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FERTILISER SUBSIDIES ARE NOT WELFARE. MANO GANESAN CALLS OUT SPIN OVER 13 BILLION RUPEE PLANTATION BUDGET

It seems that the quickest way to turn a routine crop subsidy into a social welfare triumph is to drop a big round number on social media and hope nobody reads the fine print. That is precisely what Tamil Progressive Alliance (TPA) Leader and MP Mano Ganesan accused National People's Power (NPP) politicians and their online cheerleaders of doing this weekend over the 2027 Budget.

In a statement issued on November 15 and echoed on X, Ganesan urged President Anura Kumara Dissanayake to rein in his party's messaging and stop portraying the 13 billion rupeeallocation for plantation industries as a special fund earmarked for the socio-economic upliftment of the Malaiyaha Tamil community.

The budget arithmetic backs Ganesan up. When President Dissanayake presented the 2027 fiscal plan last week, the 13 billion rupee allocation was explicitly unveiled to boost export earnings across Sri Lanka's commercial crop sectors, namely tea, rubber, coconut, and palmyrah. Look closely at where that money actually goes. Five billion rupees is set aside for a tea fertiliser subsidy, alongside 730 million rupees to build 500 tea villages across six provinces and 820 million rupees for smallholder replanting. Another 2.5 billion rupees goes to coconut rehabilitation, 1.65 billion rupees supports rubber replanting and fertiliser, and 100 million rupees is earmarked for modernising the palmyrah industry in the North, East, and Hambantota.

Calling that an exclusive Malaiyaha welfare package takes a remarkably creative reading of a spreadsheet. Fertiliser bags for coconut growers in Kurunegala or palmyrah SMEs in Jaffna are solid agricultural investments, yet they will not build a single line-room house, upgrade a crumbling estate hospital, or put extra cash into the pocket of a tea plucker in Nuwara Eliya.

Ganesan noted that while the absence of a dedicated budgetary allocation for the Malaiyahacommunity's socio-economic development is one debate, deliberately misrepresenting an agricultural industry fund as community welfare is another problem entirely. In a sharp Tamil statement, he went so far as to brand the social media claims a "blatant lie," adding that had the President genuinely allocated 13 billion rupees directly for the Malaiyaha people, he would have been the first MP on his feet in Parliament to applaud him.

The TPA leader has already pointed out several glaring omissions in the 2027 Budget for estate families, including the lack of concrete housing targets after two years without new state-built estate homes, ignored calls to merge and upgrade the Glencairn and Maskeliyahospitals, and the failure to gazette the 200-rupee daily estate allowance through the Wages Board while plantation companies quietly hike daily plucking targets from 18 to 25 kilograms.

Selling crop subsidies as community upliftment might score quick likes on social media. Out on the estates, however, workers know the difference between a bag of subsidised fertiliser and a roof over their heads.

JAY SHAH LOCKS IN SECOND TERM AS ICC CHAIR THROUGH 2030 WITHOUT A SINGLE CHALLENGER

Jay Shah will remain at the helm of world cricket through the end of the decade after the International Cricket Council (ICC) Board reappointed him unopposed for a second term following its meetings in Bali, Indonesia, yesterday.

Rather than waiting for Shah's initial three-year tenure to expire in December 2027, ICC directors moved early to extend his mandate. Under the governing body's constitution, an ICC Chair is permitted a maximum of two three-year terms, meaning the unanimous decision in Bali keeps the former Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) secretary in the top seat until December 2030.

The ICC framed the early extension as a decisive vote of confidence designed to guarantee boardroom stability during a period of major commercial expansion. Senior figures across the table quickly lined up behind the move. England and Wales Cricket Board Chair Richard Thompson hailed Shah's continued stewardship at a pivotal juncture for the game, while ICC Deputy Chair Tavengwa Mukuhlani praised his ability to rally member boards around a shared commercial roadmap. When the architect of cricket's wealthiest market already occupies the chair, opposition in the boardroom rarely materialises.

Reacting to the announcement, Shah thanked the directors for their continued backing. "I am deeply honoured by the confidence the ICC Board has placed in me and sincerely grateful to every Director for their continued trust and support," he said.

Central to Shah's second-term pitch is cricket's return to the Olympic Games at Los Angeles in 2028, ending a 128-year absence from the Olympic programme.

Shah described LA28 as an extraordinary platform to capture new global audiences and inspire a fresh generation of players and fans. Alongside the Olympic rollout, he pledged to strengthen the sport's financial sustainability, support women's cricket and Associate nations, and turn boardroom ambitions into lasting progress.

