

OM NAMO VENKATESAYA

29-12-2025

Total pilgrims: 59,631
Tonsures: 18,609
Hundi kanukalu: 4.36 CR
Waiting Compartments: 13

Approx. Darsan Time for Sarvadarshanam (with out SSD Tokens): 6-8 H



NATION | NEWS

Around 170 sheep die mysteriously near Rashtriya Prerna Sthal; CM Yogi orders probe



WORLD | NEWS

Trump hopes to reach phase two of Gaza ceasefire 'very quickly'

SPORTS | NEWS

Smriti Mandhana Misses Chance To Surpass Shubman Gill's World Record



INBRIF

SEVEN KILLED, 12 INJURED AS BUS FALLS INTO GORGE IN ALMORA

DEHRADUN: Seven people were killed and about 12 injured after a bus fell into a gorge in Uttarakhand's Almora district, police said on Tuesday. The accident occurred in the Bhikiyasain area when the bus was en route to Ramnagar in Nainital from Dwarahat in Almora, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Devendra Pincha said. According to the SSP, 18 to 19 passengers were on board when the driver lost control of the



vehicle, and it fell into a gorge, six kilometres ahead of Bhikiyasain. Upon receiving information about the accident, the police, along with State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) teams, reached the spot and launched rescue and relief operations, he said. Six people died on the spot in the accident, while another succumbed to injuries on the way to hospital, the officer added. SSP Pincha said 12 people, including the driver, were injured in the accident and rescued from the gorge.

FOG DISRUPTS DELHI AIRPORT OPS; 118 FLIGHTS CANCELLED, 16 DIVERTED'



New Delhi: At least 118 flights were cancelled, 16 flights diverted and 130 services delayed at the Delhi airport on Tuesday as dense fog disrupted operations. The Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA), operated by DIAL, handles around 1,300 flights daily. An official said 60 arrivals and 58 departures were cancelled while 16 flights were diverted at the airport. Information from flight tracking website Flightradar24.com showed that 130 flights were delayed on Tuesday morning at the airport and the average delay time for departures was around 28 minutes. In a post on X in the morning, Delhi International Airport Ltd (DIAL) said all flight operations continue as normal and flights that are not CAT III compliant may get affected. CAT III compliance allows pilots to operate flights in low visibility conditions. Against the backdrop of fog and low visibility conditions, the civil aviation ministry on Tuesday said airlines have been instructed to strictly comply with passenger facilitation norms.

CM Revanth outlines roadmap for planned urban development

HYDERABAD: Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Tuesday directed newly appointed zonal commissioners to move beyond routine administration and adopt an outcome-driven approach to urban governance, with a special focus on the Core Urban Region within the Outer Ring Road.

Reviewing urban administration, the Chief Minister said the government had taken a conscious decision to develop the core urban economic region in a planned and systematic manner in line with the Telangana Rising 2047 Vision Document, which aims for sustainable and inclusive growth. He said the city under the CURE (Core Urban Region Economy) framework has been reorganised into 12 zones, 60 circles and 300 wards to strengthen decentralised governance and accountability. Emphasising daily monitoring and effective planning, he said the objective was to put urban governance firmly on track. Describing solid waste manage-



ment as Hyderabad's most complex challenge, the Chief Minister announced a comprehensive clean-up of the core urban region and made it clear that zonal commissioners would be personally responsible for resolving issues in their respective zones. He instructed them to be present in the field every day.

The Chief Minister announced a complete ban on plastic in the city and stressed the need to protect lakes and nalas from encroachments. He also said diesel buses and

autos operating in the CURE area would be gradually replaced with electric vehicles to reduce pollution.

To strengthen monitoring, he directed officials to install CCTV cameras near lakes, nalas and garbage dumping points, conduct special sanitation drives for three days every month, and undertake garbage clearance drives every ten days. He asserted that there should be no garbage on roads and no visible potholes. He further instructed officials to leverage technology for transparent delivery of civic services

such as birth and death certificates and trade licences through online platforms. Regular coordination with colony welfare associations and apartment associations was also emphasised.

Calling for a transition from good governance to smart governance, the Chief Minister directed agencies including the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation, HYDRAA and the Water Works department to begin desilting of nalas from January. He also stressed the importance of adequate street lighting, effective mosquito control and preventive measures against seasonal diseases.

