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receives
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Karnataka tables bill to criminalise social boycott with 3-year jail term

BELAGAVI

The Karnataka government on Thursday tabled the Karnataka Social Boycott (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Bill, 2025 in the Assembly, aiming to prohibit and criminalise social boycotts imposed on individuals or groups, especially by caste panchayats. Presented by Social Welfare Minister H. C. Mahadevappa in Belagavi, the bill lists 20 forms of social boycott, including refusal to work with or hire a person, denial of access to services and opportunities, obstruction from social or religious events, social ostracism, blocking access to facilities, and cutting ties.

The bill notes that unconstitutional practices such as boycotts and punishments by extra-judicial bodies like caste panchayats continue in several communities, causing harassment and vi-

Karnataka tabled bills to criminalise social boycott by caste panchayats and amend Greater Bengaluru Governance, adding key officials and MPs to the authority and clarifying ward divisions

olations of dignity. These practices foster disharmony and ill feeling, and existing laws are considered inadequate to address them. The proposed legislation seeks to eradicate such practices and prescribes penalties, including imprisonment of up to three years or fines up to ₹1 lakh, or both. Any assembly convened to discuss imposing a social boycott will be deemed unlawful, carrying a fine of up to ₹1 lakh. Aiding or abetting such actions will attract similar penalties. All offences under the bill will be cognizable and bailable.

SC Rejects Prajwal's Plea to Transfer Cases

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday refused to entertain a plea of former Janata Dal MP Prajwal Revanna to transfer the trial of two criminal cases before the special MP/MLA court in Bengaluru to another court in the city on the ground of bias.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi told Revanna's counsel that observations of the judge cannot be a ground of bias as it dismissed his plea.

"The observations of the presiding officer of the court cannot be the ground of bias. We have no reason to doubt that the officer would not be swayed by the fact that the petitioner was found guilty in the

earlier case... and will confine his conclusions on the basis of evidence led in the pending trial," the bench observed.

Senior advocates Siddharth Luthra and Siddarth Dave, representing Revanna, said that the judge made some adverse comments against the lawyers too, which requires expunction. Justice Bagchi said that lawyers cannot hold judicial officers to ransom and make any allegations against them. "Mr Dave, these remarks were inspired by the high court order itself on the same lines. You cannot hold the judicial officers to ransom. This lawyer appears in collateral cases and withdraws the vakalatnama time and again," Justice Bagchi said. CJI Kant said that Revanna's counsel can furnish an apology before the high court as it is the most unethical thing to allege bias just because some observations were made by the presiding officer.



Siddaramaiah Hosts Farmers Meeting Vows Prompt Resolution of Issues

The CM reiterated that the govt is committed to supplying quality electricity to farmers for seven hours daily and will hold discussions with officials to increase supply as power generation improves

BELAGAVI

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Thursday held a meeting with representatives of various farmers' organizations at Suvarna Soudha to discuss pressing agricultural issues. Speaking at the meeting, the Chief Minister assured that the government has already taken several steps to address the problems of all farmers, including sugarcane growers, and that every demand would be carefully examined for a suitable solution.

The Chief Minister highlighted the state government's initiative to provide a ₹5 incentive per litre of milk. Currently, with the daily purchase of one crore litres of milk, farmers are receiving ₹5 crore as incentive support.

To prevent malpractice in sugarcane weighing and en-



sure scientific fixation of cane prices, measures have been implemented in sugar factories. Siddaramaiah also assured that amendments made by the previous government to the Land Reforms Act would be rolled back.

During the meeting, farmers' representatives highlighted issues such as power supply for irrigation, the need for

12-hour continuous electricity, restarting illegal canal schemes, increasing crop damage compensation due to wild animals, establishing a corpus fund for procurement of farmers' produce, appointing veterinary doctors at the panchayat level, and staffing the Sugar Commissioner's office in Belagavi with necessary officials.

In response, the Chief Minister reiterated that the government is committed to supplying quality electricity to farmers for seven hours daily and will hold discussions with officials to increase supply as generation improves. He emphasized that the government would act honestly and will not indulge in any deception regarding farmers' welfare.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah met farmers' organizations at Suvarna Soudha, assuring action on issues including sugarcane pricing, milk incentives, electricity supply, and crop damage compensation. He reiterated a seven-hour quality power promise and pledged honest, farmer-friendly governance as representatives welcomed ongoing government measures.

Acknowledging the government's proactive measures, representatives of various farmer organizations felicitated CM Siddaramaiah during the event, expressing confidence in the state's farmer-friendly policies.

No leadership change in Karnataka claims Yathindra Siddaramaiah

BELAGAVI

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's son Yathindra Siddaramaiah on Thursday reiterated that there is no leadership change in Karnataka.

The Congress MLC further said that there was no power tussle in the state. Speculation about a leadership change had intensified after the Congress government crossed the halfway mark of its five-year term on November 20, fuelled by talk of an alleged power-sharing arrangement between Siddara-

maiah and Shivakumar dating back to 2023.

Recently, the chief minister and deputy CM held breakfast meetings at each other's residences on instructions from the party high command—a move seen as an attempt to pause the leadership tussle and signal Siddaramaiah's continuation as chief minister for now, especially ahead of the Belagavi legislature session. They also clarified that they

will abide by the party high command's decision.

"There is no tussle over CM post. This I have told you already. Now everything is clear. The high command has clearly said as of now there is no change in leadership," Yathindra told reporters here.

The MLC has been repeatedly claiming that the high command has made it clear that there is no leadership change in the state.



Assam, Arunachal coordinate search for missing victims

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday expressed his condolences over the deaths in the truck accident in Arunachal Pradesh, and said both states were working closely to locate the people who have been missing.

At least 18 people from Assam's Tinsukia district have been killed, and three others are missing as the truck fell into a gorge in Arunachal Pradesh. Sarma said that he is deeply pained by the passing away of the people from Assam in the accident.

"Our district administration is in touch with relevant au-

thorities in Arunachal Pradesh and all necessary assistance is being provided," he said in a post on X.

Sarma said relief and rescue teams are prioritising locating missing people. "We are also ensuring that medical help is provided to those in need. My thoughts and prayers are with the grieving families in this tough time," he said in the post, tagging Arunachal Pradesh CM Pema Khandu.

The Chief Minister's Office in a separate post said the Tinsukia district administration is coordinating closely with Arunachal Pradesh authorities, as teams work through harsh terrain for rescue and relief efforts.

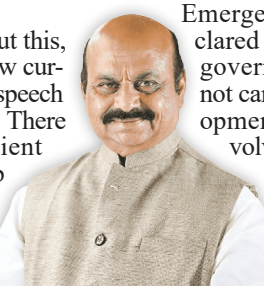
BJP to Launch Legal Battle Against Hate Speech Law: Basavaraj Bommai

BENGALURU

The Karnataka Government has introduced a law against hate speech, which is unconstitutional. The BJP strongly condemns this, and it will launch a legal battle against it, said former Chief Minister and MP Basavaraj Bommai.

Posting on X about this, he stated that this law curtails the freedom of speech and personal liberty. There are already sufficient laws in place to curb hate speech. Those laws can be used. But by bringing a

law that prescribes ten years of imprisonment, the government is plotting to send to jail—through non-bailable warrants—those who speak against the government or against their party. This is against democracy. "In one sense, it feels as though an Emergency has been declared in Karnataka. The government, which has not carried out any development work and is involved in corruption in every sector—one that has siphoned off funds meant for the poor.



GAINING INSIGHT



Students watching Council session in progress at Suvarna Soudha in Belagavi on Thursday

▶ CH PHOTO

US GOLD CARD

It's a shame students have to go back to their countries: Trump

NEW YORK/WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump on Wednesday unveiled a new "Gold Card" visa, a million-dollar pathway to long-term residency and eventual citizenship for high-skilled immigrants. He said the programme addresses the "shame" of losing top graduates from American universities—particularly from India and China—who are often forced to leave the country after completing their studies. Speaking at a White House roundtable with IBM CEO Arvind Krishna and Dell Technologies CEO Michael Dell, Trump said the Gold



Card will help companies retain elite talent from institutions such as Wharton, Har-



vard and MIT. Many firms, he argued, hesitate to hire international students because of

Trump's new USD 1 million Gold Card visa lets companies buy long-term residency for top graduates, offering a faster, stronger alternative to green cards.

uncertainty over their ability to remain in the U.S., a concern raised repeatedly by business leaders including Apple CEO Tim Cook.

The programme allows companies to sponsor workers by contributing USD 2 million, while individuals may apply by paying USD 1 million. Applicants must also pay a USD 15,000 processing fee and pass full vetting before gain-

ing the right to apply for citizenship after five years. The administration claims the card offers faster, more advantageous benefits than traditional green cards, which Trump described as "impossible to get."

Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said the initiative aims to attract only the "best people." Corporations may replace the beneficiary on a card over time, but only one person may hold it at any given moment. He argued the Gold Card would reverse trends of lower earnings among green card holders by focusing on high-income, highly skilled applicants.

QUICK READ

K'taka Sees 17-Lakh Drop in Govt School Enrolment

BELAGAVI

Enrolment in government-run schools in Karnataka has dropped by 17 lakh over the past 15 years, Minister Madhu Bangarappa informed the Legislative Assembly on Thursday. Minister for School Education attributed the decline to parents preferring English-medium education, a growing interest in central syllabi, migration, and the increasing number of private schools. The information was provided in a written reply to BJP MLA and former education minister S Suresh Kumar.

IndiGo offers ₹10,000 vouchers to its passengers

NEW DELHI

IndiGo, facing major operational disruptions, announced on Thursday that it will provide Rs 10,000 travel vouchers to passengers whose flights were cancelled or severely delayed between December 3 and 5. This compensation is in addition to the mandatory payout under DGCA norms. The airline said it regrets that many passengers were stranded for hours at various airports and were significantly affected by congestion during this period.

QUICK READ



Take action against illegal buildings: Commissioner Ramesh

BENGALURU
A workshop was held at the Bengaluru South City Corporation (BDMC) to educate the officials of the corporation on the procedure to prevent the construction of unauthorised structures in violation of the maps. Delegation of powers has been given to evict buildings which are being constructed in violation of the map sanctioning or unauthorised without obtaining the map sanction. Commissioner N Ramesh instructed the officials to act as per the allocation of powers and to work on priority in court and Lokayukta cases. Chief Engineer KV Ravi, Additional Director of Town Planning Girish, Joint Commissioners Madhu, Satish Babu and other officials were present.

Cultural preview: Yakshagana performance on Dec 13

BENGALURU
A Yakshagana performance titled 'Yaksha Bhava Sangama' is being organized by guest artists from the south on December 13 at the Ravindra Kalakshetra on JC Road. These performances are being organized by Vinayak Bhatt. 'Bheeshma Parva' composed by Devidas and 'Subhadra Kalyana' composed by Hattiyangadi Ram Bhatt will be performed. Kondadakuli Ramachandra, Thotimane Ganapathi Hegde, Thandimane Sripada Bhatt, Hillur Manju, Prashant Hegde, Nagesh Kulimane, Athreya Gaonkar, Vinayak Kalagadde, Ashok Bhatt Siddapura, K.G. Manjunath, Chapparamane Sridhar Hegde, Sadashiva Malavalli and Ramakrishna Bhatt will participate in the festival.



Students need a research environment: Dr BG Prasad

BENGALURU
An educational ecosystem conducive to research is essential for students, said Dr BG Prasad, Principal of Dayanand Sagar Engineering College. He was speaking at a research conference on 'Innovation and Sustainable Integration for Global Impact' organized at Dayanand Sagar College of Engineering. Dr J Sridevi, Director General, Central Power Research Institute, Bengaluru, gave important information on research, global collaboration, and sustainable technological progress. Vice Principal Dr. V. Suma reviewed the conference. Dr. Gopal Patra, Director, CSIR-4PE, Bengaluru, and Dr. Shyam Vasudeva Rao, Technical Director, Maastricht University, Netherlands, participated. Dayanand Sagar Institute Joint Secretary Nishan H. Sagar, Vice Principal Dr HK Ramaraju praised the students.

'Good Work Gets Friendship, Mistakes Won't Be Forgiven': Alok Kumar

Alok Kumar, who took charge as the state Director General of Police, Prisons and Correctional Services Department, has given a strong message to the officers and staff

BENGALURU

Alok Kumar, the new Director General of Police of the State Prisons and Correctional Services Department, has warned that if the officers do a good job in the prison department, their rank does not matter to me and I consider them as friends. However, officers who are intentionally involved in illegal activities will have to be treated differently. He has been appointed as the State Director General of Police, Prisons and Correc-

tional Services Department and assumed office today at his office on Seshadri Road.

Speaking on the occasion, Alok Kumar said, I have previously visited various prisons in the state, including Bailahongala. I have also raided and inspected the Parappana Agrahara Central Prison many times in the past. Some reforms are also important in this department. We will hold consultations with the officials, understand the problems properly and take further steps.



Every officer and staff in the department is important, and only they can control irregularities. Those who do good work are always encouraged. But those who do wrong will be punished. Sometimes I will not be too strict with

small unintentional mistakes. But I will not tolerate intentional involvement in irregularities, warned Alok Kumar. The state government on Wednesday promoted Alok Kumar, who was the Additional Director General of Police, State Police Training Centre, and transferred him as the State Director General of Police, Prisons and Correctional Services Department. Meanwhile, B. Dayanand, who was earlier the ADGP, Prisons Department, was transferred as the ADGP,

Training Division Jail officials conducted an inspection at Parappana Agrahara Central Jail on Tuesday night and found prohibited items. During this, 14 mobile phones, 9 SIM cards, 5 mobile phone chargers, 2 earphones, and 10 different types of knives were found. In total, 67 mobile phones, 14 chargers, 48 SIM cards, 10 earphones, Rs. 60,880 in cash, and 10 sharp weapons have been found so far, and a total of 6 cases have been registered, according to prison sources.



Rowdy-Sheete's Roadside B'day Stunt Triggers Public Outrage

BENGALURU

Bengaluru has once again been jolted by videos of a rowdy-sheets creator creating chaos on public roads, igniting a heated debate on law enforcement and the growing trend of criminal glorification on social media. A series of clips showing youths shouting, revving bikes, and cutting a birthday cake in the middle of the road have gone viral, drawing sharp criticism from citizens. The videos feature notorious rowdy-sheets Ajay Kumar alias Chinni, who operates online under the name C Boss. In the viral footage, Ajay is seen celebrating his birthday in grand style on a busy stretch, accompanied by a convoy of bikes and followers. The blatant disregard for public safety has raised serious questions on how such activities go unchecked. Ajay Kumar is no stranger to police files. In 2017, he was arrested by Jalahalli police for the brutal murder of rowdy-sheets Moni, who was stabbed 24 times on the face. Despite being linked to cases of robbery, dacoity, and ganja peddling, Ajay and his gang project themselves as social workers on social media, gaining thousands of followers in the process. Police records show 21 cases registered against him across Jalahalli, Yeshwanthpur, Gangamma Gudi, Vidyaranya, and Kodigehalli police stations. Yet, his Instagram account—run under the alias Krantiveera Madakari—openly posts videos flaunting bike stunts, group buildups, and self-styled "heroic" acts.

