



DRDO Successfully Tests Long-Range Guided Rocket, Marks New Milestone in India's Defence Capabilities

TPN Bureau | De-
cember 31

In a major boost to India's indigenous defence research and development, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has successfully conducted a flight test of its Long-Range Guided Rocket (LRGR-120) from the Integrated Test Range (ITR) in Odisha. The advanced rocket, launched from an in-service Pinaka multi-barrel launcher, achieved its maximum range of 120 km with remarkable accuracy, hitting the designated target with precision described as "textbook perfect" by officials.

Defence Ministry sources confirmed that all mission objectives were met during the trial, and key performance parameters of the rocket were validated through extensive tracking and telemetry data collected by range instruments deployed across the ITR. The maiden trial marks a significant leap in India's capability to indigenously design and manufacture long-range precision strike weapon systems for the Armed Forces.

Congratulating the DRDO and its scientists, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh hailed the achievement as a "game changer" for India's battlefield capabilities. He said the suc-



cessful design and development of the long-range guided rocket would "significantly enhance the operational potential and combat effectiveness" of India's artillery systems, enabling precision strikes deep inside enemy territory while ensuring minimum collateral damage.

Defence R&D Secretary and DRDO Chairman Dr. Samir V. Kamat, who witnessed the test, also lauded the scientific and technical teams for their dedication and excellence in meeting all mission objectives.

He emphasized that the LRGR's success underlines DRDO's growing expertise in advanced rocket and missile technologies, consolidating India's self-reliance in the strategic defence domain.

The Long-Range Guided Rocket, designated as LRGR-120, has been developed by the Armament Research

and Development Establishment (ARDE), Pune, in collaboration with the High Energy Materials Research Laboratory (HEMRL), the Defence Research and Development Laboratory (DRDL), and the Research Centre Imarat (RCI) in Hyderabad.

The flight trials were coordinated by the Integrated Test Range and the Proof & Experimental Establishment (P&EE). One of the key highlights of the LRGR-120 is its compatibility with the existing Pinaka launcher system.

The successful firing from the in-service platform demonstrated the versatility of the system, proving it can launch multiple variants of Pinaka rockets both unguided and guided with different range capabilities, without requiring any structural modifications to the launcher.

The new guided vari-

ant integrates state-of-the-art navigation, control, and guidance systems to ensure highly accurate target engagement at extended ranges. The ARDE and its partner laboratories have utilized indigenous materials and cutting-edge propulsion technology to enhance both range and accuracy compared to earlier versions of Pinaka rockets.

Officials noted that the LRGR-120 will substantially strengthen India's artillery-based precision strike options, providing a cost-effective solution for long-range engagements in diverse terrain conditions. Following further trials and validations, the weapon system is expected to be inducted into the Armed Forces, reinforcing India's commitment to Atmanirbhar Bharat in defence manufacturing.

AP State will emerge as major tourist destination - Kandula



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Amaravati: Andhra Pradesh Tourism Minister Kandula Durgesh expressed strong optimism that the state will emerge as a major tourist destination in 2026, crediting the visionary leadership of Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan for steering the alliance government toward rapid progress and inclusive development.

Speaking on the occasion of New Year's Eve, Minister Durgesh highlighted that the government's primary commitment remains the

upliftment of the poor and the holistic development of every citizen. He said that the coalition administration is resolutely working to ensure prosperity reaches every household in Andhra Pradesh, aiming to make the state a model of growth for the entire nation. Durgesh emphasized that arts, culture, and heritage are being given renewed importance under the government's development strategy.

He stated that the state is witnessing a cultural revival that aims to preserve traditional values while embracing modern expressions. Special initiatives are being launched to support artists, promote regional

crafts, and integrate Andhra's vibrant cultural identity into its tourism potential. Turning to the cinematography and film sector, the minister noted that Andhra Pradesh has become a fertile ground for innovative cinematic ventures. The government, he said, has laid the foundation for new advancements in filmmaking, technological innovation, and creative education. Efforts are underway to make cinema more accessible to common people and to foster local talent by providing state-of-the-art infrastructure and policy support for the film industry's growth. Durgesh stated that 2026 will be a year of expanded welfare programs and accelerated infrastructure development across the state. He called upon people to extend their cooperation and blessings as the government strives to deliver prosperity, employment, and security to all sections of society. Conveying his New Year greetings to the people of Andhra Pradesh, Minister Durgesh expressed heartfelt wishes for happiness and progress in every home. He hoped the coming year would fill every household with light, peace, and prosperity and reaffirmed his confidence that Andhra Pradesh will shine as a global symbol of progress, innovation, and inclusive governance.

Purandeswari Leads Key Parliamentary Review on Women Empowerment

TPN Bureau | December 31

East Godavari: Significant steps are being taken at the national level to strengthen women's economic and social empowerment. Under the leadership of Rajahmundry MP and Chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee on Empowerment of Women, Smt. Daggubati Purandeswari, a series of extensive review meetings were held over the past four days in Bengaluru and Thiruvananthapuram. The meetings brought together representatives from several sectors including defence, banking, and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) to assess the progress of women empowerment initiatives implemented across these fields. The committee also examined how Corporate

Social Responsibility (CSR) funds are being utilized to promote skills training and self-employment opportunities for women in both urban and rural areas.

During the discussions, Purandeswari emphasized that women should not be confined to mere participation in the workforce but must be positioned to play decisive and leadership roles in decision-making processes. Comprehensive measures combining training, livelihood creation, and marketing support were necessary, she observed, to ensure women achieve meaningful economic independence.

A major area of focus during the deliberations was the effective implementation of the Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) Act, 2013, aimed at ensuring safe and respectful workplaces for

women. Committee members engaged in detailed discussions on existing institutional mechanisms, prevailing gaps, and the additional reforms required for stronger enforcement. Purandeswari underscored that creating a secure work environment for women is not merely a legal obligation but a collective social responsibility.

She stressed that the POSH Act should move beyond paperwork and demonstrate concrete results in workplaces across the country.

At the conclusion of the visits, the Parliamentary Committee assured that the recommendations and

insights gathered during these reviews would be compiled into a comprehensive report to be submitted in Parliament, guiding future national policy reforms on women's empowerment.

Purandeswari's proactive engagement and her hands-on review of field-level practices reflect her commitment to transform women's empowerment from a ceremonial slogan into a tangible, result-oriented national movement.

Her leadership continues to draw recognition for aligning legislative focus with ground-level social transformation.



87% of Polavaram project complete Nimmala

TPN Bureau | De-
cember 31

milestone in the project's progress.

Highlighting the government's commitment to rehabilitating displaced families, the minister revealed that after the formation of the coalition government, compensation amounting to 1,894 crore has been distributed to the Polavaram project evacuees. He reiterated that all pending rehabilitation and resettlement activities are being handled systematically to ensure transparency and speed.

Once finished, the project will provide assured irrigation to lakhs of acres of farmland, meet the drinking water needs of several districts, and benefit industries across the state.

Ramanaidu further announced that Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu will visit the Velugonda project site in the first week of January. During this visit, the Chief Minister will inaugurate works on the Velugonda feeder canal, which are being undertaken at an estimated cost of 456 crore. These canal works are expected to play a vital role in improving irrigation facilities and addressing the water needs of farmers in the drought-prone areas.

of Prakasam and Nellore districts.

The minister emphasized that all irrigation departments have been instructed to adhere strictly to the timelines fixed for each project. He expressed confidence that, following the schedule, the Polavaram Project considered the "lifeline" of Andhra Pradesh — will be completed by 2027.

Once finished, the project will provide assured irrigation to lakhs of acres of farmland, meet the drinking water needs of several districts, and benefit industries across the state. Ramanaidu concluded by stating that regular reviews will continue to be held to monitor technical, financial, and logistical aspects of the projects.

The government, he said, is committed to completing Polavaram and other major irrigation works with quality and speed to ensure that Andhra Pradesh regains its agricultural prosperity.

YouTuber Anvesh Booked for Allegedly Insulting Hindu Deities; Karate Kalyani Files Complaint

TPN Bureau | December 31

Hyderabad: A fresh controversy erupted in Telangana after popular YouTuber Anvesh was booked by Panjagutta police for allegedly making derogatory remarks against Hindu deities. The complaint was filed by actress and BJP leader Karate Kalyani, who accused Anvesh of deliberately hurting the sentiments of Hindus through his recent YouTube video.

According to police sources, the case has been registered under Sections 352, 79, and 299

of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), along with Section 67 of the Information Technology Act, which pertains to publishing or transmitting obscene material online. Authorities said that Anvesh is likely to be served with legal notices soon for further investigation.

The controversy stems from a video Anvesh recently posted in response to comments made by actor Shivaji on the dressing style of heroines. In his counter-video, Anvesh allegedly made remarks that were considered offensive



and indecent toward revered Hindu goddesses such as Sita and Draupadi.

The statements quickly went viral, drawing outrage from various Hindu organizations and social media users. Protests have since erupted across both Telugu states, with demonstrators burning effigies of Anvesh and demanding strict legal action. Several Hindu groups have gone further, urging the government to declare the YouTuber a "traitor" and to bring him back to India if he is currently abroad.

These organizations argue that his comments are not only blasphemous but also aimed at creating religious discord. Meanwhile, BJP leader Karate Kalyani condemned Anvesh for what she described as "vulgar and insensitive content" that deeply offends millions of devotees.

"Freedom of speech cannot be an excuse to insult faith and culture," she said, calling for stringent punishment under cyber laws. Police officials stated that they are verifying the content of the video and collecting digital

Minister Anam Rambabu Warns of Stern Action Against Negligence in Temples

TPN Bureau | December 31

Athmakur: Andhra Pradesh Endowments Minister Anam Ramanayana Reddy has issued a stern warning that the state government will not tolerate any negligence or misconduct in temples. Speaking to the media at Athmakur on Wednesday, he said strict action would be taken against those responsible, regardless of their position or influence.

Referring to recent incidents at Draksharamam, Simhachalam, and Nandyal temples, the minister said the department responded im-

mediately and initiated corrective measures. "We have thoroughly investigated the incidents and ensured that necessary disciplinary and administrative actions were taken.

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has directed officials to implement strong preventive mechanisms to avoid such occurrences in the future," he said. Explaining the details, Anam said that in the recent Draksharamam incident of Konaseema district, a man had vandalized a Shiva Lingam outside the Bheemeswara Swamy temple. Based on CCTV

footage, the police apprehended the accused, who acted out of personal grudge against temple staff.

The Endowments Department promptly reinstalled a new Shiva Lingam and organized purification and worship rituals. In Nandyal, irregularities came to light when silver ornaments in the Sri Venkateswara Swamy temple were allegedly replaced with fake items. "We have appointed the Deputy Commissioner of Endowments from Kurnool as the inquiry officer," the minister said.

"Until the original sil-

ver ornaments are restored to the Lord, those responsible will not be spared," he added. At Simhachalam, a devotee had complained about finding insects in the temple prasadam. The minister stated that when the devotee reported it, a staff member at the prasadam counter misbehaved with him. "We have ordered the temple's Executive Officer to take strict action against the concerned employee. An FIR has already been registered," Anam confirmed. Emphasizing the priorities of the coalition government, he said protecting temples and ensuring



Polavaram Left Canal Works Progress Rapidly: Aqueduct Near Kummarilova Completed in Record Time

TPN Bureau | December 31: Polavaram: In a major milestone for the Polavaram Left Canal project, construction of the aqueduct across the Tandava River near Kummarilova village in Tuni mandal of Kakinada district has been completed within just one year. The massive structure, built at a cost of approximately 75.94 crore, is a significant achievement in the infrastructure works of the canal aimed at enhancing irrigation and water management in coastal Andhra Pradesh.

According to Executive Engineer Govind, the aqueduct spans 447 meters in length and stands on 22 sturdy piers. The project used an estimated 6,380 tonnes of steel and 78,855 cubic meters of reinforced concrete. The structure includes four major flow gates designed to allow the Polavaram canal waters to cross over while the Tandava River

flows beneath without obstruction.