The Chief Minister said zonal commissioners must respond promptly to public grievances received through toll-free numbers and prepare five-year action plans for their zones. He concluded that coordinated efforts by all departments were essential to securing a better future for the city.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a pre-Budget meeting with eminent economists and sectoral experts at NITI Aayog, in New Delhi....

PM Modi meets economists at NITI Aayog, urges mission-mode reforms for growth

NEW DELHI (TSIT): Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday called for mission-mode reforms across diverse sectors to sustain long-term growth to achieve the vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047. Interacting with a group of eminent economists and experts at NITI Aayog ahead of Union Budget for 2026-27, Modi also made a case for building world-class capabilities and attaining global integration. The theme of the interaction was 'Aatmanirbharta and Structural Transformation: Agenda for Viksit Bharat'. He stressed that India's policy making and budgeting must remain anchored with the

PM Modi stressed that India's policy making and budgeting must remain anchored with the vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047

vision for 2047. The Prime Minister spoke about the need to ensure that the nation remains a vital hub for the global workforce and international markets. Speaking about Viksit Bharat as a national aspiration, he noted that the vision of a developed India by 2047 has transcended govern-

ment policy to become a genuine mass aspiration. During the interaction, the economists shared strategic insights on enhancing productivity and competitiveness across the manufacturing and services sectors. The participants also noted that the unprecedented flurry of cross sectoral reforms in 2025, and their further consolidation in the coming year, will ensure that India continues to chart its path as one of the fastest growing global economies by strengthening its foundations and unlocking newer opportunities.

The discussion focused on accelerating structural transformation through increased

household savings, robust infrastructure development, and the adoption of cutting-edge technology. The group explored the role of artificial intelligence as an enabler of cross-sectoral productivity and also discussed the continued scaling of India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI). Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, principal secretaries to Prime Minister PK Mishra and Shaktikanta Das, Niti Aayog vice chairman Suman Bery, Chief Economic Adviser (CEA) V Ananth Nageswaran, Niti Aayog CEO BVR Subrahmanyam, and other members of the Aayog were present in the meeting.

All safety concerns over HAL's Dhruv NG helicopter addressed: Civil Aviation Minister Naidu

BENGALURU (TSIT): With Hindustan Aeronautics Limited's (HAL) Dhruv NG helicopter, powered by indigenous twin Shakti 1HIC engines, successfully completing its maiden flight here on Tuesday, Union Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu said all safety concerns raised earlier have been addressed during its development.

Addressing the media after the inaugural flight, Naidu said: "Feedback from previous incidents has been taken very seriously. Past experiences, along with feedback from international regulators and agencies, were care-



fully analysed, and solutions were incorporated. What HAL has created today makes us proud. We believe the DGCA certification for the civil aviation variant will be a smooth process." "Every safety aspect that was a concern earlier has now been addressed, and appropriate solutions have been provided. There is no cause for worry," he underlined.

Education key to tribal and regional development: Prez Murmu

Gumla (Jharkhand), Dec 30 : President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday called upon the tribal community, especially the youth, to remain rooted in their cultural heritage while embracing modern education, science, and technology for overall development.

Addressing the inter-state socio-cultural gathering 'Kartik Jatra' at Raidih block in Jharkhand's Gumla district, the President emphasised that preserving tribal identity and traditions is essential even as society progresses. "Education is the

President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday called upon the tribal community, especially the youth, to remain rooted in their cultural heritage while embracing modern education, science, and technology for overall development.

greatest asset for development. The holistic progress of society and the state is possible only through its expansion and dissemination," she said.



Paying tributes to eminent tribal leader Pankhraj Sahab Kartik Oraon, a native of Gumla, President Murmu described him as a source of

inspiration. "Despite receiving education abroad, he devoted his life and thoughts to his land and people, viewing education as the most powerful

instrument of social change," she said, adding that the Kartik Jatra reflects the same spirit even today. She noted that Kartik Oraon's dream of establishing a university in Gumla would soon be realised.

