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Major Fire in 4 Storey Commercial Building in Thailand – 11 Dead

36 people have been injured

BANGKOK: Eleven people have tragically died and 36 others have been injured following a major fire that broke out early this morning (November 16) in a four&storey commercial building in Patong—a popular tourist area on the island of Phuket, in southern Thailand.

The fire started around 3:00 AM in a building located on Pang Muang Sai Kor Road, near Patong Beach, which houses a vehicle rental agency, sales offices, and lodging facilities.

With 100 two&wheeled vehicles parked on the ground floor, the fuel, rubber tyres, and plastic components caused the fire to spread rapidly to five adjacent commercial buildings.

Those inside the building attempted to flee by heading to the upper floors, but they became trapped as the area filled with thick, black smoke.

Firefighters arrived promptly and managed to bring the blaze under control after a two&hour struggle. Preliminary investigations suggest that most of the fatalities were caused by suffocation due to the heavy smoke. Authorities have confirmed that the 11 victims include both Thai and Myanmar nationals; no foreign tourists were among those affected.

The injured have been admitted to nearby hospitals. Officials suspect that the fire may have been caused by an electrical leak from a utility pole located near the building. It is worth noting that, in a similar incident, 40 people died in a fire at a bar in Bangkok last July, while 67 people lost their lives in a fire at a Bangkok nightclub during New Year's celebrations in 2009.



Rainy season relief for salt- pan workers increased to Rs. 7,000

Chief Minister Vijay issues directive

CHENNAI: To safeguard the livelihoods of salt&pan workers, Chief Minister Vijay has issued an order increasing the rainy&season relief amount from Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 7,000. A statement issued in this regard notes the following: The government, led by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Vijay, has announced and is implementing an initiative titled "Vision for a Victorious Tamil Nadu" (Vetri Tamizhagam).



Under this initiative, and in response to a long&standing demand from the workers, provisions have been made to increase the rainy&season relief provided to salt&pan workers from Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 7,000, with the aim of improving their livelihoods.

Accordingly, during the debate on the demands for grants for the Industries, Investment Promotion and Commerce Department on August 25, 2026, the Minister for Industries announced that the annual rainy&season relief provided to the families of salt&pan workers would be increased from Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 7,000.

In line with this, and to protect the livelihoods of salt&pan workers during the rainy season—when they are unable to engage in salt production—Chief Minister Vijay has ordered an increase in the annual relief amount from Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 7,000 for families of salt&pan workers registered with the Tamil Nadu Manual Workers Social Security and Welfare Board.

A government order (G.O.) has been issued to this effect. This scheme will be implemented on an annual basis.

Accordingly, 23,979 worker families will benefit in the year 2026–2027. The government will bear the expenditure of ₹16.78 crore incurred for this year. This is what has been stated therein.

Quad Leaders Meet in Manila, India Joins AI Chip Protection Pact

USA: US President Donald Trump confirmed his participation in a crucial Quad leaders' meeting in Manila on November 17, marking the first in-person summit of the grouping in two years.

This high-level gathering, held on the sidelines of the ASEAN Summit, underscores renewed focus on Indo-Pacific security and economic cooperation.

The Quad, initially formed in 2007 but revived by Trump in 2017, aims to counter growing Chinese influence in the region. This Manila meeting is the first such leaders' summit during his current term, following several ministerial sessions.

Simultaneously, India has joined the United States and other key partners in the 'San Francisco Declaration on the Secure Foundations of Enduring Prosperity.'



This new pact, part of Washington's 'Pax Silica' initiative, focuses on protecting critical technologies and AI supply chains, especially advanced semiconductor processors.

The move addresses concerns about Beijing's access to advanced technology, particularly given recent controversies around Nvidia microchips reaching China through indirect channels.

This diplomatic initiative seeks to reduce reliance on Chinese-controlled supply networks and strengthen collaboration among allied nations in vital technological domains.

The agreement emphasizes collective responsibility for safeguarding the global AI ecosystem, from chip design to manufacturing and deployment.

India's formal entry into the Pax Silica coalition in February 2026, during the India AI Impact Summit, highlights its commitment to this critical technological alliance.

The Quad leaders also pledged over USD 85 million to expand trusted AI infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific, reinforcing regional technological resilience.

Karthigai Deepam Festival Begins with Flag Hoisting at Tirupparankundram Murugan Temple



MADURAI: The Karthigai Deepam festival, celebrated with great grandeur every year at the Subramanya Swamy Temple in Tirupparankundram, Madurai district, commenced this morning with the ceremonial hoisting of the temple flag. A large number of devotees participated in the special rituals and offered their prayers.

The Karthigai Deepam festival is one of the major festivals held at the Tirupparankundram Subramanya Swamy Temple. This year's celebrations began this morning with the flag&hoisting ceremony. In the early hours, the presiding deities—Subramanya Swamy and Goddess Deivayanai—underwent *abhishekam* (ritual bathing) with 16 different substances, including milk, rose water, and tender coconut water.

Following this, the deities were adorned in special attire, and *deeparadhana* (offering of lamps) was performed. Accompanied by the sounds of traditional musical instruments, Subramanya Swamy and Goddess Deivayanai, beautifully decorated, were brought to the *Kambathadi Mandapam* (hall near the flagstaff) seated upon a golden peacock *vahana* (divine vehicle). As part of the flag&hoisting ritual, the temple's flagstaff was consecrated with holy water.

It was then elaborately decorated with *darbha* grass, mango leaves, sandalwood paste, and *kumkum*. Amidst the chanting of Vedic mantras and the playing of traditional music, the flag was hoisted onto the gold&plated flagstaff at 7:14 AM. A large number of devotees gathered to witness the event and seek the blessings of Lord Murugan.

Throughout the festival, the deities will be taken in procession through the streets—in the mornings, they will be carried on a golden palanquin, and in the evenings, they will appear on various *vahanas*, including the golden peacock, silver *bhootha* (celestial being), *anna* (swan), and *shesha* (serpent) *vahanas*, to bless the devotees.

