



*Mudiraj Panchayat Leaders Honored at Grand Ceremony in Hyderabad*

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## Centre Clears 5,181-Crore Indigenous Air Defence System for Delhi's VIP Zone

TPN Bureau | December 30

**N**ew Delhi: In a major step toward bolstering India's national capital security, the Central government has approved the acquisition of the Indigenous Air Defence Weapon System (IADWS), a state-of-the-art aerial security network developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

The project will be implemented under the "Sudarshan Chakra" framework, marking a significant stride in the country's efforts to create a multi-layered air defence shield around vital zones. According to highly placed sources quoted in national media reports, the IADWS will be deployed in the strategic VIP-89 zone of Delhi as part of a pilot project.

The estimated cost of the system is around 5,181 crore. Once operational, the DRDO-developed system will be capable of neutralizing

any aerial threat including enemy aircraft, drones, and missiles within a 30-kilometre radius around the National Capital Region (NCR). Sources revealed that the decision comes amid growing concerns over drone incursions and other aerial threats in sensitive areas. Given the rapid evolution of unmanned aerial systems and the heightened risk of low-altitude strikes, the government has prioritized strengthening air defence readiness around critical national assets.

The purchase decision forms part of the Defence Ministry's broader approval for procurement of advanced military systems worth approximately 79,000 crore, cleared by the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday. The council's latest clearance includes several indigenous projects aimed at enhancing India's self-reliance in defence technologies under the "Atmanirbhar

Bharat" initiative.

Multi-Layered Defence Under "Sudarshan Chakra" The "Sudarshan Chakra" initiative was first announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his Independence Day address earlier this year. The ambitious programme seeks to establish a robust, multi-layered air defence and counter-attack network to protect India's key strategic, civil, and national assets against aerial and missile threats. Officials have stated that the framework will encompass a combination of interception, surveillance, and electronic warfare systems. These will be designed not only to detect and eliminate hostile aerial targets but also to integrate cyber defence mechanisms to counter technology-driven warfare. Indigenous Collaboration and Integration

The IADWS has been conceptualized and developed by DRDO in collaboration with leading private defence manufacturers and the Indian

Armed Forces. The system integrates radar networks, automated control units, and precision-guided interceptor weaponry capable of responding to multiple concurrent threats. It is expected to serve as a critical component of India's Integrated Air Command and Control System (IACCS), providing seamless coordination between ground-based and aerial defence assets. Officials familiar with the project said that once validated through the Delhi pilot, the system would eventually be expanded to other high-value regions across the country covering major cities, nuclear installations, defence command hubs, and industrial belts. With the implementation of the "Sudarshan Chakra" initiative, India is poised to join the ranks of nations with advanced, fully integrated air defence networks, reflecting its growing capabilities in indigenous defence manufacturing and strategic autonomy.

## Hindu Security Guard Shot Dead by Colleague in Bangladesh, Sparks Renewed Safety Concerns



TPN Bureau | December 30:

**D**haka | Bangladesh: A fresh wave of concern has arisen in Bangladesh following the killing of yet another Hindu individual, only weeks after similar incidents that stirred fears among the country's Hindu minority community. According to reports from local media, a 42-year-old Hindu man, identified as Bajendra Biswas, was fatally shot by his colleague Noman Mia at an industrial factory located in Mymensingh district.

The incident occurred around 6:45 PM on Monday evening, inside the factory premises where both men were stationed as security guards.

Authorities stated that preliminary accounts suggest the shooting might have been accidental. Noman Mia reportedly told police that he and Biswas were chatting casually inside the factory barracks when the tragic event occurred.

He allegedly pointed his service rifle toward Biswas in jest, claiming that his finger "accidentally touched the trigger," causing the gun to discharge. The bullet struck Biswas in the chest, critically injuring him. Biswas was immediately rushed to a nearby hospital, but doctors declared him dead upon arrival.

Following the incident, police arrested Noman Mia and registered a case while continuing to investigate the circum-

stances surrounding the shooting. "We are thoroughly investigating whether this was indeed an accident or if there was any underlying motive," a senior police official in Mymensingh told reporters.

This latest tragedy comes amid rising tension and violence against the Hindu community in Bangladesh. Earlier this month, 25-year-old Dipu Chandra Das was beaten to death during communal unrest, while another Hindu youth, Amrit Mandal, was killed in a separate assault. Prior to Biswas's death, a Hindu man in Rajbari district's Pangsha Circle was also lynched by locals, further intensifying fears within the minority community.

Human rights activists and local observers have expressed growing concern over the pattern of targeted violence against Hindus in recent months. They have urged the government to take stronger measures to protect religious minorities and ensure that incidents of communal aggression are dealt with promptly and transparently.

As investigations into Biswas's death continue, the case has reignited debate on the safety and security of Hindus in Bangladesh, especially in the wake of ongoing unrest. Community leaders have called for justice and for authorities to address the root causes of religious intolerance and systemic vulnerability.

## Pawan Kalyan Lays Foundation for Major Drainage Works in Konaseema, Focuses on Regional Development

TPN Bureau | December 30

**N**andyala Deputy Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Pawan Kalyan, has turned his attention toward the comprehensive development of Ambedkar Konaseema district. Emphasizing the need for sustainable infrastructure and farmers' welfare, he virtually launched crucial drainage modernization works at Kesanapalli Tufan Center on Monday. The works include desilting of the major Shankar Gupta drainage canal over an 8-kilometer stretch and strengthening of embankments along a 14.5-kilometer line. The total cost of the project is 20.62 crore, aimed at providing lasting relief to farmers in the Rajolu constituency who have suffered from severe drainage problems for over five years.

Speaking on the occasion, Pawan Kalyan recalled that the Shankar Gupta major drainage issue was

identified on Subrahmanyam Shastri day, and in just 34 days, the government took steps toward a permanent solution by launching the works on Mukkoti Ekadashi.

Highlighting the government's broader vision, he said that drainage and irrigation modernization works worth 4,000 crore are being planned across the erstwhile East Godavari district. These projects are expected to improve water flow, reduce flood risk, and support agricultural sustainability. In an additional development initiative, Pawan Kalyan mentioned that the state government is in talks with the Union Government for establishing a Cocoa Board in Konaseema. The proposed board aims to promote cocoa cultivation as an alternative crop, boosting farmers' income and diversifying the local agricultural economy.

Pawan Kalyan reiterated his commitment to ensuring balanced progress across coastal Andhra and vowed to continue monitoring Konaseema's development personally.

## Harish Rao ditches KTR



TPN Bureau | December 30

**H**yderabad: Harish Rao accuses CM Revanth Reddy of betraying Telangana's Water Interests in a sharp political attack, senior BRS leader and Siddipet MLA T. Harish Rao launched a blistering criticism against Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, calling him both a "betrayal of the Telangana movement" and a "culprit in water exploitation." Addressing a press conference at Telangana Bhavan in Hyderabad on Tuesday, Harish Rao alleged that the state government under Revanth Reddy has failed to protect Telangana's water interests, particularly regarding the approval granted to Andhra Pradesh's Godavari-Banakacharla project.

Harish Rao questioned the Central Water Commission (CWC) for approving the project without consulting Telangana. "How can the CWC grant permission

without considering Telangana's opinion?" he asked, expressing concern that the project would severely harm Telangana's share of river water.

He accused the Congress government of remaining silent while a grave injustice was being done to the state. "The Congress government is in a deep slumber while Telangana's water rights are being trampled upon," Rao said, taking aim at Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and Irrigation Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy.

He alleged that instead of defending Telangana's interests, the Congress leaders were focusing only on criticizing the BRS inside the Assembly. "Is the government truly asleep or pretending to be?" he remarked sarcastically.

Asserting that his comments were not driven by political motives, Harish Rao claimed his stance stemmed from his emotional and moral attachment to Telangana. "How can the CWC grant permission

na. He went on to level serious allegations against senior bureaucrat Aditya Nath Das, calling him "the architect of Telangana's water loot" and a "traitor to Telangana."

Rao demanded his immediate removal from any role connected to inter-state water management. The BRS leader also took on the BJP-led central government, asking how it dared to greenlight the Banakacharla project despite Telangana's objections. Calling for an all-party stand on the issue, Harish Rao urged the Congress government to pass a resolution in the Assembly opposing the CWC's approval.

"If the government brings a resolution against this project, we will extend our full support," he declared. He further suggested organizing a protest in New Delhi to demand the withdrawal of the CWC's approval for the Banakacharla project, warning that Telangana will not stay silent if its water resources are threatened.

## Andhra Pradesh Government Creates Two New Districts: Markapuram and Polavaram

TPN Bureau | dec 30, 2025

Amaravati: In a significant administrative reshuffle, the Andhra Pradesh government on Tuesday issued official orders creating two new districts—Markapuram and Polavaram—thereby increasing the total number of districts in the state to 28. The new districts, formed with Markapuram and Ramachodavaram as their respective headquarters, will officially come into effect from Wednesday.

According to the notification released by the state government, the formation of the new districts comes as part of a larger administrative reorganization aimed at ensuring effective governance, streamlined service delivery, and improved public access to government offices and services.

Alongside the creation of these new districts, the government also announced five new revenue divisions, resulting in a realignment of divisional and mandal boundaries across several districts. Among the



key changes, the Nandigama mandal has been shifted from the Palasa revenue division to the Tekkali revenue division. Similarly, Samarkota mandal has been moved from the Kakina division to the Peddapuram division.

The notification further revealed structural changes within the Alluri Sitarama Raju district, with Paderu designated as its new center following a reorganization of its administrative units. Additionally, the Penugonda area has been officially renamed as Vasavi Penugonda, marking a symbolic administrative update. The government also announced the establishment of a new Addroad Junction Revenue Division in the Anakapalli district to improve local administration.

In Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Konaseema district, certain mandal boundaries have been revised to facilitate smoother governance and better accessibility for people in rural and semi-urban regions. Officials stated that the restructuring is part of the government's long-term strategy to decentralize administration and make governance more citizen-centric. By reducing the distance between local residents and administrative offices, the government expects faster grievance redressal and improved service delivery. "These measures are aimed at empowering both rural and urban populations, ensur-

ing access to government schemes, and enhancing local development," the order stated. The Andhra Pradesh government believes that the new districts and revenue divisions will lead to greater administrative efficiency, better coordination among departments, and more effective utilization of resources. The move is also expected to help in regional planning, infrastructure development, and efficient disaster management. Political analysts describe this step as a continuation of the state's ongoing efforts to strengthen local governance, following the earlier exercise of district reorganization in 2022. They argue that this latest move will not

only bring administration closer to the people but also contribute to balanced socio-economic development across the state. From Wednesday, all government offices, local bodies, and administrative units will operate in accordance with the new district and divisional boundaries.

Residents and public representatives have been advised to align their operations, services, and records with the revised administrative structure. With this reorganization, the Andhra Pradesh government aims to reinforce its decentralization model bringing governance to the doorstep of citizens while promoting inclusive growth across all regions.

## Power Outage at Vijayawada's Durga Temple Sparks Political Row; Minister Clarifies Situation



TPN Bureau | dec 30, 2025

Amaravati: Andhra Pradesh Energy Minister Gottipati Ravi Kumar expressed displeasure over attempts to politicize the temporary power disruption at the famous Kanaka Durga Temple in Vijayawada. Speaking to reporters in Amaravati on Tuesday, the Minister said that the incident was purely due to a lack of coordination among officials and not politically motivated. He stated that as soon as the matter came to his notice, he convened a meeting with senior energy department officials and sought a detailed report. The Minister mentioned that he reprimanded the concerned officers on the same day and issued strict instructions to prevent such incidents in the future.

"The government accords utmost respect to devotees' sentiments, and there is no question of neglecting temple services," he assured.

According to sources, the Durga Temple administration has outstanding electricity dues amounting to 3.08 crore. Officials from the electricity department had repeatedly requested payment of these pending bills, but no action was taken by the temple authorities. Consequently, on December 27 (Saturday), power supply to the temple located atop Indrakiladri Hill in Vijayawada was temporarily disconnected.

He also criticized certain political groups for trying to create controversy over the incident, stating that such actions were unfortunate and unwarranted. "Some are trying to gain political mileage out of an operational issue. We are committed to ensuring this does not happen again," he said.

The state government has ordered an inquiry and directed officials to streamline coordination between the temple authorities and the power department to avoid future disruptions.

## HC Strikes off the case of APSSC

TPN Bureau | dec 30, 2025

Amaravati: Back ground of the case

In December 2023, the Andhra Pradesh Public Service Commission (APSSC) issued Group-2 notification No.11/2023 for various executive and non-executive posts in the state. Candidates later approached the High Court questioning parts of this notification. The petitions mainly targeted the allocation of special reservation "roster points" for women, persons with benchmark disabilities, ex-servicemen and meri-

torious sportspersons in the recruitment roster.

**Petitioners' key arguments**

Petitioners alleged that earmarking specific roster points for these horizontal reservation categories violated existing government orders and Supreme Court guidelines on reservations in public employment. They requested the court to set aside the 2023 Group-2 notification, redraw the reservation roster strictly in line with the apex court's directions, and direct the authorities to issue a fresh notification

accordingly.

High Court's decision After detailed hearings, the High Court rejected the petitioners' contentions and upheld the reservation pattern adopted in the Group-2 notification, holding that there was no illegality in the way special reservation points were provided. Consequently, the court dismissed all writ petitions that sought cancellation of the existing notification and issuance of a new one, effectively endorsing APPSC's approach to the reservation roster.

**Impact on aspirants and**

process The verdict removes a major legal obstacle that had created uncertainty around the recruitment, giving significant relief to thousands of Group-2 aspirants in Andhra Pradesh who were waiting for clarity on the process. With the litigation on reservations disposed of, APPSC is now expected to push ahead with the pending stages of recruitment, including completion of evaluation and subsequent appointment procedures, subject to any further legal remedies that parties may pursue.



## Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan Launches Modernization of Shankaraguptham Major Drain in Konaseema

TPN Bureau | dec 30, 2025

Amaravati: Deputy Chief Minister and Jana Sena Party chief Pawan Kalyan on Tuesday virtually launched the modernization works of the Shankaraguptham Major Drain in Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Konaseema district. Participating in the ceremony from his camp office in Mangalgiri, Pawan Kalyan formally initiated the project, which is estimated to cost 20.77 crore.

The event was also attended virtually by Water Resources Minister Nimmala Ramanaidu

and several local officials. The modernization of the Shankaraguptham major drainage system marks a significant step towards resolving long-standing irrigation and drainage issues faced by farmers in Konaseema, particularly those engaged in coconut cultivation.

