

Amaravati Land Pooling Gains Momentum: 25% Achieved in Three Villages on Day One

One Amaravati, January 13, 2026: Andhra Pradesh Municipal Administration Minister Narayana announced brisk progress in land pooling for multiple projects in Amaravati, highlighting the scheme's early success.

On the first day, farmers from three villages in Amaravati Mandal contributed 1,000 acres, achieving 25% of the targeted land pooling in those areas, he revealed during an event in Karlapudi village.

The minister, accompanied by local MLA Bashyam Praveen, laid the foundation stone for roadworks in Karlapudi on Tuesday. This followed requests from farmers whom Naraya-

na met the previous day during the land pooling launch. Responding swiftly to their demand for improved roads, he directed estimates to be prepared immediately and assigned the contract to a firm.

The 2.9-kilometer stretch from Karlapudi to Anantavarman received its foundation stone, with strict instructions to complete the work within a week. Praising the farmers who surrendered their land, Minister Narayana extended special congratulations. He credited MLA Praveen for convincing them to participate enthusiastically. "For Amaravati's development, an inner ring road and an Inter-



national Sports City are essential," Narayana emphasized.

He disclosed that MLA Praveen assured acquiring 80% of the required land through pooling within a month. Once that milestone is reached, a master plan will be designed, and

tenders called promptly. To build trust, the government plans to prioritize two-row roads in the plots allotted to farmers. Narayana recounted how, during Monday's gram sabha in Karlapudi, residents flagged the poor condition of a 3.9-kilometer

road. "We laid the foundation stone for its reconstruction right away and will complete it as quickly as possible," he assured.

This renewed push for land pooling revives hopes for Amaravati's revival as the state's capital city, a vision

championed by the TDP-led alliance government. Stalled under the previous YSRCP regime due to farmer protests and legal hurdles, the scheme now sees active farmer buy-in, buoyed by promises of annuities, developed plots, and infrastruc-

ture perks. Minister Narayana underscored the Sports City's urgency, noting its potential to position Amaravati as a global hub for athletics, training, and events.

The inner ring road, meanwhile, would decongest traffic and connect key development zones. MLA Praveen, speaking on the occasion, reiterated his commitment: "We'll secure 80% pooling in 30 days, kickstarting tenders and master planning." Farmers present expressed optimism, citing the government's responsiveness. One participant said, "The quick action on our road request shows

they're serious. We're ready to give more land for Amaravati's growth." Officials aim for full pooling across 33,000 acres, enabling phased construction of government buildings, residential zones, and commercial hubs. With a week-long deadline for the initial road, authorities monitor progress closely.

This momentum could accelerate other infrastructure like water systems and power grids, long demanded by stakeholders. As Andhra Pradesh eyes sustainable urban growth, Amaravati's land pooling drive sets a template for farmer-inclusive development.

Minister Mandipalli Ramprasad Reddy Issues Key Guidelines for Sankranti Travelers

TPN Bureau | January 13, 2026

Vijayawada: Transport Minister Mandipalli Ramprasad Reddy on Tuesday assured passengers heading home for Sankranti that no additional bus charges would be levied, emphasizing the Andhra Pradesh government's commitment to seamless festival travel. Releasing a statement from his office, the minister outlined several passenger-friendly measures amid the anticipated festival rush. Highlighting the state's proactive steps, Reddy confirmed that free bus services for women a flagship initiative will continue uninterrupted during the Sankranti season.

"The government has taken key decisions to ensure the comfort of passengers traveling to their native villages," he stated. Crucially, there will be no hike in AP-

SRTC fares this year, providing relief to millions planning festive journeys. In a direct message to the public, the minister urged commuters using private or personal vehicles to exercise utmost caution. "Travel safely by adhering to all traffic rules and reach your villages without mishaps," he advised, underscoring road safety as a priority during the high-traffic period.

He described these measures as the government's "Sankranti gift" to the people of Andhra Pradesh. Turning to private bus operators, Reddy issued a stern warning against exploitation. "Private buses hiking fares or indulging in illegal collections will face severe consequences, including vehicle seizure," he declared.

The minister made it clear that any violation of regulated charges

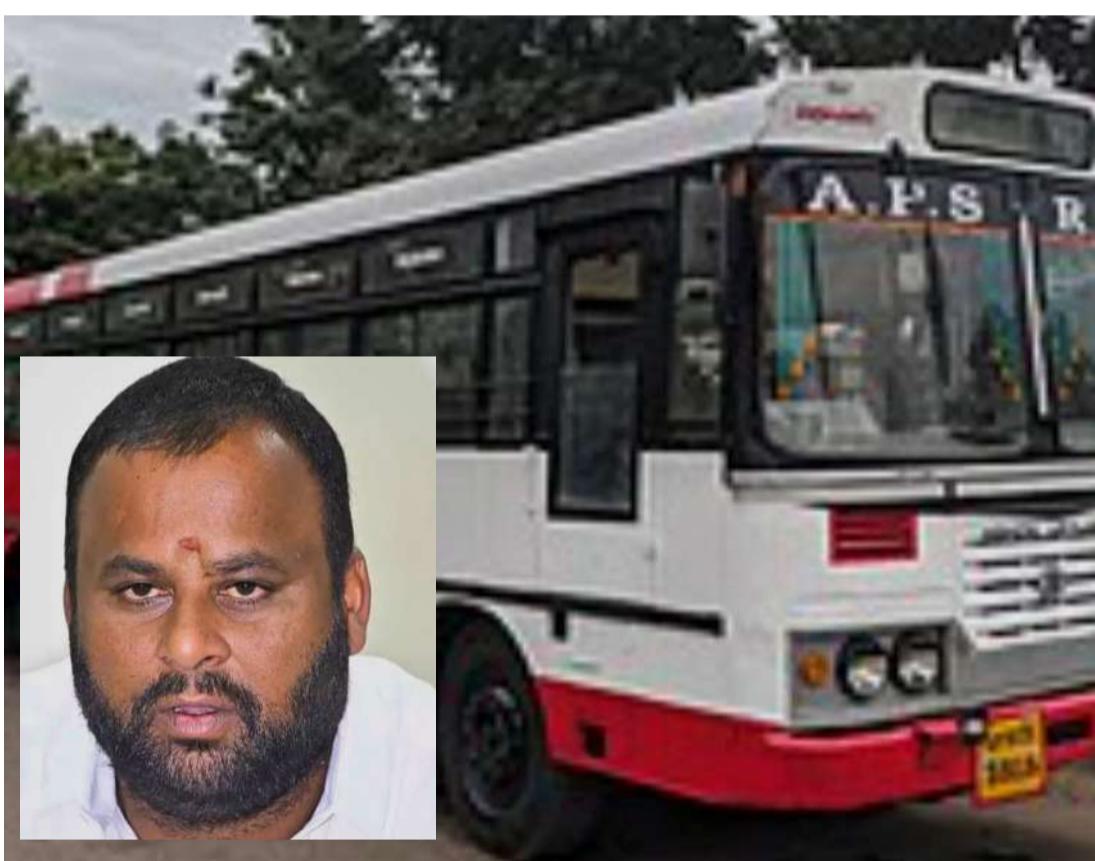
would trigger strict enforcement actions. "We will not tolerate overcharging that burdens passengers during the festival," he added, signaling a zero-tolerance policy. The announcements come at a time when Sankranti, marking the harvest festival, sees massive migrations across the state.

Roads, bus stations, and railway platforms swell with families heading to rural hometowns for traditional celebrations involving kite-flying, bonfires, and feasts of freshly harvested rice, sugarcane, and sweets. Last year, similar directives helped manage crowds effectively, and officials expect even higher footfall this season. Reddy's statement also reflects the TDP-led government's focus on public welfare post its return to power. By maintaining stable RTC fares and

cracking down on private operators, the administration aims to prevent the fare gouging seen in previous years under the YSRCP regime.

Transport department officials have been instructed to deploy special teams for monitoring and rapid response. In his concluding remarks, the minister extended warm wishes: "Let the people celebrate Sankranti with joy and safety." He called on citizens to embrace the festival spirit responsibly, fostering community bonds while prioritizing well-being.

These guidelines are poised to ease travel logistics for lakhs of Andhra Pradesh residents, ensuring a hassle-free Pongal season. With enforcement mechanisms in place, passengers can look forward to equitable and secure journeys home.



Andhra Pradesh Government Scraps Additional Excise Tax on Bars, Ensures Price Parity with Retail Shops

Ongole/Amaravati, January 13, 2026: In a major relief to bar operators across Andhra Pradesh, the state government has completely abolished the Additional Retail Excise Tax (ARET) imposed on bars since November 2019. The decision, announced through Government Order (GO) Ms. No. 24 issued by Excise Department Principal Secretary Mukesh Kumar Meena on Tuesday, aims to level the playing field between retail liquor shops and bars by ensuring uniform pricing for the same liquor brands.

This sweeping reform addresses long-standing grievances of bar owners, who faced higher procurement costs due to the special ARET on Indian Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL) and Foreign Liquor (FL) supplied from Andhra Pradesh State Beverages Corporation Limited (APSBCL) depots. Previously, bars had to purchase liquor at elevated prices compared to retail outlets, squeezing profit margins and hampering business viability.

With the tax now revoked, IMFL and FL supplies to bars from APSBCL depots will no longer attract any additional levy, restoring price parity effective immediately from January 13, 2026. Key changes outlined in the

GO include: Uniform Pricing: Retail shops and bars will now procure the same liquor at identical rates, eliminating the dual-price system that disadvantaged bars. No Additional Taxes: Explicit orders prohibit any extra taxes on IMFL/FL supplies to bars from APSBCL depots.

New Notifications: Fresh notifications under excise laws to formalize these provisions. License Rule Amendments: Revisions to the 2025 bar license regulations to align with the policy. Excise Department officials hailed the move as a "game-changer" for the hospitality sector. "This will significantly reduce operational costs for bar operators, boost viability, and promote fair competition," said a senior official from the Director of Excise and Distilleries.

The Director of Excise, Distilleries Commissioner, and APSBCL authorities have been tasked with implementing these changes seamlessly statewide. Bar associations welcomed the decision with enthusiasm. "For years, we've struggled with inflated costs that made survival tough amid rising competition and regulations. Price equality is a big relief," remarked a representative from the Andhra Pradesh

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Konaseema District Witnesses Grand Launch of Konaseema Sankranti Utsav in Ramachandrapuram



TPN Bureau | January 13, 2026

Ramachandrapuram: The three-day Konaseema Sankranti Utsav-2026 kicked off with great pomp and show at the VSM College grounds in Ramachandrapuram constituency today. Organized by the Satyam Vasanthi Foundation from January 13 to 15, the event was inaugurated by State Labour Minister Vasanthi Subhash, Amalapuram MP Ganti Harish Madhur, District Collector Mahesh Kumar, and MLAs Vegullu Jageswar Rao and Nallamilli Ramakrishna Reddy.

This decision underscores the government's commitment to supporting small businesses hit hard by past policies under the previous YSRCP regime. As Andhra Pradesh eyes economic revival through infrastructure and tourism, a thriving bar sector integral to hospitality stands to gain momentum.

The dignitaries lit the ceremonial lamp and released balloons into the sky, marking the vibrant start to the festival. Minister Subhash, addressing the gathering, described Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Konaseema District as a land of lush green fields, coconut groves, over-flowing rivers, and rich culture. "With harvests in hand, let us all celebrate this Konaseema Sankranti with unity and joy," he urged. Visitors explored colorful rangavallu (rangoons), exhibition stalls, muggu competitions, gangireddulu (bull formations), haridasa performances, and rural sports that highlighted Konaseema's unique traditions. Minister Subhash emphasized the festival's significance as a symbol of farmers' hard work yielding results and prayed for health, peace, and prosperity for every family.

He extended heartfelt Sankranti greetings to the people. District Collector Mahesh Kumar praised the event for reflecting the region's cultural grandeur amid nature's bounty. He called for traditional celebrations across villages, adherence to safety norms, and eco-friendly practices.

Noting district-wide festivities like lolakalu at irrigation canals and the Godavari Trophy dragon boat races reaching their final phase, he announced Goa-style events on January 14-16 with various competitions.

On January 16, the government-declared state festival at Jaggan Tota Prabhalu Tirtham will draw lakhs from 11 villages, with NDPR deployed for security.

MP Harish Madhur lauded Minister Subhash's efforts in introducing cultural traditions to the youth through these grand three-day celebrations.

MLAs Nallamilli Ramakrishna Reddy and Vegullu Jageswar Rao, along with Satyam Vasanthi Foundation Chairman Vasanthi Satyam, TDP Konaseema President Gandham Pallant Raju, Jana Sena in-charge Polishetty Chan-

drashekar, RDO Devarakonda Akhil, DSP Raghavulu, and others stressed that India is the birthplace of such traditions. Stalls, rangavallu, muggu designs, photo exhibitions, and haridasa costumes captivated attendees.

TDP town vice-president Chandamama Vasu unveiled a song dedicated to Minister Subhash. The event saw participation from foundation leader Vasanthi Satyam, Jana Sena in-charge Polishetty Chandrashekar, State Nataka Academy Director Penke Annapurna, Tahsildar B. Mrutyunjay Rao, TDP mandal presidents from Ramachandrapuram Rural, Kajuluru, and K. Gangavaram Undavalli Shiva, Kotthapalli Srinubabu, Chavakkula Narayana Murthy, Medisetty Ravikumar, Garikapati Suryanarayana and alliance party leaders and officials.

Andhra Pradesh Surpasses Paddy Procurement Targets, Rs 10,000 Crore Payments by Sankranti: Minister Manohar

TPN Bureau | January 13, 2026

Tenali: In a major boost to farmers ahead of Sankranti, Andhra Pradesh Civil Supplies Minister Nadendla

Manohar announced that the state has procured 41.27 lakh metric tonnes of paddy from 6,76,848 farmers during the Kharif season, exceeding the Centre's target of 50 lakh metric tonnes.

Speaking at a media conference in his camp office here, the minister revealed that Rs 9,789 crore has already been directly credited to farmers' accounts. This milestone underscores the TDP-led NDA government's commitment to farmer welfare under Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan's guidance. "For the first time in state history, paddy procurement payments will

cross Rs 10,000 crore by Sankranti festival," Manohar declared, highlighting the unprecedented speed and transparency of the process.

The procurement drive, launched efficiently post-Kharif harvest, has ensured seamless operations across mandal and district levels. Procurement centres have been equipped with digital platforms for real-time tracking, minimizing delays and ensuring minimum support prices (MSP) as per central guidelines.