The extension also locks in leadership continuity across a massive cycle of marquee tournaments finalized during the Bali meetings. The ICC confirmed multi-team event schedules running up to 2035, including the 2029 Champions Trophy in India and the 2031 ODI World Cup co-hosted by India and Bangladesh.



Having first succeeded Greg Barclay in December 2024 as the youngest chair in ICC history, Shah now holds an uninterrupted runway through the LA28 Olympics and the next commercial rights cycle. For member boards eyeing bigger broadcast payouts and Olympic exposure, continuity at the top is an easy sell, even if an uncontested ballot leaves zero doubt about where real power in world cricket sits.

17-YEAR-OLD GIRL AND TWO MEN ARRESTED OVER SEPTEMBER WELL MURDER IN HOROWPOTHANA

Nearly seven weeks after a man's body was pulled from an abandoned agricultural well in Anuradhapura's Horowpothana Police Division, detectives have finally made a breakthrough, taking three young residents from the victim's own village into custody.

On Sunday, November 15, officers attached to the Horowpothana Police arrested a 17-year-old girl alongside two men aged 23 and 26 in the Ihalakumbukgollewa area. Police confirmed that all three suspects live in Ihalakumbukgollewa, the very same rural locality where the deceased resided before his death.

The grim discovery that triggered the probe took place on September 24, 2026, when the victim's body was found inside a disused farm well in Ihalakumbukgollewa. Across Sri Lanka's dry-zone farming belt, deep, unguarded agricultural wells left behind on scrubland frequently become silent hiding places when rural disputes turn lethal. Initially treated as a suspicious death, subsequent forensic and field inquiries by Horowpothana Police established that the man had not fallen in by accident, nor had he taken his own life. Investigators concluded the case was a deliberate homicide and spent the past several weeks piecing together movements in the village before zeroing in on the trio.

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17-YEAR-OLD GIRL...

For now, Police Media and local investigators are keeping their cards remarkably close to their chests. Authorities have declined to release the identity of the deceased, the exact cause of death, or what possible motive linked a teenager and two men in their twenties to the killing of a fellow villager. Nor have police clarified the relationship between the suspects and the victim, leaving open whether the crime stemmed from a personal dispute, a financial row, or something else entirely.



The arrests also come at an uneasy time for law enforcement in the Horowpothana area, where detectives have been stretched thin tackling violent rural crime, including the murder of a 68-year-old woman living alone near Medawachchiya Junction late last month.

With the three suspects now in police custody and due to be produced before a Magistrate, Horowpothana Police say further interrogations are underway to establish each individual'sexact role in the killing and determine whether anyone else helped conceal the crime. Until investigators open the case file in court, the tight-knit farming community of Ihalakumbukgollewa is left grappling with the unsettling reality that the suspects behind one of its darkest recent crimes lived right down the road.

CALM WATERS CAN STILL KILL: GERMAN TOURIST DIES AT NARIGAMA BEACH AS PEAK COASTAL SEASON BEGINS

November marks the start of the southern coast's peak tourist season, when thousands of international visitors arrive expecting turquoise bays and gentle surf.

On Sunday evening, November 15, that postcard illusion turned fatal at Narigama Beach in Hikkaduwa.

A 71-year-old German national entered the sea along the popular Narigama stretch for an evening swim when a powerful rip current seized him and dragged him offshore. Alert local residents spotted the swimmer in distress, pulled him back to the sand, and rushed him to the Balapitiya Base Hospital. Despite emergency medical treatment, he succumbed shortly after admission.

His body remains at the Balapitiya Hospital mortuary pending a post-mortem examination as Hikkaduwa Police continue their inquiry.

Anyone familiar with Sri Lanka's southwestern shoreline knows that Hikkaduwa, alongside neighbouring Balapitiya, Bentota, and Mirissa, sits squarely on the Sri Lanka Coast Guard's list of highest-risk coastal zones.

Even more sobering is the timing. Coast Guard operational data explicitly identifies November through May as the peak window for coastal rescues, largely because visitors assume that the arrival of the dry season makes the Indian Ocean tame.

The numbers tell a very different story. Police records logged 388 water-related fatalities across Sri Lanka in 2025 alone, while police lifeguards had to pull 96 foreign tourists from dangerous waters that same year.

Over the longer term, the Sri Lanka Coast Guard has rescued 2,662 people since 2009, nearly half of them, 1,244, foreign nationals. At Hikkaduwa itself, a 54-year-old visitor perished in a strong current last December, following the death of a young tourist swept away there in January 2025. Across the island this year, rip currents and rough surf have already claimed visitors at Bentota, Weligama, and Nilaveli.



