

## President Murmu Calls Sri Sathya Sai Baba a Beacon of Spirituality and Selfless Service



TPN Bureau | November 22

**P** UTTAPARTHI: President of India Droupadi Murmu on Saturday graced a special session marking the centenary celebrations of Sri Sathya Sai Baba at Prasanthi Nilayam in Puttaparthi, Andhra Pradesh. Addressing devotees, spiritual leaders and dignitaries gathered from across the globe, the President paid rich tributes to Sri Sathya Sai Baba, praising his unparalleled contribution to spirituality, service and human welfare.

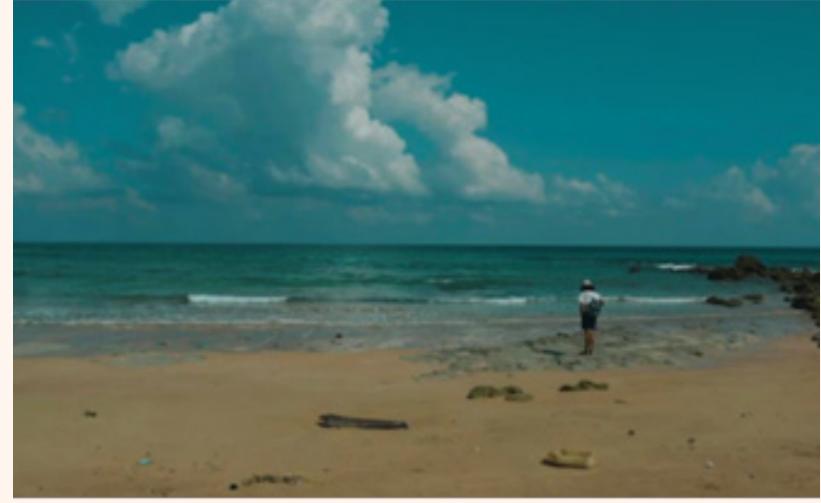
In her address, President Murmu said that since ancient times, India's saints and sages have guided society through their words and actions. Among these great spiritual masters, Sri Sathya Sai Baba holds a unique and revered place. She said his life exemplified the principle that "service to humanity is service to God," and he inspired millions to walk the path of selfless service and moral upliftment. By linking spirituality with public welfare and personal transformation, Sri Sathya Sai Baba shaped a movement rooted in compassion, discipline, and dedication to humanity.

The President highlighted the far-reaching impact of the welfare initiatives established under Baba's guidance. The Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, she noted, continues to provide high-quality, free education that nurtures both academic excellence and character-building. She also commended the Trust's network of free, world-class medical institutions, which have made advanced healthcare accessible to all, irrespective of social or economic background. Referring to the landmark drinking water projects that delivered safe water to thousands of drought-prone villages in the region, she said these initiatives reflected Sri Sathya Sai Baba's visionary leadership and deep empathy for human suffering.

President Murmu stressed that the messages "Love All, Serve All" and "Help Ever, Hurt Never"—central to Baba's teachings—are eternal, universal, and relevant across cultures and eras. She said Sri Sathya Sai Baba believed that the world itself is a school, and the five human values—truth, righteousness, peace, love, and non-violence—should be the guiding curriculum for every individual.

Underscoring the role of spiritual organizations in national development, the President said that nation-building is the shared responsibility of all institutions, inspired by the ideal of Nation First. She called upon NGOs, charitable bodies, private-sector institutions, and citizens to join the Government of India's efforts to improve ease of living and create opportunities for talent to flourish. Their collective contribution, she said, will be crucial in achieving the goal of making India a developed nation by 2047.

## Cyclone Senyar Fast Approaching



TPN Bureau | November 22

**A**maravathi: Cyclone Senyar is currently forming in the Bay of Bengal and is projected to intensify into a significant cyclonic storm in the coming days, with multiple East Coast states including Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh placed on alert by the India Meteorological Department (IMD). The IMD has issued advisories highlighting the possibility of heavy rainfall, high winds, and rough sea conditions as the system develops.

### Cyclone Senyar's Development and Projection

According to updated forecasts, a low-pressure area was set to form over the Southeast Bay of Bengal around November 21–22, strengthening into a depression by November 24. If the depression intensifies further, it will become Cyclone Senyar, named by the UAE and may evolve rapidly due to favorable sea conditions including high heat potential and wind shear. The storm is expected to travel west

northwestward over the Bay of Bengal, gathering strength as it approaches the East Coast of India.

### Regions at Risk and Possible Landfall

The latest models suggest that the landfall window for Cyclone Senyar is likely between November 26 and 29, though precise timing and location remain uncertain until the cyclone matures. Current predictions target Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, especially coastal districts between Nellore and Kakinada as well as Odisha and West Bengal, with a possibility of the system even reaching Bangladesh. Both IMD and independent weather experts caution that only after November 24 will there be clear confirmation on Senyar's projected landfall location and severity.

### Preparedness and Future Outlook

Vigilance is recommended over the next week, with November 26 to December 2 considered critical for major storm impacts along the coast. Authorities continue to monitor Senyar closely, and more precise details are expected within the next 48 hours. Coastal communities in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, and West Bengal should follow official advisories for safety and logistical planning. Prompt and proactive measures, including evacuating vulnerable areas and securing property, will be crucial to mitigate damage from Cyclone Senyar.



## 37 Maoists surrender before Telangana DGP

TPN Bureau | November 22

**H** yderabad: In yet another blow to the banned CPI (Maoist), 37 underground cadres, including three State Committee Members, surrendered before the Telangana Police on Saturday. Seven cadres also handed over eight firearms, including one AK-47 rifle, two SLRs, four .303 rifles and one G3 rifle, along with 343 live ammunition of various calibres.

Three State Committee Members (SCM) Koyyada Sambiah alias Azad, Appasi Narayana alias Ramesh of Telangana State Committee and Muchakki Somada alias Erra of Dandakarnya Special Zonal Committee (DKSZC) were among 37 Maoists who surrendered before Director General of Police B. Shivadhar Reddy. Three Divisional Committee Members (DVCM), nine Area Committee Members (ACMs) and 22 party members of the banned CPI (Maoist) organisation joined the mainstream. Cit-

ing sustained pressure from security forces, ideological divergences, and internal rifts within the leadership and various formations of the CPI (Maoist), they decided to dissociate themselves from the organization and rejoin the mainstream with government facilitation. The DGP told media persons that in response to the appeal made by the Chief Minister, A. Revanth Reddy, on October 21 to the CPI (Maoist) members to come out of the organisation, join the mainstream, and participate in the development and welfare activities of the State and its people, 37 underground cadres of the party joined the mainstream of life.

The committee held its second review meeting at the Municipal Administration Department headquarters in

Amaravati. The discussion focused on the progress made since the first meeting held on November 10, as well as several new issues raised by the farmers. Priority was given to resolving matters immediately wherever possible. Union Minister P. Chandra Sekhar, State Minister Ponguru Narayana, Tadikonda MLA Sravan Kumar, CRDA Commissioner Kannababu, Additional Commissioner Bhargav Teja, officials from various departments and representatives of contracting agencies attended the meeting.

**'Will meet every two weeks to resolve issues': Union Minister P. Chandra Sekhar**

Union Minister Chandrasek

har recalled how farmers were compelled to protest under the previous government and stressed that their sacrifices will never be forgotten. He stated that certain problematic decisions taken earlier had created complications, but the present government is addressing them systematically. He revealed that 98% of plots have already been allocated, with only issues related to around 700 acres pending.

Regarding gram panchayats, he said CRDA will quickly resolve those that fall within its guidelines. Around 370 farmers are facing issues related to these village settlement lands. The Minister further clarified that the government is not taking up development works in

Lanka assigned lands as a case pending before the National Green Tribunal (NGT). A judgment is expected in February. However, he reiterated that the government is committed to ensuring justice for farmers. The Cabinet sub-committee will take the final decision on assigned land registrations, which he said would be resolved within 90 days. From January, development works such as roads, drainage and streetlights will begin in 25 capital region villages.

**'Every capital region farmer will get justice': Minister Narayana**

Minister Narayana said all Amaravati-related farmer issues will be settled within six

months. Plot registrations for returnable plots are progressing rapidly, and only 719 farmers are yet to receive their plots. He urged farmers not to fall for statements made by a few individuals for personal gain.

**'Boundary stones must be laid in layouts': MLA Sravan Kumar**

MLA Sravan Kumar suggested marking boundaries in all capital region layouts. Existing pipelines in the villages are non-functional, and decisions have already been taken to install new drinking water pipelines and an underground drainage system. The DPR for infrastructure works is being prepared, and works will begin from the end of December.

## Amaravati Capital Region Farmers' Issues Will Be Resolved Within Six Months, Assures Three-Member Committee

TPN Bureau | November 22

**V**IJAYAWADA: The three-member committee appointed by Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has assured that all pending issues of Amaravati capital region farmers will be resolved within the next six months. Urging farmers not to believe misleading claims made by a few individuals for their own selfish interests, the committee stressed that the current government fully recognises the sacrifices and struggles of the capital region farmers.

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Amaravati. The discussion focused on the progress made since the first meeting held on November 10, as well as several new issues raised by the farmers. Priority was given to resolving matters immediately wherever possible. Union Minister P. Chandra Sekhar, State Minister Ponguru Narayana, Tadikonda MLA Sravan Kumar, CRDA Commissioner Kannababu, Additional Commissioner Bhargav Teja, officials from various departments and representatives of contracting agencies attended the meeting.

**'Will meet every two weeks to resolve issues': Union Minister P. Chandra Sekhar**

Union Minister Chandrasek

## Vijayawada Family's Udaipur Wedding Goes Viral as Donald Trump Jr Joins the Party

TPN Bureau | November 22

**V**ijayawada: A grand wedding hosted by Vijayawada-born US pharmaceutical tycoon Raj (Rama) Mantena turned into one of the most talked-about events in the country after Donald Trump Jr. arrived at the celebrations and was seen dancing alongside top Bollywood stars.

Trump Jr. and his girlfriend Bettina Anderson became the unexpected highlights of the extravagant Bollywood Night at the City Palace, where they grooved to popular tracks with Ra-

nveer Singh. Ranveer even pulled Bettina onto the stage to dance to his hit 'Jhumka' from Rocky Aur Rani Ki Prem Kahani.

Mantena, now an Orlando-based billionaire and CEO of Ingenuis Ph

armaceuticals is hosting the three-day celebrations for his daughter Netra's wedding to tech entrepreneur Vamsi Gadireaju. But it's the high-profile presence of Trump Jr., Hollywood icons, and Bollywood A-listers that has pushed the Vijayawada businessman's family wedding into global chatter.

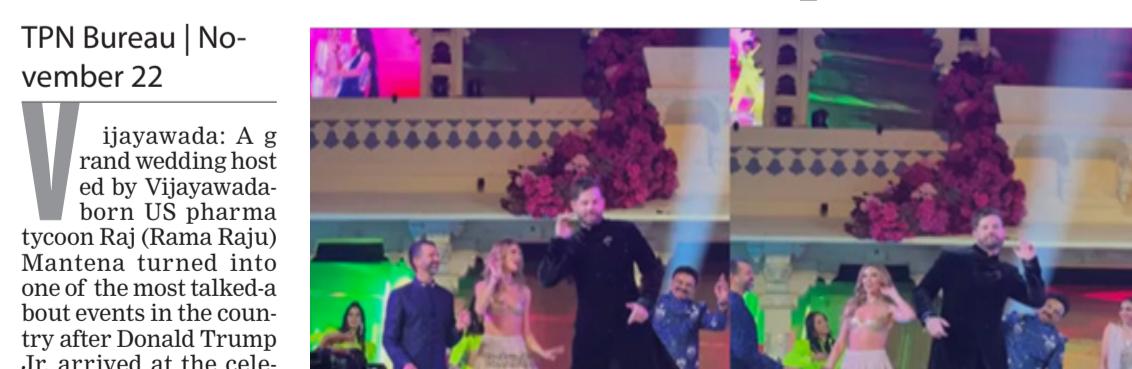
The star-packed festivities have seen dazzling performances from

Varun Dhawan, Kriti Sanon, Jacqueline Fernandez, Janhvi Kapoor, and Shahid Kapoor, along with a lively segment hosted by Karan Johar. Hollywood diva Jennifer Lopez arrived on Friday night to a traditional welcome at The Leela Palace, while Justin Bieber is expected to perform at the Hollywood Night at Manak Chowk.

The celebrations are spread across Udaipur's most iconic venues — The Leela Palace, Taj Lake Palace, Zenana Mahal, and the Jagmandir Island Palace, where the main wedding rituals will take place on November 23. Netra Mantena, dau-

ghter of Padmaja and Raj Mantena, is heir to a global pharma empire with R&D centres in the US, Switzerland, and India. Groom Vamsi Gadireaju, a Columbia University graduate and co-founder of Superorder, was featured in Forbes 30 Under 30 this year.

With celebrities, billionaires, and international VIPs descending on the lake city — and Trump Jr.'s dance videos dominating social media — the wedding of Vijayawada-born Raj Mantena's daughter has become one of India's most buzzworthy events of the year.



## Values-Based Education Will Shape India's Future: CM at Sri Sathya Sai Institute Convocation



TPN Bureau | November 22

PUTTAPARTHI: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu participated in the 44th Convocation of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning and delivered an inspiring address highlighting the institution's values-driven education model and India's promising future.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister said it was an honour to attend a convocation at an institute built on value-based learning and character development. Congratulating all gradu-

ating students, he said they were reflections of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's unique educational philosophy. "This system has shaped students into professionally capable, socially responsible and spiritually aware individuals," he noted.