As a key event of the Karthigai Deepam festival, the *Pattabhishekam* (coronation ceremony) will take place on the 23rd (Monday). Following this, on the morning of the 24th (Tuesday), the *Therottam* (chariot procession) will be held at the Subramanya Swamy Temple in Tirupparankundram.

In the evening, the *Karthigai Maha Deepam* (the grand sacred lamp) will be lit atop the Tirupparankundram hill. Subsequently, the *Chokkappanai* (a traditional bonfire/lamp display) will be held near the *16&Kaal Mandapam* (16&pillared hall).

Meanwhile, the concluding events of the *Kanda Sashti* festival are currently underway at the Tirupparankundram temple.

As part of the final day's *Kanda Sashti* chariot procession, Lord Subramanya Swamy, accompanied by Goddess Devasena, is mounted on a golden peacock *vahana* (vehicle) and is being taken in a procession along the *Ratha Veedhi* (chariot streets) and *Giri Veedhi* (circumambulation paths).

Typically, during the flag&hoisting ceremony (*Kodiyetram*) of the Karthigai Deepam festival, Lord Subramanya Swamy and Goddess Devasena are seated on a throne within the *Kambathadi Mandapam*.

However, due to the *Kanda Sashti* chariot procession taking place today, the deity appeared on a golden peacock *vahana* to bless the devotees. The arrangements for the festival are being overseen by the Temple Board of Trustees Chairman, V. Shanmugasundaram, along with the Temple Deputy Commissioner, Selvi, and the temple staff.

NOVEMBER 16
NATIONAL PRESS DAY

Saluting the Voices of Truth!
Warm wishes to all journalists who give voice to the people.
The Editor
New India Flash

Today horoscope

Your frustration over being unable to save money, regardless of how much you earn, will come to an end. You will curb your expenses and begin to save. Relatives on your mother's side will be supportive. In business and trade, you will overcome all competition.

Memories from the past will fill your mind with joy. You will carry out repairs on your home or vehicle. You will fulfill the requests of your children. By planning effectively, you will complete your professional tasks and earn praise from your superiors.

It is essential to act with caution and composure in all your endeavors. It is advisable to follow the counsel of elders in your family. In business, you might face an accumulation of unsold stock. On the positive side, you will acquire various types of goods or assets.

You will approach your tasks with confidence and enthusiasm, ensuring their successful completion. Harmony will prevail within your family. In business, try to maintain a cooperative relationship with your staff. At your workplace, you will receive support from your colleagues. Exercise patience in your speech.

Your reputation and respect in external circles will increase. Your name may be recommended for a higher position. The health of your parents will be satisfactory. In a partnership business, you will be able to manage and handle your partners effectively.

Auspicious events will be organized within the family. You will have a good flow of money. You will meet new people, which will prove beneficial. In business, old stock will be cleared. Be careful not to speak harshly to anyone.

You will find solutions to the confusion that has been on your mind. Misunderstandings between spouses will fade, giving way to greater harmony. You will find joy through your children. You may replace a vehicle that has been causing frequent expenses. You will see profits in your business.

You will successfully complete the tasks you have planned. You will implement plans for the future growth of your children. At work, a superior may extend a hand of friendship or support. You will provide whatever help you can to those who come to you seeking assistance.

You will find peace of mind as expected funds arrive. Your status and respect will increase through your spouse's side of the family. You will understand and fulfill the wishes of your parents. Your interest in spirituality, meditation, and yoga will grow.

Minor, unnecessary arguments may arise between spouses. In business, you will have to put in extra effort to collect outstanding dues. The actions of those living nearby may cause you irritation or anger. You will develop an inclination toward spirituality.

You will resolve long-standing, lingering issues through dialogue. Harmony will flourish between spouses. You will have a good flow of money. Competition in business will decrease, and your employees will be supportive.

Your reputation and respect in your hometown will rise, and you may be offered positions of honor. Any misunderstandings with your siblings will be cleared up. You can expect gains from the stock market or commission-based ventures. Tasks involving government offices or banks will be completed successfully.

Zero Risk of Bird Flu in Namakkal: Poultry Farmers Reassure Public



NAMAKAL: In the Namakkal region, over 100 million (10 crore) layer hens are raised across more than 1,000 farms, producing 80 million (8 crore) eggs daily. These eggs are supplied to the Tamil Nadu government's nutritious meal scheme, distributed throughout Tamil Nadu and other states like Kerala, and also exported abroad.

Meanwhile, a few weeks ago, thousands of broiler chickens died due to an outbreak of bird flu at poultry farms in Cuddalore district.

Addressing the press in Namakkal, Sundararajan, Secretary of the Tamil Nadu Poultry Farmers Association, stated: "In the Namakkal region, poultry is raised using strict biosecurity measures. There is absolutely no chance—zero percent risk—of a bird flu outbreak here.

The layer hens are reared following the guidance provided by the Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University and the Veterinary College and Research Institute in Namakkal. Rigorous biosecurity protocols are maintained on the farms; for instance, vehicles are permitted to enter only after passing through a designated path treated with a potassium permanganate solution.

Consequently, there has never been an instance of bird flu in the poultry farms of the Namakkal region." He further emphasized that layer hens are not susceptible to bird flu. Therefore, neither poultry farmers nor the general public need to be concerned, he added.

Prince William, Kate Middleton Bond with Sachin Tendulkar Over Chai, Cricket in Mumbai



MAHARASHTRA: Prince William and Princess Kate Middleton, the Prince and Princess of Wales, experienced a taste of Indian culture and cricket during their visit to Mumbai.

They met legendary cricketer Sachin Tendulkar at the historic Ballard Estate, engaging in a lively conversation that captivated onlookers.

The royal couple and Tendulkar shared 'chai' served in traditional kulhads at a specially arranged tea stall, a quintessential Indian experience. Visuals from the event showed them engrossed in discussion, with Tendulkar animatedly explaining cricket nuances, while Prince William and Princess Catherine listened intently, smiles gracing their faces.