Part of the problem lies in patchy beach coverage. While Police maintain 71 lifeguard units with 308 officers across 31 divisions and the Coast Guard operates 16 dedicated coastal lifesaving posts, long stretches of popular tourist beaches, including sections of Narigama, remain unpatrolled, particularly around dusk when swimmers head in for sunset dips.

For anyone heading to the coast this season, understanding how a rip current works is far more useful than relying on a calendar.

A rip current does not pull you underwater; it is a narrow, fast-moving channel of water rushing away from the beach through gaps in sandbars. Ironically, the water inside a rip often looks deceptively calm and dark between lines of breaking white waves.

Swimmers get into fatal trouble when panic sets in and they try to swim straight back toward the sand against a current moving faster than an Olympic freestyler. Exhaustion does the rest.

If you ever feel the sand vanish beneath your feet and the shore receding rapidly, fight the instinct to battle the pull. Keep your head above water, float to conserve energy, and swim parallel to the shoreline until you escape the narrow channel before angling back toward the beach.

Always swim near staffed lifeguard posts, respect red warning flags even when the surface looks glassy, and never enter the sea alone at dusk. In Hikkaduwa, the ocean rarely gives a second warning.

DEATH TOLL RISES TO FIVE IN RAMBEWA TRIPLE-BUS CRASH AFTER FOUR-YEAR-OLD GIRL SUCCUMBS TO INJURIES

Even if you never step foot onto a public bus, you share the exact same asphalt with the people driving them. Whether you are behind the wheel of an SUV heading north for a weekend in Anuradhapura, driving a sedan up to Kandy, or commuting to the office in Colombo, a 12-ton coach veering into your lane on a wet highway leaves zero margin for survival.

That grim reality came back into sharp focus Sunday night, November 15, when a four-year-old girl from Parakramapura died at the Anuradhapura Teaching Hospital, raising the death toll from last Tuesday's three-bus collision near the Rambewa-Weli Oya Junction to five. Seventy-six people were injured in the November 10 pile-up along the A9 Kandy-Jaffna main road, and 51 survivors remain hospitalised at the Anuradhapura and Medawachchiyahospitals.

The mechanics of the crash read like every motorist's worst nightmare on an outstation drive. A Colombo-bound Sri Lanka Transport Board (SLTB) bus from Janakapura crossed into oncoming traffic and slammed head-on into a Jaffna-bound SLTB bus from Akkaraipattu, before a private coach from Vavuniya ploughed into the wreckage from behind. Over the weekend, Mihintale Police and Transport Minister Bimal Rathnayake confirmed that post-mortem toxicology tests proved the 47-year-old Kebithigollewa depot driver who triggered the head-on impact was operating the bus under the influence of drugs.

Add November weather to that equation and every main trunk road turns into a skating rink. Anuradhapura and the North Central Province are currently in the thick of the second inter-monsoon and northeast monsoon transition, the wettest stretch of the year for the Cultural Triangle. Regional weather logs recorded consecutive days of heavy rain across Anuradhapura through mid-November, including over 10 millimeters of rainfall on the day of the crash alone followed by nearly 15 millimeters the next day, reducing visibility and stretching stopping distances on slick tarmac.

The national road data makes sobering reading for anyone who holds a driving licence. On the exact day the Rambewa crash unfolded, Police Media Spokesman ASP F.U. Wootlerconfirmed that 2,381 people had already been killed in 2,257 fatal road accidents across Sri Lanka in 2026. Traffic police enforcement figures earlier this year logged over 3,430 illicit drug-related detections and led to the cancellation of 70 bus crew licences during targeted inspections, yet spot checks remain sporadic outside major cities. Within days of the A9 pile-up, a cement mixer truck ploughed into traffic in the North Central Province, killing five more people and injuring over 50.

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DEATH TOLL RISES...

Anuradhapura Additional Magistrate D.L. Samarasinghe has ordered technical reports on all three buses while Mihintale Police examine roadside CCTV footage. Yet for anyone planning a drive out of Colombo during this rainy season, post-mortem toxicology reports offer little protection. Until roadside drug screening becomes routine across every highway junction, defensive driving is the only safety net left on Sri Lankan roads.

KRRISH CASE STALLS: CID TOLD TO CHECK INDIAN WITNESS SUMMONSES

Two crucial prosecution witnesses in the Krrish rugby sponsorship trial are currently somewhere abroad, and nobody in Colombo can say for certain whether they have even received their court summonses. Yesterday, November 16, that missing paperwork forced the Colombo High Court to put the brakes on proceedings against Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna Parliamentarian Namal Rajapaksa yet again, sending detectives knocking on the door of the Indian High Commission to track down the notices.