"Our alliance government is conducting paddy procurement with utmost transparency, leaving no farmer behind," the minister emphasized. Manohar credited the success to Naidu's visionary leadership and Pawan Kalyan's proactive oversight, which prioritized farmer-centric policies



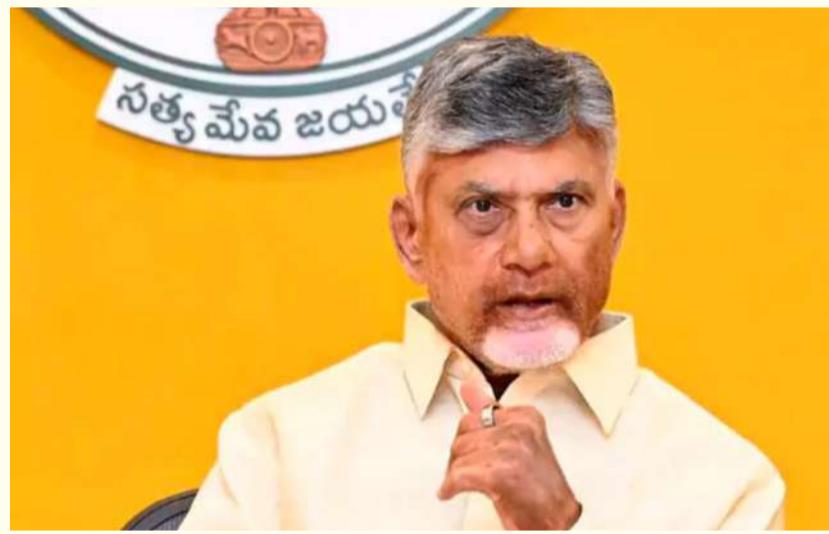
from day one. The state has mobilized adequate storage facilities and logistics to handle the influx, preventing any spillage or losses.

Over 1,000 procurement centres are operational, with teams working round-the-clock to meet the festive deadline. Farmers have hailed the initiative, noting quicker pay-

ments compared to previous regimes. One farmer from Tenali mandal said, "Last year, we waited months for payments; this time, money hit our accounts within days." The minister also outlined plans to procure additional quantities if harvests exceed expectations, aligning with the Centre's ambitious targets.

This achievement not only bolsters farmer incomes but also stabilizes food security in the state. As Andhra Pradesh gears up for Sankranti celebrations, the government reaffirmed its pledge: farmer welfare is paramount. More updates on surplus procurement and bonus incentives are expected soon.

CM Chandrababu Reviews Fire Accident in Kakinada's Sarlankapalle; Orders Comprehensive Aid for Victims



Amaravati, January 13, 2026: In a swift response to the devastating fire that razed 38 thatched homes in Sarlankapalle village of Kakinada district, Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu held high-level review meeting with ministers and officials on Tuesday evening. The tragedy struck during the auspicious Sankranti festival season, plunging the rural community into grief

and leaving dozens homeless. CM Naidu expressed profound sorrow over the incident, terming it a "heartbreaking mishap" that marred the festive spirit. "The state government stands firmly with the affected families. Officials must provide every possible support without delay," he directed during the virtual meeting from Amaravati. Home Minister Vangalapudi Ani-

tha and other senior officials briefed him on the immediate relief measures underway. According to officials, the blaze, which erupted late on Monday, gutted the entire cluster of thatched huts in the village. Preliminary investigations point to an electrical short-circuit or cooking fire as the likely cause, though a detailed probe is ongoing. No casualties were reported, but the loss of

homes, belongings, and essential documents has left residents in dire straits. Immediate Relief Packages Announced

Tangible aid has already kicked off. Each of the 38 affected families will receive Rs 25,000 in cash as ex-gratia relief, disbursed on the spot. "We are ensuring no family is left out," Home Minister Anitha assured, adding that temporary shelters, food, clothing, and medical check-ups are being arranged at relief camps. Going further, CM Naidu instructed the construction of new pucca houses for every impacted household under government housing schemes. "Until permanent homes are ready, provide safe accommodation and all necessities," he emphasized.

Recognizing the loss of vital papers, he ordered special camps to issue duplicate Aadhaar cards, ration cards, and other documents within 48 hours. District Collectors and officials must personally oversee the process to avoid delays. Ministers and district authorities have been tasked with monitoring aid distribution round-the-clock.

"This is not just relief; it's our duty to restore normalcy swiftly," Naidu stated, urging a focus on vulnerable groups like women and children. The incident underscores the vulnerabilities of thatched housing in rural Andhra Pradesh, prompting calls for enhanced fire safety awareness and infrastructure upgrades. Kakinada District Collector promised a full report within 24 hours, including preventive measures. With Sankranti celebrations ongoing, the government's proactive stance has been praised by locals, who see it as a beacon of hope amid loss.

CM Chandrababu Naidu Launches Key Projects, Joins Sankranti Festivities in Native Naravaripalli



TPN Bureau | January 13, 2026

CM Chandrababu Naidu Launches Key Projects, Joins Sankranti Festivities in Native Naravaripalli Tirupati, January 13, 2026: On the occasion of Sankranti, Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu inaugurated several significant development projects in his native village, Naravaripalli, Chittoor district, blending governance with festive celebrations. Accompanied by family, Naidu actively participated in village festivities, underscoring his commitment to grassroots development and

Naravaripalli" development. Naidu commissioned a state-of-the-art 33/11 KV substation built at a cost of 4.2 crore using advanced technology, promising reliable power supply. He initiated a natural farming model plantation and drone-based pesticide spraying, promoting sustainable agriculture. Additionally, Naidu inaugurated a new building for the Skill Development Centre, equipping youth with modern training.

He also launched development programs for SV University, Women's University, and Ruya Hospital, focusing on

education and health care upgrades. Family Joins Sankranti Revelry Naidu arrived with his wife Nara Bhuvaneswari, son and Minister Nara Lokesh, daughter-in-law Nara Brahmami, and other family members. They immersed themselves in village Sankranti celebrations, enjoying rangoli competitions, cultural performances, and fun games that captivated participants.

Local schoolchildren from nearby government schools competed enthusiastically, with Naidu and his wife keenly observing events like sports and rangoli contests. Winners received prizes directly from the couple, who posed for group photos with each school contingent. Naidu's grandson, Nara Devansh, stole the show, joining friends in traditional rural games held on the ground in front of the CM's residence. Children from Nara and Nandamuri families also participated.

Naidu's visit reinforces his vision of Viksit Andhra Pradesh, prioritizing infrastructure, agriculture, and skills while staying rooted in traditions. The initiatives are expected to transform the region, benefiting thousands.

Andhra Pradesh Receives 567 Crore Health Grant from Centre, Tops in 15th Finance Commission Fund Utilization



TPN Bureau | January 13, 2026

Amaravati: In a significant boost to Andhra Pradesh's healthcare infrastructure, the Central Government has released 567 crore as the final installment of grants recommended by the 15th Finance Commission for the health sector.

"We must ensure full utilization of Central assistance," he emphasized, underscoring the NDA coalition government's commitment to maximizing every rupee for public welfare. This announcement came from State Medical and Health Minister Satya Kumar Yadav during a high-level review meeting here on Tuesday.

Minister Yadav highlighted that over the past 19 months, his department has effectively utilized 48% of the allocated funds, channeling them into critical areas like hospital upgrades, primary health centers, and public health initiatives.

The meeting focused on budgeting and expenditure plans for the 2025-26 financial year, with senior officials presenting detailed progress reports. Speaking to reporters afterward, Yadav directed his team's top officials to immediately engage with the

Union Finance Ministry to secure the release of any remaining funds.

"We must ensure full utilization of Central assistance," he emphasized, underscoring the NDA coalition government's commitment to maximizing every rupee for public welfare.

The latest tranche will support ongoing projects, including equipment procurement for district hospitals and telemedicine networks in remote areas. This development comes amid the state's broader push for fiscal efficiency. Since the TDP-led NDA alliance assumed power in June 2024, disbursements from the Centre have accelerated, reflecting improved Centre-state coordination. Yadav

pointed out that previous delays under the YSRCP regime had hampered progress, but the current setup has turned the tide. Officials revealed that the funds will prioritize maternal and child health programs, infectious disease control, and infrastructure in underserved districts like Vizianagaram and Prakasam.

Vijayawada Kanaka Durga Temple Launches Online Services for Devotees



TPN Bureau | January 13

Vijayawada: In a significant move to enhance pilgrim convenience, the Endowments Department has officially rolled out online services at the iconic Indrakeladri Kanaka Durga Temple in Vijayawada.

Devotees can now access a range of facilities digitally, including darshan tickets, special pooja services, prasad bookings, and accommodation reservations. The initiative primarily aims to reduce waiting times in queues, making the spiritual experience smoother and more efficient.

Announcing the launch, department officials emphasized that these digital services align with the Andhra Pradesh government's push towards a cashless economy. By promoting online payments, the measures seek to minimize cash transactions and curb malpractices.

official stated. The temple authorities have also introduced 'Manu Mitra' WhatsApp services to further simplify inquiries and bookings.

WhatsApp Integration for Quick Access

Devotees are advised to use the official WhatsApp number 9552300009 for instant information on darshan timings, prasad availability, and pooja details. Queries can be resolved in real-time through this channel, reducing the need for physical visits to counters. For advance bookings, the official website: www.aptemples.ap.gov.in—serves as the primary portal.

Here, pilgrims can secure tickets for quick darshan and special darshan options, ensuring priority entry during peak hours. The website also facilitates Arjita Sevas, the temple's special ritual offerings performed on behalf of devotees.

Accommodation in devasthanam guest houses can now be booked online, allowing visitors to plan

their stay in advance. This is particularly beneficial during festivals like Dasara, when footfall surges. Digital Counters and Payment Options

To support the transition, special digital counters have been set up across the Indrakeladri premises. These feature QR code scanning, card payments, and net banking facilities for hassle-free transactions. Temple officials have cautioned devotees against touts and unauthorized agents, urging everyone to rely solely on official channels.

"Beware of fraudsters offering fake tickets or services. Use only government-provided platforms to avoid exploitation," they warned in a public advisory. This development builds on the state government's broader digitization efforts in temple administration. Similar online portals have been successful at other major shrines, cutting down queues by up to 50% and boosting revenue through transparent

Vijayawada: Tension at Sri Durga Malleshwara Swamy Temple Over Parking Dispute

Vijayawada, January 13, 2026 (TPN Bureau) – A tense situation erupted at the Sri Durga Malleshwara Swamy Temple on Indrakeeladri hill on Wednesday following a dispute over car parking between a devotee and temple security personnel. Eye-witnesses reported that the disagreement escalated quickly, with allegations that a security staff member lost control and physically assaulted the devotee. The incident caused momentary unrest among the crowd of devotees present at the temple.

The incident has renewed calls for stricter supervision and better training of temple security personnel. Devotees have urged the temple administration to



implement clear guidelines for crowd and vehicle management, par-

ticularly during peak hours and festival periods when large num-

bers of people visit the shrine.

While no official statement has yet been released regarding the

status of the devotee or

any disciplinary action against the security staff, local authorities have reportedly begun investigating the matter. Sources indicate that the temple administration is reviewing security arrangements and considering reforms to prevent future confrontations.

The Sri Durga Malleshwara Swamy Temple, a prominent pilgrimage site in Vijayawada, has previously faced criticism over parking management and crowd control. Devotees have repeatedly demanded proper infrastructure, including designated parking zones and adequately trained personnel, to ensure safety and convenience for visitors.

Accused Arrested in Vijayawada Hit and Run Case; Police Investigate Incident



Vijayawada, January 13, 2026 (TPN Bureau) – The Vijayawada police have arrested an accused in connection with a hit and run case that occurred recently, officials said on Tuesday. The arrest follows a focused investigation after the victim was struck by a vehicle that fled the scene, sparking concern among local residents over road safety and enforcement of traffic laws.

According to police sources, the incident took place within the city limits when a vehicle collided with a pedestrian and fled the scene. Police immediately registered a case under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code related to hit and run and traffic violations and launched a search to track down the vehicle and driver responsible.

During the investiga-

tion, officers combed through CCTV footage from nearby cameras, interviewed witnesses, and coordinated with traffic and law and order units to identify the suspect. Following verification of evidence, the police apprehended the accused and took them into custody for further questioning.

Senior police officials said that hit and run incidents pose a serious threat to public safety and that the department is committed to ensuring that those responsible are brought to justice. "We urge commuters and vehicle owners to strictly follow traffic rules and to immediately report any accident incidents to authorities so that prompt action can be taken," a police spokesperson said.

Hit and run cases have been a growing concern in urban areas, drawing attention to the need for stricter enforcement, better road safety measures, and increased public awareness. Both pedestrian victims and motorists are reminded of the risks associated with negligent driving, and authorities emphasize that fleeing the scene of an accident is a punishable offense which endangers lives and hampers justice.

Local residents noted that such incidents undermine road safety confidence and have called for enhanced surveillance and traffic policing, especially in busy city zones. Vijayawada police have assured the public that further arrests are possible as the investigation continues and culls additional leads from ongoing evidence collection.

Vijayawada: Sankranti Celebrations Marred by Deadly Chinese Manja



Vijayawada, January 13, 2026 (TPN Bureau) –

As Sankranti festivities fill the skies with colorful kites, a hidden danger continues to threaten lives across the city. Chinese manja, a lethal synthetic kite string, remains openly available in local markets despite a government ban, putting citizens—especially children and two-wheeler riders—at serious risk.

Chinese manja is far more dangerous than traditional cotton threads. Coated with powdered glass and chemical substances, this nylon or synthetic string can cut through skin, causing severe injuries to the neck, hands, and limbs. Over the years, numerous accidents have been reported during kite-flying festivities, some even resulting in fatalities.

Authorities have imposed a strict ban on the manufacture, storage, and sale of Chinese manja, yet enforcement remains weak. Illicit sales continue both online and in local markets, including secretive stalls and footpaths, making it easy for children and amateur kite flyers to come into contact with the

dangerous material.

Residents express alarm at the lack of oversight. "Kite flying is meant to be fun, a way for families to celebrate together, but Chinese manja has turned this tradition into a deadly risk," said a local resident. "Every year, many are severely injured, and some even lose their lives. These are not just accidents—they are a failure of the system."

Experts and activists urge the government and law enforcement agencies to take strict, immediate action, including cracking down on illegal vendors and raising public awareness. Families are advised to ensure that children use only traditional cotton threads while flying kites.

"If a single kite string can ruin a life or an entire family, the authorities cannot remain passive. Enforcement must match the laws in place," said a local safety advocate.

As celebrations continue, the call is clear: strict vigilance and enforcement are essential to ensure that the joy of Sankranti does not come at the cost of human lives.

QR Code-Based Footwear Counters Launched at Tirumala to Ease Pilgrim Rush



TPN Bureau
Tirumala, January 13, 2026

In a major step towards improving pilgrim convenience and streamlining crowd management, the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) has introduced a modern QR code-based footwear management system at Tirumala. The initiative aims to eliminate confusion and inconvenience faced by devotees while collecting their footwear after darshan at the Sri Venkateswara Temple.

The new system was inaugurated by TTD Additional Executive Officer C.H. Venkaiah Chowdary and has been rolled out at eight key footwear counters across Tirumala. Following its successful trial run at the Vaikuntha Queue Complex-2, the facility has now been expanded to other high-footfall lo-

cations, including the Matrusri Tarigonda Venkamamba Annaprasadam Complex. Under the upgraded arrangement, devotees depositing their footwear at designated counters are issued a QR code slip instead of the conventional token. The slip contains complete details such as the number of footwear items deposited, size, rack number, box number and exact storage location. Upon return, the QR code is scanned, enabling staff to quickly identify and retrieve the footwear without delay.