The Deputy Chief Minister said the project aligns with the state government's commitment to revitalizing key irrigation networks and protecting agricultural livelihoods in the delta region. During his recent visit to Razole,

Pawan Kalyan had assured local farmers that their drainage concerns would be resolved within 45 days. True to his word, he moved swiftly to ensure the project's commencement in just 35 days, fulfilling a critical promise made to the farming community. The Jana Sena Party lauded this quick action, stating that the coordination between Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan reflects the government's determination to deliver time-bound results. Officials from the Water Re-

sources Department explained that the modernization works would include desilting, strengthening of embankments, remodeling of drainage channels, and installation of new sluice structures. These improvements are expected to enhance water flow and prevent flooding in low-lying agricultural areas, which have historically suffered during the monsoon season. Speaking on the occasion, Pawan Kalyan emphasized that the well-being of farmers remains the top priority for the government.



## Irrigation Minister Nimmala Ramanaidu Slams Jagan Government, Launches Modernization of Shankaraguptham Drain

TPN Bureau | dec 29, 2025

Amaravati: Andhra Pradesh Minister for Water Resources Nimmala Ramanaidu came down heavily on YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) president Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, holding his previous government responsible for severe setbacks in the state's irrigation sector. The minister alleged that during Jagan's five-year rule, not a single rupee's worth of irrigation work was carried out, in stark

contrast to the progress made during the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) government between 2017 and 2018.

Ramanaidu made these remarks after virtually launching the modernization works of the Shankaraguptham Major Drain in Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Konaseema district, alongside Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan. He expressed deep concern over the plight of farmers in the region, stating that sea-water intrusion through



the drain had damaged coconut plantations spread across thousands of acres. The minister recalled that after the TDP-Jana Sena-BJP coalition government came to power, farmers and local leaders from Konaseema had drawn his attention to the deteriorating condition of the Shankaraguptham drain. Following on-ground inspections and two rounds of review meetings with irrigation experts, the department prepared detailed pro-

posals costing 20.77 crore to modernize the drainage system. He commended Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan for his efforts in securing funds from the Finance Department for the project. "We are initiating the works today as promised. Tenders will be invited soon to ensure quick progress on the ground," Ramanaidu said, reaffirming the government's commitment to Pawan Kalyan's assurances to the people. He further highlighted that the state government has undertaken a LiDAR-based survey worth 13.4 crore to develop a permanent solution for the flood and submergence problems that have long plagued the Godavari region. According to the minister, after completion of the LiDAR survey, a detailed project report (DPR) will be prepared and submitted to Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu for approval.

The proposals are expected to include comprehensive strategies for permanent flood mitigation and water management measures for the Godavari delta region. Ramanaidu reiterated that under Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu's leadership, the coalition government is determined to revive and modernize Andhra Pradesh's irrigation infrastructure, ensuring that the mistakes of the previous YSRCP regime are not repeated.

# Statewide Distribution of 21.8 Lakh Pattadar Passbooks from January 2; Revenue Minister Announces Schedule

TPN Bureau | December 30

Amaravati: Andhra Pradesh Revenue Minister Anagani Satya Prasad has announced that the state government will distribute 21.80 lakh Pattadar Passbooks to eligible landholders across the state between January 2 and January 9. The minister said that the new set of passbooks, printed with the official state emblem, symbolises the government's commitment to transparent and efficient land administration. According to the minister, all the new Pattadar Passbooks are being prepared under strict verification procedures to ensure accuracy and authenticity of ownership records.

He stated that the initiative is part of the government's broader land reforms and digital

revenue modernization programme aimed at eliminating discrepancies in land records and ensuring rightful ownership to farmers. Mr. Satya Prasad further directed revenue officials to exercise extra care during distribution and to immediately correct any errors reported by landowners. "If there are any spelling mistakes, mismatched survey numbers, or other technical issues in the passbooks, concerned tehsildars and mandal officers must rectify them on priority," he emphasized. The minister added that the state has streamlined the grievance redressal mechanism to resolve any disputes relating to land ownership or data mismatch within a short period. Officials at the village and ward secretariats have al-



ready received instructions to ensure the smooth conduct of the week-long distribution drive. Special counters will be set up in all districts to deliver passbooks in person to farmers and landholders.

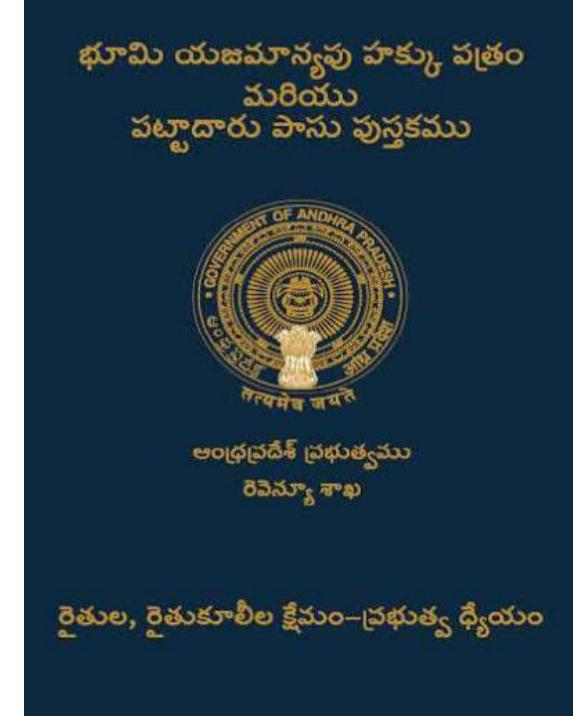
District collectors have been asked to monitor the process closely

and submit daily progress updates to the Revenue department. Meanwhile, unrelated to developments in Andhra Pradesh, dense fog engulfed Delhi and other parts of North India, severely impacting normal life. The national capital witnessed near-zero visibility on

Monday morning, causing major disruptions at the Indira Gandhi International Airport.

Airport authorities reported that more than 130 flights were cancelled due to the thick fog and poor runway visibility, while several others were running with significant delays.

Train services, too, were affected as many long-distance trains operated late by several hours. Meteorological officials forecast that the dense fog conditions are likely to persist for the next few days due to a prevailing cold wave across northern plains. Despite these disruptions,



tions, airlines and railway authorities have advised passengers to check schedules in advance to avoid inconvenience.

## Vallabhaneni Vamsi Reported Missing Again; Police Launch Manhunt Over Attempt-to-Murder Case

TPN Bureau | Dec 30

VGannavaram MLA and YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) leader Vallabhaneni Vamsi Mohan has reportedly gone incommunicado once again, triggering intense discussions in political circles across Andhra Pradesh. The development comes close on the heels of a serious criminal case filed against him by Machavaram police in Vijayawada.

According to police sources, Vamsi was booked on December 17 under charges of attempt to murder in connection with the assault on one Sunil on June 7, 2024. He was already a key accused in that earlier attack case. Investigators had long suspected his involvement, but fresh evidence reportedly confirmed his role, prompting the registration of the more serious charge.

Following the fresh FIR, Vallabhaneni Vam-



si has allegedly gone missing, leading police to believe that the politician may be deliberately avoiding arrest. Special police teams have been formed to track his whereabouts, with searches reportedly intensified across different districts. Authorities are also probing whether the MLA remains in the country or has moved to another location.

"The accused's political status does not put him above the law. Everyone is equal before it," a senior Machavaram police official said, adding that efforts are underway to bring him into custody soon. Investigators have also turned their focus toward Vamsi's close associates and followers, suspecting that they may be aiding his evasion.

This is not the first time the controversial legislator has been embroiled in serious alle-

gements. In the past, Vamsi and a few YSRCP leaders were accused of attacking the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) office in Gannavaram. In that case, a man named Satyavardhan turned out to be a key witness. Police investigations later revealed that Vamsi had allegedly kidnapped Satyavardhan to

prevent him from testifying, which led to Vamsi's arrest and subsequent release on bail. Given the renewed controversy, tension is reportedly high in Gannavaram constituency. Police have stepped up security measures to prevent any untoward incidents and maintain public order.

## YCP Leaders' Unruly Protest in Anantapur: 23 Booked for Unauthorised Rally and Police Misconduct



TPN Bureau | December 30

Anantapur: The arrogance and unruly behavior of YSR Congress Party (YCP) leaders seem unending, whether in power or out of it. On Monday evening, several local leaders and activists of the party staged an unauthorized protest in the heart of Anantapur city, creating public inconvenience and clashing with the police. The incident occurred on Court Road, one of the busiest stretches in the city, housing the District Court, multiple police stations, government offices, and educational institutions.

During the peak hours, YCP leaders and supporters reportedly took out a rally from a former MLA's residence without prior permission, alleging that police had summoned the son of a party corporator to the station. The incident occurred on Court Road, one of the busiest stretches in the city, housing the District Court, multiple police stations, government offices, and educational institutions.

Following the confrontation, DSP Srinivasa Rao rushed to the location along with several Circle Inspectors and ordered immediate action against those involved in disorderly conduct. Police later confirmed that cases had been registered against 23 identified individuals, including former MLA's brother Anantha Chandrara Reddy, Mayor Vaseem, Deputy Mayor Vasanti, and several other YCP leaders.

Authorities added that additional names

may be included as the investigation progresses. DSP Srinivasa Rao stated, "No one will be spared for causing public inconvenience or defying police orders. Conducting rallies or demonstrations

without prior permission violates the law, and strict action will follow against offenders." The incident comes at a politically sensitive time, as local body elections approach.

With little traction among the public, YCP leaders appear to be resorting to disruptive acts to maintain visibility. Observers note that similar incidents occurred even when the party was in power. In August 2023, YCP supporters reportedly attacked excise officials and assaulted a woman constable inside a police station after their associates were detained for illegal liquor sales.

The recent outburst, marked by slogans and unruly behavior, underscores the growing tension between YCP local leadership and law enforcement in Anantapur. Police officials reiterated that such acts would not be tolerated and urged political parties to observe restraint during election season.

## Minister Kollu Ravindra Slams Former CM Jagan Reddy, Calls Him a "Failed Politician"

TPN Bureau | December 30

Prakasam: In a sharp political attack, Andhra Pradesh Minister Kollu Ravindra launched a scathing criticism against former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, branding him a "failed politician" whose tenure was marked by corruption, arrogance, and deception. Speaking to the media on Tuesday, Ravindra said Jagan's political style was centered on looting public wealth, intimidating people, and misleading citizens through false propaganda. Ravindra strongly condemned Jagan's alleged misuse of public funds for personal luxury. He accused the YSRCP chief of constructing a lavish residence at Rushikonda near Visakhapatnam, spending around 400 crore of taxpayers' money. "He built a palace on Rushikonda hill with public funds while the state's development was stalled.

Ravindra noted that since 2014, International Yoga Day has been observed every year across different parts of the country under the initia-



marked. Referring to Jagan's comments on linking the Rushikonda building to Yoga, the minister said it was unfortunate that people like him exist. "Yoga is part of India's ancient spiritual heritage. It promotes both physical and mental well-being," he added.

Ravindra noted that since 2014, International Yoga Day has been observed every year across different parts of the country under the initia-

tive of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "This year's Yoga Day event in Visakhapatnam cost 18 crore, which was fully borne by the Central Government," he clarified. The minister criticized Jagan for attempting to politicize Yoga awareness programs conducted by the current state government. "Instead of appreciating efforts to promote health among citizens, Jagan is making baseless political statements. It shows his lack of maturity and awareness," Ravindra said.

He added that people of the state have already delivered their verdict on Jagan's governance. On industrial progress, Ravindra mentioned that the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant is being revised and is now running profitably. "The state is on the path of growth and revival, but Jagan cannot tolerate development. His mindset is destructive and de-



# Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu Presents 1 Crore Compensation to Family of Excise Head Constable

TPN Bureau | December 30

Amaravati: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Monday handed over a compensation cheque of 1 crore to the family of Excise Department Head Constable Picheshwara Rao, who died accidentally while on duty. The compensation was sanctioned under the State Bank of India (SBI) group insurance scheme, implemented following a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the State Government and SBI in March 2025. This marks the first disbursement made under

the scheme since its inception. During the event held at the Chief Minister's Camp Office in Amaravati, Mr. Naidu expressed his deep condolences to the bereaved family and assured full government support. He announced that eligible family members of the deceased official would be provided employment on compassionate grounds.

"The government stands firmly with the families of employees who lay down their lives in the line of duty," the Chief Minister stated. Mr. Naidu also appreciated the Excise Department for its efforts in

reorganizing and streamlining operations within a short period after the current government assumed office. He commended the leadership of Excise Minister Kollu Ravindra and Chief Secretary Mukesh Kumar Meena for their contribution to the department's progress.

The Chief Minister urged all officers to continue working with dedication and integrity, emphasizing that "the health and well-being of the public are more important than revenue targets." He directed the Excise officials to ensure strict enforcement against illicit liquor and



## Guntur district recorded a 13 per cent decline in overall crime in 2025

TPN Bureau | Dec. 30

AVijayawada: The property offences and open drinking violations increased, according to police data presented at the annual crime review meeting held on Monday. District superintendent of police Vakul Zindal said the district registered 8,937 cognisable offences in 2025, down from 10,252 cases in 2024. Fatal road accident cases dropped sharply from 429 in 2024 to 322 in 2025, while non-fatal accidents also declined from 615 to 572 cases.

Despite the overall decline in crime, property offences increased marginally from 1,054 cases in 2024 to 1,090 in 2025. However, police apprehended interstate gangs and recovered stolen property worth 11.88 crore. Recoveries were also made in 176 pending cases from previous years, with the stolen property returned to victims. Rape cases showed a decline, with 76 cases reported in 2025, while cybercrime cases reduced from 113 in 2024 to 102 in 2025. An amount of 1.47 crore was refunded to cybercrime victims during the year.



Convictions rose sharply, with 72 cases resulting in sentences ranging from one month to 20 years in 2025, compared to 28 cases in 2024. These included two cases with 20-year imprisonment, 11 life imprisonment cases, two 10-year sentences, and five seven-year sentences. Additionally, five ganja-related cases resulted in convictions. Guntur district also emerged as the state leader in Lok Adalat case disposal, with 7,634 cases settled in 2025, compared to 2,948 cases in 2024.

Open drinking cases saw a steep rise. While 2024 recorded 151 cases with 253 arrests, 2025 saw 2,157 cases registered with 3,367 arrests. In addition, 1,398 persons were arrested and booked for drunk driving during the year. In 2025, 91 ganja cases were registered, with 403 offenders in-

volved in selling, supplying and consuming ganja remanded. Police seized 221.992 kg of dry ganja, 1,325 litres of liquid ganja, 506 grams of synthetic drugs, and several transport vehicles.

