



**Pongal Holidays**  
15 & 16 January  
Celebrating the harvest  
of joy, hope, and  
prosperity.  
**Happy Sankranti**

**Ministers Distribute  
Appointment Letters to  
1,257 Lab Technicians at  
Osmania Medical  
College**

02

TRUE  
POINT

Happy  
Bhogi  
Sankranti  
&  
Kanuma

BUZZ POINTS

*“Call for Blood” Web App Launched by DGP to Connect Donors and Patients Instantly*  
PAGE 02

*BJP Leaders Criticize Congress Over “Gandhi Legacy” and State Schemes*  
PAGE 03

*Hyderabad Police Issue Public Advisory Warning Citizens Against Rising OTP Fraud Scams*  
PAGE 04

*STF Seizes Non-Duty Paid Liquor from Delhi, Haryana and Ganja in Separate Operations*  
PAGE 04

*Sports Minister Vakiti Srihari Launches Development Works Worth ₹2.5 Crore in Makthal*  
PAGE 05

International Kite and Sweet Festival Inaugurated at Parade Ground



TPN Bureau | Hyderabad January 14

The city of Hyderabad came alive with vibrant colors and festive cheer as the International Kite and Sweet Festival was inaugurated at Parade Ground on Tuesday. Ministers Jupalli Krishnarao and Ponnampaluri Prabhakar officially launched the three-day event, which celebrates Telangana's rich cultural traditions and the spirit of the Sankranti festival. The ministers enthusiastically participated in flying kites during the inaugural ceremony, setting the tone for a festival filled with joy, excitement, and community participation. Minister Ponnampaluri Prabhakar, addressing the gathering, highlighted the significance of the festival, stating, "This event is organized in accordance with Telangana's traditional practices. It not only showcases our heritage but also promotes tourism and cultural awareness. On behalf of the Telangana Tourism Department, we extend Sankranti greetings to all citizens." The festival is expected to attract both local visi-

tors and tourists from across India and abroad. Officials from Telangana Tourism, including Patel Ramesh Reddy, Chairman of Telangana Tourism Corporation, Tourism MD Kranti Valluri, and Anugu Narasimhareddy, Director of the Department of Language and Culture, were present to oversee the arrangements. They emphasized that the festival aims to combine entertainment with education, encouraging people to experience Telangana's culture through its cuisine, music, and traditional games. The festival witnessed international participation, with 40 kite players from 19 countries and 55 national players from 15 Indian states demonstrating their skills. The event featured competitive kite

flying with an impressive display of diverse designs and patterns, creating a spectacular visual experience for attendees. In addition to kites, the festival offers a culinary extravaganza, with 1,200 liters of traditional sweets and 60 food stalls serving Telangana delicacies, giving visitors a taste of the region's culinary heritage. Other attractions include a hot balloon ride at Gachibowli, adding adventure and excitement to the festivities. Facilities such as the Metro and RTC buses have been organized to ensure easy access, with free travel provided for women to encourage family participation. The three-day festival also emphasizes cultural education and tourism development. Minister Prab-

hakar noted that such events help preserve Telangana's traditions while providing entertainment and educational value for all age groups. "By organizing kite competitions, culinary exhibitions, and cultural performances, we are bringing the community together and fostering a deeper appreciation of our heritage," he said. The International Kite and Sweet Festival is set to be a platform where families, tourists, and cultural enthusiasts can experience the spirit of Sankranti in a safe and enjoyable environment. The organizers have taken steps to ensure smooth traffic management, security, and crowd control to provide a comfortable experience for all visitors. With its combination of international participation, traditional foods, colorful kites, and family-friendly activities, the festival promises to be a landmark celebration in Hyderabad's cultural calendar. Citizens are encouraged to participate, witness the spectacular kite displays, and celebrate the joyous occasion of Sankranti while embracing Telangana's rich traditions.



