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# CM Chandrababu Naidu to Meet Six Union Ministers in Delhi Today

TPN Bureau | December 19

New Delhi: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu is scheduled for a series of high-level meetings in New Delhi today, engaging with six key Union Ministers to discuss developmental projects, funding issues, and central assistance for various state initiatives. The busy day of deliberations is expected to focus on strengthening Centre-State coordination and fast-tracking pending proposals related to infrastructure, irrigation, ports, petroleum, and financial allocations for Andhra Pradesh.

According to the official schedule, Mr. Naidu will begin his day at 9:45 a.m. by meeting Union Jal Shakti Minister C.R. Patil. The discussion is expected to center around major water resource projects in Andhra Pradesh, including the ongoing works under the Polavaram irrigation project, groundwater rejuvenation, and inter-state river water allocation issues. The state government has been urging the Centre for timely financial assistance and technical clearances for these



projects, given their critical importance to irrigation and drinking water supply in the coastal districts.

Following the meeting with Mr. Patil, the Chief Minister is slated to hold talks with Union Home Minister Amit Shah. This meeting holds political and administrative significance, as key law and order, disaster management, and inter-governmental coordination issues are likely to be discussed. Sources close to the Chief Minister's office indicated that Naidu may also raise security reinforcement requirements for coastal areas and border regions.

By 11:30 a.m., Mr. Naidu will meet Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. This

crucial engagement is expected to delve into issues of fiscal support for Andhra Pradesh, including the pending dues from the Centre, additional allocations under special assistance programs, and state borrowing approvals. The Chief Minister may seek expedited release of central grants for urban development, road infrastructure, and welfare schemes tied to central funds. At around 12:00 noon, Mr. Naidu will meet Union Minister of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways, Sarbananda Sonowal.

The focus of this discussion is expected to be on the development of port infrastructure in the state including the expansion of the Machilipatnam and Ramayapatnam ports

and the modernization of fishing harbors. Naidu is also expected to explore partnership opportunities with the Centre for increasing maritime trade and logistics connectivity.

In the afternoon session, the Chief Minister will attend the CREDAI Awards ceremony at 2:00 p.m., where he will highlight Andhra Pradesh's progress in real estate policy, urban planning, and industrial infrastructure. Later in the evening, at 4:00 p.m., Mr. Naidu will hold a meeting with Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri to discuss fuel infrastructure, natural gas distribution, and refinery projects relevant to the state's energy sector.

The final meeting of

the day is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. with Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari. This interaction is anticipated to cover the status of ongoing national highway projects, greenfield corridors, and proposals for new road connectivity initiatives in Andhra Pradesh. Today's series of meetings reflect the Chief Minister's renewed efforts to secure central support for Andhra Pradesh's development agenda and to sustain momentum on long-pending projects. Sources in the government expressed optimism that the Delhi visit will yield positive outcomes for the state's growth trajectory and cooperative federal relations.

## Chandrababu Naidu Seeks Central Support for Key Andhra Projects During Delhi Visit



TPN Bureau | December 19

New Delhi: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu's Delhi tour continued on a high-level note as he met several Union Ministers to seek enhanced support for key developmental and infrastructure projects in the state. The Chief Minister held separate meetings with Union Ministers Nirmala Sitharaman, C.R. Patil, and Sarbananda Sonowal, discussing a range of pending issues including water resource projects, financial allocations, and industrial development proposals.

During his meeting with Union Minister for Jal Shakti, C.R. Patil, Naidu urged the Centre to expedite approvals and the release of funds for irrigation projects, particularly the Polavaram Project. He reiterated that water security remains one of the top priorities for Andhra Pradesh, given its significance to agriculture and drinking water supply. The Chief Minister appealed for immediate financial assistance for projects approved under the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act and requested a high-level meeting to resolve long-pending central approvals.

Highlighting the state's proactive contributions under the Jal Jeevan Mission, Naidu

said the Andhra Pradesh government had already spent 524.41 crore as its share and sought release of the corresponding central funds. He also requested the allocation of an additional 1,000 crore for the state under the scheme for the financial year 2025-26 to ensure uninterrupted progress in domestic water supply projects. Later, Naidu met Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and urged the Centre to extend financial support to the state under initiatives such as "Purvodaya" and "Saksham" to accelerate Andhra Pradesh's economic growth.

In particular, he sought special budgetary allocations to develop Rayalaseema as a horticulture hub, emphasizing the region's potential for agro-industrial growth and export-oriented farming. The Chief Minister also held discussions with Union Minister for Ports, Shipping, and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal. The talks centered on strengthening cooperation in shipbuilding, fishery infrastructure, and port-linked industrial development. Naidu thanked the Centre for its policy reforms in the maritime and shipbuilding sectors and urged continued support to align with the national "Chip to Ship" vision aimed at boosting domestic manufacturing in the marine

industry.

Seeking greater central support for coastal projects, Naidu proposed the establishment of a National Mega Shipbuilding and Ship Repair Cluster at Duggarajapatnam. He also requested additional funding for Phase-I of the state's fishing harbor development program, which aims to enhance livelihoods in the coastal fishing community. Explaining progress under this initiative, Naidu revealed that the state had taken up the construction of four major fishing harbors—Juvvaladinne, Nizampatnam, Machilipatnam, and Uppada—at a total cost of 1,361.49 crore.

Of this, the Centre had sanctioned 138.29 crore for the Juvvaladinne harbor, while the state had already spent 782.29 crore from its own resources. He urged the Centre to release the pending financial support for the remaining three harbors to ensure timely completion. Through his meetings, Naidu emphasized closer Centre-State coordination to ensure efficient implementation of flagship projects spanning water resources, infrastructure, and maritime development. His Delhi visit signals an assertive push to secure the state's share of central funds while reinforcing the government's commitment to long-term development and regional balance.

## Supreme Court Expresses Concern Over Judges Issuing Numerous Verdicts Before Retirement

TPN Bureau | December 19

New Delhi: The Supreme Court of India has expressed serious concern over the growing trend of judges delivering a flurry of judgments just before their retirement, suggesting that this tendency could compromise judicial integrity and consistency. Comparing it metaphorically to a cricketer hitting sixes in the final over, Chief Justice of India (CJI) D.Y. Surya Kant remarked that such "last-minute judicial activism" is an unhealthy practice that must be curbed.

The observation came during the hearing of a petition filed by a Principal District Judge from Madhya Pradesh who was suspended days before his retirement. The officer had challenged the suspension order issued by a full bench of the Madhya Pradesh High Court, which accused him of passing controversial judgments during his final days in service. The CJI-led bench heard the matter earlier this week and made strong observations about the timing of judicial decisions close to retirement. "Just before retirement, the petitioner seems to have started hitting sixes," CJI Surya Kant remarked, likening the situation to a batsman attempting to score quick



runs at the end of a cricket match.

"This is an unfortunate trend. I don't want to elaborate further, but the practice has become increasingly concerning," he added. The case pertains to a Madhya Pradesh judicial officer who was due to retire on November 30 but was suspended on November 19 roughly ten days ahead of his scheduled retirement date. His suspension reportedly stemmed from two orders he passed in his capacity as a district judge, which triggered criticism and institutional alarm.

Appearing on behalf of the petitioner, Senior Advocate Vipin Singh argued that the judicial officer had maintained an unblemished service record throughout his career. He contended that disciplinary action cannot

be taken merely because a judge's orders are unpopular or legally disputable. "If a judicial order is erroneous, it can and should be challenged before a higher court," Singh said, emphasizing that judicial independence must not be undermined by administrative measures.

The Supreme Court bench broadly agreed with this argument, distinguishing between an "incorrect judgment" and "misconduct." The bench clarified that errors in judicial reasoning cannot automatically be equated with bad faith or corruption. "There is a substantial difference between a judicial error and misconduct," the CJI observed. However, the court also noted that integrity and diligence are paramount, and judges should exercise restraint and judgment,

especially in their final days on the bench.

During the hearing, CJI Surya Kant also recalled the court's earlier direction to the Madhya Pradesh government to extend the retirement age of judicial officers to 61 years, a move that would now make the petitioner's retirement effective on November 30, 2026. Ultimately, the Supreme Court advised the petitioner to approach the Madhya Pradesh High Court to seek the quashing of his suspension order, stating that it was best for the state's own judiciary to evaluate the matter further. The hearing concluded with the CJI reiterating the importance of maintaining judicial discipline and professionalism regardless of a judge's service tenure or impending retirement.

## AP High Court Directs TTD to Use AI, Modern Technology in Tirumala Donation Counting

TPN Bureau | December 19

Thirupathi: The Andhra Pradesh High Court has issued key directions to the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) regarding the handling and counting of donations from devotees at the Tirumala temple, one of the most visited Hindu shrines in the world. The court emphasized the need to minimize human involvement in the process and adopt artificial intelligence (AI) and advanced machinery to ensure transparency, security, and efficiency in the Parakamani (donation counting) operations.

Responding to concerns over irregularities and potential misuse during the counting process, the High Court instructed the TTD to take up reforms in two phases — immediate and long-term. It directed the management to formulate a short-term plan to address current loopholes and prepare a comprehensive, permanent system to prevent theft and enhance accountability. The court sought a detailed report within two weeks on existing security measures related to the sealing, transportation, and counting of the temple's hundi (offering boxes).

It also mandated the inclusion of robust surveillance and monitoring mechanisms to detect and deter any malpractice during the handling of large sums of donated cash, gold, silver, and other valuables. As part of its modernization approach, the High Court suggested that TTD deploy AI-based tools to categorize offerings and identify foreign currency automatically. It also recommended establishing a specialized system to separate and record precious metals and ornaments with high precision.

These technologies, the court noted, would help eliminate human error and prevent pilferage. Furthermore, the court directed the TTD to prepare a comprehensive proposal outlining the integration

of such technological solutions and submit it within eight weeks. The proposal should include practical details on procurement, implementation, and staff training for operating new equipment.

The High Court observed that technological reforms are vital for maintaining the faith of millions of devotees who contribute to the shrine's offerings each year. It reminded the TTD that ensuring transparency in the Parakamani process is both a spiritual and administrative responsibility, essential for preserving the sanctity and reputation of the Tirumala temple.



# APDCA Warns Drug Inspectors Against Interfering in Pharmacy Council Elections

TPN Bureau | December 19, 2025

Vijayawada: The Andhra Pradesh Drugs Control Administration (APDCA) has issued a stern warning to all drug inspectors, directing them to maintain absolute neutrality and refrain from any act that could influence the ongoing Andhra Pradesh Pharmacy Council (APPC) elections. The warning follows allegations that some inspectors are attempting to sway registered pharmacists' votes in favor of a particular candidate. The circular, dated December 15, 2025, and signed by the Director (FAC) of the Drugs and Copyrights, Drugs Control Administration, Vijayawada, explicitly cautions against misuse of official position or authority for electoral purposes.

The directive emphasizes strict adherence to the Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules to preserve the fair-

ness and integrity of the electoral process, which is being conducted through postal ballots. According to the APDCA, it has received specific complaints alleging that a section of drug inspectors has been using their regulatory influence to canvass for a retired Assistant Director of the administration, who is contesting the APPC election.

Such actions, the circular notes, not only violate service conduct rules but also undermine the credibility of the statutory election process. "The AP Pharmacy Council elections are statutory and non-political in nature. Any officer found attempting to influence, coerce, or induce pharmacists to vote for any candidate will face stringent disciplinary action," the circular warns. It directs all officers to maintain "absolute neutrality" and avoid any form of conduct that could appear



biased or conflict with their official duties.

The APDCA has made it clear that violations will be treated with the utmost seriousness, leading to disciplinary proceedings under the

CCS (Conduct) Rules and other relevant provisions. The order also calls upon zonal and divisional heads to ensure that these instructions are implemented scrupulously at all levels of the

administration. By issuing this directive, the APDCA aims to safeguard the transparency of the electoral process and protect pharmacists' democratic right to vote without external

pressure.

The administration's move comes at a time when questions have been raised about the fairness of the postal ballot system used for the election. Annappa Reddy,

former president of the AP Pharmacy Council and current president of the Indian Pharmaceutical Association (IPA) Andhra Pradesh branch, told Pharmabiz that the retired regulatory officer

now contesting the election had also participated in the previous council election but was unsuccessful.

Meanwhile, a separate controversy emerged when R. Sravan Kumar, son of R. Narayana from Pudipatla village in Tirupati, reported receiving two ballot papers. Kumar clarified that he returned one ballot to the Pharmacy Council office and dismissed allegations from rival pharmacist groups as baseless and politically motivated. He explained that he holds two degrees B.Pharm and Pharm D (Post-Baccalaureate) and therefore has two registration numbers, not duplicate identities. With the APDCA's latest warning, the administration has sent a clear message reinforcing its zero-tolerance approach toward any violation that might compromise the integrity of the AP Pharmacy Council elections.

# Extended Deadline for Class 10 Exam Fee Payment: Opportunity Available Today and Tomorrow

TPN Bureau | December 19

Amaravathi: The Directorate of Government Examinations (DGE), Andhra Pradesh, has announced that students appearing for the Class 10 (SSC) public examinations will have an additional opportunity to pay their examination fees. The window for payment, which reopened for a brief period, will remain available only on Friday and Saturday (today and tomorrow).

According to K.V. Srinivasulu Reddy, Director of Government Examinations, this final opportunity comes as part of the department's effort to ensure that no eligible student misses the exams due to delayed fee payment. He urged students, headmasters, and school administrators to make use of this extension without waiting for the final hours. Students who missed the regular deadline can now pay their examination fees with a late fine of ₹500. The payment must

be made through the headmaster's login portal to ensure proper authentication and record entry.

The DGE has also emphasized the importance of completing all payments through the official online system to avoid errors or delays. In addition to regular candidates, the department clarified that students below the prescribed age can complete the "age exemption" process by paying the required exemption fee through the Board of Secondary Education's official website. This measure ensures that under-age candidates can regularize their eligibility before sitting for the exams.

Similarly, vocational stream students have also been advised to make their examination fee payments through the same online portal. The director noted that this unified digital process brings convenience and transparency,

eliminating the need for physical submission or manual corrections. Mr. Reddy further appealed to headmasters not to wait until the last date to process fee payments.

"It has been noticed that many schools delay payments until the final hours, which often causes server congestion and transaction failures. To avoid inconvenience, all schools should complete the process at the earliest," he said. The DGE has made it clear that no further extensions will be granted after this deadline.

Students who fail to make payment by Saturday will not be permitted to appear for the upcoming SSC examinations. Schools across Andhra Pradesh have been directed to inform all students and parents immediately about this final extension and assist them in completing the payment promptly.