Under the PD Act, 11 habitual offenders were detained and lodged in Rajahmundry Central Jail. Police also identified 13 professional ganja offenders and forwarded PIT NDPS proposals to the government. Traffic enforcement was intensified, with police booking 65,502 motor vehicle violations in 2025 and collecting 3.47 crore in fines through e-challans. A district task force, constituted in September 2025, detected 65 cases, arrested 307 persons, and seized property worth 46.21 lakh in cases involving gambling, brothels, drugs, thefts and illegal transportation of cattle.

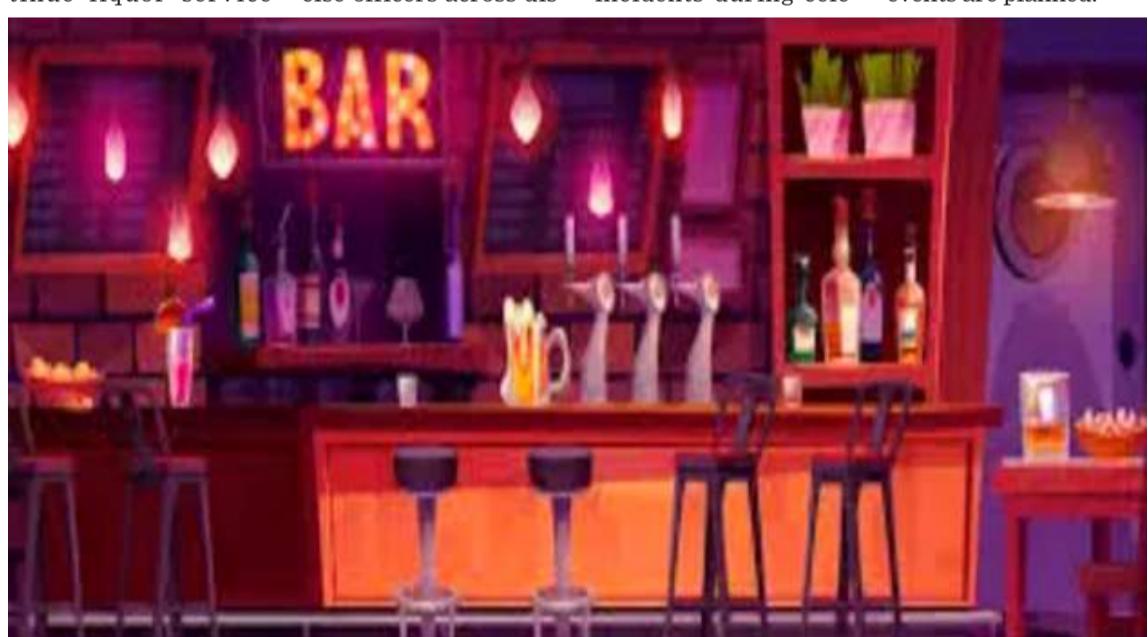
## AP Govt Extends Liquor Sale, Bar Timings for New Year Celebrations

TPN Bureau | December 30

Vijayawada: The Andhra Pradesh government has allowed an extension of liquor sale and service hours across the state on the eve of New Year celebrations. In a move aimed at facilitating smooth festivities on December 31, 2025, and January 1, 2026, the government has granted permission to keep liquor retail outlets and bars open for an extra hour beyond their usual timings.

As per the latest orders issued by the Revenue (Excise) Department, liquor retail shops, commonly known as A4 outlets, have been permitted to sell liquor until midnight (12 a.m.) on both December 31 and January 1. Similarly, bars and other licensed establishments will be allowed to serve alcohol till 1 a.m. on January 1, enabling revelers to celebrate the New Year without disruption.

Principal Secretary (Revenue-Excise) Peeyush Kumar issued a memo conveying the decision on Tuesday. The directive applies to all



## Sankranti Rush: South Central Railway Announces 11 More Special Trains to Ease Passenger Congestion

TPN Bureau | December 30

Vijayawada: With festive travel peaking across Telangana and Andhra Pradesh ahead of Sankranti, the South Central Railway (SCR) has announced an additional set of special trains to handle the heavy passenger rush. In a statement released on Tuesday, SCR said that 11 more special trains will run between major destinations across the two states between January 7 and January 12, 2026.

According to the announcement, these trains will operate primarily on high-demand routes connecting Hyderabad, Vikarabad, Kakinada, and Parvathipuram — regions that witness significant passenger movement during the harvest festival. The newly introduced services include

Kakinada-Vikarabad, Vikarabad-Parvathipuram, Parvathipuram-Vikarabad, Parvathipuram-Kakinada Town, Secunderabad-Parvathipuram, and Kakinada Town-Vikarabad routes.

Additional Sankranti Special Trains between various Destinations				
In view of extra rush on account of ensuing Sankranti Festival season, South Central Railway to run 11 Additional Special Trains				
Tr. No.	From-To	Dep	Arr	Day of Service
07460	Kakinada Town – Vikarabad	18.20	08.00 (next day)	08.01.2026
07461	Vikarabad – Parvathipuram	20.30	14.30 (next day)	09.01.2026 & 11.01.2026
07462	Parvathipuram – Vikarabad	18.30	11.30 (next day)	10.01.2026
07463	Parvathipuram – Kakinada Town	18.30	01.00 (next day)	12.01.2026
07464	Secunderabad – Parvathipuram	22.00	14.30 (next day)	08.01.2026
07465	Parvathipuram – Secunderabad	18.30	10.00 (next day)	09.01.2026
07186	Kakinada Town – Vikarabad	16.45	07.00 (next day)	07.01.2026 & 09.01.2026
07185	Vikarabad – Kakinada Town	17.35	08.30 (next day)	08.01.2026
07187	Vikarabad – Kakinada Town	19.00	11.00 (next day)	10.01.2026

Each of these special trains will consist of multiple coach categories, including First AC, Second AC, Third AC, Sleeper, and Second Class (General) coaches, ensuring sufficient capacity for passengers from all travel segments. SCR officials added that reservations for all the special trains have already opened on the IRCTC website and at all railway reservation counters. Railway authorities expect a substantial rise in passenger

footfall during the Sankranti week, as thousands of people from urban centers travel back to their hometowns in coastal Andhra districts and north coastal areas such as Vizianagaram and Srikakulam. Traditionally, Sankranti marks one of the busiest annual travel periods in the region, with demand for long-distance and inter-district train services nearly doubling compared to regular days. An SCR spokesperson said that the zonal

railway has been taking proactive measures to avoid overcrowding at stations and onboard trains. Additional staff deployment, crowd monitoring, and special ticket checking drives are being arranged to ensure smooth operations. The railway also urged passengers to book their tickets early and travel with valid reservations to avoid inconvenience.

The announcement follows an earlier round of Sankranti special train declarations made

earlier this month. With the latest addition of 11 trains, SCR aims to ensure comfortable travel and better connectivity for passengers returning to Andhra Pradesh's towns and villages for the festival. Railway officials further assured that real-time updates on train timings, platforms, and seat availability would be continuously provided through official channels to keep passengers informed throughout the festive period.

Excise Commissioner Cherukuri Sridhar, Enforcement Director Rahul Dev Sharma, and leaders of the Excise Officers' Association, including B. Narasimulu, K. Kameswara Rao, Prabhakar Rao, and Venkata Ramana, attended the program.

They said the initiative offers timely financial protection to families of employees who lose their lives while serving the state. "This



## NGO intervenes in killing of Stray Dogs

TPN Bureau | December 30, 2025

Vijayawada: Following reports of the alleged mass killing of stray dogs through the administration of lethal injections in parts of Andhra Pradesh, an NGO has sought the intervention of the state government to issue a government order codifying SOPs, jurisdictional powers and responsibilities of urban local bodies, district

societies for prevention of cruelty to animals, veterinary officers and NGOs.

He also sought suspension of all animal birth control operations being carried out without a valid Project Recognition Certificate issued by the Animal Welfare Board of India, and an audit of all MoUs executed by ULBs with NGOs for ABC implementation. Also Read - 15 Government Schools Set For Major Upgradation in Nellore The organisation urged the state government to issue a government order codifying SOPs, jurisdictional powers and responsibilities of urban local bodies, district

authorities and event organisers to maintain discipline and follow safety and hygiene norms at their premises.

The state government's relaxation is expected to give a boost to hospitality and tourism sectors, particularly in cities such as Visakhapatnam, Vijayawada, Tirupati, and Kurnool, where large-scale New Year events are planned.

earlier this month. With the latest addition of 11 trains, SCR aims to ensure comfortable travel and better connectivity for passengers returning to Andhra Pradesh's towns and villages for the festival. Railway officials further assured that real-time updates on train timings, platforms, and seat availability would be continuously provided through official channels to keep passengers informed throughout the festive period.

# Warden Bhavani Accused of Brutally Beating Student at SC Girls' Gurukul in Bhupalpally

TPN Bureau | December 30

Bhupalpally: A disturbing incident at the SC Girls' Gurukul in Bhupalpally has triggered outrage after allegations surfaced that the hostel warden, identified as Bhavani, brutally assaulted a student inside her room with a stick. The shocking episode has drawn strong condemnation from student groups, parents, and rights activists demanding immediate disciplinary and criminal action against the accused warden.

According to reports, the warden allegedly summoned a student to her quarters late in the

evening and beat her ruthlessly with a stick, leaving visible injuries. Several students at the residential school told reporters that this was not an isolated incident. They claimed the warden frequently targeted students, punishing them harshly over trivial matters and often using physical violence. "She hits us every day for small issues. We live in constant fear," one student said.

The incident came to light after the injured student confided in her classmates, who then alerted student unions and local activists. On learning about the assault, members of vari-



ous student organizations staged a protest in front of the Gurukul campus, demanding that the district authorities take strict action. The protesters raised

slogans condemning the warden's actions and called for her immediate dismissal.

Youth leaders further urged the District Collector to order an impar-

tial inquiry and ensure that the guilty official faced both administrative and criminal consequences. "The warden should be dismissed immediately and booked

under relevant sections of law for assault and abuse of power," the activists demanded.

Some demonstrators went so far as to suggest that Bhavani deserves

exemplary punishment for allegedly abusing her authority to torment students entrusted to her care. The District Collector's office has reportedly taken prior no-

tice of the protest and is expected to initiate an inquiry into the allegations. Officials assured that appropriate measures would be taken following the investigation to ensure the safety and mental well-being of the students at the Gurukul. Meanwhile, local police have been urged to register a formal case and record statements from the affected students.

The incident has reignited discussions about the need for monitoring mechanisms and counseling facilities in residential educational institutions to prevent recurring instances of corporal punishment and abuse.

## Journalists' Role in Social Progress is Commendable: TDP State Secretary Ganta Nukaraju

TPN Bureau | Bheemili, December 30:

The role of journalists in driving societal progress is invaluable and deserves high appreciation, said TDP State Secretary Ganta Nukaraju. He was speaking at a program organized at the office of former minister Ganta Srinivasa Rao in Bheemili on Tuesday, where diaries and sweets were distributed to members of the Smart City Reporters Welfare Association (SCRWA) Bheemili Unit.

Addressing the gathering, Ganta Nukaraju lauded journalists for their relentless service to society. He remarked that journalism is one of the few professions that continues to uphold public responsibility even in the most challenging circumstances. "Journalists risk their lives to bring truth to the forefront and to keep citizens informed about the realities around them," he said. "Their stories not only reflect the state of society but also awaken public consciousness and inspire collective de-



velopment. "He further praised the Smart City Reporters Welfare Association for its consistent efforts toward journalists' welfare and professional growth. "The association has been actively supporting media professionals and ensuring their well-being," Nukaraju added. He expressed hopes that the association would continue to organize more programs and welfare initiatives in the future.

Smart City Reporters Welfare Association

President Golagani Narendra Kumar, who also attended the event, said that journalists act as crucial links between the government and the public. "Their commitment lies in promoting public welfare and transparency through honest reporting," he said, acknowledging their essential role in democratic governance.

President Bangaru Ashok Kumar spoke about the association's continuous efforts over the past decade. He said that SCRWA has been working not just for journalists' welfare but also for their professional development. "We organize refresher courses and training programs to nurture ethical and values-based journalism," Ashok noted. The event concluded with the distribution of diaries and

sweets to association members.

Treasurer Karri Satyanarayana, Vice-President M.P.A. Raju, Secretary Ganapathi Rao, Roja, and other senior journalists took part in the program. The gathering reflected mutual respect between political representatives and the journalistic community—recognizing the media's essential role in societal awareness and progress.

## Tragic Family Suicide in Nandyal: Mother and Daughter Found Dead, Search Continues for Infant

TPN Bureau | December 30

Nandyal: In a heart-wrenching incident that has shaken Nandyal district, Andhra Pradesh, a young mother and her two children plunged into the Srisailam Right Branch Canal (SRBC) near Gadivemula after three days of intense efforts by the fire department, police, and local volunteers. However, the search for the infant is still underway, with rescue teams continuing to scour downstream stretches of the canal.

Police have registered a case and begun further inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the tragedy. Counseling and support are being arranged for the bereaved family members. Meanwhile, officials have appealed to the public to seek help and counseling when facing domestic or emotional distress instead of resorting to such irreversible steps.

This tragic episode underscores the growing mental and emotional strain faced by young families and the urgent need for accessible community support and awareness on mental health and domestic conflict resolution.

Officials confirmed that Lakshmi's body and that of her elder daughter were discovered floating in the canal near Gadivemula after three days of intense efforts by the fire department, police, and local volunteers. However, the search for the infant is still underway, with rescue teams continuing to scour downstream stretches of the canal.

Preliminary investigations suggest that domestic disputes may have driven Lakshmi to take the extreme step. Police sources revealed that Lakshmi had married Ramanaia, a native of the same village, about four years ago after a love affair. The couple initially lived in Pinnapuram village of Panyam mandal, as their families opposed the marriage. Eventually, they returned to their native place after some reconciliation.

However, neighbors and relatives mentioned that frequent quarrels had been taking place between the

## Telangana CM Revanth Reddy Offers Prayers at Tirumala on Vaikuntha Ekadashi



TPN Bureau | December 30

Tirupati: Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Tuesday offered prayers at the sacred Sri Venkateswara Swamy Temple in Tirumala on the auspicious occasion of Vaikuntha Ekadashi. The hill temple witnessed a heavy influx of devotees since

early morning as the Vaikunta Dwaram (the divine gate to salvation)

was opened for the ten-day annual festivities. Revanth Reddy arrived at Tirumala in the early hours and was accorded a warm reception by senior officials of the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD), the autonomous body that

manages the world-renowned temple.

Accompanied by temple authorities, the Chief Minister had darshan of Lord Venkateswara during the early morning hours, after which temple priests conducted a special archana and aashirvachanam (blessing ceremony). Following the

darshan, temple priests presented the Chief Minister with silk vestments (ceremonial robes) and prasadam at Ranganayakula Mandapam, in keeping with the traditional temple protocol for visiting dignitaries.