The CM said Bhagawan Baba lived with a divine purpose and gifted the world the eternal Sai philosophy, which stresses discipline, love and service as fundamental languages of true learning. He urged the new graduates to uphold values of selfless service, compassion and integri-

ty throughout their lives.

Highlighting India's spiritual legacy, the Chief Minister said the country had shared its wisdom for thousands of years with the message of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'—the world is one family. He praised the Institute for integrating morality and ethics with academics, and for promoting research that benefits society in fields such as science, technology and arts.

Chandrababu Naidu said India's rise began with the 1991 economic reforms, followed by technological advancement in the mid-1990s



that transformed cities like Hyderabad into global IT hubs. With a large youth population and strong leadership under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India is now poised to climb from being the 10th largest economy to the 4th, he said. "By 2047, India will emerge as the world's number one nation," he declared.

The Chief Minister said Andhra Pradesh is focusing on future industries such as AI, data centres, quantum technologies, aerospace, drones, space technology, semiconductors and defence, along with re-

newable energy. He noted that 13.25 lakh crore worth of investments were committed at the recent CII summit, creating 1.6 million jobs, and added that Google is set to invest \$15 billion for a major data centre project.

He said initiatives like One Family-One Entrepreneur and One Family-One AI Technician aim to empower every household. He encouraged students to uphold Sai philosophy while embracing innovation, and to work toward building a wealthy, healthy and happy society inspired by Baba's teachings.

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PUTTAPARTHI: Vice President of India CP Radhakrishnan conferred degrees upon the graduating students of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning and delivered an inspiring convocation address, praising the institution's discipline, values-based education, and its contribution to nation-building.

The Vice President lauded the institute as an exceptional model of holistic education. He expressed confidence that India will emerge as the world's No. 1 nation by 2047, and said the graduates receiving their degrees today would play an active role in shaping that future.

Radhakrishnan noted that the presence of top national dignitaries over the past three days during the birth anniversary celebrations of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba demonstrated Baba's profound global influence. He recalled the enthusiastic response students gave

when Minister Nara Lokesh encouraged them to join public life. "It is clear that these students have the potential to become future leaders," he observed.

He praised the extraordinary discipline visible across the campus, noting that he had never seen students maintain such decorum—sitting on the floor during the convocation with dignity and respect. Offering his congratulations to the graduates and the institution, he highlighted the uniqueness of providing high-quality education completely free of cost.

Speaking about India's rise, Radhakrishnan said the world had moved from "India listens to the world" to "the world listens to India." He credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership for transforming India into a hub of innovation and sustainable development. He stressed that producing good human beings is more important than produc-

ing large numbers of graduates—a principle that the Sai Institute exemplifies.

The Vice President urged greater investment in research, recalling India's achievement in developing COVID-19 vaccines and sharing them free of cost with over 100 countries—an act that earned global admiration and even a symbolic gesture of respect when a foreign President touched PM Modi's feet in gratitude.

He stressed India's dual identity as a powerful and compassionate nation, and encouraged students to follow both modern methods and traditional values. Calling drugs a major global threat, he urged widespread campaigns promoting "No to Drugs."

Radhakrishnan concluded by saying that Sai Baba's principles and teachings represent true education, and the graduates must take these values across India and the world.

## Naidu Hails New Labour Codes as Landmark Reform Aligned with Global Standards

TPN Bureau | November 22

AMARAVATI: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu praised India's newly implemented labour codes as a transformative step that strengthens worker rights, ensures fair wages, and aligns workforce policies with international standards. He described the reform package as one of the most significant policy changes in India since the 1991 economic liberalization.

Naidu's remarks came in response to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement on social media confirming that the four labour codes on wages, industrial relations, social security, and occupational safety came into effect on Friday.

The CM said the reform modernizes the country's labour laws to

reflect the evolving dynamics of the global job market. According to Naidu, the new framework marks a decisive step towards creating a "world-class, future-ready economy." He noted that the codes aim to protect workers' welfare while offering industries greater flexibility, balancing economic growth with social justice.

"By aligning our workforce standards with global best practices, these measures strengthen worker security, ensure fair wages, uphold dignity, and support the evolving nature of work including protections for gig workers and greater parity for women," Naidu said in a post on X. The Chief Minister commended the Union government's efforts to streamline and simplify decades-old labour regulations.



He said the simplification of more than 40 central laws into four codes is a critical structural reform that will make business operations more transparent and efficient, while also providing clarity and consistency in compliance. The four codes consolidate existing labour laws into a unified system that aims to improve employer-employee relations and foster a conducive environment for both industrial growth and welfare protection.

The Code on Wages ensures uniformity in wage structures and payments across sectors.

The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code sets stronger safeguards for workers' health and safety in all industries. The Code on Social Security extends welfare benefits to gig and platform workers for the first time.

Meanwhile, the Industrial Relations Code focuses on strengthening collective bargaining and easing dispute resolution mechanisms.

Naidu highlighted that these reforms will particularly benefit unorganized and gig economy workers, who were previously excluded from formal protections. "The world of work is changing rapidly, and laws must evolve accordingly. These codes recognize and respond to that

transformation," he added. He further said that Andhra Pradesh would work closely with the Centre to ensure effective implementation of the codes and to support industries and workers in adapting to the new regulatory environment.

The state government, he said, remains committed to promoting inclusive economic growth through labour empowerment and skill development. Calling the reform a "landmark achievement", Naidu lauded Prime Minister Modi's leadership in implementing one of the most awaited components of India's economic reform agenda. "This move reflects India's readiness to match global standards and attract investment while ensuring dignity and equity for every worker," he said.

## AP Orders Probe Against Jail Officials for Allowing Unauthorized Entry and Threats to Approver Dastagiri



TPN Bureau | November 22

AMARAVATI: In a significant development linked to the murder case of former Andhra Pradesh minister Y.S. Vivekananda Reddy, the state government has initiated disciplinary proceedings against three then-Cuddapah Central Prisons officials over allegations of serious misconduct and negligence.

The action follows reports that approver Sheikh Dastagiri, a key witness in the sensational case, was threatened inside the prison under suspicious cir-

cumstances in late 2023. According to government sources, the Home Department has issued formal orders sanctioning a departmental inquiry against former Cuddapah Jail Superintendent I.N.H. Prakash, Deputy Superintendent K. Jawahar Babu, and Duty Chief Surgeon Dr. G. Pushpalatha. The officials have been accused of dereliction of duty and misuse of authority by facilitating the illegal entry of an outsider into the prison premises under the pretext of a medical camp. The inquiry was ordered after it was revealed

that on November 28, 2023, a medical camp was organized inside the prison supposedly for inmate health services. However, investigating agencies later found that this event was used as a cover to allow unauthorized access to Dr. Chaitanya Reddy, the son of murder accused Devireddy Shivashankar Reddy.

During his visit, Chaitanya Reddy allegedly intimidated and issued threats to approver Dastagiri, warning him against not cooperating with investigators. The matter came to light when a complaint was lodged and a criminal case was registered in February 2024. Home Department Principal Secretary Kumar Vishwajit issued the disciplinary order on Friday, instructing the setting up of a formal inquiry.

At present, Superintendent Prakash is posted in the Andhra Pradesh Stars facility in Nellore. Deputy Superintendent Jawahar Babu serves at Visakhapatnam Central Prison,

and Dr. Pushpalatha is on duty at the Government General Hospital (GGH) in Kadapa. The incident has reignited scrutiny over prison management practices and the influence wielded by powerful accused persons in high-profile cases.

Officials believe that strong disciplinary measures are necessary to restore integrity and transparency in the prison administration system.

The Y.S. Vivekananda Reddy murder case continues to attract high public attention, as testimonies by approvers such as Sheikh Dastagiri have played a crucial role in advancing the investigation. The state government's swift action in this matter underscores its resolve to ensure accountability within the prison department and maintain fairness in the ongoing judicial process.

## BirlaNu To Set Up Rs 127 cr Fibre Cement Board Plant in AP

TPN Bureau | November 22

NELLORE: BirlaNu, a part of CKA Birla Group on Saturday announced the establishment of a new Fibre Cement Board Plant in the Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh. The greenfield project is a key milestone in BirlaNu's long-term expansion strategy and reflects the company's confidence in Andhra Pradesh's strong industrial ecosystem and infrastructure-led growth outlook.

Designed as a state-of-the-art facility built on advanced manufacturing technologies and sustainable production practices, the unit will play a pivotal role in accelerating regional eco-

nomic development. Akshat Seth, Managing Director and CEO of BirlaNu, said: "Our new Fibre Cement Board Plant in Nellore marks an important milestone in BirlaNu's expansion journey. Andhra Pradesh offers a compelling environment for industrial growth, supported by robust infrastructure and a progressive development approach. This facility will enhance our manufacturing footprint, address rising domestic and global demand for high-quality building materials and create meaningful employment opportunities. It underscores our commitment to responsible, innovation-driven growth."

In Phase 2, BirlaNu plans to expand the site with additional units for PVC Pipes & Fittings and Construction Chemicals, deepening the company's integrated manufacturing capabilities in Andhra Pradesh.



# SEC begins preparation for local body elections

TPN Bureau | November 22

Amaravati: The Andhra Pradesh State Election Commission (SEC) has begun preparations for conducting local body elections across the state, signaling the start of an important electoral exercise scheduled for early next year. The SEC has initiated formal communication with the Panchayati Raj and Municipal Administration departments to coordinate arrangements and ensure a smooth election process.

According to official sources, the SEC has already obtained the latest voters' list for all 175 Assembly constituencies from the Election Commission of India (ECI). Work is now underway to finalize and prepare these voter rolls for the upcoming elections to gram panchayats, municipalities, municipal corporations, mandal parishes, and zilla parishes. Election officials said the notification for the polls will be issued once the reservation process for various categories is finalized. The term of the existing local bodies is



set to end in phases beginning early next year.

The tenure of gram panchayats will expire on April 2, 2026, while municipal bodies are due to complete their term on March 17, 2026. Mandal parishad territorial constituencies (MPTCs) and zilla parishad territorial constituencies (ZPTCs) are expected to conclude their term by September 3 and 4, 2026, respectively. Given these timelines, the SEC is keen to finalize all preparatory work well in advance.

To ensure adequate polling infrastructure, the

SEC currently holds a stock of 1.2 lakh ballot boxes. However, authorities are considering procuring an additional one lakh boxes to meet contingency needs and to replace damaged or outdated equipment. The Commission is also expected to seek additional manpower from both the Panchayati Raj and Municipal Administration departments to assist with election duties, logistics, and counting arrangements.

Meanwhile, political parties have already begun internal mobilization and are preparing

their ground-level workers for the upcoming elections. Local body polls are seen as a crucial test of grassroots strength for all major parties, notably the ruling YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) and the opposition Telugu Desam Party (TDP), particularly in the context of shifting political dynamics in the state since the 2024 Assembly and Lok Sabha elections. The previous round of local body elections in Andhra Pradesh was held in two phases during February and April 2021, under the YSRCP government.

Those elections were

marked by intense political competition and questions over transparency and fairness, which makes the coming round of polls even more significant for all stakeholders. According to reports, the state government is also in the process of completing the formalities related to panchayat amalgamation. This process, expected to conclude by the end of November, will play a key role in determining the final structure and number of local bodies eligible to go to polls.

The SEC is closely monitoring these developments before announcing the election schedule. Officials suggest that once the reservation lists are released and the merger process is cleared, the Election Commission will move swiftly to issue the official notification, possibly early next year. The next few months are expected to see intense political activity and administrative preparations as Andhra Pradesh readies itself for another round of grassroots democracy in action.



tion and verification based on printed Aadhaar details will be restricted, a major shift from current practices. From December, UIDAI will also roll out reinforced age verification protocols. These steps are particularly targeted at hotels, event organizers, and similar entities who currently collect, photocopy, or retain Aadhaar cards for verification purposes. Such practices will be prohibited under the revised guidelines. Kumar explained that as per existing laws, using biometric data on the Aadhaar number for offline verification or storage is already illegal, although many organizations fail to comply. The new regulations are intended to enforce stricter adherence and prevent the unauthorized storage of Aadhaar details.

Additionally, UIDAI will soon launch an upgraded mobile application designed to empower users with full control over their identity-sharing choices.

The app will allow a family of up to five to access their Aadhaar profiles, with users deciding exactly what information they wish to share with third parties. The application will feature advanced utilities such as one-click biometric lock or unlock, making security more robust and convenient. Updates to mobile numbers and addresses will also become more user-friendly through this digital platform.

UIDAI Deputy Director General Vivek Chandra Varma emphasized that these reforms will significantly reduce the dependence on physical Aadhaar copies and photo printouts, further solidifying the digital security architecture around India's most widely used identity document. In summary, the upcoming overhaul marks a pivotal shift in India's approach to data privacy, with user empowerment and misuse prevention at the heart of UIDAI's latest initiatives.

## Dr Hanumaiah Receives Best President Award from IMA Andhra Pradesh

TPN Bureau | November 22

RAJAMPET: Dr Bodepudi Hanumaiah has been honoured with the Best President Award among all Indian Medical Association (IMA) branches in Andhra Pradesh. The award was presented during the 67th IMA Annual State Conference held on Saturday in Rajampet.

The recognition was conferred by IMA National President Dr Dilip Bhanusali in the presence of State President Dr G Nanda Kishore.

This prestigious award highlights Dr Hanumaiah's exceptional leadership, administrative excellence and unwavering commitment to strengthening the medical fraternity.

