24/D/EE/Alwal Circle/GHMC/2025-26, Dated: 09.12.2025

Name of the Work : Supply & Installation of super loo star deluxe portable mobile toilets and VVIP mobile toilets in RP Nilayam of Bollaram including water supply to the toilets through water tankers on the occasion of sojourn visit of Hon'ble President of India to Hyderabad from Dt.16.12.2025 to 21.12.2025, Alwal circle, GHMC. Estimate Amount Rs.in Lakhs: 21.00. Start Date & Time: 10.12.2025, 12.00PM. Last Date & time for receipts of Bid : 15.12.2025, 12.00 PM. Name & Address of EE : Executive Engineer, Alwal Circle-27, GHMC. Further details can be seen at e-procurement @ www.eprocurement.gov.in Sd/-, Executive Engineer, DIPR.NO. 11870-PP/CU/ADVT/1/2025-26, Dt. 09.12.2025 Alwal Circle-27, GHMC.

India-Russia Summit 2025: A quiet reset in a noisy world



**BHASKAR
JYOTI
MAHANTA**

When Vladimir Putin stepped down from his aircraft in New Delhi on the afternoon of December 4th, 2025, the moment felt almost symbolic. The world today is anything but settled - Europe still burns with conflict, the United States continues to tighten sanctions, Beijing expands its strategic ambitions, and global alliances are beginning to look like the chessboard of a new Cold War. Yet, there on Indian soil, two leaders greeted each other with familiarity, not caution. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's decision to personally receive President Putin, and later accompany him in the same vehicle, was a message written not in language but in gesture: India and Russia still trust each other, despite the storm outside.

We have watched the India-Russia relationship evolve for decades - from the days of Soviet camaraderie when every defence

installation in India seemed to carry Cyrillic markings, to the more uncertain period after the Soviet collapse, and now into this new era where India is no longer a passive customer, but an assertive nation charting its own destiny. This summit, the 23rd India-Russia Annual Summit, did not simply acknowledge that relationship - it renewed and reshaped it.

The defence discussions were among the most consequential. Russia remains one of India's oldest and most dependable military partners. The MiGs and Sukhois that roar over our skies, the T-90 tanks that guard our borders, and even the S-400 systems now protecting our strategic installations - all of these are reminders of how deeply intertwined the two nations' security frameworks are. What made this summit different was a new tone: the shift from buyer-seller to co-developer. I am told Russian officials privately reassured their Indian counterparts that Moscow is willing to open access to technologies that were once held back, and that Russia sees India as a long-term defence partner capable of building, not merely purchasing. On energy, Putin's



calm but firm declaration that Russia will continue to supply India with oil "without interruption" stood out. It was a direct counter to the pressure India has faced from Washington and European capitals ever since the war in Ukraine escalated. The truth is simple: India cannot compromise energy security because another part of the world is at war. Cheap Russian crude stabilized India's energy market when global oil prices went wild - a fact ordinary citizens may not realize,

but policymakers cannot forget.

Equally significant were the discussions on building a diversified economic roadmap. In the closed-door interactions, Indian negotiators emphasised the imbalance in trade: India imports far more than it exports.

For the first time in years, both sides agreed that the economic basket must expand - into sectors such as heavy engineering, manufacturing, fertilizers, skilled labour mobility, ports, shipping lanes, and even digital payments.

The idea of a payment system insulated from sanctions - using local currencies - was not just economics. It was strategy.

Another moment worth noting came during the leaders' joint statement at Hyderabad House. Modi did not explicitly mention Ukraine, yet his reminder that "peace and diplomacy remain the only viable path" was not lost on anyone in the room.

Putin, for his part, responded not with defensiveness, but with controlled pragmatism - signalling that Russia understands India's diplomatic balancing act and respects it.

For the United States, this summit will be read carefully. Washington has grown accustomed to India's partnership - be it in the Indo-Pacific, QUAD, defence cooperation, semiconductor supply chains, or intelligence sharing.

But India's relationship with Russia predates many of its modern partnerships. It is built on decades of reliability, shared technology, and geopolitical trust that did not disappear even when Moscow grew closer to Beijing. That continuity matters - especially for a nation like India, which seeks strategic autonomy and

not alliance dependency.

Does this visit change the trajectory of the Russia-Ukraine war? Not directly. It does, however, weaken the Western attempt to make Russia a pariah state. For Moscow, having India publicly reaffirm the partnership at a time when many nations are cautious is not a minor achievement - it is geopolitical oxygen.

Looking ahead, what does this summit mean for India?

If both sides follow through, India could emerge not just as a military and economic partner of Russia, but as one of the pivotal powers shaping the emerging multipolar order. The infrastructure corridors discussed - from the Northern Sea Route to the Chennai-Vladivostok maritime link - could reshape India's access to the Arctic, East Asia, and Eurasia. Co-manufactured defence platforms could strengthen India's capabilities and reduce dependence on Western suppliers vulnerable to sanctions and political conditionality. Continued access to Russian energy, nuclear cooperation, and joint technical research could bolster India's long-term capacities - especially as its population and economy continue to expand.

Yet, caution is necessary. Implementation - not headlines - will define the true legacy of this visit. Agreements must become factories, production lines, shipping routes, training programs, and operational military assets.

India must also ensure it remains balanced: no one partnership - Russian, American, or otherwise - should become a strategic crutch. In many ways, this summit tells us something deeper about India's foreign policy evolution. India is no longer choosing sides - it is choosing itself. And nations that choose themselves are the ones that shape history. Years from now, when scholars and diplomats revisit this moment, they may conclude that this was not just another leader-to-leader visit. It was an inflection point - when India proved, not through rhetoric but through action, that it will steer its path based on sovereignty, national interest, and long-term vision. The world may be dividing into camps again. India, instead, is building corridors.

