



## Trump Administration Suspends U.S. Green Card Lottery Following Deadly Shootings

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**W**ashington, D.C. — In a decisive move expected to reshape U.S. immigration policy, the Trump administration has announced the suspension of the U.S. green card lottery program, formally known as the Diversity Immigrant Visa (DV) Lottery. The decision comes in the wake of two recent deadly shootings allegedly involving an individual who entered the United States through this system.

The announcement was made by Homeland Security Secretary Kristi L. Noem, who stated that the Diversity Visa program had been used by the suspect in the recent killings at Brown University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Acting under President Trump's directive, Noem ordered the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to immediately halt the program. She described the action as necessary to ensure national security and prevent future tragedies.

The shootings that prompted this move occurred earlier this

month. Two students at Brown University were killed, and nine others were injured in an attack on the campus. Shortly afterward, a professor at MIT was found dead in his home in Massachusetts. Authorities identified 48-year-old Portuguese national Claudio Manuel Neves Valente as the suspect, whose body was later found in New Hampshire from an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Valente reportedly first entered the United States on a student visa in 2000 and later obtained permanent residency in 2017 after winning the Diversity Immigrant Visa lottery. The DV lottery program annually provides up to approximately 50,000 green cards to applicants from countries with historically low rates of immigration to the United States. It was created by Congress in the 1990s to enhance the diversity of immigrants entering the country. Applicants undergo background checks, consular interviews, and additional vetting before being granted permanent residency.

Demand for the program has grown significantly in recent years.



Nearly 20 million people applied for the 2025 lottery cycle, including family members of selectees, while applicants from Portugal received just a limited number of slots in the draw. The program has long been praised for offering opportunities to skilled and aspiring immigrants from underrepresented countries, while critics argue it presents potential security risks.

President Trump has repeatedly criticized the Diversity Visa lottery, calling for its termination during his first term and citing se-

## Telangana Government Forms SIT to Probe Phone Tapping Case

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**H**yderabad: The Telangana government has taken a decisive step to intensify the investigation into the alleged phone-tapping scandal by constituting a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to conduct a thorough probe. The decision, issued on Thursday night, comes nearly 21 months after the original complaint was filed and signals a significant escalation in the investigation into alleged unauthorized surveillance during the previous Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) government's tenure.

The newly formed SIT will be led by Hyderabad Police Commissioner V. C. Sajjanar, under whose supervision the investigation is expected to be fast-tracked. A formal order from the state's Director General of Police, B. Shivadhar Reddy, lists nine senior police officials appointed to the team, drawn from various wings of the Telangana Police. ACP P. Venkatagiri, who has been associated with the case since its registration, will serve as the investigation officer.

The team includes commissioners and deputy commissioners from key districts and units, including Ramagundam, Siddipet, Madhapur, Maheshwaram, and the elite Greyhounds unit, along



with other senior officers. The directive states that the SIT shall complete the investigation and file a chargesheet against the accused expeditiously.

This development comes as the Supreme Court extended the police custody of former Special Intelligence Branch (SIB) chief T. Prabhakar Rao, the prime accused in the phone-tapping case, until December 25, 2025. The court also ordered that he be released on December 26 after questioning and scheduled a further hearing in January next year.

Prabhakar Rao, a retired IPS officer who headed the SIB during the BRS government, surrendered to the police earlier this month following a Supreme Court directive. Authorities allege he orchestrated an illegal surveillance network that tapped phones of political leaders, businessmen, journalists, civil society members, and others perceived to be critical of the ruling

regime at that time.

The case originally surfaced in March 2024 when a complaint led to the registration of an FIR at the Panjagutta police station. Since then, several police officials have been arrested or booked for their alleged involvement, including additional superintendents and deputy commissioners of police.

During the investigation, SIT officials recorded statements from multiple witnesses, including former bureaucrats, politicians, and others whose phones were reportedly intercepted.

Earlier investigative efforts revealed that hundreds of phone numbers may have been tapped during key political events, including the nomination period of the 2023 state assembly elections. Reports suggest that more than 600 phones were potentially accessed in a single day during this phase, raising concerns about the scale and depth of the alleged surveillance.

Political reactions to the case have been robust, with opposition parties demanding accountability and transparency in the investigation. Some leaders have called for an independent central agency probe, citing the gravity of the allegations and the involvement of high-ranking officials.

The formation of the SIT reflects the Telangana government's intent to thoroughly investigate the complex case and move forward with legal proceedings. As the SIT begins its work, public expectations remain high for a comprehensive inquiry and clarity on how such alleged surveillance was carried out, who authorized it, and whether political motives were involved.

The probe is likely to have significant political and legal implications in the months ahead as the SIT aims to complete its investigation and present findings that could shape future judicial and political developments in the state.

## President Droupadi Murmu Stresses Integrity and Equality at Public Service Commission's Conference

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**P**resident Droupadi Murmu on Friday addressed the National Conference of Public Service Commission Chairpersons in Hyderabad, highlighting the vital role of Public Service Commissions (PSCs) in strengthening governance and ensuring fair recruitment for civil services across India. The event, organized by the Telangana Public Service Commission, brought together chairpersons and senior officials from PSCs across the country.

In her keynote speech, President Murmu emphasized that PSCs have a constitutional responsibility to uphold the principles of equality and justice enshrined in India's Constitution. She noted that the framers of the Constitution dedicated specific provisions to public services and commissions, highlighting their importance in maintaining efficient governance at both state and national levels. According to the President, PSCs must ensure not only equality of opportunity but also strive toward equitable outcomes, reflecting the aspirations of India's diverse population.

A key focus of her address was the priority of honesty and integrity in selecting civil servants. President Murmu stressed that while skills and professional competencies can be enhanced through training, a lack of integrity can pose challenges that are difficult to overcome. She urged commissions to adopt robust evaluation



methods that assess candidates' ethical orientation, underscoring that these values form the foundation of a trustworthy and effective civil service.

The President also highlighted the importance of anticipating emerging challenges, particularly in the areas of technology, transparency, and accountability, to ensure that recruitment processes remain credible and aligned with global standards. She emphasized that civil servants must be sensitive to the needs of marginalized and vulnerable communities and stressed the importance of gender sensitization training to ensure officers are responsive to the diverse needs of citizens.

President Murmu noted that India, as one of the world's fastest-growing major economies, requires effective governance at all levels to achieve long-term development goals, including the vision of a Viksit Bharat by 2047. She expressed confidence that Public Service Commissions would continue to play a central role in building a future-ready civil service workforce committed to serving the nation with competence, transparency, and integrity.

The conference is expected to foster renewed collaboration among PSCs, encouraging the adoption of best practices, innovative recruitment strategies, and a reaffirmation of their constitutional mandate to build a just and equitable governance system for all citizens.

## Telangana CM Revanth Reddy Hails Panchayat Poll Results, Takes Political Dig at Opposition

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cember 20

**H**yderabad: Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Thursday described the outcome of the recently concluded gram panchayat elections as a clear endorsement of his government's performance over the past two years, calling the results a "referendum" on the state administration's policies and governance. The informal post election interaction with reporters highlighted his confidence in the ruling party's rural electoral strength and set the stage for broader political messaging ahead of future polls.

Addressing the media, Revanth Reddy said that in the rural local body elections held across 12,702 gram panchayats, candidates supported by the Con-



gress party and its allies secured about two thirds of the total seats. The chief minister noted that Congress backed candidates won in 7,527 gram panchayats, while an additional 808 victories came from Congress rebels, giving an effective tally of 8,335 seats — approximately 66 percent of the total. He contrasted this with the performance of rival parties, stating that candidates supported by the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) together won around 33 percent, with communist and other party candidates accounting for the remainder.

Revanth attributed his party's success to the welfare initiatives and social programs introduced since the Congress came to power following the 2023 Assembly elections. Citing schemes such as

tion of restored democratic vibrancy and public trust in governance after years of entrenched regional politics.

Political observers noted that the panchayat elections, though conducted on a non-party basis with independent symbols, were widely viewed as reflective of party influence, with major parties backing candidates behind the scenes. Voter turnout was reportedly high, indicating strong engagement at the grassroots level — a factor that likely contributed to the definitive mandate claimed by the Congress leadership.

However, not all commentary aligned with the chief minister's positive framing. Senior leaders from the BRS interpreted the rural poll outcomes differently, arguing that the results revealed emerging dissatisfaction in certain districts with state governance. These leaders contend that rural voters were increasingly questioning the ruling party's performance, and they pointed to areas where non-Congress candidates won as indicative of shifting political currents.