TTD Chairman and Executive Officer briefed the Chief Minister on the special arrangements made for Vaikuntha Ekadashi, which marks one of the most spiritually significant days in the Hindu calendar. The Vaikunta Dwaram, a sacred passage believed to lead devotees to 'moksha' (salvation), was opened early Tuesday morning amid Vedic chants and the recitation of Vishnu Sahasranamam.

Thousands of pilgrims thronged the premises to witness the Swarnadwaram opening ceremony, considered highly auspicious. The unique ritual is observed for ten consecutive days each year, concluding on January 8, 2026. TTD officials have implemented extensive crowd management and

## Srisailam Temple Launches Free "Sparsha Darshan" for Chenchu Tribals on Vaikuntha Ekadashi

TPN Bureau | December 30

Nandyal: The famous Srisailam Mallikarjuna Swamy Temple witnessed a huge influx of devotees on the auspicious occasion of Vaikuntha Ekadashi. Thousands of devotees, including VIPs, thronged the temple to offer prayers to Lord Mallikarjuna Swamy. In view of the massive crowd, the temple authorities and police department put in place strict security and special arrangements to ensure smooth darshan and crowd management.

He later interacted briefly with the temple officials and expressed gratitude for the arrangements made for devotees attending the Vaikuntha Ekadashi celebrations. The Tirumala temple, dedicated to Lord Venkateswara—an incarnation of Lord Vishnu—remains the world's richest and most visited Hindu shrine.

The annual Vaikuntha Ekadashi celebrations are regarded as a spiritually uplifting experience for millions of devotees seeking divine blessings.

Officer Srinivasa Rao. As part of the inaugural event, around 100 Chenchu tribals were given the rare opportunity to participate in the sacred Sparsha Darshan of Lord Mallikarjuna Swamy. The Srisailam temple and the Chenchu tribes share a deep historical and spiritual connection. Residing in the Nallamala forest region surrounding the temple, the Chenchus have been traditional guardians and custodians of the temple for centuries. Recognizing their long-standing association and contributions,

the temple administration decided to honor their heritage through this special program. The initiative has been widely appreciated by devotees and social organizations alike. Speaking on the occasion, Chairman Ramesh Naidu stated that the decision to provide free Sparsha Darshan to Chenchu tribals was taken during the temple's recent Trust Board meeting. He further announced that similar opportunities would be extended once every month to ensure continued participation of the tribal devotees.





# India's Economy in 2025: Navigating Opportunity and Uncertainty



As the curtain falls on 2025, India's economic narrative stands out amid a backdrop of global uncertainty and shifting geopolitical winds. The country's performance this year was marked by notable achievements — including ascending to the position of the world's fourth largest economy — and significant challenges such as tariff pressures, currency volatility, and uneven external demand. India's journey through 2025 reflects resilience, structural dynamism, and a future oriented toward inclusive growth. Yet, the year also underscores areas requiring strategic clarity, sustained reform and policy foresight.

## 1. The Milestone of Becoming the Fourth Largest Economy

One of 2025's most widely noted developments was India's formal recognition as the world's fourth largest economy by nominal GDP. With an estimated output nearing \$4.2 trillion, India surpassed one of the advanced economies it had long trailed behind. This symbolic and substantive achievement speaks volumes about the country's growth momentum over the last decade.

While nominal size is influenced by exchange rates and price levels, the sheer scale of India's economy, its expanding domestic market, and structural reforms — such as simplified tax structures and investment inflows — confirm its rising global stature. This milestone is not merely numerical; it signifies India's expanding footprint in the global economic arena and positions it as a central node for future trade,

investment and strategic partnerships.

However, challenges remain. Per capita income in India still lags significantly behind advanced economies. Growth at the aggregate level therefore must translate into meaningful improvements in household incomes, job creation, and reductions in inequality. This remains an unfinished task as India continues its climb.

## 2. Sustained Growth Amid Global Headwinds

In a year defined by uneven global expansion, India maintained a robust economic growth trajectory. Domestic demand proved resilient, and growth estimates for 2025-26 hovered around the mid-six percent range. This is noteworthy given the backdrop of slowing global trade, rising protectionism, and geopolitical tensions that have damped investment flows in other emerging economies.

A key strength has been India's expansive service sector — from information technology to business process services — which continued to absorb labor and contribute meaningfully to national income. Private consumption, buoyed by rural demand and rising incomes, remained a major driver. Government capital expenditure and infrastructure investments also played a stabilizing role, preventing growth from decelerating as external demand softened.

This internal demand led growth narrative resonated well with policymakers and economists alike, shifting some focus away from export dependence toward strengthening domestic markets and supply chains.

## 3. The "Goldilocks" Episode of Low Inflation

One of the defining macroeconomic themes of 2025 was the significant easing of inflation. Consumer price inflation dipped to historically low levels at a time when many major economies grappled with persistent price pressures. Ample supplies of essential food items — facilitated by strong agricultural outputs and improved logistics — helped cushion food inflation. Rationalization of indirect taxes, including goods and services tax adjustments in some categories, also played a role.

For policymakers, low inflation offered breathing room. With prices stable, monetary authorities had the flexibility to consider supportive measures aimed at growth. Yet, extremely low inflation also raises concerns. It may mask underlying demand weaknesses in certain sectors or indicate

This fiscal strength was critical. It provided the government with both the space to continue financing capital expenditure on infrastructure and services and the credibility to maintain fiscal discipline amid shifting global financial conditions. For investors, this translated into greater confidence in India's economic governance.

Still, sustaining revenue growth while controlling expenditure will be pivotal in the coming years. This is especially true at a time when strategic investments in health, education and social welfare are essential for inclusive growth.

## 5. Trade Policy: New Agreements and Strategic Outreach

In 2025, India made decisive strides in its trade diplomacy. Multiple trade and economic partnership agreements were signed or activated with countries across

in sectors from manufacturing to services.

## 6. External Pressures: Tariffs, Rupee Volatility and Trade Headwinds

Despite progress on trade partnerships, 2025 was not without external headwinds. The imposition of elevated tariffs, particularly by the United States on certain Indian exports, posed challenges for exporters in vulnerable sectors. These tariff actions disrupted traditional trade flows and contributed to uncertainty for businesses that had long relied on established markets.

Simultaneously, the Indian rupee experienced depreciation against the US dollar during much of the year. Currency volatility was influenced by capital outflows, slowing foreign portfolio investments and shifting global interest rate expectations.

While a weaker rupee can sometimes enhance export competitiveness, it also raises the cost of imports — including critical inputs like crude oil — and can contribute to inflationary pressures.

In navigating these pressures, policymakers face a nuanced challenge: balancing export incentives with the need to ensure macroeconomic stability and manage external vulnerabilities.

## 7. Structural Reforms as a Long Term Foundation

The macroeconomic outcomes of 2025 were not merely the result of cyclical factors, but also structural reforms undertaken over the past decade. Labour market reforms, enhanced ease of doing business, changes in the tax regime and measures to attract foreign direct investment have all played a role in shaping India's economic landscape.

Tax rationalization, including adjustments to the goods and services tax structure, is intended to stimulate consumption and incentivize production. While short-term revenue implications were evident, the long-term objective remains strengthening domestic demand and reducing distortions that previously hindered investment.

Similarly, efforts to simplify regulatory frameworks and promote digital governance have improved India's business environment, making it more attractive to both domestic and global investors.

frameworks that balance revenue growth with critical public investment.

- Managing currency stability through prudent foreign exchange and macroeconomic policy measures.

## 8. Socioeconomic Challenges and Inequality

Despite macroeconomic progress, India's development story continues to grapple with enduring socioeconomic challenges. Income inequality remains a core concern, with gains in growth not uniformly distributed across regions or demographic groups. Rural economies, while showing resilience, still face structural constraints in access to markets, finance and technology.

The informal sector — which employs a significant portion of the workforce — continues to operate without stable income safeguards, leaving workers vulnerable to economic shifts. Addressing such disparities requires not only policy support for job creation and skill development, but also targeted investments in healthcare, education and social protection systems.

Achieving inclusive growth demands that economic success translates beyond national aggregates into improved quality of life and socioeconomic mobility for all citizens.

## 9. Looking Ahead: Opportunities and Priorities for 2026

As India transitions into 2026, policymakers face a dual mandate: sustaining growth momentum while managing risks that emerged in 2025.

### Key priorities include:

- Deepening domestic market strength through investments in infrastructure, digitalization and manufacturing capacity.
- Enhancing human capital by focusing on education, skills training and healthcare accessibility.
- Diversifying export markets and ensuring trade agreements are effectively operationalized to benefit Indian producers.
- Strengthening fiscal

frameworks that balance revenue growth with critical public investment.

- Managing currency stability through prudent foreign exchange and macroeconomic policy measures.

- Promoting sustainability and resilience in supply chains to withstand global shocks.

With the right policy mix and sustained commitment to reform, India's economic prospects remain bright. Indeed, the 2025 experience demonstrates that while external conditions can be unpredictable, India's internal economic engines — innovation, entrepreneurship, hu-



man capital and demographic advantage — have the potential to sustain growth in the long term.

## Conclusion: A Balanced View of Progress and Potential

India's economic performance in 2025 reflects a blend of achievement and challenge. Becoming the fourth largest economy is a testament to progress, but it also illustrates the distance still to travel in terms of inclusive prosperity. Strong growth and low inflation were encouraging, yet trade tensions and currency dynamics offered cautionary lessons.

Looking ahead, the nation stands at a crossroads. By reinforcing structural foundations, nurturing domestic capacities and engaging confidently in global economic diplomacy, India can convert 2025's gains into long-lasting prosperity. Growth must be deep, equitable and sustainable — reaching far beyond headline numbers to touch the daily lives of millions. If that vision guides policy into 2026 and beyond, India's economic narrative will not only be one of resilience, but of transformation.

## Centre Warns Online Platforms Against Hosting Illegal Content, Urges Swift Action

The Union government has issued a stern warning to major online platforms to act decisively against the spread of illegal and harmful content, highlighting growing concerns over digital safety and accountability. The directive comes amid increasing scrutiny over the role of social media and digital intermediaries in the proliferation of unlawful material and misinformation, as authorities push for stricter enforcement of existing rules and a more responsible approach by technology companies.

In a statement reiterating its commitment to upholding law and order in the online space, the government emphasised that platforms have a legal obligation to ensure that content hosted on their services complies with Indian laws. Officials pointed out that while the internet has enabled unprecedented opportunities for communication and commerce, it has also facilitated the rapid spread of content that can threaten public safety, disrupt social harmony or violate individual rights.

The Centre's warning focused on digital platforms that host user-generated content, urging them to strengthen their moderation policies and adopt robust mechanisms to promptly identify and remove unlawful material. Authorities stressed that platforms must respond effectively to complaints and legal notices, and that failure to act could result in regulatory action or loss of



intermediary protection under Indian law.

Government representatives highlighted that the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules require social media companies and online services to establish clear grievance redressal systems, appoint compliance officers in India, and follow due process for content removal when required by law. These obligations are designed to balance freedom of expression with the larger public interest and ensure accountability in the digital ecosystem.

The warning comes amid broader efforts by the government to tackle online harms, including cybercrime, hate speech, deepfakes, fraudulent schemes and content that incites violence or discriminates.

Officials noted that while many platforms have made improvements in content moderation, persistent challenges remain, particularly with regard to emerging technologies and encrypted messaging services that make oversight more complex.

Industry representatives welcomed the dialogue with the government but also underscored the need for greater clarity and collaboration. They indicated that technology companies are investing in advanced tools, artificial intelligence and human review processes to detect and take down prohibited material, but urged that enforcement frameworks should be predictable and aligned with global best practices to avoid unintended consequences for legitimate speech.

Legal experts observing the development said that the current regulatory approach aims to strike a balance between protecting digital freedoms and addressing real harms. They noted that evolving jurisprudence and policy responses across the world reflect similar tensions as countries seek to hold platforms accountable without stifling innovation or free expression.

The Centre's warning serves as a reminder that online platforms, while powerful enablers of connectivity, also carry a responsibility to uphold legal and ethical standards. As digital engagement continues to grow, the emphasis on accountability and safety is likely to shape ongoing discussions between regulators, platforms and civil society on the future of the internet in India.

## Bangladesh Mourns Former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, Pioneering Female Leader



Bangladesh is mourning the passing of Khaleda Zia, a towering political figure and former Prime Minister, who died at the age of 80 after a prolonged illness. She had been admitted to Evercare Hospital in Dhaka in recent weeks, battling multiple health issues, including infections affecting her heart and lungs as well as pneumonia. Her health had gradually deteriorated due to chronic conditions linked to age.

Khaleda Zia was the first woman to serve as Prime Minister of Bangladesh, holding office in two non-consecutive terms from 1991 to 1996 and 2001 to 2006. Her tenure oversaw significant political transitions, including the shift from a presidential to a parliamentary system of governance. She played a pivotal role in shaping Bangladesh's policies and navigating the country through critical periods of its modern development.

Her political journey began in the aftermath of her husband, President Ziaur Rahman's assassination. Rising to

prominence in a male-dominated political landscape, she led the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and became a central figure in national politics. For decades, she and her long-time rival, Sheikh Hasina, dominated the political arena, often amid intense rivalry and ideological differences.

Zia's leadership emphasized national sovereignty and regional diplomacy. During her tenure, she took firm stances on issues of connectivity, trade, and transit rights, shaping Bangladesh's relations

with neighbouring countries, including India. Her approach to governance reflected a blend of resilience and pragmatism, which earned her both domestic and international recognition.

In response to her passing, the Bangladesh government declared three days of state mourning and announced a public holiday on the day of her funeral. Citizens were urged to observe the mourning period respectfully to honour her legacy.

Tributes poured in from

across the region. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi acknowledged her as a resilient democratic leader who contributed significantly to Bangladesh's development and to India-Bangladesh relations. Leaders from other neighbouring countries also extended condolences, highlighting the impact of her long and influential political career.

Khaleda Zia's legacy is multifaceted. She is remembered for her resilience, leadership, and pioneering role as a female political figure in South Asia. At the same time, her tenure was marked by controversies and challenges that shaped the nation's political discourse. Nonetheless, her place in history as a central figure in modern Bangladesh and as a trailblazer for women in leadership remains undisputed.

Her passing marks the end of a defining chapter in Bangladesh's political history, leaving a lasting imprint on the country's governance, regional diplomacy, and the evolution of democracy in South Asia.