Under his guidance, the branch witnessed notable growth in member participation, scientific activities, community health initiatives and public health outreach programmes. The initiatives he led played a pivotal role in enhancing patient care standards and reinforcing the IMA's contribution to public welfare.

While receiving the award, Dr Hanumaiah expressed heartfelt gratitude to his fellow doctors, committee members and the state IMA leadership. He dedicated the honour

to the collective efforts of the entire branch team.

The 67th IMA Annual State Conference brought together eminent doctors and specialists from across Andhra Pradesh to discuss pressing health issues, medical innovations, and future healthcare policies.



## AP extends the tenure of CS Andhra Pradesh Extends Chief Secretary Vijay Anand's Tenure; Sai Prasad Likely Successor

TPN Bureau | November 22

Amaravati: The Andhra Pradesh government has decided to extend the service tenure of the state's Chief Secretary, K. Vijayanand, by an additional three months, allowing him to continue in his current role until February next year. Vijayanand was initially scheduled to retire at the end of this month. The extension, seen as a strategic administrative move, is expected to ensure continuity in state bureaucracy during a crucial period. According to sources, post-February, the state government is planning to hand over the reins of Chief Secretary to G. Sai Prasad, who is currently serving as the Special Chief Secretary, Water Resources Department and the Chief Minister's Office.

Sai Prasad is expected to hold the Chief Secretary post until his own retirement in May 2026.



There is also an indication that the government may consider extending his service period further, citing his administrative acumen and experience, to provide longer-term stability within the state's top bureaucracy. This development comes as Andhra Pradesh is grappling with multiple governance priorities, and the continued leadership of senior IAS officers is considered crucial for effective administration.

The move has been welcomed by some sections of the bureaucracy, while others await formal notifications and potential implications for departmental alignments in the months ahead. 37 Maoists Surrender in Telangana Amid Ongoing Operations. The state of Telangana witnessed a significant breakthrough in its efforts to curb Maoist activities, with as many as 37 members of the outlawed group reportedly preparing to surrender

before law enforcement authorities. This large-scale surrender, involving several key leaders and state and central committee members, marks a major setback for the Maoist party, which has been facing sustained pressure following recent high-profile encounters.

According to sources, the surrender follows repeated appeals for peace and development from Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, who has called upon militants to lay down arms and join the mainstream. The ongoing 'Operation Kagar' aimed at neutralizing Maoist threats, has placed considerable strain on the radical group, prompting many to seek rehabilitation. Among those surrendering are prominent Maoist leaders such as Azad, Koyyada Sambayya, Appas Narayana, and Errallu. The group is expected to formally surrender at the office of Director General of Police (DGP) Shivarao Reddy at 3 PM, where further details will be provided to the media. This wave of surrenders is being perceived as a major success for state police and a step towards restoring peace and normalcy in conflict-affected regions.

Tirumala Prasad Remarks by Anchor Sh

ivajyoti Spark Outrage. Popular Telugu anchor Shivajyoti has come under fire after a video of her making remarks about the revered Tirumala prasadam in a queue line went viral on social media. Recently, while visiting Tirumala with her husband and friends, Shivajyoti was caught on camera making comments considered insensitive and disrespectful of the sacred prasadam distributed to devotees by temple volunteers. The video, which shows her jokingly referring to themselves as the "richest beggars" while discussing the prasadam's quality and cost, quickly spread online, prompting widespread criticism from fans, Hindu religious organizations, and devotees. Many have lambasted her for making such statements while occupying a public position and during a religious pilgrimage. The controversy has reignited debates around public figures' responsibility and the growing influence of social media in amplifying sensitive matters. As calls for an apology mount, the incident serves as a reminder of the delicate balance between personal expression and respecting religious sentiments in an increasingly connected world.

The preliminary investigation revealed that Rambabu was passing by the liquor outlet where the accused were present. He reportedly spat as he walked past, which the accused misinterpreted as a deliberate act directed toward them. Feeling insulted, the accused confronted Rambabu, leading to a heated argument. In the midst of the altercation, Rambabu allegedly struck one of the accused, provoking the group's violent response.

DSP Hanumantha Rao stated that police teams swiftly launched an investigation based on eyewitness accounts and surveillance footage collected from nearby cameras. The evidence traced the suspects' movements and helped

identify all those involved in the crime. On Saturday morning, all four accused were apprehended from different locations in and around Vinukonda. Two of the accused are minors, and all four played active roles in the assault that led to Rambabu's death," the DSP said.

He added that the police meticulously examined CCTV footage that clearly captured the sequence of events leading up to the attack. The suspects were taken into custody and will be produced before the court as part of legal proceedings, he added. The DSP also urged the public to exercise restraint in such trivial disputes and avoid letting minor provocations escalate into violent incidents.

"In this case, what started as a misunderstanding resulted in a needless loss of life. Strict legal action will be taken to ensure justice is served," he emphasized. Vinukonda Circle Inspector Balagani Prabhakar and staff from the local police station were present at the press conference. Police have intensified vigilance in the area to prevent similar incidents and have appealed for community cooperation in maintaining public order.

The arrests have brought some relief to the victim's family, though the tragedy underscores the dangers of impulsive violence. Investigations are ongoing as the police prepare to file detailed charges in court.

## Four Arrested in Vinukonda Murder Case Following Dispute Outside Liquor Shop

TPN Bureau | November 22



The four men attacked him mercilessly using their hands and legs, inflicting severe injuries. Following the assault, locals alerted authorities, and Rambabu was immediately shifted to the Vinukonda Government Hospital for treatment. Despite medical efforts, he succumbed to his injuries on November 13. Medical reports later confirmed that the victim sustained critical internal injuries to his heart and liver, which proved fatal.

The preliminary investigation revealed that Rambabu was passing by the liquor outlet where the accused were present. He reportedly spat as he walked past, which the accused misinterpreted as a deliberate act directed toward them. Feeling insulted, the accused confronted Rambabu, leading to a heated argument. In the midst of the altercation, Rambabu allegedly struck one of the accused, provoking the group's violent response.

DSP Hanumantha Rao stated that police teams swiftly launched an investigation based on eyewitness accounts and surveillance footage collected from nearby cameras. The evidence traced the suspects' movements and helped

# Administration Stalled at Dr YSR Horticultural University as VC Post Remains Vacant for 3 Months



TPN Bureau | November 22, Venkatramannagudem, West Godavari: The Dr. YSR Horticultural University in Venkatramannagudem, one of Andhra Pradesh's key

agricultural research institutions, has been without a Vice-Chancellor (VC) for nearly three months, throwing its administration into disarray. The university, a vi-

tal center for horticultural education and research, has found itself stuck in "temporary mode," with day-to-day operations continuing but strategic progress at

a standstill. Former VC Prof. Gopal retired on August 31 this year.

Since then, neither a permanent nor temporary replacement has been appointed. Al-

though three senior professors' names were sent to the Principal Secretary for consideration, the file has not moved forward. Meanwhile, Prof. Gopal's petition seeking an extension of tenure till the age of 65 is pending in court, leaving the university without clear leadership. The absence of a VC has crippled major decision-making processes.

Nearly Rs.10 crore in RKVY (Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana) funds allocated for research and infrastructure remain unspent, as approvals cannot be issued without the VC's signature. Officials warn that if the funds aren't utilized soon, the central government may withdraw them. Essential projects aimed at improving crop research, disease control, and hybrid variety development have stall-

ed, delaying benefits to farmers across the state.

The Registrar, continuing from the previous administration, has limited authority to take key decisions. With an annual budget exceeding Rs.100 crore, the university requires strong govern-

ance to manage its 600-plus staff, 10 constituent colleges, 30 research stations, and 4 Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs). In the absence of leadership, faculty and scientists at the university are struggling with halted project approvals, de-

layed publications, and academic uncertainties for postgraduate and doctoral students.

Experts caution that the ongoing vacuum directly affects farmers, research outcomes, and the academic careers of hundreds of students. While other universities have promptly appointed acting VCs in similar situations, the inaction here highlights deep administrative neglect. With a massive institutional network dependent on quick decisions, the delay in appointing a Vice-Chancellor has turned into a question of accountability.

As one senior scientist put it, "The entire system is waiting for one decision." The university community now anxiously asks: When will leadership return to Venkatramannagudem?



## Kambala Srinivasa Rao Extends Financial Aid to Road Accident Victims, Promises Continued Support

TPN Bureau | November 22

Rajamahendravaram: In a moving gesture that reflected compassion and humanity, Bharatiya Janata Party leader and Viswa Hindu Dharma Ramasena president Kambala Srinivasa Rao personally visited two families affected by recent road accidents in East Godavari district, extending financial assistance of Rs 1 lakh each and assuring them of continued support during their recovery. The two victims, Madi Ratna Teja Dora (30) from Rampachodavaram and Erula Ramesh from Koti Keshavaram village in Korukonda mandal, are currently undergoing treatment for severe injuries at Sai Hospital, Rajamahendravaram.

Residents describe him as a leader who responds swiftly to genuine human needs rather than confining himself to party activities. Many locals observed that leaders of such empathy are increasingly rare, and acts like this remind society that true service stems from love, not obligation.

"Anyone can succeed as a political leader," said one resident, "but to win as a human being, one must have a heart like his." Kambala Srinivasa Rao's gesture has once again highlighted that humanity remains the greatest virtue. His aid not only eased the victims' immediate pain but also revived faith in compassionate leadership within the community.

He added that his assistance would not

## Krishna Veni College to Host ANU Inter-Collegiate Volleyball Tournament from November 25

TPN Bureau | November 22

Narasaraopet (Palnadu District): Krishna Veni Degree College, Narasaraopet, will be the venue for the Acharya Nagarjuna University (ANU) Inter-Collegiate Men's Volleyball Tournament and University Selections scheduled to take place from November 25 to 27. College Principal Dr. Nathani Venkateswarlu announced that all arrangements have been made for the smooth conduct of the three-day sports event, which will witness enthusiastic participation from various affiliated colleges under ANU.

According to the organizers, the tournament will be inaugurated by prominent guests, including Chilakaluripet MLA and former minister Pattipati Pollarao, Narasaraopet MLA Dr. Chadalavada Aravinda Babu, and ANU Rector Prof. Ramineni Siva Rama Prasad. The distinguished delegates are expected to grace the open-

ing ceremony and formally declare the games open. Tournament Organizing Secretary Eedula Aadi Babu stated that extensive preparations are underway to ensure that the sports event is conducted with discipline and sportsmanship.

The organizing committee, comprising faculty members and student volunteers, is coordinating to provide proper facilities such as accommodation, refreshments, and first-aid services for participating teams. The Volleyball Tournament serves as a platform for identifying promising players who will represent Acharya

Nagarjuna University in upcoming state and national-level competitions.

College Principal Dr. Nathani emphasized that such events not only promote physical fitness but also inspire teamwork, leadership, and a competitive spirit among students. He further invited all affiliated colleges under Acharya Nagarjuna University to take part in the tournament and make the event a grand success through active participation and fair play. The games will be conducted on the Krishna Veni Degree College grounds, with league and knockout rounds to determine the final winners over the

three-day schedule. Local sports enthusiasts, students, and faculty are eagerly awaiting the event, which is expected to add vibrancy to the campus atmosphere.

The college management expressed gratitude to the university authorities and public representatives for their continued encouragement toward sports and student welfare. The three-day tournament is seen as an example of the renewed emphasis on sports activities within the university's affiliated institutions, aiming to nurture young talent while strengthening the spirit of unity and healthy competition in the region.

## Palnadu's Historic Valor Remembered at Karampudi Festival with Cockfight

TPN Bureau | November 22

Karampudi: Karampudi village in Palnadu district came alive with vibrant celebrations as the Palnati Veerachar Utsavalu reached its most thrilling phase—the symbolic Kodiporu (cockfight), which reenacts the ancient Palnati war episode between the forces of Brahma Naidu and Nayakuralu Nagamma. The event drew huge crowds and notable guests, reflecting the enduring pride and cultural legacy of Palnadu. Macherla MLA Jukalanti Brahma Reddy took up the role of Brahma Naidu by symbolically holding the rooster named Chittimallu, while prominent physician Dr. Unnam Nagamallikarjuna

Rao represented Nayakuralu Nagamma, holding his rooster Shivangidega. The mock cockfight, steeped in tradition, recreated the legendary contest that marked a key turning point in Palnati history nearly 900 years ago.

The event was graced by Narasaraopet MP Lavu Sri Krishna Devarayalu, Palnadu district TDP president Kommalapati Sridhar, film producer Bandla Ganesh, and industrialist Karnati Venkateswara Rao, among others. The guests

praised the festival's unique spirit and its role in preserving local history. Speaking on the occasion, MP Lavu Sri Krishna Devarayalu said that the Palnati festivals hold rare historical and emotional significance.

"Across the world, heroes are remembered through grand celebrations in Rome and elsewhere but I consider it my privilege that such valor is celebrated in my very parliamentary constituency of Palnadu," he remarked. District TDP chief Kommalapati

Sridhar emphasized the responsibility of every Palnadu citizen to preserve and spread awareness of this glorious heritage across the nation. He pointed out that the Palnati saga, which symbolizes courage and sacrifice, remains a timeless testament to Andhra's cultural strength.

Film producer Bandla Ganesh noted that these valor festivals have continued unbroken for nearly nine centuries. "Generations of Palnadu people have protected their traditions, carrying forward their ancestors' legacy with pride," he said. Following the event, special rituals were conducted at the Veerula Devalayam (Temple of Heroes) and other nearby shrines.