The highlight for many was Prince William joining Tendulkar for a game of 'Gully Cricket' with local school students.

Tendulkar, known as the 'Little Master,' enthusiastically guided the Prince, showcasing his passion for the sport. Princess Kate Middleton cheered from the sidelines, enjoying the light&hearted activity. Both William and Tendulkar took turns batting, creating memorable moments for everyone present.

For the outing, Prince William sported a white shirt with a navy blue Nehru&style jacket and dark trousers, while Princess Catherine chose an elegant lime&green double&breasted blazer over a white top and matching trousers. Sachin Tendulkar opted for a smart&casual look in a navy blue shirt and dark denim.

Earlier in the day, the royal couple emphasized India's significant contributions to environmental innovation and sustainability, expressing their delight to be in the country for the annual Earthshot Prize initiative, highlighting their commitment to global environmental causes.

Use social media safely to avoid digital scams: Cyber Crime Police advise

CHENNAI: The Cyber Crime Police have advised the public to use social media safely to protect themselves from digital scams.

An awareness program regarding cybercrimes and digital fraud was conducted by the Chennai City Police's Cyber Crime wing the evening before last at the 'Ramaniyam Samarpan' apartment complex in East Kamarajar Nagar, Thiruvanmiyur. A police team, led by Inspector K. Usharani, participated in the event and provided various guidelines to the residents. Specifically, awareness was raised regarding several types of scams—including 'digital arrest' scams, online investment fraud, online trading scams, 'pass' (access/authorization) scams, gift&related scams, courier scams, and marriage&related fraud—along with measures the public can take to avoid falling victim to such schemes. Furthermore, guidance was provided on the safe use of social media platforms, including WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), Snapchat, and Telegram.



Residents were advised that, in the event of falling victim to online financial fraud, they should immediately contact the cybercrime helpline at 1930 or file a complaint through the national cybercrime reporting portal at www.cybercrime.gov.in.

Additionally, awareness leaflets regarding cybercrimes were distributed. Prizes were also awarded to participants who provided correct answers to questions asked during the event.

Madurai Jewelry Store Heist Key Suspect Nishanth Arrested

MADURAI: The key suspect in the Madurai jewelry store heist, Nishanth, has been arrested. A new Tanishq jewelry showroom is located in the Nehru Nagar area, along the Palanganatham&Kalavasal bypass road in Madurai.

In the early hours of the 12th, an individual broke into the store and stole gold and diamond jewelry worth Rs. 21 crore (weighing 15 kilograms).

The incident caused a major stir. Initial investigations revealed that the perpetrator—who had entered the store alone, wearing a mask, gloves, and covered entirely in black fabric—was Nishanth (25), a YouTuber and son of a man named Suresh, from Arutperum Jothi Street in Palanganatham.

Further investigation uncovered the involvement of Nishanth's girlfriend, Meenakshi (23)—an Instagram influencer from Madurai—as well as his father, Suresh (50).

Both Meenakshi and Suresh were subsequently arrested by the police. Additionally, the police recovered 6 kilograms of gold and diamond jewelry that had been stashed away near the banks of the Madakulam tank in Madurai.



Meanwhile, a massive manhunt was launched for Nishanth, who had gone into hiding. Today, the police successfully apprehended Nishanth, the primary suspect in the heist.

Having been on the run for five days, he was taken into custody during a surprise operation by the police aboard an omni&bus near Sesampatti in the Dharmapuri district.

The police plan to transport Nishanth to Madurai for further interrogation. With the arrest of the prime suspect,

Nishanth—following the earlier recovery of 6 kg of jewellery stolen from the jewellery store—reports suggest that the remaining stolen jewellery will also be recovered.

Iran Threatens US Navy Officers Over Alleged Minab School Strike, Citing Child Casualties

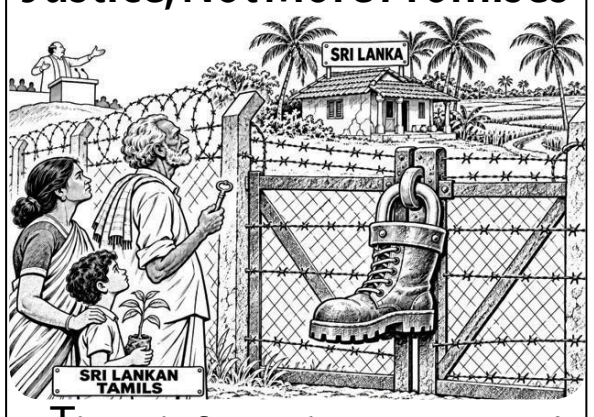
Iran has issued a public warning to two US Navy officers, accusing them of orchestrating a Tomahawk missile strike on an elementary school in Minab, which allegedly resulted in the deaths of 168 children. The Iranian Embassy in South Africa, through a social media post, explicitly identified Commander Leigh R. Tate of the USS Spruance and Lieutenant Commander Jeffrey E. York, the warship's executive officer, stating, 'We will find you.' This is not the first time Tehran has targeted these individuals; a similar accusation was made in March. The latest threat comes as the USS Spruance returned to San Diego after a 357&day deployment involving operations against Iranian forces. The public naming of these officers has raised significant security concerns. This incident follows a stern warning from US President Donald Trump to Tehran against assassinating senior American officials. In a recent interview, Trump stated that any such action would lead to severe consequences. Separately, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent confirmed his relocation to a military base due to persistent death threats reportedly linked to Tehran, a move advised by the Secret Service. These developments highlight escalating tensions between the two nations.



Relatives of a deceased lorry driver stage a road blockade in front of the Madurai Government Hospital. (Inset) Balakrishnan.

November 16 EDITORIAL – NEW INDIA FLASH *2026*

Sri Lankan Tamils Need Justice, Not More Promises



The end of a war does not automatically end the suffering of its people. Seventeen years after Sri Lanka's civil war ended, many Tamil families are still waiting to recover their land, rebuild their livelihoods and learn what happened to their missing relatives. Peace remains incomplete when people cannot live with dignity and security in their own homes.

