

Vaishali storms into knockout stage of World Blitz

Chennai Jan 01 2025: Indian Grandmaster Vaishali Rameshbabu (9.5/11) powered her way to the knockout after 11 rounds in the FIDE World Blitz chess championship 2024 at CIPRANI 55 Wall Street, New York here today. The six day \$ 1.5 million year end chess bonanza concludes tomorrow when the knock-outs on both sections are played out from the quarter-final stage onwards.



Preliminaries winner GM Vaishali Rameshbabu now faces GM Zhu Jiner of China in a four game quarter-final scheduled for tomorrow. Nine wins and two draws placed Vaishali on top of the qualifying pool.

Other seven qualifying for the knock-out stage are Lei Tingjie (Chn), Lagno Kateryna, Gunina Valentina (both Russia), Ju Wenjun (Chn), Yip Carissa (USA), Assaubayeva Bibisara (Kaz), Zhu Jiner (Chn). Newly crowned world rapid champion Koneru Humpy narrowly missed out qualifying, finishing 9th with 8.0 points.

The 18-year-old World Rapid Champion, Volodar Murzin (9.5/13), continued his impressive run qualifying for the Knock-out in the Open section of the world blitz championship. Murzin locked the 8th and final spot for the knock-out and would meet fellow

Russia's Nepomniachtchi in the quarter-final.

Joining him through to the next stage are illustrious list of Grandmasters viz., Nepomniachtchi (Rus), Caruana Fabiano (USA), Carlsen Magnus (Nor), So Wesley (USA), Firouzja Alireza (Fra), Niemann Hans Moke (USA), Duda Jan-Krzysztof (Pol) respectively.

GM Levon Aronian (USA) with an ELO 2805 performance, had the highest tie-break score but an unfortunate final round loss against GM Duda Jan-Krzysztof (Poland) saw him out of contention.

Defending world blitz champion Magnus Carlsen, returned to his favorite style of play, starting with two comfortable wins. The third round saw him fall for a stalemate trick against GM Benjamin Bok of Netherlands.

He steadied the ship with three further wins, before four draws in a

row put him on the edge. A crucial win against GM Samuel Sevian (USA) in the penultimate round saved the day for the Norwegian, taking him safely to the next day. Carlsen now faces his bete noire GM Hans Moke Niemann (USA) in a four game quarter final match-up. The whole world will closely follow this slugfest and one could already feel the palpable excitement among the fans.

The quarterfinal line up in the Open section reads: Nepomniachtchi (Rus) vs Volodar Murzin, Firouzja Alireza vs So Wesley, Carlsen Magnus vs Niemann Hans Moke, Duda Jan-Krzysztof vs Caruana Fabiano. Big names missing out on qualification were Hikaru Nakamura, Vachier-Lagrave Maxime, Erigaisi Arjun, Aronian Levon, Praggnanandhaa R, Abdusattorov Nodirbek to name a few.

In the women's section the knock-out lineup is: Vaishali Rameshbabu vs Zhu

Jiner, Ju Wenjun vs Gunina Valentina, Lagno Kateryna vs Yip Carissa, Assaubayeva Bibisara vs Lei Tingjie. All the quarter-finals begin by 2 PM tomorrow and the prize function is scheduled by 7PM local time.

Round 13 Standings (Open): 1 - 10 Nepomniachtchi (Rus), Caruana Fabiano (USA), Carlsen Magnus (Nor), So Wesley (USA), Firouzja Alireza (Fra), Niemann Hans Moke (USA), Duda Jan-Krzysztof (Pol), Murzin Volodar (Rus), Naroditsky Daniel (USA), Dubov Daniil (Rus) 9.5 pts (188 players)

Round 13 Standings (Women): 1 Vaishali Rameshbabu (Ind) 9.5, 2 Lei Tingjie (Chn) 8.5, 3-9 Lagno Kateryna, Gunina Valentina (both Russia), Ju Wenjun (Chn), Yip Carissa (USA), Assaubayeva Bibisara (Kaz), Zhu Jiner (Chn), Koneru Humpy (Ind) 8.0, 10 Wagner Dinara (Ger) 7.5 pts (108 players).

Russia releases 189 Ukrainians in prisoner swap

Chennai Jan 01 2025: A total of 189 Ukrainians returned from Russian captivity on Monday as a part of a new prisoner swap, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said. Among those released were 187

servicemen, including officers, soldiers and sergeants, along with two civilians, Zelensky wrote in a post on Telegram.