## Farmers Must Adopt Cluster-Based Cultivation: Collector Kritika Shukla

TPN Bureau | November 22

Narasaraopet (Palnadu District): District Collector Kritika Shukla has advised farmers to adopt the cluster-based farming system to achieve higher returns by cultivating crops suited to their respective regions. She emphasized that planned cultivation in clusters helps streamline production, processing, and marketing, creating profitable opportunities for both farmers and entrepreneurs.

The collector management expressed gratitude to the university authorities and public representatives for their continued encouragement toward sports and student welfare. The three-day tournament is seen as an example of the renewed emphasis on sports activities within the university's affiliated institutions, aiming to nurture young talent while strengthening the spirit of unity and healthy competition in the region.

tend loans under subsidy schemes.

"We should not stop with seed distribution. The goal should be to make moringa cultivation a reliable income source for several seasons. For that, regular training programs for farmers are essential," she instructed agricultural officers.

CSR Initiative for Welfare Hostels

As part of the same event, the Collector distributed computers and blankets to students of welfare hostels. The equipment was provided by Infosys under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds. She directed hostel wardens to make use of the new computers by organizing computer literacy and training programs for students, enabling them to acquire digital skills at an early stage. The SC/ST grievance cell, which reviewed 11 petitions during the session, was instructed to ensure timely resolution of all complaints.

The Collector stressed the need for coordinated action among departments to enhance transparency and accountability in addressing social and welfare issues. Joint Collector Suraj Dhananjay Ganore, DRDA Project Director Jhanasi, and DRDO Murali were among the officials present at the program, which concluded with a call to strengthen farmer collectives and improve rural education infrastructure through community partner ships.

# Trump's Trade Power, India's Missed Opportunity



U.S. President Donald Trump's recent Asia tour has highlighted the growing influence of trade as a tool of geopolitical power—an area where India appears to have missed the memo. Analysts note that while China has leveraged both its seller and buyer power, India has yet to fully exploit its potential in global trade.

Trump, who often emphasizes the U.S. as the world's largest importer, has used this economic leverage to shape relationships with exporting nations. During his interactions with China,

he demonstrated how import dependence can translate into bargaining power, particularly in commodities like soybeans and corn, vital for Chinese agriculture. By contrast, India's imports of U.S. soybeans, corn, and edible oils—totaling over \$18 billion annually—remain underutilized in diplomatic strategy.

China's success, experts say, stems from a mix of forward planning, technological adoption, and strategic patience. The nation has invested in genetically modified crops, improved yields, and diversified im-

port sources, ensuring it can negotiate from a position of strength. India, meanwhile, continues to rely heavily on trade protectionism and domestic lobbying pressures, limiting its ability to wield similar influence.

The recent events underscore the shift in global power dynamics: reputation, moral authority, or political history no longer determine leverage—economic power does. Trump reportedly showed condescension toward India's leadership, emphasizing that hard power is measured by what nations can

offer rather than what they expect. Analysts argue that India's hesitancy to strategically use its import capacity has cost it potential influence in bilateral negotiations.

Experts point to lessons from history: like Deng Xiaoping's dictum to "bide your time, hide your power," nations must exercise patience and deploy strategic leverage rather than celebrate economic size prematurely.

India, while the world's fifth-largest economy, has yet to convert its market size into tangible diplomatic influence.

Commerce Minister Pi-

yush Goyal has urged Indian entrepreneurs to adapt, innovate, and move beyond tariff protections. Observers say this moment resembles India's 1991 balance-of-payments crisis, signaling that reform may now be necessary, driven not by financial collapse but by geopolitical imperatives.

As global trade reshapes power structures, India's challenge will be to align domestic policy with strategic opportunity, ensuring its buying power becomes a currency in international diplomacy rather than a missed chance.

## Amazon Layoffs Highlight AI Transition Challenges



Global tech industry trembled last week as Amazon announced the layoff of 14,000 employees, part of a broader wave that has seen over 1,72,000 jobs cut across American tech giants, including Meta, Microsoft, Salesforce, and Google. These reductions have sparked concerns about the human cost of automation, especially as artificial intelligence continues to transform workplaces worldwide.

The layoffs contrast sharply with the soaring market value of AI hardware and software leaders. Nvidia, whose chips power AI data centers, recently reached a staggering \$5 trillion market capitalization, while OpenAI, in partnership with Microsoft, plans to develop 30 gigawatts of computing resources at a cost of \$1.4 trillion. Such figures underscore a growing divide between AI-driven wealth creation and workforce instability.

Jensen Huang, Nvidia's CEO, recently highlighted the future demand for skilled trades like electricians and plumbers as AI infrastructure expands. His comments illustrate the duality of the AI revolution: while some jobs are replaced by automation, new roles emerge that require technical, adaptive, and hybrid skill sets.

Experts advise tech professionals to focus on continuous learning, cultivate human-centric skills like trust and teamwork, and maintain financial prudence to navigate this transition. While AI is reshaping the workplace, the combination of human judgment, adaptability, and resilience will remain indispensable in the new digital economy.

The rapid rise of AI has also amplified demand for cybersecurity, data management, and AI-specific roles, as automation tools proliferate. "Agentic AI," which integrates intermediate technologies to enhance automation, demonstrates the need for professionals who can combine coding, industry knowledge, and problem-solving skills. As AI-generated content grows, so does the need for human oversight to manage misuse, maintain trust, and ensure quality.

Historical parallels offer lessons for today. The late Sitaram Kesri, former Congress treasurer, was known for his impeccable trustworthiness—a quality still vital in the AI era. Similarly, past technological revolutions, such as electrification or industrial mechanization, created fears of job losses but ultimately gave rise to new roles. Roy Amara's law, which notes that people overestimate short-term impacts and underestimate long-term change, remains relevant: AI may disrupt now, but it also generates opportunities for those prepared to adapt.

Experts advise tech professionals to focus on continuous learning, cultivate human-centric skills like trust and teamwork, and maintain financial prudence to navigate this transition. While AI is reshaping the workplace, the combination of human judgment, adaptability, and resilience will remain indispensable in the new digital economy.

## GST Reform 2.0: Turning Compliance Into Empowerment



Since its rollout in 2017, the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in India has been both a compliance challenge and an unintentional digital revolution. What began as a complex tax system has evolved into a live, verifiable digital ledger of the economy, enabling businesses and authorities alike to leverage real-time data. Mandatory e-invoicing and the GST Network (GSTN) turned every invoice into a trusted financial footprint, creating a foundation for credit access, financial inclusion, and data-driven governance.

For small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), GST filings became a financial passport. Lenders could now assess a firm's health instantly, unlocking loans and invoice financing. Yet, this digital advantage is uneven. Only 12% of MSMEs are fully digitalised, leaving many reliant on paper records or outsourced accounting. This digital divide risks creating a two-speed economy, where businesses in digitally advanced states like Karnataka,

Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu thrive, while those in less-connected regions lag behind.

GST Reform 2.0 aims to

bridge this gap. The 56th GST Council meeting introduced people-centric reforms, including a simplified two-rate tax structure and reduced levies on daily essentials. For businesses, the changes are transformative: provisional, risk-based refunds cover 90% of claims, easing cash-flow constraints, while a streamlined, automated GST registration scheme promises onboarding of low-risk entrepreneurs in just three days. The establishment of the GST Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT) by December 2025 adds a credible, rules-based enforcement layer.

Looking ahead, GST is poised to become more than a tax mechanism—it could emerge as a cornerstone of India's economic strategy. Recognising the GST data infrastructure as a national public good, similar to UPI, could stimulate private innovation in finance and supply-chain management. The next phase will test whether GST 2.0 can drive inclusive growth, ensuring that every MSME, regardless of location or size, benefits from this digital transformation.

GST's journey—from chaotic rollout to digital backbone and now to a tool of empowerment—could redefine India's economic landscape, shaping competitiveness and inclusivity for the decade ahead.

## India Pushes for Globalised Rupee Ecosystem



India is taking significant steps to reduce reliance on the U.S. dollar and strengthen its financial sovereignty amid an increasingly uncertain global trade environment. Geopolitical tensions, sanctions threats on Russian oil, and inconsistent U.S. tariff policies have accelerated efforts to develop a rupee-led international settlement system.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has spearheaded key initiatives to promote rupee internationalisation. In October, the RBI allowed authorised dealers (AD) banks and their overseas branches to extend rupee-denominated loans to residents, businesses, and financial institutions in Nepal, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka. This is facilitated through Special Rupee Vostro Accounts (SRVAs), which now number around 200, up from 156 in February. The expansion allows bilateral trade settlements in rupees, bypassing the U.S. dollar, reducing conversion costs, and limiting exposure to dollar volatility. Surplus SRVA balances can also be invested in corporate bonds and commercial papers, enhancing liquidity and attracting foreign participation.

In parallel, the RBI has launched the Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC), or Digital Rupee (e₹), a blockchain-based, fully regulated digital token. The digital rupee supports atomic settlements via Delivery vs Payment (DvP) protocols, ensuring efficiency, privacy, and transparency. The RBI will also publish reference exchange rates for major trading partners' currencies, starting with the U.S. dollar and expanding to the euro, yen, and pound. Meanwhile, BRICS countries are exploring integration of their digital currency systems, aiming to reduce intermediary costs and promote de-dollarisation. The

GIFT City in Gujarat has emerged as a hub for these developments. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman inaugurated the Foreign Currency Settlement System in October, enabling faster and safer transactions in major currencies, starting with the U.S. dollar and expanding to the euro, yen, and pound. Meanwhile, BRICS countries are exploring integration of their digital currency systems, aiming to reduce intermediary costs and promote de-dollarisation. The

New Development Bank plans its first INR-denominated bond issuance to encourage local currency financing.

India is also planning onshore rupee bonds worth \$400-500 million with three- to five-year maturities by March 2026. These moves could expand investment opportunities in masala bonds and reinforce India's role in global financial markets. Future plans include linking SRVAs with the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) for international settlements and integrating with central bank digital currencies, potentially enabling GIFT City to operate as a 24x7 global financial hub.

Analysts say these steps mark a strategic shift from a globalised outlook to transactional diplomacy, prioritising national financial sovereignty. By reducing dependence on offshore financial centres, India aims to enhance regional stability, attract investment, and strengthen the rupee's global presence.

## PM Modi meets Indian origin tech entrepreneurs, community members in Johannesburg

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Indian-origin tech innovators and members of the Indian community in Johannesburg on Friday urging them to strengthen their collaboration with India and contribute to the country's growth in emerging sectors. Modi is in South Africa to participate in the G20 Leaders' Summit, which has brought together world leaders for high-level discussions on global economic and geopolitical challenges.

In a social media post, the Prime Minister described the meeting as a "fruitful interaction," noting that the entrepreneurs shared insights into their work across a wide spectrum of industries, including FinTech, social media platforms, agriculture technology, education, healthcare and medical devices. Modi encouraged them to continue deepening ties with India's innovation ecosystem, highlighting the government's support for startups, digital infrastructure and cross-border collaboration.

The Indian diaspora in South Africa, one of the oldest and most influen-



tial abroad, also played a significant part in the interaction. Modi met several community members who are actively engaged with local organisations supporting cultural, educational and social initiatives. He acknowledged their contributions in strengthening India-South Africa ties and appreciated their efforts in

preserving Indian heritage while integrating with South African society. The Prime Minister highlighted the role of the diaspora as a bridge between the two nations, noting that Indian-origin professionals and entrepreneurs are making significant contributions to South Africa's technology

and business landscape. He also emphasised India's growing importance as a global innovation hub and invited the community to be part of the country's expanding digital and economic transformation.

Modi's outreach to the Indian community has become a hallmark of his international visits, reflect-

ing his government's emphasis on harnessing global Indian talent to support national development goals. The Johannesburg meeting continued this tradition, reinforcing India's engagement with its diaspora at a time when technological collaboration is gaining greater geopolitical significance.

## Lobbying intensifies for Bihar Assembly Speaker post

### BJP's Prem Kumar emerges frontrunner

TPN Correspondent | Patna

Intense lobbying has begun within the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) for the crucial post of Bihar Assembly Speaker, just a day after Chief Minister Nitish Kumar allocated portfolios to his new cabinet. With a special Assembly session expected soon, both the BJP and JD(U) are vying for the influential position, party insiders confirmed on Saturday.

Among the contenders, senior BJP leader and nine-term MLA Prem Kumar has emerged as the leading candidate. Elected repeatedly from the Gaya Town constituency, Kumar is one of the BJP's most experienced legislators. He previously served as the state's cooperative minister and was Leader of Opposition between 2015 and 2017. In the recent polls, he defeated Congress candidate Akharya Onkar Nath by over 26,000 votes.

Sources said that JD(U)



of Damodar Rawat, the MLA from Jhajha, gaining traction within the party. JD(U) leaders argue that since BJP's Awadhesh

Narain Singh currently heads the state legislative council, the Speaker's chair should be allotted to Nitish Kumar's party un-

der power-sharing norms. The BJP, on the other hand, is reportedly eyeing the Deputy Speaker position if the top slot goes to

JD(U). A special Assembly session will be convened soon to administer the oath to all 243 newly elected members and conduct the Speaker election. The date will be finalised at the state cabinet meeting scheduled for November 25. The Governor will appoint a Protem Speaker, who will oversee the swearing-in of the MLAs before the formal election.

In the last Assembly, BJP's Nand Kishore Yadav served as Speaker while JD(U)'s Narendra Narayan Yadav held the Deputy Speaker position.