High Court Judge Nadie Aparna Suwandurugoda issued the directive to the Criminal Investigation Department after Deputy Solicitor General Wasantha Perera laid out the prosecution's dilemma.

Appearing for the Attorney General, Perera informed the bench that the first and second prosecution witnesses are presently overseas. While the court summonses had already been dispatched through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, prosecutors still had zero official confirmation that the documents had reached the intended recipients.

Judge Suwandurugoda ordered the CID Director to formally verify with the Indian High Commission whether the two witnesses had been duly served and to submit a report on the matter.

Until that diplomatic paper trail is sorted out, the trial itself goes nowhere. The High Court fixed the case to be recalled on January 18, 2027.

Prison officials produced Rajapaksa before the court yesterday morning, and the judge directed the Superintendent of Prisons to bring him back on January 18 should he remain behind bars.

While Rajapaksa was previously granted bail in connection with the Krrish matter, he remains in remand custody pursuant to a separate order issued by a Permanent High Court Trial at Bar over alleged bribery linked to the Airbus procurement scandal.

The High Court indictment at the center of yesterday's hearing accuses Rajapaksa of the criminal misappropriation of 70 million rupees obtained from Indian property developer Krrish Transworks Colombo. Prosecutors allege that the money was solicited under the banner of promoting rugby in Sri Lanka, yet was diverted away from the sport.

That financial trail stretches all the way back to 2012 and 2013, when Krrish secured a prime 4.3-acre plot in Colombo Fort for a luxury mixed-development tower project. While the concrete shell in Fort stood stalled for over a decade, the 70-million-rupee rugby payment became one of the country's longest-running political corruption prosecutions, beginning with Rajapaksa's initial arrest by the Financial Crimes Investigation Division back in 2016.

More than ten years after the money changed hands, a high-profile High Court trial now hinges on whether an envelope sent via diplomatic pouch actually landed in the right hands. Come January 18, prosecutors will finally have to tell the bench if their star witnesses know they are supposed to show up.

CEILING LEAKS DISRUPT SURGERIES AT COLOMBO NATIONAL HOSPITAL

Surgeons at the Colombo National Hospital found themselves battling more than clinical complications yesterday, November 16, as water began dripping directly from the ceiling of the Theatre A complex right in the middle of a thyroid operation.

Hospital sources confirm the leak is not simply a passing headache brought on by Colombo's rainy weather. Water continues to pool and stagnate above the affected surgical suites even on completely dry days, pointing to internal plumbing or air-conditioning drainage failures rather than a simple leaky roof. Meanwhile, an identical problem has surfaced on the first floor of the Accident Service Building, where the five-table Orthopedic Theatre Complex is also taking on water, with Operating Table No. 1 directly affected.

For an operating theatre, stagnant water overhead is the exact opposite of a sterile environment. Moisture trapped in ceiling panels breeds fungal spores and bacteria, creating serious contamination risks for patients lying open on the operating table and threatening delicate electronic surgical gear.

What makes yesterday's disclosures particularly galling is that this exact crisis played out in the very same building barely sixteen months ago. In June 2025, surgical staff sounded the alarm over severe ceiling leaks soaking the 24-hour Orthopedic theatres and adjacent doctors' rooms in the Accident Service Building, warning that vital operations risked grinding to a halt.

Hospital administrators only moved to patch the problem in July 2025 after media coverage forced their hand, declaring at the time that all affected theatres had been fixed and were fully safe for surgery.

The National Hospital's infrastructure woes have piled up steadily since then. In September 2025, faulty air-conditioning systems across critical units drew complaints over patient safety and equipment damage. Just ten days ago, on November 6, a downpour of 129 millimetres inundated parts of the hospital premises, exposing how vulnerable Sri Lanka's premier state medical facility remains to basic drainage and maintenance failures.



Hospital staff have repeatedly noted that warnings about deteriorating facilities tend to gather dust until public embarrassment forces emergency patchwork. Now, with stagnant water once again hanging over open thyroid and orthopaedic procedures, patients at the country's flagship hospital are left hoping the ceiling holds until the stitches go in.

WHISKEY BOXES PACKED WITH KUSH: TWO SRI LANKANS CAUGHT AT KATUNAYAKE WITH RS. 86 MILLION DRUG HAUL

Four boxes of Jack Daniel's whiskey tucked into two suitcases looked like standard duty-free indulgence when a pair of Sri Lankan travellers stepped off a midnight flight at Bandaranaike International Airport early yesterday, November 16. Inside those cardboard cartons, however, there was not a drop of Tennessee bourbon to be found.

