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## Cong will not allow India to be turned into ‘Godse India’: DKS

D.K. Shivakumar said Congress will resist attempts to erase Mahatma Gandhi’s legacy and constitutional values



BENGALURU

Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar on Saturday said that the Congress would not allow India to be transformed from the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi into what he described as a “Godse India.” Addressing the Satyameva Jayate protest at Freedom Park in Bengaluru, the KPCC president accused the BJP of attempting to erase Gandhi’s legacy despite his central role in India’s freedom struggle and nation-building. Shivakumar recalled that Mahatma Gandhi had once led the Congress from Karnataka and laid the foundation for India’s independence. He said programmes such as MGNREGA, introduced in Gandhi’s name under the leadership of Sonia Gandhi and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, had empowered rural India by guaranteeing employment and dignity to the poor. He alleged that the BJP was deliberately removing Gandhi’s name from such schemes.

**National Herald is the nation’s asset. Hatred is the BJP’s asset. Truth never dies, and false cases have no longevity. Congress cannot be defeated through conspiracies or weakened through hatred.**

—D.K. Shivakumar, Deputy CM

Shivakumar said attempts to weaken welfare schemes or distort history would fail, just as earlier Congress initiatives like bank nationalisation, land reforms and food security had endured.

Referring to the National Herald case, he said false cases and vendetta politics could not defeat truth, adding that Congress leaders would continue to fight what he termed political harassment. Emphasising the sacrifices made by the Nehru-Gandhi family for the nation, Shivakumar said Congress workers would stand united to protect constitutional values and resist any effort to undermine India’s democratic and historical foundations.

### On power tussle.. Bengaluru

Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar on Saturday said the Congress high command will decide as to when he and Chief Minister Siddaramaiah will be called to Delhi, amid speculation over a possible leadership change in Karnataka. Speaking to reporters in Bengaluru, Shivakumar said both leaders have been informed that they will be called at an “appropriate time” and that they would wait for it. His remarks came a day after Siddaramaiah stated in the Assembly that he would continue as Chief Minister and that the high command supported him. Siddaramaiah also denied claims of a fixed two-and-a-half-year power-sharing arrangement.

## Need to end ‘maha jungle raaj’ in Bengal: PM

KOLKATA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday called on the people of West Bengal to reject what he termed the ongoing “maha jungle raaj” under the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) and vote for a BJP-led government. Speaking virtually at a rally in Nadia district, he cited Bihar’s recent electoral verdict as an example of voters rejecting “jungle raaj,” noting that Bihar had delivered more seats to the NDA than two decades ago. Modi said the river Ganga flows from Bihar into Bengal, symbolically paving the way for a BJP victory in the state.

He criticized the TMC, claiming it inherited the negative traits of the Left and was obstructing development,



while Tripura was progressing rapidly. Modi emphasized that Bengal needs a “double-engine government” to restore its lost glory and implement projects efficiently. Highlighting stalled initiatives and alleged corruption under the TMC, he promised that a BJP government would fully utilize funds and schemes to accelerate development. Modi also condemned TMC’s opposition to the Special Intensive Revision

**The Trinamool Congress alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s speech at the Taherpur rally in West Bengal showed his “lack of concern” for the Matuas, who have been facing uncertainties over deletion of names post publication of the draft electoral rolls under the Special Intensive Revision (SIR).**

(SIR) of voters’ lists, alleging it protected infiltrators. He paid tribute to three BJP workers who died en route to his rally and urged the public to give BJP a chance in the 2026 assembly elections, assuring that their support would enable rapid progress and better governance for the state.

### Modi claims BJP correcting Congress’ mistakes in Northeast

Guwahati

PM Narendra Modi on Saturday criticised the Congress for “neglecting” Assam and the northeast during its rule, asserting that the BJP government is correcting mistakes the party made over decades. Speaking at a rally after inaugurating a new terminal at Guwahati airport, Modi claimed that Congress failed to prioritise the region’s development and allegedly protected infiltrators who seized land and forests, threatening Assam’s security and identity. He highlighted that the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls aims to prevent infiltrators from influencing elections, despite attempts by some to shield them.

## Seven elephants killed as Rajdhani Express hits herd

GUWAHATI

Seven elephants were killed and one calf injured after the Sairang–New Delhi Rajdhani Express rammed into a herd in Assam’s Hojai district early on Saturday, derailling five coaches and the locomotive, officials said. The accident occurred around 2.17 am near Changjurai village, reportedly amid heavy fog. While initial reports suggested all eight elephants had died, forest officials later confirmed that one calf survived with injuries. No passengers were hurt.

Senior Forest Department officials rushed to the site, where post-mortem examinations are under way and veterinary teams are treating the injured elephant. Cremation of the carcasses will be conducted near the spot, following legal procedures. The Railways said the incident took place in the Jamunamukh–Kampur section under the Lumding division, about 126 km from Guwahati. The loco pilot applied emergency brakes after spotting the herd, but the collision could not be avoided. The location is not a notified elephant corridor, officials added.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma ordered a detailed inquiry and directed authorities to strengthen wildlife corridor protection, especially during low-visibility conditions. Environment Minister Chandra Mohan Patowary said senior forest officials would coordinate with Indian Railways to prevent recurrences.



## 7 arrested over Hindu man's lynching in Bangladesh

DHAKA/ NEW DELHI

Seven people have been arrested in connection with the lynching of a Hindu man in Bangladesh, the interim government announced on Saturday. Dipu Chandra Das, 25, was lynched to death by a mob and his body set on fire over alleged blasphemy in Mymensingh city on Thursday.

In a statement on X, the interim government led by Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus said that the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) has arrested seven individuals as suspects in the case. The arrests were made during op-

erations at various locations, and the ages of those arrested ranges from 19 to 46, it said. According to the police, Das, a factory worker, was first beaten up by a mob outside the factory over blasphemy allegations and hanged from a tree. The crowd then left the body of the deceased on the side of the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway and set it on fire. The police recovered the body and sent it to the Mymensingh Medical College morgue for autopsy. The interim government on Friday condemned the lynching, saying there is no space for such violence in the new Bangladesh.

## ISRO completes drogue parachute tests for Gaganyaan Mission

BENGALURU

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has successfully completed a crucial series of qualification tests for the drogue parachutes used in the Gaganyaan Crew Module, marking another milestone in India’s human spaceflight programme. The tests were carried out on December 18 and 19, 2025, at the Rail Track Rocket Sled facility of the Terminal Ballistics Research Laboratory in Chandigarh. ISRO scientists said the test campaign involved ten parachutes belonging to four different categories, designed to work in a precise sequence during the Crew Module’s descent. The process begins with two apex separation parachutes that remove the protective covers of the parachute compartments. These are followed by the deployment of two drogue parachutes, which play a critical role in stabilising the Crew Module and reducing its speed.

### QUICK READ

#### Former Minister Byrati Basavaraj traced to Pune

**BENGALURU:** Former minister Byrati Basavaraja went missing after the High Court rejected his anticipatory bail. He switched off his mobile phone, making tracking difficult. Sources say investigators have now traced his last known location to Pune, Maharashtra. Basavaraj disappeared during the Belagavi Winter Session, prompting a detailed search by CID officers. Officials reviewed CCTV footage from toll plazas linking districts and states to track his movements. Initial reports suggested he might have traveled to Goa or Maharashtra. After investigations, authorities confirmed Pune as his last live location. The search continues as officials try to locate him.

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#### ‘Messi left Kolkata stadium over crowd conduct’

**KOLKATA:** Satadru Dutta, the main organiser of Lionel Messi’s Kolkata event, told the Special Investigation Team (SIT) that the footballer left Salt Lake Stadium minutes after appearing on December 13 because he was uncomfortable being touched or hugged. Dutta said the event descended into chaos after a “very influential person” entered the stadium, tripling the number of ground passes and disrupting the planned flow. Despite repeated announcements, the crowd surrounded Messi, ignoring security instructions. Dutta revealed Messi’s concerns had been conveyed by his security team in advance. Dutta also disclosed that Messi was paid Rs 89 crore for the India tour, with Rs 11 crore in taxes, and over Rs 20 crore from ticket sales and sponsors was found in his frozen bank accounts.

## Modi government bulldozed MGNREGA, says Sonia Gandhi

NEW DELHI

Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi on Saturday accused the Modi government of bulldozing MGNREGA, and asserted that the “black law” that seeks to repeal it will be defied by the lakhs of party workers across the country.

In a video message, she said that by weakening MGNREGA, the Modi government had attacked the interests of crores of farmers, labourers, and landless across the country. She alleged that over the past 11 years, the Centre had ignored the interests of the rural poor.



Addressing the rural population, Gandhi said she vividly remembers the day 20 years ago, when Manmohan Singh was prime minister, and the MGNREGA Act was passed in Parliament by consensus.

The former party president said it was “such a revolutionary step”, and became a means of livelihood for the deprived, the exploited, and the poorest of the poor.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh alleged that the legislation was pushed through to help the Prime Minister restore “SHANTI” with his “once good friend,” in an apparent reference to for-

mer US President Donald Trump.

Ramesh claimed the SHANTI Bill weakens crucial provisions of the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010—an issue he said was flagged in the United States’ National Defence Authorisation Act (NDAA). Pointing to the recently signed US legislation, Ramesh noted that a reference on page 1,912 mentions a joint assessment by India and the US on nuclear liability rules.

Taking his criticism further, he said the SHANTI Act should be renamed the “TRUMP Act,” alleging it was designed to fulfil promises related to reactor use and management.

### EPSTEIN DOCUMENTS SPOTLIGHT

## Epstein files: Bill Clinton appears often in new records

WASHINGTON

The US Department of Justice on Friday released a fresh batch of heavily redacted photographs and documents from investigations into late convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, reigniting political controversy. The disclosure has emerged as a major challenge for President Donald Trump following his re-election last year, with the Epstein files becoming one of his most significant political setbacks. Despite extensive redactions, the newly released material includes images of Epstein socialising with high-profile figures such as former US Presi-



dent Bill Clinton, pop icon Michael Jackson, actors Chris Tucker and Diana Ross, and Britain’s Prince Andrew. Epstein’s longtime associate and convicted accomplice Ghislaine Maxwell also appears frequently in the files. Several documents were entirely blacked out, including a



119-page file believed to contain grand jury testimony and three others exceeding 100 pages each. The scale of redactions prompted criticism from opposition leaders, with Democrats accusing the Justice Department of failing to meet a congressional deadline for full disclosure.

#### A lot of Bill Clinton

The released documents included numerous references and photographs of former Democratic President Bill Clinton. Several images showed him in intimate settings, including one in a swimming pool with Ghislaine Maxwell and an unidentified individual, another in a hot tub, and a photo with a young woman seated on the armrest of his chair, her face redacted.

#### Not much about Trump

The key question ahead of the document release was how prominently Donald Trump would appear in the files. Trump and Epstein were known to be friends who socialised regularly during the 1990s and early 2000s. Trump has maintained that they fell out in the mid-2000s, before Epstein’s first conviction in 2008.

The files have references to what they described as “massage techniques” and Ayurveda from India. “Many practitioners in the West are now offering massage and other treatments based upon this 5,000-year-old system of natural healing from India,” it says. It also has articles titled “The Art of Giving Massage”, which mentions the use of sesame oil for detoxification.

## QUICK READ

## Yellow Line Metro services to start an hour late today

## BENGALURU

Bengaluru Metro commuters on the Yellow Line are advised that train services will start an hour later than usual on Sunday, December 21. Due to renovation work, the first trains will depart at 8 a.m. instead of the regular 7 a.m. schedule. The Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRL) confirmed that this delay affects only the Yellow Line, while services on the Purple and Green Lines will continue as usual. Commuters are requested to plan their travel accordingly to avoid inconvenience. Authorities said the schedule change is temporary and aims to ensure smooth renovation work on the Yellow Line.

## Bengaluru releases honorarium for census workers

## BENGALURU

The Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) has announced the release of 23.87 crore as honorarium for those who worked in the recent caste census survey. The grant covers five municipal corporations: Bangalore Central ( 2.68 crore), East ( 4.25 crore), West ( 6.80 crore), North ( 5.24 crore), and South ( 4.88 crore). Enumerators, including Anganwadi workers and teachers, will also receive certificates acknowledging their service. Authorities emphasized that the funds must reach participants directly and should not be misused. This move addresses earlier concerns and opposition allegations, ensuring fair compensation for the efforts of survey workers across Bengaluru.

## Egg cancer rumor hits Bengaluru bakeries hard

## BENGALURU

A recent rumor suggesting eggs cause cancer has alarmed consumers, sharply impacting Bengaluru bakeries and confection businesses. During the festive season, sales of egg-based products, including cakes and egg pops, have dropped by around 10 percent. Bakers report delays in preparing egg cakes due to customer hesitation. Previous food controversies, like the cotton candy color ban, have worsened public confusion. While some customers still buy egg items, overall demand remains low. Traders are calling for official clarification to counter misinformation and restore consumer confidence. Accurate guidance is urged to protect both public health and small businesses.

## Widespread power outages hit B'luru

## BENGALURU

Bengaluru residents are facing power outages across many parts of the city on Saturday due to emergency maintenance work by KPTCL at the Prestige Falcon City Substation. BESCOM has announced. The maintenance is scheduled from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm on Monday, December 22, 2025.

BESCOM officials said electricity will be unavailable in several areas, including Poram Mall, Prestige Falcon City Apartment, Doddakallasandra, Kanakapura Main Road, Narayana Nagar 3rd Block, Muni Reddy Layout,

## Encroached land near Kogilu Bande cleared for future projects

Under police supervision, 200 personnel, 70 marshals, 9 tractors, and 9 JCBs removed encroachments and demolished illegal structures

## BENGALURU

Five acres of land near Kogilu Bande under Bengaluru North Municipal Corporation have been cleared of encroachments, officials said. The land will now be used for future solid waste management projects, including a Bio Methanization Plant, Animal Rendering, Animal Incineration, Coconut Water Treatment, and Sanitary Waste Treatment facilities.

Karigowda, CEO of Bangalore Solid Waste Management Limited (BSWML), said the 14-acre 36-gunta site in Survey No. 99 of Kogilu village, Yelahanka taluk, had nearly five acres illegally occupied. Over 150 temporary sheds and houses were constructed on the reserved area for B.G.T.Y.N. Limited.