## Inter Exams Rescheduled in Andhra Pradesh: Board Releases Revised Timetable

TPN Bureau | December 19

Amaravathi: The Andhra Pradesh Board of Intermediate Education (BIEAP) has announced key changes to the schedule of the upcoming Intermediate Public Examinations (IPE) 2026. Originally slated to begin on February 23, several papers have now been rescheduled in view of major festivals—Holi and Ramzan—falling during the exam period. Officials released the revised timetable on Friday, confirming that all other papers will continue as per the earlier schedule. According to the new notification, the Second Year Mathematics Paper 2A and Civics Paper 2, which were initially scheduled for March 3, will now be conducted on March 4.

Similarly, the First Year Public Administration Paper 1 and Logic Paper 1, earlier set for March 20, have been postponed to March 21. The board

clarified that these adjustments were made to avoid inconvenience to students and staff on festival days. Officials stated that the first-year Intermediate examinations will be held from February 23 to March 24, while second-year exams will take place from February 24 to March 23.

All exams will be conducted in the morning session, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. The board reiterated that the updated timetable aligns with the 2026 government holiday list, which designates March 3 as Holi and March 20 as Ramzan. The BIEAP had earlier mentioned that the initial schedule released in November was tentative and subject to change based on the state government's holiday calendar.

Following the publication of the official list of holidays for 2026, the board promptly reviewed and revised the schedule to accommodate

festival observances without affecting academic continuity. Authorities urged students to carefully note the revised dates and adjust their preparation schedules accordingly. They also cautioned that such rescheduling should not cause any delay or complacency in exam preparation.

"Students must utilize this additional time effectively to strengthen their studies rather than becoming distracted," an official from the board advised. Apart from these changes, practical examinations and spot evaluation dates remain unaffected. The board also plans to release hall tickets and center details well ahead of the first exam day to ensure smooth conduct of the examinations across all districts of Andhra Pradesh. The revised timetable is now available on the official BIEAP website, and students are encouraged to download and verify their specific subject dates.



## Purandeswari Seeks Central Aid for Comprehensive Preparations Ahead of Godavari Pushkaralu-2027



TPN Bureau | December 19  
New Delhi / Rajamahendravaram ( East Godavari):

In a significant move to ensure robust preparations for the upcoming Godavari Pushkaralu-2027, Rajamahendravaram Member of Parliament (MP) Daggubati Purandeswari met Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs, Manohar Lal Khattar, in New Delhi. During the meeting, Purandeswari appealed for Central Government support under the Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) 2.0 to strengthen urban sanitation and infrastructure in Rajamahendravaram city ahead of the massive spiritual congregation.

Purandeswari submitted a detailed proposal and requested the Minister's approval for the comprehensive Detailed Project Report (DPR) prepared under the Swachh Bharat Mission. The DPR outlines key works related to city sanitation, solid waste man-

agement, and riverfront cleanliness along the banks of the Godavari. She emphasized that the proposed initiatives would greatly enhance hygiene and public health standards, particularly during the Pushkaralu, when millions of devotees and visitors are expected to throng the holy city.

Highlighting Rajamahendravaram's cultural and spiritual importance, Purandeswari explained that proper sanitation infrastructure is essential to manage the large influx of pilgrims and ensure a smooth and safe experience for them. She further stated that the efforts being planned are not just for the festival duration but are also aimed at establishing long-term, sustainable urban infrastructure to benefit the city even after the event.

According to sources, Minister Manohar Lal Khattar responded positively to the MP's appeal. He acknowledged the importance of

proactive planning and assured that the Ministry would carefully examine the DPR and extend necessary support within the framework of the Swachh Bharat Mission. The Union Minister appreciated the MP's proactive approach in seeking early planning and coordination between the Centre and the state to ensure an effective sanitation drive.

The Godavari Pushkaralu, held once every 12 years, is one of the most prominent river festivals in South India, drawing devotees from across the nation to take a holy dip in the sacred river. The 2027 edition is expected to witness record participation, placing Rajamahendravaram at the center of national attention. Authorities are now focusing on enhancing urban hygiene, environmental protection, and public amenities to ensure that the city stands ready for the grand occasion.

# Nara Lokesh Slams YSRCP for ‘Conspiring’ Against IT Investments, Says Andhra Youth Losing Job Opportunities

TPN Bureau | December 19  
Amaravati: Telugu Desam Party (TDP) general secretary and state minister Nara Lokesh has strongly criticized the ruling YSR Congress Party (YSRCP), accusing it of deliberately obstructing information technology (IT) investments and jeopardizing employment opportunities for the youth of Andhra Pradesh.

In a post shared on social media platform X on Friday, Lokesh alleged that the YSRCP government had moved court cases against several leading IT companies and infrastructure projects that promised substantial employment potential. “The YSRCP has filed petitions in courts against major firms such as TCS, Cognizant, and Sattva, and now a similar petition has been filed against the Raheja IT Park project,” he wrote, expressing outrage over the move. Lokesh asserted that



these projects together could have generated more than one lakh jobs for young professionals in the state. He questioned the intent behind Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy’s actions, asking why his administration seemed so determined to block opportunities and investments that could

boost Andhra Pradesh’s economy. “The state’s youth stand to gain from these projects through promising careers in the IT sector. Why does Jagan harbor such animosity toward their future? Is it justified to hinder projects that bring both investment and employment to Andhra

Pradesh?” Lokesh remarked in his post. The Amaravati IT corridor and allied projects have been a point of political tussle between the TDP and YSRCP governments. During the previous TDP tenure, led by N. Chandrababu Naidu, several IT companies had committed to establishing major campuses

across Amaravati, Visakhapatnam, and Tirupati. However, many of those projects faced delays or cancellations after the YSRCP came to power in 2019. Lokesh, who currently handles the IT and Industries portfolios in the state cabinet, reiterated that the new TDP-led government remains committed to reviving stalled projects and restoring investor confidence. He said the administration’s focus is on creating employment, fostering innovation, and rebuilding Andhra Pradesh’s reputation as a prime destination for IT and emerging technologies. Lokesh’s statement has triggered a renewed war of words between the two political parties, with TDP leaders accusing YSRCP of intentionally derailing development, while YSRCP members counter that due legal procedures are being followed in all investment agreements.

# Chandrababu Comments on Welfare Schemes, PPP Model During Delhi Visit

TPN Bureau | December 19  
New Delhi: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu remarked that former Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy continues to face setbacks concerning various welfare schemes implemented during his tenure. Naidu made these comments during his ongoing visit to New Delhi, where he convened a meeting with alliance Members of Parliament (MPs) from Andhra Pradesh to review key issues related to the state.



The meeting, held at the Telugu Desam Parliamentary Party office in the national capital, lasted for over 40 minutes. During the interaction, Naidu took stock of several political and administrative developments. He urged the MPs to play an active role in representing Andhra Pradesh’s interests at the central level and to maintain consistency in coordinating with the state’s priorities.

Referring to the controversial Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model introduced by the previous YSR Congress Party government for setting up medical colleges, Naidu stated that it was the only major policy initiative that fell to their lot, but even that did not earn public acceptance. “The PPP arrangement in medical education was the only thing that YSRCP could take forward. However, the people did not trust them with that either,” he said. Naidu also commented on Jagan

Mohan Reddy’s proposed “One Crore Signatures” campaign, describing it as a theatrical move that failed to gain traction. “The so-called signature drive was meant as a political drama, and it failed completely,” Naidu remarked, according to sources present at the meeting. Highlighting the importance of learning from successful models in other states, the Chief Minister advised the MPs to study the functioning of hospitals being managed under PPP mode in states like Delhi and Gujarat. He noted that as Andhra Pradesh gains greater national attention for its developmental approach, the responsibilities of its representatives would correspondingly increase.

“Our recognition is expanding at the national level, but that recognition comes with added responsibility. We must work with even greater dedication and integrity,” Naidu emphasized. The MPs reportedly agreed to coordinate more closely with the Chief Minister’s Office to pursue key central projects and ensure better representation of the state’s welfare and infrastructural needs.

# Pawan Kalyan Launches ‘Amarajeevi Jaladhara’ Drinking Water Scheme Covering Five Former Districts

TPN Bureau | December 19  
Amaravati: The Andhra Pradesh government has finalized the name ‘Amarajeevi Jaladhara’ for the new large-scale drinking water supply project covering the erstwhile East and West Godavari districts. Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan announced this on Thursday, stating that the scheme is a tribute to Potti Srimamulu, the celebrated freedom fighter who sacrificed his life for the formation of a separate Telugu state.

sacrifice and legacy of Potti Srimamulu, whose struggle remains a defining chapter in Andhra Pradesh’s history. “We want this name to remind every Telugu-speaking person of the noble ideals and selfless service of Amarajeevi Potti Srimamulu,” he said. The Deputy Chief Minister launched the official poster of the ‘Amarajeevi Jaladhara’ scheme, which aims to provide reliable drinking water to rural households across multiple districts. The scheme will operate under the central government’s Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), which seeks to ensure sustainable and safe water supply in rural India. Under the new initiative,



the state government will implement the Jal Jeevan Mission’s Water Grid Project under the banner of Amarajeevi Jaladhara. Pawan Kalyan will formally lay the foundation stone for the project on Saturday at Peravali village in the Nidadavole constituency. The state government has planned a total of five projects under this scheme across the erstwhile districts of Prakasam, Chittoor, Palnadu, East Godavari, and West Godavari. These projects together are expected to cost around 7,910 crore. According to government projections, the comprehensive water supply network

will cater to the drinking water needs of approximately 1.21 crore people over the next 30 years. The project will especially benefit rural and semi-urban regions, where drinking water shortages have long remained a major concern. Officials said the Amarajeevi Jaladhara initiative reflects the coalition government’s broader goal of improving rural infrastructure, water security, and public health through sustainable water management. The initiative is expected to not only address existing supply challenges but also serve as a lasting symbol of respect to one of Andhra Pradesh’s greatest martyrs.

## Gudivada: Police Question Jagan’s Relative Arjun Reddy; Kodali Nani Aide Arrested in Betting Case



TPN Bureau | December 19  
Gudivada: Tension and high political interest prevailed in Gudivada on Friday as police developments involving leaders linked to the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) unfolded on two separate fronts. At the Gudivada Two Town Police Station in Krishna district, questioning of YSRCP chief Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy’s relative, Sirigiri Arjun Reddy, was completed even as, in a parallel action, a close aide of former minister and YSRCP leader Kodali Nani was arrested in a cricket betting case. Gudivada Two Town Circle Inspector Haneesh told the media that a case had been registered against Sirigiri Arjun Reddy in 2024 over allegedly objectionable and inflammatory posts on social media. The posts reportedly targeted political opponents and were deemed to violate applicable provisions relating to offensive online content. CI

Haneesh said that, as part of the investigation, the police recently served Arjun Reddy with notices under Section 41A of the Code of Criminal Procedure, directing him to appear before the investigating officer. In response to the notice, Arjun Reddy appeared at the Two Town Police Station on Friday, accompanied by several YSRCP leaders. Police officials questioned him in connection with the 2024 case, seeking clarifications on the content, intention, and dissemination of the posts. After completing the initial round of inquiry, the police allowed Arjun Reddy and the accompanying YSRCP leaders to leave the station. The CI stated that further investigation in the case will continue and that appropriate legal action will follow based on the evidence gathered. In a separate development, Gudivada One Town Police arrested Kunasani Vinod, a known follower of former minister and YSRCP

strongman Kodali Sri Venkateswara Rao (Kodali Nani). According to police, Vinod was allegedly running online cricket betting operations. During the raid, police said they seized [50000] in cash and a mobile phone purportedly used for betting transactions. Investigators allege that during the previous YSRCP regime, Vinod and his associates ran gambling and betting centres in the region with little restraint. Locals had reportedly complained that such activities continued even after the new coalition government came to power. Acting on specific information, the police registered a case against Vinod and took him into custody, signaling a tougher stance on illegal betting and gambling activities in Gudivada. Further investigation is underway to identify others involved in the betting network and to trace the flow of money linked to these operations.

## Andhra Pradesh Health Minister Satyakumar Yadav launched a strong counter attack on former Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan

TPN Bureau | December 19  
Amaravati: Andhra Pradesh Health Minister Satyakumar Yadav launched a strong counter attack on former Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy over his recent remarks warning action against those involved in constructing medical colleges under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model. Addressing the media at the Secretariat on Thursday, the minister described Jagan’s statement as “a shameful and irresponsible threat,” arguing that such intimidation only exposes his fear of progress being made under the Chandrababu Naidu-led government. Yadav said the PPP model aims to expand quality healthcare and medical education to poor and rural sections of society. “The government wants to deliver corporate-level treatment to the poor. If private institutions come forward to participate, why threaten them?” he questioned. Taking a sharp dig at Jagan, he added, “Whom will you send to jail? Will you imprison NITI Aayog, which proposed the PPP policy? Will you send Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who first introduced this framework, to jail? You can’t do anything like that.”



The minister went on to assert that “not even a hundred Jagans” could return to power in the state, saying the people had seen through the opposition’s politics. Referring to the pending court cases against Jagan, Yadav remarked, “He spent years in jail in 30 cases. The people must ensure he doesn’t return there again. If he doesn’t change his style, he’ll end up building his own political grave.” Responding to criticism of the ongoing PPP projects, Yadav said he was fully prepared to face any inquiry or legal scrutiny. “If there’s anything wrong with this model, send me to jail instead. I challenge the opposition to demand a CBI probe. Everything will be out in the open,” he said. The minister accused Jagan of trying to obstruct the state’s development in healthcare. “He doesn’t want government medical colleges to come up. He doesn’t want hospitals to develop or poor students to become doctors. His intention is clear — to prevent corporate-level healthcare from reaching the poor. That’s his biggest conspiracy,” he alleged. Yadav highlighted that once the new medical colleges are completed under the PPP framework, an additional 220 medi-

cal seats will be available for poor students. “With 75% of hospital beds reserved for underprivileged patients, we will ensure high standards of treatment for every citizen, not just the wealthy,” he stated. Turning his criticism toward Jagan’s own record, the minister questioned the Opposition leader’s moral authority to oppose private participation in health services. “Wasn’t your Arogyasri scheme under the PPP model? Didn’t you hand over 108 and 104 emergency services to Aurobindo Group for nearly 2,000 crore without any transparency? If you call this privatization, then admit that you followed the same approach during your regime,” Yadav asserted. Concluding his remarks, the Health Minister said the Chandrababu Naidu government is committed to strengthening the state’s healthcare infrastructure and ensuring accessibility for the poor. “No amount of threats or political games can derail the mission to make Andhra Pradesh a hub of quality healthcare and medical education,” he said.

# Illiteracy Hindering Development in Palnadu, Says Collector Krutika Shukla

TPN Bureau | December 19

Narasaraopet (Palnadu District): Palnadu District Collector Krutika Shukla has identified illiteracy as the major obstacle to development, stressing that true progress is possible only when every citizen becomes literate. She stated that illiteracy not only hampers individual growth but also weakens community systems such as self-help groups (SHGs) and welfare projects that rely heavily on informed participation.