Instead, officers attached to the Airport Unit of the Police Narcotics Bureau uncovered 8.664 kilograms of high-grade "Kush" cannabis, neatly sealed into four packets and valued at roughly 86.64 million rupees.

The two suspects, a 35-year-old iron welder from Nedunkerni and a 46-year-old businessman from Kandy, had touched down at Katunayake around midnight onboard Malaysia Airlines flight MH179 from Kuala Lumpur. Preliminary questioning revealed that the duo had originally sourced the narcotics in Thailand before routing their return journey through Malaysia in an apparent attempt to avoid the heavier scrutiny placed on direct arrivals from Bangkok.

Narcotics officers intercepted the pair at the arrival terminal before they could clear the airport,

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WHISKEY BOXES PACKED...

uncovering 4.336 kilograms of Kush from the first suspect and 4.328 kilograms from the second. Both men were produced before the Negombo Magistrate's Court yesterday afternoon, where police obtained formal detention orders to interrogate them further and trace the local distribution network waiting on the shipment.

The midnight bust turned out to be part of a wider sweep on the very same flight. In a parallel operation at the Green Channel during the same early morning window, Sri Lanka Customs Narcotics Control Unit officers intercepted a third passenger arriving on flight MH179, a 30-year-old technician from Matale, carrying another 4.384 kilograms of Kush worth 43.84 million rupees hidden inside two foreign liquor boxes. Together, the twin seizures pulled more than 13 kilograms of the potent synthetic-laced cannabis strain off the arrivals conveyor belt in a single night.



Airport investigators note that the Thailand-to-Kuala Lumpur transit corridor has rapidly become the preferred smuggling route for couriers moving Kush into Colombo, replacing direct flights that routinely trigger automatic baggage profiling. Just three weeks ago, on October 26, Customs officers at Katunayake nabbed a 24-year-old Indian national carrying 5.1 kilograms of Kush valued at over 51 million rupees.

Swapping whiskey bottles for vacuum-sealed narcotics inside branded liquor cartons is hardly an original trick at Katunayake. As long as couriers keep betting that customs scanners cannot tell Tennessee sour mash from Thai Kush, the holding cells at Negombo will have no shortage of guests.

FENCES, FAITH, AND COURTROOMS: ANURADHAPURA SACRED CITY PLANS SHIFT AS VEN. KASSAPA THERA FACES REMAND

It is rare for Sri Lanka's monastic leadership to stay quietly inside temple grounds. Monday, November 16, served up two striking reminders of that reality as religious authority collided head-on with state administration and the courts, with developments stretching from the ancient stūpas of the Cultural Triangle to a magistrate holding cell.

In Colombo, the Acting Atamasthanadhipathi and Chief Incumbent of Ruwanwelisaya, Venerable Eethalawetunuwe Gnanathilaka Thero, stepped up to the microphone at the Ministry of Buddhasasana to calm a nervous populace. Addressing a press briefing following a meeting of the Presidential Advisory Council co-chaired by Presidential Chief of Staff Prabhath Chandrakeerthi, the senior monk moved quickly to kill swirling rumors that thousands of families living within the Anuradhapura Sacred City would be forcibly evicted under a sweeping new development blueprint.



Conceding that a communications vacuum had fueled local panic, Gnanathilaka Thero offered categorical assurances. There are zero plans to bulldoze homes or boot residents out of the 38 square kilometer designated zone, an expansion bumped up from the original 28 square kilometers to better handle massive pilgrim influxes during major poya festivals.

Even the contentious proposal to ring the sacred precinct with a security fence, originally floated to keep stray cattle, rogue parking, and illegal masonry away from irreplaceable archaeological ruins, has been permanently shelved following public pushback.

While the North Central capital worked to soothe heritage anxieties, a courtroom drama played out elsewhere over a very different kind of structural dispute. Venerable BalangodaKassapa Thera found himself remanded until Tuesday, November 17, after failing to answer a court summons.

The underlying legal battle stems from unauthorized construction work at the Sri Sambuddha Jayanthi Bodhiraja Temple in Trincomalee, where a disputed shrine room and a newly installed Buddha statue triggered regulatory action. Missing a court date is a fast track to a holding cell, regardless of ecclesiastical rank.

Pairing the two developments exposes the delicate tightrope governing sacred spaces in modern Sri Lanka.

In Anuradhapura, temple authorities are learning that state led master plans require absolute transparency to prevent community unrest, forcing a hasty retreat on boundary fences.