The clearance operation was carried out under strict police supervision. Teams from B.G.T.Y.N. Limited, the Fire Department, Revenue Department, BMTF, and the corporation were involved. Around 200 personnel, 70 marshals, 9 tractors, and 9 JCB machines participated in removing the encroachments and demolishing the illegal structures.

The government's guidance value of



the cleared land is estimated at Rs. 15 crore, while the current market value is approximately Rs. 80 crore. This action ensures the protection of government property worth crores and prepares the area for upcoming solid waste management facilities.

Key officials present during the operation included B.G.T.Y.N. Chief Operating Officer Ramamani, Chief General Manager Dr. Raghavendra Prasad, and several DGMs and AGMs.

The successful removal of unauthorized structures marks a significant step in securing land for public infrastructure projects. Authorities emphasized that such operations will continue to protect government-owned properties and support sustainable urban development in Bengaluru.

## Hundreds left homeless after early morning demolition

Bengaluru witnessed chaos early Saturday as officials from the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) demolished over 400 houses in Kogilu village near Yelahanka. The drive, which started around 4 a.m., left more than 350 families without homes. Residents claim they were not given any prior notice.

Officials said the houses were built illegally near a small pond beside Urdu Government School. Four heavy earth-movers and about 150 police personnel were deployed to carry out the operation safely. Authorities also said many residents had migrated from Hyderabad and Andhra Pradesh.

Local families, however, insist they have lived here for over 25 years, holding Aadhaar and voter ID cards. Many depend on small jobs and loans for survival. Pregnant women and children were reportedly forced out, with families unable to take basic belongings. The district administration visited the site but offered no explanations, leaving the community shocked and displaced.



## Bangalore Turf Club suspends all races temporarily

## BENGALURU

The Bangalore Turf Club (BTC) has temporarily suspended all horse races as a precaution following the detection of glanders disease, a serious infection in horses that can also affect humans. The suspension comes after similar cases were reported in Hyderabad.

Over 700 horses at BTC were tested as part of strict safety measures. Saliva samples from the horses were sent to a laboratory in Haryana. Officials confirmed that only one horse tested positive for glanders. The affected horse has been completely isolated and is receiving treatment. All other horses have tested negative so far and are under constant monitoring by veterinary staff. BTC officials are ensuring continuous hygiene checks and strict safety protocols at the premises.

Karnataka Horse Trainers Association President Pradeep Annaiah said the suspension is purely precautionary. He urged the public not to pay attention to rumours, emphasizing that the majority of the horses are healthy. The BTC management has clarified that

Over 700 BTC horses were tested for safety; one tested positive for glanders and isolated, while others remain negative under continuous veterinary monitoring and strict hygiene protocols.

races will only resume after all horses have been tested three times within the prescribed period and have cleared the infection.

BTC veterinarians and officials are conducting regular inspections to ensure the health and safety of the horses. The club is working closely with GBA officials to prevent any spread of the disease and maintain a safe environment for trainers, jockeys, and staff.

The temporary suspension reflects BTC's commitment to both animal welfare and public health. Horse owners and trainers are cooperating fully, and the club has assured that racing activities will resume only when all horses are confirmed safe, keeping the sport and its participants protected from this rare but dangerous disease.

*The circular warned employees against inappropriate office attire, citing public complaints and emphasizing government reputation, sent to top officials*

## Govt employees warned over dress code

## BENGALURU

The Karnataka Department of Personnel and Administrative Reforms (DPAR) has issued a strict circular warning government employees about maintaining office discipline, especially regarding their attire. Employees wearing indecent clothes like torn jeans, sleeveless tops, or overly tight garments may face disciplinary action.

The circular was sent to heads of departments, district collectors, the Chief Minister's Office, secretaries, principal secretaries, and zilla panchayat CEOs. It lists dos and don'ts for employees attending office duties, emphasizing that clothing should not tarnish the reputation of the government. The department said it has received complaints from the public and organizations about some employees dressing inappropriately, and that repeated warnings have been ignored.

Unlike corporate offices,



government offices did not have a formal dress code, but some employees have been dressing casually, resembling college students, which is now considered unacceptable. Officials stressed that torn jeans, sleeveless dresses, and other indecent clothing must be avoided in government workplaces.

C.S. Shadakshari, President of the Karnataka State Government Employees Association, welcomed the circular. He said maintaining decency in government offices is important and staff should dress in a manner that does not embarrass others. The circular

also reminded employees to follow other office discipline rules. They must record their entry and exit in ledgers or movement registers.

Employees should be present at their desk by 10:10 am and remain until the end of working hours. Any official work outside the office must be noted in the register.

The DPAR clarified that these measures are aimed at improving discipline and efficiency in state offices and ensuring that public perception of government employees remains professional and respectable.



## Bengaluru North plans large e-khata melas

## BENGALURU

The Bengaluru North City Corporation has announced plans to conduct E-Khata Melas in large residential apartment complexes across the city. The initiative aims to make property registration easier for residents, provided at least 100 applications with complete documents are submitted, said City Corporation Commissioner Shri Pommala Sunil Kumar.

Speaking at a meeting held at Mini Vidhana Soudha, Yelahanka, the Commissioner said apartment association office-bearers should coordinate with homeowners to prepare the applications. Once the applications are ready and a date is finalized with city officials.

## Citizens walk 7 km for safe footpaths under 'Project Walkaluru'

## BENGALURU

Under the leadership of Bengaluru North Municipal Commissioner Shri Pommala Sunil Kumar, the 7th footpath walk under Project Walkaluru was conducted in RT Nagar today.

The initiative, organized jointly with The Ugly Indian and local civic groups, aimed to promote clean, safe, and continuous pedestrian pathways. Over 80 participants, including the Commissioner, Joint Commissioners Shri Mohammed Naeem Momin and Smt. Pallavi, municipal officers, staff, residents, and pedestrian supporters of all ages, actively walked a 7 km route. The walk began at JC

Nagar main gate on Jayamahal Road, passed through Makeri Circle, entered RT Nagar from CBI Junction, and looped along both sides of RT Nagar main road, covering parks, cultural, industrial, and government areas. The primary goal was to encourage walking without fear and to identify obstacles. Citizens were instructed to photograph and report any issues for immediate municipal action. The team recorded only four major obstacles along the route, including one area of open urination, one car blocking the pavement, and two water-related issues. Notably, no garbage dumps, encroachments, or broken pavement slabs were found. Newly



painted zebra crossings, clean skywalks, and pedestrian underpasses were praised by walkers. Project Walkaluru has now completed 50 km across Bengaluru, including Shivajinagar, Koramangala, Jayanagar, Banaswadi, Thansandra, and Yelahanka, aiming for a 100 km goal. Com-

missioner Pommala said, "When citizens actively inspect their own footpaths and work with authorities, safe and sustainable walking spaces can be created."

This initiative demonstrates how community participation improves urban infrastructure effectively."

## STREETLIGHT SAFETY DRIVE

## Bengaluru South Commissioner acts against encroachment

## BENGALURU

Bengaluru South Municipal Corporation Commissioner Shri K.N. Ramesh conducted a surprise visit to the park on 16th 'A' Main Road, HSR Layout, last night to inspect street lights and park lighting. During his visit, residents and walkers approached him to raise grievances about local issues, including unauthorized parking, footpath encroachments, streetlight problems, and other civic concerns.

The Commissioner said this was part of a wider effort to

visit each ward and hear residents' problems firsthand. He assured that officers would be informed immediately to take necessary action wherever possible. Joint Commissioner Satish Babu, Chief Engineer K.V. Ravi, and other officials accompanied him during the visit.

Earlier, to address footpath obstruction complaints, a major clearance operation was conducted on Jyoti Nivas College Road, Koramangala. Residents had requested removal of unauthorized shops and pushcarts that were



blocking pedestrians and causing traffic issues.

During the operation, seven petty shops and five pushcarts across a 1.1-kilometer stretch were removed, allowing pe-

destrians to walk safely and easing traffic movement. The operation involved engineers, including Executive Engineers from the BTM Layout Division, along with eight

tractors, necessary machinery, and a team of 40 workers. Five policemen and two marshals ensured safety during the clearance work.

Officials emphasized that encroachment on footpaths is illegal and vowed to continue similar operations across the city. The residents appreciated the proactive steps taken by the Commissioner to address long-standing issues in their area. Such measures are expected to improve pedestrian safety, traffic flow, and overall civic infrastructure in Bengaluru South.

## QUICK READ

**Bengaluru parks adjust timings amid safety concerns****BENGALURU**

The Bangalore South City Corporation has revised park timings following reports of misuse during late hours. Parks previously open from 5 am to 10 pm will now operate from 5 am to 11 am and 4 pm to 8 pm. Officials cited low crowding, encroachment, and "immoral" activities as reasons for the change. While residents welcomed the move for safety, senior citizens expressed disappointment, saying reduced hours affect their routine. North, East, and West corporations reported no complaints yet. The decision may be reviewed based on public feedback, aiming to balance accessibility with security in local parks.

**Bengaluru air quality worsens, residents urged caution****BENGALURU**

Bengaluru's air quality has sharply declined, with the AQI reaching 196 on Saturday, raising health concerns. Experts warn that high PM<sub>2.5</sub> (121) and PM<sub>10</sub> (167) levels can trigger asthma, allergies, and heart problems, especially among children and the elderly. The city has seen unhealthy air for over 90 days in 2025, with cold waves worsening respiratory risks. Citizens are advised to wear masks, use air purifiers, and minimize outdoor activities. Other Karnataka cities, including Mangalore (140) and Mysore (136), also face pollution issues. Officials urge awareness as poor air quality increasingly affects daily life and health.

**Bengaluru Central launches massive cleanliness drive****BENGALURU**

The Bengaluru Central Municipal Corporation has launched an extensive cleanliness drive, covering major roads and footpaths across six assembly constituencies. The initiative, guided by Deputy Chief Minister's instructions, aims to improve city hygiene through systematic cleaning and regular spot checks.

Commissioner Rajendra Cholan stated that in the first phase, officers have been assigned a target of 110 km of road and footpath cleanliness. Today, mass cleaning was carried out in key areas including Corporation Circle, Lalbagh Road, Subbaiah Circle, Mission Road, Gauthampura, Nehrunagar, Ramachandra Road, and C.V. Raman Nagar. During the operation, officials cleared unauthorized constructions, unclaimed shops, push carts, construction debris, and



# Special teams track Byrati Basavaraj in Pune

CID found Basavaraj communicated with an accused, provided conflicting information, suggesting he misled police and may face imminent arrest

Continued from page 1

Former minister Byrati Basavaraj has gone missing after his anticipatory bail application was rejected by the High Court. Sources revealed that he switched off his mobile phone shortly afterward, making it difficult for authorities to track him. However, investigators have now traced his last known location to Pune, Maharashtra.

Basavaraj disappeared during the Belagavi Winter Session, prompting a detailed search by CID officers. The team reviewed CCTV footage from toll plazas connecting different districts and states to track his movements. Officials



studied the routes he may have taken and the direction in which he left the city.

Initial information suggested that Basavaraj could have traveled to either Goa or Maharashtra. After extensive investigation, the team confirmed that his live location was last seen in Pune. Follow-

ing that, his mobile phone was switched off, making it challenging to monitor him further.

CID officers also discovered that Basavaraj, who had earlier claimed no connection to the murder of Biklu Shivaprakash, was in communication with one of the accused. Investigators found discrepancies in the information he provided, indicating he may have misled the police. This has increased the possibility of his imminent arrest.

To ensure swift action, three special teams have been formed to locate and apprehend Basavaraj. Officials are coordinating with local au-

thorities in Maharashtra to monitor his movements and prevent further attempts to evade arrest.

Authorities have urged Basavaraj to surrender voluntarily, while the investigation continues into his involvement with the ongoing murder case. The CID is closely monitoring his known contacts and travel routes to ensure that he is brought to justice without delay.

This development has intensified public attention on the case, as law enforcement works quickly to ensure that legal procedures are followed and that any attempt to obstruct justice is addressed promptly.

*Banashankari police recorded statements from two children's parents after footage showed Ranjan kicking a boy, causing facial and limb abrasions; his mother, Deepika Jain, filed a complaint*

## POCSO complaint likely following Tyagarajanagar children assault

**BENGALURU**

Police are investigating an alarming incident in Tyagarajanagar where a man was caught on CCTV kicking and pulling the hair of neighborhood children. Authorities are likely to register a POCSO case against him after reviewing the footage.



The suspect, identified as Ranjan, a former fitness coach, has been summoned for questioning in one of the incidents. The police are also trying to locate the parents of the children to record their statements following the emergence of the CCTV videos. Banashankari

police have prepared to formally take complaints and document the parents' accounts.

According to the footage, Ranjan pulled a child's hair while the child was cycling and attempted to hit another with his Bullet motorcycle. Police suspect that Ranjan may have committed similar attacks on neighboring streets and are reviewing CCTV footage from nearby roads.

Ranjan, who had previously obtained station bail, has fled to Chennai. Police are actively searching for him and have contacted his family. Current information indicates that he is in Madurai, Tamil Nadu.

The Banashankari police have already recorded statements from the parents of two children.

The footage shows Ranjan suddenly kicking a boy from behind, causing him to fall face down on the road. The boy suffered abrasions on his face, hands, and legs. His mother, Deepika Jain, who was visiting her brother's house, lodged a complaint with the police.

Authorities plan to record statements from the parents of the other two children today. They will also decide whether additional legal sections should be added to the case against Ranjan. The police continue their search to ensure the safety of children in the area.

## New loop road at Hebbal flyover opens to ease traffic

**BENGALURU**

The Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) has completed the construction of a new loop road at Hebbal flyover, aimed at easing heavy traffic for vehicles entering the city from Bangalore Airport and Yelahanka, allowing commuters to travel smoothly towards Mekhri Circle.

Hebbal flyover, notorious for traffic congestion, has recently seen major improvements. A previous loop road dedicated for traffic coming from Nagawara towards Mekhri Circle was inaugurated a few months ago by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. The new loop specifically caters to vehicles entering the city from the airport side, enabling uninterrupted movement from Yelahanka, Jakkur, and Sahakari areas.