Originally initiated during the YSR Congress Party government, the project experienced a temporary halt before being revived under the coalition government in December of last year. Since the resumption, nearly 40 percent of the remaining work was executed and completed within a year on a war footing, reflecting the new administration's focus on accelerating irrigation and infrastructure projects across the state.

The aqueduct also incorporates two vehicle passageways on either side, enabling smooth transportation across the key Tuni-Narsipatnam road, which connects several rural and semi-urban settlements in the region. Engineers have ensured the structure adheres to modern safety, durability, and hydrological design standards to sustain

heavy monsoon inflows and canal discharge.

Meanwhile, the state tourism department has identified the scenic location around the Tandava River and the new aqueduct as a potential tourism hub. Plans are underway to establish a "boat shikara" attraction on the river and develop food courts on both sides of the site. Officials believe that these additions will not only enhance recreational opportunities but also create local employment and attract visitors traveling along the coastal corridor.

Local residents have expressed happiness over the rapid progress and the government's efforts to provide both irrigation benefits and tourism opportunities. They hope that once the Polavaram Left Canal becomes operational, the region will experience a new phase of agricultural growth and rural development.



Vandalism at Draksharamam Temple: Accused Arrested in B.R. Ambedkar Konaseema District



TPN Bureau | December 31:

Draksharamam: Police have arrested a man in connection with the desecration of a sacred Shiva Lingam at the famous Draksharamam temple, one of the renowned Pancharama Kshetras in Andhra Pradesh. The accused has been identified as Sheelam Srinivas, a resident of Thotapalem village.

The arrest was confirmed by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Konaseema District Superintendent of Police (SP)

Rahul Meena, who briefed the media on the details of the case. According to SP Meena, the accused reportedly committed the act with the intention of harassing the temple staff due to a long-standing dispute over a drainage issue.

Police say preliminary investigations indicate that the incident was not driven by religious motives but by personal vendetta. The incident occurred at Draksharamam Bhimeswara Swamy Temple, located on the banks of the Saptaganga Gopuram area, where the Kapaleswara Swamy Shiva Lingam was vandalized late on Monday night.

Local residents discovered the damage early Tuesday morning and immediately informed the

authorities. Upon receiving the alert, district SP Rahul Meena personally rushed to the temple, inspected the damaged shrine, and oversaw the initial investigation. A team consisting of Clues personnel, a Dog Squad, and forensic experts was deployed to gather evidence from the spot.

Because the immediate area lacked surveillance cameras, investigators retrieved and analyzed CCTV footage from nearby locations.

This technical evidence, combined with local intelligence inputs, led the police to identify and apprehend the accused within hours. The SP praised the swift response of the district police team in solving the case and maintaining calm in the region.

The SP also appealed to

the public to maintain peace and harmony, emphasizing that the police are committed to safeguarding all places of worship and taking strict legal action against those involved in such acts of desecration. He further assured that temple security measures, including the installation of additional CCTV cameras, would be strengthened to prevent recurrence of such incidents in the future.

The Draksharamam Bhimeswara Temple, located in Ambajipeta mandal, holds immense religious significance and draws thousands of devotees throughout the year. News of the vandalism shocked devotees and locals alike, but the quick arrest of the accused brought some relief to the community.

Minister DSBV Swamy says coalition delivering on promises; Chandrababu hailed as welfare model



TPN Bureau | Dec. 31
PONNALLURU, PRAKASAM DISTRICT: Andhra Pradesh Minister D.S.B.V. Swamy stated that the coalition government in the state is committed to fulfilling every promise made to the people, unlike the previous administration led by Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy. Speaking at a programme in Rajulapadu village of Ponnalluru mandal, where he distributed NTR Bharosa pensions, the minister said the government under Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu is working relentlessly to ensure welfare and development reach every household.

Swamy emphasized that the newly formed Markapuram district was established in line with the coalition's assurances, reflecting the government's sincerity

toward its election promises. "We are not here to deceive people with false assurances. Every word given to the public is being honored with action," he remarked.

He also added that under the coalition government, both welfare and development initiatives are being implemented concurrently to uplift all sections of society. Highlighting the reforms and progress under the leadership of Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, the minister said that Andhra Pradesh is now moving forward as a model state. "The coalition government will lead the state toward rapid development and inclusive growth," he asserted, expressing optimism that the administrative synergy between the partners in power would accelerate change on the

ground. In another programme at Chilakaluripet, senior TDP leader and former minister Pratipati Pulla Rao praised Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu's leadership, calling him a role model for governance across the country.

Distributing NTR Bharosa pensions in his constituency, Pulla Rao stated that the Chief Minister, along with Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan and Minister Nara Lokesh, has been working tirelessly for the state's

progress. "Every household in Andhra Pradesh is now witnessing welfare, transparency, and optimism under Chandrababu's vision-driven leadership," Pulla Rao said. He noted that the coalition government's focus on both social support and economic development has brought satisfaction among citizens. The combination of welfare schemes like the NTR Bharosa pensions and infrastructure initiatives, he said, underscores the government's commitment to people-centric governance. Both leaders expressed confidence that the coalition administration would set new benchmarks for good governance, transparency, and accountability, making Andhra Pradesh a national model in both welfare delivery and development outcomes.

Andhra Pradesh Cabinet Meeting Scheduled for January 8 Under CM Chandrababu Naidu's Leadership

TPN Bureau | December 31 Amaravati: The Andhra Pradesh government has finalized the date for its first major Cabinet meeting of the new year. Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu will chair the Andhra Pradesh Cabinet meeting on January 8, 2026, at 10:30 a.m. in the Secretariat, Amaravati. The meeting is expected to focus on key policy decisions, review of welfare schemes, and development strategies across major sectors.

According to official sources, the General Administration Department (GAD) has issued a memo instructing all departments to submit their respective proposals and policy notes by 4:00 p.m. on January 6. The directive emphasizes that departments must adhere strictly to the deadline so that the Cabinet agenda can be finalized on time.

Senior officials have been asked to ensure that proposals are well-documented, supported by budgetary and prac-



tical feasibility analyses. This is expected to be one of the most significant Cabinet meetings since the formation of the current government in mid-2024.

Particular focus may be placed on attracting new investments in technology, renewable energy, and manufacturing sectors. The government is also expected to discuss proposals related to employment generation, particularly through public-private partnership (PPP) initiatives.

It will also serve as a platform to assess the government's performance and set priorities for the 2026 calendar year. Sources indicate that the Cabinet is likely to deliberate on multiple agendas, including the status of capital city development projects in

Amaravati, improvement of road connectivity, education reforms, and industrial promotion.

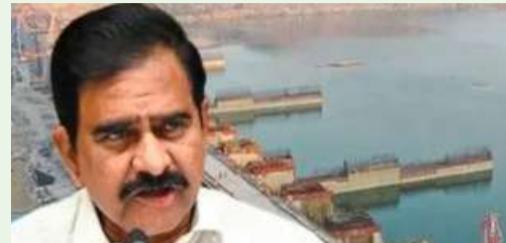
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Cabinet meetings chaired by Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu are known for their emphasis on data-driven governance and project monitoring. Officials note that the Chief Minister may review updates on flagship programs such as skill development initiatives, digital governance expansions, and smart city projects. The ongoing coordination

between the state and central governments on key infrastructure projects, including national highways, irrigation systems, and housing schemes, is also expected to feature in the discussions. Given the political significance of early 2026 being a pre-budget and pre-fiscal planning period, this meeting is seen as pivotal for outlining the government's developmental agenda and strengthening administrative accountability.

Senior bureaucrats and ministers have been instructed to prepare exhaustive reports and present concrete action plans rather than broad policy outlines. Observers in the political and administrative circles expect that decisions taken during the January 8 Cabinet meeting will have a direct bearing on the pace of implementation of major welfare and development programs across the state in the coming months.

Alliance Government Ushers in Era of Transparency, Development in Andhra Pradesh: Devineni Uma



TPN Bureau | December 31

NTR District: Former Minister Devineni Uma Praised the Alliance Government's Transparent Governance, Development Push.

Former minister and Telugu Desam Party (TDP) leader Devineni Uma Maheswara Rao stated that Andhra Pradesh, under the coalition government led by Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, is moving from an era of "dark governance" to a new phase of transparency and progress.

Addressing the media on Wednesday in NTR district, he emphasized that the state, which had been left behind in all sectors, is now firmly back on track due to Naidu's leadership. Devineni Uma said the alliance government has restored confidence among the people by maintaining transparency, accountability, and a commitment to development and welfare.

He described the administration's agenda as one built on "good governance, economic revival, and social wellbeing," adding that the coali-

tion government is moving ahead with a clear vision for Andhra Pradesh's future. Highlighting major development projects, he said the construction of the Polavaram irrigation project and ongoing works in the state's capital region, Amaravati, have gained significant momentum since the new government took charge.

The former minister noted that both projects symbolize the government's commitment to long-term infrastructure and water resource development, critical for the state's agricultural and industrial sectors.

Speaking about investment inflows, Devineni Uma pointed out that Andhra Pradesh is witnessing renewed investor confidence, citing the establishment of a Google Data Center in Visakhapatnam with an investment of 1.35 lakh crore as a milestone achievement.

"The state has turned the corner," Devineni Uma concluded, adding that the alliance government's balanced approach to welfare and development is laying a new foundation for a prosperous Andhra Pradesh.

Job Racket Exposed in Srikakulam: Man Dupes Unemployed Youth of ₹50 Lakh on Promise of Government Jobs



TPN Bureau | December 31

Srikakulam: A major job scam has been unearthed in Seethampeta after a man allegedly duped several unemployed youth by promising them jobs in the Railways, Navy, and NSE.

He specifically mentioned openings for tradesmen, Group D workers, drivers, and cooks. To make his operations more convincing, he enlisted the help of a woman named Kumari, who contacted potential job seekers and confirmed the supposed recruitment process.

According to police and victim statements, Aruna Kumar, a resident of Gopalapatnam, developed an acquaintance with Vijay Raju, an employee working in the Military Engineering Services (MES) office located on Railway Station Road. Taking advantage of this connection, Aruna Kumar frequently visited the MES office and allegedly used the premises to make his fraudulent activities appear legitimate.

He is said to have convinced unemployed youth that he had strong connections that could secure them government jobs in various departments, including the Railways, Navy, and NSE.

Realizing they had been duped, the victims collectively approached the Fourth Town Police Station, submitting payment receipts and other evidence of the scam.

Based on the complaints, Circle Inspector Umakanth registered a case against Aruna Kumar and his associate Vijay Raju. Police have detained Aruna Kumar and launched a full-scale investigation to trace the money trail and identify any additional accomplices involved.

Many were told that interviews would be held on December 30, and that candidates would have to report for duty the next day. Believing the claims, several youths handed over their money and documents. However, as the date approached, the accused went missing. When victims tried contacting him, his phone

High Court Directs CID to Submit Records in Petition on CM Naidu's Case Files

TPN Bureau | December 31

Amaravati: The Andhra Pradesh High Court has directed the state's Crime Investigation Department (CID) to submit all relevant records pertaining to cases filed against Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu. The directive came during a hearing on a petition filed by MRPS (Madiga Reservation Porata Samiti) president Mandava Suvarna Raju, who challenged the ACB Special Court's refusal to release copies of judicial orders and related case documents.

Suvarna Raju had approached the ACB (Anti-Corruption Bureau) Special Court in Vijayawada, seeking certified copies of judgments and case closure orders involving Naidu. In his plea, Raju contended that the judgments and case records are of public importance and should be accessible for transparency. He alleged that the ACB Special Court's rejection of his request lacked proper justification. However, the Special Court denied the request to furnish those copies, which led him to take his appeal to the Andhra Pradesh High Court. On Wednesday, the High Court took up Suvarna Raju's petition for hearing. After re-



viewing the arguments, the court issued an interim directive ordering the CID to submit detailed case records, including documents related to the closure of the two cases. The court observed that before taking a final view, it needs to examine the material placed on record by the investigating agency.

