



SIP approves Rs 4,000-crore ReNew Photovoltaics solar ingot **2**



Master plan for world-class Greenfield International Airport finalised **3**



Kharge, Rahul not invited to Putin banquet: Congress **5**



Nepal PM holds meeting with Gen Z leaders, political parties **8**



Australia takes 44-run lead in second Ashes test **12**

PIONEER IN SHORT

SPECIAL DRIVE AGAINST STREET CATTLE MENACE

Following special instructions from Collector Shan Mohan, who is also the Special Officer of the Municipal Corporation, the Municipal Commissioner has launched a special drive to address the problem of stray cattle, which in recent times has become a major menace causing traffic bottlenecks. The Collector directed the officials to remove street cattle in response to...

FULL REPORT ON P2

GOVT COMMITTED TO STRENGTHENING HEALTHCARE: GOTTIPATI

Energy Minister Gottipati Ravi Kumar said that the coalition government led by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu is according top priority to rural healthcare and ensuring that people in remote villages receive accessible and quality medical services. On Friday, the Minister, along with Health Minister...

FULL REPORT ON P3

CALCUTTA HC DECLINES TO STOP FOUNDATION OF BABRI-MODEL MOSQUE

The Calcutta High Court (HC) on Friday refused to intervene in suspended Trinamool Congress (TMC) Humayun Kabir's decision to lay the foundation stone of a mosque at Beldanga in Murshidabad district on Saturday. The Mosque is to be christened and modeled after the Babri Mosque at Ayodhya which was demolished on December 6th, 33 years ago. The Division Bench of...

FULL REPORT ON P5

NDRF COMPLETES RESCUE OPERATIONS IN SRI LANKA

India's National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) teams left for home on Friday after successfully completing search, rescue and relief operations in cyclone-hit Sri Lanka, according to the Indian mission. The island nation has been grappling with widespread flooding, landslides and severe infrastructure collapse following Cyclone Ditwah, which has left over 450 people dead till Friday. It also left several districts isolated and severely strained the...

FULL REPORT ON P8

QUOTE OF THE DAY



GLOBAL SUMMIT WILL BE THE MAIN PLATFORM FOR THE GRAND VISION OF MAKING TELANGANA A 15-FOLD BIGGER ECONOMY IN THE NEXT TWO DECADES

- TUMMALAM NAGESWARA RAO, AGRICULTURE MINISTER

CM announces 25 paise interest loans for higher, overseas education

PNS ■ Bhamini

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Friday announced that a scheme called "Kalalaku Rekkalu" (Wings to Dreams) has been designed for overseas education. Through this scheme, loans will be provided at an interest rate of 0.25 per cent (25 paise). He also offered low-interest student loans.

Chief Minister Naidu made the announcements in Parvatipuram Manyam district. He said the government will organise a 'Students Innovators Partnership Summit' to identify and reward innovative ideas. The Chief Minister said he will invite industrialists to this summit in January 2026. He was addressing a public meeting at Andhra Pradesh Model School in Bhamini as part of a mega parent-teacher meeting organised here.

He advised students that there is no need to kill their dreams and desires, citing these initiatives, and added that students are like precious stones in the earth, which can achieve anything



Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu interacting with a student during mega parent-teacher meeting in Parvatipuram Manyam district on Friday. Human Resources Minister N Lokesh is also seen

with the right guidance. Observing that Saturdays have been declared as 'no bag days', Naidu said subjecting students to the rigours of 24-hour studies will not yield good results, but limited study hours with interest are beneficial.

Likewise, he said the government is laying special emphasis on students lagging in studies and noted that those excelling are being awarded under the shining stars programme.

To improve education in the southern state, he said learning methodologies are

being studied across the world, adding that Andhra Pradesh education system will be developed as a role model for the entire country.

According to Naidu, 28 reforms were introduced in school education and 10 at the intermediate level to make the Andhra Pradesh education sector a role model for the country, among other initiatives.

Naidu said the teacher-to-student ratio in Andhra Pradesh government schools is 1:18 when compared to 1:28 in private schools.

CONTINUED ON >> P2

Naidu, Lokesh interact with students

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and Human Resources Minister Nara Lokesh on Friday participated in a mega parent-teacher meeting here in Parvatipuram Manyam district. Naidu and his son Lokesh sat in a classroom with children in a government school at Bhamini village and engaged a girl student in a reading exercise in the Telugu language from a tablet.

After the student completed reading, Naidu informed the student of her accuracy, words per minute and mispronunciations with the assistance of technology. He advised her on where she needs to improve. Similarly, the CM and Lokesh engaged the girl in identifying and pronouncing English letters as Naidu shifted from exercise to exercise on the tablet. Later, Naidu made the girl read an English passage and engaged her in other learning activities, according to an official video link.

Lokesh vows to keep schools free from political influence



PNS ■ Bhamini

Education Minister N Lokesh on Friday urged parents to admit their children in government schools, stating that the government introduced several key reforms to strengthen public education. Participating in the Mega Teachers-Parents Meeting at Bhamini village along with Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, the Minister said that the government is committed to keeping schools free from political influence, as directed by the Chief Minister.

The Chief Minister and the Minister visited the AP Model School, observed innovative teaching practices, reviewed the model classroom designed by Samagra Shiksha, and interacted with students. The duo sat among the children, enquired about classroom teaching, and understood their learning experiences. Minister Lokesh said he has always had a deep affec-

tion for children and therefore personally requested the Education portfolio from the Chief Minister. He said the CM has directed him to make the "Andhra Model of Education" the No.1 in the country. Lokesh added that Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan was regularly offering him valuable suggestions on various issues including midday meals, school kits, and women's dignity. Expressing gratitude, Lokesh said he frequently would consult Pawan Kalyan on education-related matters.

Highlighting the importance of moral values alongside academics, the Minister said the government appointed Chaganti Koteswara Rao as an advisor with Cabinet rank to promote ethical principles in society. He also noted that although given Cabinet status, Chaganti declined to use any government facilities.

India-Russia to achieve \$100 bn trade target before 2030: Modi

PNS ■ New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday exuded confidence that the USD 100 billion bilateral trade target between India and Russia will be achieved ahead of 2030. Speaking at the India-Russia Business Forum, along with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Modi invited Russian businesses to 'come and Make In India...and partner with India'.

The Prime Minister recalled that last year, President Putin had set a target of reaching USD 100 billion in bilateral trade by 2030. "However, after further discussions with President Putin and considering the tremendous potential in our partnership, I am con-



fident that we will achieve this target well ahead of schedule. We are making rapid progress towards this goal," Modi said. He further said that simplified and predictable mechanisms are being created for businesses, and discussions have begun on the FTA between India and the Eurasian Economic

Union.

Whether it is business or diplomacy, the foundation of any partnership is mutual trust, he noted.

"The greatest strength of India-Russia relations is this trust. It is this trust that gives direction to our joint efforts and also provides momentum," the Prime Minister said, adding that this is the launchpad that gives inspiration to take flight towards new dreams and aspirations.

He noted that India is a global leader in affordable, efficient electric vehicles, two-wheelers, and CNG mobility solutions, while Russia is a major producer of advanced materials.

CONTINUED ON >> P2

TTD to prepare 50-year master plan for Vontimitta temple development

PNS ■ Tirupati

TTD executive officer Anil Kumar Singhal on Friday directed the temple body officials to prepare a 50-year master plan for the development of Sri Kodandarama Swamy Temple at Vontimitta in Kadapa district.

The executive officer noted that the plan should estimate future devotee flow and provide the required infrastructure such as accommodation, transportation, greenery, spiritual ambience, and technological features.

"Singhal instructed the officials concerned to

prepare a comprehensive 50-year master plan for the development of the historic Sri Kodandarama Swamy Temple at Vontimitta in Kadapa district," said an official release from the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams.

According to the EO, the plan should include

Foreigner held for flying drone over Tirumala

PNS ■ Tirupati

Once again, a drone created a stir in Tirumala. A devotee flew a drone near the Shila Thoranam area. In fact, for security reasons, TTD has banned drone cameras in Tirumala. However, the drone flown by the devotee crossed the Alipiri toll gate and reached Tirumala. The drone was flown freely in the Shila Thoranam region. This has raised questions as to how the security personnel failed to detect it.

After some devotees and locals lodged complaints, TTD vigilance officials took the person who flew the drone into custody. It is reported that the individual



was identified as a foreigner. He was handed over to the police, who are currently questioning him. Full details regarding this incident are yet to be known.

Flying aircraft, helicopters, or drones in the Tirumala region is strictly prohibited. However, some continue to violate these rules and operate drones. In the past too, when someone flew a drone, TTD vigilance officials immediately detained him.

CONTINUED ON >> P2

Doctor suspended for forgetting surgical blade in woman's body

PNS ■ Amaravati

The Andhra Pradesh government on Friday suspended a government doctor over alleged negligence on duty which resulted in him forgetting a surgical blade inside a patient's body. Acting on Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu's orders, the Health Department suspended Narasaraopeta government hospital's civil assistant surgeon T Narayana Swamy.

"Narasaraopeta government hospital's civil assistant surgeon T Narayana Swamy has been suspended," said an official press release.

Following a tubectomy operation on a woman on November 26, Swamy allegedly left a surgical blade in her body, which was uncovered during a probe, leading to his suspension for negligence on duty, said the press release.

Two Telugu students injured in US fire accident

PNS ■ Amaravati

A major fire accident happened in Birmingham, USA. Two Telugu students suffered serious burns in the incident. Thirteen students pursuing higher education at the University of Alabama were living in an apartment complex in Birmingham.

On Friday, a fire broke out in the apartment. Within minutes, thick

smoke spread throughout the building. The students struggled to breathe and started shouting for help. Locals informed the fire station. Firefighters arrived shortly afterward and rescued all 13 students who were trapped inside.

The two Telugu students were severely injured and were immediately shifted to the hospital.

IndiGo cancels over 1,000 flights

Situation will normalise by Dec 10-15: CEO

PNS ■ New Delhi

On a day when IndiGo cancelled more than 1,000 flights, the airline's CEO Pieter Elbers on Friday said the situation is anticipated to normalise between December 10-15.

Elbers, in a video message, apologised for the major inconvenience caused to the passengers due to the disruptions. "Regrettably, earlier



measures of the last few days have proven not to be

enough. So we decided today for a reboot of all our

systems and schedules, resulting in the highest number of cancellations so far, but imperative for progressive improvements starting tomorrow onwards. "With these actions, we expect tomorrow to have cancellations below 1,000. The support of DGCA, in providing specific FDTL implementation relief, is of great help," Elbers said.

CONTINUED ON >> P2



SIP approves Rs 4,000-crore ReNew Photovoltaics solar ingot, wafer facility

PNS ■ Amaravati

The Andhra Pradesh State Investment Promotion Board headed by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has approved a Rs 4,000-crore solar ingot and wafer production facility by ReNew Photovoltaics at Rambilli in Anakapalli district.

The 6 GW greenfield facility of ReNew Energy Global PLC's subsidiary will manufacture the core building blocks used in solar cells and modules.

"ReNew Photovoltaics, a

subsidiary of ReNew Energy Global PLC, is investing Rs 3,990 crore to set up a greenfield plant at Rambilli in Anakapalli (district). The proposal was approved by the Andhra Pradesh State Investment Promotion Board," said an official press release on Friday.

The project aims to significantly reduce India's dependence on imported components, especially from China and support the country's ambitious renewable energy goals of achiev-



ing 300 GW of solar capacity by 2030, it said. Backed by the Government

of India's (GoI) Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for solar manufacturing,

the solar ingot and wafer facility will come up in a 140-acre land parcel, which will soon be handed over for construction.

Expected to be completed by March 2026, commercial production from this facility is set to begin from January 2028.

Once operational, the unit will create around 1,200 high-skilled and semi-skilled jobs, requiring 95 MW of continuous power supply and 10 MLD of water, said the press release.

BUSINESS AMARAVATI

Trump admin will expand travel ban to more than 30 countries, Noem says



PNS ■ Washington

The Trump administration will be expanding its ban on travel for citizens of certain countries to more than 30, Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said, in the latest restriction to come since a man from Afghanistan was accused of shooting two National Guard members.

The expansion would build on a travel ban already announced in June by the Republican administration, which barred travel to the US for citizens from 12 countries and restricted access to the US for people from seven others. In a social media post earlier this week, Noem had suggested more countries would be included.

Noem, who spoke late Thursday in an interview with Fox News Channel host Laura Ingraham, would not provide further details, saying President Donald Trump was considering which countries would be included.

In the wake of the National Guard shooting, the administration already ratcheted up restrictions on the 19 countries included in the initial travel ban, which include Afghanistan, Somalia, Iran and Haiti, among others.

Ingraham asked Noem whether the travel ban was expanding to 32 countries and asked which countries would be added to the 19 announced earlier this year.

"I won't be specific on the number, but it's over 30. And the president is continuing to evaluate countries," Noem said.

"If they don't have a stable government there, if they don't have a country that can sustain itself and tell us who those individuals are and help us vet them, why should we allow people from that country to come here to the United States?"

The expansion would build on a travel ban already announced in June by the Republican administration, which barred travel to the US for citizens from 12 countries and restricted access to the US for people from seven others

Noem said.

The Department of Homeland Security did not respond to requests for comment about when an updated travel ban might go into effect and which countries would be included in it.

Additions to the June travel ban are the latest in what has been a rapidly unfolding series of immigration actions since the shooting Thanksgiving week of two National Guard troops in Washington.

Rahmanullah Lakanwal, who emigrated to the US from Afghanistan after the US withdrawal, has been charged with first-degree murder after one of the two victims, West Virginia National Guard Specialist Sarah Beckstrom, died of wounds sustained in the November 26 shooting. The second victim, Staff Sgt. Andrew Wolfe, was critically wounded. Lakanwal has pleaded not guilty.

The Trump administration has argued that more vetting is needed to make sure people entering or already in the US aren't a threat. Critics say the administration is traumatising people who've already gone through extensive vetting to get to the US and say the new measures amount to collective punishment.

Trivikram Rao appointed as Official Language panel chief

PNS ■ Amaravati

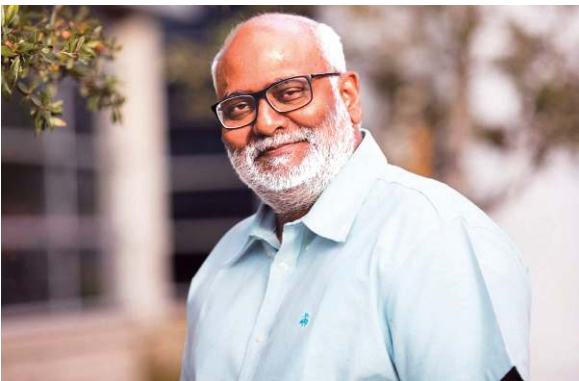
The state government has issued orders appointing P Trivikram Rao as the president of the Official Language Commission. The orders stated that he would continue in this position for two years from the date he assumes office.

Along with this, the government has issued guidelines regarding the activities to be carried out by the Official Language Commission.

It has directed the Commission to inspect the usage of the Telugu language in government and public sector organisations. It has instructed the Commission to give appropriate suggestions, advice, and directions to the officials concerned regarding the use of Telugu. The government has ordered the preparation of an action plan to increase the use of the Telugu language in official government programs.

It also suggested formulating measures to restrict the use of English in official programmes conducted by the state government.

Music director Keeravani to perform at TG Global Summit



PNS ■ Hyderabad

Oscar-winning music director M M Keeravani will give a 90-minute musical concert at the 'Telangana Rising Global Summit', to be organised by the state government here on December 8 and 9. The delegates arriving from across the world would be welcomed with Telangana's traditional dance forms like Kommu Koya, Banjara, Kolatam, Gussadi, Oggu Dollu, women Dappulu, Perini Natyam and Bonala Kolatam.

The attendees would also experience an instrumental and dance fusion show, a veena concert by P Jayalakshmi and Perini Natyam by Sri Kala Krishna, the government's 'TelanganaRisingGlobalSummit' account said in a

post on X on Friday.

The summit venue would be opened to the public from December 10 to 13 supported by free bus services from major points across Hyderabad, it said.

The Telangana government is gearing up to organise the summit on December 8 and 9 on a grand scale in a site on the outskirts of Hyderabad, where it proposes to develop the 'Bharat Future City', envisioned as India's first net-zero city and designed to be both sustainable and economically vibrant.

As part of the summit, the government would unveil its vision outlining how it plans to transform Telangana into a USD 3 trillion economy by 2047 and the developmental roadmap it plans to pursue in the coming years.

Maxi Vision offers free eye screening for police personnel

PNS ■ Kakinada

District Superintendent of police Bindu Madhav has complimented the Maxi vision Eye Hospital management for presenting twenty traffic barricades keeping in view the traffic regulation requirement as a special responsibility and service programme. He also appreciated its gesture in presenting 120 umbrellas to traffic police personnel who were discharging their duties against heavy odds of exposure to adverse seasonal conditions.