## Hate Speech Bill sparks free speech concerns: Karandlaje

**BENGALURU**

Union Minister Shobha Karandlaje has strongly criticized the Karnataka government over the newly passed Hate Speech and Hate Crimes Prevention Bill. She said the law violates the freedom of speech guaranteed by the Constitution and amounts to an undeclared emergency in the state.

Speaking at a press conference at the BJP state office, Jagannath Bhavan, Karandlaje questioned the purpose of the bill and the role of those behind it. She alleged that the government is using a new Fact Check Agency to monitor public opinion and social media, targeting critics and opposition members. Priyank Karge, she said, is leading this agency, which allegedly files cases against BJP leaders and citizens based on social media posts. "The government is spending Rs 3 to 4 crore annually on this agency, which includes private individuals. It is being used to suppress those who speak against Congress and punish activists or critics," Karandlaje said. She claimed that the bill allows administrative officials such as DCs and SPs to decide on punishments, including fines up to Rs 1 lakh and imprisonment of up to 10 years. Karandlaje accused the Congress government of



**Karandlaje said the government spends Rs 3-4 crore yearly on an agency suppressing critics, with officials empowered to impose fines up to Rs 1 lakh and 10-year imprisonment.**

changing the role of the judiciary and using the law as a tool to control public discourse. She warned that the legislation could target anyone fighting for justice and civic causes. The minister said she has written to the Governor, urging him not to give consent to the bill, and added that she may bring the matter to the attention of the President if necessary. She stressed that the BJP will continue to oppose what she described as systematic suppression of free speech and political dissent in Karnataka.

## Karnataka HC acquits husband in murder case

**BENGALURU**

The Karnataka High Court has acquitted a man who was sentenced to life imprisonment for allegedly murdering his wife, stating that convictions based solely on circumstantial evidence must meet the standard of evidence beyond reasonable doubt.

The bench, comprising Justices K.S. Mudgal and Venkatesh T. Nayak, heard the criminal appeal filed by Arun Kumar of Bengaluru, who challenged the trial court's life imprisonment order. The court emphasized that allegations made by investigating officers must be completely credible, and circumstantial evidence must be corroborated to eliminate any reasonable doubt before convicting an accused. In this case, although the accused had admitted guilt to investigators, there was no direct evidence linking him to the crime. Witness statements about the last time the accused and the victim were seen together were

recorded three months after the incident, creating a significant gap and raising doubts about their reliability. The bench noted that even a small missing link in the evidence chain prevents establishing guilt beyond reasonable doubt.

Background shows that Arun and the deceased woman initially fell in love and later married despite suspicions arising from condoms and money found in her bag. After marriage, Arun reportedly tortured his wife due to jealousy and suspicion while being in an extra-marital relationship. The prosecution alleged that he murdered her in Bagalur, skinned the body, and dumped it in a garden.

The Bagalur police had registered a case, investigated, and filed a chargesheet, leading to the life sentence by the trial court. However, the High Court ruled that circumstantial evidence in this matter was insufficient to convict and ordered the accused's acquittal, reinforcing that any doubt must benefit the accused.

## GP WORKERS PROTEST...



Members of the Karnataka State Gram Panchayat Workers Association protested at Freedom Park in Bengaluru on Saturday, demanding that tax collectors, clerks, data entry operators, water collectors, and cleaners be recognized as government employees. ▶ CH PHOTO

## TIBETAN CULTURE SPOTLIGHT

# CTA promotes Tibetan history awareness in Bengaluru

**BENGALURU**

The Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) conducted a series of Tibet Outreach Programmes in Bengaluru to raise awareness about Tibetan history, culture, and the ongoing Tibet-China conflict. The initiative is part of the CTA's South India campaign to engage students and the public on Tibet's past and present challenges.

At Bengaluru University, under the Department of History's Special Lecture Programme, Tenzin Lekshay, CTA's DIIR Additional Secretary and Spokesperson, spoke on "India-Tibet-China Rela-

tions: From Ancient History to the Contemporary World." He highlighted India's historical ties with Tibet and the strategic importance of the Tibetan Plateau.

Lekshay noted that China's occupation of Tibet in 1950-51 disrupted traditional borders and escalated tensions with India.

He also emphasized the Panchsheel Treaty often ignored Tibet's sovereignty and advocated the Middle Way Policy, promoting peaceful dialogue as the best path to resolve the conflict.

Dhondup Wangmo, Research Fellow at the Tibet Policy Institute, CTA, pre-



sented on "The Tibetan Plateau: Its Significance and Environmental Challenges." She highlighted Tibet's ecological importance for Asia and warned that large-scale mining, dam construction, and infrastructure projects by China since 1959 have caused

environmental damage, displaced communities, and harmed river ecosystems. Wangmo also stressed the persecution of Tibetan environmental activists under Chinese rule.

The programme is continuing across Bengaluru, includ-

ing sessions at St. Joseph's University, featuring workshops on the Middle Way Policy and advocacy training. CTA aims to foster informed academic discussions, raise awareness about Tibet's historical and strategic significance, and examine the consequences of China's occupation on regional security, human rights, and the environment.

The outreach programme seeks to encourage Indian students and citizens to understand Tibet's heritage, support peaceful dialogue, and reflect on the broader ecological and social challenges facing the Tibetan people.

## QUICK READ

## Tiger returns to feast on hunted cow in Mudgur

## Gundlupet

Panic has spread among farmers after a tiger was caught on camera returning to eat a cow it had hunted in Mudgur village, located within the buffer zone of the Bandipur Tiger Reserve in Gundlupet taluk. The incident occurred in broad daylight, while the photo captured by a forest department camera trap went viral on social media on Saturday. According to forest and local sources, the tiger attacked and killed two cows belonging to Sid-desh, a resident of Mudgur village.

## Rare two-branched areca tree amazes farmers

## Kalasa

As areca nut harvesting reaches its peak across the Malnad region, farmers remain busy with hectic fieldwork. Amid this routine activity, a rare natural wonder has caught the attention of everyone involved in harvesting operations in Kalasa taluk of Chikkamagaluru district. In the Uddina Makki areca garden at Kargadde village, farmers have come across an unusual Sayami areca tree that appears to defy the normal growth pattern of the crop. Unlike regular areca nut trees, which typically grow straight without branches, this particular tree has split into two distinct stems, resembling two trees emerging from a single trunk.

## Man arrested for ₹2 crore house sale fraud after 6 yrs

A man was arrested in Kollegal for cheating multiple people of over ₹2 crore

## KOLLEGAL

Rural police in Kollegal have arrested a man accused of cheating several people of more than ₹2 crore by falsely promising to sell a house. The accused, identified as Sharavan, had been absconding for the past five to six years after allegedly duping multiple victims through fraudulent sale agreements.

According to the police, Sharavan claimed ownership of a house located in the southern locality of Kollegal and entered into sale agreements with several individuals. Victims include Mambali Nagaraju, retired soldier



Vishwanath, market trader K.K. Murthy, Shivakumar, and others. By assuring them that the property would be sold to them, the accused collected advance amounts running into crores of rupees. After receiving more than

₹2 crore from five to six people, Sharavan allegedly sold the same house to another individual and went missing without returning the money or completing the promised transactions. When the victims realised they had been cheated, they approached the police and filed formal complaints, following which a case was registered against the accused.

The case remained unresolved for several years as the accused evaded arrest. Acting on fresh leads and technical inputs, Kollegal rural police recently traced Sharavan and arrested him. During preliminary interrogation, he report-

edly admitted to his role in the fraud.

Police officials said further investigation is underway to ascertain whether the accused was involved in similar cheating cases elsewhere. Efforts are also being made to recover the defrauded money and examine financial transactions linked to the case.

The incident has once again highlighted the need for caution in property dealings. Police have advised the public to thoroughly verify ownership documents and legal clearances before entering into house or land sale agreements to avoid falling prey to such frauds.



## Five tigers spotted on CCTV near Veeranpur, video sparks fear

## CHAMARAJANAGAR

In a rare and alarming sighting, a CCTV camera has captured five tigers walking together near Veeranpur village in Chamarajanagar taluk, causing widespread concern among local residents. The footage, reportedly recorded near the Ane Maduva lake area, has been circulating rapidly on social media platforms, drawing attention from both the public and forest authorities.

According to local sources, the CCTV camera installed near the outskirts of Veeranpur clearly shows five tigers moving together during the night hours. The big cats were seen calmly walking close to agricultural fields and water bodies near Ane Maduva lake, an area frequently used by villagers and farmers for daily activities.

The video has left villagers terrified, especially farmers who regularly work in fields located close to forest boundaries. Many residents expressed fear for their safety, stating that such a large group of tigers moving near human habitation is highly unusual and dangerous. Following the

## CCTV footage showing five tigers near Veeranpur village has gone viral, triggering fear among farmers and residents

viral spread of the footage, villagers have restricted nighttime movement and are avoiding early-morning farm work as a precautionary measure.

Forest department officials have taken note of the incident and are reportedly verifying the authenticity and timing of the CCTV footage. Preliminary assessments suggest that the tigers may have strayed from nearby forest ranges in search of water or prey, particularly due to changing weather patterns and human encroachment near forest corridors. Officials have urged residents not to panic but to remain alert and immediately inform forest personnel if any further sightings occur. Increased patrolling has been initiated in and around Veeranpur village, and warning advisories are being issued to prevent human-wildlife conflict.

## Court sentences two to prison for harassing woman

## RANEENNUR

A court in Ranebennur sentenced Ashok Puttappa Madiwalara and Pushpa Kom Ashok Madiwalara to one year and six months of imprisonment each for physically and mentally abusing and harassing a woman. The incident occurred in the Kumara-patna area of the taluk. In addition to the jail term, the court also imposed a fine of ₹15,000 on each of the accused.

According to the prosecution, a case was registered at Kumarapatna Rural Police Station following a complaint by the victim. The investigation was carried out by CPI K.T. Annaiah, who collected evidence and later submitted the charge sheet before the court.

The trial was conducted by Judge Meghashree, who heard arguments from both sides and examined the evidence presented during the proceedings. After the charges against the accused were proven, the court delivered the verdict on December 16, holding both individuals guilty of the offences. The prosecution was represented by Assistant Public Prosecutor Kavita S.G., who argued the case on behalf of the government. The court observed that the actions of the accused amounted to serious harassment and warranted strict punishment.

The judgment is seen as a reminder that offences involving abuse and harassment will be dealt with firmly under the law, and that victims have the right to seek justice through legal channels.

## Eleventh All India Dalit Literary Conference begins

## BISILOOR

The eleventh All India Dalit Literary Conference is being held on December 20 at Bisiloor, marking the start of a two-day national-level literary event organised by the state unit of the Dalit Sahitya Parishad. The conference has drawn writers, thinkers, scholars and literary enthusiasts from across the country, turning Bisiloor into a vibrant hub of literary and cultural activity.

Extensive preparations have been made at the venue to welcome delegates and participants. The main entrance to the conference has been named after renowned poet Bolabandappa Urukundappa Pandita Tarana, while the stage has been dedicated to Sharane Akhtarakkee Lak-kamma. The pavilion has been named in honour of poet Jambanna Amarachinta. To create a festive and welcoming atmosphere, rangoli designs have been drawn, a grand welcoming arch has been erected and a red carpet has been laid at the entrance. The conference is being



hosted at the Pandit Siddarama Jambaldinni Ranga Mandir, with the inaugural session scheduled to begin at 10.30 am today. Eminent writer and thinker Baraguru Ramachandrappa will formally inaugurate the conference. The inaugural address will be delivered by noted writer L. Hanumanthaiah, while acclaimed writer Jayadevi Gaikwad will preside over the event.

Immediate past president of the Parishad Prof. H. T. Pothe will participate in the proceedings, along with Arjuna Golsangi, President of the State Unit of the Dalit Sahitya Parishad. Adding further significance to the event, former Karnataka Sahitya Parishad president Manu Baligara will release the publications of the council. District in-charge Minister Sharanaprakash Patil will release a special commemorative issue on the occasion.



## ‘Phone addiction, fast food culture harmful to children’

## HAVERI

A strong message on responsible parenting, balanced living and religious values was delivered at a religious gathering in Haveri, where Charyashironmani Veditasagar Maharaj expressed concern over the growing dependence on mobile phones and unhealthy lifestyle habits among families.

Addressing devotees while presiding over the Dharma Sabha organised as part of the Vidhana Mahotsav of the Sid-dhachakra Mahamandal at Rajani Hall, Veditasagar Maharaj said excessive use of mobile phones has deeply affected children's lives. He stressed that parents must first reduce their own screen time to set an example for their children.

He also advised parents to avoid the habit of consuming fast food outside and instead prepare traditional, healthy food at home. What parents practice at home directly

shapes a child's character and habits, he said, adding that good food and disciplined living contribute significantly to a child's physical and mental well-being.

Emphasising the role of religion in shaping society, Veditasagar Maharaj said children should be educated with strong moral values and given a lasting foundation of faith. Children should be firm in protecting religion and understand its importance in life. Parents must follow religion sincerely; only then will children naturally follow the same path, he noted.

He further urged people to live in harmony with nature and avoid immoral paths. Highlighting humility as a core value, he said individuals must remain respectful towards God, scriptures and teachers. He underlined the importance of understanding and practicing Jainism, stating that efforts to protect all religions would ultimately safeguard one's own faith as well.

## ‘Coding education can transform futures of government school students’

## DEVANHALLI

Introducing coding and computer technology at the school level can significantly improve the future prospects of children studying in government schools, said Shalini, a project representative of the America India Foundation. She was speaking at a programme organised in Kundana of Devanahalli.

Shalini addressed students and teachers during the Amazon Future Engineer programme, recently conducted by the America India Foundation at the Bachchahalli Government School in Kundana Hobli. She emphasised that early exposure to coding and computer-based learning would help students develop logical thinking, problem-solving skills and confidence, enabling them to compete in an increasingly digital world.



She noted that over the last three years, a structured computer coding programme has been successfully implemented in nearly 500 government schools across the state. As part of this initiative, students are being introduced to basic programming concepts, digital tools and technology-driven learning methods. According to her, the programme has received encouraging responses from both students and teachers, particularly in rural areas.

Shalini said the government and supporting organisations are now placing greater em-

phasis on strengthening computer education in government schools to bridge the digital divide between urban and rural students. Technology education should not be limited to private schools. Government school children also deserve access to quality learning opportunities, she said.