Doctors warn of medical misinformation on social media

BENGALURU

A 36-year-old patient, who recently visited the outpatient department of a city hospital with kidney dysfunction had an alarming creatinine score of 4.5 (the normal range is around 1). When doctors investigated further, they found the individual was following a detox therapy promoted by a social media influencer, a regimen being recommended for weight loss but one that ultimately harmed the kidneys. We did not exactly know what the composition of the detox water was as it had some powders, boosters, and other ingredients. But this is not the first time we have encountered a case like this. We also had a patient in their early 40s who lost the golden period during a stroke and ended up with permanent paralysis of one side as they followed the advice of someone on social media when they had weakness in one side of the body, said Dr Harish Mal-



Once the doctors notice a few parameters in the reports, which are not under ideal levels, they go seeking reels to answer their questions or suggest easy therapies, said Dr SN Aravinda, Lead Consultant Internal Medicine, Aster RV Hospital.

lapura, Intensive Care Physician and Infectious Disease Specialist, Director, Institute of Critical Care Medicine, Kauvery Hospital, Marathahalli. Recently, China introduced a regulation that bars content creators from producing videos or posts on serious topics such as medicine, law, and finance unless they hold relevant academic degrees. In Bengaluru, doctors are similarly calling for government regulation, citing rising instances of patients landing in emergency rooms after following online medical advice.

Dr SN Aravinda, Lead Consultant Internal Medicine, Aster RV Hospital, said, weight

reduction methods, detox therapies, and immunity boosters have become buzzwords across social media, often propagated by influencers describing themselves as lifestyle coaches or wellness coaches.

Doctors warn many of these trends lead not only to digestive issues and, in severe cases, heavy metal poisoning, liver damage, and kidney failure. Younger people, especially those in the 20-40 age group, are often influenced by social media. Most of them have annual health checkups by their companies.

Sunil Kumar Seeks Quick Finish to Mosque Road, MM Road Works

BENGALURU

White topping work has been taken up on Mosque Road and MM Road, and Bengaluru North City Corporation Commissioner Pommala Sunil Kumar has instructed officials to ensure the work is completed promptly.

During his inspection of various locations in the Pulakeshinagar Division, the Commissioner reviewed ongoing development works and directed officials to complete the construction and repair of footpaths on Mosque Road and MM Road by the end of January.

Ensure Water Flow Into Shoulder Drains:

He instructed officials to create proper gradients on the road surface to allow rainwater to flow easily into the shoulder drains and to take necessary measures. Follow Safety Measures Near Open Drains: At several locations, drains have been left open. The



Commissioner directed officials to implement adequate safety measures to ensure the public is not inconvenienced.

Joint Commissioner Mohammed Naem Momin, along with concerned Executive Engineers, Assistant Executive Engineers, and other officials, were present during the inspection.

People's Rights under Threat amid Global Crisis, Say Activists

BENGALURU

The ongoing global economic crisis has triggered a surge in human rights violations worldwide, and India is no exception, said M.N. Sriram, State Coordinator of the Centre for the Defense of Democratic Rights and Secularism (CFDRS). He was speaking at an event organised in the city to mark International Human Rights Day.

Sriram said that continuing conflicts across several countries have intensified rights violations, adding that imperialist tendencies are on the rise. "Serious efforts are not being made to stop wars or protect human rights," he lamented.

He also pointed to worrying trends within India, noting that attempts to suppress people's rights have assumed multiple forms. Referring to the recent spe-



cial revision of the electoral rolls, he said, "Efforts to deprive citizens of their voting rights through such revisions are not a good sign."

Advocate Surendra Babu stressed that civil struggles remain the only effective path to reclaiming human rights. "Many nations have succeeded through people's movements. Their example should guide us as well," he said.

CFDRS State Organiser N. Ravi observed that the nation has travelled far

from the democracy envisioned during the freedom struggle.

"We fought British colonial rule to establish democracy, but today the system largely serves the wealthy, while ordinary people continue to struggle. Strengthening our collective fight has become essential," he said.

State organisers T.V.S. Raju and Somashekar Gowda also addressed the gathering, while law college students raised slogans in support of people's rights.

AWARENESS ON CYBER CRIME

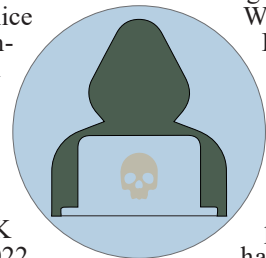
Cybercrime Gang Cons Victims with Fake Microsoft Support

BENGALURU

Investigations into the transnational cybercrime syndicate involving technical staff from Bengaluru duping American citizens revealed that the accused targeted at least 150 victims and robbed them of \$10,000 each (Rs 13.5 crore) on average since this August. The police last month raided Musk Communications in Whitefield and arrested 21 suspects. The fraudsters impersonated Microsoft technical support staff and cited fake 'Federal Trade Commission (FTC)' violations to extort money. Additionally, the

police arrested an individual identified as Ravi Chouhan from Ahmedabad, who recruited around 85 staffers in the city. A senior IPS officer said the accused made the victims deposit money in bitcoins by depositing them in Bitcoin ATMs, which are kiosks that connect to the Bitcoin network, allowing transactions with crypto currencies. We are in the process of extracting the bank details of the victim customers, and as of now, we have found that at least 150 victims from the US and UK were made to deposit around \$10,000 into various Bitcoin ATMs, he said. Mean-

while, police arrested a youth from Ahmedabad, identified as Ravi Chauhan, for recruiting the staffers at Musk Communication. With Chowhan landing in police custody, the number of arrested persons rises to 22. Three kingpins are yet to be found. They have been targeting the victims in the UK and USA since 2022, an investigating officer said. Acting on a credible tip-off, teams from Cyber Command's special cell and sleuths of the cybercrime po-



lice station, Whitefield division, raided the office of Musk Communications on the 6th floor of the Delta building in Sigma Soft Tech Park, Whitefield Main Road, on November 14 and 15. The two-day operation, with a search warrant, resulted in the seizure of computers, laptops, hard disks, mobile phones, and other devices. All 21 staffers present in the office were arrested and produced before a local court, which remanded them in po-

lice custody. Investigations revealed that Musk Communications rented a sprawling 4,500 sqft office space in August this year for a monthly rent of Rs 5 lakhs. The gang allegedly deployed malicious Facebook advertisements targeted specifically at US users. These ads contained embedded code masquerading as legitimate security alerts or service links. Once a user clicked on the ad, the code froze the computer and triggered a pop-up claiming to be from Microsoft global technical support, displaying a fake helpline number, police explained.

QUICK READ



Kusugal villagers protest neglected road repairs

HUBBALLI
Residents of Kusugal village in Hubballi taluk are protesting after road repair pits were left unattended, causing water to collect in the middle of Kumbara Oni in Ward 5. Villagers say the stagnant water has made walking difficult, especially for children and the elderly. Despite repeatedly informing the Gram Panchayat PDO, no action has been taken, leaving residents frustrated and angry. Locals questioned how funds were spent when the work remains incomplete. They criticised officials for neglecting basic responsibilities and allowing half-finished repairs to create daily hardships. Villagers urged authorities to immediately fix the road and prevent further inconvenience.

Arivu Loan Scheme application deadline extended

KOPPAL
The Karnataka Minority Development Corporation has extended the application deadline for the Arivu (Renewal) Loan Scheme 2025-26 to January 3. The scheme supports minority students selected through CET for degree and postgraduate courses, including medical, dental, engineering, architecture, MBA, MCA, law, agriculture, veterinary, and pharmacy programs. Applicants must pay 12% of the previous year's loan online while applying. Students who have not yet availed the Arivu Vidyabhyas loan, except those from the Christian community, are also eligible. Interested candidates can apply online at www.kmdconline.karnataka.gov.in. For assistance, the District Manager at Maulana Azad Bhavan, Koppal, can be contacted at 08539-225008.



Strict orders enforced around Gadag exam centers

GADAG
Gadag district will host the Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya entrance examination on December 13, from 11 am to 1.30 pm at 24 centers. To ensure fairness and maintain discipline, authorities have imposed prohibitory orders within a 200-meter radius of exam centers. Unauthorized persons, groups larger than five, and nearby shops offering copying or electronic services are restricted. Mobile phones, smartwatches, calculators, and other electronic devices are banned inside halls. Media coverage is limited to students entering and leaving. A vigilance squad and police security have been arranged to prevent malpractices and ensure smooth conduct, said District Magistrate C.N. Sridhar.

Working-class welfare push gains strong momentum

Since 2007, the Board has funded welfare schemes independently through a one-percent levy on construction costs under the BOCW Act

HUBBALLI

Karnataka Labour Minister Santosh S. Lad has called the state's latest welfare efforts a "true boost for the working class," as several new services for construction workers are being rolled out across districts. The state's Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board has launched 100 mobile health units to provide quick medical help at worksites. Each vehicle carries modern medical tools and is staffed with doctors, nurses, pharmacists, ANMs and lab technicians. These units visit worksites, conduct check-ups and keep

digital records. Every district has been given three vehicles, all tracked through GPS from a new command centre in Bengaluru. To support migrant workers, the state has also built temporary housing complexes in areas like Obade Nahalli, Kan-grali, Devak-tikoppa, Kalaburagi and B a d a n a - guppe-Kellambali. These homes are now open and aim to give workers a safe and stable place to stay.



The Board is preparing to set up special schools so workers' children can receive quality education without disruption. Officials say this will help children focus on their strengths and build better futures. Since 2007, the Board has been running various welfare schemes without direct central or state subsidies. Funds come from a one percent levy on construction costs under the Building and Other Construction Workers Act. The government recently cracked down on fake registrations that allowed

non-workers to misuse welfare benefits. Officials say this move saved crores of rupees and ensured support reaches the right people. Skill training centres are also being launched in partnership with private groups so young workers can learn new skills and find jobs. To make services easier to access, 43 AI-based Karmika Seva Kendras and mobile service centres named after Dr. B.R. Ambedkar have opened. Workers can register, upload documents and track applications through one digital system designed to make help faster and fairer. Officials expect more centres to open next year too.

Minister said the state is committed to being drug-free, with intensified operations, seizures, monitoring of students, and action against corrupt police and landlords

Karnataka police warned against drug trafficking involvement

BELAGAVI

Karnataka Home Minister G. Parameshwar has issued a strict warning to police personnel involved in drug trafficking, stating that FIRs will be filed and those found guilty will be dismissed from service. The announcement comes amid a rising concern over drug networks in rural areas, including Davanagere.

Speaking during the Legislative Council's

Question and Answer session, Minister Parameshwar said the state is committed to becoming drug-free.

He emphasized that operations against drugs have intensified, with thousands of kilograms of illegal substances seized and destroyed. Lower-level police personnel misleading the public by providing information to traffickers will also face action. Foreign students are being monitored, and landlords renting properties to traffickers are under scrutiny. An Anti-Narcotics Task Force (ANTF) has been established under the Additional Director General of Police to combat and prevent drug crimes, and the Home Minister expressed confidence in its effectiveness. Continuous awareness campaigns



are being conducted in schools and colleges to educate the youth about the dangers of drugs.

In addition to drug-related measures, Minister Parameshwar addressed personnel welfare issues. He said a proposal is under review to extend police officers' annual paid leave from 15 to 30 days, aligning it with the leave policies of the prison and fire departments. On recruitment and promotion concerns, the Home Minister said about 10,000 policemen have been promoted since he assumed office. New rules have been introduced to attract young talent, including a 70:30 ratio of direct recruitment to promotion and reservation for graduates and national or international medal-winning sportspersons. Minister Parameshwar reiterated that the government's zero-tolerance policy on drugs applies to all, including police personnel. These measures are part of broader efforts to maintain law and order, strengthen public trust, and curb the spread of drugs across Karnataka.



Central Government approves 9.67L tonnes of Tur Dal

HUBBALLI

The Central Government has approved the purchase of 9.67 lakh metric tonnes of tur dal (togari) from Karnataka under the Minimum Support Price (MSP) Scheme to support farmers facing low market prices. The procurement will be carried out through NAFED and NCCF, Union Minister Pralhad Joshi said.

Tur dal growers in Karnataka had appealed to Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on December 4 to urgently start purchases under the Support Price Scheme. The Minister responded quickly, allowing procurement to begin within five to six days.

The state government has been directed to implement the Price Support Scheme for the 2025-26 Kharif season starting December 10.

KARNATAKA Introduces Bill to end social boycott

BELAGAVI

The Karnataka Assembly witnessed the introduction of the Karnataka Protection of People from Social Boycott (Prevention, Prohibition and Remedies) Bill-2025, aimed at safeguarding citizens from social exclusion and discrimination. Minister H.C. Mahadevappa presented the bill during the winter session.

The bill proposes strict penalties for those involved in social boycotts, including a fine of up to Rs. 1 lakh and imprisonment for up to three years. It targets anyone who decides, organizes, participates in, or indirectly encourages boycotts. Even attending meetings or voting in favor of a boycott can be treated as a criminal offense. Victims can file complaints directly with the police or a judge, and District Magistrates may issue orders banning gatherings aimed at enforcing boycotts. Group-A officers may also be designated as Social Boycott Prevention Officers.

Under the bill, a wide range of discriminatory actions are prohibited. These include expulsion from villages or communities, blocking entry to public or religious places, denying education, healthcare, employment, or business opportunities, obstructing participation in social or religious events, and discrimination based on gender,



dress, language, or culture. Children's right to play together and citizens' human rights are also protected under this proposed law.

During the same Assembly session, the Greater Bengaluru (2nd Amendment) Bill was introduced to include members of the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, Vidhan Sabha, and Council in the Greater Bengaluru Authority. The bill also proposes re-division of newly added areas within three months and ensures representation of residents in municipal corporations until elections are conducted.

Additionally, Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao announced plans to fill vacant positions for doctors, nurses, and pharmacists in Teaching and Training (TT) posts within the coming months.

The introduction of these bills signals the government's focus on social justice, administrative efficiency, and improved governance, while also protecting citizens against discrimination in all forms.

Davanagere police recover worth stolen gold ₹51 lakh

DAVANAGERE

Davanagere police have successfully recovered gold jewelry worth Rs 51 lakh stolen by the notorious "Band Baja Gang" from Madhya Pradesh. The gang had stolen gold valued at Rs 67 lakhs during a wedding reception at a private resort in the district before fleeing to their home state.

According to SP Uma Prashant, the theft occurred on November 14 when the complainant's mother placed a bag containing the gold on the floor while watching a child dance. When she looked back, the bag was missing. A thorough search of the resort revealed no immediate clues. Police later reviewed CCTV footage and toll records to track the suspects.

The investigation led officers to the Sisodia gang, known for targeting wealthy weddings. The

gang often employs minors to commit theft, avoiding punishment, and uses deceptive tactics such as wearing wedding attire to blend in.

A Davanagere police team camped in Madhya Pradesh for 15 days before raiding the gang's village under Buda police station, Pachori taluk. During the raid, they recovered 524 grams of gold.

SP Prashant praised the police team for their persistence, highlighting officers DSP Basavaraj, Inspector Annaiah, and staff Prabhu for their dedication. He explained that the gang is highly skilled in avoiding law enforcement, often changing routes and taking long hours before leaving a crime scene. Despite these challenges, the team's efforts led to the successful recovery of most of the stolen gold.

The case serves as a warning against organized theft gangs operating across states.

K'taka to fill hospital vacancies soon

BELAGAVI

The Karnataka government has announced swift measures to fill vacant posts of doctors, nurses, and pharmacists in hospitals across the state within a month. Health and Family Welfare Minister Dinesh Gundurao said the initiative will strengthen healthcare services in community health centers, primary health centers, and taluk hospitals. During the Legislative Assembly's Question and Answer session on Thursday, Minister Gundurao said permission has already been granted to appoint 337 specialist doctors and 250 general duty medical officers on a contract basis. In addition, 1,500 doctors who completed studies under the government quota will undertake a one-year compulsory service in government hospitals. The Finance Department has also approved the direct recruitment of 120 specialist doctors and 100 general duty medical officers, a process that is already underway. A pending High Court case concerning specialist doctor recruitment is nearing resolution, allowing further appointments. Meanwhile, 600 nursing officers, 400 junior lab technicians, and 400 pharmacists will be hired on contract basis through counseling procedures within the month.