Speaking at a review meeting of the Aksara Andhra programme

held at the district collectorate on Friday, the Collector reviewed the current literacy levels and ongoing adult education initiatives. She expressed concern that Palnadu ranks third from the bottom among all districts in Andhra Pradesh in terms of literacy, calling for immediate and coordinated action from all departmental heads.

“The low literacy rate is directly affecting transparency and efficiency within self-help groups. Many irregularities and misuse of funds occur due to the inability of members to

read, write, and properly maintain records,” Shukla remarked. She urged officials to strengthen literacy centers at the mandal level and instructed field officers to personally inspect these centers to ensure quality implementation of adult education programs.

Collector Shukla directed key departments—including DRDA, MEPMA, and DWMA—to take a lead role in achieving the target of making 1,27,565 illiterate adults literate within the district. She emphasised that strengthening adult literacy efforts would

not only improve governance but also empower women in self-help groups to make informed decisions and effectively manage their group finances.

During the meeting, District Adult Education Officer Anjaneyulu, Nodal Officer Mallikarjunarao, District Project Directors of DRDA, MEPMA, DWMA, ICDS PD, District Education Officer (DEO), and District Literacy Promotion Officer (DLPO) participated alongside other officials from the Adult Education Department.

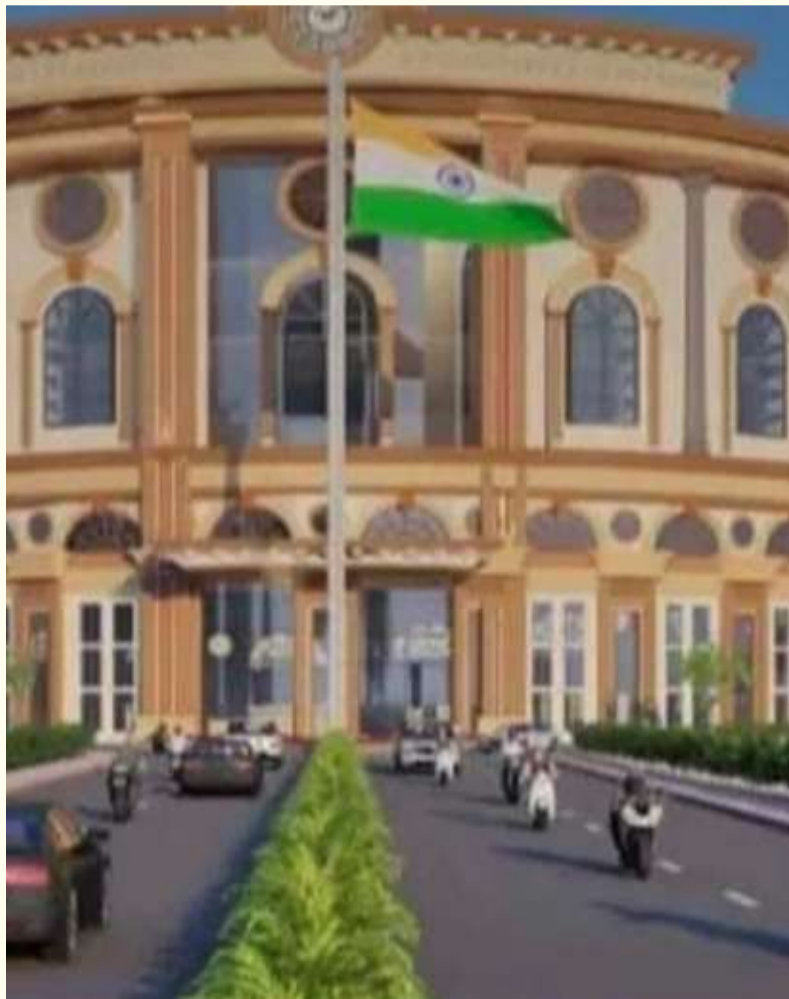
The Collector reiterated that literacy is the

foundation for all-round development, linking education directly to economic stability, social awareness, and self-reliance. She called for a collective effort from government staff, local organizations, and volunteer teachers to ensure every adult in the district gains the ability to read and write.

By aligning local administrative bodies and social welfare departments, the Palnadu district aims to transform itself into a fully literate region, setting an example of progress through education-driven empowerment.



## Low-level Bridge Collapses Between Firangipuram and Talluru Villages, Disrupting Traffic



TPN Bureau | December 19

Vijayawada | Amaravathi: In a landmark decision aimed at aligning with the vision of developing Amaravathi as a world-class capital region, the Indian Railways has given the green signal for a massive redevelopment of the Vijayawada Railway Station through the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model. The project, estimated to cost 661.11 crore, is expected to transform the station into one of the most modern, passenger-friendly transport hubs in South India.

According to official sources, the Ministry of Railways has already approved the detailed project proposals and finalized the blueprint for implementation. The project will mirror the successful redevelopment models of stations in Maharashtra and Himachal Pradesh, focusing on infrastructure modernization, passenger convenience, and commercial development. Spread across 83,367 square meters, the Vijayawada Railway Station redevelopment will include integrated facilities such as multi-level parking, food courts, retail spaces, hotels, and upgraded passenger amenities.

Of this, nearly 81,948 square meters

will be dedicated to commercial and administrative uses, encompassing railway quarters, station offices, and a series of new buildings for business and hospitality purposes. Officials revealed that both the eastern and western sides of the station will be developed with distinctive themes to reflect the growing prominence of Vijayawada as a regional hub.

The eastern entrance is planned to feature an iconic architectural design comparable to the façade of the Indian Parliament, offering a grand and elegant look that complements the capital region's vision. The western side, adjoining the bustling One Town area known for its commercial vibrancy, will be developed to enhance business activity with space for multi-storey structures suitable for traders and service providers.

“Vijayawada railway station serves as the gateway to the Amaravathi capital region. With the increasing passenger traffic and train frequency, this redevelopment project will greatly improve capacity, convenience, and aesthetics,” a senior railway official said. Currently, the station operates with three foot overbridges

catering to a growing number of passengers, but congestion during peak hours has become a significant challenge. To address this, the new design includes wider concourses, additional foot overbridges, escalators, and lifts to streamline passenger movement and reduce crowding.

The Indian Railways has prioritized this project as part of its nationwide station redevelopment initiative under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme, which aims to modernize major railway stations through sustainable infrastructure and enhanced user experience. The PPP model will allow private developers to invest in commercial complexes, hotels, and retail spaces within the station premises, while the Railways will retain ownership and regulatory authority. With funding sanctioned and plans cleared, groundwork for the redevelopment is expected to begin soon.

Once completed, the Vijayawada Railway Station will not only serve as a state-of-the-art transportation hub but also as a symbol of Andhra Pradesh's growth and modernization, standing tall as a gateway to the dream city of Amaravathi.

# Narasaraopet Engineering Students win

TPN Bureau | December 19

Vijayawada | Narasaraopet (Palnadu District):

In a remarkable achievement that has brought pride to Andhra Pradesh, students from Narasaraopet Engineering College (NEC) have won national-level honors at the Smart India Hackathon 2025, organized by the Ministry of Education, Government of India. The innovative project presented by the team impressed the judges and secured them the national winner title along with a cash prize of 1,50,000.

The NEC student team stood out for creatively integrating Indian classical dance gestures with artificial intelligence, blending tradition with modern technology. Their project not only highlighted the potential of AI in preserving and modernizing India's cultural heritage but also demonstrated outstanding technical skill and artistic sensibility. The blend of innovation, coding expertise, and cultural expression captivated the judging



panel and audience alike.

To honor this achievement, District Collector Kritika Shukla felicitated the winning team at a special appreciation and motivation program held at the District Collectorate. She praised the students for representing both the district and the state on a national platform and for showcasing how India's youth can fuse cultural values with technological excellence. The Collector commended the project as an

inspiring example of how tradition and innovation can coexist harmoniously in the digital age.

During the felicitation, Dr. B. Jhansi Vajram, Head of the IT Department and Convenor, along with Dr. K. Anil Kumar, congratulated the students for their exceptional performance and dedication that led to this success. They emphasized the importance of nurturing creativity and research among students to excel in competi-

tive platforms like Smart India Hackathon.

The institution's management also expressed immense pride in the students' success. Chairman Mittapalli Venkata Koteswara Rao, Vice Chairman Mittapalli Chakravarti, Secretary & Correspondent Mittapalli Ramesh Babu, and Principal Dr. S. Venkateswarlu extended their heartfelt congratulations to the winners. They reaffirmed the college's commitment to encouraging student inno-

vation and participation in national-level competitions.

The winning team comprises G. Shanmukha, T. Nag Kalyan, K. Harshitha, K.V. Sai Bharat, G. Chinmayi, and K. Tanmayi. Their success at Smart India Hackathon 2025 not only reflects their individual brilliance but also underscores the growing reputation of Narasaraopet Engineering College as a hub for technical excellence and creative innovation.

# Guntur Cybercrime Bust

TPN Bureau | December 19

Police Arrest Four for Duping Retired Teacher in Digital Arrest Scam In a major breakthrough against cyber fraud, Guntur police have arrested a four-member cyber-crime gang that allegedly extorted 42 lakh from a retired teacher under the pretext of a “digital arrest.” Superintendent of Police Vakul Jindal disclosed the details of the case during a press conference held at his office on Friday.

According to police, the victim, identified as Manjulavani, a retired school teacher from Kommuru village in Kakumanu mandal of Guntur district, recently received a distressing phone call from unidentified persons claiming to be CID officers. The callers falsely informed her that her name was linked to a human trafficking case and that she was under imminent digital arrest — a term fraudsters increasingly use to intimidate victims using legal and technical jargon.

The culprits used fear and psychological



pressure to manipulate the retired woman. They warned her that failure to cooperate would result in immediate legal action and public humiliation. To “avoid arrest,” they instructed her to transfer money into specific bank accounts under the guise of “security verification.” Terrified and believing the callers were genuine officials, Manjulavani transferred a total of 42 lakh in multiple installments over several days.

When the fraudsters

demanding additional money and intensified their threats, the victim grew suspicious and approached the police for help. Upon receiving the complaint, Pathipadu Circle Inspector Srinivasa Rao and Sub-Inspector Eknath swiftly registered a case and launched an investigation. The police identified and apprehended the four accused — Dr. Suresh Naidu from Visakhapatnam, Sai Srinivas from Parvathipuram, Mohit Shikhrwal from Agra,

and Mohan from Nellore. All four were allegedly working together as part of a coordinated cyber-crime network that targeted victims across different states. SP Vakul Jindal stated that the investigation revealed the gang's sophisticated methods, including the use of fake caller IDs, spoofed government documents, and counterfeit law enforcement IDs to gain victims' trust.

He urged citizens, particularly senior citizens and retired em-

ployees, to remain vigilant and verify any suspicious calls claiming to be from police or government departments before transferring money or sharing personal information.

Police have frozen multiple bank accounts linked to the accused and are investigating if the same gang is involved in similar scams elsewhere. All four suspects are currently in custody, and further investigation is underway to trace other members of the network.

# Teachings of Jesus Are a Guiding Light for Society: MLA Mandali Buddha Prasad

TPN Bureau | December 19

Mopidevi, Krishna District: Avanigadda MLA Mandali Buddha Prasad emphasized that the teachings of Jesus Christ stand as timeless guiding principles for humanity, fostering peace, love, and harmony in society. He was speaking at the grand Semi-Christmas celebrations held at Mopidevi on Thursday night under the auspices of the Hermon United Pastors' Fellowship. Addressing the large gathering of believers, the MLA highlighted the universal relevance of Christ's message — "Love your neighbor as yourself."

He said such values transcend religious boundaries and continue to guide humanity toward compassion and mutual respect. "In today's world, where divisions and conflicts often dominate, Christ's simple yet profound mes-



sage of love and forgiveness has the power to transform societies," Buddha Prasad observed. The Semi-Christmas event was marked by devotional songs, cultural programs, and community prayer sessions celebrating the spirit of Christmas. The ambience came alive with joyous carols, lighting displays, and the symbolic cutting of the Christmas cake.

MLA Buddha Prasad

joined community leaders and church members in cutting the cake and sharing it with the congregation. Extending his heartfelt greetings, the MLA conveyed Christmas wishes to Christian brothers and sisters across the Avanigadda constituency and beyond. He appreciated the fellowship for organizing such meaningful gatherings that promote unity and brotherhood among all communities. "Celebrations like these

remind us that love, service, and sacrifice are essential values that sustain the moral fabric of society," he said.

Organizing committee members and local dignitaries felicitated Mandali Buddha Prasad in recognition of his continued support for social harmony and welfare initiatives. In his concluding remarks, he reiterated his commitment to ensuring that development and peace go hand in hand in the

region. The Semi-Christmas celebration at Mopidevi not only brought together members of the Christian community but also attracted people from different walks of life, reflecting the true secular spirit of India. The evening ended on a festive note with community prayers and the spreading of goodwill, echoing the message of love and light that Christmas represents.

## Tension Erupts Near Adikavi Nannaya University in Tuni Over Nara Lokesh Tour, Plexi Board. Controversy Sparks Clash



TPN Bureau | December 19

Tuni, West Godavari District — High tension prevailed near Adikavi Nannaya University in Tuni on Friday following a dispute over the removal of flex banners related to the visit of Telugu Desam Party (TDP) General Secretary Nara Lokesh. The incident triggered sharp protests from Jana Sena Party activists and created a chaotic atmosphere near the university campus. According to sources, Lokesh's scheduled tour in the region led to the installation of welcome banners and flex boards by local TDP and Jana Sena workers.

However, university authorities reportedly ordered their removal, citing campus decorum and admin-

istrative guidelines. This decision angered supporters, who alleged that the action was politically motivated. Tensions escalated when Jana Sena activists and local leaders gathered near the Vice-Chancellor's office, demanding an explanation from the university administration. Eyewitnesses said some leaders, including local MLA and Jana Sena representatives, tried to enter the VC's office to voice their protest.

Police immediately intervened, restricting their entry and setting up security barricades around the administrative block. The confrontation led to heated exchange between the police and the protestors. Chants supporting Nara

Lokesh and condemning the alleged misuse of authority filled the air. As the crowd swelled, additional police forces were deployed to prevent further escalation. District police officials stated that the situation was brought under control after several hours.

"We have detained a few agitators to maintain peace. There was no major incident of violence," an officer on site said. Meanwhile, Jana Sena leaders condemned the "high-handed behavior" of the police and accused the university officials of acting under government pressure. The incident reflects the rising political friction in Andhra Pradesh ahead of Lokesh's upcoming programs in the region.