Nitish Kumar, sworn in on Thursday for a historic 10th term, leads a cabinet that includes 14 BJP ministers, 8 JD(U) ministers, along with members from LJP (Ram Vilas), HAM and Rashtriya Lok Morcha. With lobbying intensifying, the Speaker election is set to be one of the first major political tests for the renewed NDA alliance.

## President Murmu Pays Tribute to Sri Sathya Sai Baba on Birth Centenary



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

President Droupadi Murmu on Saturday lauded spiritual leader Sri Sathya Sai Baba, saying he

inspired millions worldwide to follow the path of selfless service. She made the remarks while addressing the birth cente-

nary celebrations of Sri Sathya Sai Baba in Sri Sathya Sai district, Andhra Pradesh.

Highlighting his endur-

ing philosophy, President Murmu said, "Sri Sathya Sai Baba emphasised that service to mankind is service to God. He linked spirituality with selfless service and personal transformation, inspiring millions to dedicate themselves to the welfare of others." She added that Sathya Sai Baba encouraged his followers to align spiritual growth with public welfare, motivating devotees across the globe to serve the underprivileged.

Murmu also emphasized the universal and timeless nature of Sri Baba's teachings. "His message of 'love all and serve all, help ever and hurt never' is eternal. He believed the world is our school, and the five human values of truth, good conduct, peace, love, and non-violence are our curriculum," she said. The President noted that the Sri Sathya Sai organisation continues to actively volunteer in community service, reflecting the

saint's philosophy of selfless love.

President Murmu arrived at Sri Sathya Sai Airport in Puttaparthi around 11 am, where she was received by Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and other dignitaries. Following her arrival, she attended a special programme at the Poornachandra Auditorium, part of the centenary celebrations.

The event marked a major tribute to the spiritual leader whose teachings on compassion, selflessness, and human values continue to influence followers globally. By linking spirituality with social service, Sathya Sai Baba's message remains relevant, inspiring communities in India and abroad to contribute meaningfully to society.

The centenary celebrations included cultural programmes, spiritual discourses, and community service initiatives, reflecting the life and teachings of one of India's most revered saints.

## US Court Orders Byju's Founder to Pay \$1.07 Billion After Default Ruling



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

A US bankruptcy court has ordered Byju Raveendran, founder of EdTech giant Byju's, to pay over \$1.07 billion, holding him personally liable for the movement and alleged concealment of funds from Byju's Alpha, the company's US-based financing arm. The ruling was issued by Judge Brendan Shannon of the Delaware Bankruptcy Court after Raveendran repeatedly failed to comply with court directions to appear and provide documents.

The judgment is a default ruling, which occurs when a party does not participate in litigation or ignores court orders, allowing the court to decide the case without a trial. Byju Raveendran has denied all allegations and announced he plans to appeal the US

court decision, calling it expedited and claiming it denied him the opportunity to present a defence. His legal team argued that the court ignored relevant facts, including that the funds were used for the benefit of Think & Learn Private Limited (TLPL), Byju's India-based parent company, rather than for personal gain.

Byju's Alpha, incorporated in Delaware in 2021, was set up as a special-purpose vehicle to manage a \$1.2 billion term loan from a consortium of global lenders. The subsidiary had no operational business and primarily acted as a holding entity for the loan proceeds. Court filings revealed that \$533 million was transferred from Alpha to Camshaft Capital, a small Miami-based hedge fund, and subsequently moved

through affiliated entities such as Inspilearn and offshore trusts without any consideration returning to Byju's Alpha.

The default judgment marks a major legal setback for Byju's, which has been grappling with financial and operational challenges in recent years. Observers note that the appeal process could extend the case timeline, and Raveendran's legal team is expected to challenge the court's expedited handling, emphasizing his right to present a full defence.

This ruling underscores increasing scrutiny of global fund management practices by Indian founders operating US-based financing entities, especially in high-profile EdTech ventures.

## Union Minister Accuses DK Shivakumar of MLA Lobbying in Karnataka



TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi on Saturday accused Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and Chief Minister Siddaramaiah of attempting to buy support from MLAs amid an escalating leadership tussle in the state.

Speaking to reporters, Joshi claimed that Shivakumar recently visited Bengaluru Central Prison to meet two jailed Congress MLAs, Vinay Kulkarni and Veerendra Pappi, undertrial prisoners, allegedly to secure their support after release. "Why had he not met them all these days? This meeting was clearly aimed at gathering numbers for a vote on the Chief Minister's post," Joshi said.

The Union Minister added that both leaders are actively mobilising

MLAs to consolidate their positions, as Siddaramaiah faces calls to step down. "Whenever the Chief Minister is asked to resign, he insists on a vote. Both are busy ensuring legislative backing," Joshi claimed.

In response, Congress MLA HC Balakrishna, a close Shivakumar supporter, said the Deputy CM has his own strength and does not need external support.

"All matters will be decided by the high command. Shivakumar has instructed leaders not to embarrass the party through public statements," Balakrishna clarified. He stressed that MLAs expressing personal opinions should not be construed as Shivakumar seeking support.

The allegations come amid intensifying Congress infighting in Karnataka, over demands

for a leadership change after two-and-a-half years of the Siddaramaiah government. Party president Mallikarjun Kharge, who visited Bengaluru on Friday, is staying on to address the crisis. He is scheduled to meet Siddaramaiah and is expected to hold talks with Shivakumar to resolve the leadership dispute.

This episode highlights growing tensions within the ruling Congress in Karnataka, with the high command under pressure to mediate between warring factions and maintain party cohesion ahead of the next political developments.

The situation remains fluid, and political observers are closely watching how the high command manages internal dissent and the potential implications for state governance.

## Trump's New Ukraine Plan Puts Zelenskyy in a Difficult Corner



TPN Correspondent | Dhaka

US President Donald Trump's newly unveiled 28-point plan to end Russia's war in Ukraine has intensified pressure on Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, pushing him toward concessions that heavily favour Moscow. The proposal, presented in Kyiv this week, demands territorial compromises, military reductions and guarantees that Ukraine will never join NATO.

Trump has argued that Ukraine can no longer sustain the battlefield struggle, claiming Zelenskyy "doesn't have the cards" to continue resisting Russia. Speaking at the White House, Trump said he expects a response from the Ukrainian leader by next Thursday, saying, "We think we have a way of getting peace. He's going to have to approve it."

Zelenskyy, grappling with corruption scandals, battlefield losses and a harsh winter as Russia intensifies strikes on Ukraine's energy grid, admitted the country faces one of the most difficult decisions in its history. Though he has not spoken to Trump since the plan became public, Zelenskyy says a discussion is expected soon.

Key elements of Trump's plan include Ukraine conceding the entire Donbas region, despite large parts remaining under Ukrainian control. Analysts note that Russia would need years to fully occupy the territory at its current pace, but Trump insists its loss is inevitable. The proposal also calls for a drastic downsizing of Ukraine's armed forces and demands from European allies to block Kyiv's future NATO membership.

The plan was delivered by US Army Secretary Dan Driscoll, surprising even his own staff.

Early indications suggest Ukraine views the proposal as a starting point, though Trump's willingness to negotiate further is unclear.

Zelenskyy faces political risks at home, where a \$100 million kickbacks scandal has already led to ministerial resignations.

Experts warn that accepting Trump's terms could endanger his government's stability and undermine Ukrainian national dignity.

With looming energy shortages, uncertain European financial support and unrelenting Russian attacks, Ukraine must now weigh its survival against the cost of concessions that many fear would be impossible for the public to accept.

## China Builds World's First Nuclear-Resistant Artificial Floating Island



TPN Correspondent | Tokyo

China is advancing a groundbreaking maritime project with the construction of the world's first artificial floating island capable of surviving nuclear blasts. The massive 78,000-tonne semi-submersible structure—officially named the Deep-Sea All-Weather Resident Floating Research Facility—is expected to become fully operational by 2028, marking a major leap in offshore engineering and strategic ocean research.

Comparable in size to China's Fujian aircraft carrier, the twin-hull platform is designed for long-term deployment in deep seas. It can withstand 6-9 metre waves and endure Category 17 typhoons, the strongest tropical cyclones rated in China. The facility will be able to support 238 personnel for up to four months without resupply, enabling extended scientific missions in remote waters.

Project leader Lin Zhongqin, an academician with Shanghai Jiao Tong University (SJTU), told Economic Information Daily that rapid progress is underway: "We're racing to complete the design and construction, aiming for operational status by 2028."

A report in the South China Morning Post reveals that the platform's resilience is en-

hanced by advanced metamaterial sandwich panels, engineered to convert intense shock waves—including nuclear blast pressure—into far milder impacts. The core superstructure includes protected compartments for emergency power, communications and navigation, making blast resistance crucial to ensuring uninterrupted operations.

According to a research team led by Professor Yang Deqing of SJTU, the platform is designed for all-weather, long-duration deep-sea residency, reflecting more than a decade of Chinese research into far-sea mobile bases. Measuring 138 metres in length and 85 metres in width, the facility stands 45 metres above the waterline, offering a stable and protected workspace even in extreme marine conditions.

Although officially presented as a civilian scientific facility, the design cites GJB 1060.1-1991, a Chinese military standard for nuclear blast protection—fueling speculation about possible dual-use strategic capabilities.

With its vast endurance, cutting-edge materials and unprecedented blast resistance, China's floating island marks a new frontier in maritime engineering and deep-sea infrastructure development.

# Trump Administration to Launch Immigration Crackdown in New Orleans

TPN Bureau | Washington

The administration of U.S. President Donald Trump is preparing to target New Orleans in the next phase of its ongoing city-by-city immigration crackdown, according to one current and two former immigration officials familiar with the planning. The move marks a continuation of the administration's intensified enforcement campaign, which has been rolling out across several major American cities in recent months.

Sources said that U.S. Border Patrol agents could arrive in New Orleans as early as Saturday, November 22, 2025, with operations expected to continue into January 2026. Officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the plans, added that enforcement activity is likely to scale down temporarily during



the Thanksgiving holiday on November 20 and again around Christmas.

The planned operation forms part of Trump's broader strategy to tighten immi-

gration enforcement by deploying federal agents to targeted cities deemed to have high levels of undocumented migrants or insufficient local cooperation with federal

authorities. Earlier phases of the crackdown have included increased workplace raids, broader use of mobile fingerprinting units, and expanded detention measures.

While the administration has maintained that such operations are necessary to restore law and order, critics argue that the measures create fear within immigrant com-

munities and disrupt local economies. Civil rights groups have warned that aggressive raids risk sweeping up individuals with no criminal background and could strain relations between federal agencies and municipal governments.

New Orleans, known for its diverse population and strong cultural identity, has previously positioned itself as a city supportive of immigrant communities. Officials there have not yet commented publicly on the reported federal plan.

As the operation prepares to launch, questions remain about its scope, scale and potential impact on residents. With enforcement expected to extend over several weeks, New Orleans is poised to become the next focal point in the Trump administration's escalating immigration policy drive.

## Over 300 Children Abducted in Nigerian School Attack After Updated Count

TPN Correspondent | UN

The number of victims in the St. Mary's School mass abduction in Nigeria's Niger state has risen significantly, with authorities confirming that 303 schoolchildren and 12 teachers were taken by armed assailants. The updated tally was released on Saturday by the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), following a full verification and census at the Catholic-run institution.

Most Rev. Bulus Dauwa Yohanna, chairman of CAN's Niger state chapter, said the revised figures emerged after a thorough assessment during his visit to the school on Friday. Earlier estimates had placed the number of abducted children at 215. Yohanna also revealed that 88 additional students were captured while attempting to flee during Monday's attack in the remote Pari community. The



victims, both boys and girls aged between 10 and 18, were taken during a midnight raid on the school dormitories.

The abduction occurred just four days

after another kidnapping of 25 schoolchildren in neighbouring Kebbi state's Maga town, located about 170 km away. No armed group has claimed responsibility yet, but se-

curity forces, along with local hunters, have been deployed to mount rescue operations.

Yohanna criticised the Niger state government for claiming the

school had resumed classes despite previous directives to shut schools in high-risk areas. He dismissed the statement as an "afterthought" and urged families to remain calm

and prayerful as efforts continue.

School kidnappings have become a recurring tragedy in Nigeria,

where armed gangs frequently target educational institutions to attract maximum attention. UNICEF reported last year that only 37% of schools across 10 conflict-affected states have effective early warning systems for threat detection.

The attack coincides with renewed international scrutiny, including recent claims by US President Donald Trump about targeted killings of Christians in Nigeria—assertions contradicted by evidence showing that both Christians and Muslims have been victims of such attacks. The incident also unfolded as Nigeria's National Security Adviser Nuhu Ribadu visited Washington for security discussions with US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth.

## "Wipe My A\*\*": Ex-CIA Man On Pak Apology Demand Over 'India Will Win' Remark



TPN Correspondent | Kolkata

A diplomatic and political row has erupted after former CIA officer John Kiriakou revealed that Paki-

stan's Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) attempted to pressure him into issuing an apology over comments he made on the military balance between India and Pa-

kistan. Instead of complying, Kiriakou responded with an intentionally crude message, saying he would "wipe" himself with the party's letter de-

manding contrition. The controversy began after Kiriakou told ANI in October that Pakistan would lose a conventional war with India, stress-

ing that "nothing good will come out of an actual war" between the two nuclear-armed neighbours. His remarks ignited backlash in Pakistan, resulting in a wave of online abuse and numerous death threats. "I've lost count of how many death threats I received," he said during a podcast interview with Julian Dorey released on November 18.