Explaining the objective of the scheme, she said the primary goal is to provide quality education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) to children studying in government schools, especially those from rural and backward regions.

## Police arrest man for threatening H.K. Patil

## GADAG

The Gadag police have arrested an accused who allegedly threatened the life of Karnataka Law Minister H.K. Patil through a provocative post on social media. The arrest follows a serious threat issued

on Facebook, which prompted swift action from law enforcement agencies. According to police sources, the accused has been identified as Veeranna Bilagi, a resident of Sudi village in Rona taluk of Gadag district. The accused allegedly posted the threaten-

ing message on December 15, targeting Minister H.K. Patil with abusive and derogatory language. In the Facebook post, Veeranna Bilagi reportedly referred to the minister using offensive terms and went on to issue a direct threat.

## JAKANAACHARI MEMORIAL CELEBRATIONS

## Jakanaachari memorial day to be celebrated on Jan 1

## CHITRADURGA

The district administration has decided to commemorate the Amarashilpi Jakanaachari Memorial Day with grandeur and meaningful programmes on January 1, 2026, at the district headquarters in Chitradurga. The decision was announced during a preparatory meeting chaired by Sub-Divisional Officer Mehboob Jeelani Qureshi at the Deputy Commissioner's Office auditorium on Saturday.

Addressing officials and representatives of various departments, Qureshi said the memorial day would be or-



ganised in accordance with government protocol and with active participation from all sections of society. The event is scheduled to begin at 10 am at the Deputy Commissioner's Office auditorium, where

elected representatives, officials, cultural personalities and members of the public will be formally invited through printed invitation cards.

Highlighting the impor-

tance of the occasion, Qureshi noted that Amarashilpi Jakanaachari made an immense contribution to the state's historic architectural and sculptural heritage. Remembering such an iconic figure in a grand manner would help future generations understand and appreciate Karnataka's rich cultural legacy, he said, urging community participation to make the programme successful and inclusive.

As part of the celebrations, the programme will feature devotional songs rendered by artists, along with special lectures by resource persons who will speak on the life, work

and legacy of Amarashilpi Jakanaachari. These sessions are expected to provide deeper insight into his craftsmanship and lasting influence on temple architecture and sculpture.

Representatives of the District Vishwakarma Community requested that the administration provide an opportunity during the event to honour two distinguished achievers from the community. They also sought permission to present talent awards to ten meritorious children from the community, a proposal that received a positive response during the meeting.

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## QUICK READ

**RBI compounds violations against Janapriya Townships****New Delhi**

The Reserve Bank of India has issued a compounding order against Janapriya Townships Private Limited for violations of the Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999. The order, dated November 6, 2025, followed a no-objection clearance from the Enforcement Directorate. The case involved delays in reporting foreign remittances, filing share issue forms, and submitting annual foreign asset returns. After the company sought compounding, the RBI settled the violations with a one-time payment of Rs 1,68,160, ending the investigation.

**Youth Congress members detained over protest****Bhubaneswar**

Odisha Police on Saturday detained Odisha Youth Congress members protesting the alleged gang rape of a minor in the Dhauli area. The protesters tried to gherao Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi's residence, seeking swift action and his resignation. Police stopped the march and took several workers into custody. Earlier, BJD leaders criticised the BJP government, alleging rising crimes against women. Former Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said law and order was worsening and urged strict, proactive steps to ensure women's safety.

**Seven elephants die in Assam train mishap****Guwahati**

Seven elephants, including three adults and four calves, were killed on Saturday after a train hit them in Assam. The incident occurred in the Jamunamukh-Kampur section under the Lumding Division when the Sairang-New Delhi Rajdhani Express collided with the herd, causing derailment of the locomotive and five coaches. No passengers were injured. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma expressed grief and ordered a detailed probe, directing officials to strengthen safety measures along wildlife corridors, especially during low visibility periods.

**Telangana BJP Chief questions Congress concern for Hindus****HYDERABAD**

Telangana BJP President N. Ramchander Rao on Saturday expressed surprise at Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's recent remarks on the mistreatment of Hindus in Bangladesh, calling it a rare shift for the party. Rao highlighted that Congress leaders have often opposed Hinduism and supported elements against Indian culture, but he welcomed the new stance.

"It is surprising that Priyanka Gandhi speaks of the sufferings Hindus face in Bangladesh. They should now condemn terrorists disturbing India and oppose illegal immigrants entering our country," Rao said. He also urged the removal of such individuals from voter lists in India. The comments follow the



# India's talent shapes strong global national brand: EAM

Jaishankar said India's skilled, disciplined workforce boosts global image, urging Make in India and confident global engagement

**PUNE**

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Saturday said India's global standing is increasingly shaped by the talent and skills of its people, which have strengthened the country's image worldwide. He was speaking at the 22nd Convocation of Symbiosis International (Deemed University) in Pune.

Addressing the graduating students, Jaishankar said globalisation has opened up many opportunities for Indian professionals across countries. He noted that during his interactions abroad, he often hears appreciation for the Indian diaspora. He said outdated views about India are slowly fading as the world recognises the country's real capabilities.



The minister said this changing perception is supported by clear trends. He pointed to the growing number of global capability centres in India, increasing demand for Indian professionals overseas, and the success of Indians across various sectors. These factors, he said, have improved both India's overall image and individual reputations.

Jaishankar said Indians are widely seen as disciplined, hardworking, and technologi-

cally skilled, while strongly valuing family life, a perception that has boosted India's global respect and credibility. Looking ahead, he stressed strengthening initiatives like Make in India, saying global success depends on focus on design, research, innovation, and delivery from within the country. He warned that without such efforts, India could remain only a consumer market. He also underlined the need for better infrastructure, skilled manpower, and sound policies, adding that India has the vision and leadership to move ahead. He noted India's steady rise over the past decade despite global challenges and urged students to confidently enter the global workforce, wishing graduates from over 40 countries success in their careers.

*The MP criticised successive governments for ignoring economic devastation in the North and East, citing lack of targeted recovery policies*

## Sri Lankan MP Ponnambalam flags Tamil community crisis

**CHENNAI**

Sri Lankan MP Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam, General Secretary of the All Ceylon Tamil Congress (ACTC), has highlighted urgent concerns regarding the plight of the Tamil community in Sri Lanka during his visit to Tamil Nadu. The legislator described the situation as grave and ongoing, despite perceptions of peace after the 2009 civil war, and stressed the need for wider awareness and support.

Ponnambalam said the purpose of his visit is to meet political leaders and civil society members in Tamil Nadu to brief them on the critical



challenges facing Tamil people. "The situation is grave and urgent," he said, underlining displacement and cultural erosion faced by Tamils.

Ponnambalam drew attention to alleged "colonisation projects" aimed at altering the demographic balance of Tamil-majority regions. "We are losing our land. Tamil areas are being systematically changed into Sinhalese-majority areas," he said. He fur-

## Uttarakhand to install solar fences, wildlife centres soon

**DEHRADUN**

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami on Friday announced a series of measures to reduce human-wildlife conflict across the state. The initiatives include installing solar fencing and sensor-based alert systems, setting up modern wildlife sterilisation centres, and opening district-level rehabilitation centres for animals.

The Chief Minister highlighted that incidents involving elephants, nilgai, bears, leopards, monkeys, and other wildlife have caused damage to crops, property, and human life in several areas. "A phased and well-planned security mechanism will be implemented to address these conflicts," he said. Solar fencing and alert systems will help prevent wildlife from entering human settlements and agricultural fields.

To control populations of

langurs, monkeys, wild boars, and bears, sterilisation centres under the Forest Department will be established in every district. Rescue and rehabilitation facilities for wildlife involved in conflicts will also be set up, with a minimum of 10 nali of land in hilly forest areas and at least 1 acre in plains reserved for this purpose.

CM Dhami stated that all works will be a top priority, with a detailed implementation plan ready within two weeks. An additional Rs 5 crore will be provided to the Forest Department for equipment such as nets, cages, and tranquilisation guns.

He also announced decentralisation of powers under the Wildlife Protection Act to enable Forest officers at the ranger level to act promptly against dangerous animals. Discussions on these measures were recently held with Union Minister Bhupender Yadav.



## India is emerging as Afghan's key pharma partner: Noor Jalal

**NEW DELHI**

Afghanistan's Minister of Public Health, Mawlawi Noor Jalal Jalali, on Saturday said India is emerging as a major partner for Afghanistan's pharmaceutical needs, as relations with Pakistan have "deteriorated." Speaking to reporters in New Delhi, he noted that Pakistan previously supplied 60-70 percent of Afghanistan's medicines, but recent disruptions have prompted Kabul to seek alternatives, with India seen as a reliable partner.

"Afghanistan's pharmaceutical supply market was largely dependent on Pakistan. Due to recent issues, we are exploring new solutions, and India is one of them," Jalali said. Stressing a pragmatic approach, he added, "As Minister of Public Health, I have only one enemy, disease. I will seek help from any country to fight it."

Jalali highlighted a "new



**Afghanistan's Health Minister Mawlawi Noor Jalal Jalali highlights India as a key partner for medicine supply as ties with Pakistan worsen**

chapter" of cooperation with India, citing long-standing ties and India's role as a trusted health partner. "We have a strong relationship with India and aim to expand collaboration. With Pakistan, relations stand deteriorated," he said.

His visit coincided with the Second WHO Global Summit on Traditional Medicine in New Delhi. On the sidelines, Jalali held discussions with Minister of State for AYUSH, Prataprao Jadhav, to enhance

## Former envoys warn Bangladesh unrest threatens Indian missions

**NEW DELHI**

Former Indian High Commissioners to Bangladesh have raised serious concerns over rising unrest in the country, pointing to weak governance, extremist involvement, and threats to Indian diplomatic staff. The unrest followed the death of Inqilab Moncho leader Osman Hadi, which triggered widespread protests, mob violence, and attacks on Indian establishments.

Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty, a former High Commissioner, said radical elements were exploiting the instability. "Governance is very weak. So people are taking advantage," he said, adding that right-wing, criminal, and Islamist forces are fueling the unrest.

Riva Ganguly Das, another former High Commissioner, described the situation as "shocking" and criticized gov-

ernment advisors for justifying mob violence. She called attacks on Indian missions "absolutely unacceptable" and emphasized that India's priority must be the safety of its High Commissioner, Assistant High Commissioner, and other staff in Bangladesh.

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) alleged that the post-Hadi violence was part of a plot to create uncertainty before Bangladesh's parliamentary elections scheduled for February.

Osman Hadi was shot on December 12 while travelling in Dhaka's Bijoy Nagar area. He was flown to Singapore for treatment on December 15 but later died. His death sparked protests across Dhaka, with activists demanding justice. Despite calls from Inqilab Moncho for peaceful observance during his funeral procession, the capital remains tense.

## Congress slams VB-G-RAM-G Bill as Godse-motivated action

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM**

Congress MP Shafi Parambil on Saturday strongly criticized the BJP-led government over the passage of the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G-RAM-G) Bill in Parliament, calling it a "Godse-motivated action." He questioned the removal of Mahatma Gandhi's name from the scheme and the 60:40 fund-sharing pattern between the Centre and the states, warning that the poorest groups would bear the brunt of the legislation.

"Not just a politician, but how can any Indian agree to this? The poorest of the states are getting affected. Even supporters of BJP cannot endorse this agenda," Parambil told. He added that while the government



promises 125 days of wage employment, practical implementation may provide far fewer days, further disadvantaging vulnerable communities.

NCP-SCP MP Supriya Sule also opposed the bill, describing the removal of Gandhi's name as "very wrong" and promising that the opposition would continue to fight against it in Parliament.

Earlier, the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha passed the VB-G-RAM-G Bill, which

seeks to replace the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). Opposition members staged a walkout in the Rajya Sabha, demanding that the bill be referred to a Select Committee for further review.

Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan defended the legislation, stating it would benefit the poor and accusing the Congress of disrespecting Gandhi's ideals. The Bill provides 125 days of wage employment per rural household and sets a 60:40 fund-sharing pattern between the Centre and states, with a 90:10 ratio for North-eastern and Himalayan states. It also allows states to notify up to 60 days in a year for peak agricultural seasons such as sowing and harvesting.

**EGGS SAFETY ALERT**

## Eggs safe for consumption, no cancer risk: FSSAI

**NEW DELHI**

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) on Saturday confirmed that eggs available in India are safe for consumption, dismissing recent claims linking them to cancer as misleading and scientifically unsupported. Officials said such reports have the potential to cause unnecessary public concern.

FSSAI addressed media and social media posts alleging the presence of carcinogenic substances like nitrofurans (AOZ) in eggs. The authority clarified



that nitrofurans are strictly prohibited at all stages of poultry and egg production under the Food Safety and Standards (Contaminants, Toxins and Residues) Regula-

tions, 2011.

An Extraneous Maximum Residue Limit (EMRL) of 1.0 µg/kg exists solely for regulatory enforcement and detection purposes. Officials em-

phasised that trace residues below this limit do not indicate permitted use nor pose any health risk.

Highlighting India's regulatory standards, FSSAI noted they align with international practices, including those of the European Union and the United States, which also ban nitrofurans. Variations in numerical benchmarks between countries reflect differences in analytical methods, not in safety standards.

Citing scientific evidence, the authority stated there is no proven link between dietary exposure to nitrofurans metab-

olites and cancer or other health issues. No national or international health body associates normal egg consumption with higher cancer risk.

Responding to reports of contamination in specific egg batches, FSSAI said such incidents are isolated, often due to feed-related factors, and do not reflect the overall egg supply. The authority urged consumers to rely on verified scientific guidance, reiterating that eggs remain a safe, nutritious, and valuable part of a balanced diet when produced and consumed under proper food safety standards.

QUICK READ



Kerala teacher found dead inside Kochi home

**Kochi**  
A 70-year-old retired teacher, Vanaja C R, was found dead in a pool of blood at her Ponnekara home on Friday night. She was discovered by her sister's son around 9 pm. Police found multiple injuries and a knife near her body. A slit wrist was noted, and it is unclear if it was suicide or homicide. CCTV footage is being checked, and forensic teams are investigating. Postmortem will confirm the cause.