# Loan Dispute Leads to Brutal Attack in K. Agraharam Village, Ponnaluru Mandal

TPN Bureau | December 19

Ponnaluru: Tension prevailed in Ponnaluru mandal's K. Agraharam village of Prakasam district after a violent clash erupted over a financial dispute on Thursday. According to reports, a man identified as Venkata Reddy from Kottapalem was allegedly attacked with sticks by two persons from K. Agraharam after he demanded repayment of money he had lent earlier. The victim, Venkata Reddy, alleged that the attackers identified as Vangapati Prasad and his brother Ram Anjaneyulu, both residents of K. Agraharam assaulted him brutally when he asked them to return the borrowed amount.

He claimed that the duo, who are reportedly associated with the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), called him to the village under the pretext of discussing the issue but launched a sudden and unprovoked attack. Local villagers rushed to the spot after hearing Venkata Reddy's cries and shifted him to Kandukur Government Hospital in a 108 emergency vehicle. Doctors stated that he sustained injuries on his hands and back but is currently out of danger.

On receiving the complaint, Ponnaluru Police Sub-Inspector Anuk Kumar visited the scene, registered a case, and began an investigation into the incident. The police are said to be verifying the exact nature



of the money dispute and the claims made by the complainant.

Meanwhile, the incident has caused unrest in the area, with locals

condemning the violent behaviour and demanding strict action against those responsible. Police have increased patrolling in the village to

prevent further escalation and assured that justice will be delivered after the investigation is completed.

## TDP Mandal President Draws MLA Kolikapudi's Over Alleged Attack on SC Officer



Tension flared in the constituency after Telugu Desam Party (TDP) MLA Kolikapudi strongly condemned alleged misconduct by a TDP Mandal President who reportedly attacked a Scheduled Caste (SC) officer associated with the Velugu program. The MLA's reprimand has sparked intense discussion within political and administrative circles. According to reports, MLA Kolikapudi expressed outrage after learning that a Velugu officer was allegedly assaulted by the local TDP leader.

Expressing serious concern, the MLA questioned, "How can anyone attack a Scheduled Caste officer? Are SC officers your subordinates or slaves?" His remarks

underscored the importance of respecting government personnel, irrespective of their social background. Kolikapudi stated that such behavior was completely unacceptable and violated both party principles and social ethics. He stressed that no one in the TDP was above discipline and that any form of intimidation against government officials would invite strict action.

"Officials are not enemies—they are public servants. Threatening or attacking them will never be tolerated," the MLA said. Further, Kolikapudi demanded that the accused Mandal President tender a public apology to the concerned Velugu officer within 48 hours. Failing to do so, he

warned, would compel him to initiate disciplinary measures and bring the matter before higher party authorities.

The MLA's firm reaction has sent a clear message through the party hierarchy, signaling that disrespect or violence toward officials will be met with uncompromising accountability. Sources indicate that local police and administrative officials are also verifying the details of the alleged incident. Observers note that this episode highlights growing pressure within political parties to maintain discipline among grassroots leaders and uphold decorum toward government officials, especially those from marginalized communities.

# Science exhibition held at Narasaraopet



TPN Bureau | December 19

Narasaraopet (Palnadu District): The district-level Educational Science Exhibition held at PNC & KR College in Narasaraopet on Friday attracted widespread attention, inspiring both students and visitors alike. Organized under the directions of the Andhra Pradesh School Education Commissioner, the event was conducted jointly by SCERT, Samagra Shiksha, and the Palnadu Dis-

trict Education Department. The exhibition was inaugurated by MLA Dr. Chadalavada Aravind Babu, who commended the creativity and innovation demonstrated by participating students.

The event showcased 140 models and exhibits prepared by students from 28 mandals across the Palnadu district, representing a wide array of scientific concepts, technological innovations, and creative learning projects. Speaking on the oc-

casión, Dr. Aravind Babu praised Narasaraopet as a land of poets, artists, and cultural richness. He expressed pride in the students' intellectual enthusiasm and inventive spirit.

The MLA noted that Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu's forward-looking vision has accelerated Andhra Pradesh's growth in fields such as Artificial Intelligence, Information Technology, and other emerging sectors. He encouraged stu-

dents to embrace these opportunities, stressing that the next generation must equip themselves with knowledge in AI and advanced technologies to match the pace of global development.

Andhra Pradesh State Library Chairman Gonuguntla Koteswar Rao emphasized the importance of such exhibitions in nurturing scientific thinking among young minds. He said these platforms help identify potential scientists and sharp-

en their curiosity and analytical abilities, which are essential for fostering innovation-driven education. Andhra Pradesh Shilparamam Arts, Crafts, and Cultural Corporation Chairperson C.H. Manjula Reddy also attended the event and lauded the dedication of the students and teachers involved. She highlighted the need for integrating creativity with science education to promote holistic learning.

District Education Officer P.V.J. Rama Rao, DyEOs Sheikh Subhani and V. Yesubabu, MEOs Jaffarulla and Sambasiva Rao, along with several school heads and teaching staff, were present on the occasion. Also attending were A.P. Naibrahmin Federation Director Madhira Gangadhar, DSO S. Rajasekhara, A.A. Madhu Kumar, C.H. Veerappayya, and PNC & KR College Joint Secretary P. Srinivasa Prasad. The event concluded with wide appreciation for the students' exhibits, which reflected their creativity, commitment, and the growing spirit of scientific inquiry across Palnadu district.



# Bangladesh in Turmoil: Lessons from the Death of Sharif Osman Hadi and the Eruption of Nationwide Protests



Bangladesh has been plunged into one of its most volatile periods in recent history following the death of Sharif Osman Hadi, a prominent youth leader whose shooting and subsequent passing sparked widespread demonstrations, violent clashes, and targeted attacks on media institutions. The crisis has not only revealed deep societal and political fissures but has also raised urgent questions about press freedom, governance, public trust, and the fragility of democratic institutions in the country.

## The Catalyst: Hadi's Death and Public Anger

Sharif Osman Hadi, aged 32, was a central figure in the pro-democracy movement that significantly reshaped Bangladesh's political landscape the previous year. His activism and visibility made him both a voice for reform and, tragically, a target. When he was shot by unknown assailants and later succumbed to his injuries abroad, the news acted as a flashpoint for pent-up public

frustrations with governance, accountability, and political transparency, igniting protests that have now spread across major cities, including Dhaka, Chattogram, and Rajshahi.

Initially, the demonstrations were largely peaceful, with thousands gathering to express grief and demand justice. Protesters carried banners, chanted slogans, and engaged in marches through crowded streets. However, the situation quickly escalated, revealing how fragile social order can be in moments of political and emotional intensity. As the protests intensified, clashes with law enforcement became more frequent, and acts of vandalism—including the destruction of property—began to emerge.

## Attacks on Media: Threats to Freedom of Expression

One of the most alarming aspects of the unrest has been the targeting of media outlets. Angry crowds stormed offices of leading newspapers and broadcasting networks, setting parts of buildings

trapped amid smoke and flames, with emergency responders stepping in to evacuate those inside. The attacks underscore the precarious position of press freedom in Bangladesh, particularly during politically charged crises.

Media institutions often act as intermediaries, providing the public with factual accounts amid chaos. Yet, in situations where citizens perceive media as either complicit with or opposed to particular political agendas, journalists are frequently made scapegoats. The arson attacks not only jeopardized lives but also disrupted the dissemination of vital information, highlighting the fragility of independent journalism in environments where public anger can manifest as direct physical aggression.

## Widening Political and Social Fault Lines

Beyond media offices, the protests have targeted political party offices, government buildings, and cultural centers, demonstrating how rapidly civil unrest can ex-

plode, roads were blocked with burning debris, public transport was disrupted, and residents reported difficulty accessing essential services. These events reflect deep divisions within society and a growing mistrust of governmental authority.

The unrest has also amplified nationalist and anti-foreign rhetoric in certain areas, particularly near strategic infrastructure and foreign consulates. Some protest groups have linked domestic grievances to perceived foreign interference, illustrating how political crises can rapidly take on regional and international dimensions. This has drawn diplomatic attention, with neighboring countries and international observers closely monitoring developments, wary of both humanitarian impacts and potential spillover effects.

## Law Enforcement and Government Response



Authorities responded to the unrest by deploying security forces to restore order, often engaging in tense standoffs with protesters. Reports of clashes have varied from stone-pelting and vandalism to direct confrontations between police and demonstrators. While maintaining law and order is essential, excessive or mismanaged force can exacerbate public resentment, creating a vicious cycle of violence and retaliation.

The interim government has called for calm, condemned acts of arson and assault, and emphasized a commitment to investigating Hadi's death thoroughly. National mourning was declared, with flags flown at half-mast, and officials urged restraint during funeral proceedings and related gatherings. Yet, these measures, while symbolically important, are insufficient if not coupled with transparent and accountable actions that address the underlying grievances fueling public unrest.

## Historical Context: Political Instability and Citi-

## zen Disillusionment

Bangladesh's political landscape has long been characterized by intense partisan rivalry, frequent street protests, and episodes of violent civil unrest. Citizens have grown frustrated with systemic corruption, slow judicial processes, and the perception of unaccountable governance. Hadi's death did not occur in isolation; it acted as a catalyst for grievances that had been accumulating over years. When individuals perceive that conventional political and legal channels are ineffective, public demonstrations often escalate rapidly, sometimes spilling into violence.

Moreover, youth engagement in politics, while crucial for democratic vitality, can also make younger leaders targets for intimidation, violence, or assassination. Hadi's role as a youthful activist made him both influential and vulnerable. His death has

news and enabled citizens to coordinate peace-



ful demonstrations. On the other, misinformation, rumours, and inflammatory content have exacerbated tensions, fueling anger and hastening violent acts, including the attacks on media offices. The viral spread of unverified claims demonstrates the urgent need for media literacy and responsible information management in times of crisis.

## Humanitarian and Social Implications

Beyond the political ramifications, the unrest has profound humanitarian consequences. Citizens in affected areas have faced disruption of daily life, restricted mobility, and exposure to violence. Local businesses, particularly small enterprises, have suffered losses due to arson, blockades, and closures. Additionally, the psychological toll on both residents and journalists has been significant, underscoring the broader societal costs of political unrest.

## The Role of Social Media and Information Flows



Social media platforms have played a dual role during this crisis. On one hand, they have facilitated rapid dissemination of

while also facilitating dialogue between the gov-

tions require structural reforms:

## International Perspective and Implications

The unrest has drawn global attention, with international human rights groups and foreign governments monitoring the situation closely. Concerns about press freedom, human rights violations, and the protection of activists have been emphasised in official statements. Bangladesh's stability is not only a domestic concern but also a regional one, given its strategic location and economic ties with neighboring countries. Any prolonged period of instability could impact trade, security, and diplomatic relations in South Asia.

## Looking Ahead: Lessons and Recommendations

The immediate priority

**1.Strengthening Rule of Law :** Transparent and timely investigations into political violence, along with swift judicial processes, are essential to rebuild public trust.

**2.Protecting Press Freedom:** Media institutions must be safeguarded, with mechanisms to prevent attacks and support journalists during periods of unrest.

**3.Youth Engagement and Safety:** Political youth leaders should be protected through legal safeguards and security protocols, ensuring their participation without fear of retaliation.

**4.Misinformation Management:** Governments and civil society must work together to combat false information, particularly on social media, while promoting media literacy.

**5.Dialogue and Reconciliation:** Channels for peaceful political dialogue must be reinforced, providing citizens with avenues to express grievances without resorting to violence.

## Conclusion

The death of Sharif Osman Hadi and the resulting unrest are stark reminders of the fragility of democratic norms under pressure. Bangladesh stands at a crossroads: the choices made in the coming weeks—between repression and dialogue, violence and reconciliation—will determine whether the nation can navigate this crisis peacefully or descend further into instability. Protecting citizens, safeguarding journalists, and ensuring accountability are not optional; they are prerequisites for any functional democracy. The world watches as Bangladesh grapples with grief, anger, and hope, searching for a path toward stability and justice.



anger. His death became symbolic of broader frus-

on fire. Journalists and staff found themselves

pand in both scope and intensity. In several cit-

# Tamil Nadu Voter List Slashed by Over 97 Lakh Names After Major Revision Exercise

Tamil Nadu has seen a dramatic reshaping of its electoral roll, with more than 97 lakh (9.7 million) names removed from the voter list following the first phase of a comprehensive revision exercise ahead of the 2026 Assembly elections. The scale of the deletions, amounting to about 15% of the state's registered voters, has triggered widespread discussion among political parties, election experts and the public alike.

The exercise in question — known as the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls — was conducted to update the voter list and remove entries that no longer reflect the current electorate. State authorities released the draft revised roll after the enumeration phase of the SIR concluded, showing that the total number of eligible voters has been reduced from approximately 6.41 crore (64.1 million) to about 5.43 crore (54.3 million). This represents a significant demographic shift in the state's electoral landscape.

Officials said that the deletions were carried out after door to door verification and detailed checks of individual records. The largest categories of removed names included those of people who had moved out of the state, deceased individuals, and duplicates where the same person was registered more than once in different locations. A smaller number of names were removed for other reasons, such as untraceability during the verification



process. In the state capital of Chennai, the impact was particularly striking, with around 14 lakh names dropped from the list. In some assembly constituencies, more than one third of previously registered voters were omitted in the draft roll, underscoring the uneven effects of the revision across different urban and rural areas. Political reactions to the deletions have been mixed and, in many cases, intense. Opposition parties have criticised the process, claiming that the large scale removal of voters could affect electoral outcomes and potentially disenfranchise eligible citizens. They have called for transparency in the criteria used and for assurances that genuine voters have not been unfairly excluded. Supporters of the SIR, in-

cluding some political figures, argue that a clean and accurate voter list is essential for credible elections. They say that removing outdated entries, such as those of deceased or relocated voters, helps uphold the integrity of the democratic process. These advocates emphasise that the revision is a normal part of electoral administration and is designed to reflect real world changes in population and residence. The Election Commission overseeing the process has opened a claims and objections period, allowing voters whose names were deleted to check their status and submit requests for reinstatement if they believe they are eligible. This window for appeals and corrections is seen as a critical safeguard to ensure that eligible electors are not per-

manently disenfranchised due to clerical errors or misunderstandings during the revision. Experts note that while such revisions are not unprecedented, the scale seen in Tamil Nadu is noteworthy and reflective of broader efforts across India to modernise and sanitise electoral records after decades without a comprehensive update. The challenge now lies in balancing the twin goals of accuracy and inclusivity, ensuring that the electoral roll is both up to date and representative of all genuine voters. As the state prepares for the upcoming elections, the outcome of this revision and its handling — including how effectively eligible voters can reclaim their entries — will remain a key focus of political debate and public attention.