TTD officials stated that the new system has significantly improved efficiency and accuracy. While earlier methods resulted in frequent complaints of misplaced or mixed-up footwear, the QR code mechanism has reportedly ensured nearly error-free retriev-

al. Officials estimate that successful return rates have increased to nearly 99 per cent, greatly enhancing pilgrim satisfaction.

The project has been implemented with the support of Coromandel International Limited as part of its corporate social responsibility initiative. TTD authorities noted that the system not only saves valuable time for devotees but also contributes to better organization, cleanliness and security at footwear counters.

Speaking on the occasion, the Additional Executive Officer urged pilgrims to use only the officially designated footwear counters and avoid leaving shoes and sandals at random locations around the temple premises. Such practices, he said, create inconvenience, hygiene concerns and additional

burden on sanitation staff. Tirumala witnesses lakhs of devotees every day, particularly during weekends, festivals and peak pilgrimage seasons.

Managing footwear for such massive crowds has long been a challenge for the temple administration. The introduction of technology-driven solutions like QR code tracking reflects TTD's continued efforts to modernize pilgrim services while maintaining the sanctity of the holy shrine.

With the successful launch of the QR code-based footwear counters, TTD is expected to further expand similar technology-enabled facilities in other areas of pilgrim management, reinforcing its commitment to providing a smooth and hassle-free darshan experience for devotees from across the country and abroad.

Minister T.G. Bharat Distributes TIDCO Houses to Beneficiaries in Kurnool

Kurnool, January 13, 2026 (TPN Bureau) —

In a major step toward promoting housing for all, State Minister T.G. Bharat participated in the distribution of TIDCO houses at the Jagannath Gattu area in Kurnool, ensuring that eligible beneficiaries received homes equipped with all essential amenities. The event was part of the state government's ongoing efforts to provide shelter and improve the quality of life for underprivileged families.

Addressing the gathering, Minister Bharat praised the vision of Chief Minister Chan-



drababu Naidu for prioritizing development alongside welfare initiatives. He highlighted that the government's key goal is to provide every deserving family with a home. "This initiative reflects the government's commitment to making the dream of owning a home a reality for all citizens, especially the poor," he said.

Minister Bharat outlined the facilities provided in TIDCO houses, including electricity, safe drinking water, proper bus connectivity, and police security. He emphasized that the houses were fully prepared for immediate oc-

cupancy and urged beneficiaries to move in without delay. "Prompt occupancy ensures that other eligible families also get their opportunity to receive a house," he said.

In addition, the minister announced that another 500 beneficiaries in Kurnool town would receive TIDCO houses in February, further expanding the reach of the government's housing initiatives. He stressed that the scheme is not only about providing homes but also about creating sustainable communities. With the Orvakallu Industrial Park nearby, residents

would have ample employment and livelihood opportunities, linking housing development to economic growth.

Minister Bharat also criticized past administrations for neglecting TIDCO housing projects, noting that these initiatives had been overlooked in previous years. "Our government is committed to ensuring that welfare programs reach the people they are intended for and that development projects benefit the communities directly," he stated.

The event saw the participation of local officials, community leaders, and beneficiaries,

who expressed their gratitude for the government's proactive role in making housing accessible and improving their living conditions. Beneficiaries lauded the government for not only providing houses but also enabling access to basic services and livelihood opportunities, reinforcing the state's focus on holistic development. The TIDCO house distribution in Kurnool is part of a broader effort by the state government to combine welfare and development initiatives, ensuring citizens receive both shelter and opportunities for economic progress.

Athreyapuram Festival and Sankranti Celebrations Make History in Konaseema



Athreyapuram, January 13, 2026 (TPN Bureau) —

The Athreyapuram Sankranti Festival this year became a landmark event in Konaseema, combining cultural heritage, sports, and tourism promotion. The festival featured thrilling Dragon Boat races, swimming competitions, kite-flying, and cultural performances, attracting large crowds from across the region and making a strong impact on the local tourism landscape.

The highlight of the

celebrations was the Sir Arthur Cotton Godavari Trophy Dragon Boat Races, conducted over 1,000 meters and 500 meters. In the 1,000-meter race, the Bandaru team

from Eluru secured first prize with 2 lakh, the Palnadu team came second with 1 lakh, and the Konaseema team finished third with 50,000. In the 500-meter race, the Errakaluvu team from Jangareddygudem, Eluru district won 70,000, the Kurnool team claimed second prize of 50,000, and the Palnadu-2 team took third place with 30,000. The prizes were awarded by Union Minister Bhupathi Raju Srinivas Varma, who expressed delight at the competitive spirit of participants and the enthusiasm of spectators.

Speaking at the event, Minister Srinivas Varma emphasized the government's commitment to promoting sports and

physical fitness under initiatives like Khelo India and Fit India, while also leveraging festivals like Athreyapuram to boost tourism. "Dragon boat races not only foster athletic skill and teamwork but also bring attention to our cultural traditions, creating awareness among the younger generation," he said. Amalapuram MP Harish Madhur highlighted the importance of connecting cultural heritage with festive celebrations. "Sankranti is not just about kite flying; it reflects our customs and values. The Athreyapuram festival successfully brings these traditions to life for both participants and spectators," he noted. He also praised the coalition

government's efforts to channel central funding into local tourism and infrastructure development. Kothapeta MLA Bandaru Satyananda Rao described the three-day celebrations as historic and memorable. "From dragon boat and swimming competitions to food festivals, handicraft exhibitions, and live performances by Cine Orchestra and Sahara Band at Mahatma Gandhi Junior College grounds, the festival lit up the region and left a lasting impression on visitors," he said.

The event was attended by Union Minister Bhupathi Raju Srinivas Varma, MP Harish Madhur, MLA Bandaru Satyananda Rao, RDPO P. Sreeram, youth leaders Jyothula Naveen and Bandaru Sanjeev, along with numerous local officials and community members. The organizers received wide appreciation for successfully blending sports, culture, and tourism, ensuring the Athreyapuram Sankranti Festival will be remembered in Konaseema's history for years to come.

Former MLA S.V.S.N. Varma Says He Will Never Leave His Native Pithapuram



Pithapuram, January 13, 2026 (TPN Bureau) — Former Pithapuram MLA and senior Telugu Desam Party (TDP) leader Srivatsavai Satyanarayana Varma (S.V.S.N. Varma)

stressed that Pithapuram is more than just a political territory — it is his identity, his home, and the community he is deeply connected to.

Having served as MLA for Pithapuram in the 2014 assembly elections, Varma said that while party responsibilities sometimes require him to travel beyond the constituency, he always returns to Pithapuram.

Speaking to the media, Varma emphasized, "I was born in Pithapuram, I grew up here, and I will never leave my native place. Who would ever leave their own homeland?" His remarks underline a lifelong bond with the constituency and its people, as well as his commitment to serving the town that shaped him.

Varma made the statement amid growing political activity in Pithapuram, where debates over constituency changes and shifting alliances have intensified ahead of upcoming elections. The veteran politi-

cian stressed that Pithapuram is more than just a political territory — it is his identity, his home, and the community he is deeply connected to.

Having served as MLA for Pithapuram in the 2014 assembly elections, Varma said that while party responsibilities sometimes require him to travel beyond the constituency, he always returns to Pithapuram.

Political analysts note that Varma's declaration comes at a time when regional political loyalties are changing and new alliances are forming. In previous elections, he had supported joint campaigns alongside alliance partners, demonstrating political flexibility while maintaining his strong ties to Pithapuram.

Varma also used the opportunity to stress the importance of equitable state develop-

Minister Gunda Appala Suryanarayana Laid to Rest with Full State Honors in Srikakulam



TPN Bureau | January 13, 2026

Srikakulam: Senior TDP leader and former minister Gunda Appala Suryanarayana was given a tearful farewell on Tuesday, with his final rites performed amid full official state honors.

Thousands of mourners lined the streets of Srikakulam as his mortal remains were taken in a procession from Arasavalli through the city's main thoroughfares to the local crematorium. The processional, which lasted several hours, drew massive crowds, turning the urban streets into a sea of grieving people. TDP cadres, party workers, and admirers raised slogans like "Appala Suryanarayana Amar Rahe" (Long Live Appala Suryanarayana), their chants echoing through the city.

The atmosphere was charged with emotion, reflecting the deep respect the veteran politician commanded among the locals. Upon reaching the crematorium, police personnel paid their last respects with three rounds of

gunfire salutes into the air. Suryanarayana's son then lit the funeral pyre, marking the end of an era for Srikakulam politics.

The 78-year-old leader passed away on Monday evening at 6:40 PM while undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Srikakulam. On Sunday afternoon, he slipped and fell at his residence in Arasavalli, sustaining a severe head injury. Family members rushed him to the hospital, where he was placed on a ventilator.

Despite medical efforts, he breathed his last, leaving behind a legacy of dedicated public service. Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu expressed profound shock over Suryanarayana's demise. In a heartfelt condolence message, Naidu recalled his close bond with the leader and praised his simple lifestyle despite holding ministerial office. "Suryanarayana's clean politics and contributions to the party and state are exemplary," Naidu said, assuring the family of the

TDP's unwavering support. He directed district officials to conduct the funeral with full state honors and urged TDP ministers, MLAs, and leaders to attend. Born on January 16, 1948, in Srikakulam, Suryanarayana entered politics in 1981 by winning a municipal election as a councillor. He joined the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and went on to secure victory as MLA from Srikakulam four consecutive times from 1985 to 2004. In 1987, he was inducted as a minister, serving with distinction. His wife, Gunda Lakshmi Devi, carried forward the family legacy as TDP MLA from 2014 to 2019. Suryanarayana's death has cast a pall of gloom over Srikakulam and the TDP ranks.

Known for his grassroots connect and unwavering loyalty to the party, he leaves an indelible mark on Andhra Pradesh politics. Condolences have poured in from across the political spectrum, underscoring his stature as a principled leader.

TDP Leader Chintamaneni Prabhakar Predicts Long NDA Rule in Andhra Pradesh

Eluru, January 13, 2026 (TPN Bureau) —

Senior Telugu Desam Party (TDP) leader and Eluru district MLA Chintamaneni Prabhakar has expressed strong confidence that the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government in Andhra Pradesh will remain in power for the next 20 years, asserting that the coalition's development focus will resonate with voters over successive election cycles.

Prabhakar's remarks came during a grand Sankranti celebration event held in his constituency, where he also distributed traditional food packages to government employees and extended festive greetings to residents. The MLA warmly highlighted the inclusive nature of the celebrations, noting that families who had lost loved ones or were unable to celebrate with relatives were treated like his own family and were also given Sankranti meals.

During his address, Prabhakar outlined the progress and welfare initiatives being carried out under the current coalition government, stating that development would stretch from Amaravati to Polavaram. He said the administration's work has been accelerating across multiple sectors, urging that the sustained focus on welfare and infrastructure would ensure the NDA's electoral success for many years to come.

The MLA also addressed con-

cerns about criticism directed at the coalition, stating that attempts by opposition groups to create unrest or disparage the government were politically motivated and unfounded. He reiterated that the coalition's programs are designed to benefit all citizens, regardless of party affiliation. "Whether a person belongs to this party or that, if they have an issue, we will help," Prabhakar said, emphasizing his commitment to accessible governance at the local level.

Prabhakar also highlighted the implementation of central and state schemes under initiatives like Annadada Sukhibhava and Talli Ki Vandana, which have provided benefits to farmers and school-going children, respectively. He acknowledged that some administrative hurdles had temporarily affected beneficiaries

under these schemes but assured that corrective measures were underway to ensure no eligible person was left out.

Political observers note that statements projecting long-term dominance by the ruling coalition reflect broader confidence within the NDA, especially after a strong performance in recent elections that reshaped Andhra Pradesh's political landscape. By stressing continuity and inclusive development, leaders like Prabhakar appear intent on solidifying voter support ahead of future polls.

The Sankranti festivities in Eluru concluded on a celebratory note, with participants praising the community outreach and distribution of essential services, even as political assertions about the future of governance continue to draw attention.



Iran on the Brink: Unrest, Regime Survival, and India's Strategic Dilemma

India's Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri's understated remark on Monday that New Delhi is "closely watching developments in Iran" masks the gravity of the situation unfolding in West Asia. The unrest sweeping across Iran is not merely another episode of internal dissent. It threatens the survival of the 47-year-old Islamic Republic and carries the potential to trigger a regional crisis with far-reaching economic and strategic consequences for India.

What began two weeks ago as protests in Tehran has rapidly snowballed into a nationwide movement. Demonstrations have now spread to more than 100 cities across all 31 provinces of Iran. As in previous crises, the regime led by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has responded with brute force. Human rights organisations report that over 600 protesters have already been killed, while warning that the true toll may be significantly higher due to a nationwide internet blackout that has made verification difficult.

Iran has witnessed waves of anti-government protests ever since the 1979 Islamic Revolution that toppled Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi. Yet the current unrest stands out for both its scale and intensity. It has already surpassed the 2022 protests that followed the custodial death of Mahsa Amini, which left at least 550 people dead. That movement was largely feminist in character and centred on opposition to compulsory hijab laws. The present protests are broader, faster-spreading, and socially more diverse, drawing in young men and women, older citizens, and crucially, or-

ganised economic actors.

A Protest or an Uprising?

One of the most striking features of the current unrest is the participation of traders—something not seen since the 1979 revolution itself. The protests were triggered on December 28 in Tehran after the Iranian currency, the rial, collapsed sharply against the US dollar. Traders shut shops and took to the streets, soon joined by students, workers, and other sections of society. Their involvement gives the movement an economic backbone that earlier protests often lacked.

Still, it may be premature to describe the situation as a full-fledged uprising. Despite reports of limited defections within the security forces, there are no definitive signs of an imminent regime collapse. The state's coercive apparatus remains largely intact.

Years of crippling Western sanctions had already eroded living standards for ordinary Iranians. The situation worsened dramatically after last summer's conflict with Israel, during which the United States joined in bombing Iranian targets. Inflation crossed 50% last month, unemployment remains stubbornly high, and the rial's collapse has wiped out savings. The ground for unrest was fertile long before the first slogan was shouted.

Ayatollah Khamenei has blamed foreign powers—primarily the United States and Israel—for orchestrating the protests. Yet the sheer scale and intensity of the demonstrations suggest a deep reservoir of domestic anger. Protesters have openly chanted slogans

against the Islamic regime itself, a rare and risky act in Iran. Exiled crown prince Reza Pahlavi, based in the United States, has urged Iranians to take to the streets, but while his lineage is undeniably Iranian, his influence inside the country remains limited.

Why US Military Action May Backfire

President Donald Trump has been vocal since the unrest began. He warned Iranian authorities that US military action would follow if demonstrators were killed. Despite repeated threats, however, Trump has so far refrained from ordering strikes—even as hundreds of protesters have died. For a leader known for swift and often unilateral military decisions, including the recent US raid on Venezuela and the seizure of President Nicolás Maduro, this hesitation is noteworthy.