BJP slams TMC over Madan Mitra remarks

**Kolkata**  
BJP leader Keya Ghosh on Friday criticised TMC MLA Madan Mitra for claiming Lord Ram was a Muslim. She said the statement was an election tactic to win Muslim votes, accusing Mamata Banerjee's government of appeasement politics. Ghosh also slammed TMC over the VB-G RAM-G Bill, claiming the party opposes measures benefiting workers and the underprivileged. She accused the state government of failing in job creation and women's security, citing unemployment and a recent tribal woman gang rape, calling it "a government for rapists."

Tamil Nadu nurses continue protest for regularization

**Chennai**  
Nurses on consolidated pay at Tamil Nadu government medical facilities continued their protest for the third day on Saturday, demanding job regularisation and benefits. Many have worked on contract for over 10 years without maternity leave or other perks. Protesters said they were praised during the pandemic but now feel neglected, prompting the indefinite agitation. Hundreds, some with children, protested overnight on December 19 despite cold weather. Over 500 nurses were detained on December 18 at Kilambakkam during earlier protests seeking reinstatement of around 700 removed staff and pay equal to TN Medical Recruitment Board-appointed nurses.

# Mayawati urges Nitish Kumar to apologise for Hijab controversy

BSP chief Mayawati has advised Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar to apologise over the recent hijab-related incident

LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief Mayawati on Saturday urged Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar to express regret over an incident where he allegedly tried to remove a Muslim woman's hijab during a public event. The episode occurred earlier this week during the distribution of appointment letters to doctors.

A video of the incident went viral on social media, triggering widespread criticism from students, college authorities, and political leaders across the country. Mayawati described the development as "regrettable and unfortunate," noting that it had escalated due to statements made by ministers and others instead of being resolved promptly.



In a post on X, the BSP leader said the matter should have been handled sensitively, considering its implications for women's safety and dignity. She emphasized that the Chief Minister should understand the situation, express regret, and take appropriate steps to end the controversy. Mayawati also highlighted that similar incidents have been reported in other areas and require careful and respectful management.

The Muslim woman doctor involved is expected to join duty on December 20. Her family clarified that they do not hold any resentment towards the Chief Minister and felt the issue was being exaggerated.

Meanwhile, the college administration defended the Chief Minister. Professor (Dr.) Mohammad Mahfuzur Rahman, Principal of Government Tibbi College & Hospital, stated that the incident was being "misrepresented" and asked the public to consider the facts carefully.

The controversy continues to draw attention nationwide, with political and social leaders calling for sensitive handling of matters related to women's dignity and religious sentiments.

## UP Minister Rajbhar supports Yogi on SP mafia allegations

LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Cabinet Minister Om Prakash Rajbhar on Saturday supported Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's claim that the Samajwadi Party (SP) is linked to criminal mafias. Rajbhar called SP a "government of goons" and alleged that it shelters criminal elements.

"People call the Samajwadi Party a government of goons. The party shelters all the mafia. The Chief Minister is right that many accused are linked to the SP," Rajbhar told.

Earlier, CM Yogi Adityanath said nearly every mafia in the state has connections with the SP. He stated that preliminary investigations show some accused in the illegal co-deine-based cough syrup trafficking case have links to the party. Yogi added that the SP's complicity in such cases would be exposed.

The illegal cough syrup case is being handled under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act. The UP government, Special Task Force (STF), police, and Food Safety and Drug Administration (FSDA) are actively investigating. A state-level SIT comprising police and FSDA officials is monitoring the case, including the flow of money and other critical details.

On December 10, Varanasi police seized about 30,000 bottles of banned co-deine-based cough syrup from a godown valued at roughly Rs 60 lakh. Two suspects were arrested at the site. DCP Crime, Saravanan Thangamani, said the godown belonged to Manoj Kumar Yadav, a close associate of Shubham Jaiswal.

## Union Minister L Murugan defended the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls, citing fair elections and accountability

# Union Minister defends SIR, blames DMK over controversy

CHENNAI

Union Minister L Murugan on Saturday defended the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, calling it essential for free, fair, and transparent elections. He said duplicate and dead voters must be removed to ensure the integrity of elections. "Everyone needs SIR. Double voters, dead voters, their names have to be removed from the voter list. Elections have to be conducted fairly and transparently. The Election Commission is ensuring this," Murugan stated.

He also criticised Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, claiming the public had rejected his criticism of electoral processes. Murugan noted that Gand-



hi's remarks in Bihar were unwelcome and that he was currently out of the country.

The Tamil Nadu Chief Electoral Officer announced that 97.37 lakh names were removed from the draft voter lists in the first phase of SIR. Of these, 66.40 lakh voters had changed residence, 26.90 lakh were deceased, and 3.98 lakh had enrolled at multiple locations. Draft rolls now list

5,43,76,755 voters, with women voters (2.77 crore) outnumbering men (2.66 crore), along with 7,191 third-gender and 4,19,355 PWD voters.

Murugan also condemned the death of Poornachandran, a 40-year-old man who self-immolated over the Karthigai Deepam issue in Madurai, blaming the DMK government for creating conditions that angered devotees. Police confirmed he circulated a voice message explaining his actions after the ceremonial lamp was not lit atop Thiruparankundram hill, despite a Madras High Court order. The investigation is ongoing, and the controversy has intensified amid growing protests and political statements.

## Delhi police successfully bust fake ASI recruitment scam

NEW DELHI

The IFSO Unit of Delhi Police on Saturday dismantled a major fake government recruitment scam that targeted hundreds of job aspirants by impersonating the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), Ministry of Culture. Officials said the accused created a fake ASI recruitment portal advertising non-existent vacancies to exploit unemployed youth.

Police registered the case under FIR No. 268/25 at the Special Cell, citing multiple sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). The scam allegedly involved seven posts of Curator and 84 posts of Junior Assistant. Links to the fake recruitment website were circulated across college groups, online forums, and messaging plat-

forms. The portal closely replicated the official ASI site with authentic logos and layouts, deceiving hundreds of applicants.

Around 150 candidates were allegedly shortlisted based on family and financial background to identify potential targets for extortion. To add credibility, the accused booked a reputed examination centre in Jaipur and conducted a written test following standard government exam protocols. They planned to declare nearly 50 percent of candidates successful and demand bribes at the interview stage in exchange for guaranteed selection.

The scam was foiled before the interview stage through intelligence-led operations. Kuldeep (30), a B.Com graduate pursuing LL.B., and Piyush (25), a B.Tech graduate,



were arrested. Recoveries included mobile phones, laptops, desktops, passbooks, iPad, and a tablet.

Delhi Police described the operation as a successful example of proactive cyber policing and confirmed that the investigation is ongoing, preventing significant financial and emotional loss to unsuspecting job seekers.

# BJP accuses Rahul Gandhi of meeting 'enemies of India'

NEW DELHI

The BJP on Saturday accused Congress leader Rahul Gandhi of meeting "enemies of India" during his visit to Germany, raising questions about his alleged anti-national agenda. Speaking at a press conference, BJP national spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia showed a photo of Gandhi with Berlin-based Hertie School president Cornelia Woll and claimed it proved the Congress leader met "anti-India forces."

Bhatia said Woll is a trustee of the Central European University, funded by US billionaire George Soros's Open Society Foundation, linking Gandhi to Soros-backed organisations. He alleged that Gandhi often travels abroad around parliamentary sessions to meet individuals who are "jealous of India" and "attack its integrity."

The BJP spokesperson claimed that this was not Gandhi's first interaction with foreign "anti-India forces," and accused him of insulting and defaming the country in previous visits. Bhatia compared Gandhi to Mir Zafar, calling his actions anti-national.

He further claimed that Soros makes anti-India state-



**BJP alleges Rahul Gandhi met "anti-India forces" in Germany, linking him to George Soros-funded organisations, and questions his loyalty and intentions toward the country.**

ments and funds activities aimed at creating unrest in India. "George Soros is not an Indian, but Rahul Gandhi has taken the oath to protect the Constitution," Bhatia said, asserting that such elements "need to be treated" and that the public demands accountability.

There was no immediate reaction from Rahul Gandhi or the Congress regarding the allegations. BJP's statement comes amid a continuing narrative by the party linking top Congress leaders with Soros-funded organisations and questioning their commitment to India's sovereignty and national interest.

## NCP-SCP MP Supriya Sule opposes VB-G-RAM-G Bill

MUMBAI

NCP-SCP MP Supriya Sule on Saturday strongly opposed the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G-RAM-G) Bill passed in Parliament, criticising the government for removing Mahatma Gandhi's name from the scheme. She called it "very wrong" and said the policy's implementation would also reduce funding previously fully provided by the Centre to states.

Sule asserted that the opposition would continue to fight the bill in Parliament. "We will fight against this policy with all our might and continue to do so," she said. She also commented on the possibility of a coalition for the upcoming Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) elections, stating that local leaders are discussing seat allocations and the full picture would emerge in a few days.

The VB-G-RAM-G Bill was passed by the Lok Sabha on December 18 and cleared by the Rajya Sabha in the early hours of December 19. Opposi-



tion members staged a walkout, demanding that the Bill be referred to a Select Committee. Following this, TMC MPs, along with INDIA bloc members, began a 12-hour dharna outside Samvidhan Sadan in the Parliament complex, protesting the manner in which the government pushed the legislation.

Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan defended the Bill, saying it would benefit the poor and accused the Congress of disrespecting Mahatma Gandhi's ideals. The legislation guarantees 125 days of wage employment per rural household, increases state funding responsibilities, and allows states to notify up to 60 days for peak agricultural periods such as sowing and harvesting.

## PWD Minister Verma reviews roads under 'Government on Wheels'

NEW DELHI

Delhi PWD Minister Parvesh Singh Verma on Saturday said the Delhi government has been actively working to provide better infrastructure and improve road conditions since coming to power.

Verma conducted inspections under the "Government on Wheels" initiative, visiting roads near Sarai Kale Khan, Ashram, Lajpat Nagar, Moolchand, and IIT Delhi. The initiative, launched this year, aims to monitor and evaluate ongoing infrastructure projects across the national capital.

"Ever since our government came to power, we have been working to build good roads. Tenders are being floated, and we are committed to providing quality infrastructure," Verma said.



He explained that on-site inspections help identify discrepancies between official reports and actual conditions on the ground. "Through the inspection, we get to know whether there is a difference between what we are being told while sitting in office and the happenings on the ground," he added.

The "Government on Wheels" programme allows officials to review projects directly, ensuring accountabil-

ity and timely execution. It also helps in addressing delays or issues in road construction and other public works.

Verma's visits underline the government's focus on improving urban infrastructure and making roads safer and more reliable for commuters. Officials said the initiative will continue across other areas of Delhi to ensure consistent monitoring and better service delivery to residents.

## Sitharaman launches AI, STEM labs in Karnataka schools

NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday launched a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative to set up five Artificial Intelligence (AI), STEM, and robotics labs in government schools in Hosapete Taluka, Hampi, Karnataka. The programme, named Cyient AI Labs (CyAILs) – 'VijAlpa', aims to make AI, STEM, and robotics education accessible to students in rural and semi-urban areas.

Each lab will feature high-performance computers, AI-ready software, robotics kits, IoT devices, sensors, and secure broadband connectivity. The initiative aligns with the National Education Policy



(NEP) 2020, Digital India, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, while integrating CBSE's AI curriculum to enhance technology-enabled learning in government schools.

VijAlpatha focuses on building early digital fluency, computational thinking, and innovation capacity among students. It will benefit over 2,000 students and provide training to more than 200 teachers, fostering clarity in

digital knowledge and problem-solving skills at an early stage.

According to Sitharaman's Office, the programme is a scalable CSR model promoting innovation, career readiness, and digital empowerment at the grassroots level. It can also be expanded to other districts and states in collaboration with local Education Departments and is intended as a model project for nationwide AI education.

The initiative reflects the government's efforts to introduce future technologies at the school level, creating opportunities for students to develop skills relevant for emerging careers while strengthening India's overall technological and educational infrastructure.

QUICK READ

Human Rights Groups Condemn Balochistan Abductions

Quetta

Human rights organisations have raised alarms over a series of enforced disappearances in Balochistan by Pakistani security forces. Noor Bakhsh was taken from Turbat on December 17, while brothers Meer Ashraf and Meer Shahid were abducted from Gwadar on the same day, according to Baloch Voice for Justice. The Baloch Women Forum highlighted the forcible disappearance of Hazira Baloch from Hub Chowki on December 18, marking the fifth known case involving women. Rights groups called for immediate disclosure of the detainees' whereabouts and safe release. They urged the international community to hold Pakistan accountable and end the ongoing cycle of abductions.

Ravi Shankar promotes meditation at UN

New York

Ravi Shankar highlighted Lord Krishna's teachings on meditation during a session at the UN for the Second World Meditation Day. He emphasized that, like Arjuna on the battlefield, people today face conflicts and stress that meditation can help address. Diplomats, UN officials, and yoga leaders joined the practice to promote inner peace and global harmony. Experts noted meditation reduces stress, prevents violence, and can support leaders in decision-making. The observance, sponsored by India, Andorra, Mexico, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, coincides with the Winter Solstice, linking ancient Indian wisdom to modern peacebuilding efforts worldwide.

US AIRSTRIKES TARGET ISIS IN SYRIA RETALIATION

US Defence Secretary Pete called the strikes retaliation, not war, stating the US will continue targeting attackers of its forces globally

WASHINGTON

The United States launched airstrikes against dozens of Islamic State targets across central Syria in response to a deadly attack on American personnel last week, US officials said. The action marks a strong military reply aimed at weakening the extremist group's presence in the region.

US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth confirmed the strikes, saying they targeted ISIS fighters, infrastructure, and weapons sites. The operation was named Operation Hawkeye Strike and could be followed by further action if

needed.

Hegseth said the strikes were not the start of a wider war but a direct act of retaliation. He stated that the United States would continue to track down and eliminate those who attack American forces anywhere in the world.

In a social media post, the defence secretary said US forces began the operation to respond directly to the December 13 attack near Palmyra, Syria. He added that under President Donald Trump's leadership, the country would not hesitate to defend its people.

The airstrikes followed an assault last weekend in which two US Army soldiers and a



US civilian interpreter were killed. Three other American soldiers were wounded in the attack, which targeted a joint convoy of US and Syrian forces. The attacker was later shot dead by military personnel. President Trump had earlier

promised serious retaliation after the incident. The White House said the strikes were carried out to honour that commitment.