The reported findings of Sri Lanka's Human Rights Commission concerning the Northern and Eastern Provinces raise serious concerns. Continued military presence, unresolved land disputes and surveillance affect more than everyday freedom. They also hinder economic recovery and weaken public confidence in reconciliation.

For displaced families, land is far more than property. It is a home, a source of income and a connection to generations before them. Housing assistance and relief programmes are valuable, but they cannot replace the restoration of lawful ownership.

Missing documents should not become a permanent barrier to justice. Families displaced by war may have lost their records along with their belongings. Authorities should examine alternative evidence, consult local records and establish fair procedures to resolve claims. Administration must help people secure their rights.

President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's promises on land restoration, provincial council elections and employment created expectations among Tamil voters. Those expectations now require visible action. The government should publish clear timelines, explain delays and report openly on progress. Announcements alone cannot rebuild trust.

Families of the disappeared also deserve answers. Their right to know the truth does not diminish with time. Credible investigations and accountability are essential to reconciliation; uncertainty cannot be allowed to become their permanent condition.

India has an important role to play. Its development assistance can support recovery, but sustained diplomatic engagement should also seek measurable progress on land rights, civilian security and meaningful political participation. These concerns deserve a consistent place in relations between the two countries.

A lasting settlement must protect every affected community, including displaced Muslims seeking resettlement. Equal rights, religious freedom and fair access to development must form the foundation of peace.

Sri Lankan Tamils are asking for the ordinary rights of citizenship: to live without fear, earn a livelihood and participate in decisions shaping their future. Sri Lanka's government must turn its promises into action, while India should firmly support that effort. The people have waited long enough. They deserve justice and a secure future.

Editorial by Madurai Mani

Successful Test of Electric Aircraft in China

BEIJING: For the first time, a test flight of an electric aircraft piloted by humans has been successfully conducted in China.

The electric aircraft was developed through a joint effort by the Commercial Aircraft Corporation of China (COMAC), the China Academy of Launch Vehicle Technology, and Shanghai Jiao Tong University. Named the CE&25A, the aircraft was built using domestic technology.



It initially underwent an unmanned test flight on February 2nd. Subsequently, on Saturday, the aircraft was successfully tested with human pilots in Shandong Province, East China.

The flight crew consisted of three individuals: two pilots and one flight test engineer. It has been reported that all operational parameters met expectations during the test.

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PM Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas programme in Gadchiroli, Maharashtra via video conferencing.

India- ASEAN Trade Soars to $128 Billion, PM Modi in Manila for Crucial Summits

NEW DELHI: India's economic ties with ASEAN nations are booming, with bilateral trade reaching a significant USD 128.37 billion in the financial year 2025-26.

This strong partnership extends beyond commerce, as highlighted by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) while Prime Minister Narendra Modi departed for Manila to attend the 23rd ASEAN&India Summit and the 21st East Asia Summit.

Investments from ASEAN countries into India have also been substantial, totaling USD 196.96 billion between 2000 and 2025. This underscores the growing confidence and collaboration between the regions.

PM Modi's two&day visit to the Philippines, from November 16&17, aims to further strengthen this comprehensive strategic partnership, which was elevated in 2022.

The MEA emphasized ASEAN's pivotal role in India's 'Act East Policy' and 'Indo&Pacific Vision'.

Key areas of cooperation include expanding physical and digital connectivity, with efforts to extend India's Digital Public Infrastructure and India Stack capabilities across Southeast Asia. Maritime security is another crucial aspect, with joint exercises like AIME&2025 and specialized training for women peacekeepers.

Education and technology also see active collaboration, with over 500 ASEAN students benefiting from Nalanda University scholarships and the operationalization of the Centre for Southeast Asian Studies. India's commitment to development and disaster relief is evident, as seen when it sent 30 tonnes of relief material to the Philippines after a super typhoon in January 2026. Over 100 ASEAN&India projects have been funded since 2014, supported by significant investments.

People&to&people connections are thriving, with India being the fourth&largest source of tourists to ASEAN.

PM Modi's participation in the East Asia Summit reinforces India's commitment to regional stability, maritime security, and sustainable development, aligning with his Indo&Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI). His visit is expected to inject new energy into these vital relationships, fostering shared growth and prosperity.

Mandala– Makaravilakku Season: Sabarimala Ayyappa Temple Doors Open Today

SABARIMALAI: The doors of the Sabarimala Ayyappa Temple are set to open today (Monday) for the current Mandala&Makaravilakku season.

The Travancore Devaswom Board has made necessary arrangements to ensure that devotees can have a smooth and hassle&free *darshan* (viewing) of Lord Ayyappa. Every year, for the Mandala&Makaravilakku season, the Sabarimala Ayyappa Temple remains open for 60 days, starting from the first day of the Tamil month of *Karthigai*, with special *poojas* (rituals) performed throughout this period.

During this season, devotees observe a period of *vratham* (fasting and penance), wear a *mala* (sacred garland), and carry an *irumudi* (a traditional bundle containing offerings) while undertaking the pilgrimage to seek the blessings of Lord Ayyappa. For this significant Mandala&Makaravilakku season, the temple doors will open today (Monday) at 5:00 PM. In the presence of the *Thanthri* (chief priest) Kandararu Brahma Dathan, the *Melshanthi* (head priest) Prasad Namboothiri will open the sanctum sanctorum and perform *deeparadhana* (offering of lamps). Following this, a ceremonial fire (*karpura aazhi*) will be lit at the base of the sacred 18 steps (*pathinettam padi*). The newly appointed *Melshanthis* for the Sabarimala and Malikappuram temples will formally assume their duties by reciting sacred *mantras*. Subsequently, both priests will undergo *abhishekam* (consecration/ritual bathing) in the presence of the *Thanthri*.