Sweet News for Gram Panchayats – ₹277 Crores Released by Finance Department

TPN Bureau | January 14

On the occasion of the Sankranti festival, the Telangana State Government has brought a festive cheer to the Gram Panchayats by releasing 277 crores in funds. This initiative, announced by Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka, aims to empower newly elected Sarpanches and strengthen local governance, ensuring that rural development projects reach their intended beneficiaries. The Finance Department acted swiftly following the announcement, disbursing the funds to Panchayati Raj institutions on Monday. These resources are expected to support a wide range of developmental and welfare programs at the village level, including improvements in infrastructure, sanitation, drinking water supply, community halls, street lighting, and other essential services that directly enhance the quality of life for residents. On Tuesday, a high-level meeting of Finance Department officials was convened at Praja Bhavan to discuss the proper monitoring and utilization of the allocated funds. The meeting was chaired by Finance Department Principal Secretary Sandeep Kumar Sultania and attended by senior officials, who emphasized the importance of transparency, accountability, and timely execution of development projects. The officials out-



lined measures to ensure that the funds reach Gram Panchayats efficiently and are utilized for the intended purposes without delay. During the event, Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka personally conveyed Sankranti greetings to all Gram Panchayat Sarpanches and Ward Members. He highlighted the transformative potential of the released funds and urged elected representatives to prioritize community welfare initiatives. "These resources will enable Panchayats to address pressing local needs, improve infrastructure, enhance health and educational facilities, and ensure that the benefits of governance reach every resident," he said. The release of 277 crores ahead of the festival underscores the State Government's commitment to rural development and participatory governance. By empowering local bodies with adequate financial resources, the government aims to accelerate the delivery of essential services, reinforce grassroots democracy, and ensure that all

villages in Telangana experience tangible improvements in quality of life. Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka also commended the newly elected Panchayat representatives, encouraging them to work with diligence, integrity, and accountability. He stressed that the funds should be used judiciously to implement welfare programs that serve the community effectively, particularly in areas such as road maintenance, water supply, sanitation, health services, and educational infrastructure. With the 277 crores now in the hands of Gram Panchayats, the festive spirit of Sankranti is set to translate into visible development across Telangana's rural landscape. The State Government's timely intervention not only reinforces its focus on village empowerment but also strengthens the role of Panchayati Raj institutions as key drivers of socio-economic growth. mark a major milestone in modernising land administration and improving service delivery across Telangana.



# Telangana Gears Up for the Grand Sammakka Saralamma Medaram Jatara



prevent any inconvenience to pilgrims, as the state expects an unprecedented turnout of nearly two crore devotees from across the country. Considered one of the most significant cultural and spiritual events in India, the Medaram Jatara draws people from all walks of life who gather to seek the blessings of tribal goddesses Sammakka and Saralamma. Highlighting the magnitude of the festival, the minister noted that devotees traditionally stay in Medaram for at least three days, following age-old customs and rituals. In view of this, comprehensive arrange-



ments are being made to provide adequate accommodation, drinking water, sanitation facilities, and medical support. A high-level coordination meeting involving all key departments has been convened to review preparedness. Special focus is being laid on trans-

port, crowd management, and essential services. Police authorities have been instructed to maintain strict vigilance to prevent traffic bottlenecks and ensure safe movement of pilgrims. Given that a large number of devotees rely on Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (RTC) buses, RTC officials have been directed to increase monitoring and deploy additional services on key routes leading to Medaram. Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy's personal involvement has added further momentum to the preparations. The Chief Minister is said to

share a deep emotional bond with Sammakka and Saralamma, which is reflected in the state government's commitment to developing Medaram as a major spiritual destination. Under his leadership, development works worth 260 crore have been undertaken to improve infrastructure and amenities in the area. In a significant move, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy will visit Medaram on the 18th of this month to inaugurate the newly developed temple facilities. Adding to the importance of the occasion, a cabinet meeting will also be held at Medaram on

the same day, symbolizing the government's collective dedication to the festival. On that day, the entire state administration is expected to be present at the sacred site. Officials have been instructed to ensure quick and hassle-free darshan for devotees, while preserving the traditional spirit of the Jatara. With arrangements nearing completion well in advance, the Telangana government aims to host the Sammakka Saralamma Medaram Jatara in a manner befitting its global stature, blending faith, culture, and efficient governance into one historic celebration.