Deputy press secretary Anna Kelly said the president had made it clear that attacks on US forces would not go unanswered. She added that the latest military action sends a strong message to extremist groups.

Officials said the operation was carefully planned to reduce threats and prevent future attacks. The United States maintains that it will remain firm against terrorism while protecting its troops deployed overseas.



Imran Khan wife jailed in Toshakhana case

NEW DELHI

A Pakistani court on Saturday sentenced former prime minister Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi to seventeen years in prison each in the Toshakhana corruption case.

The case relates to alleged misuse of state gifts received from the Saudi government during an official visit in two thousand twenty one.

The verdict was announced by a special court judge inside the high security Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi. Prosecutors said Khan bought an expensive Bulgari jewellery set at a very low price and kept it for personal use.

The jewellery was gifted by the Saudi crown prince and was valued at around eighty million Pakistani rupees. The court said Khan paid only two point nine million rupees to retain the gift.

Both Khan and Bushra Bibi were given ten years for breach of trust and seven years under corruption laws. Each was also fined ten million rupees by the court.

The judge said age and gender were considered while deciding a lesser punishment. Khan party PTI rejected the

Family members were barred from the jail hearing, Imran Khan's sister criticized restrictions, ministers praised the judgment for exposing public trust breaches, sentence starts after another term

ruling and called the jail trial unfair and politically motivated. Party leaders said family members were stopped from entering the jail during the hearing.

Imran Khan sister was seen questioning the restrictions and calling the process illegal. Government ministers welcomed the judgment and said the case showed breach of public trust. Officials said the new sentence will start after completion of another corruption term.

The ruling has deepened political tensions in Pakistan as supporters and critics react strongly nationwide. Observers say the case will shape future politics and debates on accountability. The verdict is likely to face appeals in higher courts soon ahead.

Albanese said Sydney memorial showed unity, resilience, faith, and love; a national day of reflection will honour victims

Australia PM praises Jewish strength after attack

SYDNEY

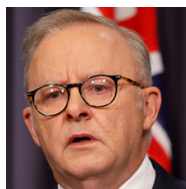
Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Saturday said the country's Jewish community is "completely unbreakable" as the nation mourns victims of a deadly mass shooting at Bondi Beach. The attack, which took place during a Hanukkah celebration, is being investigated as an antisemitic act of terrorism.

Albanese made the remarks after attending a memorial service at the Great Synagogue in Sydney. He said the gathering showed unity, resilience, faith, and love at a time of deep grief. A national day of reflection will be held on Sunday to honour the 15 people killed and dozens injured

in the attack.

The Bondi Beach shooting, the worst in Australia in nearly three decades, has shocked the country. Authorities have increased security and police patrols nationwide to prevent further attacks and reassure communities.

Facing criticism over rising antisemitism, Albanese promised stronger hate laws. The New South Wales government also announced tougher steps, including new rules on hate speech and gun control. State officials said a bill would be introduced to ban public display of symbols linked to terrorist groups, saying such acts only aim to threaten and scare people.



was a sign of respect and support for the Jewish community.

Police said the alleged gunman was shot dead at the scene, while his son remains in hospital under custody facing multiple charges. Investigators believe the attackers were inspired by Islamic State ideology. The tragedy has sparked nationwide calls for unity, safety, and stronger action against hate.

China pushes Cambodia Thailand border talks

BANGKOK

China's special envoy for Asian affairs has visited Cambodia to urge an end to intense border fighting between Cambodia and Thailand, officials said on Saturday. The visit comes as fresh diplomatic efforts are underway to restore calm ahead of a key regional meeting.

Cambodia's foreign ministry said envoy Deng Xijun travelled to Phnom Penh this week to encourage both sides to reduce tensions and return to dialogue. Fighting resumed recently along a disputed border area, breaking an earlier ceasefire and worsening the humanitarian situation.

According to officials, nearly sixty people have been killed so far, while more than five hundred thousand residents have been forced to flee their homes. Temporary shelters have been set up on both sides of the border to support displaced families.

China said it wants to play a constructive role in helping Cambodia and Thailand settle their differences peacefully. Deng reaffirmed Beijing's



support for talks and dialogue, stressing the need for restraint and cooperation to avoid further loss of life.

The renewed violence has drawn global concern. Both China and the United States are now pushing for a ceasefire before a special meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations scheduled for Monday. Regional leaders are expected to discuss ways to prevent further escalation and protect civilians.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Washington is cautiously hopeful that both countries could return to ceasefire compliance by ear-

ly next week. He added that continued communication with regional partners is ongoing. The border dispute between Thailand and Cambodia has flared up several times in the past, often leading to brief but deadly clashes. Analysts say the current fighting highlights the need for stronger regional conflict resolution mechanisms.

As diplomatic pressure builds, people living near the border remain anxious about safety and stability. Aid agencies have called for quick action to allow families to return home and resume normal life.

New Gaza governance plan and international force soon

WASHINGTON

United States Secretary of State Marco Rubio said a new governance system for Gaza will be set up soon, followed by the arrival of an international stabilisation force. The plan is part of efforts to strengthen a fragile ceasefire after months of conflict in the Palestinian territory.

Rubio said the existing situation in Gaza is not sustainable, as fighting risks returning despite the recent truce. He explained that the new structure will include an international board and a group of Palestinian technocrats who will manage daily administration on the ground.

Speaking at a year end press conference, Rubio said progress has already been made in identifying Palestinians who could take part in the technocratic authority. He added that Washington hopes to put the new governing bodies in place very soon, though he did not give a fixed timeline.

The next step after governance is the deployment of an international stabilisation force. US Central Command recently hosted talks in Doha with partner countries to discuss troop contributions. International troops could arrive as early as next month after



the United Nations Security Council authorised the mission.

However, key questions remain unanswered. Rubio admitted it is still unclear who would be responsible for disarming Hamas. Countries considering sending troops want clarity on the force's role, funding, and safety.

Rubio said several nations have shown interest in joining the force, including Pakistan, but more details must be shared before firm commitments are made.

He stressed that security and clear leadership are essential to attract donors for Gaza's reconstruction. Without stability, Rubio said, countries will hesitate to spend billions rebuilding areas that could be destroyed again.

The United States believes that effective governance and security are crucial for long term peace and recovery in Gaza.

Taipei attack suspect acted alone: Cops

TAIPEI

Taiwan police said on Saturday that the man behind a deadly attack in central Taipei acted alone, as investigations continue into an incident that left four people dead, including the suspect himself. Authorities said no evidence has been found so far to suggest the involvement of any accomplices.

The attack occurred on Friday evening in a busy shopping district near Taipei's main train station. Police said the suspect, identified as twenty seven year old Chang Wen from Taoyuan city, re-

leased smoke bombs before using a knife to attack bystanders. During a chase by police, Chang fell from a building and died from his injuries. Officers later confirmed that three other people were killed in the incident, while eleven were injured. Two of the injured victims remain in intensive care, according to the health ministry.

National Police Agency Director General Chang Jung hsin told reporters that checks carried out since the attack showed the suspect acted on his own. He said investigations into the motive are still ongoing.

SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

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JUSTICE ACROSS OCEANS

Ghana urged to lead Africa reparations push

NEW DELHI

Ghana's President John Dramani Mahama has been urged by a global delegation to rally African leaders behind a united push for reparations linked to transatlantic slavery and colonialism.

The delegation, made up of experts from Africa, the Caribbean, Europe, Latin America, and the United States, met Mahama in recent talks and presented priority actions under the African Union's reparations agenda. Earlier

this year, the African Union launched an effort to create a unified vision on what reparations could include, ranging from financial compensation and official acknowledgements to policy reforms.

Historians estimate that at least twelve point five million Africans were forcibly taken by European traders and sold into slavery between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries. Supporters say reparations are needed to address lasting damage, including racism and inequality, that



continue to affect African societies and diaspora communities today.

While Ghana has played a leading role, campaigners stressed the need for unity and coordination across the continent. They called on Mahama to encourage fellow leaders to choose courage over comfort and stand with affected communities.

The issue has gained momentum globally, though resistance remains strong in parts of Europe, where some governments oppose responsibility for historical wrongs. Recent talks between African and European leaders ac-

knowledgeled past suffering but stopped short of firm commitments, keeping the debate firmly alive.

Ghanaian officials say stronger backing at the United Nations could help frame slavery as one of humanity's gravest crimes, shaping future discussions on justice, accountability, and shared historical responsibility worldwide. Observers believe Mahama's response may influence Africa's collective voice as the movement enters a critical new phase ahead.

QUICK READ

Data error triggers sudden Infosys ADR spike

New Delhi

Infosys ADRs on US exchanges saw a sudden surge, rising nearly fifty percent within minutes. A report said the jump was not linked to company news but to a data feed mistake. Several platforms wrongly mapped the INFY ticker, confusing automated trading systems. Algorithms read it as a pricing error and placed heavy buy orders. Low trading volumes increased the impact, forcing multiple volatility halts. Prices jumped from about nineteen dollars to twenty seven before cooling. Indian listed shares showed no reaction. Regulators may review safeguards and data controls to prevent similar market shocks in future trading.

Global mergers surge as AI fuels deals

New Delhi

Global mergers and acquisitions are rising sharply as companies chase technology and scale. A Goldman Sachs report says worldwide M&A volumes jumped 40 percent year on year, led by mega deals above ten billion dollars. Artificial intelligence is the main driver, pushing firms to buy tech companies instead of building systems internally. Interest rate cuts and clearer policies also boosted confidence. Industrial and healthcare sectors saw strong growth, while private market take-private deals increased. Experts say 2026 will be shaped by ambition, strategic repositioning, and demand for data centers, as companies race to grow faster and stay competitive worldwide today.

Mumbai to host Asia's largest GCC project

Mumbai

Supreme Infrastructure India Limited has partnered with Brookfield Asset Management to build Asia's largest Global Capability Center in Powai, Mumbai. The six-acre project will offer around two million square feet of premium office space and is scheduled for completion by 2029. It will house a major multinational bank under a long-term lease. The development is expected to attract over one billion dollars in investment and create more than 30,000 skilled jobs. Designed to run on 100 percent green power, the project will boost Mumbai's economy and strengthen India's position as a global services hub.

RBI compounds FEMA violations in Genpact case

ED said RBI's no-objection ended the case; FEMA probe began on transactions, leading to a 2018 complaint violations

NEW DELHI

India's central bank has closed foreign exchange law proceedings against Genpact India Private Limited after issuing a compounding order under the Foreign Exchange Management Act, officials said on Saturday.

The Enforcement Directorate said the Reserve Bank of India passed the order after it issued a no objection, which led to the termination of the case. The agency had started an investigation under FEMA after receiving credible information related to the company's foreign exchange transactions. Following the probe, the ED filed a complaint before the Adjudicating Authority in October 2018, listing specific violations of the law.



The violations included late reporting of foreign inward remittances worth Rs 13.49 crore and delay in filing Form FCGPR after issuing shares amounting to Rs 13.01 crore. Show cause notices were issued to the company and its officials who were responsible for business decisions during the relevant period. Genpact later applied to the RBI seeking compounding of the violations as allowed under Section 15 of FEMA. After

reviewing the request, the RBI referred the matter to the ED, which gave its no objection in line with the spirit of the law.

Based on this, the RBI compounded the violations through an order dated October 17, 2025, with a one time payment of Rs 4,72,490. This brought an end to all adjudication proceedings and future litigation against the company and its office bearers. On Friday, the ED also noted that a similar compounding order was issued by the RBI in the case of Nearbuy India Private Limited.

This highlighted the regulator's approach of resolving minor compliance issues through settlement instead of prolonged legal action processes nationwide.

RBI will keep liquidity comfortable, align short-term rates with repo, prioritise growth despite possible second-half slowdown risks ahead

RBI may pause rate cuts amid changes

NEW DELHI

Unless there is a sharp collapse in economic growth, the Reserve Bank of India is likely to pause further interest rate cuts and keep its policy stance neutral, according to a new report. The report said the current easing cycle may have reached its end, especially as the central bank focuses on sustaining growth stability.

A revised consumer price index series, expected soon, may also limit room for future rate reductions. The report explained that lower food weightage in the new CPI could reduce the relief usually gained from falling food prices, unless economic growth weakens significantly.

The RBI is expected to continue keeping liquidity com-



fortable and ensure that short-term rates stay close to the repo rate. Minutes from the December policy meeting showed the central bank's strong focus on maintaining growth momentum. While growth performed better than expected in the first half, it may slow slightly in the second half.

Policy members noted that inflation remains below the

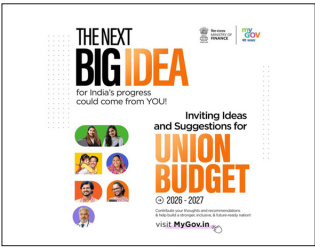
Government seeks public ideas for Union Budget

NEW DELHI

The Government of India has invited suggestions from the public to help shape the Union Budget for 2026-27. Through a message shared on the MyGovIndia platform, citizens were encouraged to take part in the budget making process and share ideas for the country's future growth.

The government said public input plays an important role in building policies that support inclusive development and national progress. People have been asked to visit the MyGov website and submit their views on areas they feel the upcoming budget should focus on.

The move comes as part of the Centre's wider effort to make the budget process more open and participative. By involving citizens, the government aims to understand public needs better and frame policies that reflect ground realities.



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman held pre-budget consultations with economists, farmers, experts, MSMEs, startups, markets, manufacturing, banking, insurance, IT, tourism, hospitality, trade unions and labour groups

Earlier, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman held several rounds of pre budget consultations in New Delhi. These meetings began with economists and later included farmer groups and agriculture experts. Discussions

were also held with representatives from MSMEs, startups, capital markets, manufacturing, banking, insurance, information technology, tourism, hospitality, trade unions, and labour organisations.

Industry bodies have also shared their expectations. The PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry submitted proposals focused on easing tax rules, improving access to affordable credit, and simplifying regulations for micro, small, and medium enterprises. It said such steps could reduce costs, improve loan repayment, and help small firms compete globally.

The upcoming budget is being prepared at a time when the economy shows strong GDP growth and controlled inflation. The Union Budget will be presented in Parliament on February 1, following consultations with key stakeholders to ensure a balanced and inclusive approach.