After the customary *poojas* for the day, the temple doors will close at 11:00 PM. Starting tomorrow (Tuesday)—the first day of the month of *Karthigai*—the temple will open at 3:00 AM, and regular *poojas* and rituals will commence. The new *Melshanthi*, Subramanian Sankaran Namboothiri, will open the temple doors and conduct the *poojas* in the presence of the *Thanthri*, Kandararu Brahma Dathan. The temple doors open daily at 3:00 AM. The schedule includes *Nirmalya Darshanam*, *Ganapathi Homam*, *Neyyabhishekam* (offering of ghee), and *Ucha Pooja* (midday ritual), concluding with the closing of the temple doors at 1:00 PM. The temple reopens at 3:00 PM, with a special *Deeparadhana* (ritual involving lamps) taking place at 6:30 PM. In the evening, *Pushpabhishekam* (offering of flowers) and *Athala Pooja* are performed, followed by the playing of the *Harivarasanam* hymn at 11:00 PM, after which the temple doors are closed.

For the current season, the *Mandala Pooja* is scheduled for December 27th, and the *Makaravilakku* ritual will take place on January 14th. Throughout the season, arrangements have been made to allow *darshan* (viewing of the deity) for 18 hours each day. As a first phase, 9,000 police personnel have been deployed for security at Sabarimala, and the Health Department has stationed 100 doctors there. The Kerala State Road Transport Corporation is operating special buses from various parts of the state to facilitate travel to Sabarimala.

Photography is strictly prohibited within the *Sannidhanam* (sanctum sanctorum) area. Devotees are permitted to visit Sabarimala through either online booking or on&the&spot (instant) booking. Online registration, which began on the 29th of last month, is currently seeing a high volume of bookings.

The Travancore Devaswom Board has decided to allow 80,000 devotees per day for *darshan*. Of this total, 66,000 devotees are permitted via online booking, while 14,000 are accommodated through on&the&spot booking. It is noted that the quota for on&the&spot bookings may be adjusted—and the number of slots increased—in the coming days, depending on the actual turnout of devotees.

Alleged Irregularities in Book Procurement for Libraries

5 Officials, Including Chief Librarians, Suspended

CHENNAI: R. V. Shajeevana, the official in&charge as Director of the Department of Public Libraries, has suspended five individuals—including two Chief Librarians—in connection with irregularities in the procurement of books for libraries.

Allegations had surfaced regarding corruption in the purchase of books for the Periyar Arivulagam Library in Coimbatore, including claims that books were procured under the names of fictitious authors. Similar allegations of irregularities in book procurement were also raised concerning the Anna Centenary Library in Chennai, the Connemara Public Library, and the Kalaignar Centenary Library in Madurai. Against this backdrop, IAS officer S. Jayanthi, who had been holding the additional charge of Director of the Department of Public Libraries, was relieved of that responsibility on the 8th of this month.

This responsibility was entrusted to R. V. Shajeevana, Managing Director of the Tamil Nadu Textbook Corporation.

In this context, on the 9th, Minister Rajmohan held consultations with a delegation led by R.S. Shanmugam, President of the South Indian Booksellers and Publishers Association (BAPASI), regarding the prevention of such irregularities. During the discussion, it was clarified that the publishing houses implicated in the malpractice—namely Phoenix, Sigma, and Agalvilakku—are not members of BAPASI.

Speaking to reporters afterward, Rajmohan stated, "The procurement process for books for libraries across the state has been temporarily suspended. A comprehensive audit is set to be conducted in all libraries throughout Tamil Nadu in connection with this fraud." He added, "The Directorate of Vigilance and Anti&Corruption (DVAC) police have also commenced an investigation, beginning with the controversial publishing house, Agalvilakku."

In this situation, separate complaints have been filed with the Directorate of Vigilance and Anti&Corruption (DVAC) by the School Education Department and the DMK regarding the procurement of books. Furthermore, inspections were conducted in libraries across Tamil Nadu, including the Anna Centenary Library. During these checks, 70,674 books—published by 'Agal Vilakku' and 'Phoenix' and attributed to fictitious authors—were identified and removed. The value of these books is estimated to be Rs. 7 crore.

Meanwhile, regarding the case of irregularities in book procurement at the Periyar Arivulagam library in Coimbatore, the Library Staff Welfare Association has appealed to the Minister, requesting that no FIRs be filed against librarians whose roles were strictly limited to administrative duties.

In this context, Shajeevana, the Director&in&Charge of the Department of Public Libraries, has issued orders suspending the following officials: S. Kamatchi, Chief Librarian and Library Officer at the Anna Centenary Library in Chennai; S. Santhana Karthikeyan, Librarian and Information Officer; Dinesh Kumar, Chief Librarian and Library Officer (in&charge) at the Kalaignar Centenary Library in Madurai; V. Santhanakrishnan, Librarian and Library Officer (also in&charge of the Periyar Arivulagam Library in Coimbatore); and J. Juliet, Chief Accounts Officer at the Directorate of Public Libraries.



New Delhi: With India continuing to hold the top position globally, coir products worth Rs 6,614 crore have been exported.



Love knows no language or borders: Pilot from Hosur, Tamil Nadu, marries a Vietnamese teacher with his parents' consent.



Historical traces dating back 2,000 years have been discovered on the premises of a government higher secondary school located near Kottaimedu in Alangankulam village, which falls under the Mandapam Union of Ramanathapuram district.

Vande Bharat train travels 463 km with non-functional brakes

NEW DELHI: A Vande Bharat train has traveled a distance of 463 km while its braking system was non&functional. A high&level inquiry into the incident is currently underway.

On October 24, it was decided to move a Vande Bharat train from the Hatia railway station in Jharkhand to the Jhansi region in Uttar Pradesh. Arrangements were made to haul the train—which had no passengers on board—using a freight train locomotive.

Before departure, the freight train's loco pilot tested the Vande Bharat train's braking system and discovered that the brakes were not working.

He reported this to the officials present at the site; however, the railway officials insisted that the braking system was in good working order and ordered the train to be moved.