## Exhibition Society Plays a Key Role in Nation Building: Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy

Hyderabad:

State Minister for Irrigation and Civil Supplies Uttam Kumar Reddy on Friday said that the Exhibition Society has been playing a crucial role in nation building by providing quality education for over six decades. Addressing the Silver Jubilee Graduation Day celebrations at Sarojini Naidu Vanitha Pharmacy Maha Vidyalaya in Tarnaka, the minister highlighted the institution's significant contribution to higher education and the pharmaceutical sector in Telangana.

The minister noted that the Exhibition Society currently runs 20 educational institutions and has consistently delivered high-quality education,

producing skilled professionals who contribute to national development. He pointed out that the institution's achievements, including UGC autonomy, NBA accreditation, and an NAAC A+ grade, reflect its commitment to academic excellence. He also described the society as a central pillar in the growth of pharmaceutical education in Telangana.

Speaking at the event as the chief guest, Uttam Kumar Reddy said Hyderabad has emerged as one of the world's leading hubs for bulk drug manufacturing, offering vast employment opportunities for pharmacy graduates. He stated that the state government, guided by the vision of "Telangana



Rising 2047," is working to transform Hyderabad into a global capital for life sciences.

The minister further explained that the government is expanding industrial development across the state through initiatives such as the Green Pharma City and the establishment of dedicated pharma vil-

lages in districts like Vikarabad, Medak, and Nalgonda. These efforts, he said, aim to ensure balanced regional growth while strengthening Telangana's position in the pharmaceutical and life sciences sectors.

Uttam Kumar Reddy revealed that under the Life Sciences Roadmap 2030, the state has set ambitious targets of attracting investments worth 1 lakh crore and creating five lakh jobs. He added that the government is focusing on cutting-edge fields such as cell and gene therapy, mRNA vaccines, biologics, and AI-driven drug discovery to stay ahead

in global innovation.

The minister also mentioned that the state is considering the establishment of a dedicated Life Sciences University to support advanced research, innovation, and skill development. Expressing confidence in the graduating class of 2025, he said these students would shape the future of Telangana's pharma industry. He assured them that the Telangana government would extend full support throughout their professional journey, encouraging them to contribute meaningfully to the state and the nation.



## MP Vamsi Krishna Urges Netherlands NRIs to Invest in Telangana at International Conference

New Delhi:  
Peddapalli Member of Parliament Gaddam Vamsi Krishna has called upon Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) living in the Netherlands to actively invest in Telangana, highlighting the state's rapid growth, investor-friendly policies, and expanding industrial ecosystem. He was speaking at a two-day international conference organised by the Foundation for Critical Choices for India (FCCI) at the Indian Habitat Centre in New Delhi on Friday.

The conference witnessed a large participation from the Indian diaspora in the Netherlands and was held to mark the 45th anniversary of FCCI as well as 75 years of diplomatic relations between India and the Netherlands. The event focused on strengthening ties between India and its overseas communities and encouraging their role in national development.

Addressing a session titled "Indian Diaspora: Dedicated to the Progress of India International Conference, New Delhi," MP Vamsi Krishna described Telangana as one of India's most promising destinations for industrial and sector-specific investments. He stated that India is steadily emerging as a preferred global in-



vestment hub and asserted that the future of investments belongs to India.

Referring to the Viksit Bharat-2047 vision, he said India's long-term development roadmap has become a model for several countries. He also highlighted the success of the Telangana Rising Summit, which has attracted significant domestic and international investments, reinforcing the state's reputation as a growth-oriented and innovation-driven economy. Emphasising the historical and economic ties between India and the

Netherlands, he said the bond between the two nations remains strong and mutually beneficial.

Vamsi Krishna acknowledged the contributions of FCCI members in driving industrial progress in the Netherlands and said their efforts in strengthening India-Netherlands cooperation would always be remembered. He remarked that such contributions play a vital role in nation-building and help repay the debt owed to the country.

Speaking in his capacity as Joint Managing Director of Visaka In-

dustries, Vamsi Krishna highlighted the company's role in promoting sustainable and eco-friendly development. He noted that environmental pollution and climate challenges are major concerns today, and Visaka is addressing these issues through innovative green solutions.

He pointed out the company's achievements in building materials, roofing, and the renewable energy sector, particularly mentioning that Atum Solar panels developed by the company have received a prestigious patent from the

United States.

During the event, MP Vamsi Krishna was felicitated with a memento by FCCI President Advocate Jasbir Singh and Vice President Dr Pramod Agrawal. Dr Agrawal praised Visaka Industries for introducing high-quality eco-friendly products, stating that they align perfectly with the objectives of sustainable development discussed at the conference.

Dr Agrawal also shared his personal connection to Telangana, stating that despite being a successful industrialist in the Netherlands, he views Telangana as a rapidly emerging and attractive investment destination. He expressed pride in being associated with FCCI and supporting initiatives linked to his home state.

The conference also featured a panel discussion in which Vamsi Krishna elaborated on the Telangana State Government's investment policies and incentives. He reiterated that Telangana is poised to play a key role in India's journey towards becoming a developed nation and urged the global Indian diaspora to partner in this transformative growth.

## UBS Athletics Kids Cup Inspires Young Talent

Hyderabad's Gachibowli Stadium recently hosted the UBS Athletics Kids Cup Tournament, with Ministers Vakiti Srihari and IT Minister Duddilla Sridhar gracing the event as chief guests. Also present were Sports Chairman Sivasena Reddy and other dignitaries, who awarded prizes to the winners of the tournament. The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from students across both government and private schools.

Speaking at the occasion, Minister Vakiti Srihari lauded UBS for its initiative in identifying and nurturing sporting talent among children. He emphasized

that Telangana is steadily emerging as a hub for sports and highlighted the state government's efforts to foster athletic skills from the grassroots.

"Through the CM Cup, we have already recognized the talent of over four lakh young athletes at the village level. In the future, our aim is to identify five lakh budding athletes and provide them opportunities to showcase their abilities at state, national, and international sporting platforms," he said.

Srihari also outlined the state's proactive measures in sports development, stating, "We are not only



comprehensive sports policy aimed at achieving gold medals at the Olympics. "We are committed to bringing out the hidden potential of children, giving them opportunities to excel, and motivating them through recognition and encouragement," he added. Highlighting the changing mindset of families, the Minister noted, "Earlier, parental encouragement for sports was limited. Today, parents are actively motivating their children to pursue sports and achieve."

He also pointed out the government's focus on infrastructure, stating, "Minister Srihari concluded by urging young athletes to make the

most of such opportunities, assuring them that the state would continue supporting their journey towards excellence. The event was widely appreciated for its role in promoting sports culture and nurturing the next generation of champions in Telangana."

## Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy Assures Modernisation of Malkapur Pedda Cheruvu Following Jagga Reddy's Request

Sangareddy:

State Irrigation Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy has assured comprehensive modernisation works for the historic Malkapur Pedda Cheruvu after a detailed representation made by Sangareddy MLA Jagga Reddy. Acting swiftly on the request, the minister directed irrigation officials to immediately prepare detailed proposals for strengthening and upgrading the feeder channels, canals, and the tank bund, in the presence of Jagga Reddy.

The proposals focus on improving water inflow, outflow, irrigation capacity, and overall safety and aesthetics of the Malkapur Pedda Cheruvu,



Cheruvu towards Club Goor village. This canal network connects key water bodies such as Nagula Kunta, Mogulla Kunta, Poluvani Kunta, and other dependent tanks. Strengthening this canal will help ensure proper water distribution and recharge downstream tanks, increase aycut area, and improve groundwater levels, especially in Sangareddy town.

MLA Jagga Reddy highlighted the strategic importance of Malkapur Pedda Cheruvu, stating that it serves as the primary source of water for six other tanks in the Sangareddy constituency. He explained that modernising the tank would enable complete filling of downstream tanks, increase aycut area, and improve groundwater levels, especially in Sangareddy town.

Officials also pointed out that once beautification is completed, the tank has strong potential to be developed as a local tourism and recreation spot, adding social and economic value to the region.

Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy instructed officials to prepare proposals without delay and assured that the government is committed to strengthening irrigation infrastructure and water security across Telangana. The modernisation of Malkapur Pedda Cheruvu is expected to bring long-term benefits to farmers, residents, and the overall ecology of the Sangareddy region.

## Telangana Agitation Activists Meet Minister Ponguleti Seeking 250-Yard House Plots



Hyderabad:  
Telangana agitation activists under the leadership of Telangana Agitators Association founder Dr. Pidamarthi Ravi met Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy, urging the Congress-led public government to fulfil its promise of allotting 250 square yards of house site land to Telangana movement participants.