Highlighting the region's significance, the President said the area connecting Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha is rich in rivers, forests, plateaus and mountains, and has preserved some of the country's oldest traditions. Calling her visit to Jharkhand a pilgrimage, she said it was the birthplace and workplace of Lord Birsa Munda, who is revered

nationwide as a symbol of social justice and tribal pride. She also recalled renowned social reformer and freedom fighter Jatra Tana Bhagat, who was born in Gumla and led a non-violent movement against British rule inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's ideals. Remembering Param Vir Chakra awardee Shaheed Albert Ekka, she said his unparalleled bravery during the 1971 India-Pakistan war remains a matter of national pride. President Murmu praised the rich cultural heritage of the tribal community, noting that its music, dance, drama and art traditions are exceptionally vibrant.

EDITORIAL

How A Pak-Friendly BNP Is Now In Pole Position In Bangladesh

The baton has passed. Bangladesh's first woman Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia, breathed her last this morning in Dhaka. Her legacy includes keeping the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) firmly together, even strengthening it, after the death of her husband, President Ziaur Rahman. She will be remembered for joining hands with Sheikh Hasina in bringing a peaceful end to President Hussain Muhammad Ershad's dictatorship and ensuring Bangladesh's return to democracy through the 1991 elections, which she won. Relations with India under the BNP rule have never been comfortable, and the legacy of BNP's strong links with Pakistan and with Jamaat-e-Islami has a lot to do with this.

On the face of it, Tarique Rahman's return to Dhaka on Christmas Day 2025, and now the passing away of his mother, Begum Khaleda Zia, have placed the BNP in pole position to win the forthcoming general elections in Bangladesh, scheduled for February next year. However, it is important not to get carried away by the media hype generated by print, electronic and social media outlets, most of which are thoroughly controlled and managed by the Yunus regime.

The BNP And the Jamaat

The BNP and the Jamaat-e-Islami have been political allies for a quarter century, since 2001. Their ideological alliance is far older, going back to their shared support for the tenets and values that sided with Pakistan and opposed everything that the 1971 Liberation War stood for. The constitution of Bangladesh, adopted in 1972 under Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, had, as its four pillars, the principles of democracy, secularism, socialism and nationalism. In addition, Sheikh Mujib banned religion-based political parties and revoked the citizenship of Ghulam Azam, the Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami during the Liberation War, responsible for untold war crimes against the minorities, against women, against intellectuals and all those supporting the Awami League. Under President Zia (who seized control after the assassination of Sheikh Mujib and later founded the BNP), all these provisions were reversed. Ghulam Azam returned to Dhaka on a Pakistani passport in August 1978, during the military rule of General Zia. The ban on religion-based political parties was reversed, and a special "Citizenship Act" enacted in 1978 provided the legal framework for Ghulam Azam to eventually regain his Bangladeshi citizenship through a court order in 1994 (when Begum Khaleda Zia was Prime Minister) after a long legal battle. It was under President Zia (father of Tarique Rahman) that the Constitution of Bangladesh was amended to replace the word secularism with the phrase that "absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah shall be the basis for all actions", thereby legitimising political Islam. Today, the BNP does have a moderate faction. This group has fought hard for early elections in Bangladesh, resulting in the Yunus regime being forced to declare the dates of February 2026 after their initially declared plan (supported by Jamaat-e-Islami) of no elections for four years, and elections only after completion of the so-called "reform process". The moderate group within the BNP also opposed the ban on the activities of the Awami League (imposed by the Yunus regime in May 2025) and supported the Awami League's participation in the February 2026 elections. However, this faction's position within the BNP is weak, and they are inevitably overruled by the much stronger pro-Jamaat-e-Islami faction. It is estimated that more than half the BNP membership is pro-Jamaat.

Tarique's Closeness To The Jamaat

Tarique Rahman has almost always been associated with the pro-Jamaat faction of the BNP. He has been politically active since the late 1980s but came into prominence during his mother Begum Khaleda Zia's second term as Prime Minister, from 2001 to 2006, when the Jamaat-e-Islami was the principal alliance partner. During these years, Tarique ran Hawa Bhaban, the power centre recognised as the de facto PMO. His involvement in directing/coordinating the Chittagong Arms Haul (April 2004), and equally in the grenade attack on Sheikh Hasina's political rally in Dhaka (August 2004), has been written about extensively. However, what often escapes attention is the close involvement of Pakistan in the planning of each of these incidents, including participation in meetings with Tarique Rahman in Dhaka and overseas. These were highlighted during the separate hearings (for each of these two incidents) in the legal trials held in Dhaka after 2009.