HUKKERI JATRA COUNTDOWN

Hukkeri Math Jatra Mahotsav set to begin

HAVERI

The countdown has begun for the grand Hukkeri Math Jatra Mahotsav, set to be held from December 25 to January 2 at Hukkeri Math in Haveri district. Lakhs of devotees from across Karnataka and neighboring states are expected to attend the week-long fair, which celebrates the legacy of Lingaykya Shiva Basava and Lingaykya Shivalingaswamy, former prelates of the Math.

The fair is known for its unique traditions. Portraits of these saints are carried in a wooden mandapa adorned with electric lights, marking the annual Hukkeri Math procession. The Jatra is among the earliest and largest fairs in North Karnataka, combining religious, cultural, and educational activities with farm-



er-centric events, including a popular cattle fair.

Devotees' hunger is met through elaborate preparations by the Dasoha Committee. Hundreds of women, along with members of Akkanabalaga, are preparing traditional sweets such as bondi, madali, and karchikai, while dishes like Sajjaka, Sheera, and Wheat Huggia will be prepared on-site. Devotees

also contribute homemade rotis and chutneys, which are distributed as prasadam to attendees. Hukkeri Math has a rich history, starting with Rachoteswara Sri, and evolving significantly under Lingaykya Shivabasava and Shivalingaswamy. Currently, Sadashivasree serves as Peethadhipati, overseeing educational institutions, Dasoha Mandirs, and programs feed-

ing poor children. A branch Math in Madanahippargagi is led by Peethadhipati Shivalingasri, drawing thousands of visitors.

This year's fair is particularly special, marking the Diamond Mahotsava of Ajjar. Highlights include the coronation program and celebrations of 51 years of the Math's high school and college. Devotees will also witness a unique recitation of Vachanamrutha by 50,000 participants, aiming for a record.

Dasoha Samiti President Mahantesh Halagannavar said the programs honor tradition while ensuring the spiritual and physical nourishment of devotees, offering both knowledge and prasadam in a festival that unites faith, culture, and community.

QUICK READ

Gadag Invites Applications for Youth Changer Posts

GADAG

The Gadag District Youth Empowerment and Sports Department has announced vacancies for the post of Youth Changer at Yuvaspandhan Kendra in Naragund and Shirahatti Taluks. Candidates must be graduates, women under 35, and possess strong communication, computer, and typing skills. Interested applicants are invited to submit their personal details to the department by December 17. The Assistant Director stated that further information can be obtained by calling 7349223455 or the office number 08372-238345. The initiative aims to engage enthusiastic youth in community development and empowerment programs. Eligible candidates are encouraged to apply promptly to be considered for these positions.

State-level jump rope games set on December 14

KOPPAL

The State Level Pre-University Colleges Jump Rope Games for 2025-26 will be held on December 14 at Smt. Indira Gandhi Residential School, Hanumasagar, starting at 10 am. Organized jointly by the District and Bangalore School Education Departments, the event will be inaugurated by Minister Thangadgi Shivaraj Sangappa, with sports flag hoisting by Minister S. Madhu Bangarappa and the torch lit by MLA Basavaraj Rayareddy. Several dignitaries, including MPs, MLAs, district officials, and education leaders, will attend. Principals, lecturers, physical education teachers, and local community members will participate, showcasing talent and promoting physical fitness among students across Koppal district.

Koppal to host divisional Dak Adalat

KOPPAL

The Koppal Division will hold a divisional-level Dak Adalat on December 16 at 10 am, chaired by the Superintendent of Post Offices, Koppal Division. Residents are encouraged to raise any complaints related to postal services. Complaints must be submitted through the respective Postmaster or Sub Postmaster and reach the Superintendent of Post Offices at Koppal Division, Koppal-583231, by 10 am on December 14. The initiative aims to address public grievances efficiently and improve postal services in the region. Officials urged citizens to take advantage of the Dak Adalat to ensure their concerns are heard and resolved promptly.

Gadag launches district pulse polio drive

Dr. Neelgund said plans ensure all under-five children vaccinated, using nursing students and mapped routes to reach 1,15,653

GADAG

Gadag district will conduct a Pulse Polio Vaccination Program on December 21, aiming to vaccinate all children under five years, District Collector C.N. Sridhar said. He urged parents to ensure their children receive the vaccine without fail.

Speaking at a preparatory meeting at the District Collector's office, Sridhar emphasized that the program's success depends on full coverage across the district. Officials were instructed to coordinate effectively and make neces-



sary arrangements for smooth implementation.

District Health and Family Welfare Officer Dr. S.S. Neelgund said that detailed plans have been made to reach every child under five,

including children from migrant families. Nursing college students will serve as vaccinators, and route maps have been prepared for door-to-door campaigns. The target is to vaccinate 1,15,653

children in the district.

Dr. Mukunda Galagali, SMO from WHO Bijapur Unit, added that the vaccination drive will run from 8 am to 5 pm on December 21 at booths across the district. From December 22 to 24, health workers will visit homes to cover any remaining children. A special campaign will also be held at traffic centers and high-risk areas during these four days.

District RCH Officer Dr. Meenakshi K.S. highlighted that the goal is to achieve 100 percent vaccination coverage for children aged 0-5 years.

The meeting was attended by Sub-Divisional Officer Gangappa M., District Surgeon Dr. Karigowda, District Leprosy Eradication Officer Dr. Rajendra Basarigida, District Surveyor Dr. Venkatesh Rathod, Gadag-Betageri Municipal Council Commissioner Rajaram Pawar, taluka medical officers, CPI representatives, and members of the District Pulse Polio Task Force Committee.

Authorities urged parents and guardians to cooperate fully and ensure no child misses this important preventive health measure.



Naragund leads Gadag district in water conservation

NARAGUND

Nargund taluk of Gadag district has brought pride to the region by securing the first position in Gadag district for water conservation under the Jalsanchai Janbhagidari 1.0 program, a key initiative of the Jal Shakti Abhiyan.

The efforts of Naragund taluk were instrumental in Gadag district achieving fourth place among 780 districts nationwide, earning a cash prize of Rs. 25 lakhs from the central government.

The campaign, launched with the motto "Unite for Water and Conserve Every Drop of Water", aims to promote rainwater harvesting, improve water quality, and address water scarcity through community participation.

From April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2025, Naragund taluk completed 4,029 water conservation works, including construction of individual and community water tanks, borewell recharges, rainwater harvesting systems, and check dams.

These works were implemented under schemes such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGA) and uploaded on the Jalsanchai Janbhagidari 1.0 portal, with the taluk contributing the highest number of photos of completed works in the district.

Central Nodal Officers visited Naragund between June 16 and 21, 2025, inspecting and reviewing water conservation works in various Gram Panchayats.

They expressed appreciation for the quality and scale of works, highlighting Naragund's role in Gadag district's recognition at the national level.

S.K. Inamdara, Executive Officer of Taluk Panchayat Naragund, said, "Naragund taluk has achieved first place in human days creation, e-KYC work of NREGA workers, and Jalsanchai Janbhagidari implementation in Gadag district."

Workshop highlights solid waste management importance

GADAG

Gadag hosted a one-day workshop on solid waste management on Thursday, emphasizing the need to maintain cleanliness and protect the environment, officials said.

Deputy Commissioner C.N. Sridhar inaugurated the workshop at the Zilla Panchayat Hall under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. He highlighted that a clean city promotes a healthy environment. "If parks and public spaces are kept clean, it improves the surrounding environment. Just as we keep our homes tidy, we must also care for public areas," he said. Sridhar

Commissioner Rajaram Pawar urged participants to use the workshop well, stressing ward-wise updates, responsible sanitary supervision, and cooperation to help make Gadag a clean city.

urged steps to prevent environmental pollution while focusing on city development and cleanliness.

Municipal Council member L.D. Chandavari stressed the public's role in waste management. "Maintaining city cleanliness is not just the responsibility of sanitary staff; citizens must also cooperate. Awareness programs in col-

leges can educate youth on proper waste management and disposal," he said.

Municipal Commissioner Rajaram Pawar encouraged participants to use the workshop effectively. "Community mobilizers should provide ward-wise updates, and sanitary supervisors must work responsibly with their suggestions. Cooperation from everyone is essential to make Gadag a clean city with basic amenities," he added.

The workshop brought together Municipal Council members Mahantesh Nalavadi, Sunanda Bakale, Shakuntala Akki, Lakshmi Shankar Khaki, Mehboobasaba Nadaf, along with Urban Development Authority Project Director Basanagowda Kotura, sanitary superintendents, and community mobilizers.

Assistant Executive Engineer (Environment) Anand Badi welcomed participants and outlined the program, highlighting the importance of collective efforts in solid waste management to ensure a cleaner and healthier Gadag.



Koppal farmers receive expert crop management advice

KOPPAL

The Agriculture Department, Koppal, in collaboration with ICAR-Krishi Vijnana Kendra, Gangavathi, has advised local farmers on controlling pests and diseases across various crops, including paddy, chickpea, jowar, sunflower, linseed, buckwheat, and sorghum.

Joint Director of Agriculture G.D. Krishnamurthy said that proper pest and disease management can significantly improve crop yield and quality. For paddy in the nursery stage, he recommended spraying Thiomethoxam 0.2 g or Preponil 2 ml per liter of water to control rice fly, and destroying grasses that harbor the pest. For chickpea crops in the growth or flowering stage, pinching shoots after 35-40 days encourages branching and higher yield. Krishnamurthy suggested



spraying Chickpea Magic at 10 g per liter during flowering. To manage stem borer, farmers should use Emamectin Benzoate 0.2 g or Spinosad 0.1 ml per liter, and for leaf blight, 2.5 g SAFF per liter of water. Armyworm in jowar can be treated with Emamectin Benzoate 0.5 g or Corentyron Iliprol 0.4 g per liter. Sunflower crops require Thiomethoxam 0.2 g or Fipronil 1 ml per liter to manage sap-sucking insects. Alfalfa crops at pod-setting stage need Imidacloprid 0.5 ml per liter to control aphids, while beans require Hex-

aconazole 1 ml per liter for powdery mildew control. Sorghum pod borers can be reduced with Emamectin Benzoate 0.2 g or Spinosad 0.1 ml per liter, and powdery mildew should be managed using water-soluble sulfur at 2 g per liter, with affected plants uprooted and burned.

Krishnamurthy advised farmers to contact their Taluk Assistant Agriculture Director, Agriculture Officer, Farmer Contact Center, or ICAR-Agricultural Science Center, Gangavathi, for more guidance and technical support.



Courts ensure human rights for all citizens

KOPPAL

Koppal witnessed a gathering to mark Human Rights Day at the city's Government Pre-University College, where legal experts and social activists emphasized the importance of knowing and protecting one's rights.

District Bar Association President A.V. Kanavi said, "District Court, High Court, and Supreme Court are there to protect human rights. Anyone facing injustice can approach these courts for relief." He stressed that human rights ensure equality, freedom, and fraternity for everyone. "Even if some rights are violated, you can seek help from the Tahsildar or District Collector," he added.

S.A. Gafar, District Coordinator of the Fraternity Committee, urged students to understand and apply human rights in daily life. He highlighted the importance of knowing the rights of children, youth, and women, noting that awareness protects citizens from injustice. He quoted Dr. B.R. Ambedkar,

emphasizing that the Constitution's value depends on citizens following it.

Channabasappa Appanavar, District President of the Pastors Association, cited a success story of student Manjunath Devappa Kinnal, who approached the High Court regarding school uniform provisions. His efforts resulted in a statewide order granting two sets of uniforms to all school children, ensuring students' rights were recognized.

The program included a poem on human rights recited by teacher Mrs. Annapurna Padmasali. Vice Principal Abdul Khayyum Pradeghar presided over the event, with several teachers and activists present, including Hulugappa Addmani, A.A. Nadaf, M.H. Kuri, Sujatha Mudgal, and Bhagyalakshmi. Activist Galepp Poojar Lebageri welcomed the gathering, and teacher Gangadhar Hiremath proposed a vote of thanks.

The event underlined the message that understanding one's rights is the first step toward justice and equality in society.

Farmers urged to prioritize rice crop growth

KOPPAL

Koppal district, a major agricultural hub, has been urged to give more priority to rice cultivation, said Deputy Commissioner Dr. Suresh B. Itnal. He made the remarks while inaugurating the Siridhanya Mela Jatha, held as part of the International Trade Fair 2026 at Sri Gavisiddheshwara Mutt in Koppal, organized in collaboration with the District Administration, Zilla Panchayat, and Agriculture Department. Dr. Itnal highlighted that Koppal contributes around 10 percent of Karnataka's green produce and is renowned as the state's granary of rice. "Earlier, rice farmers were considered poor, but today, crops like ragi, baraga,

and haraka fetch high prices in the market. Cereals provide essential fiber and promote good health," he said. He added that cereal cultivation currently spans 6,000 hectares in the district and needs to be expanded further. Organic farming should also receive more focus. The Deputy Commissioner emphasized the PMFME scheme, which supports maize cultivation and helps farmers transform into entrepreneurs by producing value-added products. The scheme provides technical training and a 50 percent subsidy for maize processing, packaging, and branding, which can boost farmers' incomes. Joint Director of Agriculture, G.D. Krishnamurthy, said the district-level grain

fair aims to raise awareness about crop processing, value addition, and increasing farm income. Yogini Akka of Prajapita Brahmakumari Ishwari University urged people to consume grains for health benefits and reduce reliance on medicines. Shri Sha.Br.Dr. Gurushanthaveera Shivacharya Mahaswamy of Itagi added that eating grains can increase lifespan and protect against fatal diseases.

Officials present included Koppal Zilla Panchayat CEO Varmit Negi, Deputy Agriculture Director L. Siddeshwar, Agricultural Technology Institute head Veeranna Kamatar, taluk agriculture officers, district agricultural implement vendors, and police personnel.

FESTIVAL READINESS URGED

Authorities gear up for grand Koppal Jatra

KOPPAL

Officials have been urged to make thorough preparations for the Sri Gavisiddheshwara Jatra Mahotsava, set to take place on January 5, 2026. The event, often called the Kumbh Mela of South India, is expected to attract lakhs of devotees from across the state.

Deputy Commissioner Dr. Suresh B. Itnal emphasized the need for a well-organized fair while addressing a preliminary meeting at the District Collector's Office Hall on Thursday.

"The district administration will extend all possible support to ensure the festival is



peaceful and orderly," he said.

Authorities were advised to ensure basic amenities such as drinking water, electricity, and vehicle parking. Committees will be formed with officers from various departments to share responsibilities and streamline preparations. CCTV cameras and proper police security will be in-

stalled at key locations to maintain safety during the chariot festival and other days of the fair. Ambulances and fire engines will be stationed within the Math premises, and barricades will be arranged to allow emergency access.

Municipal authorities have been asked to deploy additional staff for cleanliness and

water supply. GESCOM officials will take precautionary steps to prevent electrical mishaps. Zilla Panchayat CEO Varmit Negi instructed special attention to supplying clean drinking water to the Maha Dasoh, while health and food safety officers will coordinate with kitchen staff to maintain hygiene. Emergency health units with specialist doctors and nurses will also be ready.