Iran, unlike Venezuela,



is a far more formidable adversary. It is nearly the size of Western Europe and retains significant military capabilities despite degradation from Israeli and US strikes last year. Iranian retaliatory attacks on Israel in 2025 forced Tel Aviv into an unusual ceasefire—something Israel has rarely done in conflicts with non-state actors such as Hamas or Hezbollah.

Timing also matters. The US military had months to prepare for the Venezuela operation. Events in Iran have unfolded far more rapidly, leaving little scope for similar logistical and intelligence preparation.

Trump is also likely mindful of America's disastrous 1980 Operation Eagle Claw, when an attempt to rescue US diplomats held hostage in Tehran ended in failure and humiliation. This does not rule out US military action altogether, but it explains the caution. Any decision would

require careful calibration of targets, timing, and potential escalation.

Moreover, while many Iranians despise the Islamic regime, foreign military intervention—particularly by Israel or the United States—could provoke a surge of nationalist sentiment. Last summer's US strikes rallied public opinion around the regime rather than weakening it. Trump himself declined Israel's request at the time to extend military operations aimed at toppling the government.

This context lends weight to Monday's statement by White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt, who said airstrikes were "one of many options" but that "diplomacy is always the president's first choice." Simultaneously, Trump announced a punitive 25% tariff on any country conducting business with both Iran and the United States—a move aimed at isolating Tehran economically rather

than militarily.

The Pivotal Role of the Revolutionary Guards

The single most important pillar of regime survival is the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Founded shortly after the 1979 revolution by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the IRGC was initially tasked with protecting the nascent Islamic state from internal dissent and external threats, particularly from the United States.

Over time, it evolved into a parallel military and economic empire. With nearly 200,000 personnel, its own navy and air force, and an elite external operations wing—the Quds Force—the IRGC exerts enormous influence at home and abroad. It has played a central role in building Iran's regional proxy network, including Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Houthis in Yemen.

Like Pakistan's military, the IRGC has entrenched itself deeply in

Iran's economy, controlling or influencing major sectors. Its institutional survival is inseparable from that of the Islamic regime, making it unlikely to abandon the leadership without a violent struggle. Security personnel accused of firing on protesters are widely believed to belong to IRGC units. The pro-regime rallies organised on Monday would have been impossible without its backing.

Any Western military intervention would inevitably target the IRGC, just as Israel did last year—raising the risk of a wider regional war.

India's Stakes Could Not Be Higher

For India, the unrest in Iran comes at an especially precarious moment. Unlike Venezuela, Iran is geographically close and strategically vital. It has long been an important trading partner. In the last financial year, India exported goods worth £1.24 billion to Iran and imported roughly a third of that value. India has also cautiously resumed oil purchases from Iran after reducing imports from Russia under US pressure. Trump's new tariff threat now puts that fragile arrangement at risk.

Military conflict could also prompt Iran to close the Strait of Hormuz, through which more than half of India's oil and gas imports pass. Any prolonged disruption would severely undermine India's energy security and economic stability.

Beyond energy, India has invested heavily in Iran's Chabahar Port, a cornerstone of its strategy to access Afghanistan and Central Asia while bypassing Pakistan. Continued unrest—or regime collapse—

would place that project in limbo. The same applies to the International North-South Transport Corridor linking India to Russia via Iran and Azerbaijan, and the ambitious India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor announced at the G20 summit in New Delhi in 2023.

Strategically, instability in Iran could embolden Pakistan. Shortly before last year's US strikes on Iran, Pakistan's Army Chief Asim Munir was briefed in Washington. This time, Islamabad could offer logistical support for US action to curry favour with Trump and secure arms deals.

A collapse of the Islamic regime would likely usher in a prolonged period of chaos. There is no clear successor. Reza Pahlavi's aspirations to lead a transitional government lack broad domestic support and are complicated by his perceived proximity to Israel. Notably, Trump himself has shown little interest in engaging with him.

The Middle East may be heading toward a long phase of instability, with ripple effects across the Gulf. That would threaten oil and gas production, destabilise economies, and imperil the livelihoods of millions of Indian expatriates.

Trump's caution, therefore, may have less to do with concern for Iranian democracy than with fear of economic and geopolitical blowback. As Venezuela demonstrated, Trump will always prioritise instinct and self-interest. Should Iran's protesters succeed, he will undoubtedly claim credit. If they fail, the region—and countries like India—will still pay the price.

Trump's America Unbound: Power, Force, and the Rejection of Global Rules

Barely days into 2026, President Donald Trump has unleashed a series of actions that have shaken the foundations of international politics and alarmed allies and adversaries alike. What has unfolded is not a collection of isolated decisions, but a coherent—and deeply unsettling—worldview: one in which American power is unconstrained by institutions, treaties, or even traditional notions of legality, and where force is regarded as a legitimate and routine instrument of statecraft.

The shock began on Saturday, January 3, when Trump ordered a full-scale US military invasion of Venezuela. The operation culminated in the seizure of President Nicolás Maduro and his wife, their forcible removal from office, and a unilateral declaration that the United States would assume control of the oil-rich South American nation. Within hours, Trump announced that Venezuela would remain under US authority for as long as he deemed necessary.

Before the international community could absorb the implications of this extraordinary move, the White House escalated further. On Monday, senior adviser Stephen Miller appeared on television to assert that Greenland "rightfully belonged" to the United States. He openly suggested that Washington could seize Danish territory if it wished, brushing aside concerns about

NATO or international law. When asked whether the US would rule out the use of force, Miller replied bluntly: "Nobody's going to fight the United States militarily over the future of Greenland."

By Thursday, Trump had widened his assault from individual states to the very architecture of global governance. He ordered the US to withdraw from 66 international organisations—35 non-UN bodies and 31 affiliated with the United Nations—on the grounds that they were contrary to American interests. Among the most consequential exits were the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the 2015 Paris Agreement, UN Women, the UN Population Fund, and the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

'My Own Morality'

Perhaps most revealing was Trump's demeanor amid the upheaval. On Wednesday, in a two-hour interview with The New York Times—a publication he frequently denounces—he appeared calm, confident, and unapologetic. Responding to criticism that the Venezuela invasion amounted to imperialism, Trump declared that his powers as Commander-in-Chief were constrained only by his "own morality." International law, congressional oversight, and multilateral norms, he said, had no meaningful effect on his ability to invade, coerce, or

dominate other nations.

The remark was striking not only for its candor, but for its irony. Trump's invocation of personal morality comes from a president who has faced multiple allegations of sexual misconduct linked to his association with Jeffrey Epstein. Yet in Trump's telling, personal judgment—not law—was the ultimate arbiter of legitimacy.

Trump confirmed in the interview that the US planned to extract and refine between 30 and 50 million barrels of Venezuelan oil, worth an estimated \$2.8 billion. He said he would personally oversee the proceeds, claiming the money would be used for the benefit of both Venezuelans and Americans. He offered no explanation of the legal basis for this appropriation,

nor how long the occupation would last—only that it could continue "many years."

On Greenland, Trump was equally blunt. While acknowledging that the US already operates a military base on the island and could expand its presence through agreements, he insisted that anything short of outright ownership was insufficient. Physical possession, he argued, was "psychologically needed for success," something a lease or treaty could never provide.

He doubled down on this position over the weekend, declaring, "If it affects NATO, then it affects the US." Trump has imposed sweeping tariffs on much of the world, weaponising trade policy as a blunt instrument of coercion. He has also openly boasted of joining Israel in military operations against Iran, claiming to have destroyed

its nuclear programme. The latest withdrawals from international organisations fit neatly into this pattern. Many of the bodies the US is exiting are marginal or long-dormant, suggesting a symbolic gesture aimed at Trump's MAGA base. Indeed, a significant segment of that base has expressed discomfort with the Venezuela intervention, and with midterm elections approaching, Trump has openly worried that major losses could expose him to indictment.

But the list also includes institutions that matter deeply—to climate action, development finance, human rights, education, renewable energy, counterterrorism, anti-piracy efforts, and global trade governance. These organisations form a crucial part of America's soft power

and its ability to shape global norms. That Trump appears willing to discard them so casually underscores how little value he places on influence that does not flow directly from coercion.

The Organisations Trump Left Behind

Trump's hostility to multilateral institutions is not new. In 2020, he withdrew the US from the World Health Organization, accusing it of mishandling the COVID-19 pandemic. That decision was reversed by the Biden administration in 2021, but Trump reinstated the withdrawal immediately upon returning to office in January 2025, citing similar grievances.

In February 2025, the US also exited the UN Human Rights Council, UNESCO, and the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). Among the most recent withdrawals is the International Solar Alliance (ISA), an intergovernmental body headquartered in Gurugram and championed by India and France following the 2015 Paris Climate Summit. The ISA aims to scale up solar energy and reduce costs globally—goals fundamentally at odds with Trump's renewed push for fossil fuels.

In any case, the US was only an observer, not a full member, making the withdrawal largely symbolic.

India remains an active participant in many of the organisations the US is abandoning. New Delhi's

foreign policy continues to emphasize multilateralism, particularly on climate change, development, trade, and environmental governance—placing it increasingly at odds with Washington's unilateral turn.

Selective Multilateralism

Despite his rhetoric, Trump has been careful not to abandon institutions that deliver tangible power. The US remains firmly entrenched in the UN Security Council and the General Assembly, as well as in the World Bank, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the International Monetary Fund. These bodies grant Washington outsized influence over global finance, development, and security—advantages that far outweigh the political costs of MAGA discontent.

This selective approach reveals the true nature of Trump's "America First" doctrine. Multilateralism is rejected when it constrains US action or requires compromise, but embraced when it reinforces American dominance. Rules are acceptable only when written by Washington, enforced by Washington, and aligned with Washington's immediate interests.

In this vision of the world, international law is a fiction, global governance a nuisance, and consent irrelevant. What matters is power—and Trump has made clear that he alone believes he should decide how it is used.



and its nuclear programme.

The latest withdrawals from international organisations fit neatly into this pattern. Many of the bodies the US is exiting are marginal or long-dormant, suggesting a symbolic gesture aimed at Trump's MAGA base. Indeed, a significant segment of that base has expressed discomfort with the Venezuela intervention, and with midterm elections approaching, Trump has openly worried that major losses could expose him to indictment.

But the list also includes institutions that matter deeply—to climate action, development finance, human rights, education, renewable energy, counterterrorism, anti-piracy efforts, and global trade governance. These organisations form a crucial part of America's soft power

Jaishankar Outlines India's Priorities for BRICS 2026 Amid Global Uncertainties

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Tuesday outlined India's vision and priorities for its BRICS 2026 presidency, emphasizing the importance of resilience, innovation, cooperation, and sustainability in navigating a complex and uncertain global landscape. Speaking in New Delhi during the launch of the official logo and website for the 18th BRICS Summit, Jaishankar highlighted the challenges facing the international community, including geopolitical tensions, economic volatility, climate risks, technological shifts, and persistent development gaps.

"BRICS remains an important forum that encourages dialogue, cooperation, and practical responses, while respecting national priorities at different stages of development," Jaishankar said. He stressed that the grouping, now comprising 11 member countries, serves as a platform for countries to address shared challenges collectively and promote global welfare.

The remarks come at a time when the United States has imposed a 25 per cent penalty tariff on countries trading with Iran, affecting India and Brazil, both BRICS members. Jaishankar reiterated that India's presidency of BRICS would focus on delivering practical solutions while strengthening institutional capacities to withstand global shocks.

India's year-long BRICS chairship will adopt a model



similar to its 2023 G20 presidency, with meetings and delegations spread across all 28 states and nine Union Territories. In addition to the leaders' summit in New Delhi, officials said around 100 ministerial meetings, forums, and working group sessions will be held across 60 cities, including Bangalore, Hyderabad, Chennai, Chandigarh, Ahmedabad, and Lucknow. These gatherings will cover political and security, economic and financial, and cultural and people-to-people exchanges.

Jaishankar highlighted that BRICS cooperation will prioritize agriculture, health, disaster risk reduction, energy, and supply chain resilience.

He also emphasized the role of emerging technologies, startups, and MSMEs in fostering inclusive growth and addressing socio-economic challenges, particularly for developing nations. Sustainability was described as another key pillar, ensuring long-term benefits from collective efforts.

The newly unveiled BRICS logo, a lotus incorporating the colors of all member nations, reflects India's approach to its chairship, combining tradition with modernity. "The petals represent unity in diversity and a strong sense of shared purpose," Jaishankar said, noting that the design symbolizes the collective strength of BRICS while re-

specting each member's unique identity.

Alongside India, the BRICS summit will see participation from Russia, China, Brazil, South Africa, Egypt, the UAE, and Iran, with partner countries including Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Belarus, Bolivia, Kazakhstan, Cuba, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Uganda, and Uzbekistan expected to engage in dialogue and cooperation initiatives.

India aims to use its presidency to strengthen the grouping's institutional framework and foster practical, sustainable solutions to global challenges, ensuring that BRICS remains relevant in a rapidly changing world.

Rahul Gandhi Backs Vijay Amid Jana Nayagan Controversy, Sparks Speculation on Congress-TVK Political Tie-Up in Tamil Nadu

Senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's vocal support for actor Vijay amid the controversy surrounding his film Jana Nayagan has added a new dimension to Tamil Nadu politics. His recent post not only defended Vijay at a critical moment but also fueled speculation that the Congress could consider a political understanding with Vijay's party, the Thalapathy Vijay Katchi (TVK), even as it maintains its longstanding alliance with the DMK.

Rahul Gandhi, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, framed the delay in the film's certification by the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) as an attack on Tamil culture. He further asserted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi would not be able to silence the voice of the Tamil people. The timing of the post was significant, coinciding with Gandhi's Pongal visit to Gudalur in the Nilgiris, marking his first public appearance after returning from Vietnam. The message carried both cultural symbolism and political weight.



The Jana Nayagan controversy has evolved beyond a film issue. The movie has faced certification delays, legal scrutiny, and disputes over its content, turning it into a flashpoint. Earlier, Congress leaders had defended the filmmakers' creative freedom, while Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin also criticized political interference in artistic expression. Gandhi's intervention, therefore, heightened the po-

litical stakes of the debate.

Within the Congress, the post has sparked fresh strategic discussions. Some leaders believe forging ties with TVK could give the party an edge, particularly with young and first-time voters drawn to Vijay's popularity. They suggest that joint campaigns led by Vijay and Rahul Gandhi could resonate strongly at the grassroots level and potentially reshape the political mood in the state.

However, not all in the party share this view. Senior leaders caution against straying from the long-standing DMK alliance, which has provided stability, political relevance, and electoral benefit over the years. They argue that experimenting with a new political formation carries risk and that the current situation could instead be leveraged to secure greater influence within the existing alliance.

Tamil Nadu's political landscape has been evolving since the passing of J. Jayalalithaa and M. Karunanidhi, creating space for new players. Vijay, with his star power and growing political assertiveness, is emerging as a figure who can sway voters and shape discourse.