Will Haryana CM Dare to Order High-Level Probe into Rs.1,500-Crore Scam?



JAG MOHAN THAKEN

A major scam worth Rs. 1500 crore in Haryana's labour department has unearthed the fraudulent working in the Haryana government, which publicizes itself as the government having its motto 'Zero Tolerance Against Corruption' and claims that there is no difference between its words and actions. Political observers analyse that it may shake or even uproot the BJP led state government, if a proper investigation is ordered pertaining to the last ten-year period, the scam may go onto sky height as this amount of Rs. 1500 crore is being reported for the small duration between August 2023 and March 2025. Former Union Minister and present Member of Parliament, Kumari Selja, has commented that the scam of nearly ₹1,500 crore in the Haryana Labour Welfare Board, along with the detection of 91 percent fake work slips and 87 percent fake labour registrations across 13 districts, is the biggest proof of the BJP government's corrupt governance. These figures clearly show that the BJP government has turned schemes meant for the welfare of workers into a means of loot. The schemes that were intended to provide dignity, security, and support to hardworking labourers have been sacrificed to corruption under political patronage. This is not merely negligence, but a well-planned and organised act of corruption, amounting to a direct attack on the rights of the poor and the working class. The Congress party demands a high-level investigation into the entire scam and strict action against those responsible. Former Haryana Chief Minister and presently Leader of the Opposition, Bhupinder Singh Hooda, said that the BJP government is setting a new record in cor-

ruption every day. A recent report reveals that there has been a 186 percent increase in corruption cases between 2021 and 2023. This revelation is based on the NCRB report, which mentions cases registered under the Prevention of Corruption Act and relevant sections of the IPC. This situation exists even though the government suppresses major corruption cases and prevents their investigation. Despite this, a new scam surfaces almost daily, which the government cannot hide despite its best efforts. Bhupinder Singh Hooda said that the BJP has hollowed out Haryana's economy through a series of scams. Today, the common people, as well as economists and intellectuals, have lost faith in the government because Haryana's economic situation has become extremely worrying. From 1966 to 2014, the state had a debt of approximately 60,000 crore rupees, which has now increased to more than 5 lakh crore rupees. This reflects the state's dire economic condition. In the NITI Aayog's Fiscal Health Index, Haryana has slipped to 14th position among 18 states. A debt-to-GSDP ratio of over 31% indicates that the state is trapped in a deep debt crisis. Indirectly indicating through another example that the scam in question is not limited to a particular department, Hooda highlights the recent paddy procurement scam and alleges that this is a case in point, which occurs every harvest season. The revelations in this scam are shocking. In the Asandh mandi (grain market), 570 trips by 112 vehicles were shown on paper, but no actual paddy was transported. The paddy was only bought and transported on paper. This resulted in a scam of Rs 39.24 crore. In the Gharaunda mandi, the revelations regarding paddy procurement were so shocking that everyone was left stunned. Here, 11,628 quintals of paddy were shown as purchased through fake gate passes without any actual arrival of paddy. Not only that, even motorcycles and auto-rickshaws were shown as being used for paddy transportation, resulting in a scam of Rs 2.56 crore. This entire paddy scam amounts to hundreds of crores of rupees, but the government is trying to suppress it by tak-

ing action only against small employees, while the big culprits, the real perpetrators, are being protected. While exposing Rs.1,500-Crore Work Slip Scam in his own department and further recommending for a High-Level Probe to the Chief Minister, Haryana Labour Minister Anil Vij has landed the CM Nayab Singh Saini in hot waters, who always claims a corruption-free Haryana. A press release, on 29th December, by Haryana's Labour Minister Anil Vij, reportedly claims that due to the vigilant and stringent oversight serious irregularities related to work slips (work receipts) prevailing for a long time in the Haryana Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board, functioning under the Labour Department, have come to light. Preliminary investigations suggest that the scam could amount to approximately Rs.1,500 crore. Considering the gravity of the matter, minister Vij has written to the Chief Minister, recommending a thorough investigation by a reputed agency. Sharing details, the Labour Minister said that recently he chaired a meeting of the Board, during which irregularities were found not only in the appointment of Board members but also in the distribution of benefits under welfare schemes meant for construction workers. Following this, he ordered an immediate inquiry.