The freed troops included military personnel who fought

for the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, the city of Mariupol, and the Snake Island in the Black Sea, he added.

Ukraine and Russia have conducted 59 prisoner exchanges to

date, according to the Coordinating Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War. These swaps resulted in the release of 3,956 people from Russian captivity, including 1,358 freed this year alone.

China's longest tunnel ready

Chennai Jan 01 2025: China has completed the construction of the world's longest expressway tunnel, Tianshan Shengli, that will link the southern and northern parts of the Xinjiang autonomous region, Chinese state news agency Xinhua reported on Monday.

The 14-mile tunnel is expected to reduce travel time across the middle section of the

Tianshan Mountains from several hours to about 20 minutes once in operation in 2025, the news agency reported.

The project is also crucial for the regional capital of Urumqi in northern Xinjiang and Yuli County in southern Xinjiang, cutting travel time between the two locations from about seven hours to just over three hours, the report said.

CM MK Stalin, Opposition leader Edappadi leaders extend New Year greetings



Chennai Jan 01 2025: Chief Minister Stalin, Opposition leader Edappadi Palaniswami, other leaders extended the new year greetings.

In a statement Chief Minister Stalin said, "As the year 2024, which restored faith in Indian democracy, comes to an end, we welcome the dawn of 2025.

With initiatives like "Kalaigarnar Sports Equipment Distribution" in rural areas, the expansion of the Chief Minister's Breakfast Scheme, the innovative Pudhumai Pen Scheme for girls in government-aided schools, the Kalaigarnar Handicrafts Project, and the second phase of the "Ensure Nutrition" program, our Dravidian Model Government has

achieved significant milestones in 2024.

Over 2 crore people benefited from doorstep medical services, and the Vidiyal Payanam scheme facilitated free travel exceeding Rs.500 crore. Our "Naan Mudhalvan" program, gaining nationwide recognition, and the Kalaigarnar Women's Rights Scheme, now extended to 1.48 lakh beneficiaries, demonstrate our commitment to empowering women economically. Projects like the Athikadavu Avinashi Scheme highlight our continuous developmental efforts.

These achievements reflect the progressive strides of our governance model,

culminating in an unprecedented "40 out of 40" victory in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections - a victory that has earned the attention of the entire nation. The resounding success delivered by the people of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry has ensured that secularism continues to thrive in India.

The year 2024 will remain unforgettable in our history for safeguarding democracy and elevating the nation's pride. Despite challenges, it inspired us to persevere and achieve success.

In 2025, may peace prevail globally. Let social harmony flourish across our country. May every home be filled with love and joy. Tamil

Nadu shall lead the way!

AIADMK General Secretary Edappadi Palaniswami extended his New Year greetings, urging unity and tireless efforts to create a peaceful environment for all people living in Tamil Nadu.

In his statement, he said "With fresh hopes blooming in this New Year, I am delighted to convey my heartfelt English New Year wishes to all the people of Tamil Nadu.

During the AIADMK's rule, we implemented various unique schemes with the sole objective of ensuring public welfare. I take pride in pointing out that during those times, people lived peacefully without fear or worry."

WHO urges China to share COVID-19 data

Chennai Jan 01 2025: China has a moral scientific obligation to share data on the origins of COVID-19, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said in a statement on the fifth anniversary of the first media article about cases of respiratory infection in Wuhan.

"We continue to call on China to share data and access so we can understand the origins of COVID-19. This is a moral and scientific imperative.

Without transparency,

sharing, and cooperation among countries, the world cannot adequately prevent and prepare for future epidemics and pandemics," the statement says. In August, WHO spokesperson Maria Van Kerkhove told RIA Novosti that China was not cooperating sufficiently with the World Health Organization (WHO) on the origins of COVID-19, but the investigation was still

ongoing.

On December 31, 2019, Chinese authorities informed the WHO about an outbreak of unknown pneumonia in the city of Wuhan in the central part of the country (Hubei Province). Moreover, the first cases were reportedly somehow connected to the local seafood market. In early January 2020, China officially announced that the outbreak of viral pneumonia of unknown origin was

caused by a new type of coronavirus. And already on March 11, 2020, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus announced that the spread of the new coronavirus was of a pandemic nature.

Following a two-year investigation, US congressmen stated that the coronavirus most likely had a laboratory origin and spread as a result of a leak from a laboratory in Wuhan.

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Master frontier tech, Rajnath to aspiring military officers

Chennai Jan 01 2025: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday said that mastering frontier technologies in today's constantly-evolving times is the need of the hour, and the military training centres are playing a crucial role in equipping and readying the soldiers to deal with future challenges.