## Indian Court Orders Removal of Deepfake Video Featuring Prime Minister and Business Leader

A court in India has directed a major political party and several of its senior leaders to remove a deepfake video from social media, highlighting growing concerns about the misuse of artificial intelligence (AI) in politics and public communication.

The video in question falsely depicted the country's prime minister and a prominent industrialist, creating a scenario that never occurred. The plaintiffs argued that the manipulated content contained defamatory statements and could mislead the public, damaging reputations and undermining trust in political and corporate institutions.

In its ruling, the Ahmedabad civil court ordered the political party and four of its leaders to take down the video within 48 hours. The court also issued notices to the defendants to appear at the next hearing scheduled for later this month. To ensure compliance, the court instructed social media platforms and other intermediaries to remove the content if it was not taken down by the defendants within the stipulated timeframe.



The legal action follows a civil defamation suit filed by the corporate entity associated with the industrialist, alleging that the deepfake contained false accusations related to corruption, misuse of influence, and other defamatory claims. The plaintiffs demanded not only the immediate removal of the video but also a restraining order preventing the party from posting similar manipulated content in the future. Experts in law and digital media say the case underscores the challenges emerg-

ing from the rapid adoption of AI-generated media. Deepfakes—synthetic videos in which a person's likeness or voice is digitally manipulated—have become a global concern, especially when deployed for political purposes or to spread false information. Such content can distort public perception, erode trust, and blur the lines between fact and fabrication. Supporters of stricter regulation argue that court interventions are essential to deter the misuse of AI technologies in political campaigns, protect-

ing individuals and institutions from reputational harm. Critics, however, within the political party have claimed that the ruling may infringe on free speech and political expression, calling for clearer legal guidelines on what constitutes defamatory AI-generated content. The case also emphasizes the growing responsibility of social media platforms and intermediaries to monitor and remove content that could cause harm, even when posted by influential political actors. Analysts note that the outcome of this case could set important precedents in India and beyond, shaping legal and regulatory frameworks for AI-generated media in democratic societies. As technology advances, cases like this one illustrate the urgent need to balance free expression with accountability, ensuring that emerging digital tools are not exploited to mislead citizens or manipulate political discourse. The upcoming hearing will be closely watched by legal experts, policymakers, and technology ethics advocates worldwide.

## Court Upholds Conviction of Maharashtra Minister Over Housing Scheme Fraud

A sessions court in Nashik has upheld the conviction of a senior Maharashtra politician in a decades-old housing fraud case, concluding that multiple pieces of evidence clearly proved deliberate misrepresentation. The ruling carries significant political and legal consequences, including potential imprisonment and disqualification from the state legislature.

The case dates back to the late 1980s and early 1990s, when a government housing scheme reserved quota flats for economically weaker sections (EWS) of society. To qualify, applicants were required to demonstrate limited annual income and lack of property ownership. The politician involved, along with his brother, applied for four such flats in a well-known residential complex in Nashik, claiming eligibility based on poverty and landlessness.

A key piece of evidence was a gun licence application submitted by the politician, which indicated that he employed between 40 and 50 labourers and

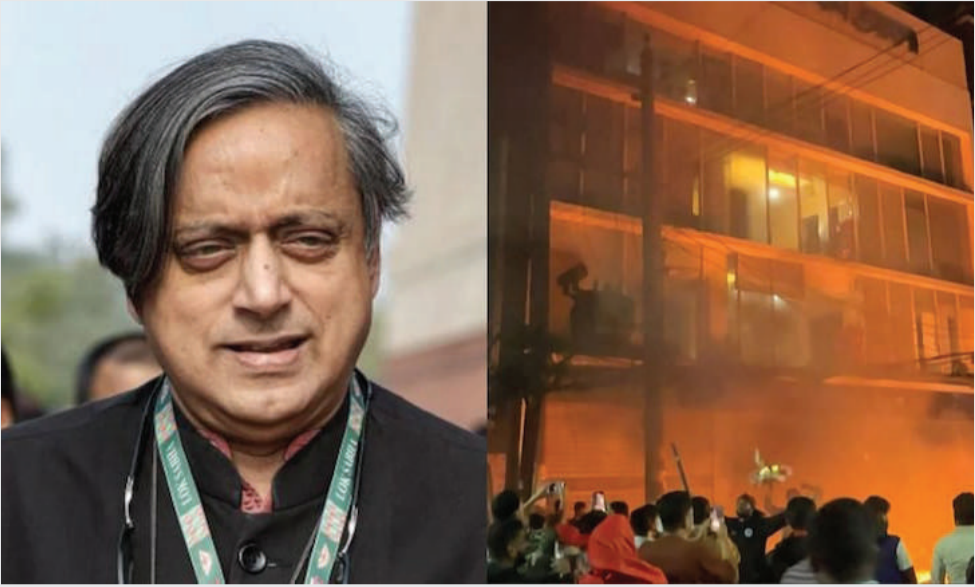


paid wages well above the threshold for EWS eligibility. The court found this contradiction crucial in disproving the claim of economic hardship. Further investigations revealed that the family owned approximately 25 acres of agricultural land and were members of a cooperative sugar factory, generating substantial income from agricultural activities. These findings directly undermined assertions of landlessness and financial deprivation.

The most damning evidence was the set of affidavits and income certificates filed to support the housing applications. The court determined that these documents were not merely erroneous but deliberately falsified to mislead authorities and secure government property meant for genuine beneficiaries. On this basis, the sessions court upheld the original conviction and two-year prison sentence for fraud, forgery, and cheating. The ruling also left

open the possibility of further legal consequences, including enforcement of the sentence and potential disqualification from public office under electoral law, which bars legislators convicted and sentenced to more than two years. The politician has appealed to a higher court seeking relief from the conviction and sentence, and the matter is currently pending. Meanwhile, political fallout continues, with opposition leaders and civic groups calling for accountability and stronger safeguards against misuse of public welfare schemes. The case underscores the long-term implications of historical legal actions on contemporary political careers. It also highlights broader concerns about transparency and integrity in public life, particularly in the administration of welfare programs designed to benefit vulnerable communities. Observers say it serves as a reminder of the need for robust verification processes and vigilant oversight to prevent abuse of government schemes.

## Indian Leader Urges Calm Amid Bangladesh Unrest, Citing Former Prime Minister's Wisdom



A senior Indian parliamentarian has expressed concern over the ongoing violent protests in Bangladesh, calling for peace and stability while invoking the wisdom of a former Indian prime minister. His remarks come amid escalating unrest in Bangladesh following the death of a youth leader, which has sparked widespread demonstrations, clashes with authorities, and attacks on media offices.

The politician, a senior member of India's opposition party and former diplomat, described the intensity of the unrest as deeply concerning. He said that the violence hindered efforts to support ordinary Bangladeshi citizens and complicated diplomatic engagement at a critical time. Drawing on a phrase popularised by the late former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, he emphasised that geography cannot be changed, highlighting that India and Bangladesh are bound by proximity and shared history. In his statement, he urged calm, appealing to both the

Bangladeshi government and citizens to seek peaceful resolutions to the crisis. He stressed that cooperation and dialogue are essential, particularly given the intertwined social, economic, and cultural ties between the two nations. He also noted that India was closely monitoring developments and needed to navigate the situation carefully to protect diplomatic and human interests.

The unrest in Bangladesh was triggered by the shooting and subsequent death of a young political activist and student leader, who had become a prominent voice in recent demonstrations. Following his death, large-scale protests erupted across Dhaka and other major cities. The demonstrations turned violent in several areas, with mobs attacking media offices, blocking roads, and clashing with law enforcement. Some protesters expressed anti-India sentiment, adding a regional dimension to the crisis.

By referencing Vajpayee's famous remark, the Indian leader stressed that shared

geography and historical ties require both nations to maintain cooperation even in times of political tension. He expressed hope that the unrest would subside and that the countries could focus on constructive engagement, dialogue, and strengthening bilateral relations.

Political analysts say the remarks underscore a larger debate in India about balancing concern for democratic values and human rights in neighboring countries with respect for sovereignty and non-interference. The emphasis on geography and shared history reflects India's strategic interest in maintaining stability and positive relations with Bangladesh, particularly as the nation navigates domestic unrest and political upheaval.

Observers note that continued diplomatic attention and cautious engagement could help reduce tensions, while also reinforcing the importance of dialogue, law and order, and respect for human rights as foundations for long-term regional stability.

## Maharashtra Town Shaken After Woman Gang Raped After Mistakenly Entering Hotel Room



A disturbing case of sexual violence has shocked residents of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar in Maharashtra after a woman was gang raped by three men following a mistaken entry into their hotel room. The incident has renewed urgent concerns about women's safety and the prevalence of gender-based violence in India.

According to police reports, the 30-year-old victim, who works at a private hospital, had gone to a hotel near the town's railway station to collect money from a friend. Her friend had booked a room for their meeting, but due to a misunderstanding, she returned and mistakenly knocked on the door of a different room. Unbeknownst to her, three men in that room were drinking alcohol and engaged in a private gathering.

When the woman asked about her friend, the men initially denied knowing him. One of the accused then lured her inside the room, shutting the door from the inside. Once inside, the trio forcibly gave her al-

cohol in an apparent attempt to weaken her resistance. They then assaulted her repeatedly throughout the night.

The assault lasted several hours. In the early morning, the victim managed to break free from their confinement as the men slept and ran out of the room. She immediately reached the nearby police station to report the crime. Shocked by the details of her account and the evidence she provided, officers took swift action.

Police quickly reviewed hotel security footage and began tracking the suspects. Within about three hours, authorities located and arrested the three men believed to be responsible. They have been taken into custody as investigations continue under relevant criminal laws related to sexual assault and related offences.

The names of the accused have been released by law enforcement, and they have been identified as local residents engaged in casual work. Authorities say the case will be thoroughly prosecuted, and victims'

rights and dignity will be prioritised throughout the legal process.

The incident has prompted outrage among local residents and activists, who say it highlights ongoing failures in protecting women from violence. Many have called for stronger systems of accountability, better security in public spaces, and more comprehensive support for survivors of sexual assault.

Community leaders have also urged caution against victim blaming and stressed the importance of compassion and justice for survivors. They noted that this case is not isolated, but part of a broader pattern of violence against women that authorities and society need to address urgently.

The police have appealed to anyone with additional information or video footage to come forward to assist in the investigation. Meanwhile, civil society groups are mobilising to support the victim and to press for broader reforms to improve safety and justice for women across the region.

TikTok Strikes Landmark Deal to Avert US Ban, Reshaping Social Media Future



In a significant development in global tech and regulatory news, TikTok's Chinese parent company, ByteDance, has signed binding agreements with U.S. and international investors to restructure the social media platform's American operations — a move designed to avert a nationwide ban that has loomed over the company for years.

The new deal will see the formation of a U.S.-based joint venture in which American and global investors hold the majority stake, effectively reducing ByteDance's share to under 20% of the U.S. business.

The joint venture, set to be called TikTok USDS Joint Venture LLC, will be led by a consortium of investors including Oracle, Silver Lake, and Abu Dhabi-based MGX. Each will hold roughly 15% of the new entity, while affiliates of existing ByteDance investors will control approximately 30%, and ByteDance will retain a 19.9% minority stake.

The deal, valued at around \$14 billion, is expected to close by January 22, 2026 — just ahead of deadlines imposed by U.S. legislation requiring foreign-controlled apps to divest or face prohibition.

This arrangement comes after years of escalating tension between the world's two largest economies over technology and data security. TikTok — one of the world's most

popular social video platforms with more than 170 million users in the United States — had been targeted under a U.S. law that empowers authorities to ban apps deemed influenced by foreign adversaries unless their ownership meets certain criteria.

Under the new structure, the joint venture will be governed by a majority-American board of directors, with responsibility for overseeing U.S. user data protection, algorithm security, content moderation, and software assurance transferred to this entity. Oracle, in particular, is expected to play a key role in securing and managing U.S. user data through its cloud infrastructure.

U.S. political leaders and tech watchers have offered varied reactions. Supporters view the deal as a pragmatic solution that safeguards national security while preserving consumer access to a global platform. Critics, however, have raised concerns about regulatory influence and the concentration of digital media power within a small group of high-profile investors.

For TikTok's vast creator and advertising ecosystem, the agreement provides continuity and stability, at least in the short term, ensuring the platform remains accessible and operational for Americans while new governance structures take shape.

Bangladesh Erupts in Turmoil Following Death of Youth Leader, Raising Concerns About Stability



Bangladesh is witnessing widespread unrest and violent protests following the death of Sharif Osman Hadi, a prominent youth leader whose shooting has reignited political tensions across the country. The turmoil has engulfed major cities, particularly Dhaka, with demonstrations, attacks on key institutions, and increasing concerns about public safety and democratic stability.

Hadi, 32, was a well-known spokesperson for a youth-driven organisation that played a central role in nationwide protests last year. He was shot in the head by assailants on a motorcycle and critically injured. After initial treatment in a local hospital, he was transferred abroad for advanced medical care, but authorities later confirmed his death.

News of his death triggered immediate and large-scale protests. In Dhaka, crowds gathered at major intersections and neighbourhoods, chanting slogans demanding justice. Some demonstrators called for sweeping political reforms and voiced dissatisfaction with the interim administration's handling of Hadi's killing and the broader political situation.

Violence quickly escalated. Mobs attacked and set fire to the headquarters of two leading national newspapers, halting their operations for the first time in decades. Journalists and staff were forced to evacuate as flames and smoke spread through the buildings, highlighting serious threats to press freedom and media safety.

Beyond media offices, protesters vandalised other symbolic locations, including cultural centres and political sites. Major roads were blocked, and clashes between demonstrators

and law enforcement occurred across multiple districts. Some protest groups also expressed anti-foreign sentiment, reflecting broader regional tensions.

The interim government, led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus since the previous administration stepped down, urged citizens to reject mob violence and maintain peace. Officials condemned acts of arson, intimidation, and property destruction, pledging accountability for perpetrators. Authorities also appealed for calm ahead of Hadi's funeral and national mourning events.

Security forces have been deployed across Dhaka and other affected regions to prevent further unrest. The capital remains on high alert in anticipation of large gatherings for funeral prayers, and citizens have been urged to exercise caution.

Analysts note that the unrest highlights deeper fractures in Bangladesh's political landscape, including partisan rivalries, generational divides, and public frustration over governance and freedom of expression. While the protests were sparked by grief over Hadi's death, they have tapped into broader dissatisfaction with the pace of democratic reforms and political transparency.

International observers are closely monitoring the situation, warning that continued violence could further destabilise the nation and impact regional relations. For Bangladesh, the coming days will be crucial in determining whether momentum shifts toward peaceful dialogue or escalates into a broader crisis, with implications for governance, civil rights, and public safety.