The loco pilot proceeded to haul the Vande Bharat train for approximately 463 km despite the non&functional brakes. He eventually brought the train to a stop in the Chandauli area of Uttar Pradesh.

He stated categorically that it was not feasible to continue operating the train.

He also submitted a formal written complaint regarding this matter to senior railway officials. The South Eastern Railway administration is currently conducting a high&level inquiry into the incident. Senior officials have indicated that strict action will be taken against the railway staff and officers found to be at fault.

Sonam Wangchuk placed under 60 day house arrest



SRINAGAR: Climate activist Sonam Wangchuk, from the Union Territory of Ladakh, has been placed under house arrest for 60 days.

He has been prohibited from participating in public meetings or rallies. Sonam Wangchuk has alleged that this action was taken because he raised questions regarding the delay in the judicial inquiry report into a death that occurred in Leh last year, and questioned why a "sham" election is being hastily imposed in the middle of winter.

He has also complained that the reach of his content on platforms like X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and YouTube has been severely restricted.

Likud Accuses Gadi Eisenkot of 'Unhinged Incitement' Amid Israeli Unity Government Talks

ISRAEL: Israel's ruling Likud Party has sharply criticized opposition leader Gadi Eisenkot, labeling his statements against caretaker Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his office as "unhinged incitement.

"This comes amidst ongoing efforts to form a national unity government in Israel, a critical need given the nation's security challenges, particularly the looming threat from Iran.

Likud, in a public statement, highlighted Netanyahu's repeated invitations to Eisenkot to join a broad coalition. They expressed dismay at what they termed Eisenkot's "inflammatory, incendiary statements" delivered in "venomous language," even as the Prime Minister sought unity.



The party also defended Netanyahu's Chief of Staff, asserting that the official acted responsibly by relaying information about suspected criminal activity to the police, as was his duty.

Questioning the basis of allegations against the Chief of Staff, Likud stated, "Did the chief of staff plant the envelopes of cash with the suspects? The absurdity of Eisenkot's unhinged incitement is outrageous."

This exchange underscores the deep political chasm between the two leaders, which has intensified since the recent elections where Netanyahu's bloc lost its parliamentary majority.

Eisenkot, whose Yashar party is now tasked with forming a government by Israeli President Isaac Herzog, has dismissed Netanyahu's overtures as a "spin," insisting on his own principles and a clear break from extremist political forces for any emergency government.



Due to the disruption of traffic on the Coonoor-Mettupalayam road, Kateri Park appears deserted, with no tourists in sight.

Roads Rise, Houses Sink

MADURAI: In Madurai, new road surfaces are being laid directly over existing ones without employing the 'milling' process (removing the old layer). This causes the road level to rise, effectively leaving residential properties in a sunken position.

The Municipal Corporation must revise its regulations for road construction to put an end to this practice. Roads in Madurai frequently fall into disrepair due to excavation for drinking water and underground sewage connections, as well as heavy vehicular traffic. Every year, the government allocates crores of rupees for the repair and maintenance of these roads.

During each repair cycle, new layers of crushed stone, gravel, and bitumen are laid directly atop the damaged road surface, rather than milling away the old material. Over a few years, the road level can rise by more than two feet. Consequently, homes and commercial buildings end up at a lower elevation than the road.

Residents are forced to construct steps or ramps to access their properties from the road level. During the rainy season, water that accumulates on the roads flows into these homes and shops.

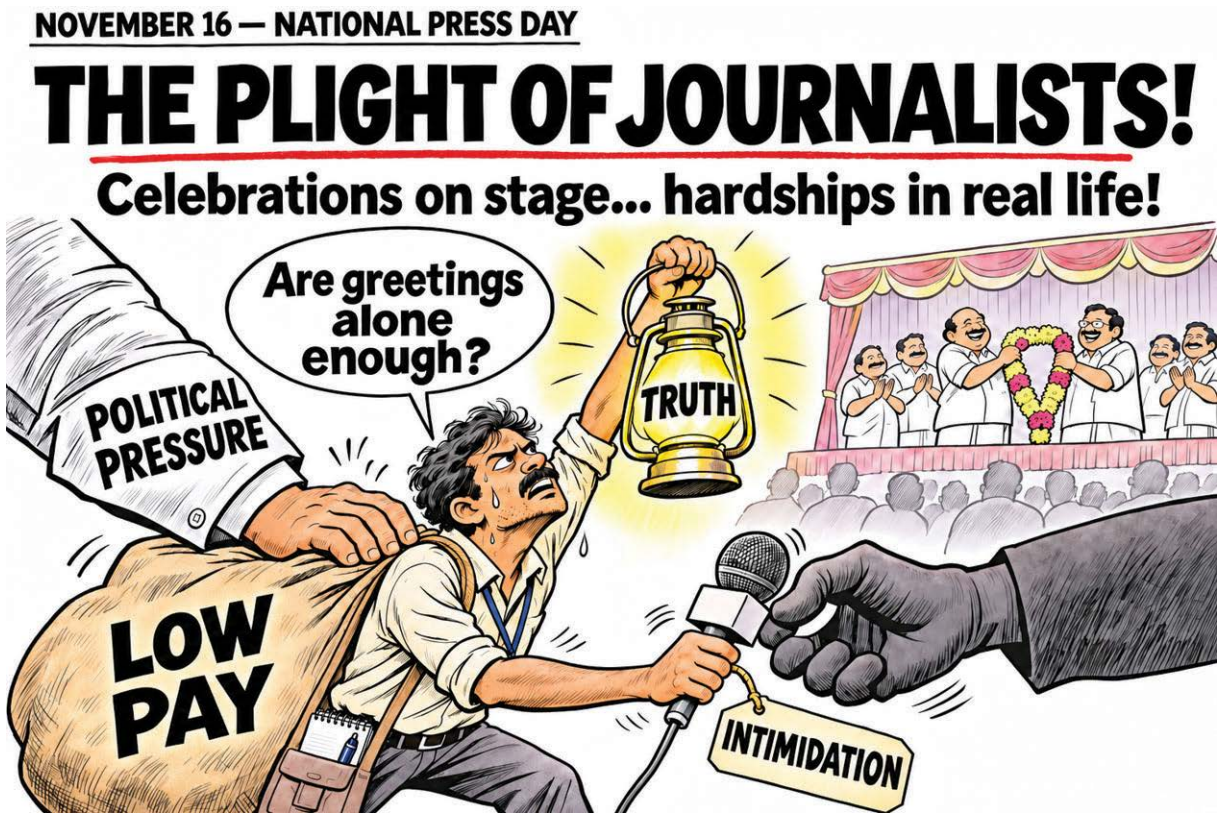
This has led to a trend where the foundations of newly constructed buildings are set 4 to 5 feet above the road level, with ramps often extending from the building entrance all the way to the middle of the road. When road repairs are carried out, the thickness of the material being removed (the old road layer) should be equivalent to the thickness of the new layer being added.