Addressing officers at the Army War College (AWC) here, Rajnath Singh highlighted the radical changes being witnessed in the ways of warfare, an official statement said.

He said that unconventional methods like information warfare, Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based warfare, proxy warfare, electromagnetic warfare, space warfare and cyber attacks are posing a big challenge in today's times.

He stressed on the need for military to remain well-trained and equipped to deal with such challenges, lauding the training centres in Mhow for their valuable contribution in these efforts. He also commended the centres for constantly improving their training curriculum, in sync with the changing times, and striving to make the personnel



fighting fit for every kind of challenge.

Highlighting the government's vision of making the country Viksit Bharat by 2047, the Defence Minister said, "India is constantly moving on the path of development and is rapidly emerging as a manufacturing hub. From a military point of view, we are getting equipped with modern weapons. We are also exporting Made-in-India equipment to other countries. Our defence exports, which were around Rs 2,000 crores a decade ago, have crossed the record figure of Rs 21,000 crore today. We have set an export target of Rs 50,000 crore by 2029".

Rajnath reasserted the Government's resolve to strengthen integration and jointness among the three services, exuding

confidence that, in the times to come, the Armed Forces will be able to face challenges together in a better and more efficient way.

He appreciated the fact that high-level training is provided to officers of all wings in Mhow Cantonment. He urged the officers to explore the possibility of promoting integration through training in areas such as weapons training in Infantry School; AI and communication technology in Military College of Telecommunication Engineering (MCTE); and Leadership - Junior and Senior Command in AWC.

He added that some officers will work as defence attaches in the future, and they should strive to secure national interests at the global level.

"When you take up

this post of Defence Attaches, you should imbibe the Government's vision of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'. Only through self-reliance can India strengthen its defence capabilities and gain more respect on the world stage," he added.

He voiced the Government's commitment to make India one of the strongest economic and military powers in the world.

"Economic prosperity is possible only when full attention is paid to security. Similarly, the security system will be robust only when the economy is strong. Both complement each other. By 2047, we will not only become a developed nation, but our Armed Forces will also be one of the most modern and strongest militaries in the world.

Trump aides upset with Musk on H-1B visa issue

Chennai Jan 01 2025: A deepening rift within US President-elect Donald Trump's MAGA (Make America Great Again) circles has brought tech honcho Elon Musk under fire, as prominent conservative figures accuse the billionaire of silencing dissent on his social media platform, X.

The accusations stem from disagreements over Musk's strong support for H-1B visa programme, a stance that has sparked anger among staunch Trump loyalists.

Trump's Department of Government Efficiency, headed by Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy, has been outspoken in defending the H-1B visa programme. Musk has argued that legal immigration of



highly skilled workers is essential for maintaining America's global technological dominance.

"If you want your TEAM to win the championship, you need to recruit top talent wherever they may be," Musk wrote on X, saying in another post on Thursday that "bringing in via legal immigration the top around 0.1 pc of engineering talent" is "essential for America to keep winning." However, this perspective has provoked sharp backlash from MAGA

loyalists, including far-right activist Laura Loomer, conservative commentator Ann Coulter and former Congressman Matt Gaetz. These figures, critical of the H-1B programme, claim it undermines American workers and contradicts Trump's "America First" agenda.

Loomer, a far-right provocateur and ardent Trump supporter, on Thursday claimed that Musk had removed her verified status on X and shut down her ability to gather paying subscribers because of

her opposition to the H-1B programme.

Musk, she posted, "is a free speech fraud." Preston Parra, chairman of the Conservative PAC, echoed her claims, stating that 53 accounts associated with his organisation had also been stripped of verification badges.

"If anyone thinks for one minute the REAL backbone of the right wing and MAGA is gonna stand idly by, while these big tech gillionaire Silicon Valley dweebs who didn't get bullied enough in high school, steal our country, they're mistaken," Parra said in a statement.

Conservative PAC also posted on X: "We spoke out against HB1 visas and it appears that @elonmusk intentionally shut us down?"

ISRO successfully launches space docking mission Jan GSLV project to mark century milestone

Chennai Jan 01 2025: After heralding the New Year with a milestone mission of PSLV-C-60/ SpaDEX spacecrafts as part of space docking experimental technology, which was key to future inter-planetary missions and the first human space flight Gaganyaan, ISRO is all set to create yet another history when it is all geared up for a century of launches with the 100th launch mission in mid-January.