## Ministers Distribute Appointment Letters to 1,257 Lab Technicians at Osmania Medical College

Hyderabad, January 13, 2026 (TPN Bureau)

Hyderabad: In a significant boost to Telangana's public healthcare system, Ministers Damodar Raja Narasimha and Ponnam Prabhakar on Tuesday distributed appointment letters to 1,257 newly selected laboratory technicians at a grand ceremony held at Osmania Medical College. The event marked an important milestone in strengthening diagnostic services across government hospitals in the state. The programme was attended by Rajya Sabha Member Anil Kumar Yadav, local corporator Surekha Om Prakash, Health, Medical and Family Welfare Department Secretary Christina Z. Chongthu, and senior officials from the medical and administrative departments. Addressing the gathering, Minister Ponnam Prabhakar extended Sankranti festival greetings to all attendees and congratulated the new-



ly appointed lab technicians on securing government jobs. He underlined the growing importance of diagnostic services in modern healthcare, noting how medical practices have evolved over time. "In the past, treatment often began the moment a patient described a problem. Today, treatment is guided by scientific investigation and detailed medical tests. The healthcare sector has transformed, and diagnostic procedures have become deeper and more precise," the minister said. He stressed that doctors rely heavily on laboratory reports to determine the

right course of treatment, placing great responsibility on lab technicians. Describing lab technicians as the "eyes and ears of doctors," Ponnam Prabhakar urged the recruits to perform their duties with accuracy, integrity, and compassion. He appealed to them to treat patients with empathy and kindness, adding that a positive and caring approach itself can help alleviate a patient's suffering. "When patients walk into a lab, they should feel reassured. Half their illness should disappear with the confidence you give them," he remarked.

The minister also acknowledged the contributions of Health Minister Damodar Raja Narasimha, crediting him for major infrastructure development in leading medical institutions such as Gandhi, Osmania, and Kakatiya Medical Colleges and their associated hospitals. He noted that the hostel building currently under construction at the Osmania campus was made possible due to Raja Narasimha's efforts. Highlighting constituency-level initiatives, Ponnam Prabhakar said that with the support of Damodar Raja Narasimha, a 250-bed hospital is being

constructed in Husnabad. Given the high number of dialysis cases in the region, special preventive measures are also being implemented to address kidney-related ailments. He further spoke about environmental and public health initiatives in Husnabad, which has been developed as a plastic-free constituency. As part of this drive, steel banks were distributed to 280 women self-help groups, and glass tumblers were supplied to over 500 hotels. These measures, he said, aim to reduce plastic usage and help curb cancer-related diseases in the long run.

## "Call for Blood" Web App Launched by DGP to Connect Donors and Patients Instantly



Hyderabad, January 13, 2026 (TPN Bureau)

Hyderabad: In a major initiative aimed at facilitating rapid blood donations, the Director General of Police, B. Shivadhar Reddy, on Tuesday officially launched the "Call for Blood Foundation" web application. The platform is designed to instantly connect blood donors with patients in need, ensuring timely access to life-saving blood. The web app has been developed with advanced technology to

enable swift communication between donors and recipients while maintaining complete confidentiality. Donors' personal details are securely protected, and their information remains hidden for a specified period after donation, ensuring privacy and safety. The platform also includes a feature to quickly identify suitable donors during emergency situations, making it an essential tool for healthcare providers and families during critical moments. Speaking at the

launch, DGP B. Shivadhar Reddy commended the initiative for leveraging technology to save lives. "This web application will streamline the blood donation process and ensure that patients receive the blood they need without delay," he said. The app was developed under the guidance of Call for Blood Foundation founder, Chintala Sampath, whom the DGP personally appreciated for his efforts. Sampath highlighted that users can access all relevant details and ser-

vices through the foundation's official website, [www.callforbloodfoundation.com](http://www.callforbloodfoundation.com). With the launch of this platform, authorities and the foundation aim to create a robust network of blood donors across Hyderabad, making life-saving support more accessible to patients and their families. The initiative has already garnered attention from hospitals, NGOs, and social organizations, emphasizing the role of technology in public health and emergency response.