District Superintendent of Police Dr. Ram L. Arasiddi said large-scale police deployment and traffic management measures will be in place, and public information will be shared through the media.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, ANJUM BANU (Old name)

address: MARATHA COLONY ROAD DHARWAD.

Has changed my name:

ANJUM BANU SOUDAGAR (New name)

for all purposes.

Vide Affidavit dated:

10/12/2025

before notary public Hubli.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, RAJANI NIMSARKAR

(Old name)

address:

AT POST

UGAR KHURD

DIST BELGAUM.

Has changed my name: RAJANI BABASAHEB CHINCHALI (new name)

for all purposes.

Vide Affidavit dated:

10/12/2025

before notary public Hubli

DIPR/Kalaburagi/849/KSMC&A/2025-26



QUICK READ

Nadda accuses Nath, Siddaramaiah of sidelining Vande Mataram

New Delhi

Leader of House in the Rajya Sabha, J.P. Nadda, on Thursday sharpened his attack on the Congress, accusing its leaders of repeatedly undermining Vande Mataram. In a pointed intervention during the debate on national symbols, Nadda alleged that former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath had deleted Vande Mataram from official practice on the first working day of every month, and claimed that Siddaramaiah in Karnataka asked Congress members not to sing Vande Mataram on Constitution Day. Nadda's remarks came against the backdrop of a wider discussion on the historical and cultural significance of the song.

BJD forms seven-member fact-finding team to assess ground situation

Bhubaneswar

Following directions of BJD President Naveen Patnaik, the party on Thursday formed a seven-member fact-finding team to assess the current situation in Malkangiri district, where large-scale violence was reported after the body of a 51-year-old tribal woman was found. The team comprises Manas Madkami (to coordinate), Manohar Randhari, MLA, Ramesh Majhi, ex-Minister, Pradeep Majhi, ex-MP, Rabi Nanda, ex-Minister, Ishwar Panigrahi, and Laxmipriya Nayak, MLA Candidate, Chitrakonda. The team has been entrusted with the responsibility of visiting the affected areas, assessing the ground situation, and submitting a detailed report to the Party President.

Ajay Gupta, partner of Luthra brothers, sent to seven-day custody

Panaji

Delhi-based businessman Ajay Gupta, one of the co-owners of the fire-devastated 'Birch by Romeo Lane' nightclub in Goa, has now been sent to seven days of police custody for further investigation. Advocate Rohan Dessai, representing Gupta, said: Ajay Gupta is fully cooperating with the investigation. The Goa Police had sought 10 days of custody, but the court granted seven days. The investigation is ongoing, so at this stage, I cannot comment on his role. The Goa Police arrested Gupta, a sleeping partner of club owners Saurabh and Gaurav Luthra.

RS Chairman Radhakrishnan warns on election debate limits

New Delhi

Ahead of a scheduled discussion in the Rajya Sabha, Chairman C.P. Radhakrishnan reminded members of the constitutional and procedural boundaries governing parliamentary debate, particularly when it touches upon institutions of high authority. He underscored that the Election Commission of India (ECI) is an autonomous constitutional body under Article 324 of the Constitution, and its day-to-day functioning does not fall under the direct purview of the Government of India. Chairman Radhakrishnan referred to Rule 238 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Council of States.

Ethanol-Blended Petrol Saved Over ₹1.40 Lakh Cr in Forex, Says Gadkari

Gadkari told Lok Sabha ethanol-blended petrol reduced fuel imports, boosted farmer income and showed no negative vehicle impact.

NEW DELHI

Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari informed the Lok Sabha on Thursday that the use of ethanol-blended petrol has enabled the country to save more than ₹1.40 lakh crore in foreign exchange while simultaneously offering significant benefits to farmers.

Addressing concerns raised by several members, Gadkari said that extensive testing has revealed no negative impact on vehicles using ethanol-blended fuel. He emphasised that the rollout of E20 petrol is a major step towards a cleaner and greener



future, highlighting that ethanol-blended petrol helps reduce pollution and lowers India's reliance on expensive crude oil imports.

The minister also noted that farmers have earned nearly ₹40,000 crore by supplying raw materials such as sugarcane and maize used in etha-

nol production. This, he said, has strengthened rural income and encouraged sustainable agricultural practices.

Responding to questions about vehicle compatibility with E10 and E20 fuel standards, Gadkari outlined the government's policy framework. He said vehicle manufacturers must declare whether a particular model is compatible with E20 fuel, and this information must be displayed clearly on the vehicle through a visible sticker.

Gadkari further clarified that vehicles sold before April 1, 2023, are compatible with E10 fuel, whereas those sold after this date have been manufactured using materials

compliant with E20 standards. Safety guidelines for E20 fuel have been formulated through BIS specifications and Automotive Industry Standards, ensuring that drivability, startability and compatibility of metal and plastic components remain unaffected.

The minister assured the House that no phase-out or modification of older, non-E20-compliant vehicles is necessary. Citing a study conducted by ARAI, IOCL and SIAM, he said normal wear and tear from using ethanol-blended fuel can be effectively managed through routine servicing and that no special retrofitting programme is required.

Tej Pratap Yadav's JJD begins new membership campaign Friday, signalling deeper political separation from RJD and Lalu–Tejashwi leadership.

Tej Pratap Yadav's JJD to Launch Major Membership Drive Amid Growing Family Rift

PATNA

Former minister Tej Pratap Yadav's Janshakti Janata Dal (JJD) will launch a large-scale membership drive from Friday as part of an ambitious plan to expand the party's organisational base. Tej Pratap, who served twice as a minister in Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's government, is preparing for a significant restructuring and consolidation effort aimed at strengthening the JJD ahead of future elections.

The mega membership drive for the 2025–28 period will be launched at 1 p.m.

from his official residence at 26 M Stand Road. Announcing the initiative on social media, Tej Pratap described it as more than a political programme—calling it an ideological movement and an expansion of the family.

The move is expected to add fresh turbulence to Bihar's already volatile political landscape. Tej Pratap has been firm about carving out an identity independent of the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) and distancing himself from the Lalu–Tejashwi camp. The RJD's traditional support base, built on Lalu Prasad Yadav's social engineering and



loyal voter groups, may face new challenges as Tej Pratap attempts to position himself as a standalone political force.

With strong visibility, a distinct public persona and considerable social media influence, Tej Pratap has the potential to make inroads

into the RJD's core voter blocs. The 2025 Assembly elections had already exposed the widening rift between the Yadav brothers, with both fielding competing candidates and campaigning in rival constituencies.

What began as an internal family dispute has now formally escalated into a full-fledged political confrontation. Tej Pratap's repeated declaration that he would rather die than return to the RJD underscores the irreparable nature of the divide and indicates that any possibility of reconciliation is effectively off the table.

Lack of level playing field for parties in elections, says Ajay Maken in RS

NEW DELHI

Congress MP Ajay Maken delivered a pointed speech in the Rajya Sabha, questioning whether India truly lives up to its claim of being the mother of democracy. He argued that recent developments provide loud evidence that democracy may not be alive in practice, and outlined three essential elements of a democratic process -- a level playing field, transparency, and credibility.

On the first point, Maken drew from his experience as Treasurer of the Congress party. He said he had examined the accounts of his party and those of other political parties after elections, and found glaring disparities. According to him, the amounts in rival parties' bank accounts shot up after 2014, raising questions about fairness.



How is this a level playing field? he asked.

He further alleged that Congress bank accounts were frozen ahead of the 2024 general election and only unfrozen after the results were declared, undermining the principle of equal opportunity.

Turning to transparency, Maken flagged inconsistencies in voter turnout figures in Haryana, which he said varied across announcements by the Election Commission.

He also criticised amendments that prevented access to CCTV footage of polling booths, arguing that



KIIFB Moves High Court to Quash ED Notice on Masala Bond Usage

KOCHI

The Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB) on Thursday approached the High Court seeking to quash the Enforcement Directorate's adjudication notice issued in relation to alleged violations in its 2019 Masala Bond transaction. After hearing initial arguments, the court posted the matter for further consideration on Tuesday, when it will examine the request for an interim stay.

In its petition, KIIFB urged the court to suspend all proceedings arising from the ED's notice until a final decision is reached. The notice stems from the agency's objection that KIIFB diverted Masala Bond funds for real estate purchases an allegation the state financing body strongly disputes.

KIIFB argued that the funds raised were strictly deployed for state development projects, including land acquisition required for infrastructure expansion. It contended that such land purchases did not constitute real estate activity, as claimed by the ED.

The Enforcement Directorate, however, maintains that funds raised via Masala Bonds must be used only for

KIIFB approached High Court seeking suspension of ED proceedings over alleged Masala Bond misuse amid sharp legal and political dispute.

projects constructed on land already owned by the government or land acquired through non-bond resources. According to submissions made by the Additional Solicitor General, using bond proceeds for any form of land purchase even for government infrastructure violates the usage restrictions governing internationally raised funds.

The ED alleges that KIIFB used ₹467 crore of the ₹2,672 crore raised through the Masala Bond to acquire land, thereby breaching provisions of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA). In addition to KIIFB, notices have also been issued to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, former Finance Minister Thomas Isaac and several senior officials involved in the bond mobilisation exercise. The adjudication process follows the ED's earlier report claiming that the Masala Bond fundraising involved procedural violations under FEMA.

Odisha constitutes special court to fast-track trial of cases against Maoist leader Azad

BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha Home Department has constituted a special court for the speedy trial of more than 35 cases pending against jailed Maoist leader Dunna Kesava Rao, alias Azad. Maoist leader Azad, who surrendered to the Andhra Pradesh police on May 18, 2011, has been in Odisha jail since June 1, 2011.

Now, therefore in compliance of the order of Supreme Court and High Court of Orissa, the State Government in consultation with the High Court of Orissa, do hereby establish court of Additional District and Session Judge at Paralakhemundi in addition to the existing number of such courts in the judgship of Gajapati with effect from the date the said court functions with the local limits of jurisdiction in the entire state of Odisha and fix the place of sitting of the said court at Paralakhemundi for speedy trial of cases pending against D.Kesava Rao, reads the order of Home Department.

The special court, however, will not hear the case registered against Azad under the POCSO Act, 2012, at Rayagada.

Notably, Azad faces 37 pending criminal cases in Odisha and Andhra Pradesh. He was the prime accused in the 2008 killing of VHP leader Swami Laxmananda Saraswati, which sparked communal violence in Kandhamal that left 39 people dead and thousands of homes destroyed.

He is also charged in the 2008 Nayagarh police armoury attack, which killed 14 people, including 13 police personnel, and in the 2006 R. Udaygiri jail attack. Another murder case against him is registered at the Tumudibandha police station in Kandhamal.

BJP AMIT SHAH

BJP Rallies Behind Amit Shah After Fierce Lok Sabha Clash Over Electoral Reforms

NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Thursday firmly backed Union Home Minister Amit Shah after he launched a scathing attack on the Congress and other opposition parties in the Lok Sabha, accusing them of spreading misinformation about the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) and attempting to malign India's democratic processes. Shah asserted that the Narendra Modi government will not allow infiltrators to get voting rights, triggering an intense exchange with Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi.



Outside Parliament, Union Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal defended Shah's statements, saying the Home Minister had responded comprehensively to every point raised by the opposition during the debate on electoral reforms. He responded to every point raised

by the opposition, but they did not listen to his answers in full, Meghwal remarked.

Union Minister Virendra Kumar also expressed support, stating, What he said to safeguard the future of the coming generations is absolutely correct.

Several BJP MPs echoed these sentiments. Praveen Khandelwal said, The Congress' narrative was completely exposed. Amit Shah laid out historical facts and dismantled their claims. The conspiracy woven by Congress and other opposition parties was fully unmasked in the House yesterday.

BJP MP Samik Bhattacharya reiterated long-standing party concerns over demographic changes in border regions. The BJP has long warned that a silent demographic shift is underway. In West Bengal, especially in border districts like Darjeel-

ing and North Bengal, demographics are changing because of the influx of Rohingya and Bangladeshi immigrants, he said.

Dinesh Sharma, another BJP MP, added that Shah had effectively countered what he described as false claims and propaganda spread by the Congress. They had no reply, he asserted.

The Congress, however, sharply criticised the Home Minister's conduct. Congress MP Sukhdeo Bhagat said that while Amit Shah holds a respected office, his demeanour in the House fell short of parliamentary expectations.

QUICK READ

Cable landing station to be set up in Gujarat’s Dhuvaran

Ahmedabad
The Gujarat government has taken a major step toward strengthening its digital and data infrastructure with the signing of a memorandum of understanding to set up a cable landing station (CLS) project in Dhuvaran village of Anand district, government officials said on Thursday. The agreement was formalised at Gandhinagar’s Mahatma Mandir in the presence of Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel and Deputy Chief Minister Harsh Sanghavi during the Regional AI Impact Conference. The MoU was signed between the Gujarat government, Gujarat International Finance Tec-City and Sharjah-based Henox IT and Data Centers Private Limited.

NIA arrests 5 accused in 2019 Ramalingam murder case

New Delhi
In another breakthrough in the 2019 Ramalingam murder case, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) has arrested two absconding proclaimed offenders and three more harbourers of the assailants involved in the brutal killing, the agency said on Thursday. Ramalingam was hacked to death in Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu, on 5th February 2019, allegedly by members of the banned Popular Front of India (PFI). Natives of Thanjavur district of Tamil Nadu, Mohamed Burhanudeen and Mohamed Nabil Hasan, were POs on the run for the past nearly seven years.

J&K L-G gives job appointment letters to 41 kin of terror victims

Jammu
J&K Lt Governor, Manoj Sinha, said on Thursday that for long the victims of terrorism were left to struggle in silence as he handed over 41 job appointment letters to next of kin of terror victims. Appointment letters were also handed over to 22 beneficiaries in Age relaxation cases and 19 wards of J&K Police martyrs under Compassionate Appointment Rules SRO-43 and Rehabilitation Assistance Scheme (RAS). Earlier, on July 28, 2025, the Lieutenant Governor had handed over the appointment letters to 94 Next of Kin (NoKs) of terror victims from the Jammu division.

Manoj Tiwari Hails Modi Govt’s Women-Centric Reforms, Slams Opposition’s Hidden Mentality

Manoj Tiwari defended Modi government’s women empowerment efforts while criticising Opposition walkout and alleged indifference toward social reforms.

NEW DELHI

In a forceful press conference at the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) headquarters on Thursday, Lok Sabha MP Manoj Tiwari delivered a spirited defence of the Narendra Modi government’s decade-long achievements in women’s empowerment, even as he launched a scathing critique of the Opposition’s approach to key social issues.

The North-east Delhi MP, known equally for his political



cal presence and his earlier career as a Bhojpuri singer, addressed a hall packed with journalists. Seamlessly blending personal anecdotes with data-driven arguments, Tiwari sought to highlight what he

described as a historic transformation in India’s gender landscape.

I’m raising an important topic, he began, before accusing the Opposition of harbouring a hidden mentality that, according to him, prevents meaningful progress. Drawing a direct parallel to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, Tiwari alleged that the Opposition walked out when the issue of taking action against infiltrators came up, referring to recent disruptions in Parliament.

Tiwari evoked a stark emotional contrast while describing the shift in societal attitudes toward the birth of daughters. When daughters were born in this country, people considered it a crisis; the era of female infanticide had begun, he recalled somberly. Today, when daughters are born, celebrations are held, and I am also a part of it. Today, we are celebrating with great fanfare.

He credited the Modi-led government for enabling this cultural transformation, ques-

tioning whether similar efforts were ever prioritised under the United Progressive Alliance (UPA). Did the UPA government ever pay any attention to this? he asked. It is the government’s job to remove the superstitions of society.