India electronics exports surge boost Make In India

NEW DELHI

India's electronics exports have jumped sharply this financial year, giving a strong push to the Make in India and production linked incentive schemes. Official figures show exports rose by about 38 per cent year on year during the April to November period of FY26, driven mainly by smartphone shipments.

Total electronics exports touched nearly 31 billion dollars in the eight month period. Apple alone accounted for almost 14 billion dollars worth of iPhone exports, making up over 45 per cent of total electronics shipments from the country.

Company filings earlier showed Apple India recorded domestic sales of nine billion dollars in FY25. One in every five iPhones made globally during the year was assembled in India, contributing around 12 per cent to Apple's worldwide production value.

Government data shows electronics production has

grown rapidly over the last decade. Output increased from about Rs 1.9 lakh crore in 2014-15 to nearly Rs 11.3 lakh crore in 2024-25. Exports also rose from Rs 38,000 crore to more than Rs 3.27 lakh crore during the same period.

India's mobile phone manufacturing base expanded from just two units in 2014-15 to nearly 300 units now. Production value climbed to Rs 5.45 lakh crore, while exports surged close to Rs 2 lakh crore.

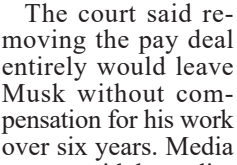
The Modified Electronics Manufacturing Clusters scheme is supporting this growth. Projects across 10 states are expected to attract large investments and create jobs.

The government said several approved clusters have already started production, bringing fresh investment, steady employment, and stronger confidence in India's electronics manufacturing future across the country.

US court restores Musk's Tesla pay package

NEW DELHI

A top US court has restored Elon Musk's 2018 pay package from Tesla, reversing an earlier ruling that had cancelled the deal. The decision by the Delaware Supreme Court overturned a lower court order that had described the package as excessive and unfair.



The court said removing the pay deal entirely would leave Musk without compensation for his work over six years. Media reports said the earlier ruling had raised concerns about Delaware's image as a business friendly legal centre, prompting closer review.

With the latest order, Musk regains a pay package now valued at about 139 billion dollars based on Tesla's recent share price. If all stock options under the deal are exercised, Musk's stake in Tesla could rise from around 12.4 per cent to about 18.1 per cent, increasing his control over the electric vehicle maker.

The 2018 package allows

Musk to buy nearly 304 million Tesla shares at a discounted price if the company meets set performance targets. Tesla's board had earlier warned that Musk might step away from the company if his pay was blocked.

Musk reacted to the ruling on social media, saying he felt vindicated. Lawyers who had challenged the deal said they were reviewing their options and stood by their efforts to question the board's decisions.

The court ruling comes even as Tesla shareholders recently approved a fresh pay plan that could be worth a massive sum if future goals are achieved.

Separately, Musk has spoken about the importance of skilled immigrants, especially from India. He said the US economy benefits greatly from Indian talent and that American companies often struggle to fill specialised roles due to talent shortages.

Musk also supported the H-1B visa programme while urging action against its misuse.

RIISING INDIAN ENGINEERING

India's bridges show scale vision and ambition

NEW DELHI

As India continues to grow, its bridges from Atal Setu to the Chenab Bridge stand as strong symbols of a nation moving forward. They connect distant regions, overcome tough terrain, and support daily life and economic activity.

An official statement said these structures reflect the country's scale, vision, and determination. Rising from mountains, crossing powerful rivers, and spanning open seas, the bridges show how



engineering is shaping modern India.

In the northeast, the Bogibeel and New Saraighat bridges across the Brahmaputra carry road and rail, im-

proving trade and travel. In Bihar, the Digha-Sonpur Bridge strengthens links across the Ganga with its sturdy rail-cum-road design.

Mumbai's Atal Setu, also

called the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link, stretches across the Arabian Sea. Spanning 16.5 kilometres over water and more on land, it is India's longest sea bridge and a major relief for traffic.

The Chenab Rail Bridge, the world's highest railway arch, rises 359 metres above the river. Built to face harsh winds, it will cut travel time in Jammu and Kashmir.

Down south, the new Pamban Bridge links Rameswaram to the mainland. This vertical lift sea bridge allows ships to pass smoothly

while trains continue. Together, these bridges reflect confidence, innovation, and India's growing infrastructure strength and future readiness.

They also create jobs, boost tourism, and bring markets closer to people in remote areas. Built with safety, long life, and future needs in mind, these projects show how planning and persistence help a nation move ahead steadily, turning bold ideas into lasting public assets for generations to come, even during challenging times and changing global conditions. Today.



# Madogiwa-zoku

## Transcending age and Efficiency at Workplace

The above lines from the poem Sailing to Byzantium by WB Yeats urges the elderly souls to sing beyond the ravages of times, and reverberates a debate on a reflexive corporate concept. Does the age kill competence or test competence. The corporate acumen and the ventures once profoundly honored become outdated on the day of superannuation. During an interview with an elderly gentleman, the man said “Cognitive decline does not affect me while.

I am working, but holistic decline begins if I don't work.” Further, he says, “I have the ability to relearn and contribute to my company, as long as they believe that age does not affect my cognitive ability to add value”. However, a young employee from Gen-Z bursts out with a sarcasm saying, “The thriving generation does not sync with fossilized mentalities, and their overcautious maneuver in business world will slow us down”. The above intergenerational tension is evidently aligned in the Japanese practice of Madogiwa-zoku, or the Window-side tribe. The Japanese companies tend to keep employees (nearing retirement or retired) on less critical job roles with limited responsibilities. The main intent of this practice is to ensure the continuity of competencies acquired through long standing expertise, and the employees' brand loyalty. One of the surveys published in The Asahi Shimbun (July 25, 2025) infers that approximately 64% of the employees belongs to older generations (46 years and above) in Japanese companies. The report also reinforces on the fact that there is a growing demand for older professionals.

However, the drastic demographic shift in working population is leading to the intergenerational conflict at workplace. According to the pwc survey titled What India's workforce thinks about work today (2022), the workforce comprises 54% of millennials



**Dr Umashankar K, Head – Learning and Development**  
► Presidency University Bengaluru

(26-41 yrs), 26% of Gen X (42-57 Yrs), 15% of Gen Z (18-25 yrs), and 7% of baby boomers (58-76 yrs). Since there is an extensive demographic diversity in Indian working population, and the percentage of older population is comparatively less, the Indian business models may think about incorporating the Japanese practice of Madogiwa-zoku while ensuring the stability of job market for deserving talents. Following are the strong perspectives that highlight on the significance of promoting Madogiwa-zoku at workplace.

**Emotional Contagion:** Although Madogiwa-zoku practice intends to acknowledge the employees' brand loyalty, and value their experiential knowledge, they have been restricted with trivial responsibilities. Yasuo Takao a political scientist from Curtin University on East Asia Forum (June 26, 2025) opines Window-side tribe as a corporate exile as the assigned trivial roles are disconnected from their actual expertise. This spread negative emotions about the practice and defeats the actual purpose while creating workplace anomalies. Therefore, organizations may device a strategic plan to reward the brand loyalty and harness their expertise in business optimization. According to study published in Psychology of Aging (Aug 2022), the crystalized intelligence (expertise acquired through comprehensive experience) remains intact despite

aging but only episodic memory (recalling recent incidents) may decline through the aging process. This supports the intention of organizations to employ older professionals in a strategic position as consultants or on emeritus status.

**Continuity of brand ethos:** An interview with a senior consultant from a public sector in India has been an eye opener, and he emphasized that loyal and older professionals can solidify the brand ethos through instilling brand narratives in the younger workforce of the company.

Further, he says that the older employees are not only the keepers of brand narratives but full of strategic mindset acquired through the decades of experience in the company. Cultural Gerontology: Madogiwa-zoku upholds the cultural values of Japanese that respect loyalty, work, and retaining dignity beyond retirement. The practice emphasizes on employing the retired employees in some low-risk jobs or clerical jobs with less accountability. However, this has led to a huge dissonance between their experience and their current job status, with clerical engagements. This is might lead to individual identity crises, and



**“An aged man is but a paltry thing, A tattered coat upon a stick, unless Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing For every tatter in its mortal dress...”**

the younger workforce may lose respect for these elderly professionals.

**Cultural Exchange and Shared Values:** In addition to the western philosophy of efficiency and workplace productivity, the Japanese emphasize on respect for brand loyalty among the employees. Wherein, the retention of long tenured employees even after retirements with limited benefits and workplace responsibilities.

If this model could be tweaked to retain the decades of expertise in strategic thinking and problem solving, this could be no more a corporate exile. Moreover, Madogiwa-zoku could become a pioneering paradigm that offers valuable lessons for other economies to integrate with appropriate adaptations. Aligned to the noble practices of Madogiwa-zoku, many Indian PSUs like ONGC, TCS, BHEL, etc. appoint the long serving employees through Reemployment.

But, the intention behind Madogiwa-zoku and Reemployment differ as the former emphasizes of respect to loyalty and the latter focuses on leveraging accumulated expertise. The combination of Respect for Employee Loyalty and leveraging expertise can evolve a new performance model.

### The key takeaways for Indian companies from the practices of Madogiwa-zoku are:

- Aging may slow down episodic memory but not the competence earned through decades.
- Respect for the employees for their brand loyalty accordingly.
- Promoting intergenerational collaboration among the workforce.
- Redesigning the Job roles for older employees (consultants) suiting their expertise.
- Designing mentor-mentee framework that can facilitate knowledge transfer.
- Avoiding negative emotional contagion by neutralizing social isolation or nonacceptance.

## Gayatri Fine Arts Global (GFA Global) Announces Its 7th Annual Music Festival in Chennai

### CHENNAI

Gayatri Fine Arts Global (GFA Global), an organization registered in Chennai and the United States with the objective of promoting Indian classical music and dance worldwide, has announced the schedule for its 7th Annual Music Festival. The festival will be held from December 22 to 28, 2025, at Sri Krishna Saras Hall in Mylapore, Chennai.

The week-long festival will bring together talented young artists and renowned musicians from India and abroad on a single platform, highlighting the organization's mission of preserving the Carnatic music tradition and honoring stalwarts of the art form.

Founded under the guidance of Vidwan Chitraveena Ganesh and co-founded by Vidya Venkatesh, GFA Global—originally rooted in Karnataka—has grown into a significant cultural force by organizing concerts and theme-based productions. Its presentation of Bhakti Vijayam at the 2024 Cleveland Thyagaraja Aradhana Festival stands as a notable example of its work. This year's festival will feature over 70 concerts, including vocal music, instrumental performances, and lecture-demonstrations (lec-dems).



**Vidya Venkatesh**

The programs are curated to provide performance opportunities for both emerging and senior artists.

A key highlight of the festival will be the award ceremony on December 23, during which the following dignitaries will be honored: Chief Guest: Smt. Vijaya Thayanban, (Member Secretary, Tamil

Nadu Iyal Isai Nataka Mandram), Guest of Honour: Vidwan Nagai R. Muralidharan, (Recipient of the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award). The award recipients are Viswa Sangeetha Seva Visharada: Sri V. V. Sundaram, (Co-founder, Cleveland Thyagaraja Festival), Sangeetha Seva Visharada:

Smt. Shubashree Thanikachalam (Renowned cultural producer) Senior artists performing at the festival include Vidwan Neyveli Santhanagopalan, Vidwan Ram Verma, the Mysore Brothers (Vidwan Mysore Nagaraj & Dr. Mysore Manjunath), Vidwan Dr. R. Suryaprakash, and many others.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

YouTube: [youtube.com/@GayatriFineArtsGlobal](https://youtube.com/@GayatriFineArtsGlobal)  
Website: [www.gfaglobal.org](http://www.gfaglobal.org)

### SPECIAL LECTURES

**December 25:** “My Journey Through Music” by Vidwan Ram Verma

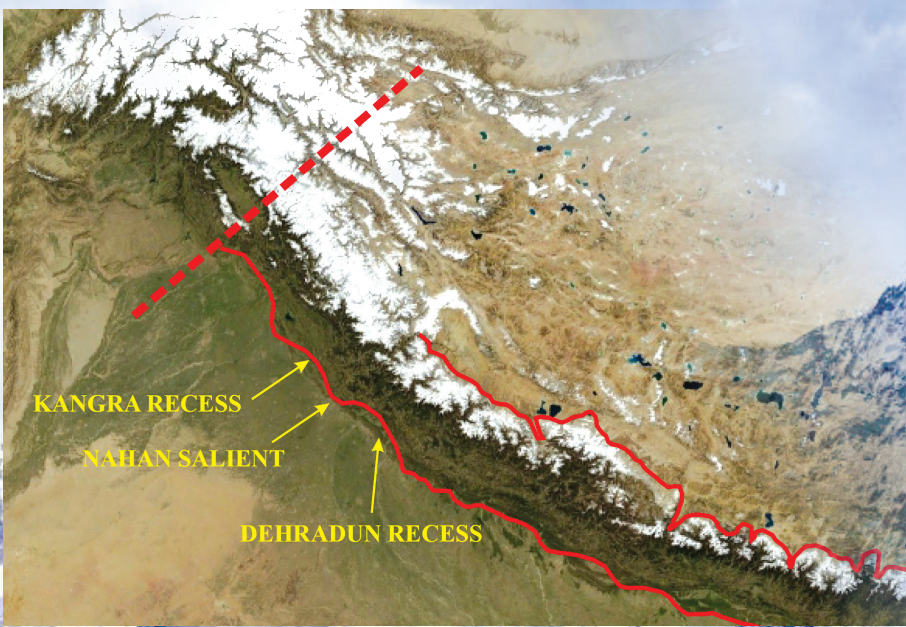
**December 27:** Vocal recital by Vidushi Smt. Rama Ravi followed by a lecture by Dr. Nandita Ravi titled “A Treasure of Javalis”

All programs are free and open to the public. The organization invites music lovers, students, and the general public to attend in large numbers.



**Chitraveena Ganesh**

# The Great Himalayan Earthquake: Understanding Past Devastation and Future Risks



The Himalayan region stands as one of Earth's most geologically active and seismically vulnerable zones. Throughout history, this majestic mountain range has witnessed catastrophic earthquakes that have claimed countless lives and reshaped landscapes. As our understanding of tectonic processes deepens and monitoring capabilities advance, scientists are increasingly concerned about the potential for another great Himalayan earthquake.