# Deputy CM Bhatti Vikramarka Calls for Happiness and Growth at Power Employees' Diary Launch

Hyderabad, January 14, 2026 (TPN Bureau)

Hyderabad: Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu on Tuesday underscored the need for both professional excellence and personal well-being among power sector employees, stating that development must go hand in hand with happiness. He was speaking at the launch of diaries and calendars brought out by electricity employees' associations at Praja Bhavan. Extending New Year and Sankranti greetings to engineers and employees working in the Telangana government's power sector, the Deputy Chief Minister lauded their contribution to the state's growth. The event marked the release of the Telangana State Power Engineers Association diary and the diary and calendar published by the 1104



Electricity Employees' Union. Addressing the gathering, Bhatti Vikramarka said the power sector plays a crucial role in the everyday lives of people by ensuring uninterrupted electricity supply. "Beyond providing light to people's lives, it is equally impor-

tant that employees and their families lead happy, secure, and progressive lives," he said. He stressed that a satisfied workforce is the foundation of a strong and efficient public service system. The Deputy CM highlighted the government's commitment to

strengthening the power sector while safeguarding the welfare of its workforce. He noted that engineers and employees have a direct responsibility in sustaining economic activity, agriculture, industry, and domestic life across Telangana. Appreciating their dedication, he

urged them to continue working with discipline, innovation, and a sense of public service. Bhatti Vikramarka also emphasized that the state government views employee welfare as a priority and is taking steps to create a positive

work environment. He said collective effort and coordination between the government and employee unions are essential for the healthy growth of the power sector and the overall development of the state. Speaking on the occa-

sion, leaders of the power employees' associations expressed gratitude to the government for its support and assured their cooperation in achieving the state's energy goals. Telangana State Power Engineers Association

president Ratnakar Rao and General Secretary Sadanandam highlighted the role of engineers in modernizing the power infrastructure and maintaining reliability. The programme was attended by Telangana State Power Engineers Association leaders Janapriya Venkateshwarlu and Sambayya Naik, along with representatives of the 1104 Electricity Employees' Union, including president Venkateshwarlu and General Secretary Saibabu. Several other union leaders, engineers, and employees were also present. The event concluded on a positive note, with the Deputy Chief Minister reiterating his hope that power sector employees would continue to illuminate the lives of citizens while ensuring happiness and progress within their own families.





# “Fourth Time, the People Will Teach a Lesson”: Minister Ponguleti Flags Off Campaign Against BRS in Aswaraopet and Sattupalli

Aswaraopet/Sattupalli, January 13, 2026 (TPN Bureau)

Telangana Revenue and Housing Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy has issued a stern warning to ruling BRS leaders, saying that the electorate will not tolerate their misgovernance for the fourth time. Speaking at two separate gatherings of newly elected Congress-supported sarpanches, the minister accused BRS leaders of misleading the public and attempting to manipulate local elections.

In Aswaraopet, Minister Ponguleti was the chief guest at a felicitation ceremony for 60 sarpanches held at Sri Sri Function Hall under the chairmanship of MLA Jare Adinarayana. Addressing the gathering, he recalled that voters had already delivered a strong message to past rulers in Assembly, Parliament, and Panchayat elections, yet the previous administration failed to learn from the people’s mandate.



“Those same leaders, who once provoked the public and indulged in chaos, are now criticizing the current government. The electorate will repeat the lesson in the upcoming municipal elections,” he said.

Highlighting his government’s development initiatives, Ponguleti noted that 4,500 Indiramma houses have been allocated in tribal areas of Aswaraopet, underlining the administration’s commitment to tribal welfare. He also

spoke of restoring the Medaram Jatara with robust stone structures, ensuring its preservation for the next 200 years. He advised the newly elected sarpanches to serve their communities selflessly and strengthen the Congress party at the grassroots level.