Tiwari highlighted the passage of the Nari Shakti Vandana Adhiniyam the Women’s Reservation Bill as a landmark accomplishment that symbolises the empowerment of women across the country.

Woman teacher attacked by husband in Kerala school

KOTTAYAM

In a shocking incident, a woman teacher was allegedly attacked inside her school on Thursday by her husband, triggering panic among staff and students. The incident took place at Poovathumoodu School in Ettumanoor around 10.30 a.m., when the accused, identified as Kochumon, entered the campus and assaulted his wife Doniya, a teacher at the school. According to school authorities, the attack occurred inside the headmistress’ room.

Kochumon allegedly used a sharp object to stab Doniya on her neck after asking to meet her. The teacher, who sustained injuries, was immediately shifted to the hospital. Initial reports said her injuries are not life-threatening. School staff said the assault appears to be linked to family issues. Earlier in the day, around 9.30 a.m., Kochumon had visited the school and enquired about his wife.

The headmistress informed him that Doniya had not yet arrived. He left the premises but returned about an hour later. When he came back at 10.30 a.m., the headmistress told him that Doniya was in class teaching. Kochumon claimed he had come to give her a book and insisted on meeting her. Believing the request to be harmless, the headmistress summoned the teacher to her office.

It was at this point, staff said, that the assault took place. Hearing Doniya’s screams, other teachers rushed to the room. By the time they reached, Kochumon had fled the school. Staff members said the entire incident unfolded within minutes, leaving the school community stunned. Police have launched an investigation and are searching for the accused.

Gujarat CM Bhupendra Patel Unveils Major AI Initiatives at Regional AI Impact Conference

AHMEDABAD

Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel inaugurated the Regional AI Impact Conference at Mahatma Mandir in Gandhinagar, declaring that under Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visionary leadership, Artificial Intelligence has transformed from a technological tool into a national mission powering India’s progress. Deputy Chief Minister Harsh Sanghavi and Science and Technology Minister Arjun Modhwadia were also present at the event.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister said AI is significantly strengthening citizen welfare, boosting transparency, and accelerating Gujarat’s journey toward becoming a future-ready state. He announced the operational launch of the Gujarat Unified Digital Stack — a compre-



hensive platform designed to make digital governance smarter, faster and more citizen-centric. With unified data-sharing across government departments, citizens will be able to access all services through a single platform, while real-time analytics will help improve the effectiveness of government schemes.

As part of the event, CM Patel unveiled the Gujarat AI Stack, a suite of six plug-and-play artificial intelligence tools aimed at enhancing gov-

ernance efficiency. The tools include Agriculture AI, scheme eligibility checks, a procurement chatbot, a grievance classifier, a document extractor and chat management solutions.

In addition, the Gujarat Cloud Adoption Guidelines 2025 were released to strengthen digital governance infrastructure, ensuring improved security, scalability and AI-readiness. The guidelines will enable easier access to MeitY-empowered cloud

CM Bhupendra Patel launched Gujarat’s new AI governance tools and digital infrastructure, highlighting AI’s role in citizen welfare and development.

services and national GPU compute resources.

The state government also signed two major Memorandums of Understanding — one with Google and another with Bhashini — focused on developing multilingual AI systems, Gujarati-language models and digital public services.

Further bolstering its digital ecosystem, Gujarat will soon see GIFT City and Henox jointly establish a Cable Landing Station, enhancing global digital connectivity and supporting the growth of green data centres in the state.

CM Nitish Kumar inspected Kesariya tourist centre, health services and welfare institutions, urging officials to enhance facilities.

Nitish Kumar reviews tourist, health and welfare facilities in Champaran

PATNA

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Thursday conducted an extensive review of development works in East Champaran, beginning with an inspection of the under-construction Tourist Facility Centre at Kesariya. He examined the auditorium and various amenities being created at the site and instructed officials to speed up the project. Kumar noted that the Kesariya Buddhist Stupa draws a significant number of domestic and international visitors, and the new facility will enhance the tourism experience while showcasing Bihar’s rich Buddhist heritage.

One of the key attractions of the upcoming centre is a 5D theatre with a seating capacity of 48, designed to present visual content on important Buddhist teachings. The facility will also include a Bihar Pavilion displaying educational exhibits and curated frames depicting the state’s historical and cultural legacy. More than 90 sculptures will be showcased in dedicated display boxes, complemented by artistic installations placed across the open areas. Additionally, eight replicas of major Buddhist monuments of Bihar will be installed at the four corners of the complex.

The Chief Minister also reviewed the ongoing conser-

vation and development works at the Kesariya Buddhist Stupa complex. He directed officials to maintain strict safety standards and ensure proper upkeep of visitor facilities.

During his visit, Nitish Kumar inspected the Health and Wellness Centre at Tajpur village, where he reviewed medical services and interacted with the attending doctor. He assessed cleanliness, medicine availability, free vaccination services and overall service quality. The Chief Minister distributed Ayushman cards to beneficiaries and directed that the road leading to the centre be widened to improve access.

CPI(M) to mobilise people demanding house pattas for long term residents

CHENNAI

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) has announced a major public mobilisation in Chennai on December 16, urging the Tamil Nadu government to immediately issue house pattas to long-term urban residents who have lived for decades without legal ownership documents. Addressing reporters, CPI(M) State Secretary P. Shanmugam said nearly one-third of households in Chennai and its suburbs still lack pattas, despite being permanent residents for decades.

Shanmugam criticized successive governments for announcing patta regularisation schemes that have failed to benefit poor and working-class families. He highlighted that rapid, unplanned urbanisation has converted waterbodies and open spaces into residential areas, often with government-facilitated infrastructure such as roads, water, electricity, schools, ration shops, and property tax collection. Despite this, residents are still labelled encroachers, with excuses like water catchment classification, railway land restrictions, or trust property disputes.

He warned that Scheduled Caste communities in central Chennai face repeated displacement, and flagged ongoing issues for resettled residents in Kannagi Nagar and Semmancheri. The CPI(M) presented a detailed charter demanding a comprehensive land re-survey, issuance of pattas on government and private lands, sale deeds, and name transfers for housing board and slum clearance board allottees.

THACKERAY BLASTS AMIT SHAH

Uddhav Thackeray criticises HM Amit Shah, CM Fadnavis over Hindutva and corruption

NAGPUR

Sena Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray on Thursday slammed the Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Hindutva and corruption while responding to the criticism by Fadnavis and Shah against him regarding his alleged pursuit of a minority vote bank. Thackeray, who interacted with the party legislators and office bearers at the Vidhan Bhavan during the ongoing winter session, responded to CM Fadnavis’ dig that ‘Kon Hotas Tu, Kay Zalas Tu...’ (Who were you, what have you become?), which was also shared alongside a video of Amit Shah’s Parliament speech.

He hit back, targeting the Chief Minister over corrup-



tion. I feel pity for the Chief Minister. You took so many corrupt people; you took them under your own blanket. This is not the culture of Maharashtra, he said.

Thackeray also slammed Amit Shah and the RSS, asserting that they do not need

to teach him about Hindutva. Amit Shah is very Hindutvavadi (pro Hindutva), but he doesn’t need to teach me Hindutva. The RSS should definitely not teach me, he stated.

Thackeray then challenged Shah over the issue of beef

consumption, mentioning a photograph from December 9.

You talk about ‘Vande Mataram.’ The minister in your cabinet, Kiren Rijiju, says he eats beef. This photo is from December 9, where he is dining with them. You call yourself Hindutvavadi, then will you demand the resignation of a minister who eats beef? he asked.

He added, Before speaking about me, you should look at the Hindutva within you and your party.

Thackeray also questioned the actions of Jay Shah, Amit Shah’s son and BCCI Secretary.

Amit Shah’s son, Jay Shah, makes India play with Pakistan. Now you tell me, is Jay Shah not a Hindutvavadi, which is why he makes [India] play with Pakistan? he asked.

RSS Patha Sanchalans Prove Congress’ Allegations Wrong, Says Union Minister Pralhad Joshi

NEW DELHI

Union Minister for Food and Consumer Affairs Pralhad Joshi on Thursday hit back strongly at the Congress, declaring that the party’s long-standing criticism of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) had been disproved by the actions of its own government in Karnataka.

Speaking to the media, Joshi said that Congress leaders, who ignite with anger whenever they hear the name RSS, have now received an answer from their own administration. He highlighted that as many as 518 RSS patha sanchalans were conducted across Karnataka in a highly disciplined manner, contradicting the Congress’ false propaganda that allowing such marches would lead to unrest.

Joshi criticised the Congress’ repeated allegation that



granting permission for RSS marches would trigger chaos, violence or communal tension. Despite holding such a large number of marches, not a single untoward incident has been reported, he said, adding that this itself exposes the misinformation spread by the Congress.

Taking a sharp jab at the party, Joshi said, Just hearing the name RSS makes Congress leaders burn with irrita-

tion. Their own government has now given them the appropriate reply.

Calling the successful organisation of 518 marches a testament to the RSS’ discipline, he said the events reinforce the organisation’s core philosophy of Nation First and dedicated national service.

Joshi urged Congress leaders to draw lessons from the situation, asserting that the RSS has always worked for national interest and public awakening rather than promoting communal divisions. Let Congress understand that RSS is a vigilant, nation-centric organisation. Its mission is to awaken the country, not sow communalism, he said.

The minister’s remarks come amid political tensions in Karnataka, where the scale of RSS activities has become a point of contention between the ruling Congress and the BJP.

QUICK READ

Magnitude 4.0 earthquake shakes Tibet Plateau

TIBET

A magnitude 4.0 earthquake struck Tibet on Thursday at a shallow depth of 10 km, the National Center for Seismology reported. Shallow quakes like this can cause stronger ground shaking, raising the risk of damage and casualties. The Tibetan Plateau is seismically active because the Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates collide, creating the Himalayas. The region experiences frequent earthquakes along strike-slip and normal faults, with major quakes historically reaching magnitude 8.0. Seven north-south faults in southern Tibet formed 4–8 million years ago. While this tremor was moderate, the plateau remains vulnerable to seismic activity due to ongoing tectonic uplifts and fault movements.

Pakistan's former spy chief jailed for fourteen years

ISLAMABAD

A Pakistan military court on Thursday sentenced former spy chief Faiz Hamid to 14 years in prison for allegedly interfering in the country's politics, the army announced. Hamid, once head of Pakistan's powerful intelligence agency, faced multiple charges related to political meddling. The verdict underscores the military's ongoing influence in Pakistan's governance and highlights accountability measures within its own ranks. While specific details of the case remain limited, the sentence sends a strong signal about the army's stance on political interference.

US, Japan conduct joint military drill show

TOKYO

U.S. B-52 bombers joined Japanese F-35 and F-15 fighter jets over the Sea of Japan, Tokyo said, in a show of force after recent Chinese and Russian military exercises. Japan's Defence Ministry said the joint flight reaffirmed both nations' readiness to prevent any attempts to alter the regional status quo by force. The drill followed Chinese-Russian bomber flights and carrier exercises that prompted Japan and South Korea to scramble jets. While China described the U.S.-Japan operation as unnecessary, the exercise highlights rising tensions in East Asia. Taiwan also reported increased Chinese military activity nearby.

Airstrike destroys Myanmar hospital, dozens killed

Residents say the airstrike surprised the hospital; Mrauk U, under Arakan Army control, faces ongoing conflict since 2021 coup

RAKHINE

At least 30 people were killed and more than 70 others injured when a hospital in Myanmar's Rakhine state was hit by an airstrike, local witnesses and a rebel group reported on Thursday. The Mrauk U General Hospital, a 300-bed facility, was overflowing with patients at the time of the attack.

Khine Thu Kha, spokesperson for the Arakan Army, which controls much of the region, said the hospital was "completely destroyed." Aid workers described scenes of devastation, with collapsed roofs, shattered beams, and bodies lying on the ground. Remaining patients were



evacuated to safer locations.

The attack comes amid intensified fighting in Myanmar, where the ruling military junta has used airstrikes more frequently to target areas held by resistance groups. According to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project,

the military carried out 2,165 airstrikes from January to late November 2025, up from 1,716 in the entire previous year.

Residents say the airstrike caught the hospital off guard, as there had been no recent fighting in Mrauk U town-

ship, which has been under Arakan Army control since last year. The Arakan Army and other resistance groups have been battling the junta since the 2021 military coup that overthrew the elected government led by Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi.

Aid agencies warn that attacks on hospitals and civilians have created a humanitarian crisis in Rakhine state. "People are terrified to seek treatment, and basic services are collapsing," said a local aid worker.

The airstrike highlights the growing risks faced by civilians in conflict zones and raises urgent calls for protection of hospitals and human lives in Myanmar.



Ukraine launches major drone attack on Russia

MOSCOW

Russia reported a large-scale drone attack by Ukraine on Thursday, with at least 287 drones shot down across several regions, including the Moscow area. Moscow and its surrounding region, home to more than 22 million people, saw around 40 drones intercepted, according to Russia's Defence Ministry.

The full extent of damage from the attacks remains unclear, but flights at all major Moscow airports were temporarily diverted. This latest strike comes amid ongoing tensions as Russia continues its invasion of Ukraine, which began in February 2022. Currently, Russia controls just under one-fifth of Ukrainian territory. Ukraine has been increasingly targeting Russian energy infrastructure with missiles and drones. On Wednesday, Ukrainian sea drones disabled a tanker transporting Russian oil through Ukraine's exclusive economic zone in the Black

Sea, heading to the Russian port of Novorossiysk. The ongoing conflict has also affected international trade, causing insurance costs for ships in the Black Sea to rise sharply. Insurers are now reviewing policies daily due to the risk posed by ongoing military actions. This attack represents a significant escalation in Ukraine's aerial and maritime tactics against Russia. Analysts say the continued drone strikes underline Ukraine's strategy to disrupt Russian energy exports and supply chains while putting pressure on Russian defenses.

The situation remains tense, with both sides likely preparing for further military actions in the coming days.

The U.S. seized a Venezuelan oil cargo, raising tensions, but global supply remains unaffected as barrels were already in transit

US seizes Venezuelan oil tanker

WASHINGTON

The United States seized a sanctioned oil tanker off Venezuela's coast, escalating tensions with Caracas and driving oil prices higher. President Donald Trump described the vessel as "the largest ever" and confirmed the U.S. would retain the oil onboard.

The seizure targets Venezuela's main revenue source and comes amid ongoing sanctions on the country's oil industry, first imposed in 2019. Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro condemned the action as "blatant theft" and "international piracy" and vowed to take the matter to global authorities. Iran also criticized the move, calling it a serious breach of international law.

U.S. authorities, including the FBI, Homeland Security, and Coast Guard, carried out the operation with military support.

A short video released by Attorney General Pam Bondi showed helicopters approach-



ing the tanker and armed personnel rappelling onto it. Reports suggest the vessel, a very large crude carrier (VLCC) named Skipper, was transporting nearly 1.8 million barrels of Venezuela's heavy crude, partly transferred to another ship bound for Cuba. Satellite data indicates the tanker falsely flew Guyana's flag.

The seizure is the first known U.S. action against a Venezuelan oil cargo since Trump ordered a military buildup in the region. Analysts said while the move raises geopolitical tensions and concerns about oil supply, it

does not immediately alter global availability, as the barrels were already in transit.

Venezuela exported over 900,000 barrels per day last month and continues to sell heavily discounted crude to China. Meanwhile, Chevron reported its operations in Venezuela remain normal, with shipments to the U.S. even increasing slightly.