The Congress plans to conduct surveys to assess public sentiment, alliance preferences, and ground realities. These findings will likely determine whether Rahul Gandhi's post was merely symbolic support for a popular actor or an early indicator of a strategic recalibration in Tamil Nadu.

Operation Sindoos Ongoing, India Ready to Respond to Any Misadventure: Army Chief Gen Dwivedi

Army Chief General Bipin Rawat Dwivedi on Tuesday reaffirmed India's strong stance on national security, stating that Operation Sindoos remains ongoing and any misadventure by adversaries will be met with decisive action. Speaking at a press conference, he emphasized that the Indian Army continues to maintain high alert along multiple fronts, sending a clear message to Pakistan about India's preparedness to counter threats.

Operation Sindoos remains ongoing, and a future misadventure will be resolutely responded to," Gen Dwivedi said, highlighting the operation's strategic significance in India's counter-terrorism and national defense posture. He explained that the operation has been instrumental in resetting strategic assumptions, targeting cross-border terror infrastructure, and challenging Islamabad's longstanding nuclear rhetoric.

Elaborating on the operational objectives, the Army chief described Operation Sindoos as a calibrated, precise, and resolute response to



cross-border terrorism, demonstrating India's strategic clarity and military readiness. The operation has not only neutralized threats but also showcased India's ability to undertake deep-strike actions when necessary, reinforcing the country's deterrence capabilities.

The Army chief also underlined ongoing efforts to enhance capabilities and infrastructure through a whole-of-government approach, ensuring that the armed forces remain equipped to respond effectively to both conventional and unconventional threats. He stressed that readiness and capability development are integral to India's security strategy.

On the northern front, along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China, Gen Dwivedi said the situation remains stable but requires continuous vigilance. "Renewed contact and confidence-building measures are contributing to the gradual normalization of

the situation," he noted, emphasizing that the Army is prepared for any eventuality while working to strengthen trust and communication with its counterpart forces.

The Army chief also underlined ongoing efforts to enhance capabilities and infrastructure through a whole-of-government approach, ensuring that the armed forces remain equipped to respond effectively to both conventional and unconventional threats. He stressed that readiness and capability development are integral to India's security strategy.

Operation Sindoos, according to the Army, continues to play a pivotal role in neutralizing threats, reinforcing deterrence, and ensuring national security in a challenging regional and global environment.

Regarding Jammu and Kashmir, Gen Dwivedi described the situation as sensitive but firmly under control, with security forces maintaining continuous surveillance and operational preparedness. He reiterated that India's military posture is designed to protect territorial integrity and ensure that any attempts to destabilize the region are swiftly countered.

Gen Dwivedi concluded by reaffirming the Army's commitment to safeguarding the nation, emphasizing that India remains vigilant, strategically agile, and fully capable of responding to threats along all borders. The statement comes at a time of heightened regional tensions and underscores India's resolve to defend its sovereignty while maintaining stability across sensitive areas.

Operation Sindoos, according to the Army, continues to play a pivotal role in neutralizing threats, reinforcing deterrence, and ensuring national security in a challenging regional and global environment.

Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan Leads Sit-In Protest Over Union Government's Financial Restrictions



Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, along with his Cabinet colleagues, MLAs, and leaders of the ruling Left Democratic Front (LDF), staged a sit-in at the Martyrs' Column in Thiruvananthapuram on Monday, protesting what they described as severe financial restrictions imposed on the state by the Union government.

The demonstration was organized to draw attention to what the state views as arbitrary curbs on its constitutional financial rights. Addressing the protesters, Vijayan accused the Centre of attempting to "financially strangle" Kerala. He said, "Many of Kerala's constitutional rights as a state in this country are being taken away. This is an extraordinary situation where we are compelled to protest in order to safeguard our rights, which are being snatched away by rulers at the Centre who believe they hold excessive

power."

The Chief Minister highlighted the latest restrictions on state funds, noting that Kerala was entitled to receive Rs 12,000 crore from the Centre in the last quarter of the financial year. However, the Union government has released only Rs 6,100 crore, effectively denying Rs 5,900 crore without any justification, he said. Vijayan emphasized that these funds were crucial for the state to meet various expenditures during the critical final three months of the fiscal year.

"This is not about seeking handouts from the Centre," Vijayan clarified. "We are demanding what is rightfully owed to Kerala. The state stands firm in its resolve and will resist every attempt to undermine its constitutional rights." He reiterated that the LDF government would continue to defend the state's interests, both politically and legally, against any perceived

overreach by the Union government.

The sit-in at the Martyrs' Column drew widespread attention, with several LDF leaders highlighting Kerala's contributions to the national exchequer and the disproportionate nature of the cuts. The protest also sought to underline the importance of federalism and the constitutional principle that states should have autonomy in managing their finances without undue interference from the Centre.

The Kerala government has indicated that it will continue to pursue the matter through legal and political channels while mobilizing public opinion. By staging a day-long protest, the LDF aims to send a strong message that the state will not accept arbitrary financial restrictions that threaten its ability to deliver essential services and maintain fiscal stability.

AAP MP Raghav Chadha Applauds Centre's Move to Remove "10-Minute Delivery" Branding from Quick-Commerce Platforms



Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MP Raghav Chadha on Tuesday welcomed the central government's intervention to remove the controversial "10-minute delivery" branding from quick-commerce platforms, calling it a much-needed step to protect delivery agents from exploitative work conditions.

Chadha, who has been vocal about the pressures faced by gig workers, expressed his gratitude on X (formerly Twitter), highlighting the constant and dangerous stress imposed on riders by the unrealistic promise of ultra-fast deliveries. "I am deeply grateful to the Central Government for its timely, decisive and compassionate intervention in enforcing the removal of the '10-minute delivery' branding from quick-commerce platforms. This is a much-needed step because when '10 minutes' is printed on a rider's t-shirt, jacket, or bag, and a timer runs on the customer's screen, the pressure is real, constant, and dangerous," Chadha

wrote.

The MP further emphasized that the working conditions of many delivery partners are exploitative. Over the past months, he said, he had interacted with hundreds of riders who are overworked, underpaid, and often risking their lives to meet impossible delivery deadlines. Chadha thanked citizens who supported the campaign, saying their solidarity stood for human life, safety, and dignity.

Chadha has repeatedly raised the issue in Parliament, urging the government to regulate the gig economy and protect delivery agents. In the Rajya Sabha, he described gig workers as the "invisible wheels of the Indian economy," highlighting that they often work under conditions worse than daily wage labourers while adhering to strict and unrealistic timelines set by algorithms.

In December, Chadha shared a tweet highlighting the plight of a Blinkit delivery agent who earned only

Rs 763 for 15 hours of work, calling it "systemic exploitation hidden behind apps and algorithms." Following this, Chadha invited the delivery partner, identified as Thapliyal Ji from Uttarakhand, to his residence for lunch, further demonstrating his commitment to engaging directly with workers to understand their challenges.

The removal of the "10-minute delivery" branding is seen as a significant step in addressing safety and labour concerns in India's rapidly growing quick-commerce sector. The move underscores the importance of prioritizing the welfare of gig workers, who form a critical part of the country's economy, over unrealistic business-driven timelines.

Chadha's advocacy highlights a growing focus on labour rights in India's gig economy, emphasizing that fast delivery promises should never come at the cost of human life, safety, and dignity.

US Revokes Over 100,000 Visas in 2025, Including 8,000 Student Visas Amid Tougher Immigration Screening



The United States revoked more than 100,000 visas in 2025, including roughly 8,000 student visas, as part of a heightened effort to tighten immigration and ensure public safety, the US State Department announced on Tuesday. The number marks a significant increase from 2024, when around 40,000 visas were cancelled, highlighting a more aggressive approach under the current administration, according to a report by Fox News.

In a statement posted on social media, the State Department noted that approximately 2,500 specialized visas were also revoked for individuals who had encounters with US law enforcement due to criminal activities. "We will continue to deport these thugs to keep America safe," the department said, emphasizing the government's zero-tolerance stance toward foreign nationals involved in criminal offenses.

State Department Principal Deputy Spokesperson Tommy Pigott explained that the majority of revocations involved foreign nationals who had been charged with or convicted of crimes. "That includes revoked visas from thousands of foreign nationals charged or convicted with crimes, including assault, theft, and driving under the influence," he said. The action extended beyond routine visa overstay to include serious legal infractions by visitors.

While most of the cancelled visas were held by business and tourist travelers who had overstayed their permitted duration, a significant number also included students and

specialized workers. Among specialized workers, about half of the revocations were linked to drunken driving arrests, with the rest involving assault, theft, child abuse, drug offenses, and fraud. Meanwhile, nearly 500 student visas were revoked due to drug possession or distribution charges.

Pigott underscored that the administration would maintain what he described as an "aggressive" enforcement approach, supported by the establishment of a new "continuous vetting center" to monitor visa holders. He reiterated the government's message that US visa is a privilege, not a right, and that all available information—including criminal records—is considered during the screening process.

The move reflects a broader effort by the administration to prioritize national security and public safety amid increasing concerns over foreign nationals committing crimes in the US.

By expanding visa revocations to include both students and specialized workers, the government signals that no category of foreign national is exempt from scrutiny.

As the US continues to tighten immigration enforcement, officials emphasize that revocations are part of a broader strategy to deter criminal activity and ensure that visa holders adhere to the laws and regulations governing their stay. The action is expected to continue as the administration reinforces the message that compliance with legal and safety standards is mandatory for all foreign visitors.

Venezuelan Opposition Leader María Corina Machado to Visit White House, Meet Trump Amid Political Uncertainty



Venezuelan opposition leader María Corina Machado, winner of the 2025 Nobel Peace Prize, is scheduled to visit the White House on Thursday and meet US President Donald Trump, a senior White House official confirmed on Monday. The meeting comes amid deep political uncertainty in Venezuela following a dramatic U.S. military operation that resulted in the capture of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro.

Machado's visit is closely watched as Trump has so far declined to endorse her as Venezuela's leader despite her international recognition and Nobel accolade. After U.S. forces carried out the operation in Caracas on January 3 and detained Maduro and his wife, Trump said it would be difficult for Machado to lead Venezuela because, in his view, she lacks widespread support and respect among her own people.

Machado, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2025 for her longstanding advocacy for democratic change in Venezuela, has publicly expressed gratitude for U.S. support. In recent weeks, she suggested she would like to present or share her Nobel Peace Prize with Trump in appreciation of his role in ousting Maduro—an idea Trump described as "a great honour." However, the Norwegian Nobel Institute has clarified that the Peace Prize cannot be transferred, shared, or revoked once

awarded.

In a statement to international media, Machado described her planned White House visit as an opportunity to personally thank the U.S. president and discuss Venezuela's path forward. Meanwhile, Trump has signaled openness to the meeting without committing to support her political leadership. In past remarks, he said, "She's a very nice woman, but she doesn't have the respect or support within the country," indicating hesitancy to back her as the nation's transitional leader.

The political landscape in Venezuela remains highly fluid. After Maduro's capture, Delcy Rodríguez, his former vice president, was sworn in as acting president, complicating the opposition's plans for a democratic transition. Many opposition leaders, including Machado, are currently in exile or under pressure, even as they seek international backing for elections and political reform.

Machado's scheduled visit to Washington underscores both her international stature and the ongoing diplomatic efforts to shape Venezuela's future. As she engages with U.S. leadership, observers will be watching closely to see whether the meeting produces heightened support for democratic transition efforts or clarifies Washington's position on leadership in post-Maduro Venezuela.

Iran Acknowledges Over 2,000 Deaths Amid Nationwide Protests, Blames "Terrorists"

Iran has confirmed that more than 2,000 people, including security personnel, have died in the ongoing nationwide protests, marking the first official acknowledgment of the high death toll since the demonstrations began in late December. The confirmation came from an Iranian official speaking to Reuters on Tuesday, highlighting the scale of the unrest that has now entered its third week. However, the official did not provide a breakdown between protesters and security forces killed, instead attributing the fatalities to "terrorists."

This admission contrasts with earlier reports from activist groups based in the United States, which indicated that hundreds of protesters had been killed and thousands more arrested during the widespread demonstrations across major Iranian cities. Security forces have been engaged in an intense crackdown, using lethal force to suppress the unrest, which has drawn international attention and criticism.

The protests initially erupted due to the country's worsening economic conditions, including rising prices, unemployment, and inflation. However, they rapidly evolved into a broader movement against the theocratic re-



gime led by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Masoud Pezeshkian. Citizens have voiced grievances not only over economic hardship but also over systemic political and social issues, making this one of the most significant internal challenges the Iranian government has faced in the past three years.

The unrest comes at a time when Iran is already under heightened international pressure following

US and Israeli strikes in June of the previous year. The combination of domestic dissent and external geopolitical pressures has intensified the sense of crisis within the country's leadership.

In response to the protests, Iran's clerical authorities have taken a dual approach. While they have recognized that citizens have legitimate concerns over economic struggles, they have simultaneously enforced strict crackdowns on dem-

onstrators. Security forces have been deployed extensively, and numerous arrests have been made to quell the unrest. Iranian officials have also accused the United States and Israel of instigating the protests, claiming that foreign-backed "terrorists" have hijacked peaceful demonstrations to destabilize the country.

President Masoud Pezeshkian's administration faces mounting criticism both at home and abroad as it navigates the twin

challenges of public discontent and international scrutiny. Despite the government's attempts to control the narrative, the protests have shown resilience, indicating widespread frustration among Iranians over economic and political grievances.

As the unrest continues into its third week, the situation in Iran remains tense, with growing fears of further violence and international concern over the government's handling of the protests.

China Condemns Trump's Threat of 25% Tariffs on Countries Trading with Iran



China has voiced strong opposition to U.S. President Donald Trump's threat to impose a 25 per cent tariff on countries doing business with Iran, describing the move as coercive, unilateral, and counterproductive, according to a report by Reuters. The warning came after Trump announced on social media that the United States would levy the tariff on all goods and services imported from any nation maintaining trade relations with Iran.

In a statement posted on X, a spokesperson from the Chinese embassy in Washington said Beijing "firmly opposes any illicit unilateral sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction." The spokesperson further emphasized China's longstanding position against the "indiscriminate imposition of tariffs," adding that "tariff wars and trade wars have no winners, and coercion and pressure cannot solve problems."

Trump's directive, which he described as "final and conclusive," aims to penalize countries that continue to engage economically with Iran. The order is global in scope and is expected to particularly affect major trading partners of Iran, including China, India, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and the European Union, due to their strong commercial and

energy ties with the Islamic Republic.

China is Iran's largest trading partner, accounting for nearly 30 per cent of Iran's total foreign trade and the bulk of its oil exports. However, official Chinese customs data released in late December 2025 indicated that trade between the two nations fell by 24 per cent during the first eleven months of the year.

Beijing's response highlights its concern about the potential economic impact of Trump's tariff threat, which could disrupt established trade flows and increase geopolitical tensions.

Trump has linked the tariffs to Iran's ongoing internal crackdown on anti-government protests, during which hundreds of protesters and security personnel have

reportedly been killed. The protests, along with severe restrictions on internet access, have drawn international condemnation, and Trump's tariff threat is seen as a further measure of economic pressure on Iran and its trading partners.