Heavy Rains and Flooding Sweep Desert Nation of UAE, Highlighting Climate Vulnerabilities



The United Arab Emirates (UAE), a country better known for its sun baked deserts and towering skylines, has been hit by unusually heavy rainfall and flooding, disrupting daily life, halting flights and underscoring growing concerns about extreme weather in arid regions.

In recent days, sudden and intense downpours drenched major urban centres including Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah, producing flash floods that overwhelmed roads, inundated low lying areas and forced authorities to issue safety warnings. Transportation was severely affected as dozens of flights were cancelled or delayed and motorists struggled through submerged streets. In some areas, floodwaters reached levels that made normal travel impossible, prompting officials to urge residents to stay indoors unless travel was essential.

While rainfall is not unheard of in the winter months across the Gulf region, the volume and intensity of the recent showers have been exceptional — far beyond the typical light drizzles this region usually receives. Built for dry conditions, much of the nation's infrastructure, including drainage systems and urban planning, was not designed to accommodate sudden torrents of rain, making even moderate storms capable of causing significant flooding and disruption.

Experts point to a combination of atmospheric conditions that brought moisture into the desert skies, creating powerful thunderstorm systems. These systems developed when warm, moist air from surrounding bodies of water met cooler air aloft, triggering condensation and the rapid formation of storm clouds. In recent years, such events have become more frequent and intense, a trend climate scientists link to broader patterns of global warming and climate change. Rising temperatures increase evaporation and the amount of moisture in the air, which can fuel heavier rainfall when storms do form.

This phenomenon is not entirely new for the region but has escalated in severity. A severe storm in April 2024 brought the heaviest rainfall recorded in decades, soaking desert cities with amounts that would normally fall over many months in just a few hours. That event overwhelmed drainage networks, flooded highways and even halted operations at key transportation hubs, highlighting the vulnerability of desert metropolises to anomalous weather.

The recent downpours have also produced unusual scenes in parts of the UAE's mountainous eastern regions, where heavy rain caused rockfalls and temporary waterfalls along slopes rarely touched by water. These dramatic effects have provided stark visuals of how sudden rainfall can transform landscapes that are overwhelmingly arid for most of the year.

Authorities have responded with a range of emergency measures, including weather alerts, traffic advisories and deployment of specialised response teams to assist in flood prone areas. Residents and visitors have been urged to monitor conditions closely and avoid travel through inundated zones.

The events have reignited discussion about the need for climate resilient infrastructure in rapidly growing cities. Urban planners and engineers are increasingly focused on redesigning drainage systems, incorporating flood management strategies and enhancing early warning systems to better cope with irregular but powerful weather events.

For a nation whose development has long emphasised rapid growth and modernisation, the recent rains offer a sober reminder that even desert landscapes are not immune to the impacts of a changing climate — and that adaptation may be as critical as progress.

Bangladesh Government Issues Apology to Journalists Following Attacks on Media Offices



The government of Bangladesh has formally apologised to journalists and media organisations after a series of violent attacks on news offices highlighted growing concerns about press freedom and political tensions in the country. The rare public apology came as authorities faced criticism for their delayed response during incidents in which journalists and media infrastructure were targeted.

In the past week, unrest triggered by the death of a prominent activist escalated into widespread protests and mob violence, during which crowds stormed and set fire to the offices of two of the nation's leading newspapers. Flames and smoke engulfed parts of the buildings, forcing journalists to take shelter and, in some cases, be evacuated by security personnel. Printing presses were brought to a halt, marking an unprecedented disruption to the publication of the affected newspapers.

Senior government officials expressed deep regret over the trauma and danger faced by journalists and media staff. Officials described the attacks as unacceptable and acknowledged that delays in providing protection constituted a failure of the state's responsibility. The apology emphasised that safeguarding freedom of expression and the safety of media workers must remain a top priority.

Authorities also condemned the broader climate of mob violence that has spread across parts of the capital, urging citizens to reject chaos and maintain law and order. Government representatives reaffirmed that attacks on journalists undermine democratic values and pledged full investigations and swift justice for those responsible for the destruction of property and threats to personal safety.

The apology has drawn mixed reactions from journalists and advocacy groups. Many welcomed the acknowledgement of their plight but stressed that words must be accompanied by concrete action to prevent future violence. Press freedom advocates point to a concerning trend in recent years, where intimidation, legal pressure, and physical assaults against reporters have increased, often without accountability. They argue that systemic reforms are necessary to ensure journalists can perform their work without fear of retribution.

Observers note that the unrest is rooted in ongoing political tensions and societal divisions, with protests becoming increasingly volatile. The attacks on media offices have raised alarms both domestically and internationally, drawing attention to the vulnerability of journalists operating in politically charged environments.

Government leaders have emphasised that protecting journalists is essential to national stability, the rule of law, and public trust in information. While the apology signals recognition of the problem, questions remain about whether it will lead to lasting change in the treatment of journalists and media organisations in Bangladesh.

The events serve as a stark reminder of the challenges faced by press institutions in regions experiencing political instability. Analysts suggest that long-term solutions will require stronger legal safeguards, more responsive law enforcement, and continued advocacy for the rights of journalists. Until such measures are implemented, media professionals in Bangladesh remain at risk during periods of civil unrest, making the protection of their safety and independence a critical issue for both national and international observers.

# Indian Markets Poised for Tepid Start as Global Risks Weigh on Sentiment

Mumbai — Indian equity markets were set for a muted start on Thursday, with the GIFT Nifty — an early indicator of domestic market direction — signalling a largely flat opening amid weak global cues. The subdued outlook comes as Asian and U.S. markets struggled in recent sessions, tempering investor risk appetite and prompting caution among domestic participants ahead of key economic data and corporate earnings.

At pre market levels, the GIFT Nifty was trading modestly lower, indicating a flat to slightly negative opening for benchmark indices such as the Nifty 50 and BSE Sensex. Market participants cited a sharp sell off in U.S. technology stocks overnight and mixed Asian market performance as the primary drivers of the subdued risk sentiment.

Global equities have recently grappled with profit taking after a pe-



riod of strong gains, while rising long term bond yields have weighed on valuations in rate sensitive sectors. Asian markets closed mixed, with some indexes marginally positive but unable to generate strong upside momentum — a trend that has filtered through to Indian market expectations.

Domestic investor interest remained cautious, with both foreign

institutional investors (FIIs) and domestic institutions tracking global flows closely. Continued volatility in currency markets and crude oil prices has added to the risk environment, with the rupee's performance and energy price shifts influencing trading strategies.

Despite the temperate outlook at the open, analysts emphasise that underlying fundamentals

remain constructive for selective sectors. Banking and financial stocks, in particular, showed relative resilience in early trade, buoyed by steady credit growth and improving asset quality trends. Meanwhile, defensive sectors such as consumer staples and IT have attracted interest on expectations of stable earnings amid macroeconomic uncertainties.

Broader market

breadth was mixed, with a larger number of stocks declining than advancing in early sessions. Mid cap and small cap segments were under pressure as traders remained wary of potential market corrections following recent volatility.

Looking ahead, traders will monitor key domestic triggers including quarterly corporate results, central bank guidance on interest rates,

and macroeconomic data releases for fresh direction. On the global front, U.S. Federal Reserve commentary and economic indicators remain in focus, as they have the potential to reshape investor sentiment and capital flows into emerging markets such as India.

*This report reflects market developments as of the latest trading sessions and investor indications at the time of publication.*

## India Sees Highest Foreign Inflows in Eight Months as Global Risk Appetite Improves



Mumbai — India has recorded a significant rise in foreign capital inflows, marking the strongest level in eight months, according to recent data from Elara Capital. The surge comes amid improving global risk appetite, as investors increase allocations to equities, emerging markets, and commodities following a period of cautious sentiment.

In the most recent week, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) infused around \$650 million into Indian assets, representing the highest weekly inflows since early 2025. This marked reversal of several weeks of muted foreign participation highlights renewed confidence among global investors in India's macroeconomic stability and market prospects. Analysts attribute the inflows to a combination of stabilising markets and an improved risk return outlook for emerging economies.

The return of foreign capital is considered a positive signal for Indian financial markets, especially after months of volatility caused by global uncertainties, including shifts in monetary policies, trade tensions, and geopolitical developments. Emerging markets such as India have benefited as global investors rotate funds into growth-oriented assets, seeking higher returns relative to developed markets where yields have remained relatively low.

Despite this surge, experts caution that foreign participation remains sensitive to global developments such as U.S. interest rate policies, inflation trends, and overall economic conditions in major

economies. Nevertheless, India's strong economic fundamentals—including steady GDP growth, resilient corporate earnings, and ongoing structural reforms—continue to make the country an attractive destination for international capital.

Domestic equity markets responded positively to the increased foreign inflows, with higher trading volumes and improved market sentiment. Large-cap and cyclical stocks were among the key beneficiaries, although some sectors continued to experience volatility. Investors are also keeping an eye on upcoming corporate earnings and macroeconomic data, which could further shape capital flows and market valuations.

Looking ahead, sustained foreign investment may depend on India's comparative growth prospects and the global monetary policy environment. With inflation moderating and economic growth projections remaining robust, India is well-positioned to continue attracting foreign capital if global risk sentiment remains supportive. Analysts, however, stress the importance of monitoring external triggers such as geopolitical tensions, commodity price movements, and changes in investor risk appetite, which could impact future inflows.

The latest trends indicate that India is regaining its position as a preferred destination for foreign investors, reflecting confidence in the country's growth trajectory and financial stability, even amid a complex global investment landscape.

## Positive Signals for Indian IT Sector After Accenture's Strong Quarterly Results

Mumbai — India's information technology (IT) sector received a boost following a strong quarterly performance by global IT services leader Accenture, providing encouraging signals for domestic IT companies as they enter the new earnings season. Accenture's results point to steady demand and broad client interest in digital transformation, particularly in managed services and financial services segments.

The company reported revenue growth near the higher end of its guidance for the quarter ending November 2025, with a significant rise in order bookings. Accenture saw approximately a 10 percent increase in new orders, driven primarily by managed services — an area where Indian IT firms such as Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Infosys, and HCL Technologies have substantial expertise. The strong performance highlights continued global corporate investment in technology modernization and long-term outsourcing contracts.

Analysts noted that the financial services vertical — a key revenue contributor for both Accenture and Indian IT companies — remained resilient, supporting optimism about near-term demand. The increase in bookings reflects client preference for large-scale digital transformation projects that often translate into multi-year engagements, providing a steady pipeline of work for service providers. With Indian IT firms heavily exposed to similar client segments, the positive results at Accenture have lifted sentiment across the sector.

The encouraging outlook

comes amid broader market focus on artificial intelligence (AI) adoption and cloud transformation services. While some industry watchers have expressed concerns about potential deflationary effects of AI on traditional service revenue, Accenture highlighted growing integration of advanced AI into client projects. This suggests opportunities for deeper technology-led services rather than a decline in demand, further boosting confidence in India's IT export prospects.

Indian IT stocks responded favorably to the news, with benchmark IT indices showing gains as investors weighed sector prospects. Companies such as TCS, Infosys, and HCL Tech saw increased trading interest, with Accenture's performance serving as a proxy for global demand trends that often shape the outlook for Indian IT exports.

Despite the positive momentum, analysts urge caution, pointing out that discretionary spending remains relatively stable and execution challenges persist in parts of the sector. The upcoming quarterly results of Indian IT companies will be closely watched to determine how much of Accenture's strong performance translates into sustained growth for local providers.

Overall, Accenture's strong quarterly performance provides timely positive signals for the Indian IT services industry, reinforcing expectations of stable demand and highlighting emerging opportunities as global corporations continue to advance their digital transformation initiatives.

# Indian Rupee Faces Pressure After RBI Rate Cut, But Imported Inflation Expected to Remain Contained



Mumbai — The Indian rupee came under renewed depreciation pressure following the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) recent monetary policy decisions. Ram Singh, external member of the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), highlighted that

while the rate cut may exert some weakness on the currency, the risk of imported inflation is likely to remain contained due to favorable global price conditions.

Singh pointed out that the local currency's real effective exchange rate has declined in recent

months, influenced partly by outflows from foreign portfolio investors amid global financial uncertainties. Reduced demand for Indian equities, along with volatility in global markets, has contributed to the downward pressure on the rupee. Despite these chal-

lenges, India's macroeconomic fundamentals remain robust, supported by strong foreign exchange reserves, a manageable fiscal deficit, and healthy corporate and banking balance sheets, which should help stabilize the currency.

The RBI recently reduced the repo rate by 25 basis points to 5.25 percent, continuing its monetary easing cycle in 2025. The central bank cited a benign inflation outlook and resilient economic growth as key reasons for the cut, allowing borrowing costs to ease and support domestic demand. Subdued inflation readings provided the MPC room to reduce rates without triggering additional price pressures.

Singh emphasized that even with short-term currency pres-

sures, imported inflation — which could result from a weaker rupee making foreign goods more expensive — is expected to be limited. He attributed this to lower global oil and commodity prices, which reduce the cost of imports and cushion potential inflationary impacts on the domestic economy. This suggests that a further depreciation of the rupee may not significantly affect consumer prices in India.

Market analysts note that the rupee has experienced volatility due to global trade dynamics and capital flow movements. The RBI has actively intervened in currency markets, including through spot and forward operations, to limit excessive fluctuations and provide stability. However, traders

remain cautious, monitoring international commodity prices and geopolitical developments that could influence currency trends.

Looking ahead, the RBI is expected to balance its growth-supportive monetary stance with careful monitoring of exchange rate developments. While its primary focus remains on sustaining economic growth, the central bank continues to recognize the importance of managing external sector risks. With inflation projected to remain within target ranges, policy-makers appear confident that imported inflation pressures will remain subdued, even amid currency volatility.

*This report reflects the latest RBI MPC insights and expert analysis on the rupee and inflation outlook.*

# RBI Approves Paytm Subsidiary as Payment Aggregator for Offline and Cross-Border Transactions

Mumbai — The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has granted Paytm Payments Services Limited (PPSL), a wholly owned subsidiary of Paytm, regulatory approval to operate as a payment aggregator for offline and cross-border transactions. This authorisation expands PPSL's operational scope beyond its existing licence for online payment aggregation, enabling the company to serve a broader range of merchants and payment scenarios.

The approval, issued on December 17, 2025, allows PPSL to offer payment aggregation services at physical points of sale as well as handle international payment flows. This means merchants can now accept digital payments from customers both in-store and for cross-border transactions, consolidating multiple payment channels under one platform. The move is a significant step in strengthening Paytm's payments ecosystem and enhancing its com-

petitiveness in the domestic and global markets.

This expanded licence follows RBI's earlier approval for PPSL to operate as an online payment aggregator in late November 2025, under the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007. With the additional offline and cross-border authorisations, PPSL can provide end-to-end payment solutions to merchants of all sizes, from small and medium enterprises to large businesses, aligning with the growing demand for seamless digital payments across India.