The author is the Former Director General of Police, Assam and General Secretary of the Think Tank Society to Harmonise Aspirations for Responsible Engagement-SHARE

Bangladesh EC to announce poll schedule in next 2 days



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Dhaka

Bangladesh Election Commission (EC) has completed all preparations to hold the 13th general elections in February and will announce the schedule in the next two days, a top official said on Tuesday. "After a meeting with the President (Mohammad Shahabuddin), the schedule would be announced tomorrow evening or the day after," Election Commissioner Abdur Rahmani Masud told reporters.

He said that the meeting is scheduled for Wednesday at the Bangabhaban presidential palace.

Meanwhile, the EC officials said that Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) AMM Nasir Uddin was expected to announce the schedule in a nationwide address.

The CEC met Chief Justice Syed Rezaat Ahmed on Tuesday at the Supreme Court ahead of the announcement of the date for elections and a referendum to seek public opinions on a series of reform proposals rolled out by the Muhammad Yunus-led interim government.

Former prime minister Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has emerged as the frontrunner, with its former ally Jamaat-e-Islami and its right-wing Islamic allies being the main

rival in the absence of deposed premier Sheikh Hasina's disbanded Awami League. Both parties have announced their nominees in the election for the 300-seat parliament.

Masud said that special emphasis will be given to ensuring the cooperation of all, including political parties, in the announcement of the election schedule. He also said that the symbols of any banned or suspended parties will not appear in the final postal ballots, in a veiled reference to the Awami League. A special tribunal last month sentenced Hasina to death on charges of crimes against humanity. She is currently in India. Most of her senior colleagues and activists in the party and Government were in jail awaiting trial on identical charges, while many of them are on the run at home and abroad.

The scenario made it difficult for Awami League leaders to contest the polls as independent candidates despite having a large support base. Meanwhile, tension between Jamaat-e-Islami and the BNP over election campaigning in the Sirajganj-1 constituency erupted into violence Monday night, injuring around 15 Jamaat activists, party sources said.

The BNP has denied involvement, blaming locals for the clash.

Zelenskyy refuses to cede land to Russia as he rallies European support

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Rome

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has reaffirmed his firm refusal to cede any territory, resisting US pressure for a painful compromise with Russia as he continued to rally European support for Ukraine. "Undoubtedly, Russia insists that we give up territories. We, clearly, don't want to give up anything. That's what we are fighting for," Zelenskyy said in a WhatsApp chat late Monday in which he answered reporters' questions.

"Do we consider ceding any territories? According to the law, we don't have such a right. According to Ukraine's law, our constitution, international law, and, to be frank, we don't have a moral right either." In an interview with Politico released Tuesday, US



Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Pope Francis waving to journalists during their meeting in Castel Gandolfo

President Donald Trump again pressed Zelenskyy to accept the US proposal that Ukraine cede territory to Putin, arguing that Russia retains the "upper hand" and that Zelenskyy's Government must "play ball." Zelenskyy met on Tuesday with Pope Leo XIV at Castel Gandolfo, a papal residence

outside Rome, and is to have talks with Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni later in the day. The Vatican said the pope "reiterated the need for the continuation of dialogue and expressed his urgent desire that the current diplomatic initiatives bring about a just and lasting peace." The Holy See has tried to

remain neutral in the war while offering solidarity and assistance to what it calls the "martyred" people of Ukraine. Leo, who has met three times with Zelenskyy and has spoken by telephone at least once with Russian President Vladimir Putin, has called for a ceasefire and urged Moscow in particular

to make gestures to promote peace. On Monday, Zelenskyy held talks in London with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz to strengthen Ukraine's hand amid mounting impatience from Trump.

US and Ukrainian negotiators completed three days of talks on Saturday aimed at trying to narrow differences on the US administration's peace proposal.

A major sticking point in the plan is the suggestion that Kyiv must cede control of the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine to Russia, which illegally occupies most but not all of the territory. Ukraine and its European allies have firmly resisted the idea of handing over land. "You know, a lot of people are dying," Trump told Politico, claiming that other unnamed

Ukrainian officials agree with the US administration. "His people loved the proposal. They really liked it. His lieutenants, his top people, they liked it, but they said he hadn't read it yet."

Russia, Trump reasoned, remains too powerful for Ukraine to continue fighting. "I give the people of Ukraine and the military of Ukraine tremendous credit for the, you know, bravery and for the fighting and all of that," he said. "But you know, at some point, size will win, generally." Trump also amplified his calls for Ukraine to hold national elections even though the martial law doesn't allow it. And Zelenskyy, elected in 2019, had his five-year term extended because of the war. "They're using war not to hold an election, but, uh, I would think the Ukrainian people would. Should have that choice," Trump said.

22 people killed in office building fire in Indonesia

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Jakarta

A fire ripped through an office building in Indonesia's capital, Jakarta, on Tuesday, killing at least 22 people, including a pregnant woman, police said.

Flames engulfed the seven-story building, sending thick black smoke billowing into the sky and causing panic among nearby residents and workers in a neighbourhood in central Jakarta. The fire, which broke out around midday, is believed to have started on the first floor of the building in the Kemayoran neighbourhood before spreading to other floors, Central Jakarta police chief Susatyo Purnomo Condro said.

Hundreds of personnel and 29 fire trucks were deployed to try to contain the blaze. The cause of the fire is still under investigation. Many workers in the building, which was used as a sales and storage office for a drone company, were out for lunch when a battery started sparking in a storage and testing area, said Condro, citing several witnesses. The fire was extin-



guished after three hours of intense effort. At least 22 bodies - seven men and 15 women, including a pregnant woman - were recovered from the building and taken to the police hospital in East Jakarta for identification.