Addressing a special function held at the district police office here on Friday, the SP has called upon the other institutions to come forward to lend their helping hand in implementation of governmental programmes in public interest by their participation. Maxi vision eye hospital specialist doctor



District Superintendent of police Bindu Madhav inaugurating barricades presented Maxi Vision in Kakinada on Friday

Amrutha said that the police personnel who were exposed to vagaries of nature in discharging their duties round the clock require eye check up for every six months for healthy vision. Several eye problems could be identified and treated by early diagnosis, she added.

Maxi vision cluster Head Akhil Tholeti said that their organisation was viewing the police who are striving round

the clock in maintenance of law and order as the 'real heroes'. He said their hospital was always ready to serve the police by extending free eye check up and concessional treatment.

Additional SP armed reserve Srinivasarao, Kakinada Sub divisional police officer Devaraj Manish patil, Special branch DSP KVV Satyanarayana ,AR DSP Sriharirao were among those attended.

Special drive against street cattle menace

PNS ■ Kakinada

Following special instructions from Collector Shan Mohan, who is also the Special Officer of the Municipal Corporation, the Municipal Commissioner has launched a special drive to address the problem of stray cattle, which in recent times has become a major menace causing traffic bottlenecks.

The Collector directed the officials to remove street cattle in response to numerous complaints from pedestrians and vehicle owners about the traffic hazards they were causing. Corporation authorities stated that they were left with no alternative, as cattle owners had failed to respond to earlier notices.

Starting Friday, Municipal Corporation staff began rounding up stray cattle and shifting them to special shelters managed by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA).

In the initial operation launched in the busy Vidyut



Nagar area, the municipal sanitation staff, led by Sanitary Inspector Durgarao, drove more than fifty animals—including oxen, buffaloes, and cows—to the SPCA shelters.

Municipal Commissioner Satyanarayana said that the drive has been intensified keeping in view pedestrian safety and the need for proper road traffic regulation. He added that the special drive would be further intensified across the city in the coming days to put an end to the menace.

TDP receives Rs 83 cr, YSRCP Rs 140 cr in donations last fiscal

PNS ■ Amaravati

The ruling Telugu Desam Party has received over Rs 83 crore in donations during the last financial year, as against over Rs 100 crore a year ago, according to Election Commission data.

Pawan Kalyan-led Janasena, an ally of TDP in the NDA government in Andhra Pradesh, has received over Rs 25.33 crore during 2024-25.

Natco Pharma, which donated Rs 7 crore to TDP and Rs 1.5 crore to Janasena, was one of the major donors to both parties. TDP received Rs 33 crore through electoral bonds during 2024-25. The Natco Pharma donated Rs 10 crore to the party during 2024-25. After the party was routed in the Assembly elections held in June last year, it received just Rs 3.94 crore in total.

YSRCP accuses govt of reducing Polavaram to mere barrage

PNS ■ Tadepalli

Senior YSRCP leader and former minister A Rambabu on Friday accused the Andhra Pradesh government of "destroying" the Polavaram project for "commissions" and silently allowing the Centre to downgrade it.

Rambabu alleged that Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu turned Polavaram, considered the lifeline of Andhra Pradesh, into an "endless saga" through selfish decisions taken over the years.

"Naidu is destroying the Polavaram project for the sake of commissions and now silently allowing the Centre to downgrade it," he said.

Addressing a press conference, the former minister

alleged that the CM treated the project like an ATM and pushed it into chaos through faulty execution.

He further alleged that Naidu is reducing Polavaram to a mere barrage by limiting the project's full reservoir level and blocking essential funds.

The YSRCP will fight until justice is ensured, he said.

The opposition leader alleged that Naidu, during his pervious tenure (2014-19), constructed the diaphragm wall without completing essential works such as cofferdams and spillways, resulting in its destruction during floods and causing massive losses.

According to the former minister, the previous YSRCP government between 2019 and 2024 corrected those



errors by completing the cofferdams, spillway, channels and power house works, and secured revised cost approvals at realistic prices to move the project forward.

He claimed that the Union Jal Shakti Ministry had proposed releasing over Rs 12,200 crore for the first phase in March 2024, but the file

was allegedly stalled after the NDA alliance government was formed, fearing political advantage to former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Further, he alleged that the NDA coalition government's decision to restrict storage to 41.15 metres reduced Polavaram to a

barrage capable of supporting barely two lakh acres, compared to the originally permitted capacity that could stabilise lakhs of acres across Godavari and Krishna deltas.

Rambabu questioned the silence of TDP MPs and alliance leaders in Parliament, saying even union ministers from Andhra Pradesh allegedly failed to defend the state's interests despite a "grave injustice" being announced.

Alleging political motives behind the 'downgrade', the opposition leader said farmers and affected families were ready to launch a mass agitation if required, Rambabu said, adding that YSRCP would mobilise people to protect the project.

Furthermore, the former minister criticised Naidu

and IT Minister Nara Lokesh for "theatrics" in government schools during Friday's mega parent teacher meeting (PTM) at Bhamini in Parvatipuram Manyam district, recalling that the benches they displayed were supplied under the previous YSRCP government's Nadu-Nedu programme, which had renovated thousands of schools and upgraded hospitals.

He alleged that the NDA coalition leaders failed to improve even a single school and were now creating distress by stopping tablet distribution and attempting to discredit reforms implemented during the previous YSRCP government's tenure.

Meanwhile, there was no immediate response from the ruling TDP.

CM announces...

Earlier, accompanied by Human Resources Minister Nara Lokesh, the CM launched the Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) programme.

Naidu and Lokesh sat in a classroom with children and engaged a girl student in a reading exercise in the Telugu language from a tablet. After the student completed reading, Naidu informed the student of her accuracy, words per minute and mispronunciations with the assistance of technology.

He advised her on where she needs to improve.

Similarly, the CM and Lokesh engaged the girl in identifying and pronouncing English letters as Naidu shifted from exercise to exercise on the tablet.

Naidu made the girl read an English passage and engaged her in other learning activities, according to an official video link.Besides the CM, public representatives participated in PTMs across the state, including Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan in Palnadu district.

Mould children into...

Additionally, he promised to donate twenty-five computers to the school and instructed officials to prepare a plan for developing a proper playground.

He urged parents to monitor their children carefully, recognize their innate talents, and provide moral guidance that helps them choose the right path. Children, he said, should not be exposed to abusive content or diverted by excessive fascination with cinema.

The Deputy Chief Minister

issued a strong warning about the rising threat of marijuana and other narcotic substances in society. He pointed out that during the previous government's tenure, drug networks expanded and even distributed narcotics in disguised forms such as chocolates and biscuits.

During the event, Pawan Kalyan interacted with students, visited their classrooms, examined their science models and handicrafts, and appreciated their achievements in academics and sports.

He spent time sitting with them on classroom benches, enquiring about the facilities available and their learning experience. Education officials also presented the newly introduced Holistic Progress Card to him, explaining how it tracks a student's academic growth, social and emotional skills, scientific aptitude, sports performance, and overall personality development. Pawan Kalyan reviewed several student reports individual-

ly and congratulated them for their efforts.

India-Russia to...

By partnering in EV manufacturing, automotive components, and shared mobility technologies, the two countries can not only meet their domestic demands but also contribute to the development of the Global South, Modi said. President Putin said Russia is for strengthening its multifaceted relations with India in various fields.

He also said that Russian companies are ready to

increase purchases of a wide range of goods and services from India.

Foreigner held for...

In another incident, a person recorded videos in Tirumala and uploaded them on his YouTube channel, causing a stir. Yet another devotee managed to take a mobile phone into the temple itself — an incident that drew attention at the time. Despite repeated warnings from TTD, some individuals continue to violate the rules. Therefore, the TTD authorities need to take

stricter measures to prevent such incidents from happening again in Tirumala.

IndiGo cancels over...

Aviation regulator DGCA has kept in abeyance the implementation of the new Flight Duty Time Limitations (FDTL) norms, and gaps in planning the second phase implementation of these norms are one of the key factors for the current flight disruptions.

IndiGo is the country's largest airline and generally operates around 2,300 flights daily.

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Order Order

Temple money belongs to deity, cannot be used to save cooperative banks: SC



Thirunelly Temple, Kerala

The Supreme Court on Friday said that money belonging to a temple deity cannot be used to prop up financially distressed cooperative banks.

The sharp observations were made by a bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi while hearing appeals filed by a few cooperative banks challenging a direction of the Kerala High Court asking them to return the deposits to the Thirunelly Temple Devaswom.

"You want to use the temple money to save the bank? What is wrong with directing that the temple money, instead of being in a cooperative bank which is breathing with great difficulty, should go to a healthy nationalised bank which can give maximum interest," the CJJ asked. Temple money belongs to the deity and hence, the money has to be "saved, protected and utilised only for the interests of the temple" and it cannot become a source of income or survival for a cooperative bank, the CJJ said.

The pleas against the High Court order were filed by Mananthawady Co-operative Urban Society Ltd and Thirunelly Service Cooperative Bank Ltd.

The High Court had directed five cooperative banks to close the Devaswom's fixed deposits and refund the entire amount within two months, following repeated refusals by the banks to release the matured deposits. The case arose from a plea filed by the Thirunelly Devaswom after several cooperative banks refused to repay the temple's fixed deposits despite repeated requests.

SC declines PIL on regulating AI use in judiciary, seeks suggestions



The Supreme Court on Friday refused to entertain a PIL seeking to curb the "unregulated" use of artificial intelligence and machine learning in the judicial system. The top court said it was aware of the ill effects of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) tools in the judiciary, but these issues can be appropriately addressed by it on the administrative side rather than through judicial directions.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi heard senior advocate Anupam Lal Das, appearing for petitioner Kartikeya Rawal, who had sought safeguards against the risks posed by AI-generated content and its alleged misuse in judicial processes.

The senior lawyer said the AI tools create non-existent judicial precedents or judgements and they finally become part of judicial pronouncements.

While acknowledging the concerns, the CJJ said this a lesson for the Bar and the judges both.

Lawyers, ex-judges object to CJI remarks on Rohingyas

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Former Judges, advocates and the Campaign for Judicial Accountability and Reforms (CJAR) headed by noted lawyer Prashant Bhushan have written an open letter to Chief Justice of India Surya Kant expressing their concern over the "unconscionable remarks" made regarding Rohingya refugees by the CJJ's bench in a recent hearing.

The letter states that the CJJ is not just a legal functionary but also the custodian and final arbiter of rights of the poor, whose words carry weight in the conscience of the country and have a cascading effect. "As the head of the judiciary, the Chief Justice is not just a legal functionary — but is also the custodian and final arbiter of the rights of the poor, the dispossessed, and the marginalised. Your words carry weight not simply in the courtroom but in the conscience of the nation and have a cascading effect on the High Courts, the lower judiciary and other Government authorities."

"The remarks from the bench are contrary to core constitutional values. They have had the effect of dehumanising Rohingya refugees whose equal humanity and equal human rights are protected by the Constitution, our laws and by international law," said the open letter to CJJ.

Former Judges and advocates said that the remarks made on December 2 dehumanise those fleeing genocidal persecution and weaken the moral



Chief Justice of India Surya Kant

authority of the judiciary. "The Rohingya, as indeed any person residing in India, is entitled to the protections of Article 21 and not just protections from "third degree measures".

This fundamental right is available to an individual who is a citizen or any other person residing in India. In NHRC v State of Arunachal Pradesh, 1996 SCC (I) 742, this Hon'ble Court has held that, "the State is bound to protect the life and liberty of every human being, be he a citizen or otherwise" the letter states. The letter goes a step further to say that the remarks provide a reasonable basis for apprehension of prejudice on the part of the CJJ bench.

"The majesty of the Supreme Court

and your office is measured not merely by the number of verdicts or administrative measures but more by the humanity with which those verdicts are delivered and considered", said the open letter to CJJ.

The signatories are : Justice AP Shah, former Chief Justice, Delhi High Court Justice K. Chandru, Former Judge, Madras High Court Justice Anjana Prakash, Former judge, Patna High Court Prof. Mohan Gopal, Former Director, National Judicial Academy Senior Advocates Rajeev Dhavan, Chander Uday Singh, Colin Gonzalves, Kamini Jaiswal, Mihir Desai, Gopal Shankar Narayan, Gautam Bhatia, Shahrukh Alam and CJAR headed by Prashant Bhushan.

National Herald case: Delhi Police issues notice to Karnataka Dy CM Shivakumar



DK Shivakumar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Delhi Police has issued a notice to Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar seeking financial and transactional details as part of its probe into the National Herald case, an official said on Friday.

The notice issued by the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) states that Shivakumar is "supposed to be having vital information" pertaining to the National Herald case registered on October 3 this year, against Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi.

In the notice dated November 29, the EOW has asked Shivakumar to appear before it or provide the requested information by December 19 latest. Investigators have sought details about his personal background, his association with the Congress party, and a complete break up of funds allegedly transferred by him

or associated entities to Young Indian.

"This is to inform you that the EOW, Delhi Police is investigating the above cited case FIR and that you are supposed to be having vital information in respect of the above case," the notice stated. The EOW posers include the purpose of Shivakumar's bank transfers, the source of these funds, details of any communication between him and Young Indian or AICC (All India Congress Committee) functionaries, if the payments were made on anyone's instructions, and whether he was aware of the intended use of the funds. The EOW has also asked for income tax records, financial statements and any donation certificates issued in relation to the payments.

The National Herald case, originally triggered by a 2013 private complaint by BJP leader Subramanian Swamy, is based on allegations that Associated Journals Limited

(AJL) assets worth more than ₹2000 crore were acquired by the Young Indian for ₹50 lakh through a 2010 transaction involving the AICC.

The FIR registered by the EOW, based on a complaint from the Enforcement Directorate, alleges criminal conspiracy, cheating and criminal breach of trust in connection with the transfer of AJL assets to Young Indian, a company in which Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi together hold 76 per cent stakes. The ED has provisionally attached National Herald's properties in Delhi, Mumbai and Lucknow in April 2025. Congress leaders said Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister said he is being targeted for "not playing ball" with the BJP, and this underscores that he is among the key leaders "taking the hit" for Congress.

They further said Shivakumar is the "most persecuted" among Congress leaders, but the BJP will not succeed in "breaking him".

Transfer of HC judges are made in public interest: Law Minister

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

All transfers of High Court judges are made in "public interest" for promoting better administration of justice and there is no timeline for such transfers, the Government said on Friday.

In a written reply in the Lok Sabha, Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal said that as per the memorandum of procedure (MoP) for appointment and transfer of High Court judges, the proposal for transfer of High Court judges is initiated by the Chief Justice of India in consultation with four senior-most judges of the Supreme Court.

The CJJ is also expected to take into account the views of the Chief Justice of the High Court from which the judge is to be transferred, as also the Chief Justice of the High Court to which the transfer is to be effected, besides taking into account the views of one or more Supreme Court judges who are in a position to offer views.



Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal

The personal factors relating to the judge concerned, including the chief justice, and his response to the proposal, including his preference of places, should invariably be taken into account by the Chief Justice of India.

"All transfers are to be made in public interest — for promoting better administration of justice throughout the country.

No timeline has been prescribed in the MoP for transfer of judges from one High Court to another," Meghwal said.

Reach consensus or court will appoint VCs: SC to Kerala CM, Guv

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday said it will intervene to resolve the ongoing deadlock over the selection of vice chancellors for two technical universities in Kerala if Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and Governor-cum-chancellor Rajendra Arlekar do not reach a consensus. A bench of justices JB Pardiwala and PB Varale was hearing the matter related to the appointments of VCs of the APJ Abdul Kalam Technological University, and the University of Digital Sciences Innovation and Technology.

The bench asked Attorney General R Venkataramani, appearing for the Governor, and senior advocate Jaideep Gupta, representing the Chief Minister, to find out some amicable solution to the impasse.

Venkataramani submitted that the Justice (Retd) Sudhanshu Dhulia committee had recommended two sets of names and the chancellor had picked two names. "The Chief Minister has some difficulty with some names. There are some common names," the AG said.

Advocate Gupta said that the name, which is not acceptable to the chief minister, is the only one that the governor-cum-chancellor agrees upon.

"I think a resolution has to be found by this Court," Gupta replied.

Justice Pardiwala told the senior counsels that Justice Dhulia led committee had recommended four names each for two universities and the governor and chief minister should appoint the most meritorious candidates from both the batches.

Noting that it will intervene and make the appoint-

ments itself if the consensus is not reached by December 9, the apex court said, "Reach consensus by Tuesday or we will appoint the vice chancellors and resolve the issue." The top court has posted the matter for hearing on Thursday.

Venkataramani said the chancellor found two of the names figures in both the lists, then they are the best candidates to be recommended.

On November 28, the top court took serious exception to Kerala Governor and chancellor "not looking" at the Dhulia committee report on the appointment of vice chancellors of two universities and remarked it is not just an ordinary piece of paper.

The top court had asked the Kerala Governor to take a call on the report within a week and apprise the decision to the apex court on December 5.