Speaking to the media after the meeting, Dr. Pidamarthi Ravi stressed that the assurance given to agitators during the Telangana statehood movement must be implemented without delay. He asserted that all those who actively participated in the movement—whether they were jailed or not—should be treated equally and granted 250 square yards of residential land as promised.

He pointed out that several genuine agitators were not booked in cases during the movement and, as a result, were ignored by the previous government. Dr. Ravi appealed to the minister to ensure that such individuals are also identified and includ-

ed as beneficiaries under the proposed house-site allotment scheme. According to him, participation in the Telangana movement should be the sole criterion, not the presence or absence of police cases.

He also announced that he would soon undertake a statewide tour across all districts to meet agitation activists, understand their problems, and mobilise support to press for the immediate implementation of their long-pending demands.

Several leaders and activists participated in the meeting, including Telangana Agitators Association State Coordinators Dr. Bommera Stalin, BSF State President Borelli Suresh, and activists Nakka Mahesh, Jogi Ganesh, Meesala Mahesh, Krishna, and others.

The delegation expressed hope that Minister Ponguleti would take a positive decision and initiate concrete steps to honour the sacrifices of Telangana movement activists by fulfilling the long-standing promise of 250-square-yard house plots.

In addition to the house-site allotment,

# Congress MPs Criticise Winter Parliament Session, Allege Anti-People Policies and Undemocratic Functioning

New Delhi, December 19:

Congress Members of Parliament from Telangana strongly criticised the functioning of the Winter Session of Parliament, accusing the NDA government of pushing anti-people legislation, undermining democratic norms, and ignoring opposition voices. Addressing a press conference in New Delhi, Nagar Kurnool MP and Telangana Congress Parliamentary Party (CPP) Convener Dr Mallu Ravi detailed the party's objections to several key bills and the manner in which Parliament was conducted.

Dr Mallu Ravi said the Winter Session, held from December 1 to December 19, was adjourned sine die without proper deliberations on crucial public issues. He alleged that the government introduced a new bill related to the rural employment guarantee scheme, removing Mahatma Gandhi's name from the programme and creating confusion over the number of

workdays and budget allocations. Earlier, he noted, the Centre bore 90 per cent of the scheme's cost, with states contributing 10 per cent. Under the new bill, the Centre's share has reportedly been reduced to 60 per cent, placing a heavier financial burden on states and adversely impacting rural workers. The Congress and INDIA bloc parties, he said, strongly opposed both the dilution of the scheme and the removal of Gandhi's name.

He further stated that several bills, including the Peace Bill and the Insurance Amendment Bill, were passed during the session despite strong opposition. Dr Ravi alleged that these legislations were contrary to public opinion and accused the government of avoiding debate. He claimed that the NDA adjourned the House prematurely because it could not face questions raised by opposition parties on issues such as the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls and the employ-



ment guarantee scheme.

Criticising Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Dr Ravi said the Prime Minister attended Parliament only briefly during the entire session and was absent during debates on key bills, including those related to SIR and the re-

moval of Mahatma Gandhi's name. On the final day, he said, Question Hour was not even taken up, and the House was adjourned within minutes after the Prime Minister led the singing of "Vande Mataram."

Dr Ravi expressed con-

cern that SIR would disproportionately affect SC, ST, BC, minority communities, and migrant workers, as many from these groups may not be able to produce the required documents, leading to the deletion of lakhs of votes. He termed the

move dangerous for democracy.

He also accused the Modi government of behaving in a "dictatorial manner," alleging that even when nearly 250 MPs protested near the Speaker, the government ignored demands to refer

controversial bills to standing committees. He said the Congress staged protests inside and outside Parliament and actively participated in all party calls to oppose what it termed anti-people decisions.

Referring to Telangana,

Dr Ravi said Chief Minister Revanth Reddy visited Delhi twice during the session and met the Prime Minister and Union ministers, seeking the release of pending central funds. He also highlighted the recent Panchayat elections in Telangana, stating that nearly 75 per cent of Congress-backed candidates won, reflecting public support for the state government's two-year governance.

Mahababab MP Pori ka Balaram Naik, who also addressed the media, raised concerns over the demolition of structures linked to Hathiram Math in Tirumala hills. He urged Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu to halt the demolition and demanded action against those responsible for selling 600 acres of Math land. He also sought representation for the Banjara community on the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) Board.

The press meet was attended by MPs Mallu Ravi, Balaram Naik, and Rama-sahayam Raghuram Reddy.

## KTR Challenges CM Revanth Reddy: "Resign and Seek Re-election If You Truly Have 66% Public Support"

Sircilla:

BRS Working President K. T. Rama Rao (KTR) today issued a direct challenge to Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, daring him to prove his claims of enjoying 66% public support in recent local body elections. Speaking at a victory meeting of newly elected BRS Sarpanches in Sircilla, KTR urged the CM to make the ten defected BRS MLAs resign and face a fresh mandate, asserting that only the people can judge the true strength of leadership.

Defected MLAs are "Clinging to Power Like Bats."

KTR did not hold back in criticizing the defected legislators, particularly senior leaders like Kadiyam Srihari and Pocharam Srinivas Reddy. "It is pathetic to see leaders who once served as Ministers and Speaker stooping so low for 'blade-of-grass' positions. They publicly announced joining Congress in front of Rahul Gandhi, yet shamelessly lie before the Speaker,



claiming allegiance to BRS. Their political credibility is destroyed," he said. KTR also accused the CM of pressuring the Speaker's office to ignore evidence and shield defectors, highlighting the erosion of moral authority.

Panchayat Polls Prove Public Rejects Congress

KTR asserted that the recent Panchayat elections were a clear message from the people rejecting Congress's attempts to deceive

farmers, women, and BC communities. Despite alleged intimidation by the Congress government using police and official machinery, BRS won 80 out of 117 Panchayats in Sircilla. "Even with Ministers and the CM touring districts, the people have made it clear; they want KCR's leadership for village welfare. The Pink Flag is flying high because public trust favors BRS over Congress's conspiracies," he

said.

Call to Party Cadre

KTR urged party workers to remain resolute, assuring support for those facing threats or harassment. He announced a massive membership drive and the formation of new village, mandal, and district committees, blending the experience of senior leaders with youth energy. He called upon the BRS cadre to maintain the momentum into upcoming Zilla Parishad and Mandal Parishad elections to secure a decisive victory.

KTR's speech reflects BRS's aggressive stance ahead of future elections, positioning the party as the unwavering choice of the public while holding Congress accountable for alleged defections and governance failures.

## Harish Rao Condemns Removal of Gandhi's Name from Employment Guarantee Scheme, Calls it an Attack on India's Federal System



Hyderabad, December 19, 2025: Former Minister Harish Rao has strongly criticized the Central Government's decision to remove Mahatma Gandhi's name from the Employment Guarantee Scheme, renaming it Vikas Bharat-G Ram G. He termed the move not just a nominal change but a direct attack on the federal structure of India, expressing his concerns through a statement on X (formerly Twitter).

Harish Rao highlighted that the proposed amendments, including the 60:40 funding ratio between the Centre and states, are aimed at weakening the Employment Guarantee Scheme.

According to him, the new provisions would place an additional financial burden on states, undermining the scheme's original objective of providing employment to the underprivileged.

He warned that the Centre is using this bill as a tool to increase its control over states, thereby infringing on the autonomy guaranteed to them under the Constitution.

He further criticized the Congress Party's silence on the issue, pointing out that while it often talks about federalism and states' rights publicly, it remains mute in Parliament when the BJP introduces measures that weaken state powers.

Harish Rao emphasized that both BJP and Congress are displaying double standards in centralization policies, using the same bill as evidence of their shared approach to undermining state authority.

Harish Rao also expressed concern that the move could politicize the scheme, diverting attention from its primary purpose of providing employment to the poor.

He warned that the Centre is using this bill as a tool to increase its control over states, thereby infringing on the autonomy guaranteed to them under the Constitution.

He stressed that the Employment Guarantee Act should continue to function as intended, without diluting its foundational principles, ensuring that states can implement it effectively for the welfare of citizens.

Harish Rao's statement reinforces his commitment to protecting the federal structure, safeguarding state rights, and maintaining the integrity of social welfare programs. He expressed concern that the move could politicize the scheme, diverting attention from its primary purpose of providing employment to the poor.

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This announcement comes amid growing concerns over the BJP-led Central Government's approach to centralization of powers and its potential impact on state-administered welfare programs across India.