MODUS OPERANDI

Minister Vij stated that initial investigations were conducted in Hisar, Kaithal, Jind, Sirsa, Faridabad and Bhiwani districts, where large-scale irregularities were detected. Subsequently, instructions were issued to Deputy Commissioners of all districts to constitute district-level committees comprising a Labour Department officer along with three other officers. These committees are carrying out physical verification of online work slips issued between August 2023 and March 2025. The verification process began around four months ago, and 100 percent verification has been completed in 13 districts so far. The Labour Minister informed that in the 13 districts—Karnal, Rewari, Nuh (Mewat), Mahendragarh, Gurugram, Jhajjar, Palwal, Panipat,

Rohtak, Sonapat, Panchkula, Sirsa and Kaithal—a total of 5,99,758 work slips were issued. Of these, only 53,249 were found to be valid, while 5,46,509 were declared invalid. Similarly, out of 2,21,517 labour registrations, only 14,240 workers were found eligible after verification, whereas 1,93,756 registrations were found to be invalid. Mr. Vij said it has become clear that in many places entire villages were fraudulently registered and work slips were generated so that ineligible persons could avail benefits of government schemes. On an average, a worker receives benefits worth around Rs.2.5 lakh under various schemes, which could result in a massive financial loss to the government. He said that "Those who are not eligible are availing benefits. This is outright loot, causing the government a financial loss running into hundreds of crores." He further said that the verification committees are examining all aspects, including authenticity of workplaces, actual participation in construction activities, employer details, local inquiries and field inspections. During the verification period, RTS timelines were stopped, SARAL Centres were instructed not to accept new applications, and necessary information was issued to all grievance redressal platforms including CM Window, Jan Samvad, CPGRAMS, HHRC, HRTSC etc. Vij clarified that already approved pension schemes have not been stopped, while benefits under death, accident and funeral assistance schemes are being released on priority. Minister Vij added that the Haryana Government implements several welfare schemes for construction workers, including maternity and paternity benefits, education assistance, scholarships, reimbursement for technical education, pensions, marriage assistance, medical aid, housing loans and accident compensation, aimed at empowering genuine workers. These benefits should reach only those workers who are duly registered after verification of at least 90 days of work. The Labour Minister reiterated that there will be no compromise on corruption at any level and strict action will be ensured against those found guilty.

The Truth Drowned in the Noise of Achievements: An Introspection for 2025

- Dr. Satyavan Saurabh

History isn't just a collection of dates and events; it's also a mirror of society's collective consciousness. The past few years, and especially the year 2025, have served as such a mirror for India—one in which we have seen both our achievements and our uncomfortable truths. This year has witnessed hope and despair, progress and backwardness, pride and guilt—all of these emotions simultaneously. In 2025, India captured global attention on many fronts. Digital payment systems simplified the lives of ordinary citizens. Technologies like UPI demonstrated that technology can reach the masses if intended. Startup culture instilled entrepreneurial confidence in young people, India demonstrated extraordinary capabilities in space research with limited resources, and the expansion of infrastructure—roads, railways, and airports—bolstered the image of a "fast-growing India." These achievements are undeniable, but this also calls for introspection, as the question is not just about development, but

about its social impact. Parallel to the dazzling growth figures, the reality of unemployment and inflation in 2025 remained equally stark. Educated youth had degrees, but no jobs. The uncertainty of recruitment exams, delayed results, and instability in the private sector put an entire generation under psychological pressure. Inflation robbed the common man of balance in his kitchen. Pulses, vegetables, gas, education, and health—everything became more expensive, but incomes did not rise in the same proportion. This economic imbalance gradually transformed into social discontent. In 2025, the plight of farmers and laborers remained undisclosed. Weather vagaries, lack of fair crop prices, mounting debt, and policy-level neglect kept farmers in constant insecurity. At times, dialogue was stalled, and at others, attempts were made to suppress movements. Ironically, those who feed the nation face the most uncertain future. The plight of laborers was no different. Millions of people working in the unorganized sector remained deprived of social security,