Meanwhile, in Trincomalee, judicial enforcement proves that erecting structures on disputed temple grounds without proper clearance carries legal consequences that even the cloth cannot bypass.

Whether dealing with heritage boundaries or court appearances, protecting religious sanctity requires more than good intentions.

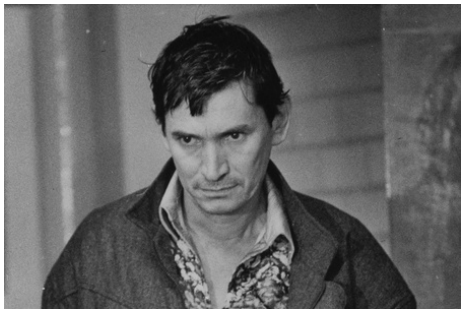
As Anuradhapura pivots toward consultative development and Trincomalee awaits its next court hearing, the message across the island is clear. Faith commands deep reverence, but paperwork and due process demand equal respect.

INTERNATIONAL

END OF AN ERA IN GUADALAJARA: GODFATHER OF MEXICAN DRUG CARTELS DIES IN CUSTODY AT 80

Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo, the former police officer who built Mexico's first modern drug empire and taught a generation of traffickers how to turn politics into a shield, died in a private hospital in Guadalajara on Sunday afternoon after suffering multiple organ failure. He was 80.

Known across the underworld as "The Godfather" and the "Boss of Bosses," Félix Gallardo had been behind bars since 1989. Moved on an emergency basis from Jalisco's Puente Grande prison two days prior, he died just miles from where federal agents finally cornered him nearly four decades ago.



Before Félix Gallardo arrived on the scene in the 1980s, Mexican smugglers mostly moved homegrown marijuana and heroin in fractured regional outfits. He changed the business model forever by striking a direct logistics alliance with Colombia's cocaine barons, including Pablo Escobar's Medellín Cartel. While Colombia produced the product, Félix Gallardo's Guadalajara Cartel owned the northern corridors into the United States, moving vast quantities of the estimated 80 percent of American cocaine flowing out of Medellín. His reach extended deep into state governorships, police forces, and Mexico City's political corridors.

That untouchable aura shattered in 1985 following the kidnapping, torture, and murder of US Drug Enforcement Administration agent Enrique "Kiki" Camarena and Mexican pilot Alfredo Zavala Avelar, retaliation for a massive raid on a cartel marijuana plantation in Chihuahua. Washington unleashed an unrelenting manhunt that eventually stripped away his political protection. Arrested in 1989, Félix Gallardo received a 40-year sentence for trafficking and weapons offences, later receiving an additional 37-year term in 2017 for Camarena's murder.

Even from a cell, his shadow lingered. Among the young lieutenants he placed in charge of logistics was Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán, who carved out the ruthless Sinaloa Cartel from the wreckage of Félix Gallardo's empire before landing a US life sentence in 2019.

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END OF AN ERA...

Blind in one eye, nearly deaf, and confined to a wheelchair, Félix Gallardo saw a 2022 house arrest order stall over prosecutor challenges and electronic ankle-monitor glitches. His rise and fall became global pop-culture fodder through Diego Luna's portrayal in Netflix's Narcos: Mexico, though the blood-soaked cartel map he drew outlived him by decades.

STREET CRICKET AND CHAI SIPPING: WILLIAM AND KATE ARRIVE IN MUMBAI TO LAUNCH EARTHSHOT PRIZE

Prince William and Kate Middleton traded royal formality for Mumbai pavement yesterday, playing street cricket alongside legendary Indian batsman Sachin Tendulkar to kick off a three-day tour centered on the Earthshot Prize.

Arriving in the Ballard Estate business district, the royal couple were greeted by traditional drummers and served cutting chai in small clay cups at a roadside stall beneath a banyan tree. Tendulkar, who supports underprivileged youth initiatives through his foundation, joined the Duke and Duchess on the pitch alongside schoolgirls from the Nagpada neighborhood. William tried his hand at batting before bowling deliveries to both Kate and the cricketing icon.



The Mumbai visit marks a major milestone for the Princess of Wales, representing her most high-profile international trip since completing cancer treatment in 2024. Now in remission and resuming a full public schedule, Kate joined her husband in highlighting the Earthshot Prize, which William founded in 2020.

On Tuesday, Mumbai hosts the sixth annual Earthshot Prize ceremony, marking the first time the global environmental awards have been held in India. The initiative awards one million pounds to each of five winners working on planetary repair, spanning categories from clean air protection to ocean revival. Among the fifteen finalists announced in September is a Latin American project utilizing artificial intelligence and satellite telemetry to track wildfires.