## Telangana Panchayat Elections: BRS Leaders Slam CM Revanth Reddy's Remarks

Hyderabad, December 19, 2025:

At a press meet held at Telangana Bhavan, senior BRS leaders, including former Minister Singireddy Nirjan Reddy, expressed strong criticism of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy over his statements regarding the recently concluded local body elections. They highlighted that during their tenure, opposition parties rarely won more than 5-10% of seats in local elections. However, in the three-phase Panchayat elections this year, the BRS emerged victorious in a majority of districts, securing top positions in several seats and demonstrating widespread public support.

The leaders pointed out that in some districts, results were split between ruling Congress candidates



and BRS, while in other areas, BRS-backed candidates emerged victorious. According to them, these outcomes reflect strong public disapproval of the current Congress administration and its alleged misuse of power. They emphasized that unlike their tenure, the current CM personally campaigned via helicopter across districts to influence local elections, yet voters still favored BRS candidates, demonstrating confidence in the party's leadership and governance.

The leaders also accused Revanth Reddy of spreading false narratives against BRS leaders, including KCR, KTR, and Harish Rao, and even ridiculing KCR's health. They cited instances of political opportunism, recalling that despite Reddy's prior claims of resigning if

defeated, he contested and won in Malakajgiri during parliamentary elections. The leaders underlined that BRS's success reflects genuine public support rather than electoral manipulation.

Former MLA Dr. Methuku Anand added that in Vikarabad, Parigi, and Tandur constituencies, BRS won the majority of seats. He alleged that in areas where BRS narrowly

lost, recounts were manipulated to favor Congress, and even in villages like Mohinkalan, the BRS's victories were challenged through coercion and intimidation. They emphasized the party's commitment to safeguarding democratic processes and ensuring that officials uphold the constitution rather than succumbing to political pressures.

According to BRS, despite efforts by Congress to undermine results, the party's ethical and organized approach ensured significant victories, reinforcing its standing among the public across Telangana.

They emphasized the party's commitment to safeguarding democratic processes and ensuring that officials uphold the constitution rather than succumbing to political pressures.

According to BRS, despite efforts by Congress to undermine results, the party's ethical and organized approach ensured significant victories, reinforcing its standing among the public across Telangana.

# PCB Officials Visit Site After True Point News Report, Collect Samples of Chemical Waste in Bowrampet

Quthbullapur, December 19:

Following a report by True Point News, officials of the Pollution Control Board (PCB) promptly responded to an incident involving the illegal dumping of chemical waste in the Outer Ring Road area of Bowrampet under the Dundigal Circle. The incident, allegedly carried out by unidentified persons, created concern among local residents and triggered immediate action by the authorities.

PCB officials visited the spot and conducted a detailed inspection of the area where the chemical waste had been dumped. To ascertain the nature and composition of the waste, officials collected samples for laboratory analysis. Preliminary inquiries are underway to assess the possible impact of the dumped chemicals on groundwater, the surrounding environment, and public health.

Speaking on the occasion, PCB official Rajender stated that strict action would be taken against those responsible for the illegal disposal of chemical waste. He warned that the culprits would be identified and proceeded against under relevant environmental laws. He also mentioned that police officials have been requested to intensify surveillance in the area to prevent such incidents in the future.

Rajender added that further action would be initiated after a comprehensive report is prepared based on the laboratory test results. He emphasized that illegal dumping of hazardous waste would not be tolerated.



disposal, according to PCB officials.

Local residents welcomed the swift response from the PCB and urged both pollution control and police authorities to enhance monitoring and enforcement to ensure that such incidents do not recur. They expressed concern over the potential long-term effects of chemical waste on soil

quality, water resources, and overall public safety.

The incident has once again highlighted the importance of vigilant reporting and timely action to curb environmental violations, with officials assuring that necessary measures would be taken to safeguard the environment and community well-being.



## DTF Seizes 10.5 Grams of Heroin Oil in Hyderabad, One Arrested



Hyderabad: In a significant crackdown on drug trafficking ahead of the New Year, the Directorate Task Force (DTF) seized 10.5 grams of heroin oil and arrested a person involved in its illegal sale in Hyderabad. The arrest was made while the accused was allegedly attempting to sell the contraband in the Begum Bazar area.

According to DTF Circle Inspector Soujanya, the arrested individual has been identified as Dinesh Lodha. The seized heroin, which was reportedly sourced from Rajasthan, is estimated to be worth around 60,000 in the illegal market. Acting on specific intelligence, DTF personnel conducted a targeted operation and apprehended the accused along with the narcotic substance.

Preliminary investigation revealed that Dinesh Lodha has been residing in Hyderabad for some time and earns his livelihood by working as a cook for Rajasthani families in the city.

However, alongside his regular occupation, he allegedly began trafficking heroin imported from Rajasthan and selling it to multiple customers in Hyderabad to earn additional income.

The accused was caught red-handed while attempting to sell the heroin oil in Begum Bazar. Following the seizure, the DTF team handed over the accused and the confiscated narcotics to the Begumpet Excise Station for further legal action. A case has been registered under the relevant sections of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, and further investigation is underway to identify possible links and supply networks connected to the accused.

Officials stated that efforts are being made to trace the source of the drug supply and to determine whether the accused was part of a larger interstate drug trafficking racket. Authorities have not ruled out the possibility of more arrests to be maintained.

## MDMA and Ganja Seized from Software Employee in Patancheru, One Arrested

Hyderabad:

In another significant operation against drug trafficking, the Special Task Force (STF) police seized MDMA drugs and ganja from a software employee in the Patancheru area. Acting on credible information about illegal drug sales, the STF team conducted a raid near Sri Vidyam Nursery in Beeranguda under the Patancheru limits.

According to STF Sub-Inspector Jyothi, the police received specific inputs that drugs were being sold in the vicinity of Beeranguda. Following this, a special team led by SI Jyothi, along with her staff, carried out a surprise raid at the identified location. During the operation, the police apprehended a youth

who was allegedly involved in selling narcotic substances.

The arrested person has been identified as Roopani Mukesh Babu, a software employee by profession. Upon conducting a thorough search, the STF team recovered 0.42 grams of MDMA, a synthetic party drug, along with 120 grams of ganja from his possession. The seized narcotics were immediately taken into custody as evidence.

Preliminary investigation revealed that the accused was actively involved in the sale of drugs in the Patancheru region, targeting local youth and individuals frequenting the area.

Police suspect that Mukesh Babu was procuring the drugs from unidentified sources and distributing them in small quantities to avoid detection.

With New Year celebrations approaching, police have intensified surveillance and enforcement to prevent drug circulation and ensure public safety.

The police also appealed to citizens, especially parents and youth,



## Burglary at Wine Shop in Suraram, Cash and Liquor Stolen

Quthbullapur, December 19:

A burglary was reported at a wine shop under the limits of the Suraram Police Station on Thursday, causing concern among local traders. The incident took place at Aryan Wines, located in Shivalayam Nagar, where an unidentified thief broke into the premises by making a hole in the wall.

According to police sources, the accused gained entry into the shop during the night hours by drilling through the wall and managed to steal cash amounting to 1 lakh



along with 15 liquor bottles. The theft came to light when the shop owner opened the outlet the following morning and noticed the missing cash and liquor.

CCTV cameras installed inside the wine shop captured the entire

burglary incident. The footage reportedly shows the accused entering the shop through the hole in the wall and committing the theft. Based on the CCTV visuals, police believe the crime was carried out in a planned manner.

The owner of Aryan Wines immediately lodged a complaint with the Suraram Police, following which the police registered a case and launched an investigation. Police teams are currently examining the CCTV footage to identify the suspect and trace his movements before and after the incident.

Suraram police officials stated that efforts are being made to nab the accused at the earliest. They are also verifying whether similar burglaries have occurred in nearby areas and checking for possible links.

The incident has raised concerns among wine shop owners and local business operators, who have urged the police to increase night patrols in commercial areas. Police have assured that additional security measures and surveillance will be put in place to prevent such incidents in the future.

## South Central Railway Announces 124 Special Trains for Sankranti Festival



Hyderabad: In a major move to facilitate travel during the Sankranti festival, South Central Railway (SCR) has announced over 400 special trains for passengers, including 124 trains made available a month in advance. The decision aims to ease congestion during the peak festive season and ensure smoother travel for people heading to their hometowns.

The highest demand is expected on routes connecting Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam, Kakinada, and Tirupati. These special trains will operate until January 24 and will carry additional charges. With ongoing development works at Secunderabad station, authorities have tightened security measures to ensure safe and orderly boarding and travel.