Industry analysts view the regulatory clearance as a boost for Paytm's business strategy, particularly as competition intensifies in India's fintech sector. By securing a full suite of payment aggregator licences, PPSL is positioned to compete more effectively with other fintech players that already operate across both online and offline channels. For merchants, the approval

enables the consolidation of multiple payment acceptance solutions under a single platform, simplifying reconciliation processes and reducing reliance on multiple service providers.

Paytm initially applied for the payment aggregator licence in late 2020, but the appli-

cation faced regulatory scrutiny and was rejected in 2022 due to compliance requirements. After addressing the issues and resubmitting, PPSL has now secured the broader authorisations, marking a notable regulatory milestone.

The expanded licence is expected to help Pay-

tm deepen its presence in India's merchant payments market, particularly among small and medium enterprises that rely on offline solutions. It also strengthens the company's ability to facilitate cross-border commercial transactions, integrating Indian merchants more closely

with global trade.

Overall, the RBI's approval reinforces Paytm's role in advancing India's digital payment infrastructure and positions PPSL as a key player in enabling both domestic and international payment solutions for merchants across the country.



# Redmi Note 15 5G: The Mid-Range Phone That Refuses to Act “Mid”

Every year, a smartphone arrives with a familiar mission: offer more than expected and charge less than feared. The upcoming Redmi Note 15 5G appears ready to take on that role with confidence, if early leaks are anything to go by. In a market crowded with capable phones, this one seems determined to stand out by quietly overdelivering.

Let's start with the detail everyone secretly checks first — the price. The Redmi Note 15 5G is tipped to land comfortably under the 25,000 mark in India, with multiple storage options designed to suit both cautious buyers and digital hoarders. For a phone in this range, the expected combination of performance and polish feels almost rebellious.

The display is shaping up to be one of its strongest talking points. A large curved AMOLED screen with a smooth 120Hz refresh rate suggests scrolling will feel buttery and animations will glide rather than stutter. Brightness levels are said to be strong enough to handle harsh daylight, meaning the phone won't flinch when taken outdoors — a small but meaningful victory in everyday use.

Under the hood, the Redmi Note 15 5G is expected to run on a modern Snapdragon chipset, focusing less on raw numbers and more on long-term smoothness. The promise here isn't gaming bragging rights, but re-

liable performance that doesn't fade after a year. It's the kind of power that quietly earns trust rather than demanding attention.

Battery life, too, seems designed with patience in mind. A large battery paired with fast charging support could mean fewer anxious glances at the battery icon and shorter pit stops near power sockets. It's the type of feature that doesn't excite at launch but becomes invaluable over time.

Camera expectations are equally ambitious. A high-resolution primary sensor with stabilisation hints at sharper photos and steadier videos, even in less-than-perfect conditions. While it may not replace a flagship camera, it aims to make everyday photography easier — and that's where most phones actually live or die.

Design-wise, the Redmi Note 15 5G appears to be leaning toward a cleaner, more premium look, complete with durability features that suggest it can survive accidental splashes and dusty commutes. It's a phone built for real life, not just show-room shelves.

If these leaks turn out to be accurate, the Redmi Note 15 5G won't just be another addition to the lineup. It could be a reminder that “mid-range” no longer means middle-of-the-road — and that sometimes, the smartest phones are the ones that don't try too hard to impress.



## Vivo X200T: The Quiet Contender That May Redefine ‘Premium Enough’



In the fast-moving world of smartphones, not every device needs to scream for attention. Some arrive quietly, confident in what they bring to the table. The rumoured Vivo X200T seems to belong firmly in that second category — a phone that doesn't chase headlines but may end up winning hearts.

Early leaks suggest Vivo is aiming for balance rather than excess. At the core of the X200T is a powerful MediaTek chipset designed to handle everything from heavy multitasking to long gaming sessions without turning your phone into a pocket heater. It's the kind of performance that doesn't beg for benchmarks but proves itself over time.

Vivo's design language is expected to lean toward clean and refined, borrowing cues from its premium lineup. One interesting detail that's raising eyebrows is the possible inclusion of an ultrasonic in-display fingerprint sensor — a feature usually reserved for flagship models. If true, it signals Vivo's intention to blur the line between “upper mid-range” and full premium.

Photography, a long-standing strength for Vivo, may once again take center stage. The X200T is tipped to feature a triple-camera setup with high-resolution sensors across the board. Rather than chasing a single oversized camera number, the focus appears to be ver-

satility — dependable main shots, detailed portraits, and consistent low-light performance. It's a camera system designed for real-life moments, not just spec-sheet battles.

Charging is another area where the X200T could quietly impress. With fast wired charging and support for wireless charging also expected, the phone may cater to users who value convenience as much as raw speed. Plug it in briefly, and you're likely good to go — a small luxury that becomes addictive very quickly.

What really makes the X200T interesting, though, is the long-term vision being hinted at. Extended software support is said to be part of the plan, meaning the phone could stay relevant well beyond its launch year. In an age of frequent upgrades and short attention spans, that kind of longevity feels refreshingly responsible.

If the pricing lands where many expect, the Vivo X200T could find itself in a sweet spot — offering premium features without the premium price tag. It may not chase extremes, but it doesn't need to. Sometimes, the smartest phones are the ones that simply get everything right.

If the rumors hold true, the Vivo X200T won't just be another option on the shelf. It could be the phone that quietly convinces users they don't need to spend more to get exactly what they want.

# When Artificial Intelligence Learns to Say “Slow Down”: Inside the New Teen-Safe Rules of Chabot’s

Artificial Intelligence has always been praised for knowing everything. But now, it's being taught something far more human — restraint. In a surprising shift, AI systems are no longer racing to answer every question with encyclopedic enthusiasm, especially when the user might be a teenager. Instead, they're being trained to pause, reflect, and sometimes gently say, “Let's think about this.”

This change marks a quiet but significant evolution in how chatbots behave. For years, AI was built on a simple promise: be as helpful as possible. Today, that promise comes with an asterisk — helpful, but not harmful. When teens interact with AI, the technology is now expected to act less like a supercharged search engine and more like a responsible adult in the room.

So what's different? For starters, AI is being



guided to recognize that teenagers are still figuring things out — emotionally, socially, and mentally. Conversations involving sensitive topics such as mental health, relationships, risky behavior, or identity are now handled with extra care. Instead

of offering definitive advice or encouraging deep dependence, the chatbot nudges teens toward trusted adults, friends, or offline support systems.

This doesn't mean AI has turned boring or preachy. Rather, it's learning context. If a

teenager asks a heavy question, the response is designed to be calm, supportive, and grounded — without pretending to replace parents, teachers, or counselors. The message is subtle but firm: AI can talk, but real life matters more.

Behind this shift lies a growing realization across the tech world — digital tools are no longer neutral. What they say, how they say it, and who they say it to can have real-world consequences. Teenagers, who already live between pressure and

possibility, don't need an algorithm pushing them toward extremes or validating every impulsive thought.

Interestingly, AI may now assume a user is a minor if age isn't clear, choosing caution over confidence. It's a “better safe than sorry” philosophy in a space that once celebrated limitless access.

Of course, not everyone is thrilled. Some worry this is censorship dressed up as care. Others see it as overdue responsibility. Teenagers themselves may roll their eyes — until they realize this AI won't egg them on during late-night emotional spirals or turn curiosity into chaos.

In the end, AI growing up alongside its users might be a good thing. Because intelligence without empathy is just data. And in a world where machines talk back, learning when not to speak might be the smartest upgrade yet.

# This Holiday Season, Your PS5 Isn’t Asking for a Break — It’s Asking for Accessories

Just when wallets were hoping for mercy after a long year, Sony has pressed the “Holiday Sale” button — and gamers across India felt the controller vibrate. The year-end PlayStation sale has arrived like an unexpected power-up, promising discounts that make it very hard to stick to sensible spending plans.

Before expectations run wild, let's clear the air: the PS5 console itself remains untouched, standing tall and pricey like a final boss. But everything around it — the gear that makes gaming smoother, louder, more immersive, and slightly more addictive — is suddenly within reach.

The biggest winners this festive season are controllers. The DualSense wireless controller, known for turning simple button presses into dramatic emotional experiences, is now available at a noticeably reduced price. Whether you want a spare for multiplayer chaos or a new color just because it looks cool, Sony seems to be encouraging “one more con-



troller” thinking.

Then there's virtual reality — the kind that makes your living room disappear and your family wonder why you're waving your arms at nothing. The PlayStation VR2 headset is seeing one of its most generous price drops yet, making immersive gaming feel less like a luxury experiment and more like a holiday indulgence.

Suddenly, stepping into virtual worlds doesn't feel like stepping into debt.

Audio gear is also getting festive treatment. Sony's gaming headsets and earbuds are trimmed down in price, perfect for players who want to hear enemy footsteps clearly while pretending they're not ignoring everyone else in the house. And for gamers who like to

wander, the PlayStation Portal remote player joins the party, letting gameplay travel from the TV to wherever the snacks are.

Of course, no sale is complete without games — and this one delivers. Popular PS5 titles, including action blockbusters and racing favorites, are discounted just enough to make “I'll buy it later” sound irresponsible.

Libraries are about to grow, backlogs are about to expand, and New Year resolutions about finishing old games are already in trouble.

The sale runs for a limited time, which is exactly how temptation likes it. It whispers things like, “You earned this,” and “It's technically a deal,” while quietly adding items to your cart.

## Xiaomi’s Rumoured 17 Ultra: A Phone That May Finally End the Great Battery



There's a familiar daily ritual most smartphone users know too well: checking the battery percentage like it's a life-support system. Xiaomi, it seems, wants to break that habit. Leaks surrounding the upcoming Xi-

aomi 17 Ultra suggest the company is preparing a phone that doesn't just survive the day — it dares the day to outlast it.

At the heart of the excitement is a rumoured massive battery, reportedly larger

than anything Xiaomi has packed into its Ultra lineup before. If the whispers are true, this phone could comfortably power through endless scrolling, binge-watching marathons, video calls, gaming sessions, and still

have enough juice left to mock your charger from across the room. Battery anxiety, meet your potential nemesis.

But Xiaomi isn't stopping at endurance. Fast charging — the modern miracle that turns panic into patience — is expected to be a key feature once again. With ultra-fast wired charging tipped to be on board, the 17 Ultra could refill its giant battery in the time it takes to make a cup of coffee and question your life choices. Wireless charging support is also expected, ensuring convenience remains part of the package.

Of course, power is nothing without personality, and the 17 Ultra seems ready to dress the part. Leaked details hint at multiple colour options, mixing safe classics with bolder, more expressive shades. It's Xiaomi quietly acknowledging that smartphones aren't just tools anymore — they're accessories, statements, and sometimes even mood indicators.

Beyond battery and colours, expectations are sky-high for what lies under the hood. Xiaomi's Ultra models are known for pushing premium performance, and

this one is expected to continue that tradition. Whether it's photography, processing power, or display quality, fans are already bracing for a spec sheet that reads more like a wishlist than a compromise.

The timing of the expected China launch places the 17 Ultra at an interesting crossroads — right when consumers are rethinking upgrades and making promises to themselves about the “perfect next phone.” Xiaomi seems eager to tempt them with something bold rather than incremental.

Of course, until the company makes things official, all of this remains in the realm of leaks and educated guesses. But Xiaomi has a track record of turning ambitious rumours into very real products — often at prices that make competitors nervous.

If even half of what's being whispered turns out to be true, the Xiaomi 17 Ultra may not just be another flagship release. It could be a quiet rebellion against chargers, power banks, and that sinking feeling when your phone hits 5 percent at the worst possible moment.

And honestly, that alone feels pretty Ultra.

# Sri Lanka Cricket Makes Bold Leadership Change Ahead of T20 World Cup

In a significant late season decision, Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) has relieved Charith Asalanka of the captaincy and appointed veteran all rounder Dasun Shanaka as the new leader of the national team ahead of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026. The announcement comes as Sri Lanka prepares for the global tournament, which it will co host with India starting February 7, 2026.

The move to replace Asalanka, who had been leading the team in white ball formats, marks a strategic shift in Sri Lanka's campaign planning. According to SLC's chairman of selectors, Pramodaya Wickramasingha,

Asalanka's recent dip in form with the bat and the need for experienced leadership in high-pressure T20 matches were key factors behind the decision.

"Shanaka's role will be as an all-rounder and a captain. He has led the side in past tournaments and brings crucial experience in the shortest format," Wickramasingha explained. He also noted that Asalanka remains part of the team's long-term plans, indicating that the change is not a complete dismissal but a tactical decision to strengthen leadership.

The timing of the change has attracted attention, coming shortly after Asalanka left Sri Lanka's white-ball tour



of Pakistan early due to security concerns following a tragic incident in Islamabad. While selectors have emphasized that the decision is performance-based, his absence from that tour likely contributed to the reassessment of leadership.

Shanaka, 35, brings a wealth of captaincy experience, having previously led Sri Lanka in three T20 World Cups and guided the team to victories in several bilateral series. His all-round skills, both with bat and ball, make him an ideal choice for the demands of T20 cricket, where quick decision-making and versatility are essential.

Sri Lanka has been drawn in a competitive

group alongside Australia, Ireland, Zimbabwe, and Oman, setting the stage for a challenging campaign as they aim to advance deep into the tournament on home soil.

Selectors have retained Asalanka in the squad as a specialist batter, hoping that relieving him of captaincy will help him regain form in time for critical matches later in the season, including home series against Pakistan and England.

As cricket fans worldwide look ahead to the T20 World Cup, Sri Lanka's leadership shake-up underscores the importance of balancing experience, performance, and strategy to compete at the highest level.

## Rohit Sharma and Yashasvi Jaiswal to Miss Early Vijay Hazare Trophy Matches – Mumbai Opts for Young Talent

In a notable development ahead of the Vijay Hazare Trophy domestic one-day tournament, Indian cricket stars Rohit Sharma and Yashasvi Jaiswal will not feature for Mumbai in the first two group-stage matches. Mumbai's chief selector, Sanjay Patil, confirmed the move, stating that the decision was made to provide opportunities for promising young players in the prestigious 50-over competition, which begins on December 24, 2025.

Rohit Sharma, one of India's most accomplished captains, will sit out Mumbai's opening games against Sikkim and Uttarakhand. Alongside him, Jaiswal and other Indian internationals such as Suryakumar Yadav, Ajinkya Rahane, and Shivam Dube will also be absent from the initial lineup. The squad for the early rounds will feature a mix of young domestic talent, giving them a chance to shine on a national stage.

Patil explained that the move is primarily aimed at bleeding young cricketers and strengthening Mum-



bai's domestic cricket depth. "We are experimenting with youngsters," he said, emphasizing that senior stars will be included later in the tournament when available.