A resident, Intan Puspita, whose home is close to the building, told The Associated Press that the fire started with a loud bang and workers running outside. "When asked, they said that there was an alleged short circuit in one of the batteries during the charging process," Puspita said. The fire spread quickly, and she saw workers on the upper

floors trying to escape by moving to the rooftop.

"I saw about 20 victims in the body bags being evacuated from inside," Puspita said. "It was tragic."

Television reports showed the tense evacuation of more than a dozen trapped workers, including many women, from the sixth floor using an emergency ladder extended by firefighters. Each person had to be lowered one by one from the building, and several struggled to breathe because of the thick smoke while waiting for their turn. Authorities said most of the victims died from smoke inhalation. Firefighters managed to rescue at least 19

trapped workers, some of whom suffered minor injuries, but were in a weak and traumatised condition. A police officer and a firefighter also experienced breathing difficulties.

"We will comb through the entire building again," Condro said when asked about the possible rise in the death toll. "Firefighters are cooling down the scene because the smoke is still thick, and it is not yet possible for us to enter the structure."

Jakarta Governor Pramono Anung called on company leaders to foster a workplace safety culture and to have emergency action plans for evacuation. "This case obviously shows the company does not provide emergency access' from fire in the direct physical sense," Anung told reporters when visiting the site. Families anxiously awaited news at hospitals or near the building occupied by PT Terra Drone Indonesia, a company that provides unmanned aerial vehicle technology for various industrial sectors such as construction, mining, oil and gas, energy, plantations and urban planning.

Macron faces backlash for using slur against feminist protesters

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Paris

Brigitte Macron was facing criticism on Tuesday after a video emerged of her using a slur to denounce feminist protesters. The scene filmed Sunday showed France's first lady in discussion backstage at the Folies Bergere theatre in Paris with Ary Abittan, a French actor and humorist previously accused of rape, before a performance he was about to give. The previous night, feminist campaigners had disrupted his show with shouts of "Abittan, rapist!"

Before Sunday's performance, Brigitte Macron asked him how he was feeling. When he said he was feeling scared, she made a derogatory and sexist reference to the women, adding: "We'll toss them out." Her office said in a statement that she'd been trying to calm his nerves: "As the video shows, Mrs Macron's only intention was to reassure an artist who, in his dressing room before going on stage, had just told her, 'I'm scared,' because his show had been disrupted the previous

evening." "In no way is she attacking a cause. She does, however, disapprove of the radical methods used to prevent an artist from performing on stage, as was the case on Saturday night."

The feminist campaign group "Nous Toutes" ("All of Us") said its activists disrupted Abittan's show to protest what it described as "the culture of impunity" around sexual violence in France.

Magistrates terminated the investigation of the 2021 rape allegation against Abittan for lack of evidence in 2024, a decision then confirmed on appeal in January this year, according to French media. In a statement on Instagram, Nous Toutes said: "We denounce venues that roll out a red carpet for men accused of rape, normalising sexist and sexual violence. It is a public insult to the victims. Victims, we believe you. Rapists, we do not forgive you!"

Opponents of President Emmanuel Macron on the left wing of French politics criticised his wife's use of a sexist slur, and some said she should apologise.



Military transport aircraft crashes in Russia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA Moscow

An Antonov An-22 military transport aircraft with seven people on board crashed in Russia's central Ivanovo Region on Tuesday during its first flight after repairs, the defence ministry said. "The aircraft crashed in an unpopulated area. A search and rescue crew has left for the accident site to determine the fate of the aircraft's crew," the ministry said. TASS reported that fragments of the An-22 were found on the shore and in the water. The An-22 is a heavy transport aircraft used by the Russian Aerospace Forces (VKS) to transport heavy weapons. The aircraft has a maximum takeoff weight of 225 tonnes and a payload capacity of 60 tonnes. With a total cargo weight of up to 40 tonnes, the An-22 can fly over 5,000 km, according to Russian TV channels.



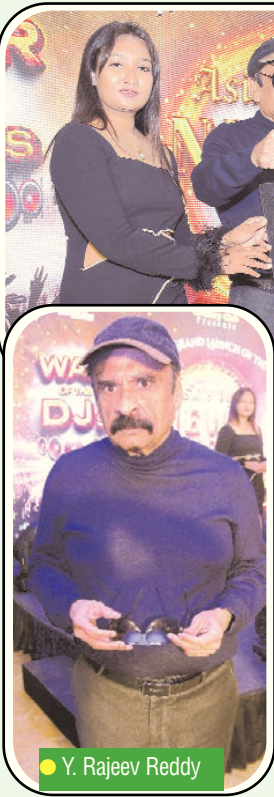
Hamas wants pressure on Israel before next phase of ceasefire

ASSOCIATED PRESS Jerusalem

A Hamas leader on Tuesday threatened to not move forward into the next phase of the Gaza ceasefire agreement until more pressure is placed on Israel to open up a key border crossing, cease deadly strikes and allow more aid into the Palestinian territory. The accusation came as Israel's Government says it's ready to move into the next, more complicated phase of the ceasefire deal - even as it has called on the militant group to return the remains of the last Israeli hostage held in Gaza. Husam Badran, a member of Hamas' political wing, called for the "full implementation of all the terms of the first phase" before moving forward, including an end to what he called the continuing demolition of Palestinian homes in the part of the territory still controlled by Israel.