Officials estimate that around 30 lakh passengers are likely to travel by train during this Sankranti season. Special arrangements are being made at major stations, including additional ticketing counters, extra

staff deployment, and enhanced safety protocols to manage the festive rush efficiently.

"This year, advance planning has been implemented to handle the expected surge in travel. With passenger numbers to Andhra Pradesh increasing every year, we anticipate this Sankranti season will see over 30 lakh travelers on trains from Hyderabad and surrounding areas," railway officials stated.

SCR has emphasized that passengers should plan their journeys in ad-

vance, book tickets early, and arrive at stations on time due to the heavy rush. Additional coaches and enhanced operational support will be provided to manage demand and ensure a comfortable journey.

This proactive initiative reflects the South Central Railway's commitment to passenger convenience and safety during peak festive travel periods, allowing families to celebrate Sankranti without travel-related stress.

# Minister Konda Surekha Congratulates Minority Gurukul Student Asiya for Guinness World Record in Karate

Warangal:  
State Forest, Environment and Endowments Minister Konda Surekha on Friday congratulated Mohammed Asiya, a student of a Telangana Minority Gurukul Educational Institution, for achieving a prestigious Guinness World Record in karate. The minister personally visited the Minority Gurukul at Hanamkonda as part of her tour and lauded the young achiever for bringing pride to the state and the country.

Out of this massive pool of participants, only 863 competitors qualified for the final record attempt, under the coordination of 17 organizers. Asiya's selection and success among such a large and competitive group stood out as a remarkable accomplishment. The minister noted that it was particularly special that Asiya, who represented Telangana, is a student of a Minority Gurukul Educational Institution, highlighting the growing impact of government-run minority edu-



cational institutions in nurturing talent.

Minister Konda Surekha praised Asiya's

dedication, discipline, and hard work, stating that her achievement would inspire many other students, especially girls, to pursue excellence in sports alongside academics. She em-

phasized that such international recognitions reflect the hidden potential among stu-

dents studying in government institutions when provided with proper guidance and opportunities.

The minister encouraged Asiya to aim even higher in her sporting career and expressed confidence that she would achieve many more milestones in the future. She assured her of full support from the government and advised her to approach the authorities without hesitation if she faced any difficulties in training, participation, or resources.

The visit concluded on a positive note, with officials, teachers, and students expressing pride in Asiya's achievement. Her Guinness World Record has not only brought honor to her family and institution but has also emerged as a symbol of encouragement for minority students across Telangana to dream big and strive for global recognition.

## MLA Sabitha Indra Reddy Congratulates Maheshwaram Sarpanch Naveen

Maheshwaram:  
Former minister and Maheshwaram MLA Sabitha Indra Reddy on Thursday congratulated Munagapati Naveen for his resounding victory as the Sarpanch of Maheshwaram village. Along with the newly elected Sarpanch, the MLA also felicitated the Deputy Sarpanch and all ward members with shawls, extending her heartfelt wishes.

Addressing the gathering, Sabitha Indra Reddy emphasized the importance of collective effort and coordination among elected representatives for the overall development of the village. She advised the newly elected leadership to work in close cooperation with offi-



cials and ensure that development initiatives reach every section of society. She expressed confidence that the new team would live up to the trust placed in them by the people.

The MLA further stated that village development plays a crucial role in the progress of the state and called upon the newly elected Sarpanch, Deputy Sar-

panch, and ward members to uphold transparency, accountability, and public welfare. She urged them to remain accessible to the people and to address local issues with dedication and commitment.

Speaking on the occasion, Sarpanch Munagapati Naveen expressed his sincere gratitude to the villagers for placing their faith in him and

electing him with a clear mandate. He thanked each and every voter who supported him and assured that he would work tirelessly for the comprehensive development of Maheshwaram village. Naveen stated that he would not step back from fulfilling the promises made to the people and would strive to implement development

works efficiently. He also highlighted his commitment to improving basic infrastructure, sanitation, drinking water facilities, and welfare schemes in the village. Naveen added that the cooperation of all ward members and villagers would be key to achieving these goals.

The felicitation programme was attended by several local leaders and public representatives, including former Sarpanch Karrolla Chandrayya, Anandam, Sudheer Goud, and Minas Patel, among others. The event concluded on a positive note, reflecting optimism about the future development of Maheshwaram village under the new leadership.



Nizamabad, Telangana — A shocking incident emerged from Varni Mandal in Nizamabad district, where a local farmer tried to repay his crop loan using counterfeit currency and fled when bank officials detected the fraud. The case has raised concerns about the circulation of fake currency in rural areas.

The accused, identified as Naredla Chinnasailu from Jalalpur village, visited the Canara Bank branch carrying 2,08,500 in 500 denomination notes to settle his outstanding crop loan. Bank staff became suspicious during the counting process and ran the notes through a cash-counting machine. All bills had the same serial number, immediately flagging them as counterfeit.

Police have urged residents to remain vigilant, carefully check all cash before accepting or using it, and immediately report suspicious notes.

Officials emphasized that dealing with counterfeit currency is a serious offence under the Indian Penal Code and that strict legal action will be taken against anyone involved in such activities.

The investigation continues as law enforcement works to locate the farmer, trace the source of the fake notes, and prevent further circulation of counterfeit money in the district. Authorities also stress the importance of public awareness to curb similar incidents in the future.

## BJP Telangana State President N. Ramchander Rao Addresses Nirmal District Panchayat Leaders' Meet

Hyderabad, December 19, 2025:

Nirmal district witnessed a grand gathering of Panchayat leaders, including Sarpanches, Deputy Sarpanches, and Ward Members, at an event organized to felicitate leaders who recently secured victory in the local body elections. BJP Telangana State President N. Ramchander Rao participated in the meet and congratulated the newly elected representatives for their remarkable performance.

Addressing the gathering, Ramchander Rao highlighted BJP's sweeping victories across multiple constituencies. In the Muthol Assembly segment, out of 181 Gram Panchayats, BJP candidates won as Sarpanches in 103 Panchayats. Similarly, in Nirmal district, which has 128 Panchayats, over 80 Sarpanches were elected on the BJP ticket. Khanapur constituency also witnessed 32 BJP Sarpanches emerging victorious. Successes were also noted in neighboring districts including Nizamabad, Karimnagar, Adilabad, and Medak. Across the state, nearly 1,000-1,200 Sarpanches were elected under the BJP banner, with over 1,200 Deputy Sar-



panches and more than 10,000 Ward Members.

Ramchander Rao criticized the Congress government for attempting to claim credit for BJP victories and misleading the public. He asserted that in two years of governance, Congress has failed to deliver justice or bring meaningful change to the lives of Telangana citizens. According to him, the electorate's support for BJP in local bodies reflects a clear mandate against Congress and BRS misgovernance, and in favor of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's welfare-driven leadership.

He highlighted several

central government initiatives that have directly benefited rural Telangana, including PM-Kisan Samman Yojana, Ujjwala gas connections, proper roads, sanitation projects, street lighting, farmer support schemes, women's self-help loans, youth employment initiatives, and direct funding for village and district development projects. Ramchander Rao emphasized that these schemes are implemented efficiently under the central government's guidance, contrasting them with alleged mismanagement by the state Congress administration.

Regarding the VB-

## Telangana Leader Harish Rao Mortgages Home to Help Poor Student Secure Education Loan

Hyderabad — In an extraordinary act of personal generosity, former minister and Siddipet MLA T. Harish Rao has mortgaged his own house to help a financially needy student secure an education loan for postgraduate medical studies. The gesture has earned widespread praise from both the public and political circles.

The student, Konka Mamatha, hails from a modest family in Siddipet. After completing her MBBS from Siddhartha Medical College in Vijayawada, she secured a seat for PG medical studies in Ophthalmology at a reputed institution in Mahabubnagar. However, she faced severe difficulties in arranging the first instalment of tuition fees, which amount to 7.5 lakh per year for three years.

With the fee deadline approaching and no collateral to present, her education was at risk.



When Mamatha and her father, who works as a tailor, approached banks for an education loan, they were informed that without collateral, the application could not be processed. With time running out, the family sought assistance from Harish Rao. Understanding the urgency, Rao took the extraordinary step of mortgaging his own residence in Siddipet with a bank to ensure that Mamatha could receive a 20 lakh education loan in time.

In addition to arranging the loan, Harish Rao personally provided 1 lakh in cash from his own funds to help Mamatha cover immediate expenses such as hostel fees. The young doctor expressed her profound gratitude, stating that Rao's intervention was pivotal in allowing her to continue her medical education.