PTI, led since 2023 by former Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Parvez Elahi, issued a formal letter condemning Kiriakou's remarks "in the strongest possible terms." The party demanded an "immediate apology" to former Prime Minister Imran Khan, its members and "the people of Pakistan." According to Kiriakou, the letter came directly from the PTI president.

Instead of softening his stance, Kiriakou wrote back bluntly:

"In regards to your demand for an apology, I wipe my a\*\* with your demands." He added that despite legal advice urging him to keep a low profile, he felt compelled to respond directly. PTI has not replied since.

Kiriakou, who served 15 years with the CIA, played a key role in US counterterrorism operations after 9/11, including the 2002 capture of top al-Qaeda operative Abu Zubaydah. He later became a whistleblower in 2007 by exposing the CIA's torture programme, a move that led to his imprisonment for 23 months.

Reflecting on his past, he maintains he has "no regrets, no remorse."

The latest dispute underscores the heightened sensitivities surrounding India-Pakistan relations and the intense political polarization within Pakistan's leadership.

# GST 2.0 Reforms To Put ₹2 Lakh Crore In People's Hands: Sitharaman

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday announced sweeping GST reforms under "GST 2.0," aimed at simplifying the tax system and boosting affordability for the common man. Speaking at an outreach programme in Visakhapatnam, she said the reforms will leave an additional ₹2 lakh crore in the hands of consumers by easing their tax burden and improving liquidity in the economy.

The revamped system, effective from September 22, will replace the existing five tax slabs (0%, 5%, 12%, 18% and 28%) with just two — 5% for essential goods and 18% for others. Sitharaman highlighted that daily necessities such as soaps, toothpaste and household essentials will now fall under the 5% or nil tax category, while life-saving medicines will see their rates cut from 12% to 5% or nil. Big-ticket items including two-wheelers, cars, televisions, and cement



will move from 28% to 18%, offering significant relief to the middle class.

"Nearly 99% of goods that were taxed at 12% earlier have been shifted into the 5% slab un-

der the new GST 2.0 system," Sitharaman said, underscoring the direct benefits to poor and middle-class families. She credited GST revenues for enabling infrastructure projects like

airports, expressways, and Vande Bharat trains. Revenues have grown from ₹7.19 lakh crore in 2018 to ₹22.08 lakh crore in 2025, with taxpayers increasing from 65 lakh to 1.51

crore over the same period.

Calling it the biggest reform since the introduction of "One Nation, One Tax" in 2017, Sitharaman said GST 2.0 is designed with the

common man at its core. The government hopes the simplified structure will encourage greater spending and drive economic growth by making goods more affordable across the country.

## Urban Company Shares Soar Over 10% After Strong Market Debut



Urban Company shares made a bumper debut on the Indian stock exchanges on Wednesday (September 17), listing with a stellar premium and continuing their rally through the trading session. The stock opened at ₹162.25 apiece on the NSE,

reflecting a 64.77% jump over the issue price of ₹103. On the BSE, it listed at ₹161.00, marking a 56.31% premium. Soon after listing, Urban Company surged further to hit an intraday high of ₹179.00 apiece, nearly 74% above its IPO price and more

than 10% higher than its listing price.

The ₹1,900 crore IPO, open between September 10 and 12, received overwhelming investor response, being subscribed 103.63 times. The grey market premium (GMP) had already hinted at a

strong debut, indicating nearly 50% gains over the issue price. Urban Company, a tech-enabled marketplace for home and beauty services, operates in 51 cities across India, UAE, and Singapore. The successful listing is being viewed as a boost for In-

dia's startup IPO market, which has seen cautious momentum in recent years.

Post listing, analysts largely advised investors to hold the stock for long-term gains. Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities, said the company offers a compelling structural growth story in the expanding home services segment. He recommended allotted investors to hold, while non-allotted investors should adopt a wait-and-watch strategy for a possible price dip. Shivani Nyati of Swastika Investmart suggested partial profit booking while holding the rest with a stop loss at ₹120. Meanwhile, Harshal Dasani of INVAsset PMS highlighted that the stock's opening market capitalization of nearly ₹25,300 crore reflects investor conviction but also raises expectations on profitability and execution.

At 2:05 PM, Urban Company was trading at ₹163.30 apiece on the BSE, up 58.54% from its issue price, underscoring strong investor confidence in the company's long-term growth prospects.

## Gold and Silver prices hit record high, driven by global uncertainty



Gold and silver prices surged to fresh record highs this week, supported by safe-haven demand amid rising global uncertainty, tariff concerns, and geopolitical tensions. Analysts expect the bullish momen-

tum in bullion to continue in the near term as investors turn to precious metals for security during volatile times.

According to the Indian Bullion and Jewelers Association (IBJA), 24-carat gold closed at

₹1,09,707 per 10 grams on Friday, registering a sharp gain of ₹1,670 compared to Monday's ₹1,08,037. Gold has remained above the ₹1 lakh mark throughout September, having started the month at ₹1,04,075.

Prices of 22-carat gold followed suit, ending the week at ₹1,00,492 per 10 grams, up from ₹98,962 earlier in the week.

Silver prices also maintained a strong rally. The metal ended the week at ₹1,28,008 per kilo.

Prices of 22-carat gold followed suit, ending the week at ₹1,00,492 per 10 grams, up from ₹98,962 earlier in the week.

On the futures market, October gold contracts settled at ₹1,09,356

per 10 grams, up 0.34 per cent, reflecting sustained optimism. Globally, Comex gold traded at \$3,680.7 per ounce, extending gains as traders sought refuge from economic and political uncertainties.

Analysts believe the upward trend will remain intact, citing geopolitical risks, a fragile economic outlook, and ongoing tariff issues. Jateen Trivedi of LKP Securities noted that gold gained 0.35 per cent at ₹1,09,350, with Comex prices factoring in expectations of a possible U.S. Fed rate cut to support economic growth.

Despite being in overbought territory, bullion continues to attract premium buying. Market watchers see gold trading within a range of ₹1,07,000-₹1,12,000 in the coming weeks, reinforcing its role as a safe-haven asset during global uncertainty.

## US tariffs to hit 8% of India's auto component output



The Indian auto component industry is facing significant headwinds as high US tariffs are expected to impact nearly 8% of the sector's total production, according to ratings agency Icra. Auto component exports contribute almost 30% to the industry's revenues, with the United States alone accounting for 27% of this share. However, the recent imposition of a 50% tariff on Indian goods has placed Indian exporters at a relative disadvantage compared to several Asian peers.

While China, Japan, Vietnam, and Indonesia face tariffs in the 15-30% range, India's much higher tariff burden makes its products less competitive. Adding to the challenge, manufacturers in Mexico and Canada enjoy exemptions under the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), further intensifying competition in the American market. This disparity underscores the growing need for India to accelerate trade talks with Washington to protect its export interests.

## GST Cut on Renewables to 5% Aims to Power India's Green Future



The government's decision to rationalize GST rates across the renewable energy value chain from 12% to 5% is set to bring down the cost of clean energy projects, making electricity more affordable for households, farmers, industries, and developers. According to the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, the move will significantly reduce capital costs for utility-scale projects, rooftop solar systems, and solar pumps, while strengthening India's clean energy ecosystem.

For large-scale solar projects, where the cost typically stands at ₹3.5-4 crore per MW, the revised GST is expected to generate savings of ₹20-25 lakh per MW. A 500 MW solar park, for instance, could see project costs cut by over ₹100 crore, improving tariff competitiveness and lowering the financial burden on distribution companies (DISCOMS). Nationwide, annual savings of ₹2,000-3,000 crore in power procurement costs are anticipated. Households will also benefit as rooftop solar sys-

tems become cheaper. A 3 kW system will now cost ₹9,000-10,500 less, accelerating adoption under the PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana. Farmers under the PM-KUSUM scheme are expected to save nearly ₹17,500 on a 5 HP solar pump, translating into a collective saving of ₹1,750 crore across 10 lakh pumps, making irrigation more sustainable and cost-effective.

The reform is also set to enhance competitiveness of Indian-made solar equipment, reducing module and component costs by 3-4%.

With India targeting 300 GW of renewable capacity by 2030, a modest 2-3% cost reduction could free up investments worth 1-1.5 lakh crore, while creating 5-7 lakh jobs in the next decade. Faster renewable deployment will also help India avoid 50-70 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions annually by 2030.

Effective from September 22, 2025, the GST cut is being hailed as a landmark step to advance India's green growth, energy independence, and Paris Agreement commitments.

## Zomato, Swiggy Users Face 'Rain Fee' Hike Under GST 2.0

operate and maintain Swiggy platform	₹25.00
Rain Fee	₹25.00
Small fee for delivery partners to ensure smooth deliveries in rain	₹295
Item 1	₹14.75
Restaurant GST	₹FREE
one	Swiggy plays no role in govt. or restaurant related taxes & charges
GST on Rain fee	₹4.50
Deliver	₹ tip

Online food delivery users are feeling the pinch as platforms like Zomato and Swiggy now come under 18% Goods and Services Tax (GST) on their delivery fees, effective September 22, 2025. The move, part of the latest GST Council reforms, applies Section 9(5) of the Central GST Act to local e-commerce delivery services, making even small charges like the "rain fee" taxable.

The change has already started reflecting in bills, with users noticing higher costs for orders during adverse weather conditions. For instance, a delivery rain fee of Rs 25 now attracts an 18% GST, bringing the total to Rs 29.50, adding an unexpected extra burden on customers. Restaurant GST is also separately applied, as seen in typical bills showing charges such as Rs 14.75 for the meal itself.

Social media users quickly reacted to the new tax rules with humor and satire. One post on X (formerly Twitter) jokingly remarked, "After historic GST reforms, even Lord Indra has been brought under

the tax net. Now when it rains, you get Rs 25 Rain Fee + 18% GST = Rs 29.50. Next up: Sunlight Convenience Fee, Oxygen Maintenance Charge GST on Breathing, Pay as you inhale." The witty post resonated widely, highlighting public frustration while keeping the tone lighthearted.

Industry experts note that the 18% GST on delivery charges is part of a broader effort to simplify and rationalize the tax structure under GST 2.0, ensuring all e-commerce services are brought under a uniform tax net. While this ensures compliance and transparency, it also means consumers need to adjust to slightly higher bills for routine food deliveries.

As the new rules settle in, users are exploring workarounds, apps, and loyalty discounts to offset the additional cost. Meanwhile, the humorous takes on social media continue to lighten the mood around a tax change that has everyone talking, proving that even small policy shifts can spark nationwide conversations online.

## Bengaluru Woman Goes Viral Walking 28 Golden Retrievers, Wins Hearts



A heartwarming video from Bengaluru has captured social media's attention, showing a woman taking a peaceful stroll with 28 golden retrievers in the RT Nagar area of the city. Titled "28 dogs, 1 big heart. Meet the dog lover aunty of RT Nagar, Bangalore!", the clip highlights the calm and disciplined demeanor of the dogs as they accompany their owner on her walk. The sight of so many well-behaved furry companions has left viewers both amazed and delighted.

The video's voiceover explains, "We saw a lady in RT Nagar, Bengaluru, walking with 28 golden retrievers, all matching, all happy. She looked so peaceful, smiling with her furry family. In today's life, loyal friends are rare, but sometimes love and loyalty comes on four legs." The footage has since gone viral, garnering over 7.2 lakh views and sparking hundreds of comments praising her dedication and love for the animals.

Many social media users shared their personal experiences with the woman and her

dogs. One viewer wrote, "She has customised her Innova car for the dogs. I love her," while another recalled, "I've been seeing these dogs and this lady since I was a kid, she's such a nice person." Others reminisced about earlier days when the number of retrievers was smaller, highlighting her long-standing commitment to caring for them. Humorous comments also emerged, including one that jokingly read, "HR: Where do you see yourself in the next 5 years? Me be like: Wooff."

The viral moment comes in the wake of a Supreme Court directive last month modifying its earlier order on the management of stray dogs. The court clarified that dogs could be released from shelters after sterilisation, except in cases of aggressive behaviour or rabies infections.

This Bengaluru woman's dedication to her furry friends has struck a chord with viewers nationwide, proving that love, patience, and loyalty often come on four legs, leaving the internet collectively saying, "We love her."

## Google Tests New Gboard Features: AI Writing Tools, Flick Keys, and More

Google is rolling out new experimental features for Gboard, the default keyboard on most Android devices, aiming to enhance user experience and boost productivity. One of the most notable additions is the AI-powered Writing Tools, designed to help users improve, refine, and polish their text messages across apps. The feature can suggest edits, provide alternative phrasing, and even help craft more professional or engaging messages, making typing faster and more efficient.

Another interesting feature being tested is "flick keys to enter symbols." When enabled, users can quickly access a symbol associated with a key by touching it and swiping downwards. This functionality is similar to the Apple keyboard experience on iPads, offering a faster way to type symbols without

switching keyboard modes. While it may take some time for users to get accustomed to the gesture, it promotes

to streamline text input once mastered.

The latest Gboard beta is also reportedly testing other small en-

hancements, such as improved emoji suggestions, smarter auto-correct options, and better multilingual support. Google appears focused on integrating AI and intuitive gestures into the keyboard, aiming to



make it more than just a typing tool—it becomes an assistant capable of anticipating and refining user input in real time.

These features are currently in beta testing, meaning they are being evaluated by select users before a wider rollout. Google often uses beta releases to gather feedback and tweak functionalities for performance, ease of use, and reliability. Users interested in trying these new features can join the Gboard beta program through the Google Play Store.

With AI-driven writing assistance and gesture-based input, Gboard is moving beyond traditional keyboard functions, reflecting Google's push to combine smart technology with everyday tools, ultimately making typing faster, more accurate, and more intuitive for millions of Android users worldwide.