The royal itinerary in Mumbai also features a ride on the city metro and high-profile meetings with Bollywood figures attending the Tuesday gala. On Wednesday, the couple travel to New Delhi for official meetings with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, revisiting a diplomatic relationship last engaged during their April 2016 tour.

While the Prince and Princess of Wales took center stage in Maharashtra, the wider royal family kept up a busy international footprint over the weekend. The Duke of Sussex made an unannounced trip to Ukraine to meet wounded and sick military veterans training for the Invictus Games.

UNITED KINGDOM

BREXIT HAS NOT WORKED: UK PM SETS STAGE FOR BRUSSELS RESET AHEAD OF EU SUMMIT

Prime Minister Andy Burnham has dropped political caution regarding Britain's departure from the European Union, preparing to tell the country ahead of a crucial Brussels summit that the Brexit arrangement handed to the public simply has not worked.

In a sharply worded speech, Burnham is set to compare the political handling of Brexit to the fable of the emperor's new clothes, arguing that consecutive administrations have refused to state the obvious out of fear. Declaring that the UK has lost more than it has gained under the current framework, the prime minister is positioning his upcoming trip to Belgium as a pragmatic reset.

He aims to secure new cooperative agreements covering food standards, carbon trading, and youth mobility when he meets European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council head António Costa later this week.



Downing Street insists the approach is not an attempt to reverse the referendum, but rather an acknowledgment that a needlessly hard trade border has choked British commerce and raised barriers for touring professionals. The Conservative opposition has slammed the manoeuvre, accusing Labour of dragging the country back toward Brussels through the back door.

For an island nation grappling with post-Brexit economic realities, Burnham's blunt admission signals a sharp pivot from adversarial posturing toward a functional, win-win renegotiation. Whether Brussels is ready to offer meaningful concessions without demanding full alignment remains the multi-billion-pound question.

INDIA

LORD MURUGAN CHANTS FOR VIJAY SPARK FIERCE POLITICAL FIRESTORM IN TAMIL NADU

Nothing in Tamil Nadu remains sacred for long once the political vultures descend, and the state's traditional festival grounds have proved it yet again.

A fresh brawl erupted across the political landscape following reports that crowds gathered for a traditional Soorasamharam temple event broke into fervent chants honoring Lord Murugan directly alongside praise for Chief Minister and Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam leader C. Joseph Vijay.

The spectacle drew an immediate and venomous response from the ruling establishment's critics. The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam unloaded a scathing critique, dismissing the mixing of holy festival grounds with partisan slogans as the absolute cheapest politics the state has ever witnessed.

Denouncing the display as a blatant attempt to manufacture a personality cult out of ancient cultural rituals, detractors argued that dragging sacred deity worship into raw electoral adulation crosses a dangerous line.



The uproar shines a harsh light on the volatile optics surrounding Chief Minister Vijay's administration. Ever since the actor turned politician charted a course rejecting strict state-enforced secular dogmas in favor of respecting all faiths, his rivals have kept a hawk-like watch on how religious spaces intersect with his movement.

While Vijay's camp insists that personal spiritual identity and governance occupy separate rooms, opportunistic opponents are more than happy to paint every stray temple chant as a mobilized political stunt.

As the rhetoric sharpens, the latest temple-ground clash delivers a familiar and cynical truth about Tamil Nadu.

Whether it is administrative squabbles over library book procurement or slogans echoing through ancient temple courtyards during holy festivals, no public space on the map is ever too sacred to escape the gravitational pull of party warfare.

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THE PRICE OF CREDIT: SIX-MONTH-OLDBABY AND MOTHER SNATCHED IN ANDHRA LOAN DISPUTE

Desperation in the informal credit market has plumbed a grotesque new depth in India's Andhra Pradesh, where a disagreement over a 1.5 lakh rupee private loan spilled over into the alleged abduction of a six month old infant and its mother.

The ugly confrontation unfolded in Sivanathapalem village within the Tirupati district, tracing back to a financial arrangement gone sour. Local residents Aadi and his wife Meghamala had borrowed 150,000 rupees from a local lending family led by Venkatagiri Munemma, Prasad, and Mohan, reportedly agreeing to a steep monthly interest rate. When financial pressure made timely repayments impossible, patience among the creditors snapped.

Rather than pursuing legal remedies or civil debt recovery channels, the lenders allegedly took matters into their own hands. Descending on the family home while Aadi was away, the creditors confronted the household and forcibly removed Meghamala alongside her six month old baby, using the infant as leverage to compel settlement of the overdue debt.