Later in Sattupalli, the minister addressed 81 sarpanches at a similar felicitation event at Rani Celebrations Convention Hall, chaired by MLA Matta Ragamayi

Dayanand. Criticizing BRS leaders for their reaction to recent Panchayat election results, he said, “After repeated defeats, these leaders cannot digest the electorate’s mandate. Their statements on the streets are irrational and misleading. Claiming victory by winning a few sarpanches is laughable.” Ponguleti emphasized that Congress had secured 69% of seats in the last Panchayat elections, showcasing public support, and predicted

that the trend is likely to continue in the upcoming municipal elections, potentially exceeding 80%.

He further warned that attempts to destabilize villages, exploit district boundaries, or misuse administrative divisions will be corrected through systematic consultation with retired judges and public opinion before implementing reforms. “Citizens are wise and observant. Any attempt to create unrest or manipulate people will backfire,” he added.

The events were attended by Khammam MP Ramasahayam Raghuram Reddy, state leaders including Dr. Matta Dayanand, district party presidents, and various Congress office bearers and supporters. Minister Ponguleti’s statements mark a clear pre-election strategy, emphasizing governance achievements and warning opponents of public accountability in Telangana’s upcoming municipal polls.

# BJP Leaders Criticize Congress Over “Gandhi Legacy” and State Schemes

Hyderabad, January 13, 2026 (TPN Bureau)

Hyderabad: BJP leaders have slammed Congress leaders for invoking Mahatma Gandhi’s name while allegedly undermining his vision of Gram Swarajya and promoting what they call “dynastic politics.” Speaking at a party event, the BJP representatives emphasized that Gandhi had opposed hereditary politics and advocated for grassroots empowerment. The leaders contrasted their party’s approach with Congress, stating that BJP workers consistently uphold traditional values and honor Indian heritage. “We live by the name of Lord Rama. Wherever our workers go, they chant ‘Jai Shri Ram.’ Even in the most critical moments, we salute Bharat Mata and declare ‘Jai Shri Ram,’” a BJP



leader remarked, referencing historical instances when the party defied threats from Naxal attacks to uphold nationalist sentiments.

The leaders highlighted their commitment to building temples and

following the path of Lord Rama, questioning why such efforts are criticized. They also defended state participation in central government schemes, stating, “Many national programs are joint initia-

tives between the Union and state governments. Providing state support for such programs is completely legitimate.”

The BJP further criticized Congress leadership for failing to ensure timely wage payments

to laborers, contrasting it with the BJP’s focus on employment and welfare schemes. The leaders also accused former governments of creating districts based on personal family interests, suggesting that Congress follows a similar pattern of favoritism. Calling for immediate action, BJP representatives urged the party to conduct a statewide review, gather public opinion, and establish committees to counter what they described as “political opportunism” by Congress. The remarks come amid growing political discourse in Telangana, as parties prepare for upcoming municipal and local body elections, with both sides emphasizing governance, welfare schemes, and heritage promotion as key campaign issues.

# Historic Milestone: Telangana Achieves Record Paddy Procurement of 70.82 Lakh Metric Tonnes in Kharif 2025-26 Season, Says Civil Supplies Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy



Hyderabad, January 13, 2026 (TPN Bureau) – Telangana has achieved an all-time high paddy procurement of 70.82 lakh metric tonnes (LMT) during the Kharif Marketing Season 2025-26, setting a historic benchmark not just for the state but nationally, said Civil Supplies and Irrigation Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy on Tuesday.

Extending Sankranti

greetings to the people of Telangana, the Minister described the festival as a celebration of gratitude and prosperity, particularly honoring the farmers whose dedication has ensured bumper harvests and filled the state’s granaries. “This Sankranti is truly special for our farmers, who have made Telangana proud through their hard work and perseverance,” he said.

Minister Reddy highlighted that the record procurement of 70.82 LMT surpasses the previous state high of 70.2 LMT. The total procurement benefitted 13.97 lakh farmers under the Minimum Support Price (MSP) operations. Breaking down the figures, 32.45 LMT comprised coarse varieties of paddy, while 38.37 LMT were fine grades, all of which have al-

ready been shifted to mills for processing.