## Who Is Aviva Baig? The Delhi Woman Set to Marry Raihan Vadra



Aviva Baig has become a subject of national interest following the announcement of her upcoming marriage to Raihan Vadra, the son of Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Robert Vadra. The engagement has drawn widespread attention, not just because of the prominence of the Vadra-Gandhi family in Indian political and social circles, but also due to Aviva's own unique background and accomplishments.

Aviva Baig hails from Delhi, where she spent her formative years and completed her education. Known for her academic prowess, she pursued higher studies with a focus on arts and humanities, though specific details about her institutions or specialisation have largely remained private, in keeping with her generally low public profile prior to this news.

Professionally, Aviva is described as a creative and culturally inclined individual. She has been associated with projects related to arts, design and cultural initiatives, often blending traditional aesthetics with modern sensibilities. Friends and acquaintances

characterize her as someone with a keen eye for detail and a deep appreciation for heritage and artistic expression.

Despite the spotlight now on her personal life, Aviva has maintained a relatively private presence on social media and in public forums. She is not known to seek public attention, and her circle of close friends and family describe her as grounded, thoughtful and warm-hearted—qualities that have reportedly endeared her to Raihan and his extended

family.

Her engagement to Raihan Vadra has brought her into the public eye, especially given the prominent political legacy of the Gandhi family. Raihan, the eldest son of Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Robert Vadra, has largely stayed away from the political limelight, focusing instead on personal pursuits and maintaining a discreet public image. The couple's announcement has sparked interest across social media and news platforms, with many congratulating them on this new chapter.

As the wedding plans take shape, much of the focus has been on how Aviva and Raihan will balance personal aspirations with public expectations. Their relationship, rooted in mutual respect and shared values, continues to capture attention—not as a political statement, but as a story of two individuals stepping forward together.

Aviva Baig's journey from a private life in Delhi to becoming part of one of India's most talked-about families is a reminder of how personal milestones can resonate broadly in the public imagination, especially when they intertwine with legacy, tradition and contemporary Indian society.

## India Upholds Artistic Freedom Amid China's Criticism of Battle of Galwan



India has reaffirmed the importance of artistic freedom following criticism from Chinese state media regarding the upcoming Bollywood film Battle of Galwan. The movie, starring Salman Khan, is based on the 2020 violent clash between Indian and Chinese troops in the Galwan Valley of eastern Ladakh, where Colonel Bikkumon Singh and 19 other Indian soldiers were killed. The incident, which marked one of the most serious confrontations along the Line of Actual Control in recent years, remains a sensitive subject in both countries. Government sources emphasised that filmmakers are free to portray historical events under creative expression and that the state does not dictate cinematic content.

Chinese media had strongly criticised the film's teaser, claiming it presented a distorted, one-sided account of the Galwan clash.

The commentary suggested that the depiction exaggerated the events and unfairly blamed China for the confrontation, asserting that Indian troops were responsible for crossing the Line of Actual Control. India

Officials also clarified that the government is not involved in producing the film and that those seeking factual clarity about the clash can approach the Ministry of Defence. They pointed out that Indian cinema has long-standing tradition of depicting significant military engagements, including earlier wars such as the 1962 Sino-Indian conflict and other border confrontations. These films often blend factual events with dramatization, reflecting the filmmaker's interpretation while paying tribute to the bravery and sacrifices of soldiers.

The controversy surrounding Battle of Galwan underscores the tension between respecting historical accuracy, exercising creative freedom, and navigating international sensitivities.

While filmmakers aim to tell compelling stories, the reception of such films by foreign governments and

media can sometimes escalate into diplomatic or political discourse. India's response emphasised that artistic narratives should not be conflated with state policy or used as a measure of diplomatic stance.

As the film's release approaches, the debate has drawn attention to the broader issue of how nations perceive historical and contemporary events in popular culture.

Indian authorities have reiterated that cinema remains a platform for independent storytelling and that filmmakers should continue to have the freedom to depict events they consider important. The statement reinforces India's commitment to protecting artistic expression, even when creative portrayals intersect with sensitive geopolitical contexts, ensuring that filmmakers can continue to craft narratives that resonate with audiences without fear of censorship.

This approach highlights the delicate balance between respecting historical accuracy, exercising creative freedom, and navigating international sensitivities, asserting that in India, storytelling remains a protected form of expression.

## PM Modi Holds Pre-Budget Meeting with Economists to Shape Union Budget Strategy



New Delhi — Prime Minister Narendra Modi convened a crucial session with leading economists and sectoral experts at NITI Aayog as part of preparations for the Union Budget 2026-27, highlighting the government's consultative approach to fiscal planning.

The discussion, under the theme 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat and Structural Transformation: Agenda for Viksit Bharat', brought together distinguished voices from academia, finance, and policy to provide insights ahead of the budget presentation scheduled for February 1.

In his remarks, the Prime Minister emphasised aligning policy and budgeting with India's long-term development vision for 2047, when the country aims to become fully developed. He called for mission-mode reforms across sectors to sustain growth, enhance global competitiveness, and build world-class capabilities.

Modi highlighted structural transformation, deeper integration into global markets, and the importance of positioning India as a hub of skilled talent in the international workforce.

The discussion underscored how the idea of Viksit Bharat has become a shared aspiration among citizens. The Prime Minister noted that economic strategy must account for evolving patterns in education, consumption, and mobility as part of India's journey toward a prosperous future.

Economists present at the meeting offered recommendations on multiple aspects of economic policy, including improving productivity, strengthening infrastructure, boosting household savings, and leveraging cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence and digital public infrastructure to drive growth across sectors.

Senior officials from NITI Aayog, including Vice Chairman Suman Bery and CEO BVR Subrahmanyam, participated alongside other

experts. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, responsible for presenting the budget, also attended, highlighting the collaborative nature of the consultation.

The meeting reflects a broader pattern of stakeholder engagement by the government as part of the annual pre-budget consultation process. Such interactions aim to gather expert views on economic challenges, investment priorities, and reform measures to support key sectors such as manufacturing, agriculture, and services.

As India prepares to unveil the Union Budget for 2026-27, the consultation at NITI Aayog reinforces the government's commitment to inclusive policy formulation. By bringing together diverse expertise, the administration seeks to ensure that the upcoming fiscal roadmap addresses immediate economic needs while laying a foundation for sustainable and equitable growth in the years ahead.

## Russia Deploys Nuclear-Capable Oreshnik Missiles Amid Rising Geopolitical Tensions



Russia has officially announced that its nuclear-capable Oreshnik missile system has entered active service, a development that has intensified global security concerns as the Ukraine conflict continues with fragile peace negotiations.

The announcement came following a ceremony in Belarus, where the intermediate-range hypersonic missile systems have been deployed. Belarusian authorities confirmed the arrival of the Oreshnik missiles, which Russia claims will strengthen its strategic deterrence. Russian President Vladimir Putin had previously indicated that the Oreshnik system would become operational before the end of 2025, linking its deployment to Russia's broader military posture and warning that Moscow could escalate operations if Ukraine and its Western allies reject key Kremlin demands during ongoing peace talks.

The Oreshnik — named after the Russian word for "hazelnut tree" — is a mobile intermediate-range ballistic missile system capable of carrying both nuclear and conventional warheads. It reportedly has a range of up to 5,000 kilometres, potentially reaching strategic targets across Europe. The missile's hypersonic speed and manoeuvrability make it difficult for existing defence systems to intercept, according to Russian officials.

The missile system's operationalisation comes at a crucial moment in the Ukraine conflict, as negotiators and international mediators seek a breakthrough in peace discussions. While

talks have seen limited progress, disagreements remain over territorial control and the status of key regions.

Belarus hosting Russian nuclear-capable missiles underscores deep military cooperation between the two nations. Analysts note that placing such weapons beyond Russia's borders — closer to NATO territories — represents a significant strategic shift, prompting concern among Western defence planners. Reports suggest that up to 10 Oreshnik units may be stationed within Belarusian territory, though official numbers have not been disclosed.

Moscow argues that the deployment serves as a deterrent against perceived Western escalation, including the presence of long-range missiles by NATO members. While supporters of the system emphasise national security and strategic necessity, critics warn that the move could heighten tensions in Eastern Europe and complicate diplomatic efforts toward peace.

The deployment of the Oreshnik missile system highlights Russia's determination to maintain a credible nuclear deterrent while signalling its strategic priorities on the global stage. As European capitals and Washington closely monitor the situation, the operationalisation of these missiles marks a significant moment in the evolving security landscape, carrying serious implications for global strategic stability and the future trajectory of the Ukraine conflict.

## All Eyes on Tarique Rahman as Successor to Khaleda Zia and Leader of BNP's Next Chapter



Bangladesh's political landscape is poised for a major transition following the death of veteran leader and former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, as attention increasingly centres on her son Tarique Rahman to lead the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) into a new era. The development comes at a critical time, with national elections scheduled for February 2026 and deep questions about the future direction of one of the country's oldest political parties.

Tarique Rahman, 60, has been serving as the acting chairman of the BNP for several years, effectively overseeing party affairs from abroad and later in Bangladesh following his return from exile earlier this month. With his celebrated homecoming just days before his mother's death, there has been no serious internal challenge to his leadership position, and party insiders and political analysts alike see him as the de facto successor to Khaleda Zia's legacy.

Rahman's ascent comes as Bangladesh mourns the loss of Khaleda Zia, a towering figure who dominated the nation's politics for decades and was known for her fierce rivalry with Awami League leader Sheikh Hasina. Her leadership shaped the nation's political culture and electoral battles for years, earning her a place among the most influential figures in Bangladesh's modern history.

Supporters view Tarique Rahman as the natural heir to his mother's political vision. He is widely expected to be the BNP's prime ministerial candi-

date if the party succeeds in next year's elections. Having lived in London for nearly 17 years following political and legal controversies in the late 2000s, Rahman returned to Dhaka in late December 2025. Shortly after his arrival, he completed national identity registration formalities, a key step toward contesting in parliamentary elections.

Rahman has articulated a vision for Bangladesh that emphasises democratic renewal, national unity and socio-economic development. In early public statements, he reaffirmed his commitment to democratic principles and spoke about inclusive governance, signalling his intent to chart a new political course while preserving the traditions of his party.

However, his leadership ambitions are not without controversy. Critics point to the turbulent political history of the BNP and Rahman's own past — including corruption allegations that have dogged him for years — as potential points of contention in the run up to elections. Supporters counter that he represents continuity and stability for a party that has long relied on the Zia family's leadership.

With national elections on the horizon, Tarique Rahman's role will be pivotal not only for the BNP's electoral prospects but also for Bangladesh's broader political future. As the party prepares for its next chapter, all eyes are on its new figurehead to see whether he can fulfil the legacy of his mother and reshape the political trajectory of the nation.

## US Think Tank Warns of Possible India-Pakistan Conflict in 2026 Amid Terror Threat Concerns



A prominent United States foreign policy think tank has warned of the possibility of renewed armed conflict between India and Pakistan in 2026, largely driven by escalating terrorist activity and unresolved regional tensions.

The report, compiled from a survey of American foreign policy experts, highlighted South Asia as one of several global flashpoints that could see increased violence in the coming year.

According to the assessment, there is a moderate likelihood that heightened militant attacks and cross border terrorism could trigger military confrontation between New Delhi and Islamabad. The think tank emphasised that even limited incidents involving non-state actors can rapidly escalate due to the

fraught history and sensitive security dynamics between the two nuclear neighbours.

The warning comes against the backdrop of the short but intense military face off in May 2025, which saw both countries engage in a series of drone and missile exchanges. The confrontation followed a deadly terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam region that left dozens of civilians dead. In response, the Indian army launched a targeted cross border operation to dismantle terror camps.

Pakistan, in turn, attempted to strike both military and civilian targets using armed drones, although these incursions were largely neutralised. The escalating hostilities eventually led to a ceasefire agreement

after several days of exchange along the Line of Control.

The report noted that

while a ceasefire remains in place, tense rhetoric from either side and ongoing militant threats could undermine stability. Intelligence inputs cited in the analysis indicate that over 30 militants from Pakistani territory are believed to be active in the Jammu region this winter, raising concerns about potential provocations.

In addition to the India-Pakistan risk, the report also flagged a separate but related flashpoint involving Afghanistan and Pakistan, where renewed cross border attacks could trigger armed clashes. While this scenario is deemed of lower impact compared to the India-Pakistan risk, it

underscores broader regional instability and the interconnected nature of security threats in South Asia.

The warning has drawn attention from policymakers and analysts alike, who underscore the need for robust diplomatic engagement and strengthened counter terror cooperation to prevent escalation. Regional security experts emphasise that military confrontation between India and Pakistan would have severe implications far beyond the immediate theatre, given both countries' nuclear capabilities and extensive military resources.

As 2026 approaches, observers note that both governments — alongside international partners — will need to prioritise conflict prevention strategies, strengthen intelligence sharing, and support peace mechanisms to mitigate the likelihood of an armed clash. The spectre of renewed conflict looms large, reminding the world of the fragile security equilibrium that continues to shape South Asia's geopolitical landscape.

## US Politician's Son Calls for Complete H1B Visa Ban Amid Severe Stamping Delays Affecting Indian Workers



As prolonged delays in H1B visa stamping continue to disrupt the lives and careers of hundreds of Indian professionals, Nalin Haley, son of former United Nations ambassador and Republican leader Nikki Haley, has sparked fresh controversy by calling for a complete ban on the H1B visa programme. His comments have reignited debate over immigration policy and the ongoing challenges faced by skilled foreign workers trying to return to the United States.

The controversy arises amid widespread frustration over severe backlogs in visa appointment schedules at U.S. consulates in India. Many H1B visa holders, including tech workers and other professionals, travelled to India this year for mandatory stamping appointments — required to re-enter the United States — but were informed that their interview dates had been postponed by several months. In numerous cases, appointments originally scheduled for early 2026 have been pushed as late as March or April, leaving applicants stranded in India and unable to return to their American jobs.

In a social media post, Nalin Haley stated that the delays were insufficient and argued that the H1B programme should be entirely eliminated, claiming that some governments raise the issue only to protect remittance flows rather than address worker hardship. He wrote that workers "can't be stranded in their own country" and

characterised the programme as harmful to domestic labour markets. His tone and stance have drawn sharp criticism, particularly given his family's political background and his previous hardline remarks on immigration policy.

The Indian government has formally raised concerns with U.S. authorities about the visa scheduling disruptions. New Delhi's Ministry of External Affairs noted that multiple Indian nationals have faced "extended hardships" due to delays in scheduling or rescheduling interviews, affecting not only workers but also students and dependents. Officials emphasise that such visa matters are with the sovereign jurisdiction

of the issuing country but have engaged with U.S. counterparts to seek resolutions and minimise adverse impacts.