Jaiswal's absence is also influenced by a recent stomach-related illness, which caused him to lose weight over a couple of days. Medical advice suggested rest, making his participation in the initial matches uncertain.

While Rohit Sharma's omission may appear surprising, factors such as India's busy international schedule and workload management played a role in the decision. Mumbai's team management has indicated that Indian internationals not currently on national duty will join the squad once logistics permit.

In the absence of Sharma and Jaiswal, the team is expected to be led by experienced domestic players, with young batsmen and all-rounders getting a chance to showcase their abilities. The move has drawn mixed reactions from fans and cricket experts alike — some welcome the chance for fresh talent, while others believe the tournament loses some star power in its early stages.

The Vijay Hazare Trophy remains a crucial platform for domestic cricketers to prove themselves and stake claims for higher honors. Mumbai's selection strategy highlights the delicate balance Indian cricket teams are trying to maintain between experienced stars and the next generation of talent.

## India Tackles Doping Crisis and Football League Uncertainty: Sports Ministry Offers Reassurance

India's sports ecosystem has come under scrutiny following recent international anti-doping reports and ongoing uncertainty surrounding the country's domestic football competitions. On Friday, officials from the Sports Ministry addressed both issues, offering cautious optimism about progress in tackling doping violations and assuring that the Indian Super League (ISL) will proceed despite administrative challenges.

According to the latest figures, over 7,000 anti-doping tests were conducted in 2024, a significant increase over previous years. Of these, 260 tests returned positive results, giving India the highest positivity rate among countries that conducted more than 5,000 tests. This marks the third consecutive year that India has topped the global list of adverse analytical findings, a record that could potentially affect its ambitions to host the 2036 Olympic Games.

Despite these concerning statistics, ministry officials highlighted signs of improvement. The overall positivity rate dipped slightly from



3.8 per cent in 2023 to 3.6 per cent in 2024, even as the total number of tests increased. Early figures for 2025 suggest further progress, with the current positivity rate reportedly just above one per cent. Authorities attribute this improvement to enhanced awareness campaigns and monitoring, including measures to educate athletes about inadvertent violations, such as taking banned substances unknowingly through medication. Initiatives

like the "Know Your Medicine" program aim to help athletes avoid prohibited substances.

On the football front, the ministry acknowledged challenges in the domestic league system, especially the ISL, after the national federation faced difficulty securing a commercial partner following the expiration of its previous long-term deal. This situation has left the 2025-26 season in uncertainty, raising concerns among clubs, players, and fans.

Sports officials are actively mediating between the All India Football Federation (AIFF), ISL clubs, I-League stakeholders, and potential commercial partners. Club representatives have proposed a club-owned league model while keeping the federation as the sport's regulator. Despite ongoing negotiations, the ministry reassured that the league will go ahead and that structural issues will be resolved to ensure uninterrupted

domestic football.

The ministry also indicated that the National Sports Awards are expected to be announced soon, celebrating athletic achievements amid these broader policy efforts.

As India works to improve its doping record and stabilise domestic leagues, these steps are seen as crucial for strengthening the national sports landscape and enhancing the country's credibility on the international stage.

# India to Announce T20 World Cup and New Zealand Series Squads on December 20

Indian cricket fans are eagerly awaiting a major selection announcement as the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) prepares to unveil the national squad for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 and the upcoming T20I series against New Zealand. The announcements are scheduled for Saturday, December 20 at the BCCI headquarters in Mumbai, where the Senior Men's Selection Committee will finalise the teams.

The selection meeting, chaired by Ajit Agarkar, will be followed by a press conference attended by newly appointed T20 captain Suryakumar Yadav. With less than two months remaining before the T20 World Cup — which India will co host with Sri Lanka in early February 2026 — the timing of the announcement is crucial for shaping India's title defence campaign.

India enters the World Cup as the defending champions, following their thrilling triumph in the 2024 edition. The selection committee is expected to balance experience with current form while picking the 15 member squad, ensuring the team is well-equipped to face both familiar rivals and emerging threats in home conditions.

A key aspect of the announcement will be the squad for the five match T20I series against New Zealand, scheduled to begin in January 2026. This series will serve as India's final competitive preparation ahead of the World Cup, providing vital match practice and an opportunity for fringe players to stake their claim. The selectors are widely expected to keep the World Cup and New Zealand series squads closely aligned, with adjustments



only for fitness or tactical reasons.

Selection debates are likely to focus on leadership, batting combinations, and depth in both spin and pace bowling. Suryakumar Yadav is anticipated to lead

the side, with Shubman Gill expected to play a key role if fit. Other strong contenders include standout performers such as Abhishek Sharma and Tilak Varma, while all-rounders like Hardik Pan-

dya, Axar Patel, and Washington Sundar are under consideration to maintain team balance. With the Asia Cup and bilateral series shaping squad dynamics throughout the year, the December 20 announce-

ment is one of the most anticipated moments on India's cricket calendar. Fans and experts alike will be watching closely as the Men in Blue prepare to defend their T20 World Cup crown on home soil.

# Karunada Chakravarthy Shiva Rajkumar, Upendra, and Raj B Shetty’s “45: The Movie” Trailer Creates a Storm

Kannada cinema enthusiasts have every reason to rejoice as the theatrical trailer of 45: The Movie has finally dropped, promising a cinematic spectacle like no other. The film marks the directorial debut of popular music director Arjun Janya and brings together three of the industry’s most formidable talents—Karunada Chakravarthy, Shiva Rajkumar, Real Star Upendra, and the versatile Raj B Shetty—in what is being described as a powerhouse ensemble. Produced by Mrs. Uma Ramesh Reddy and M Ramesh Reddy under the Suraj Productions banner, the film aims to deliver scale, substance, and star power in equal

measure. The trailer immediately captures attention with its haunting concept: a date of birth, a date of death, and the fleeting stretch in between. This stark imagery forms the philosophical backbone of the story, suggesting that life is more than just existence—it is about accountability, choices, and moral reckoning that transcends death itself. The film’s lead trio brings distinct energies to this framework. Upendra’s deep, resonant voiceover adds philosophical depth, framing the narrative as a meditation on cause and consequence. Raj B Shetty portrays the grounded, vulnerable everyman,



caught in forces larger than himself. Shiva Rajkumar surprises viewers with a striking visual—a red Bharatanatyam costume—hinting at themes of duality and transformation, adding an unexpected twist to his on-screen persona. Visually, the film impresses with Satya Hegde’s captivating cinematography, while Arjun Janya’s pulsating score heightens the drama and tension. High-octane action sequences, choreographed by stunt masters Dr. K. Ravi Verma, Jolly Bastian, and Different Dany Chetan D’Souza, promise adrenaline-pumping thrills. The crisp dialogues by Anil Kumar and seamless editing by K.M. Prakash

ensure the narrative flows with intensity and clarity. The musical score is further enriched by playback singers Roll Rida and Vinayak, with lyrics penned by Roll Rida himself. The trailer has set expectations sky-high, and with a grand release scheduled in five languages on January 1st, 45: The Movie is shaping up to be one of the most talked-about releases of the New Year. Fans are eagerly speculating about the film’s intriguing storyline, the powerful performances of its star cast, and its unique blend of philosophy, action, and drama, making it a must-watch cinematic event.

## “Alluda Majaka” Web Series Teaser Released by Director Veer Shankar

Anita Creative Works proudly presents the much-anticipated web series Alluda Majaka, produced under the Suresh Film Factory banner. The teaser, featuring KS Kumar and Nainika Anasuya in the lead roles, was officially released by acclaimed director Veer Shankar. Speaking at the launch, Veer Shankar praised the series, saying that the title Alluda Majaka is catchy and the teaser looks impressive. He added that the concept, based on the classic “mother-in-law and son-in-law” dynamic, has resonated well with audiences in the past and is likely to do so again. He also expressed his happiness in seeing KS Kumar, both a director and artist, actively contributing as a union member. Veer Shankar confidently predicted that KS Kumar and Nainika Anasuya will deliver a hit performance.



The web series has been created as a tight-knit team effort. Vasubharma handled cinematography and editing, ensuring a visually appealing experience, while Sujit Hani’s music adds a vibrant touch to the series. The director expressed his heartfelt wish that Alluda Majaka Web Series achieves the same success as the original Alluda Majaka movie. The supporting cast, including Jyothi, Naveen, Asha, Priya,

Nagesh, and Swami Nayak, has been praised for their excellent performances. Overall, the collaboration between Vasubharma and Sujit Hani in cinematography, editing, and music has set a high standard for the series, promising an engaging viewing experience for audiences. With the teaser already generating buzz, fans are eagerly waiting to see if the web series lives up to the legacy of its cinematic predecessor.

## Hyderabad Student Film Maya Gains International Recognition

Hyderabad, 19 December 2025: A graduation film created by final-year students of Annapurna College of Film and Media has earned notable acclaim on both national and international platforms. Maya, written and directed by student filmmaker Swarna Reka Prabhu, has been officially selected at several prestigious film festivals worldwide, showcasing the creative talent emerging from Hyderabad’s film education landscape. The film has been chosen for screening at multiple celebrated events, including the 44th VGIK International Student Film Festival, the Midnight Monster Club Short Film Festival, Flame First-Cut, the Kuala Lumpur International Film Awards, the Chennai International Short

Film Festival, the 5th India International Star Film Festival Awards, and The Corner Seats International Film Festival 2025, among others. Maya blends imaginative storytelling with collaborative creativity, exploring a range of emotions akin to the experience of dreams. Director Swarna Reka Prabhu explained that the film captures the surreal and layered nature of the subconscious, presenting a narrative that initially may seem fragmented but reveals deeper meaning upon closer reflection. Annapurna College Director Amala Akkineni praised the achievement as a testament to practical learning and the growing capabilities of emerging filmmakers. She highlighted that students pushing crea-

tive boundaries and gaining international recognition reflects the institution’s commitment to nurturing cinematic talent. The success of Maya underscores the artistic promise of young filmmakers in Telangana and highlights the potential of student-driven cinema to make an impact globally. It demonstrates a broader trend in which film schools are providing platforms for emerging voices to contribute fresh perspectives to international cinema. As Maya continues its festival journey, it is expected to attract attention from festivals, critics, and industry professionals worldwide. The recognition also strengthens Hyderabad’s position as a hub for film culture and independent filmmaking. This achievement affirms that innovative storytelling and collaborative filmmaking by students can resonate far beyond local contexts, bringing global spotlight to Hyderabad’s vibrant film education community.



# Ram Gopal Varma Hails Dhurandhar as a “Quantum Leap” for Indian Cinema

Veteran filmmaker Ram Gopal Varma (RGV) has praised Aditya Dhar’s latest film Dhurandhar, calling it a transformative moment for Indian cinema and a “quantum leap” that could redefine storytelling and cinematic standards in the industry. His remarks have generated significant attention among filmmakers, critics, and audiences alike. Varma highlighted that Dhurandhar goes beyond conventional filmmaking, offering a fresh and compelling vision that deeply engages viewers. According to him, the film doesn’t merely aim for attention—it commands it, drawing audiences into the story and making them active participants rather than passive observers. From the very first scene, he noted, the narrative establishes a momentum that keeps the viewers invested throughout. He praised the technical and narrative aspects of the film, de-

scribing its writing as purposeful, staging as rich with tension, and sound design as integral to the emotional impact. Varma emphasized that the film builds pressure rather than noise, using silences and visual framing effectively to enhance the cinematic experience. He also lauded the performances, noting that the characters are crafted to linger in the audience’s mind, provoking thought and emotional engagement rather than just providing entertainment. One of the film’s most notable achievements, according to Varma, is its respect for the intelligence of the audience. By avoiding over-explaining backstory, the film trusts viewers to interpret and connect with the characters, which sets it apart from formulaic commercial cinema. He also commended the film’s thematic boldness, noting that it does not chase trends or mimic Hollywood, but confidently asserts that Indi-



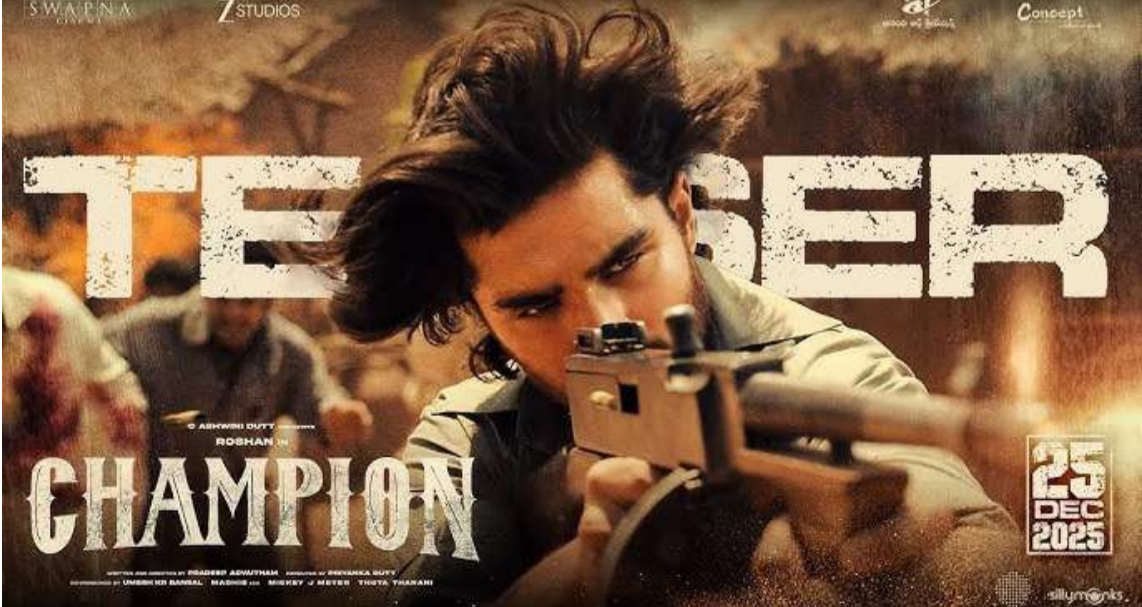
an cinema can innovate and succeed on its own terms. Featuring a stellar cast including Ranveer Singh, Akshaye Khanna, Sanjay Dutt, R. Madhavan, and Arjun Rampal, Dhurandhar has been a box-office sensation, earning both com-

mercial success and critical acclaim. Its intense character arcs, high-impact storytelling, and innovative approach have resonated widely with audiences across India. Varma’s endorsement of the film not only elevates its profile within the industry but also sig-

nals a potential shift in Indian filmmaking—one that embraces ambition, narrative depth, and respect for the viewer’s engagement. Dhurandhar is being celebrated as a film that could inspire a new wave of bold and intelligent cinema in India.

## Trailer of Champion Revives Forgotten Chapter from Hyderabad’s Past

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