Ecstasy



Y. Rajeev Reddy

CCHHL Chairman Y. Rajeev Reddy unveiled the Country Club Asia's Biggest New Year Bash 2026 poster at a curtain-raiser press conference held at the Begumpet Country Club. Hyderabad NYB 2026 celebration will be held at the Police Hockey Stadium, Hyderabad, 'War of DJs'. The grand celebrations will be held simultaneously across major Country Club locations including Hyderabad, Mumbai, Pune, Bengaluru, Chennai, Kolkata, Delhi, Surat, and Kolhapur, offering members an unforgettable night of high-energy music, dance, entertainment, and family festivities.

Simran Ahuja

The diamond store by chandubhai creates seven-part heritage bridal

Hyderabad-based The Diamond Store by Chandubhai launches bridal collection with breath-taking heritage jewellery creation, inspired by ancient Indian royal traditions. A seven-part diamond and Navrathna masterpiece, crafted as a modern interpretation of the historic "Edu Vaarala Nagalu" has been curated using 22,000 natural diamonds and authentic Navrathna gemstones. It has been adorned by a prominent Indian bride from Hyderabad at her Goa wedding, making it the highlight of the wedding celebrations and sparking admiration across design circles. This extraordinary piece revives the centuries-old practice of Edu Vaarala Nagalu, where women from nobility wore seven distinct jewellery pieces, one for each day of the week. The creator of this masterpiece and owner of The Diamond Store by Chandubhai – Kotti Srikanth says, "This launch is our tribute to the cultural richness of India. By reviving the concept of Edu Vaarala Nagalu, we wanted to preserve a tradition that celebrates strength, prosperity and divine harmony. We have poured our heart and decades of craftsmanship into this meaningful artistic masterpiece and the response has been overwhelming."



Community Pure Water (CPW), a leading organisation dedicated to sustainable drinking water access, hosted its flagship panel conversation "Solving Water: Unlocking Progress" at District150 by Quorum, Hyderabad. Curated by Pratiksha Prashant, Board Member & Chairperson of Fundraising, the discussion convened prominent voices from India and abroad to explore the future of equitable water access. The session was moderated by actor Regina Cassandra, known for her strong association with social-impact causes. Distinguished panelists included Ravi Reddy, Founder of Community Pure Water; Kalpana Ramesh, Founder of The Rainwater Project; and Peter Schwarzenbauer, Global Ambassador, Friends of Water and former BMW Board Member. They examined India's water stress, the need for decentralised purification systems, and the importance of public-private-community collaboration. preview to CPW's upcoming fundraiser on 31st January at Chowmahalla Palace, focusing on expanding safe drinking water access across underserved communities.



PARTY

Photos by- SV Chary



The Liver transplant team from South Asian Liver Institute, conducted a retrospective study covering a 2 ½ year period, amongst 67 liver surgery patients in a semi-rural Tier 2 Town. They found a 24% incidence of bacterial infections, mostly from Gram negative organisms. 16 cases were isolated from the 46 transplant recipients, although both donors and recipients were studied. Prof. Dr. Tom Cherian the Head of Transplant surgery & the Primary Investigator for the study said "Most worryingly, 15 of the 16 positive bacteria (94%) were resistant to first and second line antibiotics. Dr A Gogineni, the Liver critical care consultant and sub-investigator remarked that "Klebsiella pneumoniae & Escherichia coli were the two commonest organisms accounting for about 58% of cases.

Lords mark industries Ltd.-renalyx wins licence to manufacture class C world's first AI-based smart hemodialysis machines, becomes world's 6th CE-certified brand

Lords Mark Industries Ltd. (LMIL) has achieved a defining milestone in India's med-tech landscape by receiving the licence to manufacture Class C World's First AI-Based Smart Hemodialysis Machines from the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO), a critical step that significantly strengthens the country's self-reliance in life-saving healthcare technology. This achievement becomes even more historic as LMIL-Renalyx has now received the globally recognised CE marking, making it one of only sixth brand worldwide to earn this certification for dialysis systems. The CE marking validates that the product meets the European Union's highest health, safety, and environmental protection standards, enabling legal access to the entire European Economic Area (EEA). Securing a licence to manufacture Class C World's First AI-Based Smart Hemodialysis Machines is one of the toughest regulatory achievements in India's med-tech regime. Class C devices fall under the high-risk, life-sustaining category, which means even a minor engineering or process deviation can directly impact patient survival. Commenting on this milestone, Sachidanand Upadhyay, Managing Director, Lords Mark Industries Ltd., said: "This licence is not just a regulatory approval, it's a recognition of India's ability to build and lead in the world's most advanced med-tech categories. Strengthening its innovation pipeline, LMIL-Renalyx has expanded a specialised R&D ecosystem focused on future kidney-care technologies, liver-care engineering, advanced sensing systems, and data-driven renal informatics. With our AI-Driven smart Hemodialysis Machine and continuous R&D team efforts, we aim to redefine renal care globally. Our mission is to create intelligent, safe, and accessible healthcare technologies from India that can serve the world." By becoming the first Indian company to manufacture an AI-Powered Smart Hemodialysis Machine,



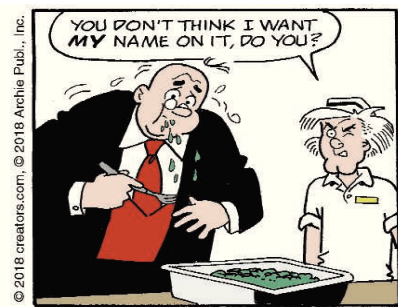
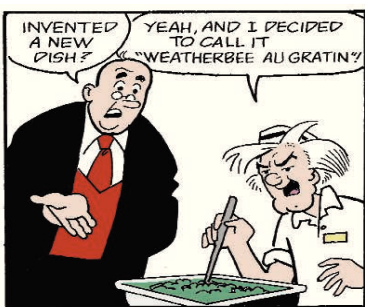
Prime Minister Felicitates HT@100 'My Country, My Lens' Photography Contest Winners