The backlog has also been linked to changes in U.S. consular procedures, including expanded social media vetting of visa applicants, a move aimed at enhanced security screening. The additional scrutiny has increased processing times, resulting in postponed appointments across various visa categories, including H1B and H4 dependent visas. Immigration lawyers advise that these new vetting measures are behind much of the scheduling chaos and have urged affected individuals to avoid travel until appointments are definitively confirmed.

The delays have profound implications for companies that rely on H1B talent, particularly in technology and specialised fields. Many employers have warned that prolonged absences or inability to return could strain project timelines, disrupt operations, and prompt reconsideration of hiring strategies. Some U.S. firms have reportedly cautioned their staff against international travel to avoid losing access to work authorisation.

Critics of Nalin Haley's call for a ban argue that eliminating the H1B programme would harm businesses that depend on foreign expertise and undercut international collaboration. They emphasise that the visa backlog stems from procedural changes rather than an inherent flaw in the system itself and that coordination between governments, industry, and consular services is needed to resolve bottlenecks without dismantling essential migration pathways.

As 2026 approaches, the H1B controversy remains unresolved, reflecting broader debates on immigration policy, skilled labour mobility, and the balance between national security and economic needs. Government engagements and public discourse triggered by these visa challenges are expected to shape future policy directions in both the United States and India.

## Record IPO Year in India Sees New Age and Financial Firms Leading Fundraising; Momentum to Continue in 2026

India's primary capital markets witnessed an exceptional year in 2025, as companies across sectors tapped public markets like never before, marking one of the most active initial public offering (IPO) cycles in the country's history. Fundraising remained robust, driven by strong interest from both domestic and institutional investors, with new age companies and financial services firms dominating the landscape.

Data from market analysts show that hundreds of companies launched IPOs in 2025, with listed issues collectively raising nearly two trillion rupees. Financial services emerged as the dominant segment, accounting for the largest share of capital raised. This category featured significant participation from non banking financial companies (NBFCs), asset managers, insurers and digital financial platforms, highlighting investor confidence in India's expanding financial ecosystem.

Among the prominent mainboard offerings during the year were large ticket issues from marquee financial players that ranked among the biggest funds mobilised in India's public markets. These large cap entries helped propel overall IPO fundraising totals to record levels, underscoring the appeal of established financial names and the depth of investor appetite for growth oriented businesses.

Beyond financial services, other segments such as manufacturing, industrials, technology, healthcare and consumer



products also attracted substantial interest. Technology and digital platforms, including several new age internet and consumer technology firms, contributed significantly to total issuance, reflecting sustained investor enthusiasm for innovation led growth stories. Healthcare and consumer durable companies further diversified the market, indicating broad structural demand across economic sectors.

Small and medium enterprise (SME) listings also played a critical role in the fundraising environment, with a substantial number of smaller companies choosing to list on specialized platforms. This proliferation of SME issues reflects broader participation

across the economic spectrum, where early stage and mid tier enterprises are increasingly using public equity to support expansion and growth ambitions.

Looking ahead to 2026, analysts expect the IPO pipeline to remain strong, supported by a healthy roster of companies at various stages of preparation for market entry. Financial services, manufacturing and infrastructure linked sectors are expected to continue dominating new issuances, while consumption oriented and technology led firms are likely to sustain investor interest.

However, experts also note that IPO activity in 2026 could be more calibrated compared to the peak enthusiasm seen in

2025. With market conditions evolving, issuers may focus on valuation discipline and quality of fundamentals to attract long term investors. Nonetheless, the strong momentum built this year has laid the groundwork for continued engagement with primary markets, positioning India's IPO ecosystem for another active year.

Overall, 2025 proved to be a milestone year for India's IPO market, with diverse sectors raising unprecedented capital and new age companies emerging as major contributors. As the country enters 2026, the combination of a rich pipeline and sustained investor interest suggests continued vibrancy in public market fundraising.

## REC and PFC Seen as Attractive Picks for 2026 Amid Dividend Trends and Valuation Opportunities

Shares of several public sector enterprises in India experienced mixed performance in 2025, with some major names outperforming while others lagged. Among the underperformers were REC Ltd. (RECL) and Power Finance Corporation (PFC), which saw their share prices decline by roughly 29 per cent and 22 per cent respectively over the year. The underperformance prompted investors to reassess valuations and potential long term opportunities, particularly in the power and infrastructure finance segments.

Despite the decline, market analysts believe both RECL and PFC present attractive investment opportunities for 2026. Valuations at current levels are seen as compelling, especially when combined with healthy dividend yields. Analysts suggest that both stocks could deliver 15-20 per cent upside over time if the companies continue to execute effectively on their core operations.

From a financial performance perspective, both companies re-



ported modest shifts in quarterly metrics. RECL's consolidated net profit dipped slightly compared with the previous year, while revenue from operations grew modestly. Similarly, PFC posted a small decline in net profit alongside stronger revenue growth. These results reflect resilient operations amid cyclical headwinds in infrastructure

and power financing, offering context to the investor caution that affected share prices during the year.

Dividend payments have been a positive aspect for shareholders. In 2025, RECL distributed dividends five times, while PFC also paid out in five installments. These distributions reinforce the companies' focus on

returning capital to shareholders and provide appeal for income-oriented investors seeking stable yields, even in a volatile market environment.

Looking ahead, analysts expect both companies to benefit if credit growth in the infrastructure and power sectors picks up and if broader economic conditions remain supportive. Their strategic positioning in government-backed sectors provides enduring opportunities, and sustained operational performance could underpin a rebound in investor interest and valuations through 2026.

Overall, while 2025 posed challenges for REC Ltd. and PFC shares, their combination of attractive valuations, solid dividends, and sectoral relevance has drawn attention from analysts and long-term investors. Market watchers see these public sector enterprises as potential beneficiaries of a stable economic environment in the year ahead, with the possibility of delivering both capital appreciation and income to investors.

## Gold and Silver Enter 2026 With Strong Fundamentals but Likely Consolidation Ahead

Gold and silver closed out 2025 having delivered some of the most remarkable performances across global commodity markets, but analysts suggest that 2026 may be characterized by a period of consolidation rather than another sharp rally. In 2025, gold prices surged significantly, driven by heightened safe-haven demand amid geopolitical tensions, persistent inflation concerns, and weakening currencies in several emerging markets. Silver's performance was even more impressive, outpacing most other asset classes due to strong investor interest and industrial demand.

In India, both gold and silver reached record levels on domestic exchanges, supported by festive buying, investment demand, and safe-haven flows. Silver, in particular, benefited from robust industrial demand across sectors such as clean energy, electronics, and electric vehicles, which reinforced its dual role as both an investment and industrial metal.

Looking ahead to 2026, analysts expect prices to remain elevated but trade within a defined range, reflecting a consolidation phase. Gold is likely to find support at higher levels as central banks continue strategic purchases and global monetary policies remain accommodative. Its safe-haven appeal remains



strong in the face of geopolitical uncertainties, currency fluctuations, and uneven economic growth in major economies.

Silver is expected to maintain its robustness, though its industrial linkages may lead to higher short-term volatility. While long-term fundamentals are supportive, including rising industrial demand and ongoing supply constraints, profit-taking and technical corrections could occur periodically. Investors should anticipate fluctuations, particularly if global liquidity conditions tighten or economic growth slows in key industrial regions.

Despite potential near-term volatility, the structural backdrop for both precious metals remains constructive. Institutional forecasts indicate that gold prices will likely remain elevated throughout 2026, supported by continued central bank accumulation and sustained investor interest as a hedge against macroeconomic uncertainties. Silver, with its combined industrial and investment demand, may continue to outperform gold in percentage terms if industrial activity remains strong.

Market experts advise that any short-term corrections

should be viewed as accumulation opportunities rather than signals of trend reversals. Overall, while 2026 may not replicate the record-breaking rallies of 2025, precious metals are expected to remain a critical part of diversified investment portfolios, offering stability and protection against economic and geopolitical risks.

In summary, gold and silver enter 2026 with strong fundamentals, likely undergoing a phase of consolidation while maintaining solid support levels amid continued global uncertainties and robust investor demand.

## Indian Markets End 2025 on a Flat Note Amid Weak Global Cues



Indian equity markets closed the week on a subdued note, with the Sensex and Nifty 50 ending nearly unchanged after a volatile trading session. Investor sentiment remained cautious as global markets displayed signs of weakness, leaving domestic indices struggling to find clear direction in the final days of 2025.

The Sensex slipped marginally, while the Nifty 50 finished flat, reflecting a lack of conviction among buyers and sellers. Analysts noted that the day's price action formed a technical pattern indicating indecision, often signaling a potential short-term reversal once confirmed by subsequent sessions.

Indian markets opened with a muted tone, as suggested by the GIFT Nifty, which indicated a flat start. Trading remained largely range-bound throughout the session, with investors taking a wait-and-watch approach amid thin year-end volumes.

Global market sentiment weighed heavily on domestic trading. Several Asian indices eased, retreating from recent gains, while U.S. markets also logged modest losses earlier in the week, particularly in technology stocks. This subdued performance abroad tempered risk appetite in India and contributed to the flat session.

Sector-wise, activity was mixed. Energy and metal stocks provided some

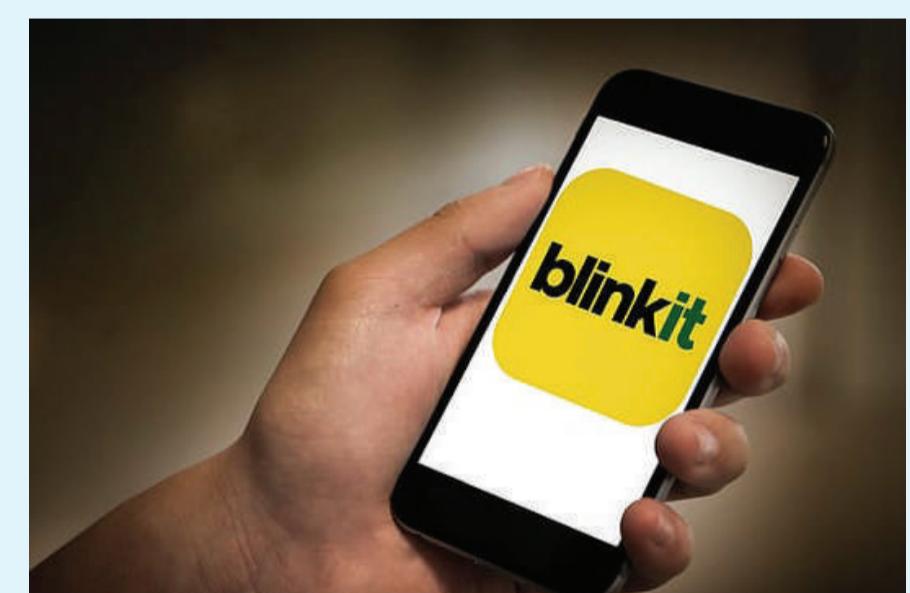
support, showing modest gains at intervals, while major IT and financial names faced pressure, keeping broader indices largely unchanged. The divergence highlighted investor caution, as domestic participants balanced sector-specific narratives against global uncertainty.

The Indian economic calendar was light on major catalysts as the year drew to a close. Market participants are now looking ahead to early 2026 events, including corporate earnings, macroeconomic data releases, and policy developments. Global triggers such as Federal Reserve policy signals and geopolitical developments are expected to influence capital flows and investor sentiment in the coming months.

Currency markets remained relatively stable, with the Indian rupee holding steady against the U.S. dollar amid cautious trading. Commodity prices, including gold and silver, traded in narrow ranges, reflecting hedging activity and measured positioning by investors.

Overall, the Indian market's flat finish, combined with weak global cues, suggests that investors are exercising caution at the year-end. With limited domestic triggers and global uncertainties, traders appear to be waiting for fresh catalysts to set the direction for equities as India enters 2026.

## Eternal Shares Fall 25% From Record High Amid Investor Concerns



Shares of Eternal Ltd., the parent company of major food delivery and quick commerce platforms, have fallen roughly 25 per cent from their record highs earlier this year. The stock recently touched a more than five month low, trading significantly below its October peak, as investors weighed near term risks and recent corporate developments.

The decline stood out as broader markets remained relatively stable, highlighting investor caution specifically around Eternal. Trading volumes were notably elevated compared with recent averages, indicating active participation by market participants reacting to the stock's underperformance.

### Leadership Change Sparks Nervousness

A key factor contributing to the sell-off has been the resignation of a top finance executive at Blinkit, Eternal's quick commerce arm. The chief financial officer, who had joined the company just over a year ago, stepped down recently, raising concerns about continuity at a critical time for the company. Analysts noted that management changes at prominent divisions can create near-term volatility, especially when investor sentiment is already fragile.

Valuation and Technical Pressures

Earlier in the year, Eternal's shares surged to record levels on optimism about digital consumption trends and strong user engagement across its platforms. Since reaching those highs, the stock has faced persistent selling pressure, and technical indicators show

resistance at previous peak levels. Traders are watching key support zones closely, as breaks below these levels could trigger further corrections.

Despite the decline, Eternal remains a major player in the online services sector, with high levels of revenue and engagement on its platforms. Some analysts view the current correction as a potential long-term entry point for patient investors, though near-term sentiment remains cautious due to leadership uncertainty and profit-taking following earlier gains.

### Sector Dynamics and Competitive Pressures

Eternal's performance is also being influenced by wider trends in the food delivery and quick commerce space. The sector has grown intensely competitive, with rival platforms investing heavily in logistics, discounts, and geographic expansion. Margin pressures from these competitive dynamics have added to investor caution, as operating costs and incremental investments remain key variables affecting profitability.

### Looking Ahead

Market watchers believe that clarity on Eternal's leadership, upcoming quarterly earnings, and progress across its core business segments will be crucial to restoring investor confidence. Demonstrating sustained operational momentum and effectively managing competitive pressures could help stabilize the stock and potentially reverse the recent downturn.

## The Year 2025 Science Made Us Rethink the Impossible



If there was ever a year that proved reality can be stranger than fiction, 2025 was it. From space discoveries that rewrote astronomy textbooks to medical breakthroughs that changed how we understand life itself, the year delivered a cascade of moments that left scientists—and the public—in awe.

One of the most talked-about revelations came from the natural world, where researchers highlighted extraordinary creatures capable of doing what once seemed biologically impossible. Animals displaying plant-like traits reminded humanity that evolution still holds many secrets. At the same time, scientists claimed the identification of a new colour—one that cannot be perceived naturally by the human eye, pushing the boundaries of how we define vision and perception.

Medicine saw some of its most emotional milestones in 2025. In a historic moment, personalised gene therapy was successfully used to treat a rare genetic condition in an infant, offering hope to families facing previously untreatable disorders. Researchers

also announced progress in growing functional human tissues and organs in laboratories, a development that could dramatically reduce transplant waiting lists in the future.