This heartwarming gesture has sparked discussions across Telangana about the role of public representatives in supporting education and helping underprivileged students achieve their aspirations. Rao's actions stand as a remarkable example of using personal resources for the greater good of society.



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



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

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

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

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

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

### Attacks on Media: Threats to Freedom of Expression

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



anger. His death became symbolic of broader frus-

on fire. Journalists and staff found themselves pated in both scope and intensity. In several cit-

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

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

### Law Enforcement and Government Response



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

### Widening Political and Social Fault Lines

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

### zen Disillusionment

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

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

news and enabled citizens to coordinate peace-

while also facilitating dialogue between the gov-

tions require structural reforms:



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

### Humanitarian and Social Implications

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

overnment and citizens. Mental health support, legal aid, and community mediation have been highlighted as critical tools to prevent further escalation.

### International Perspective and Implications

The unrest has drawn global attention, with international human rights groups and foreign governments monitoring the situation closely.

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

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

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

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

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

### Conclusion

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



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

Civil society organizations have called for immediate interventions to protect vulnerable populations, including journalists and protesters. However, long-term solu-

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

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

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

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



process.

In the state capital of Chennai, the impact was particularly striking, with around 14 lakh names dropped from the list. In some assembly constituencies, more than one third of previously registered voters were omitted in the draft roll, underscoring the uneven effects of the revision across different urban and rural areas.

Political reactions to the deletions have been mixed and, in many cases, intense. Opposition parties have criticised the process, claiming that the large scale removal of voters could affect electoral outcomes and potentially disenfranchise eligible citizens. They have called for transparency in the criteria used and for assurances that genuine voters have not been unfairly excluded.

Supporters of the SIR, in-

cluding some political figures, argue that a clean and accurate voter list is essential for credible elections. They say that removing outdated entries, such as those of deceased or relocated voters, helps uphold the integrity of the democratic process. These advocates emphasise that the revision is a normal part of electoral administration and is designed to reflect real world changes in population and residence.

The Election Commission overseeing the process has opened a claims and objections period, allowing voters whose names were deleted to check their status and submit requests for reinstatement if they believe they are eligible. This window for appeals and corrections is seen as a critical safeguard to ensure that eligible electors are not per-

manently disenfranchised due to clerical errors or misunderstandings during the revision.

Experts note that while such revisions are not unprecedented, the scale seen in Tamil Nadu is noteworthy and reflective of broader efforts across India to modernise and sanitise electoral records after decades without a comprehensive update. The challenge now lies in balancing the twin goals of accuracy and inclusivity, ensuring that the electoral roll is both up to date and representative of all genuine voters.

As the state prepares for the upcoming elections, the outcome of this revision and its handling — including how effectively eligible voters can reclaim their entries — will remain a key focus of political debate and public attention.

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

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

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

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



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

Experts in law and digital media say the case underscores the challenges emerg-

ing individuals and institutions from reputational harm. Critics, however, within the political party have claimed that the ruling may infringe on free speech and political expression, calling for clearer legal guidelines on what constitutes defamatory AI-generated content.

The case also emphasizes the growing responsibility of social media platforms and intermediaries to monitor and remove content that could cause harm, even when posted by influential political actors. Analysts note that the outcome of this case could set important precedents in India and beyond, shaping legal and regulatory frameworks for AI-generated media in democratic societies.

As technology advances, cases like this one illustrate the urgent need to balance free expression with accountability, ensuring that emerging digital tools are not exploited to mislead citizens or manipulate political discourse. The upcoming hearing will be closely watched by legal experts, policymakers, and technology ethics advocates worldwide.

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

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

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

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



paid wages well above the threshold for EWS eligibility. The court found this contradicted the claim of economic hardship.

Further investigations revealed that the family owned approximately 25 acres of agricultural land and were members of a cooperative sugar factory, generating substantial income from agricultural activities. These findings directly undermined assertions of landlessness and financial deprivation. The ruling also left

open the possibility of further legal consequences, including enforcement of the sentence and potential disqualification from public office under electoral law, which bars legislators convicted and sentenced to more than two years.

The politician has appealed to a higher court seeking relief from the conviction and sentence, and the matter is currently pending. Meanwhile, political fallout continues, with opposition leaders and civic groups calling for accountability and stronger safeguards against misuse of public welfare schemes.

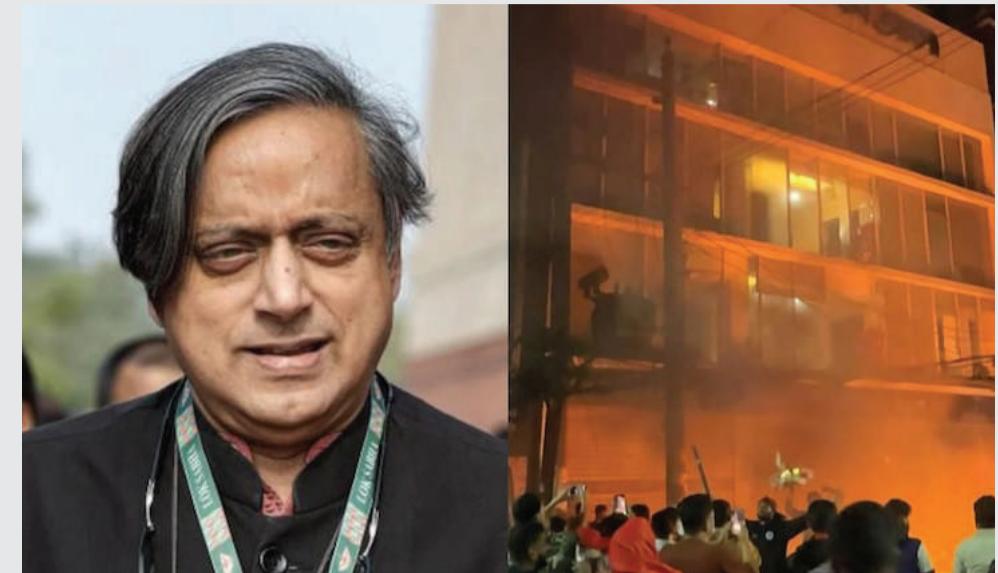
The case underscores the long-term implications of historical legal actions on contemporary political careers. It also highlights broader concerns about transparency and integrity in public life, particularly in the administration of welfare programs designed to benefit vulnerable communities. Observers say it serves as a reminder of the need for robust verification processes and vigilant oversight to prevent abuse of government schemes.

On this basis, the sessions court upheld the original conviction and two-year prison sentence for fraud, forgery, and cheating. The ruling also left

the most damning evidence was the set of affidavits and income certificates filed to support the housing applications. The court determined that these documents were not merely erroneous but deliberately falsified to mislead authorities and secure government property meant for genuine beneficiaries.

On this basis, the sessions court upheld the original conviction and two-year prison sentence for fraud, forgery, and cheating. The ruling also left

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



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

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

In his statement, he urged calm, appealing to both the

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

According to police reports, the 30-year-old victim, who works at a private hospital, had gone to a hotel near the town's railway station to collect money from a friend.

Her friend had booked a room for their meeting, but due to a misunderstanding, she returned and mistakenly knocked on the door of a different room. Unbeknownst to her, three men in that room were drinking alcohol and engaged in a private gathering.

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

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

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

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

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

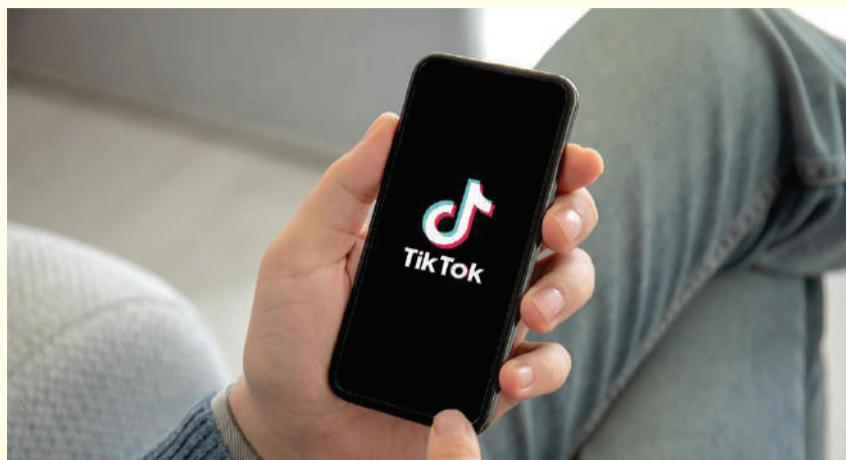
rights and dignity will be prioritised throughout the legal process.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

The interim government, led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus since the previous administration stepped down, urged citizens to reject mob violence and maintain peace. Officials condemned acts of arson, intimidation, and property destruction, pledging accountability for perpetrators.

