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**SPECIALIST TEAM FROM UK
EXAMINES AILING KHALEDA ZIA**
A four-member UK specialist medical team arrived in Bangladesh on Wednesday to assist in the treatment of the former prime minister

WILL HELP CHART ADVANCED TREATMENT PLAN
The UK specialists led by Dr Richard Beale of King's College London reviewed 80-year-old Zia's condition and assessed the treatment by the local medical team. The foreign doctors will work with the local team to help formulate an advanced treatment plan. Zia was admitted to a private hospital in Dhaka on November 23 with infections of heart and lungs | P13

CHIEFS OF THREE FORCES PAY RARE JOINT VISIT
■ In a rare joint public visit, the chiefs of Bangladesh's three armed services visited the ailing former prime minister at the hospital
■ The interim government directed Army and Air Force helicopters to conduct test landings near the hospital on Thursday as part of a Special Security Force protocol, which it said was for Zia's protection

Three

THE NUMBER OF TIMES ZIA HAS TAKEN
OATH AS BANGLADESH PRIME MINISTER

THIRUPARANKUNDAM Sec 144 clamped after HC allows petitioner to light Deepam at hilltop



Deepam lit at the Uchipillaiyar temple mandapam, the usual spot, in Thiruparankundram on Wednesday | K K SUNDAR

M S THANARAJ @ Madurai

PROHIBITORY orders under Section 163 of the BNSS (Section 144 of CrPC) were imposed in Thiruparankundram area late on Wednesday amid a tense standoff between members of Hindu outfits, who wanted to light the Karthigai Deepam atop a stone pillar (Deepathoon) near a dargah on the Thiruparankundram hill, and police personnel deployed for security at the foothills. Argument broke out between the state police personnel and a 60-member CISF unit after petitioner Rama Ravikumar, who was allowed by Justice G R Swaminathan of the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court to light the Deepam atop the hill around 6pm on Wednesday, arrived at the foothills with the CISF contingent as ordered by the court and argued with the police to allow him and others accompanying him to climb up the hill to reach the Deepathoon. After three hours of standoff, the protesters finally lit camphor at the entrance leading to the hilltop and left the scene by 9.30pm. A two-judge bench headed by Justice G Jayachandran will hear the appeal filed by the state against the single judge's direction on Thursday. P7

● HC NOTICE TO DINDIGUL COLLECTOR | P4

EXPRESS READ

Weather system likely to weaken into low-pressure area in 24 hours

CHENNAI: A well-marked low-pressure area brought heavy rainfall to 46 places in TN and very heavy rain to six places on Wednesday. Ennore received the highest rainfall of 15 cm. The weather system may weaken into a low-pressure area in the next 24 hours | P3

HC impleads HUL, Nestle in plastic ban case in Nilgiris and Kodaikanal

CHENNAI: The Madras HC on Wednesday suo motu impleaded top firms, including HUL and Nestle, in a case regarding banning of single-use plastic products in the hill stations of Ooty and Kodaikanal. A special division bench passed the order while hearing forest-related petitions | P2

85 lakh names may be off TN draft SIR rolls

T MURUGANANDHAM /
PON VASANTH B A @ Chennai

WITH eight days left for the enumeration phase of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls to be completed, the number of forms that remained "uncollectable" so far in Tamil Nadu stood at 84.91 lakh, indicating that these many voters' names may potentially be removed from the draft electoral rolls to be published on December 16, 2025.



This amounted to 13.24% of Tamil Nadu's total electorate of 6.41 crore as per the latest electoral roll, based on which the enumeration forms were distributed.

As per a report generated on Wednesday morning by officials engaged in monitoring the progress of the exercise, those classified for now as "Permanently Shifted" accounted for the maximum of 44.22 lakh among the 84.91 lakh classified as "uncollectable". P7

Among the remaining, 26.18 lakh have been classified as "Deceased", 10.73 lakh as "Absent", and 3.5 lakh marked as "Already Enrolled (Duplicate)" as of now.

However, in a release on Wednesday evening, the office of the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) emphasised that the work is still under way and the list of uncollectable forms is being shared with the Booth Level Agents (BLAs) of political parties before preparing the draft roll to ensure transparency. P7

Rupee breaches 90-mark for the first time

BENN KOCHUVEEDAN @ Mumbai

THE rupee's freefall deepened on Wednesday, breaching the 90-per-dollar mark for the first time, hitting a new low of 90.29 in the morning trade after opening flat at 89.96. It closed the day's session at an all-time low of 90.15.