Space, as always, delivered its share of wonder.

Astronomers confirmed a massive number of previously unknown moons orbiting Saturn, strengthening its title as the planet with the most satellites. Beyond our solar system, thousands of confirmed exoplanets reinforced the idea that Earth may not be as unique as once believed.

Adding to this, the James Webb Space Telescope identified one of the oldest and most distant galaxies ever observed, offering a glimpse into the universe's earliest days.

Technology, too, crossed new thresholds.

Quantum computing took a decisive step forward with the unveiling of advanced chips designed to make previously theoretical systems more stable and practical. Experts believe these developments could eventually transform fields ranging from cryptography to climate modelling.

The year also marked

a turning point in space exploration. For the first time, a private commercial lander achieved a successful soft landing on the Moon, signaling a shift toward greater private participation in lunar missions. Meanwhile, India strengthened its space credentials by launching its heaviest satellite yet, showcasing growing confidence in indigenous launch capabilities.

Back on Earth, scientists revisited human history with fresh eyes. Fossil evidence shed new light on ancient human relatives, reshaping theories about early migration and evolution. At the same time, studies on urban wildlife revealed how animals are rapidly adapting to life alongside humans in expanding cities.

Taken together, 2025 was not just a year of discoveries—it was a year that challenged assumptions. It reminded us that science is not a closed book, but an ever-unfolding story, one where each answer sparks even bigger questions about who we are, where we come from, and what lies ahead.

## India's 'Bandar Apna Dost' Tops Global AI Video Charts, Earns ₹38 Crore



In a striking example of how artificial intelligence is reshaping digital entertainment, an India-based YouTube channel titled Bandar Apna Dost has emerged as the world's top-earning AI-generated video platform. The channel has reportedly earned around 38 crore in annual revenue, placing it at the forefront of a fast-growing global trend driven by automated content creation.

Bandar Apna Dost features short, fast-paced animated videos centred on a cartoon monkey character and a superhero-like figure. Created largely using AI tools, these videos require minimal human involvement yet have managed to attract massive viewership. The channel has accumulated over two billion views, making it one of the most-watched AI-driven content creators on the platform.

Industry analysts studying thousands of YouTube channels worldwide have identified a growing category of content often described as "AI-generated bulk videos." These

videos are produced rapidly using artificial intelligence for animation, scripting and voice generation. While such content is often criticised for lacking depth or originality, its popularity is undeniable, driven largely by algorithms that reward frequent uploads and high engagement.

What sets Bandar Apna Dost apart is its extraordinary financial success. With billions of views and consistent watch time, the channel's advertising revenue has soared, surpassing that of many traditional content creators. The estimated 38 crore annual earnings highlight how AI-powered creativity—even in its simplest form—can translate into significant commercial returns.

The rise of such channels has sparked debate within the digital creator community. Supporters argue that AI democratises content creation, allowing individuals or small teams to compete with large production houses. Critics, however, warn that an influx of low-effort automated vid-

eos could overshadow human-driven storytelling and reduce the overall quality of online content.

Despite the criticism, platforms continue to promote content that keeps users engaged, and AI-generated videos appear well-suited to this model. Their bright visuals, rapid pacing and universal themes make them easily consumable across languages and regions, helping them reach a global audience.

The success of Bandar

Apna Dost reflects a broader shift in how entertainment is produced and consumed. As artificial intelligence tools become more accessible, the boundaries between technology and creativity continue to blur. Whether this trend represents the future of digital media or a temporary phase remains to be seen.

For now, Bandar Apna Dost stands as a powerful symbol of India's growing presence in the global digital economy—proving that in the age of AI, even a simple animated monkey can become a worldwide phenomenon.

## "Dear Indians, Stop Behaving Like This": Viral Beach Video Triggers a Wake-Up Call on Civic Sense

A quiet stretch of Kerala's picturesque coastline has unexpectedly become the center of a loud national conversation on civic responsibility and environmental awareness. A viral video from Varkala Cliff Beach, showing plastic waste and food litter scattered across the sand, has sparked widespread debate on how tourists treat public spaces meant for collective enjoyment.

The video, shared by a social media user, contrasts the natural beauty of the beach with the disturbing sight of trash left behind by visitors. The accompanying message was direct and emotional, calling out fellow Indians for careless behavior and questioning whether basic civic sense has been forgotten while traveling. The blunt appeal struck a chord, rapidly spreading across platforms and drawing strong reactions from viewers.

Many netizens expressed embarrassment and disappointment, admitting that such scenes are becoming all too common at popular tourist destinations. Several users pointed out that people often complain about dirty public places while ignoring their own re-



sponsibility in keeping them clean. For them, the video served as a mirror, reflecting uncomfortable truths about everyday habits and attitudes toward shared spaces.

At the same time, the viral clip also opened up a broader discussion. Some viewers argued that tourists alone should not shoulder all the blame. They highlighted the lack of adequate dustbins, poor waste segregation systems, and weak enforcement of cleanliness rules in crowded tourist zones. According to them, sustainable tour-



ism requires a joint effort from visitors, local authorities, and businesses operating in these areas.

Varkala, known for its unique cliffside views and serene atmosphere, attracts thousands of domestic and international tourists every year. Like many scenic destinations across the country, it faces the growing challenge of balancing tourism growth with environmental preservation.

As travel becomes more accessible, pressure on natural spaces has increased, often revealing gaps in infrastructure and public awareness.

Environmental experts note that littering is not merely an aesthetic issue but a serious ecological concern. Plastic waste threatens marine life, contaminates soil, and undermines local ecosystems that depend on clean surroundings. Once damaged, such environments can take years to recover, if at all.

What makes this incident offbeat is not just the viral outrage, but the uncomfortable self-reflection it has triggered. The video does not showcase an extraordinary event,

## "They Just Need to Be Invited": A Founder's Observation Rekindles the Gender Gap Debate in Startups



A single observation at a startup event in Delhi has reignited a much-needed conversation about women's visibility in India's entrepreneurial ecosystem. When a young founder noted that only a handful of women were present at a gathering buzzing with innovation and ambition, her reflection struck a nerve far beyond the room it described.

The founder's post was not angry or accusatory. Instead, it was quietly un-

settling. Amid pitches, panels and networking conversations, she could count the women attendees on one hand. Her takeaway was simple yet powerful: women are building businesses, generating ideas and leading teams—but they are often missing from the spaces where visibility, funding and influence converge. Not because they lack ambition, she argued, but because they are rarely invited or encouraged enough.

The reaction was immediate. Entrepreneurs, professionals and students weighed in, many acknowledging that the scene described felt familiar. Startup events, especially those focused on funding, technology or high-growth ventures, continue to be male-dominated. While India has seen a steady rise in women-led startups, their presence at industry forums does not reflect that progress.

What makes this epi-

sode offbeat is its ordinariness. There was no controversy on stage, no policy announcement, no headline-grabbing incident—just a moment of noticing. And yet, that moment revealed a deeper imbalance. Startup events are more than social gatherings; they are gateways to mentorship, capital, partnerships and credibility. Absence from these spaces can quietly reinforce existing inequalities.

Several women entrepreneurs responding to the discussion shared similar experiences. Some said they hesitated to attend events where they felt outnumbered or overlooked. Others pointed to practical barriers—safety concerns, timing, lack of childcare support, or simply not being on the invitation list. A recurring theme emerged: inclusion rarely happens by accident. It has to be intentional.

At the same time, the conversation also invited

## Mocked for a Christmas Post, an Engineer's Calm Response Exposes Online Bias



What began as a light-hearted Christmas moment quickly turned into an unexpected lesson on online prejudice, after a woman engineer working at a global tech company was mocked for sharing a festive photograph on social media. The episode, though seemingly trivial, revealed deeper issues surrounding gender bias, insecurity and toxic online behaviour.

The engineer, who works at Amazon, had posted a cheerful photo with a friend employed at Google and an inflatable Santa Claus. The caption was playful, meant to capture the spirit of the season and the coincidence of two tech professionals posing alongside a festive symbol. However, instead of spreading holiday cheer, the post attracted a wave of criticism and personal attacks.

Several social media users mocked the caption and questioned her professional merit, with some going as far as

branding her a "diversity hire." Others accused her of arrogance, turning a harmless celebration into an excuse for hostility. The comments reflected a familiar pattern: when women in high-visibility roles share moments of joy or pride, they are often judged more harshly than their male counterparts.

Rather than deleting

the unnecessary negativity and applauding her clarity and confidence. Supporters noted that a simple festive photo had somehow triggered deep-seated insecurities in strangers online, exposing how social media can amplify prejudice under the guise of opinion.

Her response struck a chord. Many users rallied in her support, calling

Despite growing representation, women engineers often find their achievements questioned or minimised, especially in public forums. Online spaces, while offering visibility and connection, can also become arenas for unchecked bias and harassment.

What makes this story offbeat is not just the trolling itself, but the dignity of the response. Instead of escalating the conflict, the engineer used the moment to highlight a broader truth: that society must evolve beyond narrow stereotypes and outdated thinking. Her message was simple yet powerful—talent does not need justification, and celebration does not require permission.

In the end, a Christmas photo did more than mark a festive moment. It sparked reflection on how far conversations around gender, merit and respect have come—and how far they still need to go.

# Jasprit Bumrah Makes Surprise Nets Appearance During Vijay Hazare Trophy



In a delightful turn of events for cricket fans, India's star fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah made a surprise appearance at the nets on the sidelines

of a Vijay Hazare Trophy match in Ahmedabad on Tuesday. The sight of the pacer, who has been carefully managed by the national team's support

staff, bowling in practice sparked excitement among players and spectators alike.

Bumrah did not participate in the ongoing List-

A match but engaged in a controlled nets session, focusing on short spells to maintain rhythm without putting undue strain on his body. Observers noted that he concentrated on maintaining line and length while running in at moderate intensity, suggesting a measured approach to workload management.

The session comes at a critical time as Bumrah is being gradually prepared for India's upcoming international assignments, including the T20 series against New Zealand. The Indian team management has been taking a cautious approach with its frontline pacers, balancing domestic exposure with rest and recovery to ensure peak performance for major tournaments like the ICC Men's T20 World Cup.

Local players and supporters at the Gujarat College Ground had the rare opportunity to witness Bumrah in action. Young cricketers found the session particularly inspiring, with some even getting a chance to bowl against or face a few deliveries from the national star. Such experiences are invaluable for domestic players, offering motivation and practical lessons in fast-bowl-

ing techniques and professional discipline.

Cricket analysts believe that these controlled training stints reflect a broader strategy by the team management to reintegrate Bumrah gradually, avoiding injury while ensuring he stays match-fit. Managing workloads for fast bowlers has become a key priority, especially given the intense schedule of modern international cricket.

The timing of the nets appearance is also significant, as selectors are preparing the squad for upcoming international fixtures with an eye on long-term performance rather than short-term gains. Bumrah, along with other senior players, is likely to be rested from less critical matches to safeguard fitness for major tournaments.

Fans and experts are keeping a close watch on Bumrah's progress, and even a brief nets session has reignited excitement about his return to competitive action. His presence at the domestic venue underscores India's careful yet proactive approach in managing its premier fast bowler, giving confidence that he will be ready to spearhead the team's pace attack in the near future.

## Ashwin Picks India's Stand-Out Stars of 2025, Spotlights Chakravarthy & Abhishek Sharma

Former India spin great Ravichandran Ashwin has named two of the national team's standout performers of 2025, and surprisingly, neither pick was the current India captain. In a year packed with memorable cricket from the Indian setup across formats, Ashwin selected mystery spinner Varun Chakravarthy and explosive opener Abhishek Sharma as his two most impactful teammates, highlighting their contributions to India's success and future potential.

Ashwin described Varun Chakravarthy as India's bowler of the year, labelling him a "huge MVP" for the team. Chakravarthy, known for his enigmatic mystery spin, consistently delivered whenever given the ball. His ability to break partnerships and stem scoring rates made him a reliable wicket taker in white ball cricket throughout the year. Beyond raw numbers, Ashwin pointed to Chakravarthy's remarkable personal jour-

ney — from being sidelined and overlooked to reinventing himself in domestic circuits and lower division leagues — as evidence of his dedication and resilience. Ashwin believes this reinvention and Chakravarthy's knack for unpredictable spin will be key to India's bowling strategy, especially with big tournaments like the upcoming T20 World Cup on the horizon.

Equally enthusiastic, Ashwin singled out Abhishek Sharma as possibly the best Indian performer overall in 2025. The left-handed opener enjoyed a prolific season in T20 Internationals, amassing huge run tallies at a blistering strike rate that re-imagined India's powerplay batting template. Ashwin highlighted Sharma's fearless strokeplay and consistency, saying the young batter didn't just arrive but redefined top order aggression for the year.

Such dominance at the start of the innings forced bowlers onto the back foot and gave India the momentum in many key matches.

Reflecting on veterans like Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, Ashwin noted that their hunger to win a 50 over World Cup remained undiminished. Despite speculation about their careers and the challenges of a packed schedule, both senior stars continued to display passion and form throughout domestic and international fixtures.

Ashwin's selections underline a broader shift in Indian cricket, where emerging talents are making defining contributions alongside established greats, shaping a vibrant and competitive future for the national team.



## Pakistan Cricket Board Parts Ways With Test Coach Azhar Mahmood Three Months Early

In a surprising development, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has decided to end the tenure of Azhar Mahmood as the head coach of the men's Test team, with three months still remaining on his contract. The move comes as Pakistan prepares for the next phase of its red-ball cricket schedule, including the upcoming ICC World Test Championship cycle.

Mahmood, a former all-rounder for Pakistan, was appointed Test head coach in June and had a contract that was due to run until March 2026. Despite the remaining term, the PCB granted him an early release, citing the desire to give the next coach sufficient time to plan and prepare the squad ahead of future international commitments.

During his brief tenure, Mahmood oversaw only one home series, against South Africa, which ended in a 1-1 draw. While the re-



sults were competitive, the board emphasized that the decision was strategic rather than performance-based, aiming for a smooth transition and continuity in preparation for upcoming tours.

Sources within the PCB indicated that since Pakistan has no Test fixtures until March 2026, the board preferred to start its

search for a new head coach now. The proactive move is intended to allow the incoming coach to settle in and shape the team well before the resumption of competitive red-ball cricket.

This change highlights the ongoing volatility in Pakistan's Test setup, which has seen several shifts in coaching and support staff in recent years. Interim coaches have often stepped in, and structural changes continue as the PCB seeks the right formula for consistent success at the international level.