While congratulating the team ISRO for the successful SpaDEX mission and the 24 scientific experiments as part of PSLV fourth stage vehicle POEM-4, ISRO chairman S. Somanath, addressing the scientists from the Mission Control Centre, said "our next mission is GSLV in mid-January marking the first launch of the New year 2025.

He said in 2025 "we will have several mission and to being with we will have the GSLV launching NVS-02 (a satellite part of the NavIC constellation)."

"Until we update you on the GSLV mission, I wish you all a Happy New Year," he said.

He said last night's PSLV-C60/ SpaDEX mission was the 99th mission of ISRO and the GSLV mission in mid-January will be the 100th launch, marking a century of launches.

Extending all help to nurse on Yemen death row: Govt

Chennai Jan 01 2025: The Indian Government said today it is extending all help in the matter of Nimisha Priya, an Indian nurse who has been sentenced to death in Yemen for murder.

The Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said in a statement: "We are aware of the sentencing of Nimisha Priya in Yemen. We understand that the



On the SpaDEX Mission, Somanath said the space Dcking research will help in construction in space, human space flight mission, maintenance and service of satellites.

"It's primarily a research and development docking. It will help us when developing space stations," he said.

On the two minutes delay in the launch of PSLV-C60 Mission which took off from the First Launch Pad at 22:00 hrs 15 secs, as against the scheduled launch of 2158 hrs, he said "it was to ensure that our satellites don't get too close to other satellites (which are in the same orbit).

Stating that docking is a controlled technology, Somanath said, "We are proud of this accomplishment... a really important research." "This is the first spadex mission and in the near future there will be many more," he stated.

About the two SpaDEX satellites which were injected into the right orbit at 475 km with an inclination of 55 degrees and the orbit would be brought

down by switching of the PS4-stage twice, Somanath said the docking is estimated to take place on January 7 forenoon or January 8.

"There is a lot of work for us in the New Year to demonstrate docking as well as the experiments on POEM (PS4 Orbital Experiment Module)," he explained.

ISRO said the space docking experiment mission was the key to future missions including sample return from the Moon, landing an Indian on the Moon and building and operation of the Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS).

Noting that the two small satellites, Chaser and Target, each weighing 200 kg, as part of SpaDEX will demonstrate the docking technology, ISRO said a distance of around 20 km will first be created between the two satellites - the SDX01 Chaser and SDX02 Target.

Once the required distance is attained within a day, the propulsion system on the Target will be fired to counter the relative

velocity? the satellites will stop drifting away and remain at a constant distance from each other.

"The final docking manoeuvre will be attempted around January 7 or 8," he said.

For the docking, the Chaser will start reducing the distance between the satellites progressively finally joining with the Target satellite.

Once joined, the satellites will also transfer electrical power before they get separated later and continue working on their own for the next two years.

SpaDEX Mission is to demonstrate the first ever technology needed for rendezvous, docking, and undocking of two small spacecraft (SDX01, which is the Chaser, and SDX02, the Target, nominally) and they were launched in a low-Earth circular orbit.

SpaDEX mission is a cost-effective technology demonstrator mission for demonstrating in-space docking using two small spacecraft launched by the PSLV.

family of Priya is exploring relevant options.

"The Government is extending all possible help in the matter." The statement comes following reports that Yemeni President Rashad al-Alimi on Monday approved the death sentence for Nimisha Priya, a nurse from Kerala, who was convicted of murder in Yemen.

The execution of

the sentence will take place in a month's time.

Nimisha Priya is on death row in Yemen after being convicted of murdering a Yemeni man, Talal Abdo Mehdi, in 2017.

According to reports, Nimisha overdosed Mahdi with sedatives in order to obtain her passport from his possession. She was convicted in 2018.

Nimisha Priya's

release depended on securing forgiveness from the family of the victim, Talal Abdo Mehdi, and their tribal leaders. Her mother, Prema Kumari, has been living in Sana'a, Yemen's capital, working to secure a waiver of the death penalty and negotiate the blood money with the victim's family.

Efforts to release Nimisha by providing blood money failed to yield any results.