The financial implications of this record procurement are substantial. The total MSP value of the procured paddy stands at over Rs 16,912 crore, with payments of Rs 16,602 crore already disbursed, achieving an impressive 98% payment rate. Additionally, bonus payments totaling Rs 1,425 crore were provided to incentivize farmers and support the cultivation of fine-grade paddy.

The Minister noted that the procurement exercise was made possible through the operation of 8,448 purchase centres across the state, ensuring accessibility for farmers in both rural and remote areas. He reassured that the government machinery would continue to engage with farmers according to the scheduled timelines to maintain a smooth, efficient, and farmer-friendly process.

“This achievement is not just a numerical milestone but a reflection of Telangana’s com-

mitment to farmer welfare and food security,” Minister Reddy emphasized. He also underlined the government’s focus on timely MSP payments and additional incentives, ensuring that farmers reap the full benefits of their labor.

The Minister further called upon officials to sustain the momentum in procurement operations, maintaining transparency, efficiency, and seamless logistics to uphold the confidence of the farming community. He stressed that the record achievement will serve as a National benchmark in paddy procurement, reinforcing Telangana’s position as a leading agricultural state. As Telangana celebrates Sankranti, the record paddy procurement stands as a testament to the state government’s policies that prioritize farmers’ welfare, promote agricultural productivity, and strengthen food security, marking a historic milestone in the state’s agrarian history.

# AICC General Secretary Sampath Kumar Responds to Media Reports on Bramarambh Company Payments



Hyderabad, January 13, 2026 (TPN Bureau)

Hyderabad: All India Congress Committee (AICC) General Secretary Sampath Kumar has responded to recent media reports alleging financial irregularities involving him and the Bramarambh company. He stated that the reports circulated by BRS-affiliated media are misleading and exaggerated. According to Sampath Kumar, a subcontractor named Bhasha had worked under Bramarambh for certain projects and was owed 13 lakh by the company. Bhasha approached him, requesting assistance to recover the dues. Kumar contacted the General Manager of Bramarambh, urging that the pending payment be made to Bhasha. However,

the payment was not released by the company.

Kumar clarified that a dispute arose when Bramarambh engaged another individual for work that Bhasha claimed should have been his responsibility. This disagreement escalated to the police station, but he insisted that the amount owed was minor and that media outlets falsely reported it as 8 crore, creating unnecessary sensationalism. “Some channels even posted 8 crore on YouTube, tarnishing my reputation,” he said.

Addressing criticism regarding local governance, Sampath Kumar remarked that Palamuru had long been neglected. He praised Chief Minister Revanth Reddy for actively addressing development projects

in the region, which had been ignored for over a decade under the previous government led by K. Chandrashekar Rao.

Kumar also said he reserves the right to defend himself against false accusations and that no one has the authority to question him unfairly. He further alleged that Bramarambh company supplies substandard black soil and added that he plans to lodge a complaint with the National Highway Authority regarding this issue.

Kumar’s statement comes amid growing scrutiny of construction projects and financial disputes in Telangana, highlighting tensions between local contractors, political figures, and media narratives.

# TPCC President MLC Mahesh Kumar Goud Extends Heartfelt Sankranti Greetings to the People of Telangana



Hyderabad, January 13, 2026 (TPN Bureau) –

On the auspicious occasion of Bhogi, Sankranti, and Makar Sankranti, Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) President and MLC Mahesh Kumar Goud extended warm and heartfelt greetings to the people of Telangana, emphasizing the cultural and social significance of these festive days.

In his message, Mahesh Kumar Goud described Sankranti as one of the most important festivals for the Telugu community, celebrating the fruits of farmers’ hard work and symbolizing the profound connection between nature and humanity. He highlighted that the three-day festival carries distinct meanings: the first day, Bhogi, marks the end of the old and the beginning of new life, welcoming positive changes and new beginnings; while Makar Sankranti, the

second day, coincides with the Sun’s entry into the northern hemisphere (Uttarayan), signifying the onset of brighter days, prosperity, and auspicious outcomes for everyone.