Governor of Kerala Rajendra Arlekar

Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan

SC shaped, reshaped contours of freedom of speech since Independence: Ex CJI Gavai

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

The Supreme Court has steadily shaped and reshaped the contours of freedom of speech and expression in the last 75 years, former Chief Justice of India BR Gavai said here on Friday. "The evolution of free speech jurisprudence in India reflects a larger constitutional commitment to ensure that the State's power to restrict expression does not overshadow the citizen's right to think, to speak and to participate freely in the democratic set-up," he asserted.

He was delivering the Justice KT Desai Memorial Lecture 2025 on 'Freedom of Speech and Expression: Its Scope and Limitations Under the Constitution'. Citing several landmark judgments of the Supreme Court since Independence, the former CJI traced out the evolution of law over the years and role played by the judiciary in protecting citizen's rights.

"Over the last 75 years, the Supreme Court has steadily shaped and reshaped the contours of the freedom



Former CJI BR Gavai

of speech and expression under Article 19 1(A), while simultaneously defining the permissible limit under Article 19 (2)," he said. "What emerges from this constitutional journey is a conscious and consistent judicial effort to preserve the breadth of free speech and constraint the scope of restrictions so that the right is not diluted through overreach, vagueness and excessive state control," Gavai said.

Recognising that freedom of speech and expression protects diverse and highly personal modes of expression integral to dignity, autonomy and

democratic participation, the court has expanded the understanding of expression to include personal and identity based freedom, he pointed out. In this reference, he cited a judgement in which the apex court held that transgender persons have a constitutionally protected right to express their gender. He highlighted that as the 21 century began the "court also increasingly recognised that freedom of speech and expression is integral to the health of democracy, particularly in ensuring transparency and enabling citizens to make informed electoral choices".

Gavai pointed out that, in the recent past, the SC has been increasingly called upon to navigate the complexities of digital communication, its unprecedented reach, its potential for misuse and its fundamental role in shaping public discourse. "Traditional free speech principles must be recalibrated to respond to the unique challenges posed by the online world, including misinformation, surveillance and the monopolistic powers of digital intermediaries," the ex-CJI said.

Don't test patience, Madras HC on comments on judge

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Madurai

The Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court on Friday remarked that it will not tolerate comments degrading the judiciary. Those who comment should remember not to test the patience of the court, a division bench orally observed when advocate MR Venkatesh representing the writ petitioners in the Thirupparankundram lamp lighting (Karthigai Deepam) row, said personal remarks were being made against the single judge who allowed the lighting of the lamp on the ancient stone pillar atop the Thirupparankundram hill near a Dargah.

"Persons violating the law think that there won't be any reaction. Please instruct your clients not to test the patience of the court and degrade the judiciary," the court said. It warned that action would be taken if they continued to demoralise the judicial



Thirupparankundram temple

institution. "Whether you are in power or not, you have tongue or no tongue. Whatever it is, if you are going to demoralise the institution, the constitution will remain only on paper," the Bench comprising Justices G Jayachandran and KK Ramakrishnan remarked. Merely because judges cannot openly react, persons should

not keep on provoking the court. Strict action would be taken if they exceeded the limits, the Bench warned while hearing the appeal against the single judge, Justice GR Swaminathan's order directing the management of the Arulmighu Subrahmanya Swamy temple to facilitate the lighting of Karthigai Deepam at

the Deepathoni (stone pillar) on December 3 evening. However, since the order was not complied, the petitioners sought Justice Swaminathan to initiate contempt proceedings against the temple authorities.

On the other hand, the executive officer of the temple, Madurai District Collector and the police commissioner moved the division bench to quash the single judge order. The Bench said it would hear the Karthigai Deepam case verdict on December 12 after all the parties already involved in the case filed their appeals.

"We will hear everyone together. All those parties already involved in the case will be allowed to file pleas. No one will be allowed to implead," the Bench said. Meanwhile, Justice Swaminathan adjourned to December 9 the contempt petition filed by petitioner Rama Ravikumar over non-compliance of the December 1 verdict.



States Focus



BIHAR GOVT CREATES 3 NEW DEPARTMENTS TO BOOST JOBS

The Bihar Government on Friday announced the creation of three new departments, directorate of micro, small and medium enterprises and the state marketing promotion corporation to provide more employment opportunities for the state's youth.

According to an official, the newly created departments are the Youth, Employment and Skill Development Department, the Higher Education Department and the Civil Aviation Department. Announcing the decision, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar wrote on social media, "We have set a target to provide jobs to one crore youth in the next five years (2025-30). For this, it's essential that more youth be trained for skill development. For this, instructions have been given to create three new departments: Youth, Employment and Skill Development Department, Higher Education Department, and Civil Aviation Department."



WORLD BOOK OF RECORDS HONORS NITISH'S 10TH OATH

The World Book of Records, London, on Friday recognised Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's "milestone" of having taken oath as chief minister for the 10th time.

Announcing the development, Janata Dal (United) national working president Sanjay Jha posted on social media, "It is a matter of great joy and pride to share that the World Book of Records, London, has recognised the extraordinary milestone achieved by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, who has taken oath as Chief Minister for the 10th time."

Kharge, Rahul not invited to Putin banquet: Congress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Congress on Friday said Leaders of Opposition (LoP) Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi have not been invited to the banquet for Russian President Vladimir Putin, and took a swipe at its own MP Shashi Tharoor for accepting the invite.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said, "There has been speculation whether the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and the Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha have been invited for tonight's official dinner in honour of President Putin. The two LoPs have not been invited."

Congress' media and publicity department head Pawan Khara accused the Government of breaking protocols daily and not believing in democratic principles. "There is no invite to both the



LoPs, (Mallikarjun) Kharge and (Rahul) Gandhi. This comes as a surprise but I don't think we should be surprised. This Government is known to be breaching all protocols. What

else to say, ask the Government," Khara said.

Asked about party MP Tharoor getting invited to the banquet and accepting the invitation, Khara said,

"Ask Tharoor. All of us who are in the party, if our leaders don't get invited and we get invited, we need to question our own conscience and listen to our

conscience. Politics has been played in inviting or not inviting people, which in itself is questionable and those who accept such an invite is also questionable," Khara said.

Earlier, Tharoor said there was a time when the chairman of the external affairs committee was routinely invited but that practice seems to have stopped from some years.

"It has been resumed, I have been invited, yes. I will definitely go," the chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs said.

On the LoPs reportedly not getting an invite, Tharoor said, "I don't know on what basis invitations were sent. I think the custom that usually used to be followed was for a wide representation. Certainly, I remember in the olden days, they used to invite not only the LoPs,

(but) various other cross section of representatives of different parties. It conveys a good impression."

"I don't know the basis (of invitation), this is all done by the Government, by the protocol by the Rashtrapati Bhawan, what do I know. All I can say I have honoured to have been invited. Of course I will go," Tharoor told reporters in the Parliament House complex.

Rahul on Thursday had alleged that the Government tells visiting foreign dignitaries not to meet the Leader of the Opposition due to its "insecurity". His remarks had come hours ahead of Putin's two-day visit to India.

The Congress leader had said it is a tradition that visiting foreign dignitaries meet the LoP but Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Ministry of External Affairs were not following this norm.

Champai Soren backs delisting converted Adivasis from ST list

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Jamshedpur

Former Jharkhand Chief Minister and BJP MLA Champai Soren on Friday said delisting Adivasis who have converted to other religions from the Scheduled Tribe category (ST) was essential to protect tribal identity and traditional practices.

Religious conversion is a major threat to the existence of the Adivasi society, Soren said in a statement.

"If conversions continued, no one would be left in the tribal community to offer prayers at our Jaherthan, Sarna Sthal and Deshawli in the future, and our tradition, culture and existence would be wiped out," he claimed.

Soren said people from the Adivasi community who choose to adopt another religion were free to follow their faith, but "should not be entitled to reservation benefits and other constitutional rights meant for Scheduled Tribes."

Delisting them, he claimed, "could save our orthodox systems and existence." He also alleged that rampant infiltration from Bangladesh posed a serious threat to the tribal community.

According to him, infiltrators were grabbing tribal land and misusing reservation quotas through marriages in some areas.

Strongly pitching for the Special Intensive Review (SIR) of electoral rolls in the state,

the BJP leader said it would not only help identify infiltrators, but also make the process of "removal from the electoral system and deportation smoother".

Meanwhile, BJP Scheduled Tribe Morcha national executive member Ramesh Hansda said municipal elections in the state should be conducted only after the SIR is completed.

The proposed civic polls, which have to be completed by March 31, 2026, will not be impartial if held before SIR is completed, Hansda, a working committee member of BJP Jharkhand, said. The last revision of voters' list in the state was held before the 2024 Assembly polls.

Lok Sabha members seek new site for Nashik Sadhugram project

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A strong demand was made in the Lok Sabha for an alternate site to develop a 'Sadhugram' in Nashik instead of building it in the Tapovan area by felling over 1,800 trees.

Raising the issue during Zero Hour, Shiv Sena-UBT member Rajabhau Waje urged the Centre to stop the development of Sadhugram at Tapovan ahead of the 2027 Kumbh Mela in Nashik-Trimbakeshwar.

Waje said locals of Nashik-Trimbakeshwar have been opposing the felling of trees in Tapovan and urged the Centre to look for an alternative site.

BJP member Anurag Thakur raised the issue of the Pong Dam project-affected persons from Himachal Pradesh who were to be rehabilitated in Rajasthan.

Thakur, a former Union minister, said 6,500 families were still awaiting rehabilitation in the project that was taken up in 1970 during the Congress Governments.

"Fifty years ago, the then Congress Government promised land allocation in Rajasthan to the displaced families from 339 villages—20,772 families—for the construction of the Pong Dam in Kangra, Himachal, and that promise remains unfulfilled to this day," Thakur said.

He demanded that the Centre set up inter-ministerial consultations with Jal Shakti and Home ministries and setting up of a joint task force of Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh Governments to speed up rehabilitation efforts.

Congress MP from Meghalaya Saleng A Sangma said more than three lakh youth aged 15-29 are drug addicts, and thousands are suffering from HIV/AIDS in the north-eastern state.

"In Meghalaya, there is no rehabilitation centre and no system in place to offer convenience for patients. I request through you to the Government to set up at least 2-3 rehabilitation centres," Sangma said.

Calcutta HC declines to stop foundation of Babri-model Mosque

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ Kolkata

The Calcutta High Court (HC) on Friday refused to intervene in suspended Trinamool Congress (TMC) Humayun Kabir's decision to lay the foundation stone of a mosque at Beldanga in Murshidabad district on Saturday. The Mosque is to be christened and modeled after the Babri Mosque at Ayodhya which was demolished on December 6th, 33 years ago.

The Division Bench of Acting Chief Justice Sujoy Paul, after hearing a public interest litigation seeking stay on the foundation stone laying ceremony for the proposed mosque—as it could trigger law and order situation—observed that it was the duty State Government to maintain law and order.

The petitioner in his draft pleaded that "the MLA (Kabir) has been using filthy and derogatory statements and hate speech against a community, which causes breach of public tranquility."

Such kind of statements and hate speech over social media, being a Member of Legislative Assembly, may break the communal

harmony of our state as well as our country," hence the petition sought to "stop foundation stone laying of Babri Masjid to maintain Law and order."

Meanwhile the suspended TMC MLA continued to fire salvos at his former outfit and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for committing "showing her true colours when it comes to the construction of constructing a mosque."

A fuming Kabir who was on Thursday suspended from the party for making "irresponsible remarks and refusing to follow the party line" on Friday said "it is the same Chief Minister who has been constructing temples, organising carnivals during Durga Pujas encroaching Government land in Kolkata and granting ₹1.10 lakh from public money to clubs organising Durga Pujas but when it comes to constructing a mosque and that too on a private land with private money she tries to stop me from laying the foundation stone of the mosque and suspends men, she has shown her true colours and the kind of secularism she practices, she has committed

a big blunder and will have to pay high price in 2026 Assembly elections."

Senior Congress leader and former MP Adhir Chowdhury too slammed the Chief Minister for opening the Pandora's box "by constructing Jagannath Temple at Digha and preparing to construct Durga Temple and Mahakal Temple out of Government funds, she has set the trend in order to project herself as a Hindutva champion so as to contain the BJP, now she will have to face the music."

Bengal Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari on the other hand said that his party was not opposed to constructing any mosque but what bothered was its name. "Anyone can construct a mosque, temple, Gurudwara or church but when you construct it in the name of a Moghul invader every nationalistic person will object to it," he said.

Meanwhile, the State police on Friday made a massive security bandobast in Murshidabad, particularly at Beldanga block to preempt any law and order problem, sources in the State administration said.

Karnataka LoP hits out at Siddaramaiah, calls him shameless

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bengaluru

Targeting Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and the Congress Government in Karnataka on alleged corruption, BJP leader R Ashoka on Friday said, being foolish was forgivable, but being "shameless" in public life was not.

The Leader of Opposition in the state Assembly claimed that in just 30 months of its tenure, the Congress administration has broken every previous record on corruption-related controversies.

He was responding to Siddaramaiah's post on social media on Thursday hitting back at the BJP, stating that Upa Lokayukta Justice Veerappa's claims of "63 per cent corruption" were based on his report in November 2019, when BJP's BS Yediyurappa was the CM.

"But Ashoka, without understanding the Upa Lokayukta's statement properly, has ended up tying the BJP's own bells of sins onto our heads and has effectively shot himself in the foot," the CM had said, as he accused Ashoka of foolishness for trying to twist Veerappa's statement to target the

current Government.

Responding, Ashoka said, "it is one thing to be called foolish in politics, that can be forgiven."

"But in public life, especially in the Chief Minister's chair, one must never become shameless," Ashoka posted on social media on Friday addressing Siddaramaiah.

Noting that the CM himself had admitted on the floor of the Assembly that a ₹87 crore scam took place in the Valmiki Development Corporation, he said that when a CM acknowledges such a massive irregularity inside the floor of the House, the natural expectation is immediate action and accountability.

"But instead of taking responsibility, you continue in office as if nothing has happened. What should the people of Karnataka call this, if not sheer shamelessness," he asked.

Pointing out that the CM's Economic Advisor and senior Congress MLA Basavarajja Rayareddy had publicly stated that under Congress rule, Karnataka has become number 1 in corruption, Ashoka said, "Yet, you still cling to the Chief Minister's chair without a moment of introspection. What should the



people of Karnataka call this, if not sheer shamelessness."

Senior Congress MLA CR Patil had exposed the "money for House" racket in the Housing Department and even warned that the Government would collapse if the details he has were made public, Ashoka said.

"Despite such serious allegations from within your own party (Congress), you neither initiated an inquiry nor acted against the concerned minister. What should the people of Karnataka call this, if not sheer shamelessness," Ashoka asked the CM.

Highlighting the "40 percent commission" allegation Congress made against the previous BJP Government, the Opposition leader said, the commission that the Siddaramaiah

Government appointed concluded that the accusation was baseless.

"After your own panel demolished your own claim, what moral right do you have to continue repeating that allegation. What should the people of Karnataka call this, if not sheer shamelessness," he asked.

For the last two and a half years, Karnataka has been 'drowning' in corruption, scandals, irregularities and allegations across departments. Ashoka said, "If I begin listing every case that emerged under your Government, even 24 hours would not be enough."

"And the most tragic aspect of your administration is this: the unbearable pressure, corruption demands and administrative harassment under your

Government pushed several officers and contractors into extreme distress—including the suicide of Chandrasekharan which exposed the Valmiki Development Corporation scam—a sign of how deeply broken the system has become under your watch," he said.

Instead of fixing this hopeless environment, the Government has tried to bury every complaint and silence every voice, he charged.

"Being foolish is forgivable, but being shameless in public life is definitely not." "When your own ministers admit scams, when your own advisors certify Karnataka as number 1 in corruption, and when your own MLAs expose rackets inside your departments - clinging to power without accountability is not leadership. It is shamelessness in its purest form." PTI KSU

Earlier on Thursday Ashoka had demanded that the corruption case and allegations in the state against the Congress Government be handed over to a CBI investigation, citing a reported statement by Upalokayukta Justice Veerappa alleging "63 per cent corruption."

Rijiju rules out extending registration deadline for Waqf properties

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju on Friday ruled out extending the deadline for registering Waqf properties on the UMEED portal but said a way would be found for those who attempted registration but could not complete and that they will be exempted from penalties for the next three months.

He also said that 1.51 lakh properties had been registered by Friday morning.

The minister stressed that those *mutawallis* (Waqf property caretakers) who have not registered on the portal at all can approach their respective Waqf tribunal.

The Centre launched The Unified Waqf Management,

Empowerment, Efficiency, and Development (UMEED) Act central portal on June 6 to create a digital inventory after geo-tagging all Waqf properties.

According to the provisions of the portal, details of all registered Waqf properties across the country must be uploaded within six months. The six-month deadline for registration ends on Friday.

"After making the Waqf law, we had launched the UMEED portal and a six-month duration was given to the concerned parties to register all the Waqf properties on the portal. Today is the last day, and lakhs of Waqf properties have still not been registered," Rijiju said.