The seizure comes as the Trump administration intensifies pressure on Maduro, following a series of military strikes on suspected drug vessels in the region. Critics have raised legal and ethical concerns over these actions.

South Korea Ex-Justice Minister faces insurrection charges

SEOUL

A special counsel team in South Korea has formally charged former Justice Minister Park Sung-jae over his involvement in a failed martial law attempt under ex-President Yoon Suk Yeol.

The team, led by Special Counsel Cho Eun-suk, said Park played a central role after martial law was briefly declared in December 2024.

He allegedly organized a high-level ministry meeting, prepared prosecutors for possible deployment, instructed detention agencies to check facility capacities, and had immigration officials ready for



travel restrictions.

Park is also accused of abusing his power by ordering documents justifying martial law and acting on a request from Yoon's wife, Kim Keon Hee, to help clear her of legal issues, which violated laws against improper solicitation. Courts had earlier rejected two requests to ar-

rest Park, so he was indicted without being detained.

Other senior officials, including former Prime Minister Han Duck-soo and former Finance Minister Choi Sang-mok, were also charged for failing to appoint Constitutional Court justices after Yoon's impeachment and for abuse of power in selecting justice candidates.

In related developments, prosecutors recently searched a separate team investigating Kim Keon Hee's alleged corruption. Evidence suggests she may have influenced Yoon's martial law declaration, possibly to protect herself from ongoing legal problems.

Fighting escalates on Thai-Cambodian border again



PHNOM PENH

Heavy clashes between Thailand and Cambodia entered their fourth day on Thursday, with both sides awaiting a planned call from U.S. President Donald Trump, who says he can help end the conflict. The fighting, which erupted at multiple points along the 817-km (508-mile) disputed border, is some of the fiercest since a five-day battle in July.

Trump, who helped broker a temporary ceasefire in July, said he expects to speak with the leaders of both countries on Thursday. However, Thailand has reacted cautiously this time, insisting the dispute should be resolved bilaterally without outside interference. Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, who also helped mediate the earlier truce, said both nations remain open to

talks but no formal resolution has been reached.

Both Thailand and Cambodia blame each other for the recent clashes. Cambodia claims Thai shelling and airstrikes have hit villages, schools, temples, and roads up to 30 km inside its territory, while Thailand denies targeting civilian areas and says it is defending its sovereignty.

The civilian toll has risen sharply. Cambodia reports 10 deaths, including an infant, and 60 injuries, while Thailand has lost nine soldiers and over 120 wounded. Tens of thousands of people have been evacuated from border areas on both sides, with hundreds of thousands displaced since the fighting began.

Thai Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul said the country must defend its independence and sovereignty, emphasizing that no nation wants conflict.

BULGARIA BUDGET BACKLASH

Tens of thousands protest Bulgaria government corruption

SOFIA

Tens of thousands of Bulgarians took to the streets, demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Rosen Zhelyazkov's government over alleged corruption and contested economic policies, just weeks before Bulgaria joins the eurozone.

The protests followed last week's demonstrations against the government's 2026 budget, which included higher taxes, increased social security contributions, and higher spending. The government later withdrew the plan, but public anger has persisted,



expanding calls for Zhelyazkov's center-right coalition to step down. In Sofia, the capital, protesters gathered at the central square near parliament, the government, and

presidential buildings. They waved Bulgarian flags and chanted slogans like "Resignation" and "Mafia." Students from local universities joined the crowd, which organizers

estimated at over 100,000—doubling the turnout from last week's protests of around 50,000. A key source of public frustration is the influence of oligarch and politician Delyan Peevski, sanctioned by both the United States and Britain. Peevski's MRF New Beginning party supports the government, and critics accuse him of shaping policy to serve oligarchic interests.

Despite the massive turnout, the demonstrations remained peaceful, with no reports of violence.

Meanwhile, the opposition coalition We Continue the Change – Democratic Bulgar-

ia called for a no-confidence vote against the government, the sixth such motion this year. The vote is scheduled for Thursday. President Rumen Radev, a political opponent of Zhelyazkov, described Wednesday's protests as a "vote of no confidence in the Cabinet" and urged lawmakers to heed public sentiment.

Bulgaria, a Balkan nation of 6.4 million people, is set to adopt the euro on January 1, becoming the 21st member of the eurozone. The protests underscore public anxiety over governance just as the country prepares for this major economic transition.

SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

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5	9	4	3	6	8	1	7	2
7	1	8	5	2	9	3	6	4
6	8	9	7	1	2	4	5	3
4	5	2	9	8	3	6	1	7
1	3	7	6	5	4	8	2	9

Fill a 9×9 grid with numbers so that each row, column and 3×3 section contain all of the digits between 1 and 9.

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

QUICK READ

India boosts start-ups for circular economy

New Delhi

The Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) under NITI Aayog has teamed up with Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL) to promote a circular economy in India. Under HUL's Project Circular Bharat, the programme will support 50 start-ups over three years. These start-ups will focus on recycling plastics, reuse, refill models, and sustainable packaging. Other areas like textiles and e-waste will also be included. Selected entrepreneurs will receive mentorship, funding, and chances to test their ideas. AIM's policy expertise, HUL's industry network, and Xynteo's guidance aim to build a strong ecosystem, helping start-ups reduce waste and create greener industries.

FX risks could hit some Indian firms

New Delhi

Fitch Ratings warned that some Indian companies could face rating pressure if they fail to hedge foreign-exchange (FX) risks. Firms with high exposure to rupee depreciation, like those in renewables, power utilities, and toll roads, are most vulnerable. While many companies already hedge or earn in local currency, partial hedging could raise costs if the rupee falls sharply, affecting debt and interest coverage. A depreciation over 10% against the US dollar in the next year could worsen the situation. Companies in sectors such as technology, pharmaceuticals, automotive, and building materials often benefit from natural FX hedges through exports or overseas operations.

TSMC revenue surges on AI chip demand

Taipei

Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) reported strong annual revenue growth in November, driven by rising global demand for AI chips. November revenue reached NTD 343.61 billion (USD 10.99 billion), up 24.5% from the same month last year, though down 6.5% from October. For January–November 2025, TSMC earned NTD 3,474.05 billion (USD 111.17 billion), marking a 32.8% rise from 2024. The company's advanced chips power AI servers, large-scale computing, and premium smartphones. While monthly revenue softened, the year-on-year jump highlights TSMC's leadership in semiconductor manufacturing and its vital role in global AI expansion, supplying top technology firms worldwide.

RURAL WEALTH RISE

Rural India sees rising consumption, income growth

Rural households in India are experiencing a significant boost in consumption and income, according to the latest NABARD Rural Economic Conditions and Sentiments Survey (RECS) released on Thursday. Around 80 per cent of rural families reported higher consumption over the past year, indicating broad-based economic improvement.

The survey revealed that 67.3 per cent of monthly income is now spent on consumption, the highest share recorded since the survey began, supported by rationalisa-

India-US trade deal expected by March 2026

US trade negotiators are in India to resolve differences; tariff talks delayed, but an agreement may conclude year-end

NEW DELHI

India's Chief Economic Adviser, V. Anantha Nageswaran, said he would be surprised if an India-US trade deal isn't signed by March 2026, as most trade-related issues have been resolved. The deal is seen as crucial for India to secure relief from Washington's 50% punitive tariffs.

"I was hoping something would be done by the end of November, but it has turned out to be elusive," Nageswaran told Bloomberg TV. He added that the negotiations are influenced by geopolitics as much as bilateral trade, making precise timelines difficult.

A team of US trade negotiators is currently in India to resolve differences and final-



ise the deal. The first tranche, covering tariff rates, was originally scheduled to conclude this fall but was delayed. Officials remain optimistic that the initial agreement could be finalised before the end of the year.

Despite trade uncertainties, Nageswaran noted that India's domestic economy is performing well. Exporters have mitigated the impact of US tariffs by diversifying into other markets. Structural reforms over the past decade have strengthened potential growth, while consumption

demand and the rural economy remain robust.

The Chief Economic Adviser also commented on the weaker rupee, which he estimates has lost 5%–15% against India's trade competitors. He said this has been beneficial for exports, cushioning the economy amid global uncertainties.

"The economy has surprised us with better performance than anticipated earlier in the year," Nageswaran said, adding that he expects high growth with moderate inflation for 2026–27.

With negotiations progressing and most major issues resolved, India and the US are on track to seal a trade deal that could significantly boost bilateral trade and ease tariff-related pressures in the coming months.

Nadella said AI-driven development starts with tests, shifting developers toward outcomes-first thinking and reversing traditional workflows practices

Nadella urges AI-driven shift in software development

BENGALURU

Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella on Thursday called for a fundamental change in software development, stressing that the next wave of innovation will be driven by AI-powered processes. Speaking at the "Building India's AI Frontier" keynote in Bengaluru, Nadella urged developers, organisations, and institutions to re-think how technology is built to accelerate innovation and real-world impact.

Nadella said technology has always aimed to empower people and organisations, and AI now allows developers to expand that impact. "We're not building for building's sake. We're building to have impact," he noted, pointing to transformations in customer experience, employee



experience, and operational efficiency.

A key change, he explained, is in the developer mindset. Unlike traditional software cycles, AI-driven development starts from the evaluation loop rather than the specifications. "You start with the test, not the spec," Nadella said, describing how workflows are now built backwards from the desired real-world outcomes.

He highlighted the rise of context engineering, a discipline rooted in data engineer-

Strong SIP flows reflect steady investor confidence

MUMBAI

Systematic Investment Plan (SIP) inflows remained steady in November, touching Rs 29,445 crore, just a little below October's Rs 29,529 crore, according to fresh data released by the Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI). Despite the slight dip, investor interest in mutual funds stayed firm, showing confidence in the market's long-term outlook.

Equity markets also saw positive sentiment. Net equity inflows rose to Rs 29,894 crore in November, climbing from Rs 24,671 crore in October. This steady rise highlights growing participation from retail investors. At the industry level, total assets under management increased to Rs 80.80 lakh crore, compared to Rs 79.87 lakh crore a month earlier.

Market experts said the steady flow of money reflects



Gold ETFs saw inflows drop to Rs 3,742 crore from Rs 7,743 crore, while other ETFs and sectoral funds recorded higher inflows in November

strong domestic liquidity, consistent SIP contributions, and optimism regarding India's economic and earnings growth over the coming years.

Within equity categories, large-cap funds received Rs 1,640 crore, up from October's Rs 972 crore. Mid-cap

funds saw inflows of Rs 4,487 crore, while small-cap funds attracted Rs 4,407 crore, showing continued interest in broader market segments.

However, gold ETFs experienced a notable drop in inflows, slipping to Rs 3,742 crore from Rs 7,743 crore in October. Other ETFs performed better, with inflows rising to Rs 9,721 crore compared to Rs 6,182 crore earlier. Sectoral and thematic funds also saw improved demand, receiving Rs 1,865 crore in November.

Liquid funds reported outflows of Rs 14,050 crore, though this was far lower than the heavy outflows of October. Meanwhile, dividend yield funds continued to see money moving out.

Experts believe that with uncertainty around global rate cuts, investors may prefer short-duration and high-quality strategies until monetary policies become clearer.

India's GCC sector set for rapid rise



NEW DELHI

India's Global Capability Centres (GCCs) are on track to reach \$105 billion by 2030, driven by strong government policies, growing talent, and expansion into high-value research and development. According to fresh government data released on Thursday, the sector continues to evolve far beyond traditional back-office roles.

India currently hosts over 1,700 GCCs, earning \$64.6 billion in FY24 and employing more than 19 lakh professionals. This marks steady growth from \$40.4 billion in FY19, expanding at an annual rate of nearly 10 per cent. Officials said the number of centres may rise to 2,400 by 2030, potentially creating jobs for more than 2.8 million people, strengthening India's standing as a global hub for enterprise capability.

GCCs are offshore units set up by multinational companies to provide various services to their parent organisations. Most centres are located in cities like

Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Pune, Chennai, Mumbai, and the NCR. Increasingly, these hubs are handling advanced work such as engineering R&D, AI, cybersecurity, and semiconductors, with engineering-focused centres growing 1.3 times faster than others.

India contributes around 28 per cent of the global STEM workforce and 23 per cent of global software engineering talent. The number of global leadership roles handled from India is expected to rise from 6,500 to over 30,000 by 2030.

Government measures, including GENESIS, Special Economic Zone reforms, tax incentives, and single-window clearance systems, have fueled this rise. Initiatives like Skill India, Digital India, and Future Skills Prime are preparing the workforce with next-gen skills.

The Economic Survey 2024–25 highlighted how GCCs are moving from support roles to strategic functions in aerospace, defence, and advanced manufacturing, marking a major shift in India's global role.

IndiaAI meet highlights push for smarter governance

NEW DELHI

India moved a step closer toward building a responsible and inclusive artificial intelligence ecosystem as the IndiaAI Mission under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) organised a Regional Pre-Summit Event in Gandhinagar on Thursday. The gathering, held at Mahatma Mandir with support from the Gujarat Government and IIT Gandhinagar, is a major lead-up to the India–AI Impact Summit 2026, scheduled for February 15–20 in New Delhi.

The conference aims to bring together senior government officials, industry leaders, researchers, and technology experts to explore how AI can support India's economic, social, and digital progress. A major focus is using AI to improve governance, public service delivery, and development in both cities and villages.

The event opened with an inauguration attended by several key dignitaries, including Gujarat Chief Minister Bhu-

pendrabhai Patel, Deputy Chief Minister Harsh Sanghavi, State Science & Technology Minister Arjunbhai Modhwadia, Chief Secretary Manoj Kumar Das, and MeitY Additional Secretary and NIC Director General Abhishek Singh. Gujarat DST Secretary Ponugumtla Bharathi also joined the ceremony.

Centred on the theme "AI for Good Governance: Empowering India's Digital Future," the event features keynote talks from national and global experts representing MeitY, Bhashini, Google Cloud, Microsoft, IBM Research, NVIDIA, Oracle, and AWS. Topics include AI for governance, agriculture, rural development, healthcare, fintech, digital inclusion, and generative AI.

Another key highlight is multilingual AI, with platforms like Bhashini helping break language barriers across India. Participants can also explore an Experience Zone showcasing AI-powered tools for governance, healthcare, agriculture, and industry.

'I Don't Think I Love Anything More Than Cricket': Smriti Mandhana

Smriti Mandhana reflects on cricket, World Cup glory, mentors, and her lifelong motivation



NEW DELHI

India's star opener Smriti Mandhana says more than a decade of international cricket has only strengthened one belief — that nothing in her life compares to the love she holds for the game. Mandhana looked back on her 12-year journey from her debut in 2013 to becoming a central figure in India's recent World Cup triumph. "I don't think I love anything more than cricket. Wearing the Indian jersey is what drives us. You keep every problem aside because that one feeling brings complete focus," she said. Mandhana added that her childhood ob-

NRCE Seeks Fresh Samples as Glanders Scare Keeps BTC Racing Suspended



BENGALURU

Racing at the Bangalore Turf Club (BTC) will remain suspended through the Winter Season after the National Research Centre on Equines (NRCE), Hisar, requested a fresh round of samples from nine horses for additional testing, even as it cleared 11 others of suspected glanders infection.

The uncertainty began earlier this month when veterinarians at the Government Veterinary Hospital in Hebbal detected possible glanders symptoms in five BTC horses. Given the severity of the disease — a highly infectious and often fatal bacterial illness affecting horses, donkeys and mules — the club immediately forwarded around 20 samples to NRCE, the country's nodal body for diagnos-

World Athletics Shelves 'Take-Off Zone' Plan after Athlete Pushback

BENGALURU

World Athletics' ambitious attempt to modernise the long jump — by replacing the classic take-off board with a 40-centimetre "take-off zone" — has quietly been put on hold after sustained resistance from elite athletes, despite encouraging pilot results.