The U.S. president plans to use his executive authority to impose the tariffs without requiring congressional approval. However, the broader scope of his tariff powers is currently being challenged in the U.S. Supreme Court, which is expected to issue a ruling this week. The outcome of the court case could influence the enforceability of Trump's directive and shape the future of U.S.-Iran trade sanctions.

Beijing's firm objection reflects ongoing tensions between the U.S. and China over global trade policies and underscores the challenges that unilateral sanctions pose for international economic cooperation.

Canadian Police Arrest Key Suspect in 2023 Toronto Airport Gold Heist



Canadian authorities have arrested a 43-year-old man in connection with the 2023 gold heist at Toronto Pearson International Airport, which investigators have described as the largest theft of its kind in the country's history.

Arsalan Chaudhary was taken into custody on Monday after arriving in Toronto on a flight from Dubai. Peel Regional Po-

lice confirmed that Chaudhary coordinated his surrender through his lawyers upon landing. He faces multiple charges, including theft over C\$5,000, two counts of possession of property obtained by crime, and conspiracy to commit an indictable offence. Chaudhary remains in custody pending a bail hearing.

Peel Regional Police Chief Nishan Duraiappah

highlighted the role of international cooperation in the arrest, emphasizing that law enforcement partners across borders played a crucial part. "No matter where you try to run or hide, we will find you," he said, according to ABC News.

The heist occurred on April 17, 2023, when a flight from Zurich, Switzerland, landed in Toronto carrying approximately

400 kilograms of gold, valued at over \$20 million (around ₹1,660 crore at the time), alongside about \$2.5 million in foreign currency (around ₹207 crore). The cargo was transferred to a holding area at the airport and was reported missing the following day.

Investigators have said the theft involved coordination between airport insiders and external actors. Some Air Canada employees are alleged to have facilitated the theft by diverting the shipment, while Chaudhary is accused of belonging to the external group. According to court documents cited by ABC News, he allegedly played a central role in planning the heist and coordinating the movement and sale of the stolen gold outside Canada.

These allegations, however, have not yet been tested in court. Police identified another

key suspect, former Air Canada employee Simran Preet Panesar, who is believed to be in India. A Canada-wide warrant has been issued for his arrest. Additionally, two other suspects from Brampton, Ontario, remain at large.

The investigation, named Project 24K, is ongoing, and authorities have indicated that further arrests may be forthcoming. The case has drawn attention for the scale of the crime, the involvement of airport personnel, and the international efforts required to apprehend suspects and recover the stolen assets.

The successful arrest of Chaudhary underscores the ability of Canadian law enforcement to track suspects across borders and coordinate with international partners, sending a strong message to others who might consider engaging in similar high-value crimes.

Sensex, Nifty End Lower After Early Gains as Profit Booking, FII Outflows Weigh



Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty erased early gains and closed lower on Tuesday after a volatile trading session, as investors booked profits across major sectors amid continued foreign fund outflows and selling pressure in heavyweight stocks.

The Sensex declined 250.48 points, or 0.3 percent, to close at 83,627.69. During the session, it had slipped as much as 615.38 points, or 0.73 percent, to an intraday low of 83,262.79. The Nifty50 also ended lower, shedding 57.95 points, or 0.22 percent, to settle at 25,732.30.

Markets had opened on a positive note, extending Monday's rebound when both indices gained around 0.4 percent, snapping a five-session losing streak that had dragged benchmarks down nearly 2.5 percent. Sentiment was initially lifted by optimism over renewed momentum in India-US trade talks after comments from a US envoy suggested discussions on trade issues were likely.

However, the rally proved short-lived as selling pressure emerged in auto, IT and pharmaceutical stocks, dragging the indices into the red by mid-session.

Among Nifty50 stocks, Larsen & Toubro, Dr. Reddy's Laboratories and Cipla were among the top laggards, falling up to 2 percent. On the other hand, ETERNAL and Oil & Natural Gas Corporation gained up to 3

percent, providing limited support to the index.

Key Reasons Behind the Market Decline

Profit booking:

Investors locked in gains after the indices rose nearly 0.5 percent in early trade. On Monday, both Sensex and Nifty had staged a sharp intraday recovery of about 1.2 percent from their lows following comments by US envoy Sergio Gor, which led to unwinding of bearish positions.

Sustained FII selling:

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) remained net sellers, off-loading equities worth Rs 3,638.40 crore on Monday. This marked the sixth consecutive session of net selling after a brief pause on January 2, keeping pressure on domestic markets due to continued capital outflows.

Rupee weakness:

The rupee weakened by 5 paise to 90.22 against the US dollar in early trade, pressured by a stronger greenback, rising crude oil prices and persistent foreign fund outflows. A weaker currency typically dampens market sentiment, particularly for import-heavy sectors.

Trump's tariff announcement:

US President Donald Trump announced a 25 percent tariff on countries "doing business" with Iran. The move raised concerns over global trade disruptions, es-

specially for countries such as India, China and the UAE, which maintain trade ties with Iran.

Commenting on the development, Dr. VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Investments, said geopolitical developments and President Trump's policy actions would continue to influence markets. He noted that the "weaponisation of tariffs" has already impacted global trade and that the latest announcement reinforces the continuation of this strategy.

Nifty weekly expiry:

Tuesday was also the weekly expiry day for Nifty derivatives contracts, which often leads to heightened volatility as traders roll over or square off positions.

Muted IT earnings:

IT stocks came under pressure after Tata Consultancy Services reported a 13.91 percent year-on-year decline in December quarter profit to Rs 10,657 crore, largely due to a one-time impact of new labour codes. HCL Technologies reported an 11.2 percent drop in consolidated net profit to Rs 4,076 crore.

Shares of HCL Technologies fell over 2 percent as brokerages remained cautious. HSBC and CLSA reiterated 'Hold' ratings, with CLSA flagging the risk of sequential revenue decline in the March quarter due to seasonal weakness. TCS shares also slipped amid concerns over a

subdued demand outlook, despite stable margins.

Higher crude oil prices:

Brent crude rose 0.3 percent to USD 64.06 per barrel. Elevated oil prices tend to strain India's trade balance and inflation outlook, weighing on equity sentiment.

Weak global cues:

Asian markets remained subdued, with Shanghai's SSE Composite trading marginally lower. US futures were also down up to 0.3 percent, signalling a weak start for Wall Street.

Technical Outlook

Nagaraj Shetti, Senior Technical Research Analyst at HDFC Securities, said Nifty failed to sustain early gains after opening with an upside gap and slipped into weakness during the early-to-mid session. However, buying interest emerged near the 25,600 level, helping the index recover from intraday lows and close off the bottom.

He noted that a long bearish candle with a long lower shadow formed on the daily chart, indicating strong resistance around the 25,900-26,000 zone. At the same time, buying near support levels is a positive sign.

According to Shetti, the short-term trend remains positive, and a higher-bottom formation on the intraday chart suggests the possibility of a breakout above the 25,900-26,000 range in the coming sessions, with immediate support seen at 25,600.

Infosys Q3 Results Preview: Modest Growth, Margin Stability in Focus



Information technology major Infosys Ltd. is scheduled to announce its December quarter (Q3FY26) earnings on Wednesday, January 14, 2026. Market participants will closely track revenue momentum, margin performance, and any potential changes to the company's full-year guidance amid a seasonally weak quarter for the IT sector.

According to estimates compiled by Business Standard, Infosys is expected to report an average net profit of ₹7,315.83 crore for Q3FY26, reflecting a year-on-year growth of about 7 percent compared with ₹6,822 crore in the same quarter last year. On a sequential basis, however, profit is likely to edge down marginally by 0.64 percent from ₹7,364 crore reported in Q2FY26.

Revenue for the quarter is projected to rise nearly 8 percent year-on-year to ₹45,206.68 crore, up from ₹41,764 crore in Q3FY25. Sequentially, revenue is expected to increase by around 2 percent from ₹44,490 crore in the September quarter, supported by deal ramp-ups, though furloughs and fewer working days are likely to cap growth.

Brokerage Expectations

Nomura expects Infosys' revenue to decline 0.5 percent quarter-on-quarter in constant currency terms, citing seasonal weakness. On a year-on-year basis, pass-through revenues may remain subdued, while discretionary demand in the financial services segment is seen improving modestly. The brokerage anticipates a 40 basis point sequential improvement in Ebit margin to 21.4 percent, driven largely by currency benefits. Nomura expects Infosys to narrow its FY26 revenue growth guidance.

Axis Direct projects a 2.7 percent sequential revenue increase to ₹45,679 crore, with Ebit margins improving 14 basis points to 21.2 percent, driven by ongoing cost optimisation efforts.

Overall, the focus will remain on margin resilience, deal pipeline strength, and any tweaks to Infosys' FY26 guidance.

IFCI Shares Surge for Second Day as NSE IPO Buzz Fuels Heavy Buying and Technical Breakout Hopes



IFCI share price extended its rally for the second straight session on Tuesday, rising as much as 5.6 per cent intraday amid exceptionally high trading volumes. Over the past two sessions, the stock has jumped 17.53 per cent, drawing strong interest from market participants.

Trading activity in IFCI surged sharply, with volumes on the National Stock Exchange (NSE) reaching nearly 17 times the stock's 30-day daily average. According to Bloomberg data, the relative strength index (RSI) stood at 65.47, indicating strong momentum without yet entering overbought territory. During the session, the stock touched an intraday high of ₹59.60, its highest level since October 31, 2025.

In the previous session, IFCI shares had surged over 19 per cent on heavy volumes, prompting stock exchanges to seek clarification from the company regarding the unusual price and volume movement. IFCI has yet to respond to the exchange query. On a year-on-year basis, the stock has gained 11.83 per cent over the past 12 months, broadly in line with the Nifty 50 index, which has risen 11.22 per cent during the same period.

Market participants attribute the recent rally to optimism surrounding the long-awaited initial public offering (IPO) of the National Stock Exchange (NSE). Shares of capital market-related companies and exchange-linked entities have seen increased buying interest following reports that the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) may soon clear the IPO. According to a Reuters report, NSE Ltd is planning to file its draft red herring prospectus by the end of March.

IFCI's connection to the NSE has further fueled investor enthusiasm. The company holds a 52.68 per cent stake in Stock Holding Corporation of India, which in turn owns a 4.4 per cent stake in the NSE, as reported by the Financial Express. Adding to the optimism, Sebi Chairman Tuhin Kanta Pandey recently stated that the regulator would soon issue a no-objection certificate (NOC) to NSE, after which the exchange would begin preparations for its public listing.

From a technical perspective, analysts note that IFCI has been trading in a broad consolidation range of ₹46-₹60 for over six months. Vipin Kumar, assistant vice president of derivatives and technical research at Globe Capital Market, said the stock has now reached the upper end of this range on strong volumes. A decisive close above ₹60 could pave the way for a move towards ₹70 and higher levels in the near term.

Jigar S. Patel, senior manager for equity technical research at Anand Rathi Share and Stock Brokers, advised investors to consider accumulating the stock in a staggered manner in the ₹56-₹58 range, with a stop loss below ₹54 on a daily closing basis. He sees a potential target of ₹70 over a two- to three-month timeframe, adding that the overall technical setup continues to support further upside.

Shadowfax Flags Franchisee Dependence, Client Concentration, and Cash Flow Risks in UDRHP



Logistics solutions provider Shadowfax has flagged multiple operational and financial risks in its Updated Draft Red Herring Prospectus (UDRHP), including its reliance on third-party franchisees, leased infrastructure, client concentration, and persistent losses.

A key risk highlighted by the company is its dependence on third-party franchisees for a portion of its last-mile delivery operations. Shadowfax warned that any failure on the part of these franchisees or disruptions in its business relationships with them could adversely affect service quality, financial performance, and brand reputation.

"We depend on third-party franchisees for a portion of our last-mile deliveries, and any failure in their performance or disruptions in our business relationships with them could adversely impact our service quality, financial performance, and reputation," the company said in the UDRHP.

Shadowfax also pointed to risks stemming from its infrastructure strategy, noting that it operates entirely out of leased logistics facilities as of September 30, 2025. Some of these lease agreements contain irregularities, and the company cautioned that any failure to renew existing leases or secure suitable alternatives could materially and adversely impact its business operations.

In addition, the company disclosed a history of losses and negative cash flows. Shadowfax

incurred losses of ₹142.64 crore in FY23 and ₹11.88 crore in FY24, and reported negative cash flows from operating, investing, and financing activities during certain periods. The company warned that losses and negative cash flows could persist as it expects expenses to rise in the future.

While revenue from operations increased significantly—from ₹1,415.12 crore in FY23 to ₹2,485.13 crore in FY25—Shadowfax cautioned that historical growth rates may not be indicative of future performance. Any failure to manage growth effectively or execute its business strategy could hinder expansion and negatively affect future prospects.

The UDRHP also underscored the company's reliance

on a large and unified logistics network. As of September 30, 2025, Shadowfax operated 4,299 touchpoints across first-mile and last-mile centres and sort centres, supported by over 3.50 million square feet of operational space and covering 14,758 pin codes. Disruptions to this network could materially impact operations, financial condition, and cash flows.

Operational risks related to delivery execution were also highlighted. The company warned that mishandling of goods by delivery partners could result in inefficiencies and client dissatisfaction, potentially affecting business performance and results.

Shadowfax further disclosed significant customer

Canadian Influencer Questions 'Silicon Valley of India' Tag, Sparks Identity Debate Online



A Canadian tech influencer who has lived in India for more than eight years has triggered a lively debate on social media after questioning the logic behind calling Bengaluru the "Silicon Valley of India." Caleb Friesen, in a video shared online, argued that such comparisons are not only geographically inaccurate but also culturally limiting, urging Indians to stop benchmarking their cities and industries against foreign counterparts.

Friesen pointed out that Bengaluru is often compared to Silicon Valley in the United States despite the obvious difference in geography. "Bengaluru isn't even a valley—it's a plateau," he noted, adding that the label feels forced and unnecessary. According to him, India's cities should be recognised for what they are, rather than being framed as versions or replicas of places elsewhere in the world.

Expanding on the idea, Friesen criticised a broader trend among vloggers and content creators who market Indian destinations through foreign comparisons. He cited examples such as Pondicherry being called "India's Thailand" or Gulmarg being likened to Switzerland. While such labels may grab attention, Friesen argued that they ultimately reduce India's rich and diverse locations to imitations, stripping them of their unique character and cultural depth.

Supporting his argument, Friesen referenced an interaction on X where a user suggested to Zomato CEO Deepinder Goyal that India needs a local version of American entrepreneur Bryan Johnson. Goyal replied that India should focus on being its authentic self—a sentiment Friesen strongly endorsed.

The influencer's comments struck a chord with many users, who echoed his views on mental colonisation and the need to reclaim India's identity. Several agreed that India's cities, people, and achievements deserve appreciation on their own terms, without Western comparisons.

Friesen further highlighted how China brands its tech hubs with original identities, citing cities like Shenzhen rather than borrowing names from the West. He also mentioned a recurring social media trend

in Bengaluru, where the annual blooming of pink trumpet trees is often compared to Japan's cherry blossoms. Calling it a "bad habit," he wrote on X that derivative descriptions weaken India's individuality.