Along with appointing Mahmood's successor, the PCB is expected to review its broader coaching framework, including as-

sistant coaches and support staff, to ensure stability and effective management. With challenging tours ahead, including series in the West Indies and England, followed by home matches against Sri Lanka and New Zealand, clarity in the coaching ranks is seen as crucial.

For Azhar Mahmood, the early exit marks the conclusion of a coaching chapter in Pakistan cricket that included roles as assistant coach and bowling mentor. His departure underscores the delicate balance cricket boards must strike between long-term planning and the pressures of elite international sport.

Fans and analysts will now watch closely to see who the PCB appoints as Pakistan's next Test coach and how the team adapts to this leadership change as it prepares for critical matches in the upcoming year.

## England Ashes Win Sparks Pitch Debate as Boycott Blasts ECB's Priorities



England's dramatic Boxing Day Test victory over Australia at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG)

has ignited intense discussion about pitch preparation and the direction of modern cricket. The MCG wicket, traditionally suited for a five-day Test, produced an astonishing 36

wickets in just two days, leaving both sides struggling against sharp seam movement and unpredictable bounce.

The early finish has prompted scrutiny of how pitches are prepared for high-profile matches and whether current conditions favour results over fair contest.

Former England batting legend Geoffrey Boycott weighed in strongly on the debate, praising England's performance while criticizing the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) for its focus on commercial priorities. Boycott argued that modern players are not being sufficiently prepared for challenging wickets, particularly in the longer format, and that an overemphasis on limited-overs cricket and franchise leagues is harming skill development. He described the ECB's approach as prioritizing financial gain over Ashes glory or long-term Test success.

Boycott highlighted that the excitement generated by fast-paced, result-oriented matches should not overshadow the importance of nurturing technique and resilience among players. He stressed that bal-

anced Test surfaces, which challenge both batters and bowlers over five days, are essential to preserving the integrity of the game. The recent MCG pitch, while providing thrilling action, raises questions about whether cricket boards are maintaining that balance.

The legendary former opener also emphasized the human aspect of the sport, noting that players must adapt to varying conditions, but administrative decisions should support skill development rather than focusing solely on revenue. Fans and commentators have echoed Boycott's concerns, arguing that repeated early finishes in marquee Tests could erode the traditional challenge and appeal of Test cricket.

The pitch controversy and Boycott's comments have reignited broader debates on how cricket boards balance commercial interests with the long-term health of the sport. Critics argue that an emphasis on short-form formats may compromise player preparation, particularly for challenging conditions in Test matches abroad.

As the Ashes series continues, the discussion around pitch quality, player readiness, and the ECB's priorities is likely to remain a key talking point, prompting reflection on how cricket can maintain both commercial success and the traditions that have defined the sport for over a century.

## Travis Head Backs Ben Duckett, Says Ashes Drinking Row Has Been Blown Out of Proportion



In an unexpected twist off the field during the fiercely contested 2025-26 Ashes series, Australia batsman Travis Head stepped forward to defend England's Ben Duckett amid a mid-series drinking controversy that has dominated social media and cricket talk. Head described the reaction to the episode as exaggerated and admitted he was even "jealous" of England's brief getaway, underscoring that such off-field downtime is nothing out of the ordinary during long Test tours.

The issue began after a video circulated showing Duckett apparently intoxicated during a break in Noosa between Ashes Tests. The footage sparked a media storm, with critics questioning the professionalism of the England squad at a time when they were trailing in the series. Duckett, who has struggled for form in the series, found himself at the centre of intense scrutiny.

However, Head's comments shifted the narrative to one of empathy rather than judgment. Speaking after Australia's dramatic loss to England at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, where the visitors inflicted a rare defeat on the hosts, Head said the focus on the drinking story had been overblown. He stressed that players at the elite level are constantly under the microscope and that what happens in their personal time should not overshadow their performance or character.

"I am jealous," Head said, laugh-

ing when discussing how the break was handled. He noted that long tours inevitably require periods of mental relaxation and that both teams have indulged in similar breaks in the past without generating controversy. His remarks highlighted the human side of professional athletes, who must balance intense competition with periods of rest and recovery.

Head also revealed that he had reached out to Duckett after the video emerged to check on his well-being and to offer support. The gesture drew praise from some quarters as a sign of sportsmanship and camaraderie between players, even amid one of cricket's most historic rivalries.

Meanwhile, cricket officials from England confirmed they were looking into the Noosa incident, emphasizing that while occasional downtime was acceptable, excessive drinking beyond reasonable limits would not be condoned. The governing body's investigation was aimed at establishing facts rather than punishing players outright.

The incident and Head's response have sparked broader discussion about player welfare, media scrutiny, and how modern cricket tours are managed off the field. While the Ashes remains fiercely competitive on the pitch, Head's comments have added a human and humorous dimension to one of the series' most unusual off-field stories.

## 'Ghantasala The Great' Musical Biopic to Release on January 2: A Tribute to the Legendary Voice



The life and legacy of legendary music director and singer Ghantasala is being celebrated on the big screen with the upcoming film 'Ghantasala The Great', directed by C.H. Rama Rao and produced by Smt. C.H. Phani under the Anyukth Ram Pictures banner. Singer Krishna Chaitanya takes on the titular role, while Suman plays a key supporting character. The film is slated for a grand release on January 2, promising a musical journey that honors one of Telugu cinema's most iconic voices.

In line with the release, Swaravahini and Sri Bharati Music Academy hosted the "Ghantasala The Great Special Musical Night", celebrating the legendary singer's contributions to Indian music. Speaking at the event, director Rama Rao said the aim was not just to present Ghantasala's songs, which are timeless, but to portray his personality and life story. He recalled accompanying poet Sri Sri to meet Ghantasala and how the poet was mesmerized by

his rendition, noting, "I feel like the song I wrote has come alive in your voice."

Prominent producer C. Kalyan expressed that Ghantasala's life deserved such a grand cinematic tribute, while producer Shobha Rani, who is releasing the film, emphasized the unparalleled importance of this project in her long career. She praised Rama Rao's dedication, calling it a labor of love destined for massive success.

Other contributors to the film also shared their admiration. Producer T.S. Rao lauded Ghantasala's enduring legacy in Telugu cinema, noting that the singer's music had elevated countless films. Vakulabharanam Krishna Mohan emphasized that Ghantasala's music would last as long as the sun and moon and highlighted the film as a celebration of Telugu language, culture, and artistic heritage. Director Samudra echoed the sentiment, noting that Ghantasala created stars with his voice and contributed to the growth of the

industry. Lyricist Vennigala Rambabu and music director Ravi Shankar highlighted Ghantasala's global recognition, comparing him with legends like Mohammed Rafi and Kishore Kumar, while praising the film as an essential experience for Telugu audiences. Producer Karri Balaji encouraged viewers to watch the film, stating that its success would pave the way for more such remarkable biopics.

The movie also had a special celebrity preview attended by singer-music director Raghu Kunche and singers Kousalya and Vijayalakshmi, who all praised the film as a must-watch, emphasizing its inspiring portrayal of Ghantasala's life and artistry.

With a combination of stellar performances, soulful music, and a heartfelt tribute to a legendary icon, 'Ghantasala The Great' promises to be both an emotional and musical spectacle for Telugu audiences this January 2.

## Aadi's 'Shambhala' Celebrates Success at Star-Studded Divine Blockbuster Event



Aadi Saikumar's 'Shambhala', produced under Shining Pictures by Mahidhar Reddy and Rajasekhar Annabhemmoju and directed by Ugandhar Muni, has been running successfully in theaters since its December 25 release. To mark its success, a Divine Blockbuster Event was held, attended by top industry figures including ace producer Allu Aravind, directors Vassishtha and Bobby, actor Sundeep Kishan, and writer Kona Venkat.

Ace producer Allu Aravind praised Ugandhar Muni for his direction, lauding Aadi's performance and highlighting the emotional connection of three generations in Aadi Kumar's family. He also complimented Archana Iyer and child actor Baby Chaitra for their compelling performances.

Aadi Saikumar thanked everyone for their support, emphasizing the team effort behind the film. He acknowledged director Ugandhar's two-year dedication, producers' trust,

and music director Sricharan Pakala's sleepless nights in composing the soundtrack. Aadi encouraged audiences to watch the film in theaters, promising an engaging experience.

Veteran actor Sai Kumar expressed joy at seeing Aadi achieve success, noting that perseverance and hard work have finally paid off. Director Bobby highlighted the father-son pride and congratulated the team for creating a film that resonates with audiences.

Actress Archana Iyer reflected on the overwhelming response to her role, saying the audience's appreciation reinforced the importance of good content. Mythri Shashi highlighted Aadi's commitment and Prabhas' support as instrumental in shaping the film into a blockbuster.

Music director Sricharan Pakala described the film as his 49th and most special project, with countless sleepless nights resulting in a soundtrack that complements the film's narrative.

The event celebrated not just box office success but also the collaborative effort, creativity, and dedication that went into 'Shambhala', making it a hit with audiences and critics alike.

Producers Mahidhar Reddy and Rajasekhar Annabhemmoju expressed gratitude to Aadi and the

## American Telugu Association Honors Akavaram Lohith Kumar at ATA Vedukalu 2025

The American Telugu Association (ATA) honored noted actor, anchor, mimicry artist, and social activist Akavaram Lohith Kumar at the prestigious ATA Vedukalu 2025 event held at Ravindra Bharathi in Hyderabad. The ATA team felicitated Lohith Kumar as a distinguished personality, recognizing his multifaceted talents and his decades-long contribution to the entertainment industry and social service.

With a remarkable career spanning over four decades, Akavaram Lohith Kumar has emerged as one of the most versatile performers in Telugu media. Beginning his journey at a young age as a stage artist, he steadily rose to prominence through sheer dedication, discipline, and a passion for entertaining audiences across generations. Over the years, his work has reached viewers not only in India but also across the globe.

Lohith Kumar has been associated with several leading television networks, including Eenadu TV, Star Maa, Gemini TV, and Zee TV. His vast body of work includes performances in more than 20 short films, 30 daily television serials comprising



nearly 30,000 episodes, and over 6,000 mimicry stage shows conducted both in India and abroad. His contribution to cinema is equally notable, with acting roles in more than 60 films, in addition to serving as Executive Producer for three films and Producer for five films.

One of the defining milestones in his career came in 1994, when he earned a place in the Limca Book of Records under the title Fastest

Mimicry, a testament to his exceptional talent and innovation in the art of mimicry. This achievement further cemented his reputation as a pioneer and trendsetter in the field.

Beyond his accomplishments in entertainment, Lohith Kumar has consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to social causes. Through various organizations, he has actively worked for the welfare of people with disabilities, particu-

larly individuals with hearing impairments. His initiatives include facilitating medical treatments, providing assistance programs, and raising awareness about inclusive support systems.

Addressing the gathering after receiving the honor, Lohith Kumar said that his personal philosophy is rooted in the belief that life offers an opportunity to make the world a better place. He emphasized that

wealth creation is not limited to financial gains but also involves empowering people to grow and succeed in their respective fields. He noted that his life's work reflects a commitment to compassion, service, and meaningful effort.

The felicitation at ATA Vedukalu 2025 stood as a celebration of Akavaram Lohith Kumar's enduring legacy, applauding his artistic excellence and his unwavering dedication to social responsibility.

## Chennai Hosts Grand Finale of 'Margazhiyil Makkal Isai' with Actress Shobita Dhulipala as Chief Guest



Chennai witnessed a spectacular conclusion to the 6th edition of 'Margazhiyil Makkal Isai', a prestigious music festival organized by the Neelam Cultural Center under the guidance of renowned director P. Ranjith. The three-day event, held from December 26 to 28 at Pachaiyappa's College Grounds, captivated art and music enthusiasts with a vibrant showcase of talent and cultural performances.

The grand finale was graced by acclaimed Tollywood and Bollywood actress Shobita Dhulipala as the chief guest. She praised the festival's efforts in bringing marginalized communities' art forms and folk traditions into the mainstream, highlighting the dedication of P. Ranjith and his team in promoting cultural diversity.

During the closing ceremony, Shobita personally attended several musical performances, applauding artists and encouraging their ef-

forts. She emphasized the importance of celebrating folk arts and blending traditional and contemporary music to engage wider audiences.

The festival featured a wide array of musical styles, ranging from classical Carnatic music to regional folk performances, reflecting the rich tapestry of India's

cultural heritage. The organizers ensured that both seasoned artists and emerging talents had the opportunity to perform on the same stage, promoting inclusivity and artistic exchange.

Audience members lauded the festival for its well-curated program and immersive

experience, noting the seamless integration of visual and musical storytelling. The event also highlighted the role of cultural festivals in fostering community engagement and appreciation for local art forms.

With the 6th edition now concluded, 'Margazhiyil Makkal Isai'

has once again reinforced its position as a significant platform for musical and cultural expression in Chennai. The festival's success is expected to inspire more initiatives that bring together diverse artists and promote the preservation and celebration of India's folk and classical arts.

## Tollywood Veteran Bandla Ganesh Launches New Banner 'BG Blockbusters'



Tollywood's sensational producer and actor Bandla Ganesh has announced his return as a producer with a brand-new banner, 'BG Blockbusters', marking the second innings of his illustrious career. Previously associated with Parameshwara Art Productions, under which he produced several blockbuster films, Ganesh is now ready to re-enter the industry with fresh energy and innovative ideas. He officially unveiled the banner and shared his future production plans.

Ganesh first tasted success as a producer with 'Anjaneyulu' starring Mass Maharaja Raviteja, followed by the massive hit 'Gabbar Singh' featuring Power Star Pawan Kalyan, which cemented his position in Tollywood. Subsequent successes include 'Badsha' with NTR, 'Iddara-

mmayilatho' with Allu Arjun, and 'Temper' with Junior NTR. After a brief hiatus, Ganesh has now returned with renewed focus, including involving his family as partners in the new venture.

Under BG Blockbusters, Ganesh aims to produce films that are not only commercially entertaining but also emotionally engaging, giving priority to honest and heartfelt storytelling. The banner also seeks to nurture young talent, including directors, writers, and technical experts, while encouraging creative freedom to deliver fresh cinematic experiences to audiences.

Ganesh confirmed that a new project is already in the works under the BG Blockbusters banner. Details regarding the cast, crew, and technical team will be

officially announced soon. He expressed confidence that the banner will consistently deliver entertaining films and captivate audiences with multiple upcoming projects.

With a track record of commercial hits and a keen understanding of audience preferences, Bandla Ganesh's BG Blockbusters promises to usher in a new chapter in Tollywood, blending star power, innovative narratives, and technical finesse. Fans eagerly await the first release from this new venture, expecting a combination of mass appeal and creative storytelling.

This launch marks a powerful comeback for the veteran producer, reaffirming his influence in Tollywood and signaling exciting times ahead for audiences and industry insiders alike.