### Historical Context: The 1934 Bihar-Nepal Earthquake

When discussing great Himalayan earthquakes, the 1934 Bihar-Nepal earthquake remains one of the most devastating seismic events in recorded history. Striking on January 15, 1934, this magnitude 8.0 earthquake caused widespread destruction across northern Bihar in India and southern Nepal. The disaster

claimed approximately 10,000 to 12,000 lives, though some estimates suggest the death toll may have been considerably higher given the limited record-keeping of the era.

The earthquake's impact extended far beyond immediate casualties. Entire villages were leveled, with reports describing how the ground rolled in waves and buildings collapsed like houses of cards. The cities of Munger and Muzaffarpur in Bihar suffered extensive damage, while Kathmandu, despite being further from the epicenter, experienced significant structural destruction. The earthquake was felt across a vast area, with tremors reported as far away as Calcutta (now Kolkata) and even in parts of Punjab. What made the 1934 earthquake particularly significant from a scientific perspective was that it occurred during a period when seismological instruments were becoming more sophisticated.

### The Geological Foundation of Himalayan Seismicity

To understand why the Himalayan region is so prone to devastating earthquakes, we must examine the fundamental geological processes shaping this landscape. The Himalayas are the result of one of nature's most dramatic tectonic collisions: the ongoing convergence between the Indian and Eurasian plates.

Approximately 50 million years ago, the Indian plate began its collision with the Eurasian plate, a process that continues today. The Indian plate moves northward at a rate of roughly 4 to 5 centimeters per year, driving under the Eurasian plate in a process called subduction. This relentless movement has created the highest mountain range on Earth, but it has also generated enormous tectonic stress along the plate boundary.

The main fault system responsible for Himalayan earthquakes is the Main Hi-

malayan Thrust (MHT), a massive geological structure that extends for thousands of kilometers along the base of the Himalayan range.

This fault represents the interface between the subducting Indian plate and the overriding Eurasian plate. As the Indian plate pushes northward, stress accumulates along the MHT until it exceeds the frictional strength of the rocks, causing the fault to rupture and release energy in the form of an earthquake.

The MHT is not a simple, single fault but rather a complex zone of deformation with multiple segments. Some segments rupture frequently in moderate earthquakes, while others remain locked for centuries, accumulating stress that could eventually be released in a great earthquake. Scientists have identified several segments along the Himalayan arc where the fault appears to be locked.

# Joshua Ends Paul Hype With Brutal Miami Knockout

Anthony Joshua crushed Jake Paul in Miami, ending hype with a brutal knockout that stunned fans worldwide globally

## FLORIDA

Former heavyweight champion Anthony Joshua delivered a sobering reality check to social-media sensation-turned-boxer Jake Paul, scoring a savage sixth-round knockout in Miami. The emphatic finish brought an abrupt end to Paul's ambitions of challenging elite professional boxers and reaffirmed Joshua's pedigree as one of the most dangerous heavyweights of his generation.

The bout began cautiously, with Paul adopting a defensive approach in the opening rounds. Using lateral movement and clinches, he managed to evade Joshua's power for much of the first four rounds. The early stages were largely uneventful, drawing mixed reactions from the crowd as Joshua patiently stalked his opponent, probing with jabs and measuring distance rather than forcing exchanges.

That patience paid off in the fifth round. Joshua began finding his range, increasing pressure and cutting off the



ring effectively. A sharp combination sent Paul to the canvas for the first time, exposing the clear disparity in experience and ring intelligence. Though Paul beat the count,

he appeared shaken, his movement slowing noticeably as Joshua sensed the finish was near. Moments later, another knockdown followed, further draining Paul's resistance and confidence.

The end came decisively in the sixth round. Joshua unleashed a thunderous right hand that connected flush, instantly dropping Paul and prompting the referee to stop the contest. Paul remained on the canvas as ringside medical staff attended to him, with early assessments suggesting a suspected broken jaw. The knockout silenced any remaining doubts about the mismatch many critics had predicted beforehand.

For Joshua, the victory serves as a powerful statement after recent career setbacks. Facing a younger but far less experienced opponent, he demonstrated discipline, power, and composure—qualities that once made him a unified heavyweight champion. The win is expected to reignite discussions about his future against top-tier contenders in the division.

## PARIS

Three-time Grand Slam singles champion Stan Wawrinka has confirmed that the 2026 tennis season will be the final chapter of his long and distinguished professional career. The Swiss veteran made the announcement through a heartfelt social media post, reflecting on his journey and signalling his desire to step away from the sport on his own terms.

Every book needs an ending. It's time to write the final chapter of my career as a professional tennis player. 2026 will be my last year on tour, Wawrinka wrote. The message resonated deeply with fans and fellow players alike, marking the beginning of a farewell tour for one of tennis's most respected competitors.

Wawrinka, who will turn 41 in March, enjoyed his greatest successes during an era dominated by legends such as Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal, and Novak Djokovic. Despite competing against three of the greatest players in the sport's history, Wawrinka carved out his own legacy, capturing the Australian Open in 2014, the French Open in 2015, and the US Open in 2016. Each of those triumphs came in finals where he defeated world number one opponents, underlining his reputation as a fearless big-match player.

At his peak in 2014, Wawrinka rose to a career-high world ranking of No. 3. How-

Stan Wawrinka announced 2026 will be his final season, closing a celebrated career with three Grand Slam titles.



## Wawrinka Announces 2026 as Final Tennis Season

and appearances on tour. He is currently ranked 157th, a far cry from his prime, yet his longevity remains remarkable. With 582 tour-level victories, Wawrinka ranks fourth among active players, trailing only a small group that includes Gael Monfils, who has also indicated plans to retire at the end of next year.

Beyond individual success, Wawrinka played a vital role in Swiss tennis history. He won Olympic gold in men's doubles alongside Federer at the Beijing Olympics and was instrumental in securing Switzerland's first-ever Davis Cup title in 2014. As Wawrinka prepares for his final seasons, he has made it clear that his goal is not merely to compete, but to finish on the best note possible.

Young Indian golfers dominated the US Kids Golf Indian Championship, excelling despite smog, weather challenges, and reduced rounds

## Young Indian Golfers Shine at Fifth US Kids Golf Indian C'ship

### MANESAR

India's young golfing talent delivered an impressive performance at the fifth edition of the US Kids Golf Indian Championship, held at the Classic Golf and Country Club. Battling difficult weather conditions and persistent smog, local golfers swept the titles across categories, showcasing resilience and composure in challenging circumstances.

Due to a delayed start and limited daylight, the Tournament Committee reduced the final round for all sections to nine holes. Despite this adjustment, the competition remained intense, with several standout performances across boys' and girls' categories.

Among the boys, Nihal Cheema emerged as one of the stars of the championship. Competing in the Boys 8 category, the Chandigarh golfer was the only player to shoot



par or better on all three days. Cheema posted consistent nine-hole rounds of 36, 34, and 33, finishing well ahead of his nearest rival, Zowra Sikand. His final round was particularly impressive, as he carded three birdies without a single bogey.

Haryana's Drona Singh Dhull also turned heads in the Boys 11 category, delivering the best round of the day.

Dhull fired a four-under 32 for nine holes, highlighted by four birdies and a bogey-free card. In the Boys 15-18 section, Prince Bainsla claimed the title after recording the best round of the week overall—a six-under 66 on the opening day. He finished ahead of Shashank Sachin Gadre, with Arshvnt Srivastava securing third place.

The girls' categories were equally competitive. Aanya Dandriyal stood out in the Girls 11-12 section, edging Malaysia's Choi Quinn Cie in a dramatic tie-breaker after both players finished tied at 196 over 45 holes. Aanya's regulation round, featuring an eagle and a birdie against four bogeys, proved decisive. Preitisha Kaur Gill impressed in the Girls 15-18 category, while other notable performers included Naaysha S Sinha (Girls 8), Gairat Kaur Kahlon (Girls 9-10), and Shiksha Jain (Girls 13-14).

## BAI to Launch First Grassroots Para Badminton Coaches Programme

### RAIPUR

The Badminton Association of India (BAI) is hosting its inaugural Coaches Development Program - Para Badminton (Grassroot) in Raipur from December 16 to 20. This marks a major step in enhancing the coaching infrastructure that supports the sport's quick growth in the country. The five-day event gathers coaches from all over India for specialised training focused on developing long-term capacity in para-badminton.

The course is led by Gaurav Khanna, a Dronacharya Awardee and the national head coach of the Indian para-badminton team. It offers a thorough curriculum that includes classroom instruction and practical on-court training. Participants learn about disability awareness, pa-



ra-sport governance, classification systems, assistive devices, coaching techniques, medical support needs, and event organisation, providing a well-rounded understanding of the field.

India's para-badminton scene is experiencing steady growth, demonstrated by ongoing international success. Indian players earned 18 medals at the 2024 BWF Para-Badminton World Championships, showcasing their strength across various categories. This momentum continued at the Summer

Paralympics 2024, where India won five medals, cementing its status as a top contender in the sport. As standards improve, focusing on structured coach education becomes more vital for maintaining this progress.

Sanjay Mishra, General Secretary, BAI, said, this coaching course is an important step in strengthening the ecosystem around para-badminton. The performances of our athletes on the global stage underline both the potential and responsibility we have.

## Vir Gahrotra Wins Historic World C'ship Gold

### MUMBAI

Indian athlete Vir Gahrotra created history by winning a gold medal at the Pole and Aerial Sports World Championship, securing India's first-ever podium finish at the prestigious international event held in Budapest, Hungary.

The 16-year-old from Mumbai represented India in the Junior B Amateur Men (15-17) Aerial Silks category. Competing against athletes from aerial sports powerhouses such as Ukraine, Hungary and the Czech Republic, Vir delivered a technically demanding routine combining strength, flexibility and artistry.

Aerial silks is a performance-based discipline requiring exceptional upper-body endurance, control and expressive movement. At championship level, routines are judged on technical precision, execution and artistic quality rather than difficulty alone. Vir's gold-winning performance impressed judges for its consistency, composure and control, even as fatigue set in.

India participated for the first time at the inaugural POSA World Aerial Championships 2025, organised by the Pole Sports & Arts World Federation. Featuring athletes from more than 40 countries, the event marked a major milestone globally.

## Top players gear up for Thailand Tennis Masters in February

### NEW DELHI

The Lawn Tennis Association of Thailand (LTAT) has announced that the Thailand Tennis Masters 2026 will be held in February at the National Tennis Development Center in Muang

Thong Thani, Nonthaburi. The international tournament is expected to feature leading global players alongside top Thai athletes, providing a major boost to the country's tennis ecosystem.

The announcement was made at a press conference attended by LTAT Executive Director Kritachai Neiyocha, international relations officer

Nannaphat Nantasuk, Thai players Thanapet Owen Chanta and Pavit Mangpor Sornlaksup, and organisers from Red Talent Group. LTAT has partnered with Red Talent Group to stage the event.

The eight-day tournament will feature 16 players, 31 matches in a round-robin format, and a prize purse exceeding USD 67,000.

### INDIA T20 SQUAD

## Suryakumar Yadav to Lead India's T20 World Cup 2026 Squad

Continued from page 1

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announced a 15-member Indian squad for the ICC T20 World Cup, making several high-profile selection calls that underline a clear shift in approach. The biggest development was the appointment of Suryakumar Yadav as captain, while former vice-captain Shubman Gill was left out due to fitness and form concerns. Axar Patel has been reinstated as vice-captain, reflect-

ing the team management's trust in his consistency and all-round value. Another notable inclusion is wicketkeeper-batter Ishan Kishan, who returns to the national side to provide an additional wicketkeeping option alongside batting depth.

The selectors have opted for an aggressive opening combination, sealing Sanju Samson and Abhishek Sharma at the top of the order. Middle-order firepower has been a clear focus, with Tilak Varma, Hardik Pandya, and Shivam Dube offering a blend of power-hitting and bowling options. The return of Rinku Singh further strengthens India's finishing capabilities, an area the team has looked to reinforce in recent T20I assignments.

India's spin department features variety and experience. Kuldeep Yadav will be the frontline wrist-spinner, supported by mystery spinner Varun Chakravarthy and all-round spin options in Axar Patel

and Washington Sundar. This combination provides flexibility across conditions likely to be encountered during the global tournament. The pace attack will be led by Jasprit Bumrah, whose experience and death-over expertise remain central to India's plans. He will be supported by left-armers Arshdeep Singh and emerging fast bowler Harshit Rana, highlighting a balance between proven performers and fresh talent.

India's squad for the T20 World Cup 2026 comprises: Suryakumar Yadav (captain), Abhishek Sharma, Sanju Samson, Tilak Varma, Hardik Pandya, Shivam Dube, Axar Patel (vice-captain), Rinku Singh, Jasprit Bumrah, Harshit Rana, Arshdeep Singh, Kuldeep Yadav, Varun Chakravarthy, Washington Sundar, and Ishan Kishan. With a strong mix of experience, versatility, and explosive batting depth, the squad reflects India's intent to mount a serious title challenge.

## Zak Crawley: England are 'staring down the barrel' of Ashes defeat

### LONDON

Zak Crawley conceded that England have found it impossible to play that way that we have in the past in Australia and that they are staring down the barrel ahead of the final day in Adelaide.

Crawley top-scored with 85 on the fourth day but his dismissal - stumped by Alex Carey off Nathan Lyon's bowling late in the evening session - meant that Australia will head into day five needing four more wickets to go 3-0 up with two to play, sealing a home Ashes win at the earliest possible opportunity for the fourth series in a row.

England arrived with high hopes of reversing their dire recent record in Australia but have been comprehensively outplayed. They have largely abandoned their ultra-attacking approach with the bat: they have scored at 3.79 runs per over across the series compared to Australia's 4.34 runs per over, which Crawley attributed to the gap in quality between the two teams.

They've bowled very well, and haven't given us a lot, Crawley said. You look at [Scott] Boland, just for one of them. He just very rarely misses, and so it's hard to play that way that we have in the past, perhaps.

They have to get credit for that there and they set good fields, in fairness to them. It's just an attritional style of cricket over here, and they don't allow it. It's not as easy to score quickly out here.

Crawley described Australia's attack as phenomenal, telling sources: They're the best bowling attack that I've played against, for sure - especially in these conditions, when it was spinning like that for [Nathan] Lyon. They don't give you anything, they make the ball move, and they're relentless.



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