Prime Minister Narendra Modi felicitated the Top 12 winners of HT@100 My Country, My Lens, a nationwide photography contest launched as part of the Hindustan Times' centenary. The ceremony took place at Hindustan Times Leadership Summit 2025, where the Prime Minister presented citations to the winning photographers in the presence of Hindustan Times Chairperson and Editorial Director Shobhana Bhartia. The HT@100 My Country My Lens contest invited citizens to share how they see their country. The response was overwhelming, with over 10,000 entries from more than 30 cities across four themes — Borders, Rivers, Monuments, and Communities of My Country. "I believe it can become a source of great strength for photography in the country," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said. Shobhana Bhartia, Chairperson and Editorial Director of Hindustan Times, said, "As Hindustan Times marks 100 years, we wanted to celebrate not just our own milestone, but the collective stories of India and its people. A jury comprising noted photographers Rohit Chawla, Dhritiman Mukherjee and Ajay Aggarwal evaluated each submission and selected the Top 100 photographs.

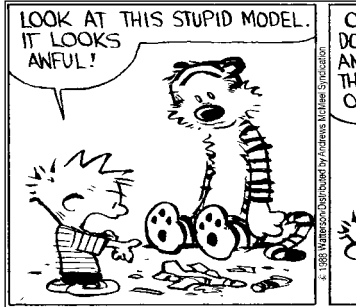


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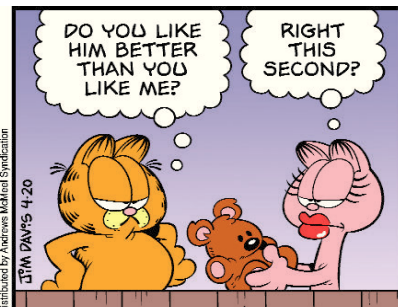
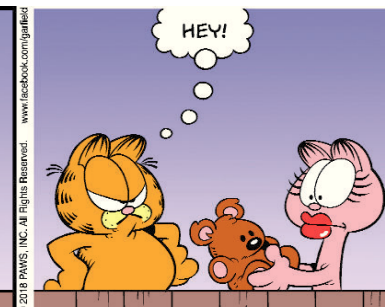
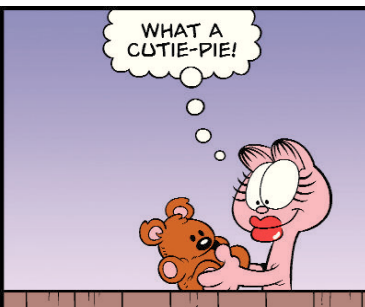
ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



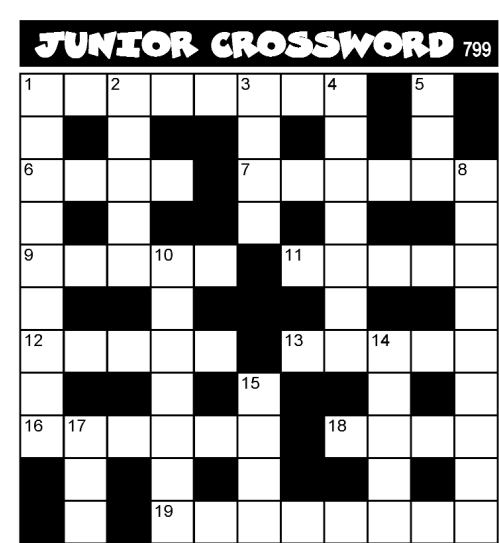
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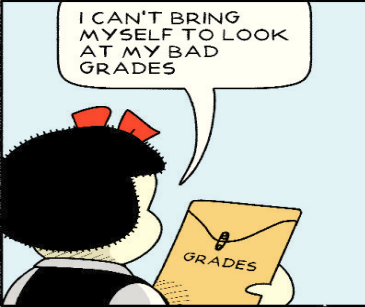
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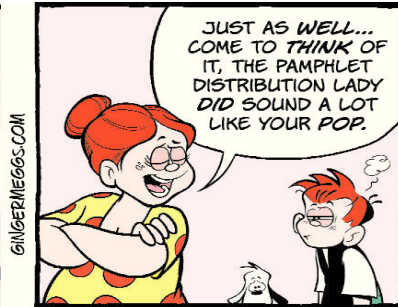
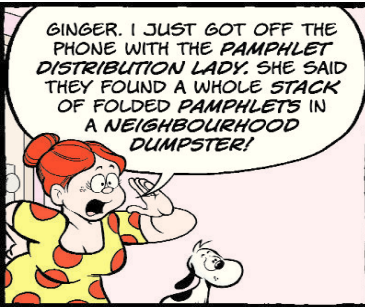
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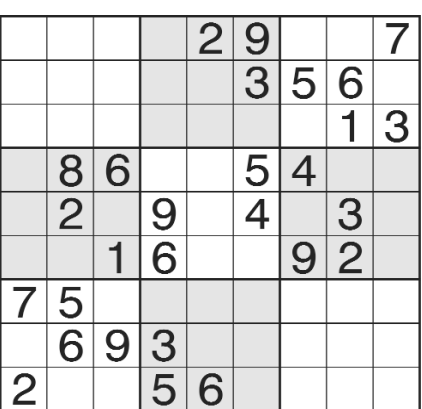
NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution

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

- 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.