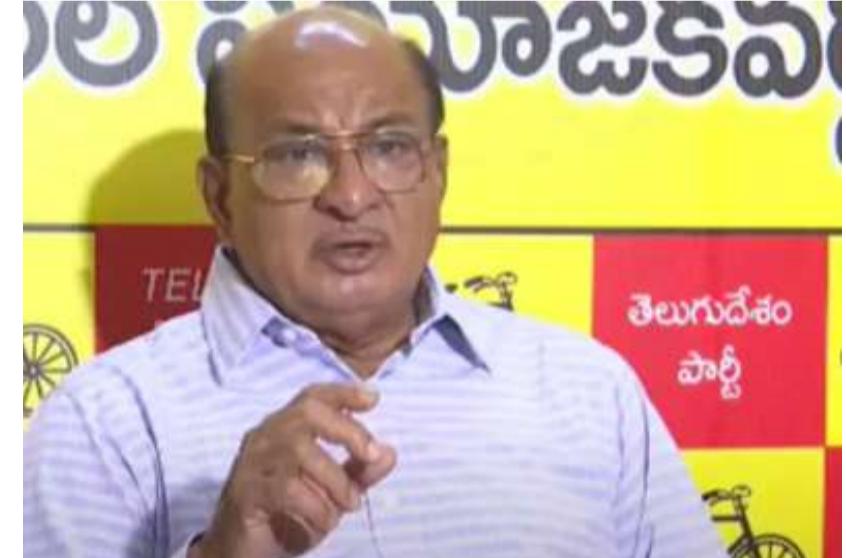
Subsequently, the bench adjourned the hearing by one week. The background to

these cases traces back to the investigations launched by the YSRC government, which accused Naidu of financial irregularities in both projects. The AP FiberNet case, linked to alleged tendering irregularities, was recently dismissed by the ACB Court.

Meanwhile, the CID issued a closure notice in the Skill Development case, citing "mistake of fact," effectively ending proceedings against the Chief Minister. Following these developments, Suvarna Raju sought the official judicial records, claiming the public has a right to know how the cases were processed and closed.

The High Court's directive to the CID marks the latest step in the ongoing legal back-and-forth surrounding these politically sensitive cases. A detailed hearing on the matter is expected next week.

Coalition Will Continue Despite Challenges: Gorantla Butchaiah Chowdary



TPN Bureau | December 31

Rajahmundry: Telugu Desam Party (TDP) legislator Gorantla Butchaiah Chowdary reaffirmed that the TDP-Jana Sena-BJP alliance will continue steadfastly despite internal challenges, external pressures, and occasional misunderstandings. Speaking to



the media in Rajahmundry on Wednesday, Butchaiah Chowdary said that no amount of provocation or political disruption could shake the unity of the coalition. He praised Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu's visionary leadership, saying Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan understands and values

individuals connected to the film industry. "The ruling party is attempting to pit cinema personalities against him, but their plans will not succeed," he said. Launching a sharp attack on former Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, Chowdary alleged that the YSRC government "did nothing for the people" and functioned in an authoritarian manner.

"Jagan acted like a dictator and failed to address people's problems," he remarked. Defending the Andhra Pradesh government's efforts in constructing the Banakacharla project across the Godavari river, the TDP veteran asked, "What is wrong if Andhra Pradesh takes up such a project as a downstream state?"

He accused Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao (KCR) of habitually targeting Naidu while being silent about his own government's

failures. "KCR is junior to me in politics. He used to attack Chandrababu Naidu even when he was not in power. Now corruption charges are being probed in irrigation projects initiated during his regime," Chowdary stated. He further alleged that both KCR and Jagan had deliberately kept several post-bifurcation disputes unresolved between the two Telugu states.

"The Telangana Telugu University issue was left pending for years, but we have finally settled it," he said. Closing his remarks, Chowdary took a swipe at controversial YSRC leaders Kodali Nani and Vallabhaneni Vamsi, saying their loose talk had backfired. "I had warned them before to control their language. They ignored me and are now facing the consequences," he concluded.

ployed youth that he had strong connections that could secure them government jobs in various departments, including the Railways, Navy, and NSE.

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e-Panta App for farmers became brainstorming

TPN Bureau | December 31:

Vijayawada: Brainstorming Held on Modernisation of the e-Panta App to Empower FarmersA brainstorming session on the modernisation of the e-Panta App was held on Wednesday (December 31, 2025) at the Office of the Director of Agriculture, Mangalagiri. The session was chaired by Director of Agriculture, Dr. Manazir Jeelani Samoon, IAS, and attended by senior officials from the National Informatics Centre (NIC), the Digital Agriculture Cell, APAIMS, and other related departments.

During the discussions, Dr. Samoon highlighted that the e-Panta system has evolved into the central database for crop registration and serves as the single source of truth for procurement, input subsidy, and various agricultural welfare schemes implemented by the Government of Andhra Pradesh.

However, he pointed out that field staff and farmers have been facing several operational challenges in recent years while recording crop data, underscoring the urgent need to simplify and modernise the system through innova-



tive digital solutions. The Director instructed NIC and Digital Agriculture Cell officials to take up necessary upgrades so that farmers can register their own crop details independently from the upcoming Rabi season.

The revamped e-Panta App will provide farmers with complete autonomy to enter, monitor, and verify their crop data within their field boundaries. Superintending Engineer (Digital Agriculture Cell) Balasubramanyam explained that farmers may check their registered crop details by downloading the APA-

IMS 2.0 App from the Play Store.

He added that the option for self-booking of crops by farmers will soon be made available. Several key decisions were made during the meeting. The weekly e-Panta registration schedule will be communicated to farmers at least two days in advance. Artificial Intelligence will be leveraged to analyse field crop photos uploaded during registration. Farmers will receive three SMS alerts before crop booking, after booking, and after field verification.

The use of modern satellite imagery will

help identify and verify fallow lands, while SMS messages will carry URL links for e-KYC completion and data verification. Farmers can verify their crop details and lodge grievances through the official portals www.karshak.ap.gov.in/ecrop and www.agriculture.ap.gov.in.

Dr. Samoon concluded that the modernised e-Panta platform will make crop registration more transparent, accurate, and farmer-friendly, ensuring that every cultivator receives timely updates and support from the department.

Andhra Pradesh Soft Tennis Teams Shine with Gold and Silver at National Championship

TPN Bureau | December 31

Amaravati: Andhra Pradesh's young soft tennis players delivered a stellar performance at the 19th National Sub-Junior Soft Tennis Championship, clinching both gold and silver medals in major categories. The national-level event, organized in Odisha from December 27 to 31, brought together promising players from across the country, showcasing the next generation of Indian soft tennis talent.

According to Andhra Pradesh Soft Tennis Association general secretary D. Dileep Kumar, the state's mixed team secured a gold medal in the Mixed Team category, marking a remarkable achievement for the contingent. The victorious team comprised P.V. Chinhias, N. Krish Dharan Reddy, S. Eshwar Hitesh, A.S. Vaishali, T. Sathyra Sri, and D. Aaliya.

Their impressive coordination, strong serves, and tactical play helped them overcome tough competition from several states to finish at the top of the podium. In



addition to the team gold, Andhra Pradesh also bagged a silver medal in the Mixed Doubles category. The pair of P.V. Chinhias and A. Sri Vaishali, representing the NTR district, displayed outstanding chemistry on court, advancing to the finals after defeating strong pairs from Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu.

Though they narrowly missed the gold in the final match, their silver-winning performance was widely applauded for its skill and consistency throughout the tournament. The 19th National Sub-Junior Soft Tennis Championship featured intense matches over five days, providing a platform for under-15 players to exhibit their abilities and gain exposure at the national level.

Officials further stated that the association would continue to support players through advanced coaching camps, exposure trips, and competitive practice sessions to prepare them for upcoming national and international events.

The remarkable success in Odisha has boosted morale across Andhra Pradesh's sports circles and underscored the state's rising presence in Indian soft tennis.

Spectacular Ongole Bull Race Competitions Enthrall Crowds in Narasaraopet

TPN Bureau | Dec 31

Amaravati: The ongoing national-level Ongole bull cart races being held at the Dr. Kodela Siva Prasada Rao Sports Complex on Sattenapalli Road in Narasaraopet, Palnadu district, have drawn massive crowds and created an electrifying atmosphere. Organized under the leadership of Narasaraopet MLA Dr. Chadalawada Aravinda Babu, the event has turned into a grand celebration of rural tradition and strength.

TDP senior leader Kollu Brahmavaya presided over the competitions, which featured enthusiastic participation from bull owners not only from various districts of Andhra Pradesh but also from neighboring states. The Ongole breed, renowned for its power and endurance, was showcased in thrilling cart races that kept spectators on edge from start to finish.

According to the organizing committee, around 90,000 spectators have witnessed the week-long competitions so far. The event has become a major crowd-puller, attracting visitors from distant towns and dis-

tricts who gathered to experience the excitement of this traditional sport and the pride associated with the iconic Ongole bulls.

Former Minister Kasu Venkata Krishna Reddy graced the occasion as a special guest and lauded the organizers for preserving and promoting the legacy of rural sports in Andhra Pradesh. MLA Dr. Aravinda Babu, who inaugurated the races and felicitated the winners, received widespread appreciation for organizing the event with meticulous planning and dedication. The function was attended by an impressive lineup of dignitaries, including Parliament Member Lavu Krishna Devarayalu, former Peddakurapadu MLA Kommalapati Sridhar, GGH Superintendent Dr. S.S.V. Ramana, Dr. Chadalawada Amulya, TDP state secretary Nagothu Souraya, and community leaders



Redgram procurement centres in AP

TPN Bureau | December 31

Vijayawada: Redgram Procurement Centres to Begin in Andhra Pradesh from January 2. The Department of Agriculture announced that Red Gram (Tur) procurement centres will be opened across Andhra Pradesh from January 2, 2026, bringing timely relief to farmers struggling with low market prices.

The initiative follows the Central Government's approval for procurement of pulses under the Price Support Scheme (PSS) for the Kharif 2025 season. Dr. Manazir Jeelani Samoon, Director of Agriculture and Managing Director of AP MARKFED, stated that the Centre's orders to procure Red Gram, Green Gram (Moong), and Black Gram (Urad) have come as a major relief to pulse growers.

"The Government's intervention ensures that farmers receive the Minimum Support Price and need not resort to distress sales due to poor market rates," he said. Under the allocations approved for Andhra Pradesh, 1,16,690 metric tonnes of Red Gram, 903 metric tonnes of Green Gram, and 28,440 metric tonnes of Black Gram will be procured during this season. The open market price of Red Gram currently ranges between 6,800 and 7,300 per quintal, compared to the Government-fixed MSP of 8,000 per quintal.

Dr. Samoon informed

that arrivals of Red Gram in markets are expected from mid-January and will continue until the second fortnight of March. The Central Government issued the procurement guidelines under the PSS on December 10. District-level MARKFED officials have been instructed to establish procurement centres and ensure smooth operations starting next week. Red Gram was cultivated in 4,11,653 hectares across the State during the Kharif season.

Anantapur leads with the largest cultivation area of 1,37,016 hectares, followed by Prakasam (77,730 ha), Kurnool (69,025 ha), Nandyal (47,580 ha), and Palnadu (39,546 ha).

To streamline operations, the District Joint Collector will serve as Chairman of the District-Level Procurement Committee, while the MARKFED District Manager will oversee the procurement process.

So far, 8,893 farmers

have registered for procurement, out of which 6,932 are from Anantapur district alone. Farmers who wish to sell their

produce must register at their nearest Rythu Seva Kendram. This coordinated procurement drive by the Agriculture Department and MARKFED is expected to stabilize pulse prices, ensure remunerative returns to farmers, and strengthen rural confidence in Government-supported agriculture initiatives.



State Government Upgrades Grades of Three Municipalities in Andhra Pradesh

TPN Bureau | Dec 31

Amaravati: The Andhra Pradesh government has issued orders upgrading the grades of three municipalities across the state, recognizing their improved financial performance and administrative efficiency over the past few years. The orders were released by the Municipal Administration and Urban Development (MA&UD) Department, headed by Principal Secretary S. Suresh Kumar.