Panic-stricken relatives immediately dialed the emergency services, triggering a swift police intervention that located the mother and child and safely restored them to their family. Srikalahasti DSP Pavani confirmed that local law enforcement registered complaints and initiated formal procedural steps under the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, while political heavyweights seized on the incident to excoriate the ruling administration over deteriorating public safety and predatory lending unchecked by regulators.

The episode lays bare the brutal underworld of unregulated village moneylending, where exorbitant interest rates collide with zero legal recourse. When debt collection descends to snatching infants from cradles, the breakdown extends far beyond a missed installment. It signals an institutional failure where human life is priced lower than petty cash.

THE SUPERPOWERS

MOSCOW PUSHES FOR NATO COLLAPSE WHILE THE U.S AND IRAN WRESTLE ON A SECOND FRONT

While diplomatic delegations gathered in the neutral glare of Abu Dhabi for United States mediated talks on Ukraine, Moscow made its true strategic playbook painfully clear. The Kremlin is not sitting across the negotiating table to broker a genuine ceasefire or offer reasonable territorial compromises. Instead, Russian negotiators have tabled maximalist demands designed to shatter European unity, evict NATO forces from Central and Eastern Europe, and trap individual continental states into bilateral nonaggression pacts.

If accepted, these bilateral deals would effectively dismantle Article 5 and destroy the alliance cornerstone principle that an armed attack against one member is an attack against all thirty two. As former Russian diplomat Boris Bondarev astutely observed, signing individual nonaggression pacts with Moscow leaves European nations completely isolated, facing the Russian bear alone and surrendering strategic sovereignty without firing a single shot.

By deliberately dragging out the Abu Dhabi talks, the Kremlin is playing a calculated long game. Moscow is openly betting on shifting political winds across key Western capitals, hoping that rising nationalist figures like France's Marine Le Pen or surging factions within Germany will pull the plug on military and financial aid to Kyiv.



Meanwhile, this unfolding European security crisis does not exist in a vacuum.

It is dangerously intertwined with simmering geopolitical friction on a completely different front between Washington and Tehran. US and Iranian diplomatic backchannels remain perpetually stretched to the breaking point over escalating regional proxy conflicts, maritime security in the Gulf, and Tehran's persistent nuclear enrichment ambitions.

This creates a volatile cross-continental axis where Middle Eastern instability directly feeds into Western strategic fatigue, complicating how Washington manages its global commitments.

When superpowers negotiate under the heavy weight of hidden agendas and maximalist ultramarines, regional conflicts transform into mere leverage points in a much larger global realignment.

For Kyiv, the reality on the ground remains brutally stark. Double-tap drone strikes continue to pulverize northern towns like Hlukhiv, burying civilians and first responders under concrete rubble, while diplomats thousands of miles away trade grand illusions about peace.

Russia's strategy relies on the exhaustion of its adversaries and the fracture of collective defense agreements. If Western capitals fall for the trap of individual security deals with Moscow, the architecture of post-Cold War European security will collapse from the inside out.

True peace cannot be built on capitulation, and no amount of diplomatic theater in the Gulf can disguise a naked push for territorial conquest and continental division.

PALESTINE – THE PEOPLE THE WORLD IS FORGETTING

ONE STATE, ONE LAW: PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP PUSHES FOR INTERNAL UNITY AS INSTITUTIONAL PRESSURES MOUNT

Behind the grim backdrop of flooded tent cities in Gaza and relentless military raids across the West Bank, Palestinian institutional politics have hit a major turning point.

The Palestine Liberation Organization Executive Committee has officially locked in 2027 as the target target window for long overdue presidential and legislative elections across both the West Bank and Gaza.

The scheduling move follows a formal presidential decree by Mahmoud Abbas postponing earlier electoral timelines, setting up a high-stakes roadmap that aims to test whether a fractured leadership can restore democratic legitimacy after nearly two decades without a national vote.



At the heart of the leadership's new institutional strategy is a push for administrative unification under the strict banner of "one state, one law, and one legitimate armed force."

Meeting in Ramallah, top PLO officials emphasized that internal consolidation is the only way to withstand intensifying external pressure and counter ongoing territorial fragmentation.

Yet, these political manoeuvres are colliding with severe administrative strain on the ground.

The Executive Committee has issued sharp rebukes against proposed staff reductions and funding freezes facing UNRWA, warning that dismantling essential relief agencies threatens to collapse the basic civic safety net keeping millions of refugees afloat.