The height of the road should be measured both before and after the work, and these details should be published on the Municipal Corporation's website. If the road level increases, action should be taken against the contractors. Currently, existing government regulations regarding this are not being followed by anyone.

Representatives of the 'Arappor Iyakkam' (a civic advocacy group) stated, "During road renovation work, it should be made mandatory to document the 'milling' (removal of the existing road surface) process—including the depth of the milling and the planned height of the new road—through photographs and videos.

We have submitted a petition to the Municipal Commissioner requesting the formation of an expert committee to assess homes already affected by the increased road height and to provide compensation for the damages."

NOVEMBER 16 — NATIONAL PRESS DAY



We will always stand by journalists: CM Vijay's greetings on National Press Day

CHENNAI: On the occasion of National Press Day, Chief Minister Vijay has extended his greetings to journalists and media professionals. In a post shared on the platform 'X' (formerly Twitter), he stated:

"On this day, celebrated annually as National Press Day—which marks the commencement of the Press Council of India—I extend my heartfelt greetings to all our friends in the press and media fraternity. As the 'fourth pillar' of democracy, the press plays a vital role by bringing social issues to light, advocating for the rights of the people, fostering public awareness, and ensuring that government welfare schemes reach the citizens—all while upholding the noble values of democracy.

We will always stand by those journalists and media professionals who operate with truth, integrity, impartiality, credibility, and a strong sense of social responsibility."



DMK President M.K. Stalin has also extended his greetings to journalists. In a post on 'X', he remarked: "A journalist's duty is not to blindly form opinions based on common perceptions or personal likes and dislikes. When the collective mindset of society teeters on the brink of decay, the media—the fourth pillar of democracy—bears the crucial responsibility of shaping and refining it.

This is precisely why the role of the media is considered even more significant than that of the other three pillars." "Warm wishes on National Press Day to all journalists who carry out their duties with integrity, courage, a passionate commitment to uncovering the truth, hard work, and patience!" This is what has been stated therein.

US, India, 8 Other Nations Unite for Secure Super Intelligence Supply Chains

USA: The United States, India, and eight other nations have signed the San Francisco Declaration, pledging to strengthen cooperation on sensitive technologies, critical infrastructure, and supply chain security for the emerging Super Intelligence (SI) era.

This significant agreement, inked during the Pax Silica Founders Retreat in San Francisco, brings together countries like Australia, Israel, Japan, South Korea, Qatar, Singapore, UAE, and the UK.

The declaration underscores that economic security is fundamental to national security. It establishes a common framework to identify and protect sensitive technologies—including goods, software, and manufacturing capabilities—and critical infrastructure such as ports, transportation networks, and communication systems that are vital to SI supply chains.

The goal is to prevent theft, illicit transfers, or hostile acquisition that could pose risks to national and economic security.

Participants recognize that no single country can secure the foundations of the SI era alone. The agreement emphasizes reducing dependencies through diversified and trusted supply chains, ensuring access to critical technologies, and addressing market distortions. Five working groups will be established to foster practical collaboration on policy frameworks, SI adoption across sectors, supply chain cooperation, secure hubs, and SI security.

India's involvement highlights its commitment to strengthening trusted technology partnerships and diversifying critical supply chains.

This collective effort aims to safeguard prosperity and independence by enhancing vigilance and cooperation in an increasingly interconnected and technologically advanced world.



Devotees offer 'Usha Arghya' to the rising sun on the final day of Chhath Puja at ITO Chhath Ghat, in New Delhi.

Trump Administration Designates Nvidia, Microsoft as AI 'National Champions

USA: The Trump administration is set to name technology giants like Nvidia, Amazon, Microsoft, OpenAI, and Anthropic, among over two dozen US firms, as artificial intelligence (AI) 'national champions'. This strategic move aims to help American tech companies expand globally and compete more effectively with Chinese rivals.

Sources cited by The Wall Street Journal indicate a formal announcement is expected within the coming week, led by Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick. The program encourages foreign governments and businesses to adopt US&developed AI systems over Chinese alternatives, streamlining procurement for international buyers.

Companies granted this status may receive expedited export licenses, official support for international operations, and eligibility for federal funding.

This initiative, first unveiled a year ago, is a key part of the Trump administration's broader technology strategy to bolster American AI innovation amid growing competition with Beijing.

Nvidia's inclusion comes despite increased scrutiny and evolving US regulations on AI chip exports to China. President Trump has often lauded Nvidia and its CEO, Jensen Huang, for their role in the AI revolution. However, concerns about national security and potential loopholes allowing Chinese entities access to high&end Nvidia components have led to calls for stricter controls. Lutnick has also faced criticism regarding alleged failures to close these loopholes, especially given his reported reluctance to alienate Beijing during trade negotiations. The announcement coincides with Lutnick's planned diplomatic visit to China with Trump this week, as the Commerce Department prepares new regulations to prevent illicit diversion of high&performance processors to Beijing.