According to the latest government notification, Kadri Municipality in Sri Sathya Sai district, which was previously classified as a Special Grade Municipality, has now been elevated to the prestigious Selection Grade category. Officials noted that this decision was made after reviewing the municipality's income and expenditure for the last two financial years, both of which reflected a consistent increase in revenue and sound fiscal management.

The upgrade is expected to help the local body access additional funds, improve administrative facilities, and strengthen civic infrastructure in the region.

Similarly, Tanuku Municipality in West Godavari district — earlier functioning under Grade-I status has also been upgraded to Selection Grade. The government stated that from



2022 onwards, the municipality has demonstrated a steady rise in its revenue base and effective expenditure control, meeting the necessary criteria for grade enhancement.

This reclassification will enable Tanuku to receive higher grants and undertake broader developmental projects, including better roads, sanitation, urban planning, and housing

schemes. In another key move aimed at encouraging urban growth, the state government has upgraded Kovvur Municipality in East Godavari district from Grade-III to Grade-I.

This decision was

made after evaluating the municipality's financial strength, population growth, and service delivery standards, paving the way for further upgrades in the coming years.

With this reclassification, Kovvur is poised to attract more urban investment and accelerate its civic modernization plans. The MA&UD Department clarified that the revised grade classifications for all three municipalities will come into immediate effect from today, December 31, 2025. The move is part of the state's broader administrative re-

form to strengthen local governance and ensure equitable urban development across Andhra Pradesh.

Officials added that the government will conduct periodic reviews of all municipal bodies based on their financial strength, population growth, and service delivery standards, paving the way for further upgrades in the coming years.

Bolero Catches Fire After Collision in Racharlalapadu, Driver Charred to Death

Racharlalapadu, December 31, 2025:

A tragic road accident occurred early Wednesday morning near Rangareddy village in the Racharlalapadu Police Station limits of Prakasam district, claiming one life and injuring another. According to reports, a Bolero vehicle traveling from Tuni towards Anantapur caught fire after colliding with an unidentified vehicle on the Nandyal-Amaravati National Highway.

The mishap took place around 5:45 a.m. when the Bolero, loaded with cashew nuts, rammed into another vehicle moving ahead of it near Rangareddy village. The impact was so severe that flames

erupted immediately from the Bolero's engine compartment, quickly engulfing the entire vehicle.

Villagers nearby rushed to the spot but were unable to rescue the driver as the fire spread rapidly. The driver, identified as Swamy (50), reportedly died on the spot, trapped inside the blazing vehicle. Another person, K. Jayaramreddy from Kandipalli village, sustained minor injuries in the incident.

He was immediately shifted to the Government Hospital in Giddalur by a 108 emergency ambulance crew, where he is currently under medical observation. Upon receiving the information, fire service



personnel from Giddalur reached the site and brought the fire under control after battling the flames for nearly half an hour.

The Bolero was completely gutted, with only its charred frame remaining at the scene. Police, led by the Racharlalapadu Station House Officer, also reached the spot to manage traffic and ensure the safe clearance of wreckage, preventing further disruption on the busy highway. Authorities reported that the unidentified vehicle involved in the collision fled the scene immediately after the accident. Police have registered a case and launched a probe to identify the other vehicle and determine the

exact cause of the crash. Preliminary investigations suggest overspeeding and poor visibility at dawn could have contributed to the mishap. The accident caused brief traffic congestion on the highway, which was later cleared after police intervention.

The tragic incident once again highlighted the need for strict adherence to road safety measures and the enforcement of speed limits, especially on major highways connecting key districts in Andhra Pradesh. The Racharlalapadu Police have sent the deceased's body for post-mortem examination and notified his family. Further investigation is underway.

Minister Acchennaidu Distributes NTR Social Security Pensions in Kotabommali, Restores Withheld Benefits

Kotabommali, December 31, 2025:

In a significant public outreach initiative, Andhra Pradesh Minister for Labour and Employment, Kinjarapu Achchennaidu, personally visited households in Kotabommali town of Srikakulam district on Wednesday to distribute NTR Social Security Pensions. The minister's visit was part of the government's broader campaign to ensure social welfare benefits reach every eligible citizen without delay or discrimination.

Achchennaidu, accompanied by local officials and community leaders, went door-to-door, handing over pension cards and interacting directly with elderly beneficiaries and vulnerable groups. He enquired about their well-being, healthcare access, and support needs, reaffirming the government's commitment to uplifting economically weaker sections through social welfare programs.

The minister later addressed a gathering in Dinabandhupuram vil-



lage under Nandigam Mandal, where he resolved a long-pending issue concerning nine pension beneficiaries.

These individuals had their pensions unjustly withheld by the previous YSRCP government. Following court orders, the current government

restored their entitlements and calculated the arrears from the date of stoppage.

Acchennaidu symbolically handed over cheques amounting to a total of 18 lakh, covering the pending pension dues. Speaking at the event, Acchennaidu

highlighted that over 50,000 crore had been spent on pension distribution alone, marking an unparalleled scale of welfare implementation in India. He described the pension program as not just financial assistance but a measure of social dignity and care

Delhi School Student from Narasaraopet Selected for National Football Tournament

TPN Bureau | Dec 31

In a proud moment for Palnadu district, D. Akbar Ali, a talented student from International Delhi Public School, Narasaraopet, has been selected to represent Andhra Pradesh in the upcoming National-Level School Football Championships to be held in Haryana. His selection marks a remarkable achievement for both the young athlete and his school.

According to N. Suresh Kumar, Secretary of the School Games Federation (SGF) for Palnadu district, Akbar Ali earned his place on the national team after displaying exceptional skill and sportsmanship in the State-Level Under-17 Boys Football Tournament conducted on December 7, 8, and 9 at the Dr. Kodela Siva Prasada Rao Grounds in Narasaraopet. Thirteen districts from across Andhra Pradesh participated in the tournament, and Akbar's performance stood out as one of the most impressive. His agility, precision, and game sense were key factors that secured his spot



on the national team. The achievement has brought immense pride to the school and the local community. On Wednesday, the school's Chairman Dr. Nagotu Prakash Rao and Director Nagotu Sabitha felicitated Akbar Ali for his milestone.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Prakash Rao said that students of International Delhi Public School have consistently excelled not only in academics but also in sports throughout the year.

They acknowledged that Akbar's commitment, rigorous training, and passion for the game were instrumental in his selection. The staff expressed hope that his success would inspire more students to take up sports seriously and bring laurels to the school and district in future competitions. This recognition at the state level and selection for the national tournament reflect the growing prominence of Palnadu district in youth sports.

As Akbar Ali prepares for his national debut in Haryana, both his school and the local sporting community eagerly await his performance, hoping he will make Andhra Pradesh proud on the national stage.

Crime Rate Drops by 15% in East Godavari During 2025: SP Narasimha Kishore

East Godavari: East Godavari Police have achieved remarkable results in crime control and maintenance of public order during 2025, according to District Superintendent of Police (SP) D. Narasimha Kishore, IPS. Releasing the department's annual performance report, the SP noted that overall crime in the district decreased by 15 percent compared to 2024.

He credited public cooperation and the diligent efforts of police personnel for the successful crime reduction. In recognition of exemplary service, the SP felicitated several officers and staff members with mementos and appreciation certificates. He also bid farewell to Additional SP (Administration) N.B.M. Murali Krishna, who was transferred to another posting.

With continuous focus on welfare delivery, transparency, and infrastructure development, the ruling government aims to make Andhra Pradesh a model state in administration and economic progress.

and 139 were traced. The department also solved 67 pending missing cases from the previous year. Most cases were resolved within 48 hours, a reflection of the police team's efficiency and proactive approach.

Emphasizing safety measures for women and children, the SP noted that "Shakti Teams" and special patrol units in Rajamahendravaram Urban limits were conducting day-and-night surveillance. Women help desks were established in every police station, and the district ranked first in the state three times in registrations for the Shakti safety app.

However, road accidents remained a concern in 2025, with a 14 percent increase compared to the previous year. A total of 335 people lost their lives and 728 others sustained injuries.

The police registered 56,971 traffic violation cases, imposing penalties and conducting awareness campaigns such as "Face Wash & Go" and black-spot identification programs. The SP

further reported a 15 percent decline in cheating cases and a 37 percent drop in cases of atrocities against Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Compensation of 1.68 crore was distributed to victims under relevant welfare provisions. As part of strict law enforcement, police maintained constant surveillance on 843 rowdy-sheets and 136 "blade-batch" offenders, invoking stringent laws like the PD Act and PIT-NDPS where necessary.

Technological measures such as drone surveillance, installation of 5,795 CCTV cameras, and the Locked House Management System helped curb theft and enhance community safety. The average response time of Dial-112 emergency patrol units also improved in both urban and rural areas.

SP Narasimha Kishore concluded that 2025 marked a significant year of success for East Godavari Police in maintaining law and order and ensuring public safety.

Chandrababu Naidu Committed to State's Development: MLA Dr. Chadalavada Aravind Babu



TPN Bureau | Dec 31

Narasaraopet (Palnadu District): Narasaraopet MLA Dr. Chadalavada Aravind Babu praised Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu's relentless efforts toward the all-round development of Andhra Pradesh, stating that the Chief Minister's governance reflects both strong welfare initiatives and progressive development policies aimed at transforming the state.

The MLA, along with State Library Corporation Chairman Gounguntla Kotaiah, participated

in the distribution of NTR Bharosa pensions in the 11th, 22nd, 23rd, and 24th wards of Narasaraopet town on Wednesday. They personally handed over pensions to beneficiaries ahead of the scheduled date, marking the government's commitment to timely delivery of welfare benefits.

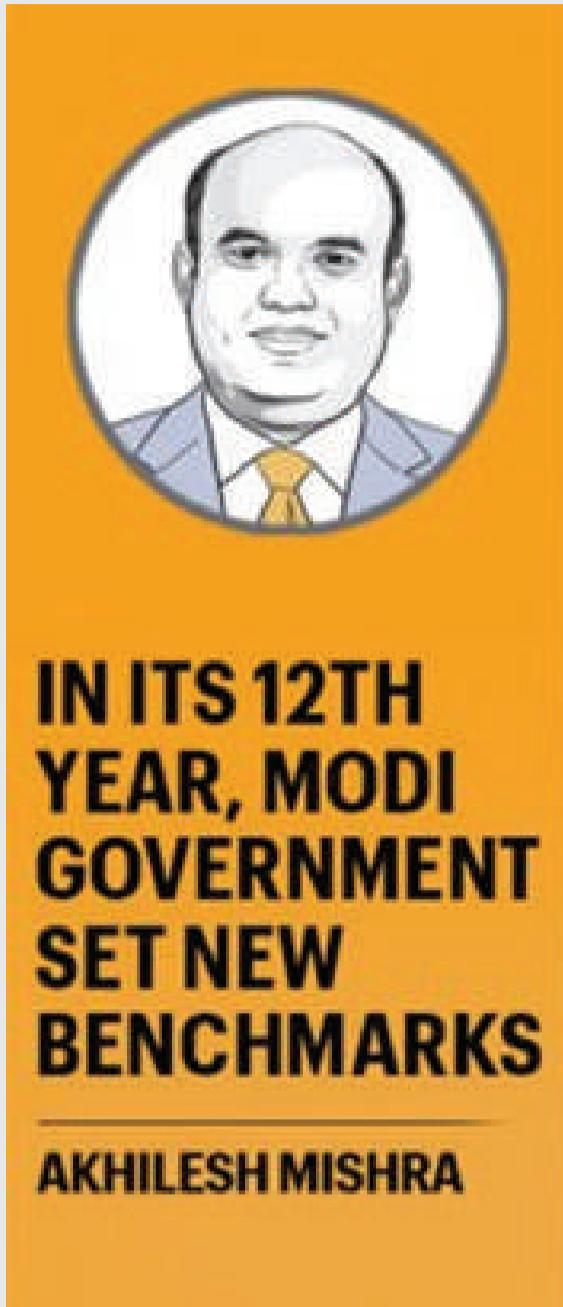
Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Aravind Babu expressed satisfaction that pensions were being distributed one day earlier than usual, which brought immense joy to senior citizens and other beneficiaries.