The TPCC President also lauded the Telangana State Government’s commitment to farmer welfare, noting that various reforms have been implemented to promote agricultural development and ensure that farmers can celebrate Sankranti joyfully.

He underlined that since the Congress-led government assumed office, crucial decisions have been taken on issues like farmer insurance, irrigation projects, and Minimum Support Prices (MSP) for crops, providing tangible support and security to the rural population.

Mahesh Kumar Goud encouraged citizens to celebrate the festival with their families and friends while preserving the

rich cultural traditions and heritage of Telangana. He stressed the importance of community participation and unity during these festivities, urging everyone to extend compassion and support to the less fortunate, including farmers, laborers, and economically vulnerable families.

Expressing his hopes for the state’s continued progress, the TPCC leader called for prosperity and happiness to permeate every household, emphasizing that the festival season should bring joy, unity, and well-being to all sections of society.

Concluding his message, Mahesh Kumar Goud reiterated his best wishes for a safe, happy, and meaningful Bhogi, Sankranti, and Makar Sankranti, hoping that these celebrations would foster harmony, collective joy, and social goodwill throughout Telangana.



unknown calls or messages related to KYC updates, refunds, loans, or rewards, and to never approve unknown UPI collect requests. The advisory also recommended verifying customer-care numbers only through official websites or apps, avoiding sharing screenshots of messages containing OTPs, and activating security measures such as SIM locks, device screen locks, and transaction alerts. Victims or suspected cases should be reported immediately to the National Cyber-crime Helpline at 1930 or through the official portal [cybercrime.gov.in](https://cybercrime.gov.in). The advisory was issued by the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Cyber Crimes, Hyderabad City, who urged citizens to remain vigilant and spread awareness to curb cyber frauds.







# 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 NATO—but you know, they need us much more than we need them.” As for Iran, Trump suggested that while no immediate action was planned, the option of

military force remained firmly on the table.

**A Worldview of Power**

Taken together, these statements and actions reveal Trump’s core belief: that national strength—not laws, treaties, or institutions—determines outcomes in global politics. In his worldview, the United States alone decides the limits of its authority, and every tool—military, economic, or political—is fair game to entrench American supremacy.

This philosophy has been evident for some time. Over the past year, 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.



# 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 Sindoor Ongoing, India Ready to Respond to Any Misadventure: Army Chief Gen Dwivedi

Army Chief General Upen-dra Dwivedi on Tuesday reaffirmed India's strong stance on national security, stating that Operation Sindoor 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 Sindoor 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 re-setting strategic assumptions, targeting cross-border terror infrastructure, and challenging Islamabad's longstanding nuclear rhetoric.

Elaborating on the operational objectives, the Army chief described Operation Sindoor 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.

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.

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 Sindoor, 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 over-stays 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 a 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 Duraipapp

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 approximate-

ly 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, offloading 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-

pecially 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 guid-

ance to 2.5-3 percent year-on-year, while maintaining an Ebit margin band of 20-22 percent.

Kotak Institutional Equities expects a gradual improvement in margins, aided by benefits from the company's cost optimisation initiative, Project Maximus. The brokerage forecasts a strong total contract value (TCV) of \$4.5-5 billion—nearly double year-on-year—driven by a £1.2 billion mega deal with NHSBSA. Ebit is estimated at ₹9,513 crore versus ₹9,353 crore in Q2FY26. Kotak expects Infosys to revise its FY26 revenue growth guidance to 2.5-3 percent from the earlier 2-3 percent range. Its estimates do not factor in the pending Versent Group acquisition.

Motilal Oswal Financial Services anticipates flat sequential revenue growth in constant currency terms due to seasonal furloughs, with second-half growth expected to trail the first half. Operating margins are projected to remain stable in the absence of wage hikes and lower third-party costs. Ebit is pegged at around ₹9,500 crore, with margins seen at 21.1 percent. The brokerage expects US BFSI demand to remain resilient, while retail demand stays muted amid tariff-related uncertainties.