Wednesday marks the sixth consecutive day of fall for the rupee as traders bet the subdued trade and portfolio flows will keep Asia's worst perform-

ing currency under pressure, while analysts project the next level for rupee at 92-93.

However, Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran sought to downplay the currency slide, saying the weakness has had no impact on inflation and the currency will recover in 2026. "Right now, it's not hurting our exports or inflation. I am not losing my sleep over it. If it has to depreciate now probably

is the right time," he said at an event in Mumbai.

With Wednesday's fall, the rupee's value eroded 5.7% so far this year, putting it on track for its steepest annual decline since 2022, and making it the worst-performing Asian currency.

The fall also underscores a divergence in the domestic and external macroeconomic position of the nation. While GDP growth has

been stronger-than-expected, punitive US tariffs and weak capital flows have piled pressure on the rupee.

"Every day that we do not have a trade deal, the forex demand from trade deficit and outflows keep pushing the dollar, while forex supply is relatively thin and inconsistent," HSBC said in a note. "We had one month of net inflows in October, but without any more trade deal headlines since then, net flows have become flat."



Now, it's not hurting exports or inflation. I am not losing my sleep over it

Anantha Nageswaran

GOVT BLINKS, ROLLS BACK SANCHAR SAATHI ORDER

ARSHAD KHAN @ New Delhi

THE government on Wednesday withdrew its order directing phone makers to pre-install the Sanchar Saathi app, following strong backlash from opposition parties, digital rights activists, and manufacturers including Apple and Google. The reversal came a day after the telecom ministry clarified that the state-run cybersecurity app is not mandatory and that users may activate or deactivate it.

"Given Sanchar Saathi's increasing acceptance, Government has decided not to make the pre-installation mandatory for mobile manufacturers," a statement by the ministry read. Sources said this is the first time phone makers have been asked to pre-install a government-owned app. The mandate also meant operational difficulties for phone makers.

Earlier in the day, communications minister Jyotiraditya Scindia sought to dispel privacy concerns saying the Sanchar Saathi app neither enables nor allows snooping.

Russia's MAX

Russia is the only country where phone makers need to pre-install a state-run app. MAX, a state-backed messaging service, must be installed by default on all phones and tablets

Massive chaos as over 200 IndiGo flights cancelled

Insiders attribute it to Emirates' hiring spree

S LALITHA @ New Delhi

THOUSANDS of fliers across airports in the country on Wednesday had a harrowing time as crew shortage at IndiGo resulted in cancellation of at least 200 flights besides delaying many others. This was the second consecutive day that IndiGo failed to operate a large number of flights.

A massive recruitment drive by an international airline at Delhi and Mumbai this week is a key reason for it, said multiple sources. IndiGo attributed the disruption to multiple reasons, including unforeseen operational challenges.

The shortage is of both the cockpit and cabin crew, the sources stressed.

At Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport alone, 67 flights were cancelled, of which 37 were departures. Flights to Hyderabad, Mumbai, Kolkata and Srinagar were among those that were nixed.

Over 70 flights were cancelled from Mumbai and Bengaluru airport until Wednesday evening. The Rajiv Gandhi International Airport at Hyderabad witnessed irate scenes after 13 flights were cancelled to various cities apart from 18 incoming flights.

Airline sources said, "Emirates has been having a recruit-



Irate fliers at the Delhi airport | x

ment roadshow in Mumbai and Delhi the last two days and IndiGo crew have been making a beeline for it."

An aviation source blamed it on IndiGo mismanagement, which, however, attributed part of the problem to the DGCA's revised Flight Duty Time Limitations (FDTL) that kicked in from November 1. Increased weekly rest for pilots from 36 hours to 48 hours and limiting night landings by pilots to two instead of six are part of the revised FDTL mandate.

Later in the day, the DGCA said IndiGo had cancelled 1,232 flights in November, of which 755 were due to the FDTL, adding it is probing the current cancellations. The Federation of Indian Pilots blamed the ongoing disruption on "IndiGo's prolonged and unorthodox lean manpower strategy across departments, particularly in flight operations."



SERIES GOES TO DECIDER

Virat Kohli scored a 53rd ODI ton but South Africa hunted down 359, the 3rd highest successful ODI chase in India, with Aiden Markram hitting a 100 | PTI/AFP | P15

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