The proposal, first floated in early 2024, aimed to reduce the sport's biggest irritant: foul jumps. Under the new format, an athlete's jump would be measured from the exact point of take-off within the broader zone rather than a fixed board. Trials during last season's indoor events suggested the change had potential. The foul rate, which typically hovers around one-third of all attempts, dropped



to nearly a third of that during testing. Spectator feedback, too, leaned slightly in favour of the revamped system. But numbers weren't enough to convince those who matter most. India's Murali Sreeshankar — reigning Commonwealth and Asian Games silver medallist — recalled that the global meeting of long jumpers was unanimously opposed to the reform.

"Everyone was against it," he said. "Long jump is a technical, skill-based event. With a broader board, you take away the beauty of the event — the precision, the challenge. Fouls reduced, yes, but there weren't many big jumps."

Opposition was even fiercer abroad. Olympic champion Miltiadis Tentoglou slammed the proposal public-

ABD Warns Against Excess Tweaks Despite Agreeing with Gambhir

NEW DELHI

Former South Africa captain AB de Villiers has weighed in on India head coach Gautam Gambhir's recent comment that batting orders in ODIs are "overrated," saying he agrees with the idea to an extent but cautioned that too much flexibility can disrupt defined player roles. Gambhir had made the remark after India clinched a 2-1 ODI series win over South Africa, arguing that situational demands matter more than rigid batting positions.

Sharing his thoughts on his YouTube channel, de Villiers said he has always enjoyed the idea of a floating batting lineup in the 50-over format.

"I do agree with him to a certain extent. I've always enjoyed a floating batting lineup in ODIs," he said. "But it's a fine line because you can't really play around too much with the players' roles."

The former Proteas skipper explained that an ODI side typically functions in structured segments. "It's the top three, four to six, and then your tailenders who can hold the bat. It's almost like three segments, and you can really be creative with that," he noted.

He added that tactical tweaks—such as promoting a left-hander to counter a particular bowler—can be beneficial, but teams must avoid changes that could unsettle the batting group.

De Villiers also lauded India's impressive white-ball run, with the team having won the first T20I against South Africa and extending their streak to 27 victories in 31 games. "It has been incredible, especially for a T20 format," he said. "It's the most volatile format of the three, and to have that kind of consistency tells you something is heading in the right direction. I think it's got to do with the depth of Indian cricket."

AB de Villiers backs Gambhir's view but warns against excessive experimentation with roles



IOC Targets Early 2026 for New Gender-Eligibility Policy in Female Sports

GENEVA

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has set an ambitious target of early 2026 to finalise a new policy on gender eligibility in female sports — a move that could potentially bar transgender athletes from competing at the Olympic Games. IOC president Kirsty Coventry announced the timeline after chairing an executive board meeting, emphasising that while elite sport requires clarity and fairness, access to sport at grassroots level remains a fundamental human right.

Coventry, a two-time Olympic swimming champion, created a working group soon after taking office in June to examine how best to "protect the female category." Her election campaign, like those of most other candidates, highlighted the urgent need for stronger, more centralised IOC policies on gender eligibility. Until now, the IOC had largely left such decisions to individual international federations, providing only broad guidance.

"I am really hopeful that in the next couple of months, and definitely by the first quarter of next year, we will have a very clear decision and way forward," she said. The policy is likely to address participation of transgender athletes and athletes with differences of sexual development (DSD). It could be formally adopted at the meeting ahead of the 2026 Milan-Cortina Winter Olympics.

The continued suspension has left the Winter Season in limbo, affecting trainers, jockeys, owners and associated staff. BTC officials said they will resume racing only after receiving complete clearance from NRCE, as any confirmed case could trigger mandatory quarantine and culling procedures under national biosecurity rules. For now, the racing community waits — and hopes the next set of reports brings clarity.

IPL mini-auctions often spark bidding wars, driving overseas player prices sky-high

IPL 2026 Auction: Costliest Overseas Buys Over the Years

ABU DHABI

The Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 auction, scheduled for December 16 in Abu Dhabi, is expected to continue the tournament's long-standing trend of franchises spending heavily on elite overseas talent. With mini-auctions historically favouring foreign pacers and all-rounders, teams often stretch their budgets to plug key gaps. This trend is further amplified by the annual Rs 5-crore increase in the purse cap and the release of several players ahead of the auction.

A rule introduced by the BCCI in 2024 — implemented for the first time this year — caps overseas player salaries at Rs 18 crore, determined either by the highest retention value or the top bid in the previous mega-auction. Since the 2022 mega-auction saw Rishabh Pant command a record Rs 27 crore bid from Lucknow Super Giants, the ceiling for overseas players now stands at Rs 18 crore. Any amount bid beyond that threshold will go directly to the BCCI's player development programme.

Despite these limits, overseas stars have fetched staggering sums over the years. Among them is Australian pacer Mitchell Starc, who commanded an eye-watering Rs 24.75 crore from Kolkata Knight Riders in 2024. Starc justified the investment, claiming 17 wickets in 14 games and earning the Player of the Match award in the final.

Fellow Australian Pat Cummins was another high-ticket signing, bought by SunRisers Hyderabad for Rs 20.50 crore in 2024. Cummins delivered an 18-wicket season and contributed valuable lower-order runs while leading the side. Sam Curran, purchased by Punjab Kings for Rs 18.50 crore in 2023, struggled to meet expectations, managing only 10 wickets.

Cameron Green proved his worth for Mumbai Indians after a Rs 17.50 crore purchase, scoring over 450 runs at a strike rate of 160, including a century. Meanwhile, England's Ben Stokes, acquired by Chennai Super Kings for Rs 16.25 crore, endured an injury-hit season, featuring in just two matches.

With the 2026 auction approaching, franchises will once again look to secure impact overseas players within the new financial framework.



Germany Edge Spain in Shootout to Claim 8th Jr Men's WC Crown

CHENNAI

Germany reaffirmed their status as the undisputed powerhouse of junior hockey, clinching their eighth FIH Junior Men's Hockey World Cup title after a gripping 3-2 shootout win over first-time finalists Spain at the Mayor Radhakrishnan Stadium on Wednesday. Locked 1-1 at full-time, the two teams produced a contest worthy of a summit clash — tense, tactical and decided only by the finest of margins.

Spain, playing their maiden final, brought heart, flair and relentless energy. Germany, world No. 1 and perennial title favourites, leaned on structure, discipline and the brilliance of goalkeeper Jasper Ditzler. The young custodian, who had been the standout performer throughout the tournament, rose to the occasion yet again by pulling off three crucial saves in the shootout, single-handedly tilting the decider in his team's favour.

Spain briefly nosed ahead after both sides missed their opening attempts, but Andres Medina's slip in their final attempt, with Germany leading 3-2, sealed their fate.

For Germany, the victory reaffirmed their dominance on the global junior stage.



'If We Can Beat India, We're Good Enough to Win the WC': Coach Nawaz

CHENNAI

Bangladesh U-19 coach Naved Nawaz believes that competing closely with India — or beating them — is the clearest indicator that his team is capable of winning the Under-19 World Cup. Speaking ahead of the 2025 Asia Cup starting December 12, the former Sri Lankan cricketer praised India's junior cricket system, calling it a global benchmark.

Nawaz, who coached Bangladesh to the 2020 U-19 World Cup title and last year's Asia Cup triumph, both achieved by defeating India in the final, said India's structure continually produces exceptional talent. He cited recent IPL standouts Vaibhav Suryavanshi and Ayush Mhatre as examples of the depth in India's youth pipeline.

"I have seen Vaibhav and Ayush in the last Asia Cup and in the IPL as rising stars. It is normal for India to keep producing unbelievable cricketers," he said.

For Nawaz, India's strength makes them the gold standard. "Indian youth cricket has always been a yardstick.

If we can go out there and beat or even play neck-to-neck with India, I think we are good enough to win a World Cup or make a strong statement on the world stage," said the 52-year-old.

The Asia Cup serves as a key preparation platform ahead of the 2026 Under-19 World Cup, scheduled in Zimbabwe and Namibia from January 16 to February 5. Nawaz said the tournament will help teams refine combinations and test their bench strength under pressure.

Reflecting on Bangladesh's historic 2020 World Cup win, Nawaz said it remains a defining moment for the nation. "It was huge, especially for a country like Bangladesh, which had not won an ICC trophy before.

It's an inspiration for many young boys and girls, even in villages, who commit to the sport," he said.





Arsenal Ease to Win Over Club Brugge

Arsenal powered to a flawless sixth win, overwhelming Club Brugge with stunning goals

BRUGES

Arsenal extended their flawless Champions League campaign with a commanding 3-0 win over Club Brugge, keeping their 100 per cent league-phase record intact and cruising toward automatic qualification for the last 16.

The victory ensured injury-hit Arsenal remain top of the league phase with 18 points, making a top-eight finish — and direct passage to the knockouts — almost certain with two matches still to play.

Former Chelsea winger Noni Madueke stole the spotlight with two stunning goals. His

first, a thunderous left-footed strike from distance, rocketed in off the underside of the bar to put the Gunners ahead midway through the first half. Moments into the second period, he doubled the lead, heading home from close range after timing his run perfectly to meet Martin Zubimendi's cross.

If Madueke set the tone, Gabriel Martinelli delivered the exclamation mark. Cutting in from the left, the Brazilian unleashed a curling right-footer from outside the box — a strike to rival Madueke's for goal of the night — sealing Arsenal's sixth straight win in Europe.

Manager Mikel Arteta lauded his team's resilience amid a long injury list. "To win away in the Champions League with so many players out shows the spirit of this group," he said, praising Christian Norgaard's preparation and influence after the midfielder filled in at centre-back.

Arsenal arrived in Belgium smarting from a rare defeat — their first since August — after falling 2-1 to Aston Villa in the Premier League. Arteta made five changes, with Viktor Gyokeres returning to the XI and Norgaard anchoring the defence.

The visitors started brightly, and Piero Hincapie nearly put them ahead when he deflected a shot onto the post before Madueke's blistering opener.

Brugge showed flashes of threat through Carlos Forbs and Aleksandar Stankovic, but their hopes evaporated once Arsenal doubled the lead early in the second half. Martinelli's finish soon after ended the contest, and substitute Gabriel Jesus struck the bar late on in his comeback appearance after 11 months out.

Arsenal roll on — perfect, powerful and primed for the knockouts.

Late Grimaldo Strike Earns Leverkusen Draw

LEVERKUSEN

Alejandro Grimaldo delivered an 88th-minute equaliser to secure a 2-2 draw for Bayer Leverkusen against Newcastle United in league-phase clash, preventing the visitors from breaking into the top eight and sealing early qualification for the last 16.

With two matches remaining, Newcastle sit two points adrift of the top eight and one point ahead of Leverkusen, leaving both sides on course for the knockout play-offs. The dropped points frustrated Newcastle, who twice came from behind before conceding late. "It all comes back to mentality," goalscorer Anthony Gordon told. "We've got to be stronger and hold teams off. Ultimately, it's about consistency."

Leverkusen struck first in unusual fashion. Captain Robert Andrich's header from an Aleix Garcia corner appeared to be drifting wide before rebounding off Bruno Guimaraes's back and into the net for an own goal in the 13th minute. The hosts controlled much of the first half but handed Newcastle a lifeline



Late drama denied Newcastle a vital win as Leverkusen struck near full-time

early in the second. Pressed by Nick Woltemade, goalkeeper Mark Flekken committed a costly error, pulling the forward down in the box. Gordon converted the penalty and nearly doubled his tally minutes later, smacking a shot off the inside of the post.

Newcastle grabbed the lead in the 74th minute when Gordon curled a cross for Lewis Miley, who rose to head past

Flekken. But the visitors' decision to drop deeper invited Leverkusen forward, and fatigue crept in for both sides.

Leverkusen captain Andrich admitted the dip. "From the 65th minute, we were running out of steam, but we deserved the point," he told.

Grimaldo, enjoying a scintillating season with nine goals and five assists, ensured Leverkusen were rewarded. Picking up an Ibrahim Maza pass, he fired past Aaron Ramsdale with two minutes left, leaving the tie perfectly poised as both teams chase a top-eight finish.

India-Italy Seal Deal to Enhance Sports Development

CHENNAI

The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) and the Italian National Olympic Committee (CONI) signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at strengthening sporting collaboration between India and Italy. The agreement is expected to facilitate athlete training, coach development, infrastructure sharing, and overall sports growth.

The signing ceremony was attended by Union Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya and Italy's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Antonio Tajani. IOA president PT Usha and CONI president Luciano Buonfiglio formally executed the MoU, symbolising a new era of bilateral sports cooperation.

According to the IOA, the agreement establishes a "structured framework for joint promotion of sports, exchange of expertise, and mutual access to each nation's elite sporting infrastructure and high-performance centres for athletes, coaches, and sports science professionals."



The initiative will allow Indian athletes and coaches to train in world-class Italian facilities and enable knowledge-sharing across sports science, coaching techniques, and high-performance management.

Usha called the partnership "a proud moment for the Indian Olympic movement" and highlighted its potential to elevate India's global sporting performance. "This collaboration opens new horizons for our athletes to train, learn, and excel within one of the world's most respected sporting systems," she said.

Buonfiglio emphasised the

shared passion for sport between the two nations. "By opening our high-performance facilities and expertise to each other, we are building a bridge of excellence that will benefit both nations' athletes for years to come," he stated, describing the MoU as a forward-looking initiative.

The agreement is expected to lead to long-term collaboration, joint training camps, exchange programmes, and technical workshops, providing a major boost to India's preparations for upcoming international competitions and strengthening sports diplomacy between the two countries.

Legends Pro T20 Unveils Star-Studded Lineup

NEW DELHI

The Legends Pro T20 League has unveiled a star-studded roster for its inaugural season, confirming participation from cricketing heavyweights including Chris Gayle, Jacques Kallis, Robin Uthappa, Ambati Rayudu, and Stuart Binny. The league is shaping up as a reunion of former teammates and rivals, promising fans a unique blend of nostalgia and competitive cricket.

Chris Gayle shared his excitement, recalling past encounters with Kallis and Rayudu. "Some of my best cricket memories involve the guys playing in this league," he said. "I've faced Kallis when getting past him felt impossible, discussed batting rhythm with Uthappa, and endured more Rayudu banter than I can count."

Jacques Kallis echoed Gayle's sentiment, highlighting the joy of returning to the game. "After being away, you realise how much you miss the feel of the bat in your hands," he said. "Michael Clarke as commissioner brings fresh energy and professionalism, making us look forward to this experience."

Robin Uthappa emphasised the camaraderie among players. "I've faced Rayudu as an opponent and later shared a dressing room with him. Conversations with Dinesh Karthik about finishing games and playing alongside Shaun Marsh make this feel like old times," he said.

Competing Against Transgender Women Unfair in WTA Events: Sabalenka

CHENNAI

World No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka has taken a firm stance on the participation of transgender women in WTA events, calling it unfair to female athletes. Sabalenka said she has "nothing against" transgender players but believes their physical advantages can create an uneven playing field.

"That's a tricky question," she began. "I feel like they still have a huge advantage over women who have not undergone gender transition. It's just not fair to a woman to face biologically men." Sabalenka highlighted the long-term effort female athletes invest in training, saying, "A woman works her whole life to reach her limit and then has to face someone biologically much stronger. I don't agree with this kind of stuff in sport."