"Many MPs and social leaders came to me request-



ing that problems are being faced in registering more than 9 lakh Waqf properties and it is the last day today, so the deadline should be extended. Till now, more than 1.51 lakh Waqf properties have been registered on the UMEED portal," he said.

Some states have done well like Karnataka and Punjab and also Jammu and Kashmir but some others have lagged behind.

Rijiju said in some places, the UMEED portal was slow while some people did not have the papers.

"I assure all mutawallis' who tried but could not complete the registration process, we will find a way for you and for the next three months, we will not impose any penalties or take any strict action. In three months, get the registration done," he said.

Those who have not been able to come on the portal must approach their respective tribunals. The Supreme Court was clear on its instructions that the date cannot be extended, he said.

The Government, through the Ministry of Minority Affairs, has said it is committed to modernising Waqf administration and unlocking the full developmental potential of Waqf properties for the benefit of minority communities.

Lok Sabha row over lamp-lighting at Tamil Nadu hilltop temple

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The issue of lighting of a traditional lamp at a hilltop temple near Madurai rocked the Lok Sabha on Friday, with DMK leader TR Baalu accusing the BJP of trying to "ignite" communal tensions in Tamil Nadu and Union Minister L Murugan hitting back at the Tamil Nadu Government for "denying the right to worship".

DMK members stormed the Well of the Lok Sabha and tried to raise the issue of the lighting of the 'Karthigai Deepam' at the stone lamp pillar on the Tirupparankundram hillock near Madurai and forced the adjournment of the

Question Hour.

Raising the issue during Zero Hour, Baalu accused the BJP of trying to "ignite" communal tension in Tamil Nadu and claimed that the Madras High Court judge, who permitted lighting of the lamp at the stone lamp pillar 'Deepathoon' on the Tirupparankundram hillock, owed allegiance to a particular ideology.

"Who should light the deepam on the hill? Whether the Hindu Religious Endowment Board representative or some miscreants who have got a judgement from a Madras High Court's judge?" asked Baalu.

Baalu's reference to the high court judge's ideology drew a sharp riposte from

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju, who asserted that the DMK leader cannot cast aspersions on the judiciary and urged the chair to delete the remarks.

Hitting out at the DMK, BJP leader and Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs L Murugan accused the Tamil Nadu Government of denying the right to worship to devotees at the Arulmighu Subramaniya Swamy Temple.

As Murugan was speaking, some DMK members walked up to the seat of Rijiju, prompting TDP member Krishna Prasad Tenneti, who was in the chair, to appeal to protesting members to confine themselves to the Well.



Editor's TAKE

Airborne crisis unfolds at Indian airports

IndiGo's cancellations expose structural weaknesses in the country's busiest airline, raising concerns about preparedness and sectoral resilience

This was the week of meltdown at Indian airports. Chaos ruled as passengers flying IndiGo did not know when their flight would take off, with no one to tell them the truth that the flight they had been waiting for was cancelled. Even those that took off were off the mark by hours. India's airports have descended into unprecedented chaos as IndiGo – the country's largest airline – struggles to keep its operations in the air. More than 1,000 cancellations across major hubs like Delhi, Bengaluru and Hyderabad have left passengers stranded, frustrated and confused. This chaos is caused suddenly but is the culmination of accumulated structural weaknesses, regulatory tightening and a failure of planning on the part of airlines in question.

IndiGo hit an air pocket when the implementation of new Flight Duty Time Limitations (FDTL) rules – reforms designed to address pilot fatigue, long flagged as a serious safety concern in a rapidly expanding aviation market – kicked off. The DGCA issued revised norms which mandate increased weekly rest, stricter limits on night operations and capped duty hours for pilots engaged in late-night flying. These rules, long demanded by pilot bodies and aligned with global safety standards, were upheld by a recent court order.

But that sent IndiGo operations haywire, which has the lion's share of the Indian aviation sector.

In more than two decades of its operations, IndiGo has not only survived but also flourished, servicing almost all major sectors. IndiGo survived while others came and left, but that came at the cost of air safety – long and often back-to-back duty hours for pilots, shorter turnaround times at airports by squeezing more flights into a given time, lower taxi times and reaching destinations ahead of schedule to cut costs. In fact, IndiGo went further – selling premium seats, doing away with cooked meals, no in-flight entertainment, leaner ground staff and using a single-type fleet – to slash costing and maximising profits.

While some cost-cutting measures are acceptable, others do compromise air safety – especially maximum utilisation of aircraft and reduced rest time for pilots. It has shied away from hiring more pilots earlier, leading to around 25 daily cancellations even before this week. The DGCA has done the right thing, as air safety is paramount. The big question, then, is: why did IndiGo not see it coming, as the new norms did not arrive overnight; they had been discussed for months. IndiGo underestimated the quantum of crew required under the revised framework, leading to what the airline itself now acknowledges as "misjudgment and planning gaps."

This is not merely a rostering issue but a failure to build scheduling buffers and enable higher-rest regimes. IndiGo's lapse has triggered turbulence across Indian skies, causing widespread airport chaos. The way forward demands a realistic schedule reset, clearer communication and close coordination with the regulators, prioritised routes and fewer night operations – without compromising safety of the passengers.

PIC TALK



Farmers warm themselves around burning stubble on a winter morning at Ranbir Singh Pura in Jammu district. PHOTO: PTI

DIGITAL EXPERIENCE

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HONOURING AMBEDKAR'S LEGACY OF EQUALITY AND JUSTICE

Ambedkar Vardhanthi is observed annually on 06 December, the day he passed away in 1956. His Jayanthi, celebrated on April 14, since 1928, is observed nationwide and abroad as Equality Day. Born into a Dalit family on April 14, 1891 in Mhow near Indore, Madhya Pradesh, this year marks the 69th death anniversary of a towering figure in Indian history. Academically brilliant, he studied at Elphinstone College, Mumbai, and went on to earn two doctorates in Economics from Columbia University and the London School of Economics - becoming the first Indian Dalit to obtain a doctorate abroad.

Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar was not only the principal architect of the Constitution but also India's first Law Minister, an eminent jurist, economist, and

social reformer. He served as Principal of the Government Law College and as Professor of Political Economy in Mumbai. As Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee from 29 August 1947, he oversaw the adoption of the Constitution on 26 November 1949, which came into force on 26 January 1950. He was posthumously awarded the Bharat Ratna in 1990.

Ambedkar championed social justice, equality, civil liberties and Dalit empowerment. He founded the Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha and led temple-entry, anti-caste and equal-rights movements. He supported the establishment of the RBI, reduced working hours from 12 to 8, and remains the only Indian with a statue placed near Karl Marx in the London Museum.

BURRA M REDDY | KARIMNAGAR

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Tributes to Baba Saheb Dr Ambedkar: From labour leader to a nation builder

As we honour the countless contributions of labourers in nation-building, guided by the enduring spirit of *Shramev Jayate*, Dr Ambedkar's Mahaparinirvan Diwas offers a fitting moment to reflect on the vision and actions of this great nation-builder



ARJUN RAM MEGHWAL

Today, we commemorate the 70th Mahaparinirvan Diwas of Baba Saheb Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar, a larger-than-life figure and a champion of progressive measures that have shaped the course of modern human society. As a jurist, economist, philosopher, reformer, and above all, a nation-builder, his tireless efforts laid the foundation of modern India. He did not merely draft a Constitution; he provided a blueprint for an inclusive and empowered nation, where every citizen enjoys dignity and opportunity. Inspired by these foundational values, the Modi government has undertaken numerous initiatives promoting welfare and good governance.

On November 27, 2025, at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, the world paused to witness the unveiling of a bust of Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Indian Constitution. Among global dignitaries, the statue stood not merely as a tribute to an Indian leader but as a universal symbol of justice. The plaque reads "Architect of the Indian Constitution," yet these words barely capture the legacy of a man who not only drafted laws but helped shape an entire nation in totality.

During his entire lifetime, Baba Saheb Dr Ambedkar carried forward the struggle for justice, championing labour rights and welfare. As the representative of the Depressed Classes at the Round Table Conference, he strongly advocated living wages, decent working conditions, freedom for peasants from oppressive landlords, and the eradication of social evils affecting the downtrodden. He had personally witnessed the suffering of workers and the marginalised. In Bombay, he lived for over 10 years in one-room tenements of the Bombay Development Department alongside mill workers, where there were no modern facilities and each floor had only one lavatory and one tap for all purposes. These conditions gave him firsthand knowledge of workers' lives. He mobilised the masses and founded the Independent Labour Party (ILP) in 1936 with a comprehensive programme for landless people, poor tenants, agriculturists, and workers. On September 17, 1937, during the Poona session of the Bombay Assembly, he introduced a Bill to abolish the Khoti land tenure system in Konkan. In 1938, he led a peasants' march to the Council Hall in Bombay, becoming a popular leader of peasants, workers, and the landless. He was the first Indian legislator to introduce a Bill to end the serfdom of agricultural tenants. He also strongly opposed the Industrial Disputes Bill, 1937, because it curtailed workers' right to strike.

When the world order was in uncertainty during the Second World War, Dr Ambedkar, as Labour Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, was guiding the path for labourers in India. As economies transformed and industries expanded, entrepreneurs gained opportunities for prosperity, but labour did not receive its fair share. Dr Ambedkar introduced key measures for labour welfare, laying the foundation of the Government's labour policy. He handled complex labour issues with great efficiency and earned the respect of both employees and employers.

In his 1943 All India Radio address from Bombay, Dr Ambedkar urged securing a "fair condition of life" for labour, grounded in liberty, equality, and fraternity. His efforts helped bring workers under social security. He made lasting contributions through key labour legislation, including the War Injuries (Compensation Insurance) Bill, the Indian Boilers (Amendment) Bill, 1943 – addressing unsafe inspections that caused many mill deaths – the Indian Mines and Trade Unions



ON NOVEMBER 27, 2025, AT UNESCO HEADQUARTERS IN PARIS, THE WORLD PAUSED TO WITNESS THE UNVEILING OF A BUST OF DR BHIMRAO RAMJI AMBEDKAR, COMMEMORATING THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION. AMONG GLOBAL DIGNITARIES, THE STATUE STOOD NOT MERELY AS A TRIBUTE TO AN INDIAN LEADER BUT AS A UNIVERSAL SYMBOL OF JUSTICE. THE PLAQUE READS "ARCHITECT OF THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION," YET THESE WORDS BARELY CAPTURE THE LEGACY OF A MAN WHO NOT ONLY DRAFTED LAWS BUT HELPED SHAPE AN ENTIRE NATION IN TOTALITY

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Amendment Bills, the Miners' Maternity Benefit Amendment, the Coal Mines Safety (Stowing) Amendment, and the Workmen's Compensation Amendment.

On December 9, 1943, Dr BR Ambedkar visited the Dhanbad coalfields, going 400 feet underground to inspect operations and labour conditions. This visit led to the Coal Mine Labour Welfare Ordinance of January 1944, creating a fund for workers' welfare. He strengthened this fund by doubling the tax on extracted coal, ensuring better health and safety measures for miners. On 8 November 1943, he also introduced the Indian Trade Union (Amendment) Bill, requiring employers to recognise trade unions.

On February 8, 1944, during the Legislative Assembly debate on lifting the ban on women's underground work in coal mines, Dr BR Ambedkar stated: "It is for the first time that I think in any industry the principle has been established of equal pay for equal work irrespective of sex." This marked a historic moment for the nation. Through the Mines Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Bill, 1943, he strengthened maternity benefits and addressed absenteeism. In 1945, he amended the Act further to prohibit women from underground work for ten weeks before childbirth and ensured fourteen weeks of maternity leave – ten weeks before and four weeks after confinement.

Addressing the Indian Labour Conference in New Delhi on November 26, 1945, he reviewed the State's obligations to labour and urged laws to raise Indian labour standards to international levels. Emphasising the need for progressive labour welfare legislation, he said:

"Labour may well say that the fact that the British took 100 years to have a proper code of labour legislation is no argument that we should also in India take 100 years. History is not to be studied merely with a view to know how well to imitate the mistakes of other countries. We study history with a view to know the errors people have made and how they could be avoided. History is not always an example. More often it is a warning."

The next day at the same conference, he proposed legislation to reduce working hours to a 48-hour week in factories, introduce statutory industrial canteens, and amend the Workmen's Compensation Act, 1934. He also announced plans to draft laws for minimum wages and to amend the Indian Trade Union Act, 1926. On February 21, 1946, Dr BR Ambedkar moved the Factories (Amendment) Bill to reduce weekly working hours to 48, fix overtime rates, and provide paid leave. After review by the select committee, this landmark leg-

islation – championed by Ambedkar – was passed on April 4, 1946.

The Mica Mines Labour Welfare Fund Bill, introduced by him to create a fund for welfare activities in the mica mining industry, was passed on April 15, 1946. It improved amenities and working conditions for child and women labourers, including hours and wage issues. Dr Ambedkar also moved a Minimum Wages Bill on April 11, 1946, proposing advisory committees and boards with equal employer-labour representation. This Bill was later enacted into law on February 9, 1948.

Dr Ambedkar opposed the labour movement led by communists, rejecting Marx's totalitarian approach of controlling all means of production. He disagreed with Marx's view that abolishing private property would end poverty and suffering. In his essay *Buddha or Karl Marx*, he writes:

"Can the Communists say that in achieving their valuable end they have not destroyed other valuable ends? They have destroyed private property. Assuming that this is a valuable end can the Communists say that they have not destroyed other valuable end in the process of achieving it? How many people have they killed for achieving their end? Has human life no value? Could they not have taken property without taking the life of the owner?"

While drafting the Constitution, Dr Ambedkar placed labour in the Concurrent List to ensure uniform legislation and alignment with international standards. His foresight also eliminated bonded labour by declaring it illegal in the Constitution.

Guided by the mantra of "Reform, Perform, Transform," and taking inspiration from Dr Ambedkar's values, the government has implemented four comprehensive labour codes – the Codes on Wages, Industrial Relations, Social Security and Welfare, and Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions. These reforms aim to ensure universal social security, protect workers' rights, boost productivity, create jobs, and strengthen India's economic growth towards a Viksit Bharat by 2047. The Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maandhan Yojana, launched in February 2019, provides old-age protection for unorganised workers, while the Maternity Amendment Act, 2017, extends maternity leave from 12 to 26 weeks and mandates crèche facilities.

As we honour the countless contributions of labourers in nation-building, guided by the enduring spirit of *Shramev Jayate*, Dr Ambedkar's Mahaparinirvan Diwas offers a fitting moment to reflect on the vision and actions of this great nation-builder. His ideals remain a guiding light, inspiring us to achieve the goal of a Viksit Bharat by 2047.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Foreign dignitaries must meet opposition

Rahul Gandhi's allegation that the Government is discouraging foreign dignitaries from meeting the Leader of the Opposition raises an issue that deserves serious democratic scrutiny. If visiting leaders are being subtly prevented from interacting with the Opposition, it marks a clear departure from India's long-standing political conventions and our proud tradition of openness.

For decades, India's strength has rested on allowing foreign interlocutors to hear multiple political voices. Governments have changed, but the democratic convention of enabling meetings with Opposition leaders remained intact. The Government may insist there is no formal restriction, yet even the perception of behind-the-scenes gatekeeping is damaging. The Opposition represents a vast section of the electorate and has every right to present its views before international visitors. Denying that space creates the impression of a curated political landscape, where access is managed and political diversity is concealed.

A confident democracy does not fear dialogue. Visiting dignitaries must be free to meet all legitimate leaders, including the Leader of the Opposition – without barriers, signals, or subtle discouragement of any kind.

KV CHANDRA MOULI | MYSURU

Putin visit marks strategic shift

President Vladimir Putin's two-day visit to India will remain a watershed moment in bilateral relations. The evident warmth between the Indian Prime Minister and the Russian President sent a clear message to the world: both countries continue to remain steadfast, all-weather partners. The newly realised Strategic Economic Accord 2030, which facilitates freer trade and smoother labour mobility, could become a genuine game-changer in an increasingly uncertain global economy.

India can rely on Russia in its fight against terrorism, just as Russia can rely on India during its challenging geopolitical moments. Should both nations find common ground in helping resolve the Ukraine conflict, it would greatly strengthen the cause of global peace.

In today's multipolar world order, relations guided by mutual respect and pragmatic cooperation stand to influence other nations in positive ways. India and Russia, both resilient powers with long-standing ties, now have an opportunity to shape regional and global dynamics with maturity, balance and strategic foresight. Their partnership, anchored in trust and consistency, remains one of the most stable bilateral equations of the contemporary era.

SANKARA RAO | ANDHRA PRADESH

Indians must rethink America obsession

Indians continue to aspire to move to the United States even though visa rules have become stricter and far more unpredictable. The American authorities now screen applicants' social-media activity and repeatedly emphasise that a visa is a "privilege, not a right". Fear of sudden deportation, often without proper opportunity to counter allegations, adds to the anxiety. It is increasingly evident that the United States is becoming reluctant to welcome outsiders.