Authorities also appealed for calm ahead of Hadi's funeral and national mourning events.

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

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

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

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



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

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

impossible, prompting officials to urge residents to stay indoors unless travel was essential.

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

Experts point to a combination of atmospheric conditions that brought moisture into the desert skies, creating powerful thunderstorm systems. These systems developed

when warm, moist air from surrounding bodies of water met cooler air aloft, triggering condensation and the rapid formation of storm clouds. In recent years, such events have become more frequent and intense, a trend climate scientists link to broader patterns of global warming and climate change.

Rising temperatures increase evaporation and the amount of moisture in the air, which can fuel heavier rainfall when storms do form.

This phenomenon is not entirely new for the region but has escalated in severity. A severe storm in April 2014 brought the heaviest rainfall recorded in decades, soaking desert cities with amounts that would normally fall over many months in just a few hours.

That event overwhelmed drainage networks, flood-

ed highways and even halted operations at key transportation hubs, highlighting the vulnerability of desert metropolises to anomalous weather.

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

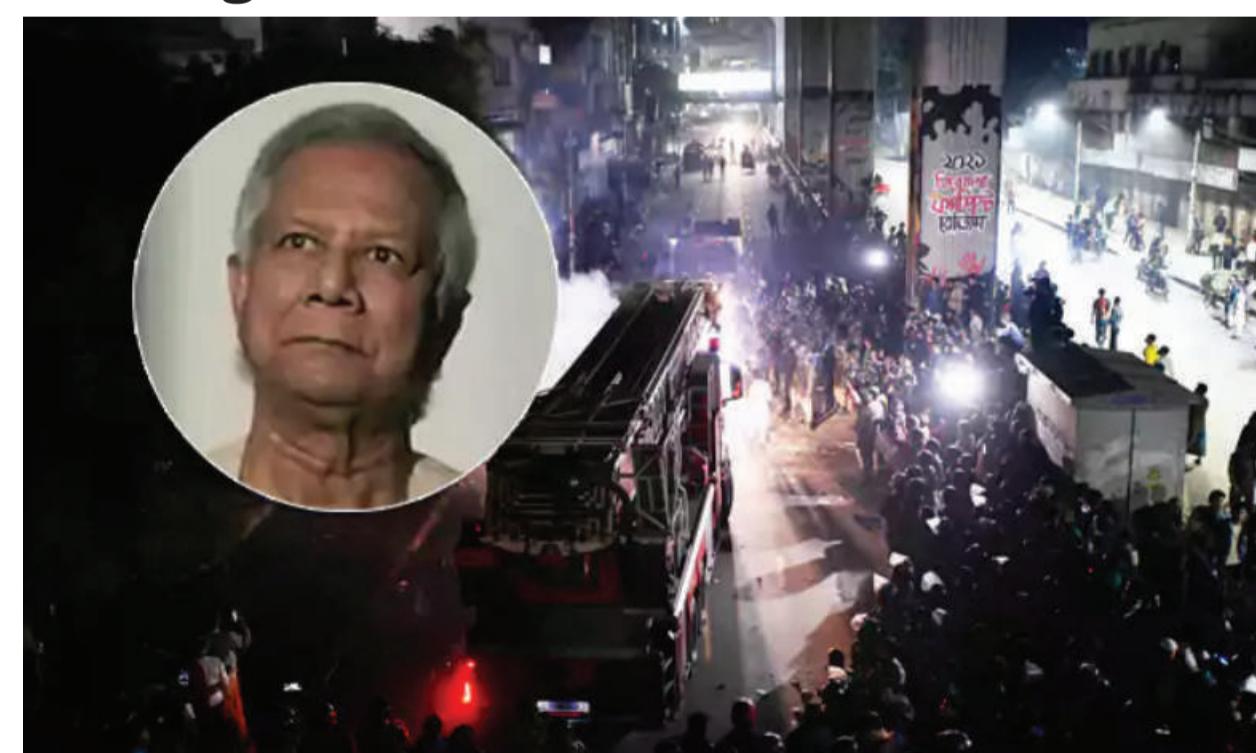
Authorities have responded with a range of emergency measures, including weather alerts, traffic advisories and deployment of specialised response teams to assist in flood-prone areas. Residents and visitors have

been urged to monitor conditions closely and avoid travel through inundated zones.

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

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

## Bangladesh Government Issues Apology to Journalists Following Attacks on Media Offices



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

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

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

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

The apology has drawn mixed reactions from journalists and advocacy groups. Many welcomed the acknowledgement of their plight but stressed

that words must be accompanied by concrete action to prevent future violence. Press freedom advocates point to a concerning trend in recent years, where intimidation, legal pressure, and physical assaults against reporters have increased, often without accountability.

They argue that systemic reforms are necessary to ensure journalists can perform their work without fear of retribution. Observers note that the unrest is rooted in ongoing political tensions and societal divisions, with protests becoming increasingly volatile. The at-

tacks on media offices have raised alarms both domestically and internationally, drawing attention to the vulnerability of journalists operating in politically charged environments.

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

The events serve as a stark reminder of the challenges faced by press institutions in regions experiencing political instability. Analysts suggest that long-term solutions will require stronger legal safeguards, more responsive law enforcement, and continued advocacy for the rights of journalists.

Until such measures are implemented, media professionals in Bangladesh remain at risk during periods of civil unrest, making the protection of their safety and independence a critical issue for both national and international observers.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Broader market

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

Looking ahead, traders will monitor key domestic triggers including quarterly corporate results, central bank guidance on interest rates, and macroeconomic data releases for fresh direction.

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



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



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

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

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

months, influenced partly by outflows from foreign portfolio investors amid global financial uncertainties. Reduced demand for Indian equities, along with volatility in global markets, has contributed to the downward pressure on the rupee. Despite these challenges, India's macroeconomic fundamentals remain robust, supported by strong foreign exchange reserves, a manageable fiscal deficit, and healthy corporate and banking balance sheets, which should help stabilize the currency.

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

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

Market analysts note that the rupee has experienced volatility due to global trade dynamics and capital flow movements. The RBI has actively intervened in currency markets, including through spot and forward operations, to limit excessive fluctuations and provide stability. However, traders remain cautious, monitoring international commodity prices and geopolitical developments that could influence currency trends.

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

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

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

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

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

petitiveness in the domestic and global markets.

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

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

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

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

cation faced regulatory scrutiny and was rejected in 2022 due to compliance requirements. After addressing the issues and resubmitting, PPSL has now secured the broader authorisations, marking a notable regulatory milestone. The expanded licence is expected to help Paytm deepen its presence in India's merchant payments market, particularly among small and medium enterprises that rely on offline solutions. It also strengthens the company's ability to facilitate cross-border commercial transactions, integrating Indian merchants more closely

with global trade.

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



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



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

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

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

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

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

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

The company reported revenue growth near the higher end of its guidance for the quarter ending November 2025, with a significant rise in order bookings. Accenture saw approximately a 10 percent increase in new orders, driven primarily by managed services — an area where Indian IT firms such as Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Infosys, and HCL Tech saw increased trading interest, with Accenture's performance serving as a proxy for global demand trends that often shape the outlook for Indian IT exports.

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

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

The encouraging outlook



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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

Sri Lanka has been drawn in a competitive

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

On the football front,

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

Sports officials are actively mediating between the All India Football Federation (AIFF), ISL clubs, I-League stakeholders, and potential commercial partners.

Club representatives have proposed a club-owned league model while keeping the federation as the sport's regulator. Despite ongoing negotiations, the ministry reassured that the league will go ahead and that structural issues will be resolved to ensure uninterrupted domestic football.

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

only for fitness or tactical reasons.

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

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

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

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

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

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

measure. The trailer immediately captures attention with its haunting concept: a date of birth, a date of death, and the fleeting stretch in between. This stark imagery forms the philosophical backbone of the story, suggesting that life is more than just existence—it is about accountability, choices, and moral reckoning that transcends death itself.

The film's lead trio brings distinct energies to this framework. Upendra's deep, resonant voiceover adds philosophical depth, framing the narrative as a meditation on cause and consequence. Raj B Shetty portrays the grounded, vulnerable everyman,



caught in forces larger than himself. Shiva Rajkumar surprises viewers with a striking visual—a red Bharatanatyam costume—hinting at themes of duality and transformation, adding an unexpected twist to his on-screen persona.