TMB has opened Four new branches at Thuvankurichi - Trichy District, Varanasi - Uttar Pradesh, Kurichi - Coimbatore District and Kurumbapalayam- Coimbatore District (30.12.2024)

Chennai Jan 01 2025: Tamilnad Mercantile Bank Limited (TMB), one of the premier scheduled commercial Banks, has realigned its vision of expanding network to enhance its business after the listing of the Bank's shares in the stock exchanges. Marching towards the vision, the bank has today (30.12.2024) opened Four New Branches with onsite ATM at Thuvankurichi - Trichy District, Varanasi - Uttar Pradesh, Kurichi - Coimbatore District and Kurumbapalayam- Coimbatore District. Thuvankurichi - Trichy District - 569th Branch The branch was declared opened by Shri. Jamal Mohammed

Abdul Kani, Prop. Gani Sales. Varanasi - Uttar Pradesh - 570th Branch The branch was declared opened by Shri. R.K. Chaudhary, MD & Chairman of RAS Polytext Pvt Ltd and Group of Companies. Kurichi - Coimbatore District - 571st Branch The branch was declared opened by Shri. R. Krishnamurthi, B.E., (Homs), Managing Director, COSIEMA Industrial Park and Chairman, KGK Group of Companies. Kurumbapalayam - Coimbatore District - 572nd Branch The branch was declared opened by Dr. D. Hari Prasad, Chairman, Kumaran Medical Center and Kumaran College of Nursing. Regional Manager,

Officers, staff members from the Bank, customers and general public were present to grace the function. Shri. Salee S Nair, MD & CEO, Tamilnad Mercantile Bank Limited (TMB) said, "On getting listed in the Stock Exchanges, Tamilnad Mercantile Bank Ltd., is back to enrich our vision in expanding the network Pan India. On the course of its expansion, our bank has opened Four New Branches today at Thuvankurichi - Trichy District, Varanasi - Uttar Pradesh, Kurichi - Coimbatore District and Kurumbapalayam- Coimbatore District, we also have plans to open many more branches in the near

future covering Pan India. It gives us immense pleasure in sharing this momentous of expansion to all our stakeholders." Tamilnad Mercantile Bank Limited (TMB), one of the renowned Old Private Sector Banks having its Headquarters in Thoothukudi, Tamilnadu has a long cherished history of 100+ years of eventful existence with strong fundamentals and track record of continuous profit making in the industry. TMB is having Pan India presence with 572 branches and 12 Regional Offices across 17 states and 4 Union Territories serving more than 5.30 million delighted customers.

Rajat Verma to take over as DBS Bank India CEO in March 2025

Chennai, Jan 01 2025: DBS announced today that it will be appointing Rajat Verma as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of DBS Bank India with effect from 1 March 2025, in line with approval accorded by the Reserve Bank of India. Verma, currently Head of Institutional Banking Group (IBG) at DBS Bank India, will succeed Surojit Shome as CEO upon the latter's retirement on 28 February 2025. In this new role, Verma will be part of DBS' Group Management Committee.



2024. Prior to joining DBS, he was Managing Director and Country Head of Commercial Banking at HSBC India.

Said DBS CEO Piyush Gupta, "India has been a key market for DBS over the last 30 years and under Surojit's leadership, over the last decade, DBS India has grown impressively to become a full-service platform across the institutional banking, wealth and retail segments. We thank Surojit for his strong vision and unwavering commitment to excellence in growing DBS India into the strong franchise it is today. A banking veteran, Rajat has solidified our India IBG business since joining us 18 months ago. With our robust platform, DBS is well-positioned to continue participating in the India growth story over the coming years. I am confident that Rajat will build on what has been accomplished and take the business to the next level."

and was ranked among the top three on Forbes' list of the World's Best Banks in India from 2020 to 2022.

A seasoned banker, Verma has a 27-year track record across consumer and corporate banking including transactional banking, financial institutions, sustainable finance, micro and SME banking, as well as branch banking.

Since joining DBS as Head of IBG in June

2023, he has significantly grown the business across all client segments. This has been achieved through deepening existing corporate relationships, accelerating the acquisition of new customers and identifying new opportunities across a broad spectrum of growth areas. Under his leadership, DBS was named the Best Bank for Sustainable Finance India by Global Finance in

Semmozhi Poonga's annual flower show blooms from Jan 2

Chennai Jan 01 2025: Semmozhi Poonga in Chennai is all set to dazzle visitors with its second annual flower show, scheduled to open on January 2, 2025. The event, likely to be inaugurated by Chief Minister M. K. Stalin, will welcome the public daily from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. until January 18.



This year's flower show promises an enchanting experience, featuring over 30 lakh flowering plants, including petunias, marigolds, delphiniums, and roses. These blooms, sourced from horticulture gardens in Ooty, Kodaikanal, Krishnagiri, and Hosur, are meticulously arranged in eye-catching structures such as a clock, a train, a heritage car, a butterfly, and along the pathways of the park.