It is widely perceived as a land of opportunity, offering higher salaries, advanced research facilities, and employment in global companies. Families hope for better education, healthcare, and a safer environment for their children. Many professionals believe India offers slower growth due to competitive job markets, limited avenues, and lower wages. They see moving abroad as a quicker route to recognition and stability.

The large and successful Indian diaspora in the US provides emotional and logistical support, making the transition appear smoother. For many, the risks posed by stricter rules are outweighed by hopes of success, global exposure, and a brighter future. Yet Indians must reconsider this instinctive craving for America and recognise the growing opportunities within India itself.

O PRASADA RAO | HYDERABAD

How global indices mislead the world and mask the real crises

The backdrop to this reliance is a world in crisis. Humanitarian disasters from Gaza and Sudan to the Sahel and Myanmar have pushed global displacement to its highest levels since the Second World War. Conflicts in Eastern Europe, the Red Sea, and the Horn of Africa reinforce a broader pattern of instability that no longer feels exceptional but systemic

HEMANGI SINHA

PRAVIN KUMAR SINGH

Global indices have never carried as much influence as they do today. Rankings on development, hunger, democracy, the environment, happiness, and peace shape how nations are perceived, how policies are debated, and how investments flow. In moments of uncertainty, the world turns instinctively to these numerical summaries to make sense of global progress. Yet this dependence has grown precisely when the world itself has become more fragmented, more unequal, and more difficult to measure with conventional tools.

The backdrop to this reliance is a world in crisis. Humanitarian disasters from Gaza and Sudan to the Sahel and Myanmar have pushed global displacement to its highest levels since the Second World War. Conflicts in Eastern Europe, the Red Sea, and the Horn of Africa reinforce a broader pattern of instability that no longer feels exceptional but systemic. Climate distress deepens this sense of upheaval.

The year 2024 was the hottest ever recorded; extreme weather events have become almost seasonal, and their impacts fall hardest on the Global South - regions least responsible for historical emissions.

The global economy, too, is splintering. Sanctions, export controls, technology bans, and now tariff escalations reflect a widening trend of coercive economic statecraft. Strategic decoupling, rivalry over critical minerals and semiconductors, and the securitisation of supply chains have begun to replace the old narrative of globalisation.

Meanwhile, trust in global governance continues to erode. Institutions meant to uphold multilateral order — whether the UN system, the WTO, or global climate mechanisms - struggle to deliver equitable outcomes or restrain geopolitical exceptionalism.

It is in this volatile landscape that global indices assert their authority. They claim to offer clarity amid chaos, order amid disorder. But there is an overlooked reality: when the world becomes more complex, simplistic measurement becomes more dangerous. The very tools designed to interpret global reality are themselves riddled with methodological flaws, cultural assumptions, and structural



THE GLOBAL HUNGER INDEX FACES A MORE FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM THAN DATA INCONSISTENCY OR STATISTICAL ASYMMETRY: NARRATIVE OVERREACH. THE INDEX PRESENTS ITSELF AS A DEFINITIVE GLOBAL BAROMETER OF “HUNGER”, YET THE CONSTRUCT IT MEASURES IS NOT HUNGER IN ANY HOLISTIC OR LIVED SENSE

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biases, raising the question of whether they illuminate global progress or distort it.

When the World Is Fractured, Measurement Must Be Exact — Yet It Is Not

Global indices were once conceived as instruments to democratise development knowledge. Their mission was noble: simplify complex realities to create global reference points. However, the growing political and economic consequences of these indices mean their limitations are no longer academic concerns; they now have material and normative implications. At a time when the world desperately needs trustworthy, culturally plural, and empirically robust measurements, many internationally influential indices rely on methodological shortcuts, cultural assumptions, and opaque data foundations.

A clear example is the World Happiness Report (WHR), which has gained disproportionate global influence. According to its published methodology, the ranking is derived solely from a single subjective life-evaluation question — the Cantril Self-Anchoring Striving Scale — which asks respondents to place their life on a ladder from 0 to 10. This is not a multi-indicator composite index, nor does it incorporate objective well-being metrics into its ranking formula.

This simplicity enhances transparency but raises major concerns about cross-cultural comparability. Psychological research shows that populations differ in how they respond to self-evaluation questions: Nordic societies tend to answer more directly; East

Asian societies may avoid high self-ratings due to cultural modesty norms; Latin American societies often give more affective responses. The WHR does not claim any cultural bias and presents the ladder as a universal tool, yet the possibility of cultural response biases cannot be dismissed - especially when life-evaluation patterns align more closely with cultural self-expressive well-being indicators.

The Global Hunger Index faces a more fundamental problem than data inconsistency or statistical asymmetry: narrative overreach. The index presents itself as a definitive global barometer of “hunger”, yet the construct it measures is not hunger in any holistic or lived sense. Instead, it merges disparate indicators - child stunting, child wasting, child mortality, and population-level undernourishment - into a single score, even though these phenomena do not move together, do not share determinants, and do not reflect the same type of deprivation. Compressing multidimensional nutritional realities into one rank creates a misleading storyline: that a country's complex food landscape can be captured by a solitary ordinal position. The result is less an analytical tool and more a narrative device — one that travels easily through headlines, reinforces simplistic comparisons, and shapes global perceptions while doing little to illuminate the structural causes of food insecurity.

Democracy and freedom indices reveal yet another concern. Freedom House, V-Dem, and the Economist Intelligence Unit

generate global authority but depend heavily on expert-coded assessments. The identities of these experts, their epistemic frameworks, and their evidentiary standards are only partially disclosed. Many indicators hinge on interpretive questions - such as whether public discourse is “pluralistic” or whether media autonomy is “adequate” — that vary significantly with ideological predispositions. These indices often present precise numerical scores without confidence intervals, giving perception-based judgments the illusion of scientific certainty. Because they feed into broader governance tools like the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators, they influence sovereign ratings and investment patterns.

Environmental indices such as the Environmental Performance Index (EPI) and the Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) face a different critique: they tend to apply uniform decarbonisation expectations to societies with vastly different historical emissions, development responsibilities, and energy transitions. By rewarding alignment with European policy pathways, they risk penalising countries that prioritise developmental equity or energy-access imperatives. Taken together, these examples show that the crisis of measurement

is not about flaws in individual indices; it is structural, epistemic, and systemic. It raises a fundamental question: Who measures the world — and through whose worldview? Today's global ranking ecosystem does not merely reflect global asymmetries - it reinforces them. The current global ranking system is deeply flawed because it rewards self-interest, privileging nations and institutions whose worldviews, data capabilities, and ideological assumptions align with the metrics they design.

A Measurement Architecture Dominated by One Part of the World

More than 85 per cent of the world's population lives in the Global South, yet close to 90 per cent of global indices are conceptualised, designed, and produced by institutions in the Global North. This asymmetry shapes what is measured, which indicators are deemed meaningful, and which developmental pathways are legitimised. It generates narrative power: indices become the lens through which the world interprets itself.

It generates policy power: rankings influence negotiations, investments, and climate

finance priorities.

And it generates civilisational power: most indices embed Western philosophical assumptions — individualism, liberal-democratic norms, institutional templates — even when applied to societies grounded in entirely different ontologies. Most importantly, it produces epistemic power: the authority to define progress itself.

Reimagining How the World Should Be Measured

The world needs not fewer indices but better indices — those transparent in methodology, explicit in epistemology, and cognisant of civilisational diversity. A new global metrics architecture must begin with radical transparency: raw data, methodologies, expert identities (with safeguards), margins of error, and sensitivity analyses must all be publicly accessible.

Cross-cultural response patterns must be recognised rather than ignored. Clear distinctions must be made between empirical indicators, model-generated estimates, and perception-based judgments. Above all, the Global South must move from being a passive consumer of indices to an active producer of them.

Plurality is the antidote to epistemic concentration. When multiple frameworks exist — rooted in Global South realities, civilisational ethics, ecological justice, and social responsibility — the world gains not confusion but balance. In an age of polarisation and fragmentation, the objective should not be to rank nations in a single global hierarchy but to understand them on their own terms.

Conclusion: Reclaiming the Right to Measure

At a time when the world is struggling with wars, environmental collapse, economic fragmentation, and failing global governance, the very tools we use to understand progress must themselves be trustworthy. Today, they are not. The crisis of global governance is mirrored by a crisis of global measurement. This crisis is also a clash between inadequate quantitative proxies and unexamined qualitative judgments — a reminder that measurement without context can distort more than it reveals.

Reclaiming the right to measure is therefore not only a statistical necessity but a civilisational and epistemic imperative. Only when the world measures itself through plural, transparent, and culturally grounded lenses will it be able to imagine a more equitable future.

Is centrism the alternative to extremism?



ACHARYA PRASHANT

The question is like asking a physician: which disease should I choose? The physician will say: choose health. But health, the state of not being seated in any ideological row, seems unimaginable to us. We have grown accustomed to sitting in camps, identifying ourselves by which chair we occupy. The very terms “Left” and “Right” came from an accident of seating. In 1789, during the French Revolution, supporters of the King sat to the right of the president's chair in the National Assembly; supporters of the revolution sat to the left. What began as a furniture arrangement hardened into identity. Rows became doctrines. Positions became personalities.

The Left now speaks of equality, redistribution and collective welfare. The Right speaks of tradition, order and the preservation of inherited structures. The Left says, “A better future awaits, once equality arrives.” The Right says, “The best is behind us; preserve what was.” One leans into the future, the other clings to the past. Broad distinctions, yes, but this tension between the pull of what should be and the weight of what has been is ancient: Plato imagined the ideal and Confucius honoured the ancestral. What 1789 offered was not a new conflict but new seats, and we have since mistaken the seating for the substance. Yet notice something deeper: both camps, while quarrelling over their chairs, keep gazing outward — to society, systems, others. Neither asks the question that dislodges the entire arrangement: who is the one so eager to sit on either side? Who is this “I” that seeks nostalgia or utopia?

Without asking this, the Left and Right become opposite costumes worn by the same actor.

Opposites Are One

In 1954, psychologist Hans Eysenck surveyed hundreds of British subjects and found that the radical Left and radical Right shared almost identical psychological traits: dogmatism, authoritarian submission, a hunger for certitude. The extremes, supposedly enemies, curved towards each other like ends of a horseshoe. They resembled each other not in ideology but in psychology. Look around today and you will see the same pattern, amplified. Social media now performs what parliaments once did: it seats us into rows, rewards outrage and convinces each camp that hatred is loyalty. The extremist Leftist and extremist Rightist despise each other's conclusions, yet share the same inner architecture: the same fear of ambiguity, the same dependence on enemies, the same relief that comes from belonging to a row. Is centrism the alternative to extremism? No. The centrist who prides himself on balance, and splits

every difference as a habit, is merely an extremist of moderation — just as seated, just as identified. The problem is not which chair you occupy, but the inner compulsion that you must occupy one. History exposes this vividly. In 1939, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union - two ideological opposites - signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and divided Eastern Europe between them. Enemies by speech, twins by method. The pact was not an aberration but a revelation: when pushed far enough, ideologies converge into the same structure of fear, domination and dependence on unquestioning followers.

Mussolini offers the same lesson. Until 1914 he was a rising star in the Italian Socialist Party; within years he founded fascism. The man had not changed in essence, only in seating. The ego kept its taste for totalitarianism; only the banner shifted.

The Ego's Need for Ideology

Why do the extremes converge? Because every ideology, when carried to its limit, serves the same master: the unexamined human ego.

The ego is terrified of groundlessness, so it grabs a chair. It clings to labels because labels give it continuity. When someone says, “I am a Leftist” or “I am a Rightist,” this is not identity but insecurity. The chair is a crutch. The row is a refuge. The ego loves ideology because ideology is a respectable form of bondage. The prisoner paints his cage in party colours and calls it conviction. Ideological people are rarely found acknowledging virtues on the opposite side. I must criticise whoever sits across the aisle. This is bondage. Something outside has acquired the right to dictate what you must think, approve and attack. Before analysing the world, ask the sharper question: what is this mind that needs an ideology in the first place? This is the pivot. The investigation must now turn inward.

The Illusion of External Order

If the Left speaks of equality, ask: where is true equality possible? Not in the body, for bodies differ. Not in the mind, for minds vary infinitely. Not in circumstances, for no two lives match. Equality is genuinely possible only at the level of the Self, which is the same in all beings. Whatever truth the Left points towards is already completed in this understanding.

If the Right speaks of order, ask: whose order? Which tradition? Every tradition was once an innovation; every order was once a disruption. The conservative clings to the past because the ego fears the unknown. But if there is a tradition worth preserving, it is the tradition of self-inquiry, the willingness to know oneself without bias. And order? True order arises from individuals aligned with their inner clarity. A society of inwardly chaotic people will produce outward chaos despite endless laws. The order the Right seeks cannot be imposed, only discovered. Not all positions are equally distant from truth. The abolition of slavery was not “Leftist” but a recognition of the Self in the other. The preservation of genuine wisdom traditions is not “Rightist” but

fidelity to what liberates. But insight becomes poison when it hardens into a camp identity.

Engagement Without Enslavement

In the real world, policies must be made, elections happen. Must I not choose a side?

A fair question, and it deserves a fair answer. Freedom from ideology does not mean withdrawal from action; it means acting without being owned. In a world of limited time and information, some heuristics are inevitable. Coalitions require coordination. The person who refuses all labels may find herself politically homeless.

But the issue is not whether you take positions. The issue is whether your positions take you.

Can you revise your stance when evidence demands it — even if your row disapproves? Can you advocate without demonising? Can you see the human being behind the opposing chair? The test is not detachment but honesty. Self-inquiry alone enables such honesty — not the adoption of yet another ideology of “non-ideology,” but a relentless questioning: Why do I believe what I believe? What fear is being defended? What image is being preserved? Who am I beneath all this seating arrangement?

The Freedom of Fearlessness

When roots are deep, the tree welcomes storms; when roots are shallow, even a mild breeze terrifies. The weak sapling needs walls and fences. The strong tree stands open to the sky. So too with the ideological mind. The frightened ego closes windows; the fearless mind says: show me everything. No thought scares me; no tradition threatens me. Because truth is limitless, inquiry cannot be fenced. “All the scriptures of the world are mine,” says the seeker rooted in truth. “I can read Marx and Adam Smith. I can sit with a Hindu or a Muslim. No danger arises, for there is no seat I must defend.” Civilisations grow through such openness. India's oral wisdom received paper from elsewhere; the camera and microphone came from other lands; other cultures received zero and algebra from us. Exchange is natural when there is no inner boundary to maintain.

The Question Beyond Ideology

An era of narrowness sweeps the world. Walls rise everywhere: ideological, national, religious. We divide and subdivide, then subdivide again. Rows within rows, seats within seats. But wisdom exists to dissolve seating plans. If truth is limitless, then every boundary is self-imposed. The real question is not Left versus Right. The real question is: who am I, and what is the purpose, if any, of life?

Any answer that binds you to a row, demands enmity, sacrifices your independent inquiry, is not truth but an ideological prison. You were not born to sit on the Left or the Right. You were born to stand free.

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RAHUL KAUSHIK

Bharat is undergoing a profound transformation in the grammar of statecraft — one that is not cosmetic but structural. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the architecture of governance has been stripped of its feudal and colonial residues and reoriented towards its most fundamental purpose: service. This shift is not a matter of administrative rebranding; it is an ideological reset rooted in the belief that political authority is not a pedestal of power but a discipline of duty. Over the past eleven years, this philosophy has been implemented with consistent, almost monastic precision.

Prime Minister Modi's own positioning set the tone. By calling himself Pradhan Sevak, he replaced the traditional, hierarchical vocabulary of high office with one grounded in humility and responsibility. This was not a rhetorical flourish. It became the organising principle of his governance model — seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day — marked by accessibility rather than aloofness. For more than a decade, the highest office in the land has functioned less like a throne and more like a workbench.

That single shift altered the culture of governance across the system. The renaming of the Prime Minister's Office as Seva Tirth crystallises this transformation. Far from symbolic, it represents an ideological intervention. The PMO is no longer to be viewed as an administrative citadel insulated from the public. It is reframed as a sanctified space of service — a pilgrimage site of duty. Such terminology forces a psychological reset. It removes the imprint of colonial hierarchy embedded in earlier institutional names and instead aligns the office with a native Bharatiya ethos of seva, kartavya, and people-centric governance.

The parallel decision to replace Raj Bhavan and Raj Niwas with Lok Bhavan and Lok Niwas extends this logic across constitutional offices. These buildings, historically symbols of colonial authority, retained an air of distance between the administrative elite and the citizenry. Renaming them as the people's houses reorients their purpose and cultural significance. Authority is reminded that it must be accountable, public-facing, and grounded in democratic legitimacy rather than ceremonial grandeur.