"Under Chandrababu Naidu's leadership, our government is not only ensuring effective welfare implementation but also steering the state toward rapid growth," he said. He emphasized that the "Suparipalana" (good governance) being implemented by the state government has created an environment of peace, progress, and prosperity for all sections of people.

Welfare and development are being balanced effectively so that no citizen is left behind in the process of progress, the MLA added. Dr. Aravind

Babu further highlighted that the NTR Bharosa pensions, a flagship social security scheme of the state government, are a lifeline for thousands of poor and elderly citizens, providing them financial stability and dignity. The MLA reiterated his commitment to ensuring that every eligible beneficiary in his constituency receives timely assistance without any delays or irregularities.

The program witnessed enthusiastic participation from TDP alliance leaders, local ward representatives, and



In Its Twelfth Year, The Modi Government Continues To Defy Political Fatigue

As 2025 draws to a close, Prime Minister Narendra Modi enters his twelfth year in office — a rarity in modern democracies. Typically, such longevity brings caution, risk aversion, and an obsession with legacy preservation. Governments that last this long often turn defensive, managing decline rather than pursuing new ambition.

The Modi government, however, has charted a markedly different course.

From the outset in 2014, the administration signalled its intent to pursue structural transformation rather than incremental change. The Jan Dhan Yojana fundamentally altered India's financial landscape by bringing millions of previously unbanked citizens

into the formal system. This was not merely a welfare initiative but the backbone for future reforms such as direct benefit transfers and subsidy rationalisation.

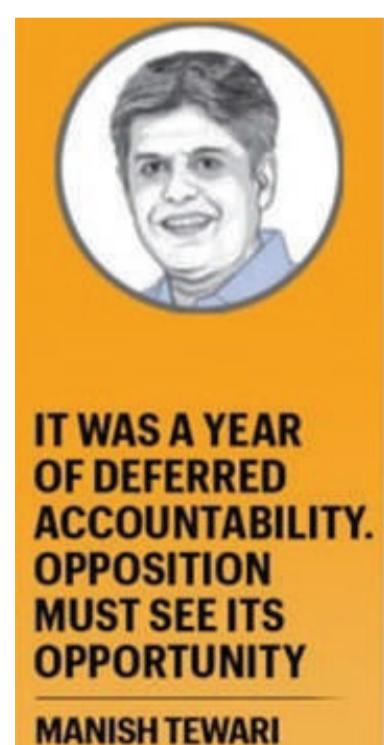
Digital India followed, redefining governance delivery, citizen services, and business operations. Startup India further reinforced this shift by encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation, moving India's youth from job-seeking to job-creating mindsets. In 2017, the Goods and Services Tax (GST) marked one of the most ambitious economic reforms since Independence, unifying the national market and strengthening cooperative federalism, despite early disruptions.

Healthcare reform through Ayushman Bharat placed India at the forefront of public health insurance coverage, offering protection to millions of vulnerable families. Infrastructure expansion — roads, railways, ports, and digital connectivity — has remained a constant theme, reflecting a long-term vision of capacity building rather than short-term populism.

What sets this prolonged tenure apart is the government's sustained appetite for politically risky decisions. Whether applauded or criticised, the administration has consistently chosen decisiveness over inertia. The ability to maintain electoral relevance while pushing disruptive reforms underscores a leadership model built on narrative clarity and political conviction.

As the Modi government enters its twelfth year, the central question is no longer about endurance but impact. History will debate outcomes, but it cannot deny that this administration refused to slow down when convention suggested it should.

A Year Of Deferred Accountability And The Opposition's Missed Moment



Weddings are supposed to be celebrations of love, commitment, and the beginning of a shared life. But in recent times, particularly in India, they have become something else entirely: elaborate displays of wealth, status, and social performance. The recent trend highlights how extravagant celebrations may actually distract from the very purpose of marriage, turning a sacred rite of passage into a spectacle consumed by optics rather than meaning.

Two high-profile weddings in Delhi, reportedly costing over ₹150 crore each, have become symbols of what some describe as "festival-scale nuptials" that outshine even the most lavish corporate events. These weddings, featuring stadium concerts and celebrity performers, dominate social media feeds and set new benchmarks for grandeur. But what does it say about society when people feel compelled to hire arenas and celebrities to mark an intimate personal union?

There's a distinct cultural shift embedded in these trends. Weddings once symbolised a transition from one stage of life to another — much like birth and death. They were occasions for family, community, and affection, marked by tradition, blessing, and restraint. Today, they have increasingly become performances — meticulously curated events meant to generate social media attention and public approval. The social pressure isn't unique to the wealthy elite; the desire to "keep up" has trickled into middle-class aspirations as well. Average wedding spending has climbed significantly, with families routinely shelling out ₹30–35 lakh on basic ceremonies, and luxury additions pushing costs even higher.

There is also a booming wedding industry behind all this, projected to generate more than ₹6.5 lakh crore in 2025 alone. These figures reflect not only rising incomes but also how deeply weddings are woven into cultural and economic life. The market now includes destination venue packages, high-end entertainment, culinary experiences, and even wedding insurance — a sign of financial risks tied to these expensive events.

But the moral of the story is not

just about inflated bills; it's about misplaced priorities. When weddings become about lavish receptions, celebrity performances, exotic destinations, and designer outfits, the fundamental purpose of marriage can get lost. The messy but real work of building a life together, facing challenges, and nurturing emotional bonds isn't showcased in a two-day celebration. In fact, when a wedding becomes overwhelmingly spectacular, the inevitable mundanity of married life can feel underwhelming — and that's precisely the irony critics point out.

Another troubling aspect is the social and economic pressure

these expectations create. Many families, anxious to present an image of success, take on debt or redirect funds that might otherwise support education, housing, or long-term financial security. Many young couples express frustration about societal expectations, advocating for smaller, simpler ceremonies that focus on personal values rather than social performance. These voices reveal a growing sentiment that true fulfilment doesn't come from ornate trousseaus or large guest lists, but from meaningful shared experiences and financial prudence.

A wedding should be joyous, but it should not be a spectacle that

consumes resources far beyond what is purposeful or sustainable. At its heart, marriage is about partnership — resilience, compromise, understanding, and growth. Extravagance can create dazzling memories, but it is not a guarantee of a successful partnership. Recognising this distinction is key to reclaiming the essence of what weddings, and marriage itself, truly signify.

In a world where the wedding industry grows bigger every year, perhaps the bigger challenge is not the glitz, but reminding ourselves what we are celebrating — two lives coming together, not a contest of consumption.

2025 Was The Year Indian Women Redefined Sporting Excellence

The year 2025 marked a decisive turning point for Indian women's sports — not through isolated triumphs, but through sustained excellence across disciplines. It was a year when women athletes moved beyond symbolic representation to redefine performance, resilience, and ambition.

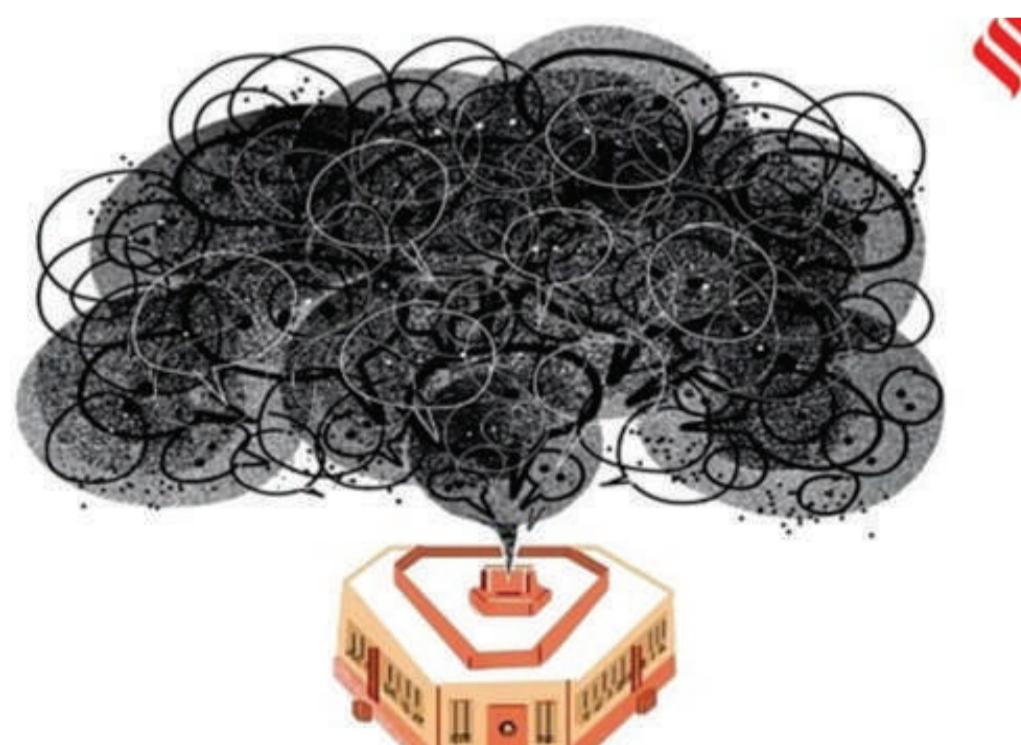
Cricket naturally commanded attention, but it did not stand alone. From Tambalhatti village in Andhra Pradesh emerged T C Deepika, captain of India's Blind Women's Cricket Team, who led her side to a historic T20 World Cup title. Her journey from poverty to international glory reflected the transformative power of sport when talent meets opportunity.

Weeks earlier, Harmanpreet Kaur's Indian women's cricket team clinched its first major ICC title, finally converting years of near misses into long-awaited success. The victory was not just about silverware but recognition after decades of living in the shadow of men's cricket.

Beyond cricket, athletes shattered physical and social barriers. Sheetal Devi, an armless archer from Jammu and Kashmir, became a Para World Champion, redefining what sporting excellence looks like. In chess, 19-year-old Divya Deshmukh defeated legend Koneru Humpy to win the Women's Chess World Cup, symbolising both generational transition and continuity.

Olympic sports also offered hope. Shooting emerged as a strength, with young talents like Suruchi Phogat signalling a strong future. Wrestling and boxing saw promise through athletes such as Antim Panghal and Preeti Pawar. In football, while the men's game struggled, India's women's Under-17, Under-20, and senior teams all qualified for AFC Asian Cups — a quiet but powerful indicator of grassroots growth.

In 2025, Indian women did more than win medals. They changed expectations. And that shift may prove to be their most lasting victory.



Cabinet Freezes ₹87,695-Crore AGR Dues In Major Relief For Vodafone Idea



In a major policy intervention, the Union Cabinet has approved a relief package for Vodafone Idea by freezing ₹87,695 crore of its adjusted gross revenue (AGR) dues as of December 31. The decision offers breathing space to the debt-hit telecom operator and aims to maintain competition in India's telecom sector.

Under the decision, the fro-

zen dues will not require immediate payment and will instead be repaid over a 10-year period from FY32 to FY41. The Department of Telecommunications will reassess the frozen amount at a later stage, potentially reducing Vodafone Idea's long-term burden. However, AGR liabilities related to FY18 and FY19 remain unchanged and must be paid between

FY26 and FY31. The move is intended to protect the government's nearly 49 per cent stake in Vodafone Idea, ensure stability in the telecom sector, and safeguard services for around 20 crore subscribers. Despite the relief, Vodafone Idea shares fell sharply, reflecting investor concerns over the company's financial health and execution

challenges. Experts say the decision provides temporary relief but does not eliminate structural issues facing Vodafone Idea, including high debt, intense competition, and the need for fresh capital infusion. The coming years will be critical in determining whether the company can turn around its fortunes.