He also took aim at India's film industries for adopting Hollywood-inspired names like Bollywood and Tollywood, calling it an unnecessary search for external validation. In contrast, he pointed out that countries such as South Korea have globally successful film and entertainment industries without referencing Hollywood in their naming conventions.

Friesen further highlighted how China brands its tech hubs with original identities, citing cities like Shenzhen rather than borrowing names from the West. He also mentioned a recurring social media trend

From Parking Lot to Podcast Studio: How One Question Transformed a Mumbai Security Guard's Life



Sometimes, life-changing opportunities emerge from the most ordinary moments. In Mumbai, a brief conversation in an apartment parking lot set the stage for a remarkable transformation in the life of Aniket Katkar, proving that curiosity, courage, and a willingness to learn can open unexpected doors.

Two years ago, Aniket Katkar was working as a security guard in a residential building when he crossed paths with digital creator and podcaster Kushal Lodha. Rather than letting the moment pass, Katkar gathered the courage to approach Lodha and share his long-held interest in videography. He expressed a strong desire to learn how to create videos and politely asked if he could meet Lodha at a later time to understand the craft better.

Lodha later shared this inspiring journey on social media, revealing how

that simple interaction marked the beginning of Katkar's professional growth. Impressed by Katkar's enthusiasm and sincerity, Lodha agreed to meet him the following Sunday. During their conversation, Lodha quickly recognised Katkar's genuine hunger to learn and his willingness to put in the effort required to master a new skill.

Moved by his determination, Lodha offered Katkar a chance that would change his life—he invited him to handle the video production for all his podcast shoots. With no formal training or expensive equipment at the start, Katkar threw himself into the learning process. He taught himself video recording techniques, learned how to connect microphones to audio mixers, and understood the nuances of maintaining high production quality.

Over time, Katkar's confidence and technical

skills grew rapidly. Today, he leads the entire production team for Lodha's podcasts. There isn't a single shoot he misses, and he now interacts comfortably with high-profile guests, managing the technical side with ease and professionalism.

Reflecting on the journey, Lodha emphasised that success does not always require costly degrees or specialised certifications. According to him, what truly matters is a strong mindset, curiosity, and an unrelenting desire to learn. When people remain open to growth and willing to put in consistent effort, opportunities naturally follow.

Katkar's story stands as a powerful reminder that ambition can rise from anywhere, and that sometimes, all it takes to change one's life is the courage to ask a single question at the right moment.

When Legends Play: Amitabh Bachchan and Sachin Tendulkar's Finger Cricket Moment Wins Hearts



Two icons from entirely different worlds—cinema and cricket—came together for a simple, nostalgic game, and the result was nothing short of magical. Amitabh Bachchan and Sachin Tendulkar, both towering figures in Indian popular culture, were recently seen playing a spontaneous game of finger cricket, a moment that has since become one of the most heartwarming viral clips on social media.

The delightful interaction took place during an event of the Indian Street Premier League (ISPL). While Sachin Tendulkar is part of the league's core committee, Amitabh Bachchan owns the Mahi Mumbai franchise. What began as a casual conversation between the two legends soon turned into a playful contest, reminding everyone of childhood days when finger cricket was the simplest and most joyful form of the game.

The video captured the essence of innocence and nostalgia, instantly striking a chord with viewers across generations. Later, Amitabh Bachchan himself shared the clip on his social media account, adding a caption that further melted hearts. Refer-

ring to Tendulkar as the "God of Cricket," Bachchan wrote about playing finger cricket with him—an expression that perfectly captured the humility and admiration he holds for the cricketing icon.

The clip quickly went viral, drawing immense appreciation from fans of both cricket and cinema. What made the moment even more special was Amitabh Bachchan's

spontaneous reaction during the game. After being declared "out," the legendary actor appeared visibly disappointed for a brief moment, only to break into a warm smile and rejoin the game with renewed enthusiasm.

Fans were delighted to see this playful side of the megastar and praised the effortless chemistry between the two legends. Social media platforms were flooded with positive reactions and affectionate comments.

One user wrote, "Two legends and a timeless game! Watching you play finger cricket with the God of Cricket is pure joy." Another added, "Love to see you

both—Master Blaster with Mahanayak."

The video served as a gentle reminder that beyond fame, records, and achievements, it is these simple, human moments that truly connect people. In just a few seconds, Amitabh Bachchan and Sachin Tendulkar brought smiles to millions, proving once again that legends, too, cherish the joys of childhood.

"Negotiating With Destiny": Foreign Woman's Bengaluru Road-Crossing Video Goes Viral



Crossing a busy street in an Indian city is often less a routine task and more an adventure—and a short Instagram video has captured that experience perfectly. A clip shared by a foreign woman documenting her attempt to cross a congested road in Bengaluru has struck a chord with social media users, triggering laughter, relatability, and a broader conversation about pedestrian safety in urban India.

The video was posted on Instagram by Ines Faria and shows her along with a foreign friend cautiously trying to make their way across a crowded Bengaluru street. As vehicles continue to move steadily in all directions, the two hesitate, pause, and step forward carefully, embodying the uncertainty many pedestrians feel while navigating Indian traffic. There are no clear breaks in the flow of vehicles, forcing them to rely on instinct, timing, and a fair bit of courage.

Overlay text on the video reads, "Trying to cross a road in India be like," a line that instantly resonated with viewers familiar with similar daily struggles.

What truly elevated the clip, however, was Faria's witty caption. "In India you don't cross the road. You negotiate with destiny," she wrote, summing up the experi-

ence with humour and sharp observation.

The video has since gone viral, drawing thousands of views, likes, and comments from users who found it both amusing and painfully accurate. Many Indians admitted that the scene reflected their everyday reality, especially in large cities where pedestrian infrastructure of

ten takes a back seat to vehicular traffic.

Social media users flooded the comments section with reactions. One person wrote, "So much traffic, no walkways," pointing to the lack of proper footpaths and pedestrian crossings in many areas. Another commented simply, "This is so relatable," echoing the sentiment of

countless others who have faced similar situations.

Beyond the humour, the video also sparked discussions around road safety and urban planning. While many laughed at the familiar chaos, others noted that such moments highlight the challenges pedestrians face in cities designed primarily for vehicles. Several users called for better crossings, clearer signals, and improved footpaths to make walking safer.

What makes the video stand out is its simplicity. In just a few seconds, it captures a shared experience that transcends nationality. Whether a visitor or a local, navigating Indian roads often requires patience, awareness, and a sense of humour.

Through her light-hearted post, Ines Faria managed to turn a moment of everyday chaos into a viral reflection of life on Indian streets—one cautious step at a time.

Meta Engineer Slams Traditional Job Applications After 670 Rejections, Sparks Online Debate



A software engineer at Meta has ignited widespread discussion online after openly criticising the traditional job application process and sharing how a change in strategy transformed his career prospects. Marmik Patel, who is based in San Francisco, described applying for jobs as "the dumbest thing" after submitting 670 applications and reaching out to more than 1,000 recruiters—without landing a single opportunity.

Patel shared his experience in a detailed post on X (formerly Twitter), highlighting the frustration many job seekers face in today's highly competitive tech market. Despite having strong credentials, he found that mass applications and cold messages yielded little to no response. The experience prompted him to rethink how hiring works in modern tech ecosystems.

The shift, Patel said, led to dramatic results. "Between January and May, 83 recruiters mes-

saged me," he wrote, adding that he heard back from leading AI labs, Y Combinator-backed startups, and several unicorn companies. According to Patel, the job market increasingly favours a small group of highly visible and differentiated candidates, making it essential to stand out beyond a résumé.

Summing up his philosophy, Patel re-

marked, "It's a winner-takes-all world. You have no choice but to become the winner." His post quickly gained traction, amassing over two lakh views and resonating with job seekers, entrepreneurs, and professionals across industries.

The responses reflected a growing scepticism about traditional hiring methods. One user commented, "It's right—help

yourself first before applying to help others," emphasising the importance of self-development. Another compared job hunting to product building, saying, "You can cold email 1,000 users or build something people actually talk about. One takes forever, the other compounds."

Others shared actionable advice for career growth in today's landscape. A popular comment outlined a four-step approach: acquire skills, stack those skills, teach what you learn publicly, and build credibility over time. Many agreed that personal branding, visibility, and value creation are increasingly critical in a world where opportunities often flow to those who are seen and remembered.

Patel's experience underscores a broader shift in how careers are built—away from mass applications and toward initiative, creativity, and authentic engagement.

Wesley So Criticizes Multiple 'World Champion' Titles, Says D Gukesh Alone Holds Official Chess Crown

The 2026 chess calendar is shaping up to crown multiple "world champions," but American Grandmaster Wesley So believes there should be only one official titleholder: India's D Gukesh, the reigning classical World Champion.

So, who recently won the blitz segment at the Tata Steel Chess tournament in Kolkata, expressed concern over what he sees as the dilution of the World Chess Championship. This year alone, players could claim multiple titles—from the classical championship to rapid, blitz, Freestyle, and the newly announced Total Chess World Championship, which will be piloted in 2026 and fully launched in 2027.

"It's weird that you have a 'Total Chess World Champion' title, but we all know Gukesh is the official World Champion. There should only be one World Champion in chess, and that's Gukesh for now because he really earned it," So told The Indian Express. "All these new titles like Freestyle World Champion, or even Rapid and Blitz, or the Total... I think they are just secondary titles."

So criticized FIDE, the



sport's governing body, for prioritizing politics and business over tradition.

"FIDE is very political. They run it as a business, so they do what's good for them financially and politically, and everything else is secondary," he said.

While acknowledging that some fans, particularly in the United States, question the relevance of the classical World Championship, So remains committed to the traditional format. "I'm more old-fashioned. Growing up with all the official World Champions like Fischer, Karpov, Kasparov, I still like the idea that you have

to play a 14-game classical match and go through the process. The champion should have the advantage to wait for the challenger to come," he said.

The upcoming FIDE Freestyle Chess World Championship, set to be held in Germany in February, has also raised questions about fairness. Neither So nor the previous champions of the format, Hikaru Nakamura and So himself, were invited. The eight-player event will include six qualifiers from the 2025 Freestyle Chess Grand Slam Tour, one player recommended by the organisers, and a final

participant determined through an online qualifier.

So criticized the handpicking of participants, saying, "To call it a World Championship, and then handpick seven out of eight players, does not seem like a World Championship. Every spot should go through a qualifier."

He also questioned the accessibility of Freestyle Chess for fans, calling it difficult to follow despite claims of simplicity. "For fans to follow Freestyle is difficult. I myself don't really follow the games. They have a lot of books about Chess960 and Free-

style, but I wonder who actually reads those," So said.

While So remains focused on classical chess, he also acknowledged the uncertain future of Freestyle events, suggesting the Weissenhaus tournament in Germany could be the format's final edition.

In the meantime, So celebrates his first title at the Tata Steel event in Kolkata, achieved on his sixth appearance, while keeping faith in the traditional World Championship as the sport's ultimate measure of excellence.

Bangladesh Refuses to Play T20 World Cup Matches in India, ICC-BCB Talks Yield No Breakthrough

The deadlock between the International Cricket Council (ICC) and the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) over the venue of Bangladesh's matches at the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 continued on Tuesday, with no breakthrough achieved after a video conference between the two sides. Despite detailed discussions, both parties remained firm on their respective positions.

During the meeting held on Tuesday afternoon, the BCB once again reiterated its refusal to send the national team to India, citing security concerns for players, officials, and support staff. The Bangladesh board renewed its request to the ICC to shift Bangladesh's matches to venues outside India. However, the ICC maintained that the tournament schedule has already been finalised and urged the BCB to reconsider its decision.

In an official statement, the BCB said, "During the discussions, the BCB reaffirmed its position regarding the decision not to



travel to India, citing security concerns. The Board also reiterated its request for the ICC to consider relocating Bangladesh's matches outside India. While the ICC highlighted that the tournament itinerary has already been announced and requested the BCB to reconsider its stance, the Board's position remains unchanged. Both parties agreed that discussions will continue to explore possible solutions. The BCB remains

committed to safeguarding the well-being of its players, officials and staff while engaging constructively with the ICC to address the matter."

The standoff follows a series of formal exchanges between the ICC and the BCB in recent weeks. It is understood that the ICC has shared a detailed security assessment with the Bangladesh board, stating that there is no specific or heightened threat to the Bangladeshi

team while playing in India. Despite this, the BCB has not shifted its stance.

Bangladesh have been placed in Group C of the T20 World Cup 2026 and were scheduled to play their first three matches in Kolkata—against West Indies on February 7, Italy on February 9, and England on February 14. The team was then set to travel to Mumbai to face Nepal in their final group match on February 17.

While the ICC has not issued an official public statement, it is understood that the global body held an internal meeting on Tuesday before conveying its position to the BCB.

Tensions between the two boards escalated earlier after the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) directed Indian Premier League franchise Kolkata Knight Riders to release Bangladeshi pacer Mustafizur Rahman from its 2026 squad.

The directive, issued without a public explanation, came amid strained diplomatic relations between India and Bangladesh. Mustafizur, who was bought by KKR for 9.5 crore, was the only Bangladeshi player to be picked at the IPL auction and remains part of Bangladesh's T20 World Cup squad.

Following his release, Bangladesh's Information and Broadcasting Ministry banned the telecast of IPL matches in the country, stating that the decision had "hurt and angered" Bangladeshi citizens, further intensifying the dispute.

Ayush Shetty Set for India Open Debut, Eyes Win Over Lakshya Sen in First-Round Clash



Championships, he has steadily climbed the ranks. "You have to play so many good players and stay consistent, but I've managed to do pretty well. My consistency helped me break into the top 30, and the plan is to enter the top 20 or top 15 in the world," he said.

Reflecting on his recent quarter-final loss to world number one Shi Yuqi in Malaysia Open Super 1000, giving him confidence as he prepares to face Lakshya.

Ayush's journey from a promising junior to a competitive senior player has been challenging. Since winning a bronze at the 2023 Junior World

Championships, he has steadily climbed the ranks. "You have to play so many good players and stay consistent, but I've managed to do pretty well. My consistency helped me break into the top 30, and the plan is to enter the top 20 or top 15 in the world," he added.

Ayush has also been focusing on building his physical strength, training under Danish legend Peter Gade alongside two

time Olympic champion Viktor Axelsen. Gade emphasized the need to improve endurance and power. "Ayush is the next Indian shuttler in line. His defence is good, and attack comes naturally. He needs to build a strong base physically to move from top 30-20 into the top 10," Gade said. Ayush agreed, stating, "There is a lot of room for improvement in endurance and the power part of my game. I've been working with Peter and will keep improving over time."

Tuesday's clash against Lakshya Sen is set to be a treat for fans, as both come from the Centre for Badminton Excellence (formerly PPBA). "It's a bit unfortunate that Indian fans will see two of us clashing in the very first round. But I am excited to face him—it's going to be a good match," Ayush said. Though Lakshya has won their previous encounters at the Australian and Hong Kong Opens, Ayush is determined to turn the tables this time.