Conclusion of Kanda Sashti Festival: Grand Wedding Ceremony for Lord Shanmukha with Valli and Devasena at Palani



PALANI: At the Arulmigu Dhandayuthapani Swamy Temple in Palani—the third of the six sacred abodes (*Arupadai Veedu*) of Lord Murugan—the Kanda Sashti festival concluded today (November 16) with a grand wedding ceremony (*Thirukalyanam*) for Lord Shanmukha, accompanied by his consorts Valli and Devasena. A large number of devotees gathered to witness the event and seek the Lord's blessings. The Kanda Sashti festival is celebrated with great fervor every year at the Palani Murugan Temple.

This year, the festival commenced on November 10 with the *Kaappu Kattuthal* (the ritual tying of a sacred thread).

Throughout the festival, the deity was honored daily with special *abhishekams* (ritual bathing), elaborate decorations, and prayers. The highlight of the festival, *Soorasamharam*—the slaying of the demon Soorapadman by Lord Murugan—took place yesterday evening (November 15).

The event was enacted with great spectacle along the *Giri Veedhis* (circumambulatory paths) of Palani, drawing a vast crowd of devotees who came to worship Lord Murugan. Following this, the wedding ceremony (*Thirukalyanam*) for Lord Shanmukha, along with Valli and Devasena, was held this morning in the *Thirukalyana Mandapam* (wedding hall) atop the hill. From 9:30 AM onwards, the deity was adorned and worshipped with special *abhishekams* and rituals.

The wedding ceremony was conducted amidst the chanting of Vedic mantras. Devotees present at the venue chanted "Arohara... Arohara..." with deep devotion as they beheld the Lord.

The temple premises were vibrant and bustling with the presence of a large number of devotees.

In observance of the Kanda Sashti festival, thousands of devotees had observed a fast (*vratham*) over the past six days, offering their prayers to Lord Murugan. After witnessing the divine wedding ceremony (Thirukalyanam) held today, the devotees concluded their Kanda Shashti fast.

Soorasamharam held grandly at Tiruchendur, thanks to the excellent arrangements by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department



THOOTHUKUDI: The Soorasamharam festival was conducted in a grand manner at the Tiruchendur Subramania Swamy Temple, owing to the excellent arrangements made by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department. In preparation for the Soorasamharam at the Tiruchendur Subramania Swamy Temple, temporary shelters made of corrugated metal sheets were set up in 11 locations within the temple complex for the convenience of the devotees.

Thousands of devotees stayed in these shelters while observing their *vratham* (fasting). From children to adults, people arrived at the seashore as early as the morning to secure spots to witness the Soorasamharam. By the afternoon, the crowd on the beach began to grow significantly. When the Soorasamharam event commenced at 4:00 PM, hundreds of thousands of devotees had gathered on the beach.

The entire stretch of the shore was so packed with people that the sand itself was no longer visible—it was a sea of human heads.

For the convenience of the devotees, various organizations provided *annadhanam* (offering of food), drinking water, and refreshments at different points along the beach.

Temporary parking facilities for private vehicles were arranged at 12 locations. Large LED screens were set up at 22 spots—including the temple circumambulation path (prakaram) and the temporary shelters provided for devotees—to broadcast the 'Soorasamharam' event live. Police monitored the area using 150 temporary CCTV cameras installed around the temple complex.

Three temporary bus terminals were established outside the town. Free shuttle buses operated continuously from these parking areas and temporary bus terminals to the temple entrance. Police personnel, stationed in 30 observation towers—including those along the beach—monitored the crowd using binoculars.

The entire beach area was also kept under surveillance via four drone cameras. Additionally, fire and rescue personnel were deployed along the beach, equipped with rescue boats and flotation devices.

Marine police conducted patrols by boat. The Soorasamharam festival was attended by Tamil Nadu Ministers Ramesh, Keerthana, Srinath, Madan Raja, and Prabhu; Commissioner of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (HR&CE) Department D.G. Vinay; District Collector Vishu Mahajan; District Forest Officer Ilaiyaraja; Temple Board of Trustees Chairman Thirumurugan; Joint Commissioner Arunachalam; and Tiruchendur Sub&Collector Gautam, among others.

Thanks to the excellent arrangements made by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department, the Soorasamharam festival was conducted successfully and on a grand scale.

"Investigate Vanniyarasu for threatening wild life" – TTV Dhinakaran

CHENNAI: AMMK General Secretary TTV Dhinakaran has urged Chief Minister [M.K.] Stalin to conduct a proper investigation into the allegations against Minister Vanniyarasu and to take action if any violations are confirmed. In a social media post regarding this incident, Dinakaran stated: "The actions of Minister Vanniarasu—who chased a tiger within the Mudumalai forest reserve, sat atop a Forest Department vehicle to record a video, and subsequently posted it as a 'Reel' on social media—have brought great disgrace to those who claim to champion 'social justice.'



A question arises as to how Minister Vanniarasu—whose portfolio has no direct connection to the Forest Department or forest reserves—was able to roam the forest accompanied by a contingent of forest officials.

Furthermore, the fact that these officials permitted him to engage in behavior that threatens wildlife has sparked significant controversy. With the current administration—from party functionaries and MLAs all the way up to the Chief Minister—seemingly obsessed with creating 'Reels,' one cannot help but wonder if this VCK Minister, who is part of the government, felt compelled to join the trend—even at the cost of compromising the natural peace and safety of wild animals.

Does holding the position of a Minister grant one a special legal exemption to harass wildlife or trespass into their natural habitats? Will the Wildlife Protection Act, which applies to those who mistreat wild animals, be invoked against Minister Vanniarasu?

These are the questions now being raised by the public. Therefore, I urge Chief Minister Vijay to conduct a thorough investigation into the allegations that Minister Vanniarasu trespassed into the Mudumalai forest reserve and harassed wildlife.

If these violations are confirmed, strict action must be taken against the Minister, as well as all the forest officials who facilitated his actions." "Vanniarasu, who posed a threat to wild animals, must be questioned" – TTV Dhinakaran

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