Faridabad Horror: Woman Gang-Raped In Moving Van For Hours, Brutal Crime Shocks Nation

A horrifying case of sexual violence has shaken the country after a 28-year-old woman was gang-raped inside a moving van in Faridabad for more than two hours before being thrown onto the road. The brutal incident occurred on the intervening night of Monday and Tuesday and has once again highlighted serious concerns over women's safety in urban India.

According to police, the woman was waiting for a vehicle to return home late at night when two men offered her a lift in a van, claiming they would drop her safely. Instead, the vehicle was driven towards Gurgaon Road, where the accused allegedly raped her repeatedly for nearly two and a half hours. Despite her resistance and repeated pleas, the men continued the assault and threatened her with harm.

Around 3 am, the accused threw the woman out of the moving van near Raja Chowk in SGM Nagar. She suffered severe facial injuries and was bleeding heavily when she was found. The woman managed to



contact her sister during the ordeal, repeatedly calling for help. Her family rushed to the spot and immediately admitted her to a hospital, where doctors treated her critical injuries and applied 10 to 12 stitches to her face.

The victim, who is married and has three children, is currently in shock and recovering. Her statement has not yet been

recorded due to her fragile mental and physical condition. Her sister informed police that the woman had earlier mentioned a domestic dispute and had planned to stay with a friend for a few hours before returning home.

Police have arrested both accused and recovered the van used in the crime. Authorities say a detailed investigation is

underway and strict action will be taken. The case has sparked widespread outrage and renewed calls for stronger policing, faster trials, and stricter punishment for sexual crimes. Activists argue that such incidents underline the urgent need for systemic reforms to ensure women's safety, especially during night hours.

New Year's Eve Security Alert As Explosives-Laden Car Seized In Rajasthan

A major security scare was averted on New Year's Eve after Rajasthan Police seized a car loaded with illegal explosive material in Tonk district. The explosives-laden vehicle, a Maruti Ciaz, was found carrying nearly 150 kg of ammonium nitrate concealed inside bags of urea fertiliser, along with explosive cartridges and safety fuse wires.

Police officials said the seizure was made following a specific intelligence tip-off. The car was intercepted in the Baroni police station area, and two accused — Surendra Mochi and Surendra Patwa — were arrested on the spot. Apart from ammonium nitrate, the vehicle contained around 200 explosive cartridges and nearly 1,100 metres of fuse wire, indicating the material could have been used for large-scale illegal or dangerous activities.

According to investigators, the explosives were being transported from Bundi to Tonk, possibly for illegal mining operations. However, officials have not ruled out



other possibilities, including criminal or terror-related use. "We are probing all angles. Given the quantity and nature of the explosives, this was a serious threat," said DSP Mrityunjay Mishra.

The seizure comes in the backdrop of heightened security concerns following a re-

cent blast near Delhi's Red Fort, where ammonium nitrate was used in an improvised explosive device. That incident had resulted in multiple casualties, making the Tonk seizure particularly alarming.

Ammonium nitrate is a commonly used fertiliser but

has been repeatedly misused in terror attacks worldwide due to its high explosive potential when improperly handled. Authorities have intensified checks across Rajasthan to prevent illegal transport and storage of such materials, especially during the festive season.

Congress Goes Solo With Massive 528-Seat Push In Maharashtra Civic Polls



The Congress has made a bold political move by deciding to contest 528 seats across major municipal corporations in Maharashtra for the January 15 civic body elections. This marks the party's largest solo civic contest in the state since 1999 and signals a decisive break from its traditional allies in the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA).

The decision comes amid a complete breakdown of the alliance with Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena

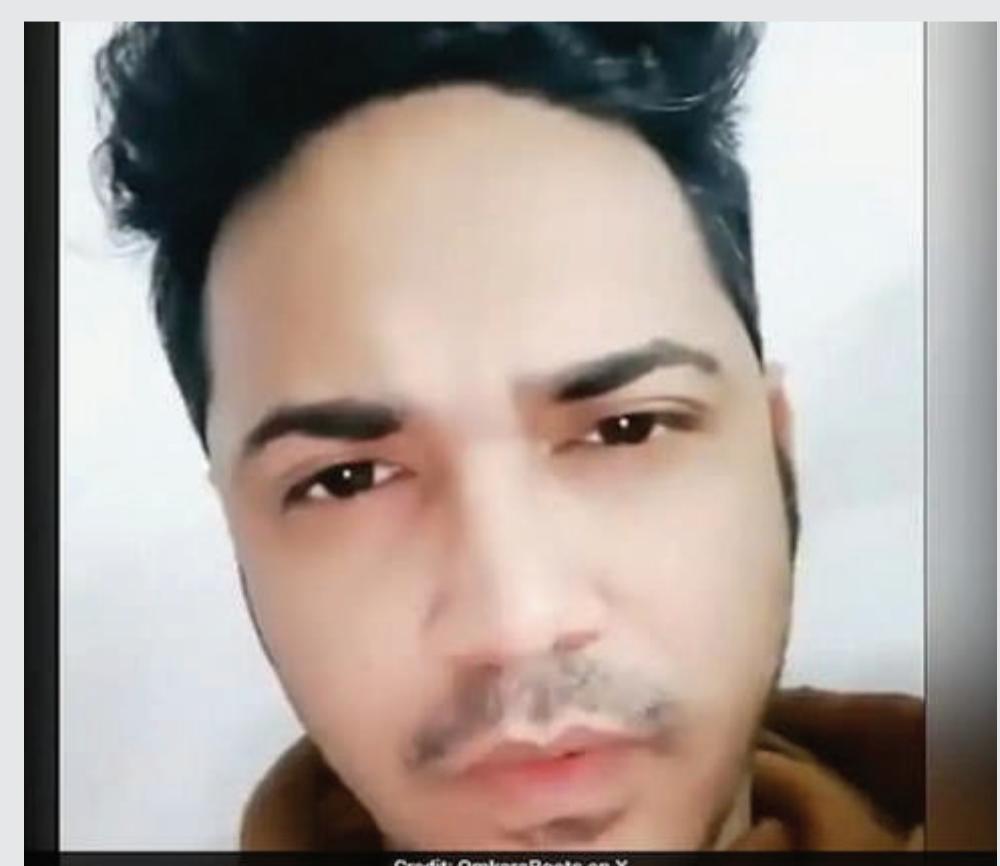
(UBT) and Sharad Pawar's NCP faction. Congress will contest 167 seats in Mumbai, 101 in Thane, 100 each in Pune and Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar, and 60 in Pimpri-Chinchwad. It will also go solo in several other cities, including Nagpur, Akola, Amravati, and Chandrapur.

Political observers say the move reflects Congress's attempt to reassert its independent organisational strength after years of alliance politics. The recent re-

union of the Thackeray cousins — Uddhav and Raj Thackeray — further complicated seat-sharing talks, pushing Congress to adopt a "lone-wolf" strategy.

While the move carries risks of vote fragmentation, Congress leaders believe fighting independently will help rebuild the party at the grassroots level. The civic polls are seen as a crucial test ahead of future assembly and parliamentary elections, making this decision strategically significant.

Bangladesh Student Leader Murder Case Takes Dramatic Turn As Prime Accused Claims He Is In Dubai



Credit: OmkaraRoots on X

The murder case of Bangladeshi student leader Osman Hadi has taken a dramatic and controversial turn after the prime accused, Faisal Karim Masud, publicly denied any involvement and claimed he is currently in Dubai. His statement directly contradicts earlier claims by Bangladeshi authorities, who had suggested that Masud was in India following the killing. A viral video message attributed to Masud has reignited debate and raised fresh questions about the investigation.

In the video, Masud categorically denied killing Osman Hadi and alleged that the case against him was fabricated. He claimed that he was forced to flee Bangladesh due to false accusations and harassment of his family. According to Masud, despite holding a valid five-year multiple-entry visa for Dubai, leaving the country was extremely

difficult because of the pressure he was facing. He further alleged that his family members, who he claims are innocent, are being harassed and tortured by authorities.

Masud acknowledged that he had visited Osman Hadi's office prior to the murder but insisted that their relationship was strictly professional. He stated that he had gone to Hadi regarding a job opportunity and had paid him 500,000 taka as an advance after being assured of assistance. Masud also admitted to donating money to Hadi's programmes on multiple occasions, including shortly before the murder.

However, he maintained that these financial interactions were legitimate and not connected to any violent act.

In a significant allegation, Masud accused

Jamaat-linked elements of orchestrating the murder. He described Hadi as a "product of Jamaat" and claimed that internal political rivalries within the group led to his killing. Masud strongly denied that he or his younger brother were involved and said they were deliberately framed to divert attention from the real perpetrators.

The emergence of Masud's alleged UAE visa photo on social media has added another layer of complexity to the case. While the authenticity of the video and documents has not been independently verified, the claims have triggered public debate and criticism of the investigation process. The case has now evolved into a politically sensitive matter, highlighting deep divisions within Bangladesh's student politics and raising concerns over cross-border narratives involving India.

Indian-Origin Adviser Honoured In US Amid Controversy Over India–Pakistan Ceasefire Claims



Credit: @robertcobrien on X

Ranjit "Ricky" Singh Gill, an Indian-origin adviser in the Trump administration, has drawn attention after receiving the US National Security Council's Distinguished Action Award for his role in internal coordination and diplomatic outreach related to the India–Pakistan ceasefire following Operation Sindo.

The recognition was presented by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and is among the highest internal honours within the US national security establishment. American media reports said Gill was acknowledged for his contribution to shaping the ceasefire framework during 2025.

However, the award has stirred controversy in India, as New Delhi has repeatedly rejected claims of US mediation in the India–Pakistan truce. Since May 10, President Donald Trump has publicly claimed more than 70 times that Washington brokered a "full and immediate" ceasefire between the two countries. Indian officials have categorically denied these assertions, maintaining that the understanding was

UAE Withdraws Forces From Yemen As Rift With Saudi Arabia Deepens



The United Arab Emirates has announced the withdrawal of its remaining forces from Yemen, marking a significant escalation in tensions between Abu Dhabi and Riyadh. The decision followed Saudi-led coalition airstrikes on the southern Yemeni port city of Mukalla, which Saudi Arabia said targeted a UAE-linked weapons shipment.

The airstrike has exposed growing fractures within the coalition that has been fighting Yemen's civil war since 2015. Saudi Arabia accused the UAE of backing the Southern Transitional Council (STC), a separatist group seeking autonomy in southern Yemen, and of encouraging the group to push towards

Saudi borders — a move Riyadh described as a national security "red line".

The UAE's withdrawal signals a strategic recalibration. While Abu Dhabi has gradually reduced its military presence in Yemen over recent years, the latest decision underscores the widening divergence between the two Gulf powers over Yemen's future.

The development raises concerns about further instability in Yemen, where years of conflict have already triggered one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. Analysts warn that fractures within the coalition could embolden armed groups and complicate peace efforts.

India Rejects China's Mediation Claims, Reasserts No Third-Party Role In India–Pakistan Truce



India has firmly rejected China's claim that it played a mediating role in brokering peace between India and Pakistan following the military confrontation earlier this year. The clarification came after Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi echoed US President Donald Trump's repeated assertions that external powers helped facilitate a ceasefire between the two nuclear-armed neighbours after Operation Sindo.

Sources in the Indian government reiterated New Delhi's long-stand-

ing and unambiguous position: there was no third-party intervention of any kind. According to Indian officials, the cessation of hostilities occurred only after Pakistan's Director General of Military Operations (DGMO) formally reached out to his Indian counterpart requesting a truce. The communication was handled strictly through established military channels, consistent with bilateral protocols.

India launched Operation Sindo on May 7, targeting terror infra-

structure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in retaliation for the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 civilians. The operation marked a sharp escalation in tensions, prompting intense international attention. However, New Delhi has consistently maintained that its actions and decisions were sovereign and not influenced by external pressure.

Chinese claims of mediation have been viewed in New Delhi as an attempt by Beijing to pro-

ject itself as a global peacemaker amid multiple international conflicts. Indian officials argue that such statements distort the facts and undermine India's diplomatic stance, which rejects third-party involvement in bilateral disputes with Pakistan.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also addressed Parliament on the issue, stating clearly that no world leader asked India to halt Operation Sindo. The government's pushback reflects broader concerns about interna-

tional narratives that could dilute India's strategic autonomy or legitimate Pakistan's attempts to internationalise bilateral disputes.