India vs New Zealand 2nd ODI: Rajkot Set for Another Run-Fest on Batting-Friendly Pitch



After an opening ODI that saw the scores push close to the 300-run mark, batting fireworks could be taken to another level when India and New Zealand lock horns in the second One Day International at the Niranjan Shah Stadium in Rajkot on Wednesday. Known for its flat, batter-friendly surfaces, the venue promises another high-scoring contest, especially with two strong batting line-ups in action.

The Rajkot stadium has built a reputation over the years as a paradise for batters, not just in international cricket but also in domestic competitions. India will be playing their first ODI at this venue since September 2023, and all signs point towards another run-fest. With short boundaries and true bounce on offer, bowlers are likely to have a tough time containing runs, particularly in the middle and death overs.

Niranjan Shah Stadium Pitch Report

The pitch at the Niranjan Shah Stadium is widely regarded as one of the flattest tracks in the country. Historically, it has heavily favoured batters, and the numbers back this up. Only four ODIs have been played at the venue so far, but an interesting pattern has emerged—the team batting first has won all four matches since the inaugural ODI in 2013.

In three of those four games, the side batting first posted totals in excess of 300 runs. The lowest first-innings score at the venue remains South Africa's 270/7 against India in 2015, which still proved enough to

be competitive. The most recent ODI at Rajkot, played just before the 2023 World Cup, saw Australia register a venue-record 352/7 before defeating India by 66 runs. These figures underline the advantage of setting a big target on this surface.

Rajkot Weather Report

Weather conditions on Wednesday are expected to be pleasant, but they could play a subtle role as the match progresses. According to AccuWeather, daytime temperatures are forecast to hover around 28 degrees Celsius, dropping sharply to about 13 degrees in the evening. This significant dip in temperature increases the possibility of dew setting in later in the match, potentially making it tougher for the team bowling second to grip the ball and control their lines.

Squads

India: Rohit Sharma, Shubman Gill (c), Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul (w), Nitish Kumar Reddy, Harshit Rana, Kuldeep Yadav, Arshdeep Singh, Mohammed Siraj, Prasidh Krishna, Dhruv Jurel, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Ravindra Jadeja, Ayush Badoni.

New Zealand: Devon Conway (w), Will Young, Henry Nicholls, Daryl Mitchell, Glenn Phillips, Michael Bracewell (c), Zakary Foulkes, Nick Kelly, Josh Clarkson, Michael Rae, Kyle Jamieson, Mitchell Hay, Adithya Ashok, Kristian Clarke, Jayden Lennox.

With conditions stacked in favour of the batters, fans can expect another thrilling, high-scoring encounter in Rajkot.

Alyssa Healy to Retire from International Cricket After India Series, Citing Loss of Competitive Edge



Australia captain and star wicketkeeper-batter Alyssa Healy has announced that she will retire from international cricket following the upcoming India series in February, citing a loss of her "competitive edge" after more than a decade at the highest level.

The 35-year-old, who has had a decorated career with Australia, said that while she has cherished every moment on the field, the constant drive to compete had gradually left her feeling drained. Speaking to reporters in Sydney on Tuesday, Healy reflected on the toll that long-term international cricket can take on a player's mind and body.

"The timing's right. I lost a little bit of my competitive edge... I've been doing it a long period of time," Healy said. "I've loved every minute of it, but I felt like every contest I wanted to be a part of, I wanted to compete, and it's probably drained me a little bit more over the years."

Healy said she had discussed her decision with her parents and husband, Australia fast bowler Mitchell Starc, before reaching the conclusion that it was the right time to step away from the game. She also acknowledged that while the upcoming T20 World Cup in England

in June offered an opportunity to end her career on a high note, playing when her heart and mind were not fully committed would not have been fair to her teammates or to the country.

"To be completely honest, if I had fought my way through to the World Cup, it's probably not doing the right thing by my teammates and probably the country as well, to half-ass that opportunity," Healy said.

Despite her personal achievements on the field, Healy said that witnessing the growth of women's cricket over the years has been more rewarding than any individual milestones. "It's probably only today that that's really hit me, that actually probably means more to me than the runs on the board or the dismissals. It's about growing the game and inspiring the next generation," she added.

Healy will finish her international career after the series against India, which will include three T20Is, three ODIs, and one Test match, starting with the first T20I at the Sydney Cricket Ground on February 15. Her retirement marks the end of an era for Australian women's cricket, but her legacy as a player and ambassador for the game is set to continue.

Grand Conclusion of the 3rd NIRI9 International Film Festival Celebrates Global Cinema



Hyderabad, January 12, 2026 — The third edition of the NIRI9 International Film Festival concluded today on a grand and celebratory note after two enriching days dedicated to cinematic excellence, creative dialogue, and cultural diversity. Hosted at Prasad Film Labs and Raj Bhavan Sanskrit Auditorium, the festival once again proved to be a dynamic platform for filmmakers, artists, industry professionals, and cinema enthusiasts from India and across the world.

Over the course of the festival, audiences were treated to a compelling lineup of feature films, short films, documentaries, showcasing diverse narratives, powerful themes, and innovative storytelling styles. The festival stood out for its commitment to promoting meaningful cinema and fearless voices from independent and regional filmmaking spaces.

The closing ceremony was graced by Sri M. Dana Kishore, IAS, Spe-

cial Chief Secretary to the Governor, who attended as the Chief Guest, while Ms. C. Priyanka, Managing Director of the Telangana Film Development Corporation, was present as the Guest of Honour. The event also saw the participation of several eminent personalities, including Sri V. N. Aditya, Senior Director and Chairman of the National Film Awards, actor-director Sri Ashok Kumar, SVFFA Principal Sri Ajit Surabhi, and other distinguished guests.

A major highlight of Day 2 was an engaging panel discussion featuring Seema Biswas, Karlita Mouhini, Manoj Nandwana, Jadumoni Dutta, Dr. Padmini Nagulapalli, Satish, Y. Ravi Shankar, and Festival Director Dr. Junmoni Devi Khaund. Moderated by Sunita Krishnan, the discussion explored topics such as cinema as a tool for social change, the challenges of independent filmmaking, and storytelling in the digital age.

The prestigious Dr.

Zubeen Garg Memorial Best Film Award was won by the Assamese feature film 'Jui Phool', which also received widespread acclaim from the jury. Rajesh Touchriver was honoured with the Best Director Award for his powerful film 'Dahini - The Witch', while several other films and artists were recognized across categories.

In her closing remarks, Festival Director Dr. Junmoni Devi Khaund expressed deep gratitude to all filmmakers, jury members, partners, volunteers, and audiences. She said, "NIRI9 stands for fearless storytelling and meaningful cinema. These two days have reaffirmed our belief that films can connect cultures and create a lasting impact."

With its successful conclusion, the NIRI9 International Film Festival has once again reaffirmed its position as a significant cultural and cinematic platform celebrating impactful storytelling from around the world.

'Anaganaga Oka Raju' Will Feel Like a Sankranthi Festival: Naveen Polishetty



Tollywood's upcoming Sankranthi release Anaganaga Oka Raju is being touted as a complete festive entertainer packed with humor, emotion, and family appeal. Starring Star Entertainer Naveen Polishetty in the lead role, the film is set to hit theatres on January 14, 2026, amid high expectations. The makers recently held a grand pre-release press meet, where the cast and crew shared their excitement and confidence in the film.

Speaking on the occasion, Naveen Polishetty described Anaganaga Oka Raju as a movie that captures the true spirit of Sankranthi. "For Telugu people, Sankranthi is a very special festival. No matter how many problems we have, we forget everything, meet our loved ones, eat festive food, laugh together, and relax. That same positive energy is what audiences will experience in Anaganaga Oka Raju," he said. Naveen added that the overwhelming response to the trailer, with its

jokes going viral on social media, has doubled the team's confidence. He also revealed that overseas pre-sales have already surpassed the opening numbers of his previous films.

Producer Suryadevara Naga Vamsi stated that the film is designed as a true festival treat with all the elements Telugu audiences enjoy. "Set against a Godavari backdrop, the film is filled with clean comedy, emotional moments, songs, fights, and even a rural political satire episode. While the film will make audiences laugh throughout, it also carries a strong emotional core towards the climax," he said.

Heroine Meenakshi Chaudhary expressed her happiness about being part of the project and urged audiences to watch the film with their families. "We have worked very hard on this film, and we are eagerly waiting for audience reactions. I'm confident that viewers will laugh

from start to end and thoroughly enjoy the film," she said.

Debut director Maari called the film a perfect Sankranthi entertainer. Emphasizing the emotional significance of the festival for Telugu people, he said Anaganaga Oka Raju is a clean family entertainer that helps audiences forget their worries and enjoy two and a half hours of pure laughter and joy.

Young actor Revanth, who plays a key role, thanked the producers and Naveen Polishetty for the opportunity and promised that his role would be a major highlight in both halves of the film.

Produced by Sithara Entertainments and Fortune Four Cinemas, with Srikara Studios presenting, Anaganaga Oka Raju features music by Mickey J. Meyer. With strong buzz, impressive bookings, and a festive release date, the film is expected to be a major crowd-puller this Sankranthi.

Prabhas' 'The Raja Saab' Crosses ₹201 Crore Worldwide in Four Days, Dominates Sankranthi Box Office

Rebel Star Prabhas continues his dream run at the box office as his latest blockbuster The Raja Saab has crossed an impressive ₹201 crore gross worldwide within just four days of its release.

The film has firmly established itself as the biggest blockbuster of the Sankranthi festive season in Tollywood, drawing massive footfalls across domestic and international markets.

Achieving the ₹200 crore milestone in such a short span stands as strong testimony to the film's extraordinary audience acceptance. From urban multiplexes to single screens in rural centres, The Raja Saab is witnessing packed houses, with families and children emerging as the film's strongest supporters. Trade analysts point out that the film's repeat audience factor has played a crucial role in sustaining its phenomenal collections.

One of the major highlights driving the buzz is Prabhas' old-setup sequences, which were recently added to the film. These scenes have received an overwhelming response from fans and general audiences alike, further strengthening

the film's word-of-mouth publicity. Prabhas delivers a one-man show, showcasing remarkable versatility and screen presence that once again proves his pan-Indian appeal.

Director Maruthi deserves special praise for crafting a fresh and engaging cinematic universe within the horror-fantasy genre. His balance of humour, emotion, and thrilling elements has connected strongly with viewers across age groups. The film's grandeur is further elevated by the uncompromising production values of People Media Factory, which has mounted the project on a truly global scale, delivering visually stunning sequences and rich technical finesse.

The film's success is also reflected on online ticket-booking platforms, where The Raja Saab continues to witness heavy demand, particularly during the festive holiday period. Advance bookings remain robust, indicating sustained momentum in the coming days.

Adding to the film's appeal are the performances of the leading ladies Malavika Mohanan, Nidhi Agerwal, and Riddhi

Kumar, whose screen presence and performances have been well received by audiences. Their roles complement Prabhas' character and enhance the film's entertainment quotient.

With its strong hold at the box office and the Sankranthi holidays still underway, The Raja Saab is now gearing up to post even bigger numbers in

its first week, further cementing its status as one of the biggest commercial successes in Prabhas' career and a landmark film in the horror-fantasy genre.



Icon Star Allu Arjun Takes 'Pushpa' Fever to Japan Ahead of Grand Release



Icon Star Allu Arjun is all set to expand his global footprint as his record-shattering blockbuster

Pushpa 2: The Rule prepares for a grand theatrical release in Japan on January 16, under the ti

tle Pushpa Kunrin. The film, which emerged as one of the biggest Indian industry hits and a cultural phenomenon, is now ready to create history in the Japanese market.

Pushpa 2: The Rule enjoyed an unprecedented run at the Indian box office, captivating audiences with its mass appeal, powerful storytelling, and iconic performances. The film also carries a unique Japanese connection, with one of Pushpa Raj's electrifying entry fight sequences set in Japan. In a standout moment, Allu Arjun delivers Japanese dialogues fluently, a detail that has already sparked curiosity and excitement among Japanese moviegoers.

Ahead of the much-anticipated release, Allu Arjun arrived in Tokyo to personally promote the action-packed entertainer. Accompanied by his family, the star's

roles of his career. His portrayal of Pushpa Raj has been hailed for its intensity, swagger, and transformation. The film's pulsating music, composed by Devi Sri Prasad, further amplifies its mass appeal.

The cast also features Fahadh Faasil in a commanding role as a police officer, delivering a gripping performance, while Rashmika Mandanna adds emotional depth and charm as the female lead. The film is produced by Naveen Yerineni and Y. Ravi Shankar, whose uncompromising production values have played a key role in the film's global success.

With the Japanese release around the corner, Pushpa 2: The Rule is poised to extend its dominance beyond Indian borders, reinforcing Allu Arjun's status as a true global star and taking the Pushpa madness to a whole new level.

Amardeep Chowdary's Sumathi Shatakam Unveils First Melody 'Ekkade Ekkade'

The makers of the upcoming romantic entertainer Sumathi Shatakam have released the film's first melody song titled 'Ekkade Ekkade', creating a wave of musical excitement ahead of the movie's theatrical release on February 6. Produced by Sai Sudhakar Kommalapati under the Vision Movie Makers banner, the film stars Amardeep Chowdary and Shaili Chowdary in the lead roles and is written and directed by M.M. Naidu.

'Ekkade Ekkade' is a soulful romantic number that beautifully captures the emotional depth of the film's love story. Penned by Tirupati Javava and rendered with heartfelt emotion by Dhananjay Seepana, the song stands out for its soothing melody and meaningful lyrics. Composer Subhash Anand weaves an evocative musical arrangement that enhances the song's gentle tone, making it an instant ear-pleaser for melody

lovers.

The song offers a glimpse into the tender relationship between the lead characters and sets the emotional tone for the narrative. With its soft rhythm and romantic vibe, 'Ekkade Ekkade' is expected to strike a chord with audiences and emerge as a chartbuster in the coming days.

Sumathi Shatakam has been steadily building buzz with its first look and teaser, both of which received encouraging feedback from audiences. The release of the first song has further raised expectations, especially among fans of romantic musical dramas. The film promises a blend of love, emotion, and light-hearted entertainment, backed by strong performances and engaging storytelling.

Apart from the lead

notable ensemble cast including Tasty Teja, Mahesh Vitta, JDV Prasad, Akella Gopi Krishna, Kiran Vijay, Mirchi Kiran, Nellore Neeraj, and Malakpet Shailaja, all playing key roles that add depth and humour to the narrative.

On the technical front, S. Halesh handles cinematography, while Nadeed Mohammed is the editor, ensuring polished visuals and seamless storytelling. The film's dialogues are penned by Bandaru Naidu, adding strength to the screenplay. The project is presented by Kommalapati Sridhar, with Madhu VR serving as the public relations officer.

With its strong musical start and growing anticipation, Sumathi Shatakam is shaping up to be a promising romantic entertainer. As the release date approaches, the makers are confident that the film will connect with audiences seeking heartfelt emotions and soulful music.