Similarly, calling the Central Secretariat Kartavya Bhavan further embeds this ideological framework. The Indian bureaucracy has long struggled with inertia, opacity, and a self-preserving mindset. The new name imposes a doctrinal expectation: duty is not negotiable. Every official entering the building is reminded that the state exists to serve — not to rule, delay, or evade

responsibility. It is a behavioural nudge woven into the very identity of the institution. Taken together, these renamings form a coherent architecture of governance. They dismantle a power-centric state and replace it with a service-centric one. They revive a civilisational lineage in which leadership is measured by responsibility rather than entitlement, by labour rather than privilege. Bharat is being steered towards a governance paradigm grounded in accountability and moral clarity.

Over the past eleven years, the Modi government has attempted to embody this ethic through relentless operational execution. The speed of implementation has been non-negotiable. Infrastructure expansion, welfare delivery, digital governance, foreign policy, cultural revival, and administrative reform have moved simultaneously — not sequentially. The goal has been to make the state visible, efficient, responsive, and rooted in service. The emphasis on seva is not branding; it is a directive for action. India's development trajectory reflects the results of this shift.

The decade has seen unprecedented infrastructure growth. These achievements rest on the belief that governance is a continuous sadhana, not a five-year political performance. It is an ethic of execution without noise, excuses, or delay. This administrative transformation runs parallel to a cultural and civilisational renaissance. The revival of heritage, restoration of temples, strengthening of cultural institutions, and renewed assertion of national identity are part of the same ideological continuum. A nation connected to its roots is more confident in shaping its future. Governance, identity, and cultural self-belief are no longer separate streams but converging

paths. In this context, the renaming of institutions is not ornamental — it is instructional. These names guide behaviour: they urge the political leadership to serve, constitutional offices to remain accountable, and the bureaucracy to perform with discipline. They reflect the government's attempt to redefine the ethos of state institutions in Indian terms.

The shift from Raj Bhavan to Lok Bhavan, from PMO to Seva Tirth, and from Secretariat to Kartavya Bhavan marks a decisive break from the colonial mindset. It signals that power must yield to duty, and governance must return to purpose. These are structural signals, not symbolic gestures. They communicate that the journey to Viksit Bharat will be carried not by slogans but by seriousness.

As India moves through this pivotal phase of nation-building, such steps help create the mental architecture for long-term transformation. A developed Bharat cannot be built on the language of rule. It must be built on the language of service. This shift defines the moment.

The writer is commentator on socio-political issues

dailypioneer

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The Pioneer



Chinese media spotlight Putin’s New Delhi visit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Beijing

Chinese official media on Friday highlighted President Vladimir Putin’s remarks calling both India and China the closest friends of Russia while emphasising that Moscow has “no right” to interfere in their bilateral ties. China, a close ally of Russia, is yet to officially comment on Putin’s visit to India, while keeping a close watch on the outcome.

While Putin’s visit to India is largely ignored by the official media, which focused more on French President Emmanuel Macron’s current visit to Beijing, State-run Global Times, however, carried a report on Putin’s remarks on how he viewed Russia’s relations with India and China.

The daily, which is part of the ruling Chinese Communist Party’s official publications, quoted Putin’s remark to India Today stating that “India and China are our closest friends - we treasure that relationship deeply.”

But at the same time, it highlighted Putin’s guarded comment that despite sharing close ties with India and China, Russia has “no right” to interfere in their bilateral ties. “We know this very well — India and China are our closest friends. We treasure that relationship deeply, and I do not believe we have the right to inter-

GLOBAL TIMES CARRIED A REPORT ON PUTIN’S REMARKS ON HOW HE VIEWED RUSSIA’S RELATIONS WITH INDIA AND CHINA

fere in your bilateral relations,” the daily quoted Putin as saying in the interview. Quoting a report by Russian news agency TASS, the daily’s report said Putin expressed confidence that Indian and Chinese leaders are committed to finding solutions to all intergovernmental issues, including the most sensitive ones.

He cited their wisdom as the key factor enabling the two countries to reach agreements. “At the same time, Russia does not feel entitled to intervene, because these are your bilateral affairs.”

Experts say that while China and Russia enjoy a close strategic partnership, Moscow’s enduring ties with New Delhi remain a source of unease for Beijing. While developing its close ties with Beijing, Moscow for its part has ensured its close with New Delhi remained intact even when Sino-Indian relations reached their lowest in 2020 following the Ladakh confrontation.

Besides Putin’s comments on India-China ties, his remarks refuting US accusations over India’s purchases

of Russian oil were briefly carried by state-run Xinhua news agency.

For its part, China tops the list of countries purchasing Russian oil and gas and rejected US calls to halt the imports to penalise Moscow for continuing its war on Ukraine.

“The US itself still buys nuclear fuel from us for its own nuclear power plants. That is also fuel,” Xinhua quoted Putin as saying in his India Today interview.

He further added, “If the US has the right to buy our fuel, why shouldn’t India have the same privilege? This question deserves a thorough examination, and we stand ready to discuss it, including with President Trump,” Putin said.

Significantly, days ahead of Putin’s visit to India, China and Russia held their annual strategic dialogue in which they discussed security interests of both countries, including “Asia-Pacific and neighbouring regions”.

The “two sides also had in-depth communication and coordinated positions on other international and regional issues of mutual concern, including the maintenance of global strategic stability, major-country relations, and the situation in the Asia-Pacific and neighbouring regions, and reached a broad consensus”, a Chinese Foreign Ministry press release here said on Wednesday.



Tents sheltering displaced Palestinians stand amid the destruction left by the Israeli air and ground offensive in Gaza City on Friday

Russian strike kills boy in Ukraine

ASSOCIATED PRESS N KYIV

Russian drones struck a house in central Ukraine, killing a 12-year-old boy, officials said, while long-range Ukrainian strikes reportedly targeted a Russian port and an oil refinery as US peace efforts continued out of public view.

US President Donald Trump’s special envoy, Steve Witkoff, and Trump’s son-in-law, Jared Kushner, were set to meet Thursday in Miami with a Ukrainian delegation but there was no official confirmation whether the meeting took place.

Those scheduled talks came after discussions between President Vladimir Putin and the US envoys at the

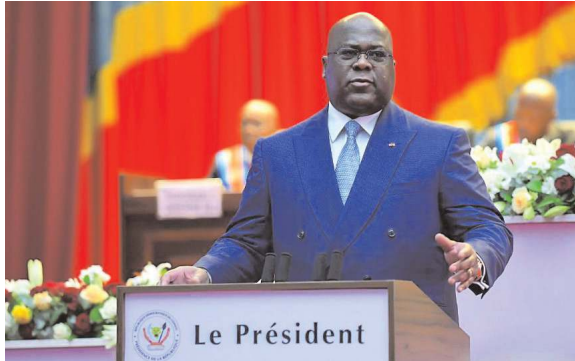
Kremlin on Tuesday. Previous diplomatic attempts to break the deadlock have come to nothing and the nearly four-year war has continued unabated. Officials largely have kept a lid on how the latest talks are going, though Trump’s initial 28-point plan was leaked.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said his country’s delegation in Miami wanted to hear from the US side about the talks at the Kremlin. Zelenskyy, as well as European leaders backing him, have repeatedly accused Putin of stalling in peace talks while the Russian army tries to press forward with its invasion. Zelenskyy said in a video address late Thursday that officials wanted

to know “what other pretexts Putin has come up with to drag out the war and to pressure Ukraine.” Meanwhile, Kremlin foreign affairs adviser Yuri Ushakov, who accompanied Putin on a visit to India on Friday, repeated the Russian leaders’ recent criticism of Europe’s stance on the peace talks. Kyiv’s European allies are concerned about possible Russian aggression beyond Ukraine.

Kyiv’s allies in Europe are “constantly putting forward demands that are unacceptable to Moscow,” Ushakov told Russia’s state-owned Zvezda TV. “Putting it mildly, the Europeans don’t help Washington and Moscow reach a settlement on the Ukrainian issues.”

Congo fighting threatens Trump-brokered peace



ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Goma

Residents of eastern Congo said fighting has intensified despite a peace agreement that was signed by the Congolese and Rwandan presidents in Washington, DC, with US President Donald Trump in attendance.

Presidents Felix Tshisekedi of Congo and Paul Kagame of Rwanda met with Trump on Thursday to sign a wide-ranging deal that attempts to stop the ongoing war between the Congolese armed forces and the Rwanda-backed M23 rebel group in the eastern part of Congo. But residents said Friday the fighting has intensified in recent days, with the town of Kamanyola near the borders with Rwanda and Burundi bearing the brunt. “People are fleeing; they are leaving the neighbourhoods where the bombs are falling to go to areas considered calm, and others are fleeing towards Rwanda,” Kamanyola resident Urbain Dunia told The Associated Press by telephone Friday. “Yesterday, we saw that agreements were signed, but we don’t see any positive impact on this situation, and that worries us,” said Samson

Alimasi, also from Kamanyola. “We only see bombs falling without knowing which side they are coming from.” Lauded by the White House as a “historic” agreement brokered by Trump, the pact between Tshisekedi and Kagame followed monthslong peace efforts by the US and other partners including the African Union and Qatar. The agreement finalized a deal signed in June.

M23 spokesperson Lawrence Kanyuka blamed the Congolese Army.

“It’s the governing coalition that continues to bomb us. I’ve always told you that this regime never respects agreements. Besides, what happened in Washington doesn’t concern us,” Kanyuka said.

M23 leader Bertrand Bisimwa claimed in a post on X that the shelling reported by residents was coming from Burundian Army positions across the border. The AP was unable to independently verify the claim.

Throughout eastern Congo, residents have reported pockets of clashes. M23 and Congolese forces have repeatedly accused each other of violating the terms of the ceasefire agreed earlier this year.

Iran launches massive missiles: Report

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Tehran

Iran launched massive missiles in the Sea of Oman and near the strategic Strait of Hormuz during the second day of a naval drill, State TV reported Friday.

The report said the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard launched the missiles from the depth of Iran’s mainland, hitting targets in the Oman Sea and neighbouring area near Strait of Hormuz in a drill that began on Thursday. It identified the missiles as cruise Qadr-110, Qadr-380 and Ghadr that have a range of up to 2,000 kilometers (1,250 miles.) It said the Guard also launch a



ballistic missile identified as 303, without elaborating.

TV footage showed the missiles’ launch and hitting their targets. The drill is the second one following the

end of the war, Iran has increasingly insisted that it is ready to counter any future Israeli attack. Iran launched its first naval drill in the area in August.

Iran’s paramilitary Revolutionary Guard is mainly in charge of operations in the Persian Gulf and its narrow mouth, the Strait of Hormuz. The national navy is in charge of Sea of Oman and beyond.

Iran long has threatened to close off the Strait of Hormuz, through which 20 per cent of all global oil traded passes. The US Navy has long patrolled the Mideast through its Bahrain-based 5th Fleet to keep the waterways open.

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Around the world, refugees are shut out of US by Trump’s new policies

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Washington

When US President Trump suspended the refugee programme on day one of his current administration, thousands of people around the world who’d been so close to a new life in America found themselves abandoned.

As part of Trump’s crackdown on legal and illegal migration, the Republican president has upended the decades-old refugee programme that has served as a beacon for those fleeing war and persecution.

In October, he resumed the programme but set a historic low of refugee admissions at 7,500 — mostly white South Africans. New restrictions were announced after an Afghan national became the suspect in the shooting of two National Guard members last week. The Trump administration also plans a review of



President Donald Trump arriving for a signing ceremony with Rwanda’s President Paul Kagame and Democratic Republic of Congo President Felix-Antoine Tshisekedi at the Donald J. Trump Institute of Peace in Washington

refugees let in during the Democratic Biden administration. Trump’s administration has cited economic and national security concerns for its policy changes.

About 6,00,000 people were being processed to come to the US as refugees when the programme was halted, according to the administration. Aside from

dozens of white South Africans let in this year, only about 100 others have been admitted as a result of a lawsuit by advocates seeking to restore the refugee programme, said Mevlude Akay Alp, a lawyer arguing the case. The Associated Press spoke to three families whose lives have been thrown into disarray because

of the changing policies. The Dawoods fled civil war in Syria and settled in northern Iraq. They hoped to find a new home that could provide better medical care for a daughter who had fallen from the fourth floor of the family’s apartment building.

After they were accepted as refugees to the US, son Ibrahim and his sister Ava

Munir officially appointed as Pak’s Chief of Defence forces

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Islamabad

Pakistan’s defence ministry on Friday officially notified the appointment of Field Marshal Asim Munir as the first Chief of Defence Forces (CDF), a move aimed at the major restructuring of the military command since the 1970s. The development came a day after President Asif Ali Zardari approved Munir’s appointment. The “president, on the advice of the prime minister, is pleased to appoint Field Marshal Asim Munir (NI) M as the chief of army staff, concurrently the chief of defence forces for a tenure of five years,” Dawn reported, citing the notification. Last month, the parliament passed the 27th Constitutional Amendment, creating a new post of CDF with the objective of a unified command and expediting decision-making in critical situations.

The CDF replaced the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (JCJSC), a position now abolished. The new arrangement consolidates operational, administrative and strategic authority in a single office - CDF. Munir was appointed as Army Chief in November 2022 initially for three years, but his tenure was extended

in 2024. Munir, who was promoted to the rank of Field Marshal just days after the four-day conflict with India in May, is only the second military officer in Pakistan’s history to be elevated to the position, after Field Marshal Ayub Khan in the 1960s. Talking to the media, Army spokesman Lt Gen Ahmad Sharif Chaudhry on Friday said the establishment of the CDF headquarters was one of the most important steps towards providing the requisite synergy and jointness for military operations. “This was debated a lot in the media, and we understand that the character of warfare has changed — now there are multi-domain operations taking place. It’s no more just land, sea and air; it’s in space, it’s in cyberspace, it is the informational domain, it’s intelligence-based, and war is fought in multiple domains,” he said. “The wars have become violent, short and intense, so to get efficiency, efficacy and economy of effort in that, the CDF headquarters was a long-awaited essential requirement, and it’s not only in Pakistan, but there are more than a dozen countries, almost more than 70 countries, where synergetic headquarters of the chief of defence are available,” he said.

German President visits WWII bombing site



ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ London

Germany’s president laid a wreath Friday at Coventry Cathedral in central England, symbolically atoning for the atrocities of World War II as his country and the United Kingdom seek to bolster an alliance to combat the new war raging in Europe. Frank-Walter Steinmeier’s pilgrimage commemorates the Nazi bombing of Coventry on the night of November 14, 1940, which destroyed the 14th-century Gothic cathedral, leaving behind a roofless ruin that stands as a reminder of the ravages of war. At least

568 people were killed and more than half of Coventry’s homes were damaged or destroyed in what was the single most concentrated attack on a British city during the war. Britain was represented at the event by the Duke of Kent, who has long fostered UK-German reconciliation. He served as the royal patron of the Dresden Trust, which seeks to build bonds between the people of Britain and Dresden following the Allied bombing that destroyed the German city’s historic centre and killed an estimated 25,000 people in February 1945.



Pak General accuses Imran of anti-army onslaught

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Islamabad

A senior Pakistani general on Friday accused jailed former premier Imran Khan of orchestrating a well-planned onslaught against the armed forces through the media, describing him as a “narcissistic” and “mentally sick” person. Director-General Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the media wing of the army, Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhary, also warned Khan that such acts would no longer be tolerated. “That threat emanates from a delusional mindset of a delusional person who has become captive to his own ego, thinking that his wishes are bigger than those of the state of Pakistan,” Chaudhry said while talking to the media. “His ego, his wishes, and frustrations have increased to such an extent that he thinks that the world would cease to exist without him,” he said.



Burkina Faso Council plans to restore death penalty

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Dakar

Burkina Faso’s Council of Ministers has adopted a bill to restore the death penalty, targeting offenses such as treason, terrorism, and espionage, authorities said. “The adoption of this bill is part of reforms. To have a justice that responds to the deep aspirations of our people,” Minister of Justice Edasso Rodrigue Bayala said in a Facebook post late Thursday. The death penalty was abolished in the country in 2018. The bill has to be adopted by parliament and reviewed by the courts before becoming law. Since taking power in a 2022 coup, the West African country’s military leaders have launched sweeping reforms, including postponing elections that were expected to restore civilian rule and dissolving the country’s independent electoral commission.



Visitors and organisers at the Three Day Flower exhibition at Siddhartha Hotel Management College grounds in Vijayawada on Friday.



PARTY



Kannada Actor Shivarajkumar offering prayers in Kanaka Durga Temple atop Indrakeeladri during his new film launching Gummadi Narasaiah Bio Pic in Vijayawada on Friday.