Sabalenka is set to play Nick Kyrgios in an exhibition match titled 'The Battle of the Sexes' in Dubai at the end of December, but her comments have already sparked renewed debate about fairness in women's sport.

The WTA currently allows transgender women to compete provided they meet specific conditions, including maintaining blood testosterone levels below 2.5 nanomoles per litre for at least two years and signing a statement confirming female or non-binary

identity. Despite these regulations, no transgender woman currently competes at the highest level of the women's tour.

Historically, Renee Richards — born Richard Raskind in 1934 — was among the few transgender athletes to play professionally at the top tier, competing at the US Open in the 1950s before returning to the women's circuit in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Richards later coached Martina Navratilova, cementing her legacy in discussions on gender and elite competition.



Man City Beat Real Madrid, Alonso Faces Mounting Pressure

MADRID

Manchester City fought back from a goal down to defeat Real Madrid 2-1 in a tense Champions League league-phase clash, leaving coach Xabi Alonso on the brink as pressure intensified inside a restless Santiago Bernabéu.

Real Madrid, missing injured star Kylian Mbappé, started brightly and took the lead in the 28th minute when Rodrygo finished a sweeping move initiated by Alvaro Carreras. It was the Brazilian's first goal in 33 matches, ending a long drought and offering a brief glimpse of hope for the struggling giants. Rodrygo later said his celebration with Alonso was deliberate — a show of unity during a "difficult moment".

But Madrid's promising start fell apart quickly. A mistake from goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois gifted City their equaliser, as he failed to hold Josko Gvardiol's header, allowing 19-year-old Nico O'Reilly to tap in the loose ball. Ten minutes later, Antonio Rüdiger hauled down Erling Haaland in the box, and the Norwegian converted from the spot to give City the lead heading into half-time.

India to Host Inaugural Commonwealth Kho Kho Championship in March

NEW DELHI

India will host the inaugural Commonwealth Kho Kho Championship from March 9 to 14 next year, with over 24 countries expected to participate, the Kho Kho Federation of India (KKFI) announced. The final venue is yet to be confirmed, with the federation in discussions with several states.

The championship will feature 16 men's and 16 women's teams, following the format of the first Kho Kho World Cup held earlier this year in Delhi, which saw participation from 23 nations. Organisers aim to use the event as a platform to showcase the sport on a global stage and increase its reach ahead of major multi-sport events.

"This championship is a significant milestone for Kho Kho in India and internationally," said Upkar Singh Virk, general secretary of KKFI. "Ahead of the 2030 Commonwealth Games in Ahmedabad, we hope this event acts as a stepping stone for Kho Kho's inclusion in the Doha Asian



Games (2030), the Commonwealth Games (2030), and even the Brisbane Olympics (2032)."

The decision by Commonwealth Sport (CS) to approve India as host underscores the growing recognition of Kho Kho as a competitive sport globally. Organisers are keen to ensure the event is run on the lines of the recently concluded World Cup, emphasising professionalism, competitive integrity, and interna-

tional participation.

With preparations underway and discussions ongoing with potential host states, the KKFI aims to announce the venue soon.

The championship is expected to draw widespread attention from fans, media, and sports authorities, highlighting India's traditional sport on an international platform and building momentum for its inclusion in major global sporting events.

Aman Sehrawat Set to Return at Sr Nationals After Suspension Lifted

CHENNAI

Less than a month after the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) lifted his one-year suspension, Paris Olympics bronze medallist Aman Sehrawat is set to represent the Railway Sports Promotion Board (RSPB) at the senior national championship starting Friday in Ahmedabad. Aman, suspended last year for being overweight at the 2025 Senior World Championships, will compete in the 61kg weight category instead of his usual 57kg. The nationals kick off with women's wrestling on Friday, followed by men's freestyle on Saturday, and conclude with men's Greco-Roman bouts on Sunday.

The RSPB initially faced hurdles after skipping the 2024 nationals in Bengaluru, but a recent executive board meeting cleared their wrestlers for participation. Aman did not compete in the Inter-Railway Champion-

ships but secured his spot in the team through selection trials, winning two bouts despite no weight concessions, unlike the Inter-Railways where a 1.5kg allowance was provided.

A source from RSPB explained, "Frequent weight reductions can cause problems, so Aman opted for 61kg. Our team is strong with three Olympians, including Aman."

Apart from Aman, Haryana's Neha Sangwan also had her two-year suspension lifted after being overweight at the Junior World Championships earlier this year. However, she failed to qualify for nationals after losing to Manisha in the 57kg category at the Haryana State Championships. The senior nationals will feature 28 teams, including wrestlers from the RSPB and the Services Sports Control Board (SSCB), promising a competitive field as top Indian wrestlers prepare for upcoming international events.



Class of Mysore Muhurta held in Bande Mahakaali Temple

The muhurta and title unveiling ceremony of the film *Class of Mysore*, was held at the Sri Bande Mahakali temple. Sr. Actor Dattanna, who is acting in the film, clapped for the first scene, actress Tara presented the title to the public. Gautham Basavaraju, who produced and directed ‘Yathabhava’, is writing the story, screenplay and directing the film as his second experience and is investing under the banner of Macht Entertainments. All the artists arrived with silk panches and Mysore petas, and the Mysore Palace and Ambari sets were prepared on the stage.

Speaking after the puja, the director said. That the palace and Ambari located on stage tell the story of the film. What we have lost in retirement, what would we be like if we experienced it? If we tell the rest now, it will be like giving away the synopsis of the film. That is why it has been kept



secret. It is a story related to the Mysore region, and all the artists appear in every frame. The search is on for two girls. The shooting is planned to be held in two phases in Goa, Mangalore, Coorg, and Bangalore for 40 days from February 2. Gautham Basavaraju

informed that two months have been set aside for post-production.

Dattanna, Tara, Rangayana Raghu, Tabalanani, Biradar, Sharath Lohitashwa introduced their character.

Mantesh, Jaggappa and others will be playing the lead

roles in the cast. Technicians, who is making a name for himself in the current cinema industry, is working in this film. Joe Costa is composing music for four songs written by Nagarjuna Sharma. Cinematography by S.K. Rao, Dialogues by Maasti.

Rishab Shetty criticised for supporting Darshan’s new film

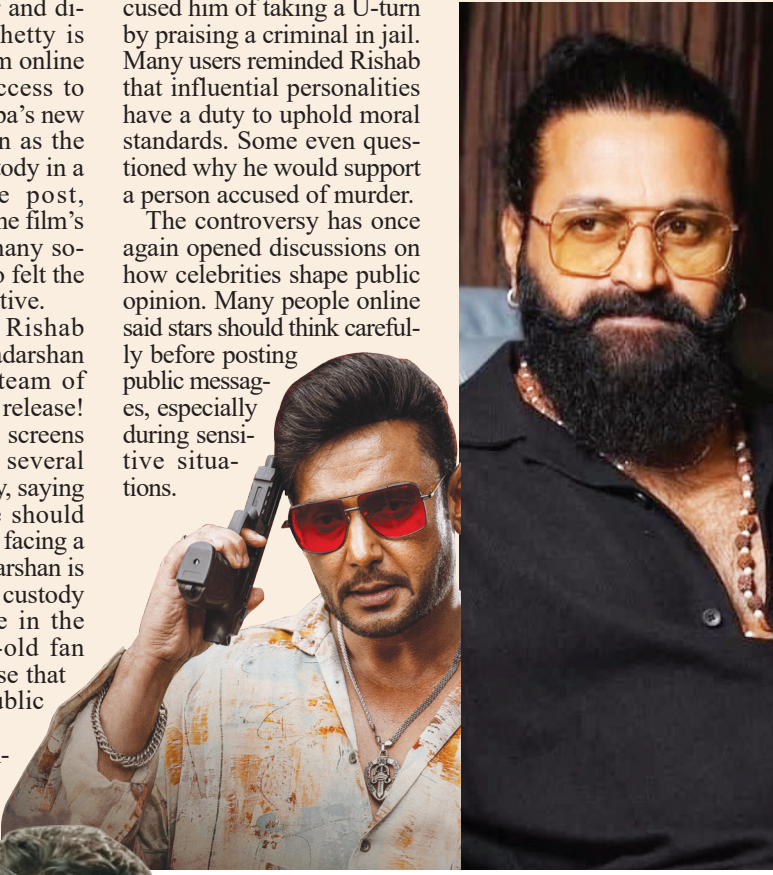
Sandalwood actor and director Rishab Shetty is facing sharp criticism online after he wished success to Darshan Thoogudeepa’s new film *The Devil* even as the actor remains in custody in a murder case. The post, shared a day before the film’s release, has upset many social media users who felt the message was insensitive.

In his message, Rishab wrote, Wishing dasadarshan Sir and the entire team of Devil a blockbuster release! May the film set the screens on fire. Soon after, several users reacted strongly, saying that a public figure should not support someone facing a serious allegation. Darshan is currently in judicial custody for his alleged role in the murder of 33-year-old fan Renukaswamy, a case that has drawn major public attention.

One user said Rishab was supporting a man of no values, while another ac-

cusced him of taking a U-turn by praising a criminal in jail. Many users reminded Rishab that influential personalities have a duty to uphold moral standards. Some even questioned why he would support a person accused of murder.

The controversy has once again opened discussions on how celebrities shape public opinion. Many people online said stars should think carefully before posting public messages, especially during sensitive situations.



Padayappa re-release thrills fans, sparks sequel speculation

Rajinikanth’s iconic 1999 blockbuster *Padayappa* is set to make a grand return to theatres on December 12, coinciding with the superstar’s birthday and celebrating 50 years of his cinematic journey. The announcement has generated massive excitement, amplified by the release of the digitally enhanced re-release trailer, which has sparked nostalgia among fans. Advance bookings have already picked up across multiple theatres, indicating



strong demand for the restored version. Directed by K.S. Ravikumar, the original film featured a stellar cast including Sivaji Ganesan, Ramya Krishnan, Soundarya, Nassar, Lakshmi and Radharavi. With memorable music by A.R. Rahman, *Padayappa* broke several box-office records in 1999 and remains one of Rajinikanth’s most celebrated films. Its characters, iconic dialogues and powerful moments continue to hold a special place in the hearts of audi-

ences. In a recent interview, Rajinikanth revealed that the character Nandini from Ponniyin Selvan inspired the film’s core concept. As the film returns with improved visuals after 25 years, fans are gearing up for a festive celebration, hoping it may even pave the way for a future sequel.

Pamela Anderson confirms Barb Wire reboot led by her sons

Actor Pamela Anderson has confirmed that her iconic Barb Wire character will return, not as a film but as a new television series.

The reboot idea came from her sons, Brandon and Dylan Lee, who pitched the concept and are now partners with her in producing the show. Anderson said the project has moved into development and described the reboot as a dark comedy that will offer a fresh approach to the cult classic.

Speaking to People magazine, Anderson said she was surprised when her sons first approached her with the idea. Brandon and Dylan, who now run a production company with her, told her they wanted to revive Barb Wire for a TV format. Anderson said their confidence and clear vision convinced her to join the project. She added that her sons are now taking a hands-on role and leading the



creative direction of the series.

Reflecting on the original 1996 film, Anderson said her character, Barbara Barb Wire Kopetski, was inspired by a cartoon and designed to look bold and exaggerated. While the film received mixed reviews when it released, it later gained a cult following. Anderson said she believes the film achieved what it set out to do, but the new reboot feels like a form of redemption. She added that her sons are protective of her and eager to reshape the story in a fun and meaningful way.

Further details about the cast, release date, and platform for the upcoming series are yet to be announced.



Anirudh emotional as Vijay’s Jana Nayagan nears



Music composer Anirudh Ravichander has expressed deep emotion as he completes his final collaboration with Thalapathy Vijay for the actor’s last film, *Jana Nayagan*. In a recent interview with Sun News, Anirudh said the re-recording work is progressing at full speed and added that scoring for Vijay’s final film carries both pride and sadness. There is an emotional weight because this is Vijay sir’s last film. We are trying to reflect that feeling through the music and background score, he said.

The film’s grand audio launch is set for December 27 at the Open Stadium in Malaysia, and Anirudh has promised that the event will be explosive. He said the energy from fans in Malaysia will make the evening unforgettable, especially

since this marks Vijay’s final audio launch as an actor. Anirudh is preparing a special medley celebrating his journey with Vijay, featuring songs from *Kathithi*, *Master*, *Beast*, *Leo*, and the new tracks from *Jana Nayagan*. This is my tribute to Thalapathy, he said.

Fans are eagerly waiting for the event, calling it an emotional milestone. Many believe thousands will be moved to tears as the audio launch closes, marking the end of the popular Vijay–Anirudh musical partnership.

Anirudh also shared updates on his upcoming projects. He revealed that the shooting of *Arasan* has begun and that the film’s music will take a year to complete. He noted that despite composing only 39 albums in 14 years, global fan support motivates him to keep pushing forward. He added that songs for *Jailer 2* are almost ready, promising more major releases next year.

Alia Bhatt receives Horizon Award, hints at risk

Actor Alia Bhatt shone at the Red Sea International Film Festival, where she received the prestigious Golden Globes Horizon Award. The festival also presented a special retrospective of her film journey, celebrating her rise as one of India’s most recognised global talents. Golden Globes president Helen Hoehne shared the announcement online, praising Alia as an exceptional artist whose influence extends across regions, including the Middle East and Asia.

Alia and Tunisian actor Henda Sabry were chosen as this year’s honorees for their outstanding impact in film and television. Thanking the Golden Globes team, Alia said the award was a true honour and meaningful for young performers and women in cinema. She said global storytellers were coming together to create more inclusive and powerful narratives, and she hoped to continue playing strong and deserving female characters. She added that being recognised by the Golden Globes, one of the world’s most iconic award bodies, was deeply encouraging.

During the event, Alia also spoke about her upcoming action film *Alpha*. She described the project as a risk because it is the first female-led action movie in the Yash Raj Films universe. She said the industry had not seen such films perform like male-led action movies, making *Alpha* a bold step. The film is the seventh part of the YRF Spy Universe and stars Alia Bhatt, Sharvari and Bobby Deol.

Produced by Yash Raj Films, *Alpha* is scheduled to release on April 17, 2026, and is expected to set a new benchmark for women-centric action cinema in India.



Anupama’s Lockdown delayed again, raising doubts over 2025 release

Anupama Parameswaran’s social-emotional drama *Lockdown* has been postponed for the second time in just two weeks, leaving fans unsure about when the film will finally hit theatres.

The film was first scheduled for release on December 5 but was delayed due to heavy rains and cyclone conditions in Tamil Nadu. It was then rescheduled for December 12, only to be pushed back again. The makers said the release is now postponed indefinitely due to unforeseen circumstances, and



a new date will be announced soon. In a statement, the film’s team apologised to fans, saying

the movie should only reach audiences under the best circumstances. They also acknowledged the growing curiosity around the film, which has attracted attention for its intense, female-centric story inspired by true events.

Directed by AR Jeeva, *Lockdown* follows the struggles of Anitha, played by Anupama Parameswaran, during a 21-day nationwide lockdown. The trailer shows Anitha afraid to return home, suggesting she is hiding a serious issue she cannot discuss. As the lockdown forces her to

stay indoors, her unusual behaviour, sudden anger and constant phone use alarm her parents. The trailer also shows her seeking help from a doctor, urgently asking for money, and dealing with suspicion from her family, all of which builds tension around her hidden struggle.

The film, certified U/A, features several noted actors and has been praised for its strong technical work. With two delays in quick succession, fans now await clarity on whether *Lockdown* will release before the end of 2025.