Preparations are in full swing at the park, located on Cathedral Road, with workers carefully arranging colorful pots of flowers to transform the space into a floral wonderland.

The iron trellises lining the walkways and decorative installations are being adorned with a vibrant palette of blossoms.

Visitors can also look forward to carpets of pink and red petunias, yellow marigolds, and multi-

colored roses, which are expected to be in full bloom just in time for the show. Over 50 varieties of flowers from botanical and rose gardens in Ooty and Kodaikanal will be showcased.

Tickets for the flower show will be available at the venue and online, ensuring easy access for all. The event is a treat for nature lovers and photography enthusiasts, making it a must-visit in the city's New Year calendar. Unlike Ooty's

cut flower displays, this show features live plants meticulously grown to bloom in January using organic methods. Special care has been taken during their transport and arrangement under shaded areas within the park.

The exhibition will showcase more than 50 flower varieties, with tickets available both online and at the venue. Semmozhi Poonga will remain temporarily closed to the public as final preparations are underway.

Bumrah in Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy short list

Chennai Jan 01 2025: India's pace-bowling icon Jasprit Bumrah, England's marathon run-scoring duo Harry Brook, Joe Root and Australia's swashbuckling left-hander Travis Head make for a stellar list of nominees for the Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy.

The Indian pace spearhead went on an inspiring run across formats for India, guiding his side to memorable triumphs, including their

second ICC Men's T20 World Cup title.

Bumrah nabbed 15 wickets from eight outings - including a couple in the final against South Africa - as India went unbeaten at the 2024 T20 World Cup.

The right-arm quick also boasts incredible numbers in the longest format this year. From 13 Test outings, Bumrah notched a sizable tally of 71 wickets.

Be it home or away, Bumrah thrived under

different conditions and capped off his year putting in an incredible shift during India's Test tour of Australia.

Wearing the captain's armband in the Perth Test against Australia, Bumrah led from the front as India took an early lead in the five-Test series.

With the visitors dismissed for 150, the skipper ran through the Australian batting to claim a five-wicket haul and establish India's advantage in the first

innings.

In the second innings, Bumrah added to his tally, finishing the Test as player of the match with eight wickets.

Harry Brook emerged as one of England's most reliable performers in the longest format in the year gone by.

The 22-year-old not only scored a heap of runs, but was also a flagbearer of England's quickfire brand of cricket.

South Zone Inter-University Kho Kho Tournament for Men 2024-2025 Concludes at Central University of Tamil Nadu (CUTN)

Chennai, Jan 01 2025: The Central University of Tamil Nadu (CUTN) proudly hosted the grand culmination of the South Zone Inter-University Kho Kho Tournament for Men 2024-2025, with a valedictory ceremony on 31 December 2024. Organized by the Department of Physical Education and Sports, the prestigious tournament was conducted from 27 December to 31 December 2024, transforming the university campus into a vibrant hub of sporting excellence.

The tournament witnessed participation from 72 teams hailing from Southern Indian states, bringing together 1,044 skilled players who competed fiercely for the top honours. Matches were conducted across four outdoor and two indoor Kho Kho courts, ensuring seamless gameplay even amidst intermittent rains.

The valedictory event was graced by the esteemed Chief Guest, Dr. D. Manikandan, District Collector of Karaikal, who praised the participants for their unwavering spirit and



determination. Prof. M. Krishnan, Vice Chancellor of CUTN, presided over the ceremony, commending the university's commitment to fostering sportsmanship and holistic development. Joining him were Prof. R. Thirumurugan, Registrar, and Dr. R. Parameshwaran, Librarian, who shared their reflections on the significance of sports in academia.

Addressing the gathering, Prof. M. Krishnan remarked, "Not only do we aim to provide higher education, but also to foster mental strength and holistic development. I congratulate the Department of Physical Education

and Sports for successfully organizing South Zone Inter University for both the men's and women's Kho Kho tournaments. Higher education and the development of our society should always be our primary focus. Our culture and traditions must be upheld, and practices like yoga should be regularly integrated into our lives. This year, CUTN has also introduced Silambam as a credit course, further emphasizing our commitment to blending academics with physical and cultural enrichment."

The tournament was meticulously organized under the able leadership of Dr. S. Jayaraman, Head of the Department of Physical Education and Sports. He was ably supported by his dedicated team of faculty members, including Dr. Y. Nagaraja, Dr. K. Vishnuvardhan Reddy, Dr. S. Binthu Mathavan, and Dr. S. Akila.