The episode highlights growing geopolitical competition, with major powers seeking diplomatic credit in regional conflicts. For India, countering such claims is not merely about historical accuracy but about safeguarding a core foreign policy principle that disputes with Pakistan must be resolved bilaterally, without mediation.

Tatiana Schlossberg, Granddaughter Of John F Kennedy, Dies At 35 After Leukemia Battle



Tatiana Schlossberg, the granddaughter of former US President John F Kennedy, has died at the age of 35, just a month after publicly revealing her diagnosis with a rare form of leukemia. Her passing was announced by the John F Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum.

Schlossberg was the daughter of Caroline Kennedy, the US ambassador to Australia, and was known for her work in journalism and environmental advocacy.

Her death has prompted tributes from political leaders, public institutions, and admirers of the Kennedy family legacy.

In November, Schlossberg had spoken openly about her illness, drawing attention to the challenges of cancer treatment and the importance of medical research. Her passing adds another poignant chapter to the Kennedy family's long history marked by both public service and personal tragedy.

Iran Sees Third Day Of Protests As Cost-Of-Living Crisis Intensifies



Analysts say the unrest reflects deep-seated economic frustration exacerbated by sanctions, mismanagement, and declining public confidence. The protests pose a significant challenge to Iranian au-

thorities as economic pressures continue to mount.

Indian Stock Markets End 2025 Strong As Sensex, Nifty Extend Decade-Long Rally

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

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

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

Beyond financial services, other segments such as manufacturing, industrials, technology, healthcare and consumer products also attracted substantial interest. Technology and digital platforms, including several new age internet



and consumer technology firms, contributed significantly to total issuance, reflecting sustained investor enthusiasm for innovation led growth stories.

Healthcare and consumer durable companies further diversified the market, indicating broad structural demand across economic sectors.

Small and medium enterprise (SME) listings also played a critical role in the fundraising environment, with a substantial number of smaller companies choosing to list on specialized platforms. This proliferation of SME issues reflects broader participation across the economic spectrum, where early stage and mid tier enterprises are increasingly

using public equity to support expansion and growth ambitions.

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

However, experts also note that IPO activity in 2026 could be more calibrated compared to the peak enthusiasm seen in 2025. With market conditions evolving, issuers may focus on

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

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

India Vs Global Markets: Can Indian Equities Reclaim Leadership In 2026?

After underperforming global markets in 2025, Indian equities are entering 2026 with cautious optimism. While benchmark indices delivered positive returns, India lagged emerging markets by nearly 25 per cent and global equities by around 15 per cent, largely due to a sharp slowdown in corporate earnings growth.

Analysts attribute the under-performance to a collapse in India Inc's earnings growth from over 20 per cent CAGR between 2020 and 2024 to just 5-6 per cent in 2025. In contrast, global markets—especially the US—benefited from an AI-led rally, with the Nasdaq Composite surging over 22 per cent during the year.

Looking ahead, experts believe India's relative performance in 2026 will depend on two key factors: a recovery in earnings growth and a cooling of the global AI frenzy that has driven capital toward developed markets. Domestic reforms, infrastructure spending, and consumption recovery could help India regain its appeal as a growth destination.

Valuations remain another critical variable. While Indian



equities are not cheap, analysts argue that stable inflation, improving demand, and supportive fiscal policies could justify

premium valuations if earnings rebound meaningfully.

Overall, 2026 is expected to be a year of selective opportuni-

ties rather than broad-based rallies, with investors closely tracking earnings momentum and global capital flows.

PSU Bank Stocks Outshine Market With Fifth Straight Year Of Outperformance

Public sector bank (PSB) stocks emerged as standout performers in 2025, with the Nifty PSU Bank index surging 31 per cent—far outpacing the Nifty 50's 10 per cent gain. This marked the fifth consecutive year of PSU banks outperforming the broader market, reflecting a dramatic turnaround in the sector's fundamentals.

Major PSU lenders such as Canara Bank, Bank of Maharashtra, Punjab National Bank, and State Bank of India posted strong gains, with several hitting multi-year highs. Analysts attribute this sustained rally to improved asset quality, declining non-performing assets, and stronger balance sheets following years of deleveraging.

Looking ahead to H2FY26, profitability is expected to improve further, supported by festive demand, steady credit growth, lower CRR requirements, and easing stress in unsecured and microfinance



portfolios. Additionally, corporate deleveraging post-Covid has strengthened borrower profiles, reducing credit risk for banks.

The strong performance of PSU banks signals renewed investor confidence in state-owned lenders, once considered structurally weak. If

earnings momentum continues, analysts believe PSU banks could remain a key pillar of India's equity market performance in 2026.

Zomato And Swiggy Raise Gig Worker Payouts Amid New Year's Eve Strike Threat



Food delivery platforms Zomato and Swiggy announced higher payouts and incentives for delivery partners ahead of New Year's Eve, aiming to ensure uninterrupted services amid a nationwide strike call by gig workers' unions.

The move comes as demand for food delivery and quick commerce peaks during year-end celebrations, making operational continuity critical for platform companies.

According to industry sources, Zomato offered delivery partners payouts ranging between 120 and 150 per order during peak hours from 6 pm to midnight on December 31. The company also indicated that delivery executives could earn up to 3,000 over the course of the day, subject to order volumes and availability. Additionally, penalties for order denials and cancellations were temporarily waived, a measure companies describe as standard practice during festive or high-demand periods.

The strike call was issued by the Telangana Gig and Platform Workers' Union (TGPWU) and the Indian Federation of App-Based Transport Workers (IFAT), which claimed that lakhs of workers across the country may participate. Their demands include higher

base payouts, transparent incentive structures, and improved working conditions for app-based delivery workers.

Industry experts warned that disruptions could impact not just food delivery giants but also quick-commerce platforms such as Blinkit, Zepto, and Instamart. These companies rely heavily on gig workers, particularly during high-demand windows like New Year's Eve, when order volumes surge sharply.

The episode highlights the growing tension within India's gig economy, where rapid platform growth has not always translated into stable earnings for workers. While platforms argue that dynamic incentives offer flexibility and earning potential, worker unions continue to push for minimum guarantees and social security benefits.

As gig work becomes a permanent feature of India's urban economy, experts believe regulatory clarity and structured dialogue between platforms and workers will be essential. The New Year's Eve incentives may provide short-term relief, but the broader debate over fair compensation and worker protection is likely to intensify in 2026.

Vodafone Idea Shares Crash As AGR Dues Resurface Investor Concerns



Vodafone Idea (Vi) shares plunged nearly 15 per cent on December 31, hitting the lower circuit, after reports suggested the telecom operator may need to clear its Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) dues for FY18 and FY19 over the next five years. The sharp fall came despite broader market strength, underscoring persistent investor anxiety over Vi's financial stability.

According to reports, the Union Cabinet has approved a framework to reassess and restructure Vodafone Idea's past AGR liabilities. Under the reported plan, Vi has been granted a five-year window from FY26 to FY31 to pay dues related to FY18 and FY19. For post-FY19 liabilities, the total amount has reportedly been capped at ₹87,695 crore, with repayments scheduled over FY32 to FY41, subject to reassessment by a government-appointed committee.

Earlier, Vodafone Idea had approached the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) seeking recalcula-

tion of AGR dues, citing arithmetical errors and duplication. The company also sought a one-time waiver of penalties and interest on penalties, estimated at ₹45,000-50,000 crore. Similar arguments were raised before the Supreme Court, where Vi urged a comprehensive review of dues up to FY17.

Despite these efforts, the market reacted negatively, reflecting skepticism over Vi's long-term ability to service its obligations amid intense competition from stronger rivals. Analysts note that while restructuring offers temporary breathing space, the company's survival hinges on sustained revenue growth, tariff hikes, and continued government support.

The episode highlights the fragile state of India's telecom sector, where legacy policy disputes continue to cast long shadows over corporate balance sheets. For investors, Vodafone Idea remains a high-risk stock, sensitive to regulatory decisions and capital infusion timelines.

A Birth In A Cab And A Decade Of Unexpected Legacy



Ten years after a dramatic cab ride in Delhi captured global attention, Uber co-founder Travis Kalanick marked the 10th birthday of a boy whose life story remains one of the most unusual intersections of technology and humanity. The child, officially named Nitansh Sharma but affectionately known as "Uber Sharma," was born in December 2015 after his mother went into labour while travelling in an Uber cab.

The incident unfolded after repeated attempts to arrange an ambulance failed. In desperation, the family booked a cab. The driver, Shahnawaz Khan, initially hesitant, agreed to take them. During the journey, labour intensified, prompting Khan to stay calm, provide water, and alert hospital staff ahead of arrival. Though the baby was ultimately delivered moments after reaching the hospital, the timing was so close that the birth became inseparable from the ride itself.

In a light-hearted moment after the incident, Khan jokingly suggested naming the child Uber.

To his surprise, the family embraced the idea, officially naming their son Uber Sharma. The story quickly went viral, symbolising how digital platforms sometimes step in when traditional systems fail. A year later, Travis Kalanick visited the family and announced a scholarship fund worth \$12,000 to support the child's education.

Now, a decade later, Kalanick's tweet revisiting

the story resonated widely online, reminding audiences of the human narratives behind everyday tech services. Beyond its novelty, the story highlighted the role of ordinary individuals—like the driver—whose presence of mind turned a crisis into a safe outcome.

The milestone also prompted reflection on how urban infrastructure gaps, such as emergency healthcare access, force citizens to rely on alternative solutions. What began as an emergency became a symbol of improvisation, kindness, and the unintended social impact of technology. Uber Sharma's story remains a rare example of how a moment of crisis can evolve into a lasting legacy.

Blinkit Billboards Turn Consumer Data Into Cultural Commentary



As 2025 drew to a close, quick-commerce platform Blinkit captured public attention with a billboard campaign that transformed mundane shopping data into viral cultural commentary. Titled 2025 in a Blink, the campaign used real customer order statistics to highlight India's everyday habits with humour, nostalgia, and sharp social insight. The result was a series of hyper-local, meme-driven hoardings that resonated instantly with urban audiences.

One of the most shared billboards declared that India ordered over 1 crore kilograms of ghee in 2025, followed by the tongue-in-cheek line, "Ab bas bhi karo mummy." Others included references to karela consumption, shampoo orders,

Maggi purchases, and even tipping amounts paid to delivery riders. Each message paired hard numbers with culturally familiar phrases, turning raw data into storytelling.

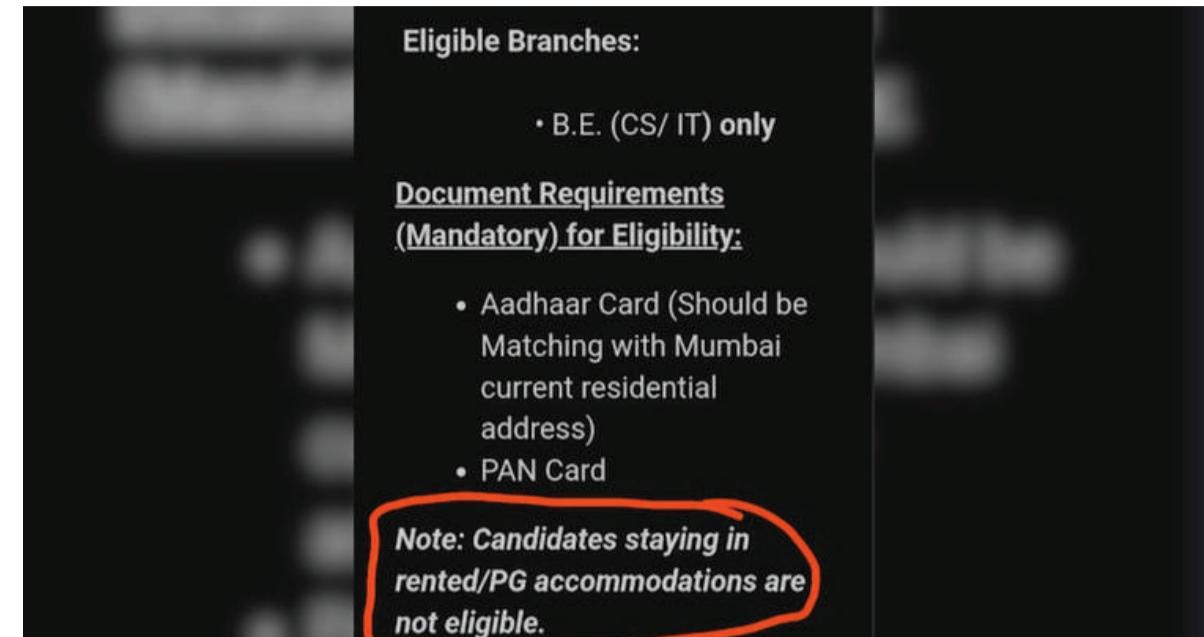
What set the campaign apart was its relatability.