ACROSS

- A large extinct animal
- Do this in water
- Me
- A friendly word for a cat
- Feathered creatures
- The same in value
- This animal has no legs
- Turned over and over on the ground
- A group of players on one side in a game
- All the bones in your body
- A person from Moscow
- Unwell
- Someone who catches fish
- Houses for horses
- Wide awake and watchful
- Doing nothing, lazy
- A bird that hunts at night

DOWN

- Vanish
- Hit these in with a hammer
- A large number of soldiers



India name Kamalini, Vaishnavi as new faces for SL T20 series

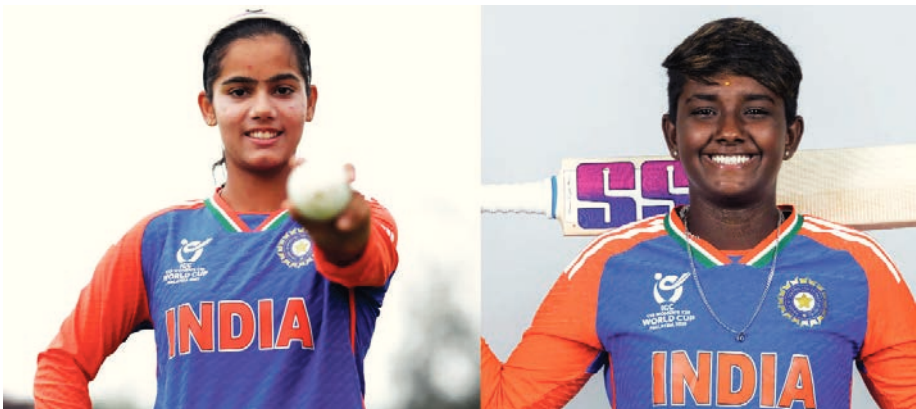
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Gunalan Kamalini and Vaishnavi Sharma on Tuesday got their maiden call-ups in the Indian women's team for the upcoming five-match T20I series against Sri Lanka at home.

The series will be played from December 21 to 30, with the first two games in Visakhapatnam and the last three in Thiruvananthapuram.

While 17-year-old wicket-keeper-batter Kamalini has featured in nine matches for Mumbai Indians in the Women's Premier League, Vaishnavi, 19, who is also a part of the 15-member India squad, was not drafted into the WPL auctions.

Kamalini and Vaishnavi came in place of Radha Yadav and Uma Chhetri, who were part of the squad that triumphed in the ODI World



Cup last month.

Kamalini and Vaishnavi aside, the squad comprises all the familiar names with Harmanpreet Kaur leading the team and Smriti Mandhana doing duty as the vice captain.

Big-hitting opener Shafali Verma, who replaced Pratika Rawal in the World Cup squad just before the semi-final against Australia after the latter was ruled out of the

tournament with an injury, is also part of the team.

India and Sri Lanka play the five-match series just before the start of the WPL 2026 on January 9 in Navi Mumbai.

The schedule of this bilateral series was announced soon after the white-ball series between India and Bangladesh that was to happen in India in December got postponed last month.

The last time India and Sri Lanka played a T20I was at the World Cup in October 2024. India's squad: Harmanpreet Kaur (capt), Smriti Mandhana (vice captain), Deepti Sharma, Sneha Rana, Jemimah Rodrigues, Shafali Verma, Harleen Deol, Amanjot Kaur, Arundhati Reddy, Kranti Gaud, Renuka Singh Thakur, Richa Ghosh (WK), G Kamalini (WK), Sree Charani, Vaishnavi Sharma.

As a player, you cannot move forward without passion, fire: Sachin Tendulkar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Mumbai

The legendary Sachin Tendulkar on Tuesday said young players cannot move forward without passion and fire, challenging them to "climb the mountain" and set examples for others.

Recalling his early days, Tendulkar said he was not only madly in love with cricket but he was also ready to do what it took, at times, even spending 12 hours training everyday for close to two months during summer holidays.

"I started playing cricket because I was passionate. I was madly in love with the sport and all I wanted to do was play for India and I was prepared to do whatever it took," Tendulkar said ahead of the Indian Street Premier League season 3 auction here.

"There were various stages in my life — there was school cricket and I was prepared to work hard, possibly

be on the field for 12 hours. There was a period where I did that for 55 days in a row in my summer holidays and (I) finally fell sick but that is what it is. If the passion and that fire is not there, you are not going to be able to move forward," he added.

Tendulkar said a lot of elements need to come together for a player to grow but it is also important to deliver at the right time.

"To move forward you need hard work, you need planning, you need to be able to execute that, you need the right guidance, (and) discipline," he said. "... (a) number of elements come together and then when the time comes you have to go out and perform and that is how you progress to the next level."

Tendulkar said expectations are on those players who have set examples in the past but one should not get bogged down.

"We have to remember, why are the expectations

there? The expectations are there because of your past performances," he said.

"Suddenly, you cannot come here and think 'there are too many exceptions from me and there is too much pressure. How should I do it?'

"You can look at it in two ways. Either you get bogged down, the weight of pressure suddenly freezes you. Or you say that 'the expectations are there only because I have done well in the past.'"

Tendulkar cited examples of Irfan Umar and Abhishek Dalhor, who got opportunities to play at senior levels from the tennis-ball ISPL.

While Umar represented Mumbai in the Ranji Trophy earlier this year, Dalhor featured as a nets bowler for Kolkata Knight Riders.

"My advice to all the players is to be yourself. Don't look to compete with anyone else. Whatever you were yesterday, can you better yourself today? Can you continue that journey?,"

he said. "It's a beautiful journey to continue getting better and create that impression on the field. This (ISPL) is one such platform where you can go out, express yourself and everyone is watching you and enjoying your talent."

"My advice is to just go out, be yourself, climb the mountain. Climb the mountain because from these two seasons, we have learnt that Abhishek and Irfan both have been able to climb the mountain, (or) at least the journey has begun."