Jismat Jail Mandi, formerly inauguration by Hero Dharma Mahesh, known as Gismat, proudly announced the grand opening of its second branch expressed gratitude to loyal customers and supporters, stating, at vv. Colony, Pillar no 1557, Dilsukhnagar



Photos by- Ch. Vijaya Bhaskar

Boring to binge-worthy: lenskart x netflix's Stranger things 5 makes eyewear apop-culture essential

Lenskart has announced an electrifying partnership with Netflix for the highly anticipated fifth and final season of the global phenomenon, Stranger Things. This collaboration sees the launch of an exclusive, limited-edition eyewear collection of eleven eyewear designs, fusing the nostalgic allure of the Upside Down with Lenskart's cutting-edge style, firmly establishing eyewear as a must-have fashion statement for the Gen Z and OTT communities. "We have always believed that eyewear is a powerful tool for self-expression, and what better way to highlight this than by tapping into the cultural zeitgeist of Stranger Things," said Peyush Bansal, Co-Founder and CEO at

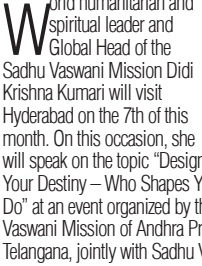


Lenskart. "This collaboration goes beyond simply creating frames; it's about making eyewear undeniably cool, bringing the excitement of pop culture to a category often perceived as 'boring.' We're engaging with our audience where they live, online on OTT platforms, and giving them a tangible piece of their favorite show to wear with pride." The limited-edition Lenskart x Stranger Things 5 collection draws inspiration from the iconic aesthetics and thrilling narratives of the series. Fans can expect frames that subtly nod to the 80s retro vibe, bold futuristic elements, and details that evoke the show's mysterious world, all crafted with Lenskart's signature precision and comfort.

World humanitarian and spiritual leader Didi Krishna Kumari to visit Hyderabad on the 7th



The World Telugu Information Technology Council (WTITC) has announced the appointment of Mahesh Babu Pittala as the Organising Secretary - Telangana State, following formal approval from the WTITC Governing Council. His official oath-taking ceremony will be held at the World Trade Center, Dubai, during the World Telugu IT Conference 2025.



Sunday the 7th from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm. Entry to this event is free, and those interested may register through the organization's QR code, said Dr. Harish Mirchandani and Mrs. Heera Rupani, Trustees of the Sadhu Vaswani Mission for Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. The program is expected to attract students, professionals, homemakers, academicians, spiritual aspirants, and members of the wider community, they said in a statement. Sadhu T.L. Vaswani, revered saint, philosopher, and educationist, and Dada J.P. Vaswani, internationally respected spiritual master, spread the Mission's message of humanitarianism and interfaith harmony across the world.

FUN

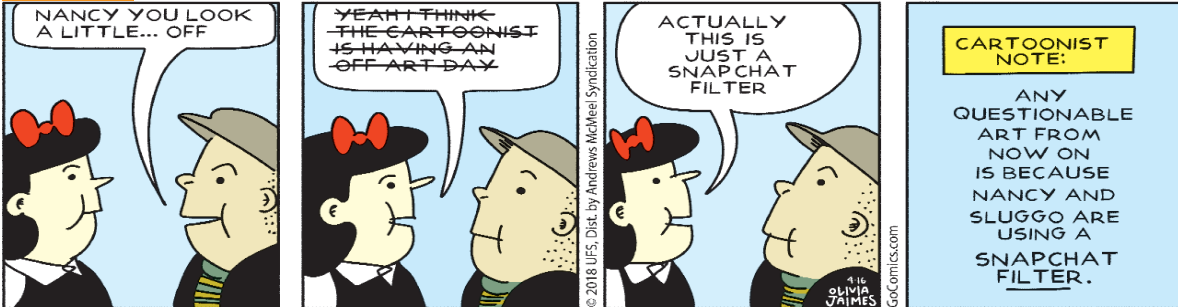
ARCHIE



GARFIELD



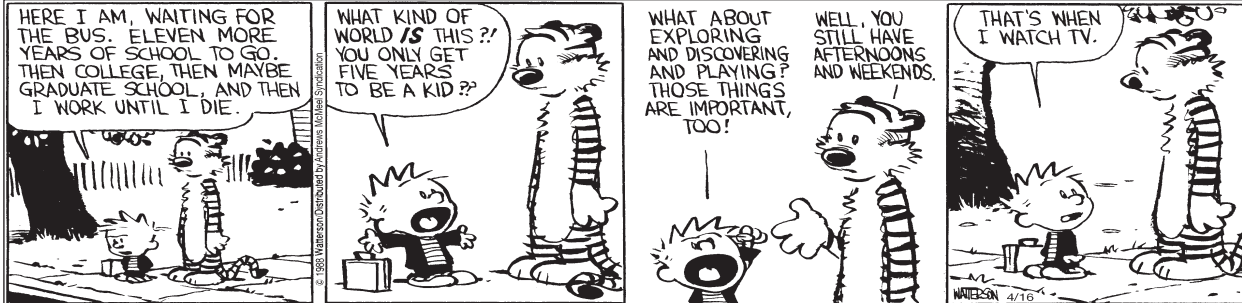
NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



CALVIN AND HOBBS



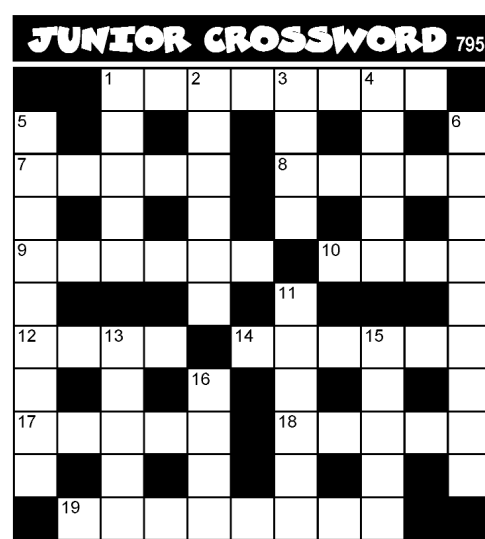
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1 Gets better after illness
- 7 An item of furniture
- 8 Move
- 9 Painter or sculptor
- 10 At this place
- 12 Pleased
- 14 A meal outdoors
- 17 Arrive at
- 18 A large lifting machine
- 19 A bird's covering

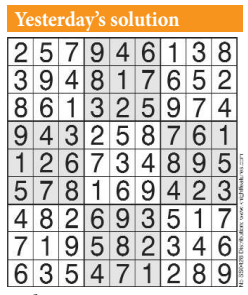
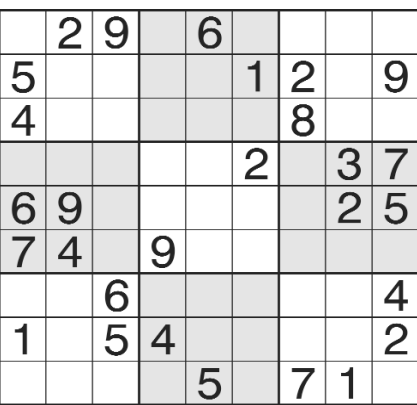
- 5 People unknown to you
- 6 Made longer by pulling
- 11 Ring shape
- 13 Not asleep
- 15 Gets closer to
- 16 Closed

DOWN

- 1 A mechanical person
- 2 A mark from a fold
- 3 A holder for cut flowers
- 4 Lift up



SUDOKU



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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

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RBI REACTIONS

Benign inflation outlook provides policy space to support the growth momentum. The language seems to indicate one more rate cut in the coming months as current year CPI inflation has been revised lower to two per cent, and GDP growth upwards to 7.3 per cent. As per the RBI Governor, core inflation pressure is still low given that 50 basis points of increase in core inflation is contributed by the metal prices.

■ **Murthy Nagarajan,**

Head-Fixed Income, Tata Asset Management

For the real estate sector, this rate cut builds on the momentum created during the recent festive season and GST rationalisation of key construction materials. Lower borrowing costs will improve affordability and buyer sentiment, particularly in affordable and mid-income housing segments.

■ **Vimal Nadar,**

National Director, Colliers India

The RBI delivered what the bond market was hoping for. The unanimous decision underscores confidence in the disinflation trend and signals a supportive stance for growth. Moreover, front-loading OMOs creates the possibility of additional liquidity.

■ **Siddharth Chaudhary,**

Head (Fixed Income), Bajaj Finserv AMC

The MPC's decision was assertive. The governor noted disinflationary pressures in the economy, which created room for a rate cut despite ongoing trade uncertainties, and early signs of weakness in indicators such as the IIP and electricity demand. We anticipate an additional 25 bp rate cut in February '26 based on our forecast of further downside surprises in inflation over the next 2-3 months.

■ **Radhika Piplani,**

Chief Economist, Motilal Oswal Group

With inflation printing significantly below projections, real rates were getting too high, potentially choking future growth. Nominal growth needed a boost in order that fiscal targets remain realistic. The policy addresses the live issues in comprehension, and is expected to significantly boost growth in coming quarters. Going ahead, as the possibilities for further rates remain alive, interest rates are expected to ease gradually and marginally.

■ **Mahendra Kumar Jajoo,**

CIO (Fixed Income), Mirae Asset Investment

It reinforces a supportive monetary environment for boosting consumer sentiment. Coupled with the income-tax relief measures announced in the Union Budget, and the landmark GST 2.0 reforms, this creates strong enablers for further enhancing affordability and accessibility. SIAM remains optimistic that this alignment of monetary and fiscal measures will accelerate growth of the Indian auto industry.

■ **Shallesh Chandra,**

President, SIAM

The central bank clarified that the primary purpose of the OMO was to manage liquidity, and not to directly influence yields. The RBI governor assured to provide ample system liquidity in the current rate environment, with OMOs to be conducted across maturities. He noted that the tolerance towards the rupee depreciation had not changed, and repeated that it will be allowed to move as per the market forces. Growth-inflation dynamics continues to provide space to support the growth momentum, implying that conducive financial conditions are here to stay.

■ **Naval Kagalwala,**

COO, Shriram Wealth

The repo-rate cut would bring more relief to both prospective and existing home loan borrowers. Transmission of the rate cut would be faster for floating rate loans linked to repo rate. The date of transmission would depend on the interest reset dates set by their lender. As banks would fully pass the benefits over time, we should see stronger demand for credit for the next few months. The rate cut should boost spending and investments from existing borrowers.

■ **Santosh Agarwal,**

CEO, Paisabazaar

The RBI's decision is a timely signal that the larger economic cycle is shifting toward growth, and it comes at a particularly important moment for the mid-segment where affordability plays a defining role. The mid-income category has been the backbone of residential demand through 2024 and 2025, and this policy move strengthens that foundation further. This adds to the confidence that the real estate market is entering a more balanced, expansionary phase.

■ **Mohit Goel,**

MD, Omaxe

The RBI's decision will significantly support housing demand in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, where affordability plays a central role in purchase decisions, and homebuyers are sensitive to EMI movement. Improved borrowing costs are expected to bring greater confidence to end-users, and accelerate decision-making among families. For developers in emerging cities, reduced funding pressure helps maintain construction momentum and encourages investment.

■ **Amrita Gupta,**

Director, Mangalam Group

Missing regulators in our lives

Across sectors, many firms operate without checks and balances

A few weeks ago, I suffered multiple fractures and muscle ruptures on my left shoulder. Although the hospital did not have a cashless facility for medical insurance, I presumed that I could pay upfront, and claim reimbursement. Post-surgery, even as I was recovering in the hospital, I started reading up on insurance claims. It was horrifying to learn that more than ₹26,000 crore of medical claims were not paid by the insurers. According to the portal managed by the Insurance Regulatory Development Authority of India (IRDAI), the sector's regulator, more than 95 per cent of the claims and complaints against the firms are about the failures to repay claims that the policyholders felt were legitimate and genuine.

There were more shocks. As I began to fill up the reimbursement form to claim the medical expenses, I struggled with the complicated paperwork that ran into dozens of pages, which included supplementary documents, attachments, proof, and photocopies. This was despite the help from my elder brother. Fortunately, the hospital was cooperative, and aided with the requisite documents. When I reached the insurer's office, I was informed that the paperwork was incomplete and, despite my pain, I had to get more documents from the hospital. Thankfully, the reimbursement came quickly.

However, the episode made me realise how insurers make life hell for the policyholders despite the claims of ease, simplicity, and efficiency. IRDAI makes huge claims of how effectively it regulates the companies, but the on-ground reality is different, and people struggle to get the claims. If an educated professional like me needs to spend so much time, what is the state of normal, semi-literate, and illiterate individuals? What about those in the small towns and villages? Maybe, this state-of-affairs is limited to insurance.

Weeks after my surgery, I toyed with the idea

of taking a flight, but gave up since it was not urgent. Thank God for it! Usually, I would have booked a IndiGo flight, and I was relieved that I did not when I saw the newspaper headlines about how the airline, and its passengers were battered and shattered with canceled and delayed flights. Things are so bad that tens of thousands of passengers were across the airports in Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Kolkata, and even the smaller cities like Bhubaneswar.

In Bhubaneswar, for example, 18 flights were cancelled. On December 4, 2025, more than 400 flights were cancelled. The next morning, the headlines screamed that not a single domestic flight would leave the Delhi airport until midnight. This is scandalous. Even more scandalous is the reason, or shall we say, the excuse given by the airline for the inexplicable and unacceptable delays and cancellations. According to IndiGo, the situation is due to a shortage of staff. The pilots' union contends that the airline has limited its hirings due to its business model that focuses on costs and expenses.

Just imagine a situation if the Indian Railways suddenly, and without prior notice, cancels thousands of trains, and because it does not have enough engine drivers, and ticket collectors. The commonsensical question, which is not being asked by the media, is that how can an airline, which is operating for close to 20 years, has expanded at a rapid rate, is highly profitable in most of the years, and boasts of a 95 per cent punctuality rate, suddenly, find itself without adequate crew and staff. How is this possible?

According to a recent report by the aviation regulator, Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), IndiGo's domestic market share is almost two-thirds, and its cancellation rate for scheduled flights in August this year was an amazingly-low 0.51 per cent. How can a seem-

ingly-efficient airline resort to gross mismanagement tactics that it has to cancel not 1-2 flights, but hundreds of them? It seems mysterious, intriguing, disturbing, and glaring. There is something inherently wrong in the manner IndiGo operates, and none of us have looked at its business model closely or carefully.

Of course, apart from the airline, the behaviour of the DGCA is perhaps more scandalous. What exactly has the regulator done in the recent past, and what is its monitoring exercises that it could not pinpoint that things were so wrong with IndiGo. In any case, DGCA's performance in 2025 is not something to be proud of. Most of us can recall the horrifying crash of the Air India flight, which was travelling from Ahmedabad to London a few months ago, and in which all, but one, passengers died. Inquiries were ordered. DGCA ordered one, and the preliminary inquiry report was submitted in time.

Shockingly, the internal confidential report was selectively leaked to foreign media outlets, which suggested that the crash was possibly due to pilot error. The 83-year-old father of the captain of the unfortunate flight approached the Supreme Court to clear his son's name, and demand a fair inquiry into what exactly happened during the flight. The DGCA, of course, while publicly claiming that the investigations were on, did not explain how the inquiry report was leaked. The ongoing IndiGo's imbroglio probably adds to the growing image of either a lax regulator, or an inefficient one.

Unfortunately, in India, this is the story with most regulators across major sectors. The harsh reality is that in the twenty-first century, most industries have moved towards a phase of consolidation, with repeated takeovers, mergers, and acquisitions. This wave of M&As have created either duopolies or oligopolies in the market-place. One sees this across sectors and segments, from steel to tires, aluminum to telecom, aviation to e-commerce. While there is sufficient, and seemingly-stiff competition on paper, there is little or no doubt that there are indications of cartels, or dominance in market shares.

Sadly, the regulators have not done much to reverse the trends. India has the Competition Commission of India, which takes crucial decisions to pinpoint, and stop anti-market, anti-consumer, and monopolistic practices by the large firms. Although it does a commendable job legally, the actions and judgments have had a weak impact in some sectors, and minimal impact on the consumers. Perhaps, the policy-makers need to think of how to make the regulators better, and more efficient. In contrast, political pressures, and industry lobbies aim to influence some of the regulators.

Do not forget that 60 per cent of India's GDP is related to private consumption expenditure. The consumers, therefore, need better protection, and more incentives to open their wallets.

The author has worked for leading media houses, authored two books, and is now Executive Director, C Voter Foundation



Sutanu Guru
Author, Journalist and Academician

OUR TAKE



Valuations of technology firms in the US and India are being fiercely debated among analysts, experts, and investors. They make comparisons between the gaps between US-based mega-cap tech firms, and India's IT and "new-age" tech stocks. DSP Mutual Fund's recent report highlights that Indian IT stocks underperformed the Nasdaq 100 by roughly 48 per cent since the Artificial Intelligence (AI) trade took off. There is overvaluation in US tech rather than in Indian IT. The former is "overbought, over-owned, and overvalued," and the latter "under-owned, oversold, and underperforming."

Saddled, and nestled between the two is India's young but growing cohort of "new-age" tech firms such as Zomato, Nykaa-parent FSN, PB Fintech, Delhivery, MapmyIndia, and Nazara that allow exposure to platforms, logistics, and gaming. Their revenues, and stock prices seem to follow the trajectories of the US-tech growth stories. But the former's valuation logic is dominated by price-to-sales ratio, rather than price-to-earnings one, and unit economics, rather than cash flows. Thus, there is a mismatch when one compares Indian new-age tech to America's old-age tech, and the latter to Indian IT.