## Thinnest Yet Strongest? iPhone Air Survives JerryRigEverything Durability Test

Apple recently unveiled the iPhone 17 series along with the iPhone Air, its slimmest smartphone yet. At the launch, the company highlighted the Air's durability, claiming it is the most robust iPhone to date. With tech enthusiasts eager to see how it performs in real-world stress tests, YouTuber JerryRigEverything put the device through his signature durability assessment.

The iPhone Air measures just 5.6mm in thickness, making it remarkably slim, yet it features a titanium frame designed to enhance structural strength. The 6.5-inch OLED display is safeguarded by Corning's Ceramic Shield 2, which Apple says is three times more scratch-resistant than the previous generation. This combination of lightweight design and reinforced materials has made it a point of curiosity for fans and reviewers alike.

During the test, the iPhone Air faced standard scratch,

burn, and bend assessments. The screen resisted scratches up to higher levels on the

Mohs scale, confirming Apple's claims about Ceramic Shield 2. Its titanium frame

provided significant rigidity, minimizing bending even under extreme pressure, and



demonstrating an impressive balance between thinness and structural integrity.

The device also fared well in drop and burn tests, with minimal cosmetic damage to the screen and body. This suggests that Apple's engineering approach—using premium materials like titanium while keeping the device ultra-thin—successfully delivers both aesthetics and durability.

For users who prioritize sleek design without compromising toughness, the iPhone Air appears to be a compelling option. While ultra-thin devices often face criticism for fragility, this test indicates that Apple has managed to push the boundaries of smartphone engineering, creating a device that is as strong as it is slender. The iPhone Air may well redefine expectations for premium smartphones, balancing portability, elegance, and resilience in one package.

## Delhi Metro's Airport-to-Railway Station Ride Wows Passenger: "Built Differently"

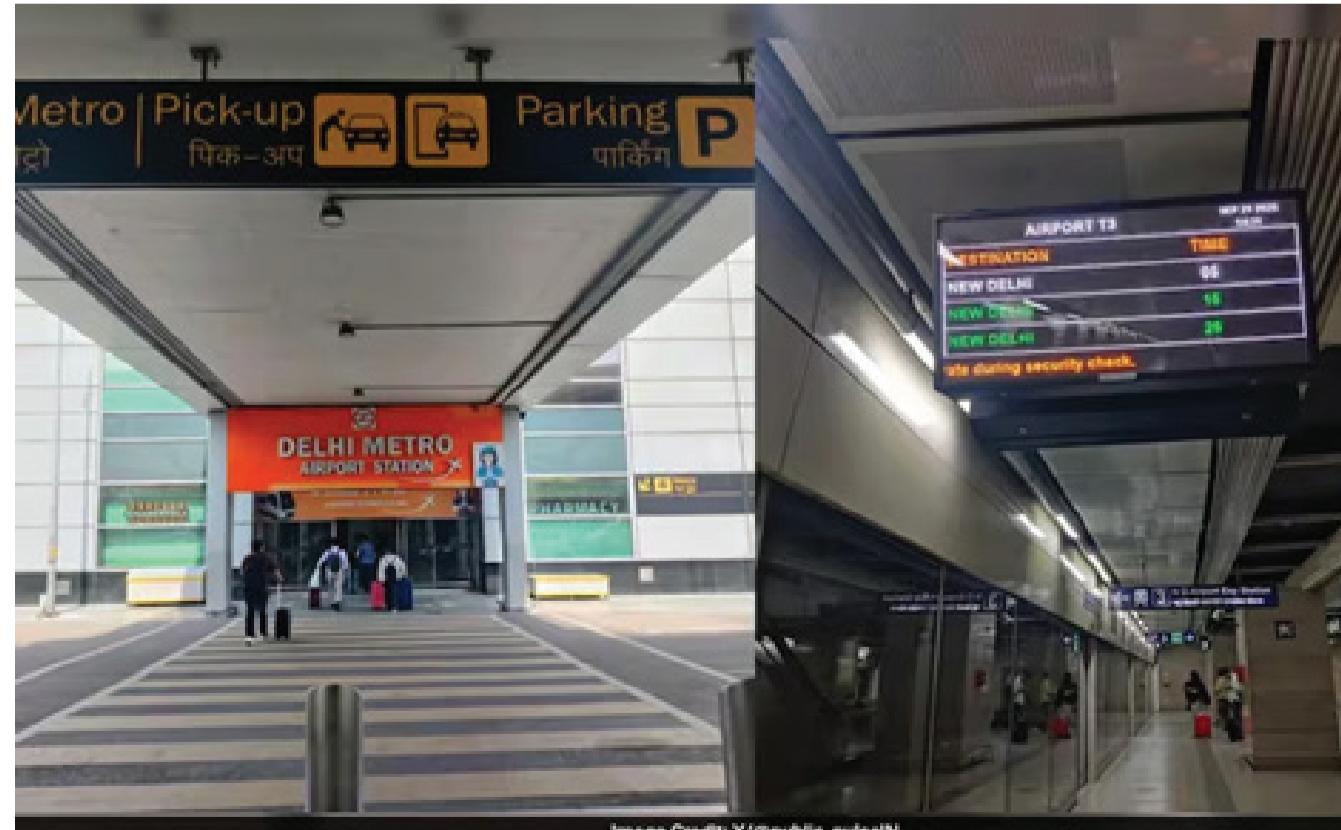


Image Credit: X/@public\_pulseIN

A Delhi Metro commuter has gone viral for sharing their seamless journey from the airport to New Delhi Railway Station (NDLS) in under an hour, praising the city's public transport network. The post, titled "Delhi Metro is

just built differently", detailed the passenger's experience of travelling from the airport after arriving from Mumbai.

According to the passenger, they landed in Delhi at 2:14 PM and collected their luggage by 2:24 PM. By 2:30

PM, they were already on the airport metro platform, and by 2:54 PM, they had reached NDLS. Boarding their train by 3:10 PM, the total travel time from landing to getting on the railway train clocked in at just under an hour.

In the viral post shared on X (formerly Twitter), the user wrote, "Less than 1 hour from airport to railway station. This is how public transport should work!! @OfficialDMRC", highlighting the efficiency and convenience of the Del-

hi Metro system. The journey impressed many online, who lauded the capital city's ability to connect key transport hubs swiftly.

Delhi Metro, the lifeline of India's capital, caters to millions of commuters daily, providing quick and hassle-free connectivity not just within the city but also to neighbouring states. Its extensive network, combined with efficient train schedules, allows passengers to reach major locations like railway stations, airports, and business districts in record time.

The viral post reflects a growing appreciation for well-planned urban transport solutions, particularly in cities where traffic congestion can otherwise delay travel. Many users echoed the sentiment, praising Delhi Metro for its reliability, speed, and overall user experience, calling it a benchmark for how public transportation should operate in modern cities.

This passenger's story serves as a reminder of how strategic infrastructure and timely execution can make urban commuting both fast and convenient, leaving travelers impressed and the internet celebrating Delhi Metro's efficiency.

# Australia Beat India by 4 Wickets in 2nd T20I, Take Series Lead

Australia defeated India by 4 wickets in the second T20I at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, taking a 1-0 lead in the five-match series. The hosts chased down India's modest target of 126 with ease, maintaining their dominant form in the series.

India, sent in to bat by Australian captain Mitchell Marsh, struggled from the start. The team was bundled out for 125 in 18.4 overs, losing early wickets under pressure. Australian pacer Josh Hazlewood starred with the ball, dismantling India's top order in a sensational spell. He accounted for vice-captain Shubman Gill, captain Suryakumar Yadav, and Tilak Varma in the initial overs, putting India on the back foot immediately.

Amid the batting collapse, Abhishek Sharma stood out with a resilient 68 runs, while Harshit Rana, promoted to No. 7, contributed 35 runs, providing some resistance. Despite their efforts, India could not recover, as the middle and lower order failed to



capitalize on the platform created by Sharma and Rana.

Australia's chase was clinical, anchored by steady batting performances and disciplined bowling. The visitors managed the target

efficiently without losing control, showcasing their experience and composure in tricky situations.

This win gives Australia an early edge in the five-match T20I series, placing pressure on India to re-

spond in the remaining games. The Indian team will need to address their batting fragility, especially their vulnerability against fast bowling in powerplay overs, to remain competitive in the series.

The third T20I is scheduled to be played later this week, where India will look to bounce back and level the series, while Australia aims to consolidate their lead and secure a significant advantage in the contest.

## Abhishek Sharma Shines as Hazlewood Tears Through India in 2nd T20I



India were bundled out

for 125 in the second T20I against Australia at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, with Abhishek Sharma the lone bright spot amid a top-order collapse. The first match of the five-game series in Canberra had been

abandoned due to rain. Abhishek's 37-ball 68 featured aggressive strokes on the off-side, including slashes, check drives, and lofted shots, helping him reach a 23-ball half-century in his debut appearance at the iconic venue. His in-

nings stood out as the only resistance against the relentless Australian pace attack.

Australia's Josh Hazlewood led the charge, wreaking havoc on India's top and middle order. He dismissed vice-captain Shubman Gill,

captain Suryakumar Yadav, and Tilak Varma early, leaving India reeling at 5 wickets down in just eight overs. The rest of the batting lineup faltered under pressure, failing to build partnerships or mount a meaningful chase.

Harshit Rana, promoted to No. 7, scored a quick 35, offering some late resistance, but it was not enough to lift India to a competitive total. The visitors' batting frailties, particularly against high-quality pace bowling in powerplay overs, were on full display.

Australia chased the modest target efficiently, with their openers and middle order keeping the scoreboard ticking. Hazlewood's stellar bowling spell ensured India never gained momentum, giving the hosts a comfortable 4-wicket victory and a 1-0 lead in the series.

The defeat highlights India's urgent need to strengthen their top-order batting and develop strategies to handle quality pace attacks. With three more T20Is scheduled, India will aim to regroup and bounce back, while Australia looks to consolidate their advantage and take a commanding lead in the five-match series.

## 16-Year-Old Ilamparthy A R Becomes India's 90th Chess Grandmaster



success in making the nation proud."

Legendary Indian chess player and five-time World Champion Viswanathan Anand also praised the young prodigy, noting, "He has been missing the title on a few occasions, but

each time he came back and worked harder. I really believe he has a lot of potential and we hope to work together towards greater achievements."

Ilamparthy's rise is seen as a continuation of India's growing prominence in in-

ternational chess, following in the footsteps of players like Viswanathan Anand and Praggnanandhaa R. His achievement at such a young age highlights his talent, dedication, and the growing support system for chess in

India.

The chess fraternity and sports enthusiasts across the country have hailed Ilamparthy's accomplishment, celebrating him as an inspiration for aspiring young players aiming to excel on the global stage.

## Sinner, Zverev Advance to Paris Masters Quarter-Finals



Italy's Jannik Sinner and defending champion Alexander Zverev powered into the Paris Masters quarter-finals on Thursday, keeping their title hopes alive in dominant fashion.

Sinner eased past Francisco Cerundolo 7-5, 6-1 to reach the last eight, setting up a high-voltage clash with American Ben Shelton. The victory means Sinner remains on track to reclaim the World No. 1 ranking, following Carlos Alcaraz's shock early exit at the hands of Britain's Cameron Norrie.

"It was a crucial first set. Francisco is very talented and tough to play against, but I raised my level in the second," Sinner said after his win. The 24-year-old, who has yet to drop a set this tournament, is aiming for his fifth title of the season.

Shelton continued his dream season, beating Andrey Rublev 7-6(6), 6-3. The American fifth seed, who won his maiden Mas-

ters 1000 title in Toronto earlier this year, also secured a debut spot at the ATP Finals in Turin. "It's the result of a year's hard work — the ups, downs, and comebacks," Shelton said.

Meanwhile, Zverev maintained his title defence with a 6-2, 6-4 victory over Spain's Alejandro Davidovich Fokina. The German third seed will next face former World No. 1 Daniil Medvedev, who defeated Lorenzo Sonego in three sets. "Daniil is my kryptonite — he beats me most of the time," Zverev admitted.

Elsewhere, Alexander Bublik stunned fourth seed Taylor Fritz 7-6(5), 6-2 to meet Alex de Minaur, who cruised past Karen Khachanov 6-2, 6-2. Felix Auger-Aliassime also advanced, rallying past Daniel Altmaier 3-6, 6-3, 6-2, keeping his ATP Finals hopes alive as the Paris Masters heads into an electrifying final weekend.

## Oman Replaces Pakistan at Junior Hockey World Cup



Oman will join the lineup for the upcoming FIH Men's Junior World Cup 2025 in Tamil Nadu, following Pakistan's late withdrawal, the International Hockey Federation (FIH) announced on Wednesday. The tournament is scheduled from November 28 to December 10, with matches to be held in Chennai and Madurai.

Oman earned the spot as the next highest-ranked team from the Junior Asia Cup 2024, stepping in after Pakistan decided not to participate despite qualifying through last year's continental championship. The Pakistan Hockey Federation informed the FIH that the team would not accept the invitation, citing internal consultations with their government before the event.

Pakistan had been placed in Group B alongside India, Chile, and Switzerland. With Oman taking their place, the group composition has been updated ahead of the tournament. This late withdrawal marks the second recent instance of Pakistan

pulling out from a major hockey event in India, after the Men's Asia Cup in Rajbir, Bihar, where Bangladesh replaced them. The withdrawal also cost Pakistan a chance to qualify for next year's World Cup, as the Asia Junior Cup served as a qualifying event.