U.S. Mission to India Continues to Break Records in 2024

Chennai Jan 01 2025: The U.S. Mission to India issued more than one million nonimmigrant visas for the second year in a row, including a record number of visitor visas, underscoring the huge demand of Indians for travel to the United States for tourism, business, and education.

In the past four years, visitor numbers from India have increased by five times, and more than two million Indians traveled to the United States in the first eleven months of 2024, a 26 percent increase over the same period in 2023. Over five million Indians already have a nonimmigrant visa to visit the United States and each day the Mission issues thousands more.

The Department of State completed a successful pilot program to renew of H-1B visas in the United States this year. This allowed many specialty occupation workers from India to

renew their visas without leaving the United States. This pilot program streamlined the renewal process for thousands of applicants, and the Department of State is working to formally establish a U.S.-based renewal program in 2025.

The U.S. Mission to India issued tens of thousands of immigrant visas, facilitating legal family reunification and the migration of skilled professionals. These immigrant visa holders became permanent residents upon their arrival, adding to the already rich and sizable Indian diaspora community in the United States.

The U.S. Mission to India also provided more than 24,000 passports and other consular services to American citizens living and traveling in India. A new version of the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) debuted in 2024, making it easier for the embassy and consulates to contact

American citizens during emergencies and send them safety and security alerts.

Increased processing of thousands of interview waiver-eligible nonimmigrant visa applications each week made it quicker and easier than ever for Indians to renew their nonimmigrant visas. By streamlining operations and utilizing global consular resources, the U.S. Mission has been able to redirect its own resources to focus on in-person interviews, reducing wait times for all applicants.

More Indian students than ever before now have U.S. student visas. In 2024, India became the top sender of international students for the first time since the 2008/2009 academic year with more than 331,000 students overall studying in the United States. India also remained the largest sender of international graduate students in the United States for the second

year; Indian graduate student numbers increased by 19 percent to reach almost 200,000 students.

Many exchange visitors will now be able to remain in the United States and not need to return home for two years after completing their programs in the United States, offering them more opportunities to further their careers and education. The removal of India from the Exchange Visitors Skills List has provided greater flexibility for these Indian J-1 nonimmigrant visa holders.

The U.S. Mission to India remains dedicated to fostering strong bilateral relations and providing exceptional consular services. These achievements over the past year are a testament to the hard work and dedication of the Mission's staff and the enduring partnership between the United States and India.

American Center Booth at Chennai Book Fair is a Gateway to Opportunity

Chennai Jan 01 2025: The American Center Chennai presents the American Center Booth at the 48th Chennai Book Fair at YMCA Nandanam. Visit us at stall number F-51 to explore our extensive collection of books and resources. The book fair runs until January 12, 2025.

American Center aims to challenge, inspire, and empower the next generation of Indian and American changemakers through innovative, inclusive, and transformative dialogues and programs that showcase the true spirit, opportunity, and promise of America.

Inaugurating the American Center booth today, Acting U.S. Consul General Chennai Gwendolyn Llewellyn said: "The American Center's book fair participation highlights the transformative power



of literature and information in sparking innovation and creativity. We are dedicated to empowering changemakers from India and the United States to question assumptions, think critically, foster understanding, and leverage unique perspectives to make a meaningful impact on the world."

The American Center booth

showcases educational and exchange opportunities in the United States, offering resources and exclusive programming for students, experts, researchers, and faculty. Patrons can also avail an American Center discounted membership fee and eLibrary USA orientation. The American Center's library at the U.S. Consulate General

Chennai boasts a diverse collection of over 15,000 books and extensive multimedia e-resources. Members of the American Center can enjoy exclusive personalized access to eLibraryUSA, a digital library containing numerous commercial databases that include resources like journals, magazines, newspapers, dissertations, and videos.

Tata Motors flags off electric buses for workforce transportation in Pantnagar; reiterates its commitment towards carbon neutrality

Chennai Jan 01 2025: Tata Motors, India's largest commercial vehicle manufacturer, today flagged-off a fleet of electric buses dedicated for workforce transportation at its Pantnagar plant in Uttarakhand. These indigenously built, zero-emission buses are equipped with latest features, and powered by advanced battery systems. TML Smart City Mobility Solutions Limited (TSCMSL), a wholly owned subsidiary of Tata Motors, will facilitate this workforce commute with a modern fleet of Tata Ultra 9m electric buses.



Designed to provide a safe, comfortable and convenient commute, this e-bus service will reduce carbon footprint by providing clean and green transport to over 5,000 people and save ~1,100 tonnes of CO2 emissions annually. Electricity generated from a 16MW solar energy plant will

charge the e-bus fleet, making the entire operation green from end-to-end.