Rather than focusing on brand promotion, Blinkit highlighted shared behaviours—overstocking comfort food, health fads, hostel lifestyles, and last-minute shopping panic.

Comparisons between campuses like XLRI and IIM-Calcutta added playful rivalry, while tipping data underscored appreciation for gig workers.

Marketing professionals praised the campaign for achieving what many brands attempt but few succeed at: making data feel personal. Compari-

Hiring Bias And Housing Status Spark Debate On Workplace Ethics



A Mumbai-based company recently found itself at the centre of a nationwide online backlash after a job application form explicitly barred candidates living in rented flats or paying guest accommodations. The placement, aimed at B.E. Computer Science and IT graduates, included a clause stating that applicants residing in PGs or rented homes were "not eligible" for the role. Once screenshots of the form began circulating on social media, the hiring policy was widely condemned as discriminatory, regressive, and ethically questionable.

Critics argued that housing status has no bearing on a candidate's professional capability, especially in a city like Mumbai where renting is the norm rather than the exception. Many users labelled the condition a "red flag" indicating problematic work culture, exploitative salary practices, or an attempt to restrict mobility among employees. A commonly voiced concern was that the company might be targeting candidates living with parents to justify offering salaries below market standards, assuming

lower living expenses would reduce bargaining power.

Legal experts and commentators also raised constitutional concerns. Several users cited Article 16 of the Indian Constitution, which guarantees equality of opportunity in public employment and prohibits discrimination based on residence. While the company operates in the private sector, critics noted that similar residence-based hiring restrictions imposed by

state governments in the past have faced judicial scrutiny. The policy was seen as reinforcing class and migration bias, particularly against young professionals who relocate to cities for better career prospects.

Others pointed out the broader implications for workplace diversity and inclusion. Excluding candidates based on residence effectively filters out migrants, early-career professionals, and those from less privileged backgrounds.

Some argued that such practices undermine meritocracy and further concentrate opportunity among a narrow demographic. Former students and professionals shared experiences of rejecting similar placements collectively, calling such criteria early warning signs of toxic management and poor work-life balance. The controversy also reignited discussions about ethical hiring practices in India's private sector, where regulation is often lighter but consequences for unfair policies can still be reputationally severe. While the company has not publicly clarified or withdrawn the condition, the episode serves as a reminder that recruitment decisions are no longer private processes. In an era of viral screenshots and public accountability, hiring policies are increasingly judged not just by legality, but by fairness, inclusivity, and common sense.

A Traveller View Reveals South India Through Fresh Eyes



A viral video by travel content creator Rory Porter has reignited online appreciation for South India's diversity, hospitality, and scenic beauty. Having visited India twice in a year, Porter recommended South India as the ideal starting point

for first-time visitors, describing the experience as relaxed, welcoming, and visually stunning.

In the video, Porter shared candid ratings of destinations including Goa, Kerala's backwaters, Munnar, and Kochi. He praised Goa's laid-

back atmosphere, scenic coastline, friendly locals, and ease of travel, rating it nine out of ten. His reflections highlighted practical aspects often overlooked in travel content, such as road conditions and ease of renting vehicles.

Porter's experience in Alleppey stood out, where he stayed overnight on a houseboat, enjoyed freshly prepared seafood, and interacted with fellow travellers. He described the experience as tranquil and immersive, again awarding a

Wolf Supermoon Opens 2026 With A Rare Celestial Alignment



with the best viewing opportunities shortly after sunset on January 2 and 3. Observers won't need special equipment, though binoculars or telescopes can enhance surface detail. Adding to the excitement, Jupiter

will reach opposition a week later, shining at its brightest point of the year.

This Wolf Supermoon also marks the final event in a supermoon sequence that began in October 2025, which includ-

ed the Harvest, Beaver, and Cold Moons. The next full moon, known as the Snow Moon, will occur on February 1, 2026.

Beyond aesthetics, lunar events like this continue to captivate public

imagination, blending science, folklore, and shared experience. The Wolf Supermoon serves as a dramatic and symbolic opening to the year, reminding observers of the rhythms that quietly shape life on Earth.

Deepti Sharma World Record Crowns India Women Perfect Series Sweep



India Women capped a dominant home season with a commanding 5-0 T20I series sweep over Sri Lanka, sealing the final match by 15 runs in Thiruvananthapuram. While the whitewash itself underlined India's depth and consistency, the series finale carried

added significance as Deepti Sharma etched her name into cricket history by becoming the leading wicket-taker in women's T20 internationals.

Deepti achieved the milestone in the 14th over of Sri Lanka's chase, trapping Nilakshika Silva leg-before to claim her 152nd

T20I wicket, surpassing Australia's Megan Schutt. The record reflects Deepti's remarkable longevity and adaptability across conditions, formats, and leadership phases of Indian women's cricket. Her ability to control the middle overs with accuracy and calm has made her

indispensable in high-pressure matches.

The match itself was shaped by India captain Harmanpreet Kaur's timely resurgence with the bat. Walking in with India struggling at 77 for five, Harmanpreet played a captain's knock of 68 off 43 balls, anchoring the in-

nings while accelerating at crucial moments. Her partnership with Amanjot Kaur stabilised the innings, and a late cameo from Arundhati Reddy pushed India to a competitive 175.

Sri Lanka's chase showed promise early, with Hasini Perera and Imesha Dulani building a solid second-wicket stand after the early loss of Chamari Athapaththu. However, their inability to clear the ropes consistently meant the required rate steadily climbed. Once wickets fell in clusters, India's spinners tightened the noose, denying Sri Lanka the finishing burst they needed.

Beyond the result, the series symbolised India's growing dominance in women's T20 cricket. With a World Cup-winning year behind them, the team displayed bench strength, tactical discipline, and adaptability. Deepti's record-breaking achievement added historical weight to a performance that was already comprehensive. For Sri Lanka, the tour exposed gaps in finishing ability and bowling depth, while for India, it reaffirmed their position as one of the most formidable teams in the format.

Shreyas Iyer Recovery Delayed As Fielding Fitness Remains Concern

Shreyas Iyer's return to international cricket has suffered another setback, with the batter ruled out of the upcoming ODI series against New Zealand due to incomplete recovery from a serious spleen injury. The injury occurred during an India-Australia ODI in October when Iyer sustained internal bleeding after a diving effort in the field, requiring immediate hospitalisation and surgical intervention.

Although Iyer has resumed batting practice and skill training, medical assessments indicate that he has not regained sufficient strength for the physical demands of a 50-over match. Reports suggest he lost nearly six kilograms during recovery due to muscle mass reduction, impacting his agility and fielding endurance.

The BCCI has taken a cautious approach, emphasising long-term health over rushed returns. While Iyer may feature in domestic matches if progress continues, his

participation will hinge on how his body responds to sustained workload.

Iyer's absence high-

lights the often-overlooked physical toll of modern cricket, where fielding intensity ri-

vals batting and bowling in importance. His recovery timeline underscores why selec-

tors increasingly prioritise all-round fitness rather than batting alone.

Melbourne Test Pitch Sparks Debate On Balance And Responsibility

The Melbourne Cricket Ground pitch has come under intense scrutiny after the fourth Ashes Test concluded in just two days, with 36 wickets falling across six sessions. Former England opener Geoffrey Boycott delivered a scathing assessment, stating that the surface "failed the standard expected for a five-day Test" and turned batting into a lottery.

With excessive grass aiding seam movement, neither England nor Australia managed a single half-century, raising concerns about pitch preparation and intent. Boycott placed responsibility squarely on the curator, dismissing explanations related to weather conditions and stressing that Test cricket demands a fair contest between bat and ball.

The ICC later deemed

the pitch "unsatisfactory," issuing the MCG a demerit point. While some praised the drama

and bowler-friendly conditions, critics argued that such extremes undermine the integrity of

Test cricket. The episode reignites a long-standing debate about balance in the

longest format—where competitiveness should challenge skill, not negate it.



Smriti Mandhana Rest Ends Record Chase But Highlights Team First Approach



Smriti Mandhana's absence from the fifth and final T20I against Sri Lanka brought an unexpected pause to what could have been a historic personal milestone. Entering the match, Mandhana required just 62 runs to surpass Shubman Gill as the highest international run-scorer across men's and women's cricket in 2025. Instead, team management opted to rest her, prioritising workload management and squad rotation over individual records.

Mandhana had already enjoyed an extraordinary year, amassing 1,703 runs across ODIs and T20Is, underlining her status as one of the most consistent batters in world cricket. The decision to sit her out sparked debate, but captain Harmanpreet Kaur made it clear that maintaining momentum and assessing bench strength took precedence. With India already leading the series 4-0, the match offered an opportunity to test new combinations and provide exposure to debutants.

The move also reflected a broader shift in Indian team culture, where personal milestones are increasingly subordinated to collective goals. Mandhana's rest allowed Gopalakarman to make her debut and Sneh Rana to return, reinforcing India's emphasis on squad depth ahead of major tournaments.

From a historical perspective, Mandhana's near-miss does little to diminish her achievements. Records often follow opportunity, and her consistency suggests future chances are inevitable. More importantly, the episode highlighted how elite teams balance player welfare with competitive intensity. In a packed international calendar, strategic rest is no longer a luxury but a necessity.

While fans may lament the missed record, Mandhana's year remains one of the most prolific in international cricket. The decision serves as a reminder that longevity and team success often matter more than single-season statistics, especially in an era where burnout and injuries loom large.

Mohammed Shami Comeback Gains Momentum As Selectors Reconsider



Mohammed Shami's prolonged absence from India's white-ball squads may finally be nearing an end, with selectors signalling a possible rethink as the 2027 ODI World Cup enters long-term planning. Once considered indispensable in global tournaments, Shami has not represented India since the Champions Trophy in March 2025, despite finishing that event as India's joint-highest wicket-taker.

The fast bowler's continued exclusion has puzzled many, particularly given his impressive domestic returns. Shami's recent performances across the Ranji Trophy, Vijay Hazare Trophy, and Sylhet Mushtaq Ali Trophy demonstrate that his wicket-taking instincts remain intact. His 17 wickets in six limited-overs domestic games and 20 wickets in four Ranji matches have reignited debate about his omission.

The sticking point has never been skill, but fitness. Recurring ankle and knee injuries since the

2023 World Cup led to surgeries and prolonged rehabilitation, creating uncertainty around workload management. That uncertainty strained relations earlier this year, when Shami publicly questioned the selection logic after being overlooked despite playing domestic cricket.

Selectors, led by Ajit Agarkar, have maintained that fitness clearance remains the only barrier. Recent comments suggest that stance is softening as Shami continues to bowl regularly and recover rhythm. A return as early as the New Zealand ODI series is now being discussed, with the longer-term lure of World Cup experience hard to ignore.

For India, the equation is simple but delicate. Younger pacers offer athleticism and durability, but Shami offers proven excellence on the biggest stage. His potential recall reflects a pragmatic approach—experience, when fit, still carries immense value in tournament cricket.



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