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 In-

dia (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 Rath 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

concentration risks. Its largest client accounted for 48.91 per cent, 51.23 per cent, 48.00 per cent, 59.23 per cent, and 59.52 per cent of revenue from operations for the six-month periods ended September 30, 2025 and 2024, and for FY25, FY24, and FY23, respectively. The loss of any major client could have a material adverse impact on the business.

Finally, the company flagged risks associated with cash-on-delivery transactions. Some clients prefer this payment method, requiring Shadowfax to act as a limited agent for brands, merchants, and quick-commerce platforms. This exposes the company to operational complexities and potential cash-handling risks, the UDRHP noted.



# 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 cre-

ators 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.

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

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.

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.

As the debate continues, Friesen’s message remains clear: India does not need to resemble anything else to be remarkable—it already is.

# 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 Majhi 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. Referring 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. This candid display of childlike joy stood in sharp contrast to his usual serious and commanding on-screen persona, making the moment all the more endearing.

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.

Instead of continuing with the conventional approach, Patel decided



to invest his energy in building products, creating content, and networking in person. He began attending tech meetups and events in major hubs such as San Francisco and New York City, where direct interactions allowed him to showcase his skills and ideas more effectively.

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 hand-picking 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 is-

sued 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 Bangladesh 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

Ayush Shetty is gearing up for his debut at the India Open Super 750 tournament, and the young Indian shuttler couldn’t hide his excitement. “It’s my first time at the India Open. I have always wanted to play here. I will be looking for home support even though I’m playing home favourite Lakshya Sen,” Ayush said ahead of Tuesday’s first-round clash at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium.

Currently ranked 32 in men’s singles, Ayush enjoyed a breakthrough season in 2025, capturing the US Open Super 500 title and registering wins against established stars like Chou Tien Chen, Loh Kean Yew, and Kodai Naraoka. Most recently, he defeated local favourite Lee Zii Jia at the 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 said.

Reflecting on his recent quarter-final loss to world number one Shi Yuqi in Malaysia, Ayush noted the lessons learned. “Play-

ing a top player like Shi is very challenging. I had a lead in the first game but he won it. I fought back hard in the second and pushed it to a decider. Physically, he is much stronger, and that made the difference. After that match, I have clarity that I need to improve a lot to compete against the world’s best,” he said.

Alongside competing against top players, Ayush is also adjusting to the

mental demands of high-profile tournaments. “It’s a mental challenge and a new one for me. But I am excited to play in events like the All England and the Super 1000s. Having faced top players already, I know the intensity and how to navigate my way,” 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, shorter films, and 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, Special

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, Karli-ta 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 Sankranti Festival: Naveen Polishetty



Tollywood's upcoming Sankranti 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 Sankranti. "For Telugu people, Sankranti 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 Sankranti 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 Sri Kara 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 Sankranti.

Prabhas' The Raja Saab Crosses ₹201 Crore Worldwide in Four Days, Dominates Sankranti 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 Sankranti 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-getup 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, Riddhi 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 enter-

tainment quotient. With its strong hold at the box office and the Sankranti 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

presence has created considerable buzz in the city. Taking to his official Instagram handle, Allu Arjun shared a stunning picture featuring Tokyo's skyline, simply captioned "Tokyo," which quickly went viral among fans and followers. The Japanese release is being jointly handled by Geek Pictures and Shochiku, in collaboration with Mythri Movie Makers and Sukumar Writings. The film will hit Japanese screens as Pushpa Kunrin, with premieres scheduled for January 15, 2026, a day ahead of the official release. Given Japan's growing appreciation for large-scale Indian blockbusters, the makers are confident that the Pushpa phenomenon will strike a chord with local audiences. Directed by Sukumar, Pushpa 2: The Rule showcases Allu Arjun in one of the most defining

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 Yeneni 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 Javana and rendered with heartfelt emotion by Dhanunjay 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. Released through Aditya Music, the track has already begun attracting attention and positive responses from listeners. 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 pair, the film features a

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 Naeed 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.