Announcing the launch, Mr. Vishal Badshah, Vice President and Head Operations, Tata Motors Commercial Vehicles, said, "The introduction of electric buses for workforce commuting marks a significant step forward towards fulfilling Tata Motors Commercial Vehicles' aspiration of achieving net-zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2045. We are committed to making all our manufacturing facilities green by integrating sustainability across

their entire value chain from sourcing to development and engineering to operations. I am delighted to launch this initiative in Pantnagar first as it adds to and acknowledges the successes of the facility's myriad of sustainability initiatives. This plant is already a certified Zero Waste to Landfill facility and has also received water-positive certification by CII-GBC. The launch of a zero emission, e-fleet service creates another major milestone in the sustainability journey of the plant."

Powered by a full-

electric drivetrain, Tata Ultra EV 9m electric bus is equipped with smart features including regenerative braking system and Intelligent Transport Systems. This deployment builds upon Tata Motors' remarkable success in India's electric mass mobility segment, where the company has already deployed over 3,100 electric buses across 10 cities. These buses have cumulatively covered more than 24 crore kilometres with an uptime of over 95%, demonstrating reliability and efficiency of Tata Motors' electric mass mobility solutions.

CUTN Hosts South Zone Inter University Kho Kho Tournament for Men 2024-25

Chennai Jan 01 2025: The Central University of Tamil Nadu (CUTN) proudly announces the hosting of the South Zone Inter University Kho Kho Tournament for Men 2024-25. This prestigious event is scheduled to take place from 27 December 2024 to 31 December 2024.

The South Zone Inter University Kho Kho Tournament for Men 2024-25 will be inaugurated by Subhash Kumar, DIG SSB (Retd), Director Coordination, Administration Kho Kho Federation of India on 27 December 2024 at 8:00 AM at CUTN's state-of-the-art Kho Kho arena. Prof M. Krishnan, Vice Chancellor and Chief Patron of the tournament, will

preside over the event.

CUTN has set up four dedicated Kho Kho grounds near the Multipurpose Hall and Indoor Stadium, enabling simultaneous matches. Over five days, an impressive total of 76 matches will take place, with each ground hosting eight matches daily to ensure a smooth and exciting competition. This year, 80 teams comprising 1,000 to 1,200 participants from universities across Southern India will compete in the event.

The event highlights CUTN's continued commitment to fostering sportsmanship and excellence in athletics, building on its success of hosting the South

Zone Inter University Kho Kho Tournament for Women in 2023-24 last year, which showcased the prowess of 62 university teams and 930 enthusiastic participants.

The event is organized by the Department of Physical Education and Sports, a department established in the year 2023 under the visionary leadership of Prof M Krishnan, Vice Chancellor. The department offers academic programs, including a Ph.D. in Physical Education and a Postgraduate Diploma in Fitness Management. Dr. S Jayaraman, the Head of the Department, is the Organizing Convenor for this tournament.

Prof. M. Krishnan, Vice Chancellor, CUTN, expressed his enthusiasm:

"This tournament is a testament to CUTN's dedication to nurturing holistic development, combining academic excellence with sporting brilliance. We are thrilled to host the event and witness the best of Kho Kho unfold at CUTN premises."

South Zone Inter University Kho Kho Tournament for Men 2024-25 is not just a celebration of athleticism but also a gateway for Southern India's brightest Kho Kho talents. The top-performing teams will advance to national competitions, representing the region and striving for glory on a larger stage.

Statement attributable to G P Hinduja

Chennai Jan 01 2025: Among economists, Dr. Singh was a colossus. He was India's man of destiny, when the country on the brink of bankruptcy needed someone to take charge. His clear vision to revive the nation demonstrated through an epoch making budget in 1991, marked a

turning point unlike any other on the road to liberalisation. He helped break the shackles of India's outdated protectionist policies and opened India to the world.

A transformative act, that will forever be remembered in letters of gold when the history of modern India is penned in the future. Thus, from the

liberalisation of the Indian economy to the abolition of the licence raj it were his efforts that laid the foundation for India's economic transformation and opened the doors for global trade.

India as we know it today, owes much to much to this humble yet courageous person in Dr Singh who

played an integral role in bringing Indian from nuclear isolation to the mainstream of global nuclear nations.

Thus, it is in fact Dr Manmohan Singh's statesmanship, that has helped India achieve its pride of place on the path of prosperity and he will forever be remembered for that.