"One went to bowl for KKR in the nets and the other played for Mumbai, which is a magnificent thing," he said.

Tendulkar continued, "Climb the mountain so that you can see the world, not so that the world can see you. Seeing the world and exploring more things is going to make you a better player and a better contributor on the field. Eventually, you will be setting examples for the rest of the guys."



Desert Vipers beat Gulf Giants in Super Over thriller

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dubai

Desert Vipers held their nerves to prevail over Gulf Giants in the first-ever Super Over finish of the ILT20 after Sam Curran and Dan Lawrence heroics here.

After the scores were tied at 179, the Vipers went on to score 13 in the Super Over with Lawrence finding the boundary once, before Thushara got his wicket. But, Naseem Shah clinched the game for the Vipers after restricting the Giants to just nine runs on Monday.

The Vipers have beaten the Giants in each of their previous five matches. Curran (44 off 36) and Dan Lawrence's (56 off 31) partnership ensured the Vipers tied the scores despite a challenging target of 180.

Azmatullah Omarzai bagged four wickets for the Giants, but it was not enough to stop the Vipers from their third straight win of the season. The lower-order batters of the Vipers also scored crucial runs in a team effort. The Gulf Giants started on the front foot, with Pathum Nissanka (56 off 29) and Rahmanullah Gurbaz (41 off 31) taking 14 runs off Naseem in the opening exchanges.

The opening pair raced to a 50-run stand inside five overs and powered the Giants to 58 in the powerplay.

Nissanka continued his rich vein of form, bringing up his

third half-century in as many games, off just 27 balls. He struck Noor Ahmad for his fourth six of the innings, but the Afghan spinner had the final say, dismissing him off the very next delivery to end the 73-run opening stand.

Gurbaz then took charge, with James Vince providing solid support with 25 runs off 22 balls. Their 54-run partnership was broken by Khuzaima Tanveer, who removed Vince before sending Gurbaz back two balls later. The Giants were 129/3 at the end of the 14th over.

The Giants' bowlers fought their way back into the contest thereafter. Noor picked up his second wicket by dismissing Azmatullah Omarzai (20 off 13), while David Payne removed Moeen Ali (11 off 11). With only 38 runs coming from the final five overs, the Giants finished on 179/5.

Omarzai made early inroads for the Giants by dismissing Fakhar Zaman (1 off 9). Mark Adair struck soon after, removing Andries Gous (11 off 9), leaving the Vipers struggling at 14/2 early in the chase.

Curran and Impact Player Max Holden (15 off 15) attempted to steady the innings, but Haider Razaq provided the third breakthrough by sending Holden back. At the halfway mark, the Vipers were 65/3, still needing 115 runs for victory.

IPL 2026 auction to feature 350 players including 240 Indians

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

A total of 350 cricketers — 240 Indians and 110 overseas players — will go under the hammer in the Indian Premier League auction to take place in Abu Dhabi on December 16, with South Africa's wicketkeeper-batter Quinton de Kock, who recently came out of his ODI retirement, featuring in the final list.

De Kock is a late addition to the list at a base price of ₹1 crore. The list also includes Australia batter Steve Smith at a base price of ₹2 crore. Smith last played in the IPL



in 2021. A total of 1390 players registered for the Player Auction.

The number was pruned to 1005 players before 350 were finally shortlisted to battle for 77 slots available across the 10 teams for the 19th edition of the world's biggest T20 league.

The first set of players in the auction includes India and Mumbai batters Prithvi Shaw and Sarfaraz Khan, who both have kept their base price at ₹75 lakh each.

The list shared by the IPL features two Australians in Cameron Green and Jake Fraser-McGurk, along with New Zealand and

former Chennai Super Kings opener Devon Conway and South Africa's David Miller, with each of them keeping a base price of ₹2 crore.

Venkatesh Iyer, who was released by Kolkata Knight Riders, has listed himself at a base price of ₹2 crore.

Three-time winners KKR will go into the auction with the biggest purse of ₹64.3 crores, followed by five-time champions CSK with ₹43.4 crores. Sunrisers Hyderabad, who have won the IPL once, have the third highest purse of ₹25.5 crores.

Hazlewood out of Ashes series; Cummins set to return for Australia



ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Brisbane

Australian pace bowler Josh Hazlewood has been ruled out of the Ashes series with hamstring and Achilles injuries.

Hazlewood missed Australia's two eight-wicket wins over England in Perth and Brisbane but had been expected to return later in the five-match series.

Australia coach Andrew

McDonald on Tuesday said the veteran paceman would now be targeting a return for the Twenty20 World Cup early next year.

"He'll be out of the series and his preparation will then shift toward the World Cup, which is an incredibly important campaign for us," McDonald said.

"It's really flat for him. A couple of setbacks we didn't see coming — we thought he'd play a huge part in the

series." Hazlewood has been a key member of Australia's regular bowling attack for a decade.

There was better news for skipper Pat Cummins, who is expected to return for the third test in Adelaide starting December 17 after missing the first two tests while he recovers from a back problem.

The 32-year-old paceman increased his training workload at Allan Border Field in

Brisbane while the Australians were playing the second test against England at the Gabba.

He is set to be recalled as captain when the match squad is announced Wednesday. Steve Smith has been leading the Australia XI in the absence of Cummins.

"We feel as though he'll be as best prepared as can be," McDonald said. "Us seeing him further advanced, we feel he'll be really well placed for the challenges of Adelaide."

"We feel as though the simulation in the nets has got him skill ready. His body's ready to go. Barring anything else happening in the next week, I'd be expecting Pat to be tossing the coin and putting the blazer on."