In a July 2025 note, Jarvis Invest places Indian IT stalwarts such as TCS and Infosys at about 22-6 times earnings with 12-15 per cent five-year earnings growth. Compare these to global tech names like Nvidia and Apple, which are at 35-90 times earnings with 20-40 per cent growth. The analyst firm feels the IT stocks are "reasonably valued," and global tech ones "overvalued, (with) high expectations." Clearly, the valuations of core tech firms (especially beyond AI) are at different junctures. In addition, tech in New York, and Bengaluru are not the same thing, even though they are often lumped together.

In the US, a handful of names drive earnings and sentiments. These include Apple, Microsoft, Alphabet, Amazon, Meta, and Nvidia, and are accompanied by a long list of suppliers of software services, cloud infrastructure, payments, and semiconductor. As of early December, the Nasdaq 100 traded at a price-to-earnings multiple of 34, which was above its five-year average of 27-33 times. The S&P IT was at almost 40 times earnings, versus a five-year average closer to 27-35 times. The Nifty IT index is still overwhelmingly an IT services basket, with names such as TCS, Infosys, HCL Tech, and Wipro.

The Nifty IT trades at about 27 times earnings, and 7.2 times book value, with a dividend yield just under three per cent. Recent reports suggest that the Nifty IT fell

New-age vs old-age tech vs IT

Tech firms are valued differently in India and the US



16.7 per cent in terms of total returns this year, while the broader Nifty 500 eked out a small gain. While Indian IT looks cheaper than US tech, investors are not paying for the same thing. In the former, they buy exposure to products and platforms with embedded pricing power and, in the latter, they are excited about billing-hour leverage on global IT budgets.

In a recent report, Goldman Sachs outlines how the AI trade amplified an already-extreme concentration in the US tech indices. Valuation excesses, index concentration, and investor exuberance combine to give global equities some of the "early stage bubble" characteristics of the late 1990s. But Goldman Sachs concludes that the global stocks are "not yet" in a classic bubble because the earnings and balance sheets are stronger, and the universe of the beneficiaries is narrower. BlackRock expects AI to dominate markets in 2026, and remains constructive on US equities. It does flag the

risks related to heavy concentration, crowded positioning, and high leverage among hedge funds that can lead to sharp corrective episodes, as was evident in this November's pullback.

The tech market has narrowed in the US because an extraordinary volume of global capital is concentrated in a small cluster of mega-cap companies. Their dominance creates a self-reinforcing cycle. As the prices of these stocks rise, index funds allocate more capital to them, and their size and liquidity attract institutional money. The narrowness is thus a product of excess capital clustering around perceived certainty rather than a shortage of opportunities. Hence, at the top sit firms with immense pricing power, deep cash reserves, and the ability to fund multi-year investment cycles.

India's IT market is narrow for a different reason. Here, capital has thinned because the sector's core growth is under questioning. Large IT exporters deliver steady margins,

strong balance sheets, and dependable cash flows, but the investor appetite is restrained by doubts about the future of their labour-led, billing-hour-driven model in an era defined by automation, cloud consolidation, and generative software. This hesitation is reinforced by a cyclical slowdown in global tech budgets after years of digital spending. Unlike the US, where money crowds into dominance and scale, India reflects a deficit of conviction about the durability of business-es.

Another interesting layer to look at is what the investors pay for. At the top in the US market are the AI-adjacent mega-caps. Nvidia trades at rich price-to-earnings, and price-to-sales multiples. Microsoft, Alphabet, and Amazon combine earnings from mature cloud and advertising franchises with options on AI productivity tools and foundation models. Apple sits apart, sustained more by brand, ecosystem, and buybacks, and trades at a high multiple. A second tier of "old tech" names like Cisco, Intel, IBM, and Oracle are the previous generation's market darlings, and are now valued more for their high cash flows, and huge dividends, rather than growth.

A third tier of high-beta chip and software plays, from AMD and Broadcom to Arm and more-specialised AI software firms, makes the valuation debate acute. Their earnings are less diversified, business models more dependent on the durability of the current upgrade cycle, and their share prices more sensitive to changes in the narrative about AI spending and macro conditions. In India, the classic IT services group is the equivalent of US old tech, except that it is treated as a growth sector. But this feeling can change due to the disruptions, and the impact of generative AI.

The Indian new-age consumer tech and fintech names give a more direct parallel with the US. Zomato and PB Fintech are profitable, but still priced on revenue growth and market share. Nykaa, Delhivery, and Nazara face intense competition, shifting regulation, and consumer demand cycles, which makes their high price-to-sales ratios fragile, and unstable. These businesses rely on domestic discretionary spending, and regulatory stability. They may become the future darlings, and replace the software giants.

BRIEFLY

SENTHILKUMAR, ANAHAT WIN SQUASH INDIAN TOUR



National champions Velavan Senthilkumar and Anahat Singh clinched the men's and women's titles respectively at the Squash Indian Tour 4, which concluded at the Indian Squash Academy, here Friday. Top seed and World No. 46 Senthilkumar overcame Egypt's Adam Hawal 11-7, 11-9, 9-11, 11-4 to lift the men's crown. The Chennai player displayed superior control in the closing stages to quell the challenge of the rising Egyptian. In the women's final, Delhi teenager and World No. 29 Anahat Singh battled past former World No 10 and veteran compatriot Joshna Chinappa in a pulsating five-game contest, winning 11-8, 11-13, 11-13, 11-6, 11-8. This was Anahat's second straight victory over the seasoned campaigner after the Daly College Indian Open last month.

MAN UNITED HELD 1-1, MISS PREMIER LEAGUE TOP-5 SHOT



Manchester United blew the chance to move up to fifth in the Premier League when West Ham salvaged a late 1-1 draw at Old Trafford. Soungoutou Magassa's 83rd-minute equalizer on Thursday cancelled out Diogo Dalot's opening goal that had put United on course to move level on points with fourth-place Chelsea. Bruno Fernandes squandered two chances to score a winner in added time – blazing a shot wide from inside the box and then volleying another off target. It was another setback for United, which has only won one of its last five games – drawing three.

McIlroy's late birdie burst keeps him alive at Australian Open

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Melbourne

Not before a bit of back-nine drama at Royal Melbourne, Rory McIlroy has made the weekend at the Australian Open after shooting a 3-under 68 on Friday to finish inside the 36-hole cut line.

McIlroy, who was 2-under on the tournament, was seven strokes behind leaders Daniel Rodrigues (64) and Rasmus Neergaard-Peterson (66), who had 9-under totals of 133.

The leading pair were one shot clear of third-place Min Woo Lee, who shot 65 Friday. Adam Scott (66) was in a tie for fourth with Cameron Smith (65), who avoided adding to his tally of seven consecutive missed cuts. Scott and Lee were playing in the same featured threesome as McIlroy.

McIlroy started the day at 1-over after a 72 on Thursday, tied for 57th and trailing the leaders by seven shots. At



the time, that was just one shot inside the expected cut of 2-over.

He birdied one hole and had eight pars on his front nine Friday, then had four more pars before making a bogey on the par-5 14th. He missed the fairway to the right off the tee and ended up under a tea tree. McIlroy then whiffed on his next shot as his club got stuck in a branch but he recovered to make a 6.

Australia takes 44-run lead in second Ashes test

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Brisbane

Australia took a 44-run first-innings lead after two days of the second Ashes cricket test, with the top order all getting starts Friday to help the hosts reach 378-6 at stumps.

Five dropped catches and some wayward bowling dented England and allowed the batters to capitalise.

Opener Jake Weatherald led from the start of Australia's innings with 72 from 78 balls, Marnus Labuschagne (65) completed back-to-back half centuries, and stand-in skipper Steve Smith made 61 as bat dominated ball despite some uneven bounce at the Gabba.

Alex Carey was dropped before he'd scored and again on 25, but survived to be unbeaten on 46 off 45 balls at stumps. Michael Nesar also got a reprieve before finishing not out 15 in a 49-run seventh-wicket stand.

The series-opener in Perth was all over on Day 2, with Australia winning by eight wickets, but this day-night test in Brisbane seemingly

still has a long way to go. Joe Root's unbeaten 138 — his first Ashes century for England in Australia — remains the standout innings. The Australians were coasting at 291-3 in the night session until Brydon Carse took two wickets in four balls against the run of play. He ended a 95-run fourth-wicket partnership when Cameron Green (45) backed away too far from a half-volley and was bowled.

Carse then got a thick edge with a short ball to Carey from the next delivery but Ben Duckett grassed a regulation chance at gully.

Two balls later Smith pulled a short ball and Will Jacks reached out one-handed to pluck it out of the air at deep backward square. Australia suddenly was 292-5. Carey and Josh Inglis, both wicketkeeper batters, added 37 for the sixth wicket to get Australia within range of England's first innings 334.

Duckett put down another catch, going with one hand at gully when Inglis edged Ben Stokes. But the England captain didn't rely on any



England's captain Ben Stokes, centre, celebrates with teammates the wicket of Australia's Glenn Maxwell, left, during the second Ashes cricket test match between Australia and England in Brisbane

PTI

help two balls later when he angled a cutter back into Inglis' middle stump, bowling the Australian No. 7 for 23.

Stokes hit Nesar on the pad first ball but it was given not

out, and England wasted a review. Carse then put down a catch off Jofra Archer's bowling when Nesar was on six, yet another reprieve for the Aussies. It got worse for England when Root put

down a catch to his right when Carey edged between wicketkeeper and slip.

The England pace bowlers had heavy loads and weren't able to stick to a consistent length, with Archer bowling

Chandigarh retain title at KIUG 2025 with 67 medals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Jaipur

Chandigarh University defended their overall championship crown at the Khelo India University Games, finishing their campaign with 67 medals, comprising 42 gold, 14 silver and 11 bronze.

Olympian and India's top swimmer Srihari Nataraj was the most successful athlete of KIUG 2025 as he ended with nine gold and two silver medals to help Bengaluru's Jain University clinch a total of 27 gold, nine silver and nine bronze.

Chandigarh University won 23 out of the 30 gold medals on offer in Canoe and Kayaking, a sports discipline which made its



debut at the KIUG, six in swimming and five in athletics, two in wrestling and one each in weightlifting, shooting, cycling, archery, table

tennis and kabaddi. Lovely Professional University (LPU) finished their KIUG campaign as the runner-up with 78 medals, 11

medals more than the champions, but with less number of gold medals. LPU took home 32 golds, 25 silver and 22 bronze.

Guru Nanak Dev University (GNDU) also finished with 32 gold medals but their tally of 22 silver and 18 bronze meant that they had to settle for the third spot.

The fifth edition of KIUG was being held across seven cities in Rajasthan with a whopping 4448 athletes from 222 Universities competing in 23 medal disciplines. The Games were held under the aegis of the Sports Authority of India (SAI) in collaboration with the Rajasthan State Sports Council and is being hosted by Poornima University.

Germany beats France to enter junior hockey WC semi-final

SAUMOJYOTI S CHOUDHURY
■ Chennai

Seven-time champions Germany had to dig deep to keep their hopes of title defence alive as they progressed into the semifinals of the FIH Men's Junior World Cup, edging out a gutsy France 3-1 in shoot-out after both the teams were locked 2-2 at the end of regulation time here on Friday.

In the 2023 edition, seven-time champions Germany eked out a narrow 2-1 win over France in the final to claim the title.

In the shoot-out, Jonas von Gersum, Justus Warweg and Lukas Kossel, who scored from a penalty stroke, were the goal getters for Germany, while France's lone strike in the shoot-out came from Aristide Michaelis. All credit goes to German goalie Jasper Ditzer, who produced a superlative show, not just in the shoot-out but all throughout the enthralling contest.



On Friday, it turned out to be a hard-fought contest between the two sides but France had better share of circle penetrations and chances.

France had the first real scoring chance in the form a penalty corner in the 13th minute but the effort was saved by German keeper Ditzer.

But both the teams matched each other stick-for-stick as the deadlock continued after the first 15

minutes.

The second quarter produced enthralling contest with the tempo and intensity of the game increasing to a different level. If not for German goalkeeper Ditzer, France would have had a sound lead by halftime.

France secured their second penalty corner in the 23rd minute but Ditzer produced another fine save.

The Germans too had their chances but failed in final execution. (PTI)

Himanta inaugurates new Umrangso cricket stadium



Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma batting in the newly inaugurated stadium

TONY DAS
■ Guwahati

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma today inaugurated a state-of-the-art cricket stadium featuring an impressive earthen gallery with 15,000-seat capacity in the picturesque surroundings of Umrangso in Dima Hasao district. Developed by the Assam Cricket Association (ACA), the modern facility also includes the newly constructed Senga Tularam Pavilion. The initiative forms part of the State government's efforts to encourage Assam's emerging cricket talent and foster a positive sporting environment.

The foundation stone of the stadium was laid on 25 September 2021. Built amid a serene natural landscape, the complex features five centre wickets and practice arena with five dedicated practice pitches ensuring year-round training opportunities. To support its operations, the complex also houses eight residential quarters for staff. The project area

also houses an advanced pavilion with accommodation for around 32 players.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister announced that a new football stadium will also be constructed adjacent to the cricket ground. Once completed, the twin stadiums will create a vibrant sporting ecosystem in Umrangso, he said. Sarma added that plans are underway to host cricket matches in the presence of national star players in the near future in the stadium. He noted that night matches at the scenic venue would enhance the viewing experience for sports lovers.

Sports Minister Nandita Gorlosa, ACA president and MLA Taranga Gogoi, North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council CEM Debolal Gorlosa, Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council CEM Tuliram Ronghang, NCHAC chairman Mohit Hojai, BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia, ACA secretary Sanatan Das, members of the District Council and several dignitaries were present at the event.

US prioritises visas for fans travelling for World Cup and Olympics

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Washington

The Trump administration has instructed US Embassies and consulates around the world to prioritise visa applications from foreigners wishing the visit the United States to either invest in America or attend the 2026 World Cup, 2028 Olympics and other major sporting events.

At the same time, the administration has added new criteria for highly skilled foreign workers seeking a particular visa.

The new rules would deny entry to those deemed to have directed or participated in the censorship of American citizens on social media through content moderation initiatives that have sprung up throughout Europe and elsewhere to combat extremist speech.

In a series of cables sent this

week to all US Diplomatic missions that were obtained by *The Associated Press*, the State Department said visa applications for businesspeople considering "significant investments" in the United States should be at the top of the list for consideration along with applications from those wanting to travel "for major sporting events which showcase American excellence."

It is the latest effort by President Donald Trump's administration to crack down on migrants and visitors entering the US but with major sports events planned in the United States, the administration is looking to ensure that fans are able to attend those competitions.

The policies are getting heightened attention ahead of Friday's World Cup draw.

As part of a broader initiative to control the entry of foreigners into the U.S., the State Department has said all those



who require visas to enter the country would need to submit to an in-person interview and screening to vet them for potential national security

risks.

This has led to lengthy wait times at many embassies and consulates for interviews to apply for what are known as

"B1" and "B2" visas despite a surge in consular staffing.

Last month, Trump announced a new initiative, dubbed "FIFA Pass," for for-

eigners travelling to the U.S. For the World Cup that will allow them to get interviews for visas more quickly. Nonetheless, he still encouraged them to apply for their visas "right away."

Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the administration had dispatched more than 400 additional consular officers around the world to handle the demand for visas for the World Cup and that in about 80% of the globe, travellers to the U.S. can get a visa appointment within 60 days — something reflected in the cable. The new steps in the cable this week go beyond the FIFA Pass initiative to expedite applications for those looking to travel to the United States for the Olympics and other major sports events.

Posts "should ensure sufficient appointment capacity to accommodate spectators and other fans travelling for events surrounding the (World Cup)

tournament," said one of the two cables sent Tuesday.

"These should take priority over all other B1/B2 applications, except those related to American re-industrialization."

Others to be prioritized include foreign diplomats, government officials travelling on official business, temporary agricultural workers, religious workers, physicians and nurses, and students attending academic institutions with less than 15% foreign enrolment. "Posts should ensure that applicants of higher ranked groups get priority over applicants and lower rank groups, regardless of demand by lower ranked applicants," the cable said.

"Posts may significantly reduce the number of appointment slots available to lower rank groups in order to accommodate demand from higher rank groups."

A second cable sent Tuesday to all embassies and

consulates set out new criteria for considering H-1B visa applications, instructing diplomats to "be on the lookout" for those who may have been or are "responsible for or complicit in the censorship of Americans" online and elsewhere. Those visas allow American companies to bring in people with technical skills that are hard to find in the United States, and President Donald Trump has said he would slap a USD 100,000 annual fee on them.

The department said evidence of this could lead to visa denial. It defined such information as having "adopting global content moderation policies inconsistent with freedom of expression, complying with global content moderation or censorship demands from a foreign entity and providing access to private data on American citizens in connection with content moderation."