Visually, the film impresses with Satya Hegde's captivating cinematography, while Arjun Janya's pulsating score heightens the drama and tension. High-octane action sequences, choreographed by stunt masters Dr. K. Ravi Verma, Jolly Bastian, and Different Danny Chetan D'Souza, promise adrenaline-pumping thrills. The crisp dialogues by Anil Kumar and seamless editing by K.M. Prakash

## "Alluda Majaka" Web Series Teaser Released by Director Veer Shankar

Anita Creative Works proudly presents the much-anticipated web series Alluda Majaka, produced under the Suresh Film Factory banner. The teaser, featuring KS Kumar and Nainika Anasuya in the lead roles, was officially released by acclaimed director Veer Shankar.

Speaking at the launch, Veer Shankar praised the series, saying that the title Alluda Majaka is catchy and the teaser looks impressive. He added that the concept, based on the classic "mother-in-law and son-in-law" dynamic, has resonated well with audiences in the past and is likely to do so again. He also expressed his happiness in seeing KS Kumar, both a director and artist, actively contributing as a union member. Veer Shankar confidently predicted that KS Kumar and Nainika Anasuya will deliver a hit performance.



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

With the teaser already generating buzz, fans are eagerly waiting to see if the web series lives up to the legacy of its cinematic predecessor.

Nagesh, and Swami Nayak, has been praised for their excellent performances. Overall, the collaboration between Vasubharma and Sujit Hani in cinematography, editing, and music has set a high standard for the series, promising an engaging viewing experience for audiences.

Varma highlighted that Dhurandhar goes beyond conventional filmmaking, offering a fresh and compelling vision that deeply engages viewers. According to him, the film doesn't merely aim for attention—it commands it, drawing audiences into the story and making them active participants rather than passive observers. From the very first scene, he noted, the narrative establishes a momentum that keeps the viewers invested throughout.

He praised the technical and narrative aspects of the film, de-

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

Veteran filmmaker Ram Gopal Varma (RGV) has praised Aditya Dhar's latest film Dhurandhar, calling it a transformative moment for Indian cinema and a "quantum leap" that could redefine storytelling and cinematic standards in the industry. His remarks have generated significant attention among filmmakers, critics, and audiences alike.

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One of the film's most notable achievements, according to Varma, is its respect for the intelligence of the audience. By avoiding over-explaining backstory, the film trusts viewers to interpret and connect with the characters, which sets it apart from formulaic commercial cinema. He also commended the film's thematic boldness, noting that it does not chase trends or mimic Hollywood, but confidently asserts that Indian cinema can innovate and succeed on its own terms.

Featuring a stellar cast including Ranveer Singh, Akshaye Khanna, Sanjay Dutt, R. Madhavan, and Arjun Rampal, Dhurandhar has been a box-office sensation, earning both commercial success and critical acclaim. Its intense character arcs, high-impact storytelling, and innovative approach have resonated widely with audiences across India.

Varma's endorsement of the film not only elevates its profile within the industry but also signals a potential shift in Indian filmmaking—one that embraces ambition, narrative depth, and respect for the viewer's engagement.

Dhurandhar is being celebrated as a film that could inspire a new wave of bold and intelligent cinema in India.



## Hyderabad Student Film Maya Gains International Recognition

Hyderabad, 19 December 2025: A graduation film created by final-year students of Annapurna College of Film and Media has earned notable acclaim on both national and international platforms. Maya, written and directed by student filmmaker Swarna Reka Prabhu, has been officially selected at several prestigious film festivals worldwide, showcasing the creative talent emerging from Hyderabad's film education landscape.

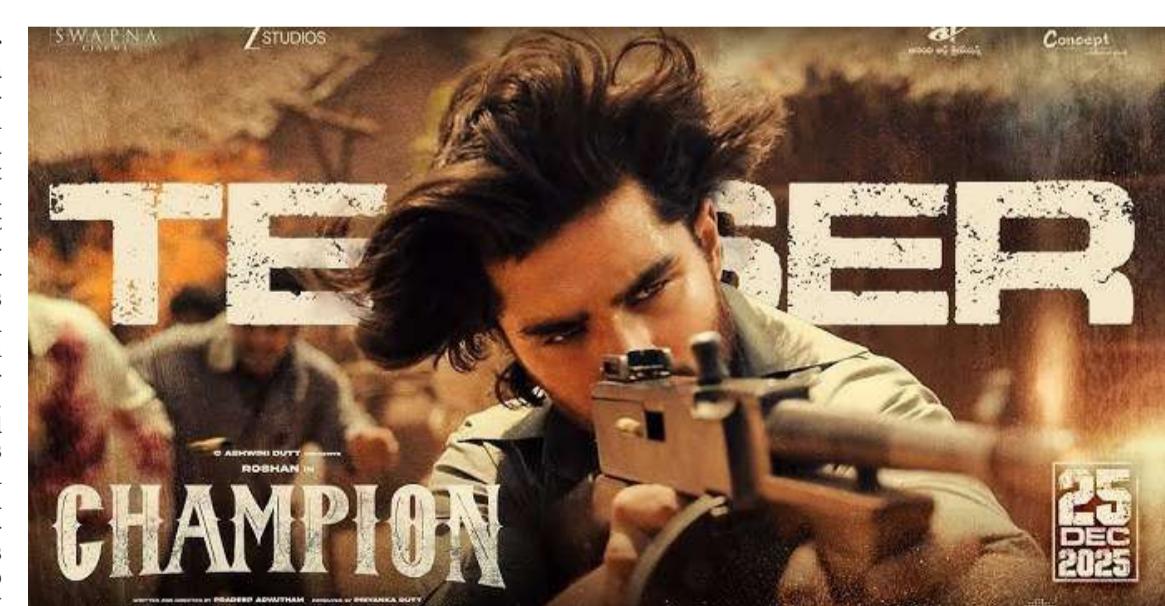
The film has been chosen for screening at multiple celebrated events, including the 44th VGIK International Student Film Festival, the Midnight Monster Club Short Film Festival, Flame First-Cut, the Kuala Lumpur International Film Awards, the Chennai International Short

film Festival, the 5th India International Star Film Festival Awards, and The Corner Seats International Film Festival 2025, among others.

Maya blends imaginative storytelling with collaborative creativity, exploring a range of emotions akin to the experience of dreams. Director Swarna Reka Prabhu explained that the film captures the surreal and layered nature of the subconscious, presenting a narrative that initially may seem fragmented but reveals deeper meaning upon closer reflection.

Annapurna College Director Amala Akkineni praised the achievement as a testament to practical learning and the growing capabilities of emerging filmmakers. She highlighted that students pushing creative

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



Veteran filmmaker Ram Gopal Varma (RGV) has praised Aditya Dhar's latest film Dhurandhar, calling it a transformative moment for Indian cinema and a "quantum leap" that could redefine storytelling and cinematic standards in the industry. His remarks have generated significant attention among filmmakers, critics, and audiences alike.

Varma highlighted that Dhurandhar goes beyond conventional filmmaking, offering a fresh and compelling vision that deeply engages viewers. According to him, the film doesn't merely aim for attention—it commands it, drawing audiences into the story and making them active participants rather than passive observers.

One of the film's most notable achievements, according to Varma, is its respect for the intelligence of the audience.

By avoiding over-explaining backstory, the film trusts viewers to interpret and connect with the characters, which sets it apart from formulaic commercial cinema. He also commended the film's thematic boldness, noting that it does not chase trends or mimic Hollywood, but confidently asserts that Indian cinema can innovate and succeed on its own terms.

Varma's endorsement of the film not only elevates its profile within the industry but also signals a potential shift in Indian filmmaking—one that embraces ambition, narrative depth, and respect for the viewer's engagement.

Dhurandhar is being celebrated as a film that could inspire a new wave of bold and intelligent cinema in India.



film firms that innovative storytelling and collaborative filmmaking by students can resonate far beyond local contexts, bringing global spotlight to Hyderabad's vibrant film education community.

sound design as integral to the emotional impact. Varma emphasized that the film builds pressure rather than noise, using silences and visual framing effectively to enhance the cinematic experience. He also lauded the performances, noting that the characters are crafted to linger in the audience's mind, provoking thought and emotional engagement rather than just providing entertainment.

He praised the technical and narrative aspects of the film, de-

scribing its writing as purposeful, staging as rich with tension, and