The FIH had initially postponed the official draw for nearly a month to accommodate Pakistan's decision-making, eventually holding the ceremony at its headquarters in Lausanne. The Men's Junior World Cup 2025 will feature 24 teams for the first time, alongside the Women's edition, reflecting the FIH's Empowerment and Engagement strategy aimed at promoting wider participation.

Germany enters the tournament as the defending champions, having won the 2023 edition in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The inclusion of Oman ensures the tournament maintains full participation and competitive balance, while giving the Middle Eastern nation an opportunity to showcase its growing hockey prowess on the global stage.

## Mahieka Sharma Quashes Engagement Rumours With Hardik Pandya



Actress-model Mahieka Sharma has dismissed speculation about her engagement to cricketer Hardik Pandya, putting an end to the social media frenzy.

The rumours began after Mahieka was spotted wearing a diamond ring at a puja ceremony, prompting fans and media to speculate about an engagement. Hardik Pandya had confirmed their relationship in October 2025, which fueled the chatter further.

On Friday, Mahieka took to Instagram Stories to address the rumours in a witty post. Sharing an image of a black cat wearing a pink wig, she captioned, "Me watching the Internet decide I'm engaged when I just wear nice jewellery every day."

She continued the humorous thread with a playful nod to potential pregnancy rumours. In another post, featuring a man driving a toy car, she wrote, "Wyd if I pull up in this to fight the pregnancy rumours?"

The actress attended a puja

## Vijay's 'Jana Nayagan' Audio Launch Set for Malaysia



The makers of Thalapathy Vijay's upcoming action entertainer 'Jana Nayagan' have announced that the film's audio launch will take place in Malaysia on December 27, 2025, at the Bukit Jalil Stadium in Kuala Lumpur. This marks Vijay's return to Malaysia after three years and is particularly special as 'Jana Nayagan' is reported to be his last film.

Co-producer Jagadish Palanisamy shared an emotional note, reflecting on his journey with Vijay, from attending the 'Nanban' audio launch as a fan to now organizing the #OneLastDance - 'Jana Nayagan' audio launch.

With its Malaysian audio launch, the event is expected to be a historic celebration for Vijay's fans, marking a memorable chapter in the actor's illustrious career while setting the stage for the much-anticipated global release.

This launch not only celebrates the film's music but also Vijay's connection with fans worldwide, making it a truly emotional and grand occasion.

# Champion's 'Gira Gira Gingiraagirey' Promo Shines with Charm

The much-awaited musical journey of Champion has officially begun with the release of the promo for its first single, "Gira Gira Gingiraagirey." The film features Roshan in the lead role and marks a grand collaboration between Swapna Cinemas, Anandi Art Creations, and Concept Films, with Zee Studios presenting this ambitious project. Directed by Pradeep Advaitham, the movie is set in a period backdrop, blending sports drama with patriotic elements.

The newly released song promo has already started drawing attention for its delightful and refreshing musical vibe. Composer Mickey J Meyer, known for his melodious and emotionally soothing works, brings his trademark touch once again.

The couple, who have been in a relationship since earlier this year, continue to be in the public eye, but Mahieka's witty social media response has successfully put engagement rumours to rest—at least for now.

Her playful and humorous approach has been widely appreciated by fans, who lauded her for addressing the speculation with grace and a sense of humor, rather than feeding the gossip cycle.

With the social media storm calmed, the couple can now focus on their relationship without constant public scrutiny, though fans continue to follow their updates closely.

His composition in this track is filled with pleasant, smooth orchestration, creating an instantly engaging musical atmosphere. Adding further allure, singer Ram Miriyala



lends his expressive vocals, giving the track a warm and charming feel that resonates even in the short preview.

The promo also introduces audiences to the world of the film's heroine, played by Anas-

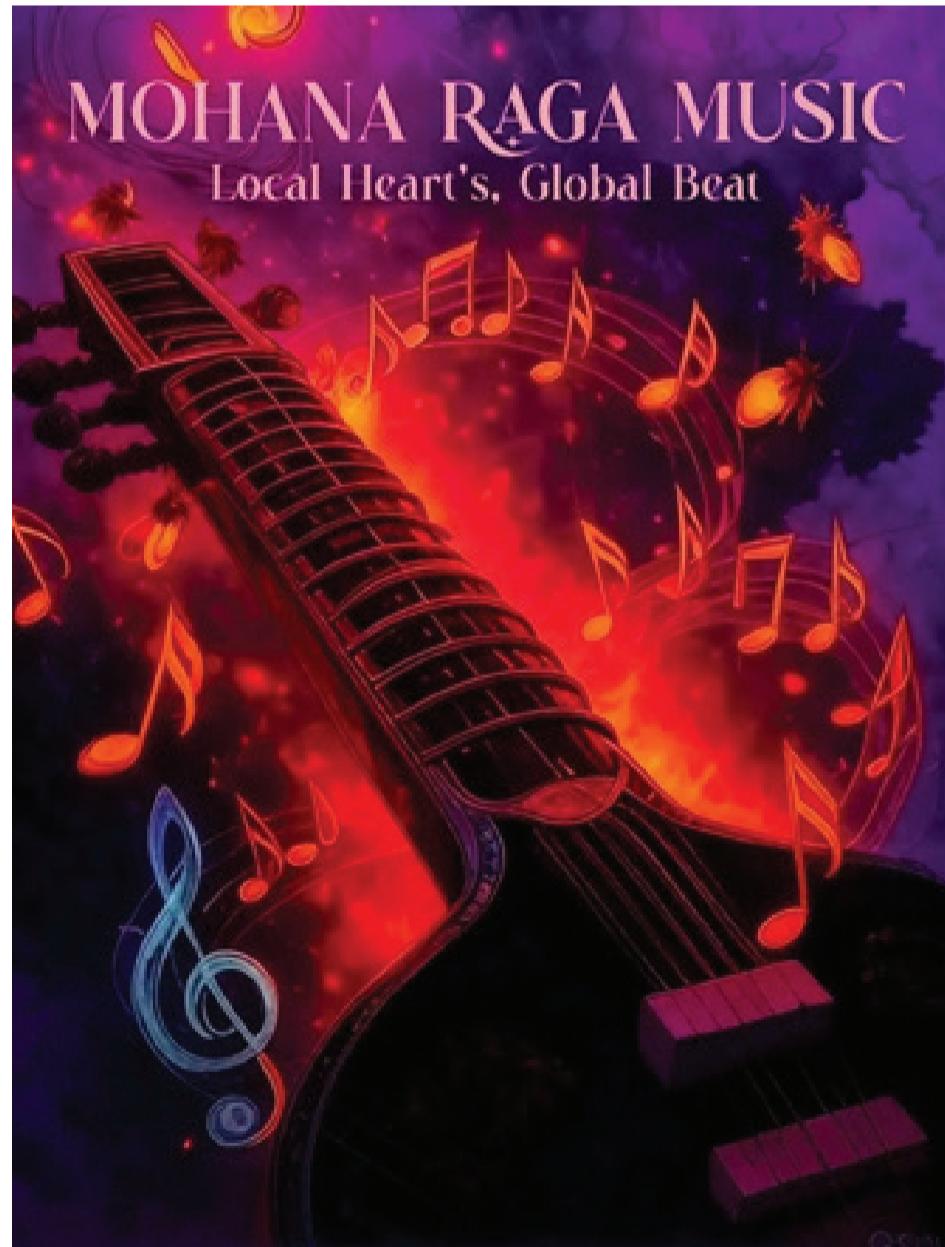
wara Rajan. Her character appears to be a strong-willed, independent woman determined to follow her artistic calling. She is shown dreaming of building her own drama company, symboliz-

ing ambition, self-belief, and creative passion. These glimpses hint that her role will add significant emotional and narrative depth to the film.

Champion, with its combination of sports,

patriotism, drama, and melodic storytelling, is shaping up to be a promising entertainer. The launch of "Gira Gira Gingiraagirey" sets the tone with a gentle yet sparkling musical start, raising anticipation for the full song and the upcoming promotional content. Fans can now look forward to more musical treats as the makers prepare for the next phase of the film's campaign.

## Manchu Manoj Begins a New Musical Venture



Manchu Manoj has stepped into a fresh creative chapter with the launch of his new music label, Mohana Raga Music. The venture holds deep emotional value for the actor, as music has always been an integral part of his life. Manoj shares that this dream has been nurtured within him and his family for many years, finally taking shape in a form that connects directly to his artistic spirit.

Known for carving a distinctive space in Telugu cinema, Manoj began his journey as a child actor and went on to deliver memorable performances in films such as Bindaas, Current Theega and Potugadu. His energetic performances, unique acting style, and

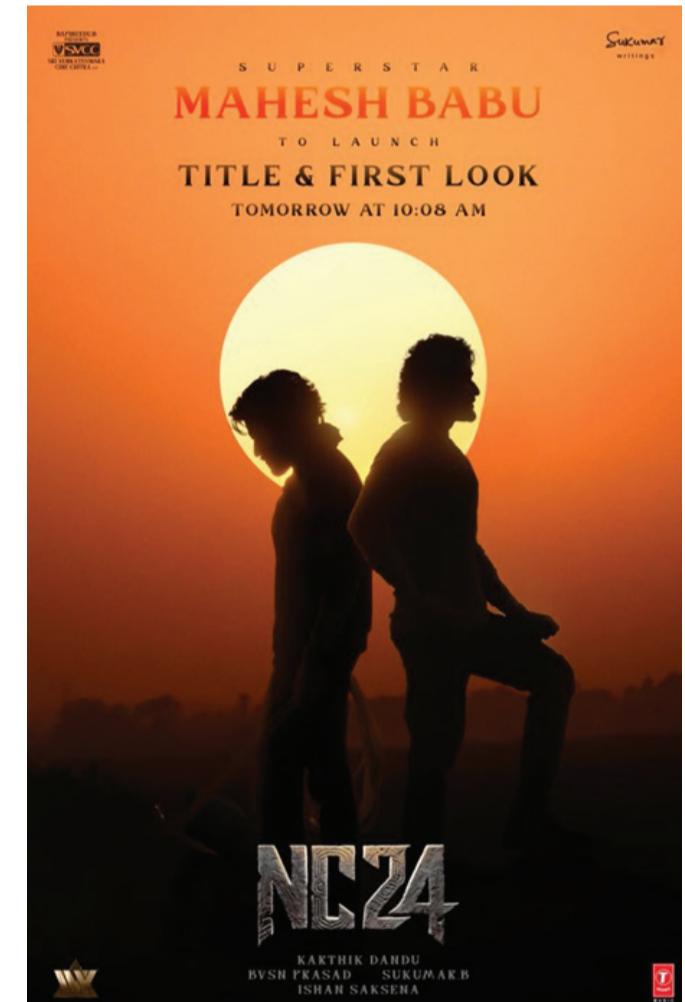
commitment to performing his own stunts have made him a dependable and versatile presence on screen. Beyond acting, he has remained deeply involved in the creative process of filmmaking, often contributing ideas and participating in behind-the-scenes work.

Music, however, has always been a personal passion. Manoj has showcased his vocal talent in songs like "Pyar Mein Padipoya" from Potugadu and released the soothing independent track "Antha Ba-guntamta" during the pandemic. As a lyricist too, he has penned songs such as "Pistha Pistha," "Yenno Yenno," and "Pranam Poye Badha," each reflecting his raw and expressive artistic

style. His creative contributions extend to working in music and action departments for several films produced by his father Dr. Manchu Mohan Babu, his brother Manchu Vishnu, and his sister Lakshmi Manchu. He has even added rap segments to multiple family projects. Manoj's collaboration with composer Achut Rajamani for the Hollywood film Basmati Blues, starring Brie Larson, further expanded his artistic horizons.

With Mohana Raga Music, Manoj hopes to bring more heartfelt, soulful work to audiences, marking the beginning of an exciting new phase in his artistic journey.

## Naga Chaitanya Birthday Special: Mahesh Babu to Unveil NC24 First Look



Tollywood fans are in for an exciting treat as the makers of NC24, starring Akkineni Naga Chaitanya, have announced a major update ahead of the actor's birthday. The film, directed by Virupaksha filmmaker Karthik Varma Dandu, is gaining strong buzz after BTS visuals hinted at its intriguing mythological thriller backdrop. The much-awaited title and first look poster will officially be launched on November 23 at 10:08 am.

Adding to the excitement, the team revealed that Superstar Mahesh Babu will be unveiling the film's first look. A special poster featuring Mahesh Babu in a striking Varanasi-themed visual, designed by Chaitunu, has already gone viral, raising anticipation among fans of both stars. The makers shared that this announcement is part of a birthday gift for Naga Chaitanya, whose special day falls on the same date.

Meenakshi Choudhary plays the female lead in NC24, marking another strong pairing for the actor. Rising talent Sparsh Srivastava, known for his impressive performance in Laapataa Ladies, is playing a crucial role in the film, adding further depth to the cast.

NC24 is being produced by BVSS Prasad under the Sri Venkateswara Cine Chitra banner, with Sukumar Writings presenting the project. The film's technical strength is amplified by the involvement of Ajaneesh Loknath of Kantara fame, who is composing both the music and background score. His inclusion has already elevated expectations around the film's audio and atmospheric elements.

With a powerful cast, an accomplished technical crew, and the major boost of Mahesh Babu launching the first look, NC24 is shaping up to be one of the most anticipated films in Tollywood's upcoming lineup.

Fans are eagerly waiting for tomorrow's unveiling to get a first glimpse of this promising mythological thriller.