The under-fire England squad, which needs a win in Adelaide to have any chance of reclaiming the Ashes, is taking a few days out this week to rest and relax at one of Australia's iconic beach towns. The fourth test starts Boxing Day at the Melbourne Cricket Ground and Sydney will host the fifth test from January 4. England hasn't won an Ashes test in Australia since the 2010-11 series.



England's Mark Wood ruled out of Ashes series with knee injury

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Brisbane (Australia)

Injured fast bowler Mark Wood has been ruled out of the Ashes in a major setback for an England lineup trailing 2-0 in the five-match series.

Wood had limited impact in the first test, bowling 11 overs without taking a wicket in the eight-wicket loss in Perth. He then missed the second cricket test in Brisbane because of his troublesome left knee.

The 35-year-old Wood's fitness had been an issue ahead of the Ashes tour after he only recently returned following knee surgery in March.

Matt Fisher, who made his only test appearance in the Caribbean in 2022, was drafted into the test

squad as cover.

In an Instagram post, Wood said he was "gutted to be out the remainder of the Ashes. After extensive surgery and seven long, hard months of work and rehab to get back into the test arena, my knee just hasn't held up."

Wood said he traveled to Australia "with high expectations about making a big impact. I'm desperately disappointed that despite yet more injections and intensive medical treatment it has become clear that the flare up in my knee is worse than feared."

Wood was England's leading wicket-taker in the 2023 Ashes series, when his return from injury coincided with a big comeback by the home team.

Hardik Pandya unique in Indian T20 side: Bangar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Former India batting coach Sanjay Bangar believes there is no other player like Hardik Pandya in the national T20 set-up because the star all-rounder is capable of commanding a spot in the team merely as a specialist batter or bowler too. Out for more than two months due a quadricep injury during the Asia Cup, Pandya will return to the Indian squad for the home five-match ODI series against South Africa beginning in Cuttack on Tuesday.

"Look at all the all-rounders in world cricket now. Does England have a back-up for Ben Stokes? No. In one-day or even Test cricket, there is no back-up for Ravindra Jadeja. It is the same with Hardik Pandya," JioStar expert Bangar said. "He (Pandya) can command a spot in the top five on his batting alone.



He could also be one of the top three seamers in any team if he was just a bowler.

"The point is, to be that kind of all-rounder, you must earn your place with your batting and also with your bowling. There is no other player like Hardik Pandya in the Indian team." On Pandya's workload management, Bangar said he should at least play the first three matches against South Africa. "We need to see how he copes," he

said, insisting that it is too early to say if he should play six or seven T20Is before the World Cup.

"Playing in the SMAT (Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy) is different from the intensity of an international game. The team management must manage the workload of important players like him. So, if needed, we must do that for Hardik too. A fit Hardik Pandya allows the team to play its desired combination, especially with the spin options we have. That's why his presence is critically very vital."

Before the India return, Pandya made a 42-ball 77 not out for Baroda in SMAT before bowling four overs at full tilt for 1/52. Test and ODI captain Shubman Gill is also making a return after missing almost a month of cricket owing to a neck spasm suffered while attempting a slog sweep during the opening Test against the Proteas.

Bangar said Gill's growth as Test captain will benefit him in other formats.

"The confidence Shubman Gill has now after doing so well in Test cricket over the last year will certainly help him. More than his skill, his mindset has grown. Taking extra responsibility as a Test Captain makes him a far more rounded player. He now understands the game situation and what is needed from him. "At the top of the order, Shubman Gill could do the job for the team in T20I cricket. And if needed, Hardik Pandya could do a similar job in the middle order."

Bangar felt Sanju Samson may find it difficult to get a slot in the Indian T20 side.

"...His best spot in T20 cricket is still at the top. With players like Tilak Varma, Shivam Dube, or Hardik Pandya available, there may not be a place for him at number four, five, or six.

Tendulkar recalls Gursharan's gesture in scoring Irani Cup ton in 1989-90

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

Sachin Tendulkar on Tuesday recalled former India player Gursharan Singh's gesture to walk out at No 10 with a broken hand only to help him score a valiant 103 for the Rest of India in their Irani Cup match against Delhi in 1989-90.

A rampant Delhi crushed the Rest of India by 309 runs in the contest played here at the Wankhede Stadium in which Tendulkar waged a lone battle scoring 103, with former India opener WV Raman's 41 being the other noticeable performance.

Struggling at 209 for nine in pursuit of a mammoth target of 554, the former India, Delhi and Punjab player Gursharan walked out at No 10 with a broken hand to support Tendulkar as the two put on another 36 runs for the final wicket. ROI were bowled out for 245

"As they say, promises are meant to be kept. I feel I'll go a step further and say that promises are meant to be



kept, but also meant to be delivered... And that is what is our DNA," Tendulkar recalled at an Ageas Federal Life Insurance event here. "I can recall an incident... Long way back in 1989 when I was playing Irani Trophy. This was a trial match before one got selected for India. I was batting in the 90s, and my partner, Gursharan Singh, had an injury - a

broken hand - and he wasn't supposed to bat.

"But he was asked by the chairman of the selection committee, Raj Singh Dungarpur, to go out and bat and support his teammate. Gursharan came and helped me reach my hundred and I got selected to play for India after that. Afterward, Gursharan also became part of the Indian cricket team," he added.

Tendulkar said the gesture from Gursharan, who made a solitary appearance each in Tests and ODIs for India, was something that touched his heart.

"I thanked him profusely on the ground and in the dressing room because it was a big thing for him to come out with a broken hand," Tendulkar said.

"Just stepping out with a broken hand was significant. Whether I scored a hundred or not was secondary. His intent and attitude mattered most to me (and) that truly touched my heart," he added.