stable employment, and a dignified life. The hands that build the edifice of development are often the most tired and least secure. The deplorable state of public education and healthcare systems was further exposed in 2025. The poor condition of government schools and hospitals is no longer a state problem, but a national challenge. Teachers continue to work under resource constraints and administrative pressure, while health workers continue to perform their duties in an environment of excessive workload, limited facilities, and insecurity. Privatization has provided choice, but not equality. Education and healthcare have gradually become commodities rather than rights, and those who were already socio-economically disadvantaged have suffered the most. 2025 was also a disturbing year for democracy. The tendency to equate dissent with anti-national sentiment narrowed public discourse. Growing pressure on writers, journalists, and social activists signaled that questioning power was becoming increasingly risky. Arrests based on social media posts,

attempts to restrict expression, and questions raised about the autonomy of constitutional institutions reminded us that democracy doesn't survive solely on the electoral process. It thrives on a free press, fearless citizens, and accountable institutions. The politics of religion and identity repeatedly divided society in 2025. Religious fanaticism, mob mentality, and moral policing challenged the fundamental concepts of equality, fraternity, and secularism enshrined in the Constitution. Religion, which should have been a personal sphere of faith, became a tool of power and politics. The result was increased distrust in society, a breakdown in communication, and a deepening of fissures in human relationships. Amidst all this gloom, 2025 also offered some tangible glimmers of hope. Youth asked questions, students raised their voices, farmers and workers organized and demanded their rights. Civil society organizations and independent journalism proved that Indian democracy had not been completely silenced. This resistance was not just

against power, but also against the social apathy that slowly erodes us from within. 2025 made it clear that development cannot be measured solely by GDP figures. Unless villages are safe, farmers are confident, laborers live with dignity, teachers and health workers are protected, and students are free from fear about the future, 'Developed India' will remain just a catchy slogan. Technology is meaningful only when it is connected to human emotions, and governance can be considered successful only when its impact reaches the last person in line. The biggest lesson of the past year, and especially of 2025, is that the responsibility to save India lies not only with governments but also with conscious citizens. In a democracy, silence is not neutrality; it often becomes injustice's strongest ally. When we remain silent in the face of injustice, we unwittingly stand in its favor. 2025 made us realize that silence is no longer an option. Questioning, expressing disagreement, and maintaining dialogue are the greatest acts of patriotism today.

2025: The Year India Boarded The 'Reform Express'



In the recent past, India has demonstrated an ability to act decisively and boldly in moments of crisis - and 2025 was no exception. Confronted by a fresh geo-economic shock triggered by Trumpnomics, New Delhi returned to a familiar playbook, using the pressure of external disruption to push through a fresh wave of long-pending economic reforms. However, what makes this moment stand out is the politically sensitive nature of some of these measures. Reforms such as changes to labour laws have long been acknowledged as necessary, yet avoided by successive governments - precisely because they are politically sensitive. The crisis triggered by Trumpnomics created the

space, and a spate of key electoral wins in assembly elections provided political momentum to finally convert intent to execution. And clearly, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) is not done. A few weeks ago, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman told a public gathering that the upcoming Union Budget will press ahead with more reforms, including effecting a complete overhaul of the customs duty structure - bringing it on par with the soft touch employed by regulators while randomly scrutinising direct tax filings. And then this weekend, Prime Minister Narendra Modi took to X to renew his government's commitment

to economic reforms. The context was the conclusion of the annual meeting of chief secretaries convened in New Delhi and addressed by the Prime Minister. "This conference of Chief Secretaries," the PM posted on X, "has taken place at a time when India is witnessing next-generation reforms. India has boarded the Reform Express. And, the primary engine of this Reform Express is India's youth, our demography. That is why, it is our endeavour to empower this demography." The obvious question then: has India, under NDA, pivoted from reforms of stealth to one of conviction? The Reforms Playbook India's previous approach to reforms followed a pattern.



iPhone 16 becomes highest selling phone in India: Report



Mumbai, US-based tech giant Apple sold about 6.5 million iPhone 16 units in the first 11 months of 2025, making it the country's highest-selling smartphone, according to a new report.

The report from Counterpoint Research said that Apple outpaced Android rivals in the same period. The research firm's data found the gap is striking as iPhone 15 also made to the top five best-selling list.

The research firm said Apple's performance reflects changing buyer behaviour in a market, historically dominated by entry-level and mid-range devices.

Further, the change is underpinned by a strategic push by Apple to expand local manufacturing and reduce reliance on China. Apple recently opened three new Apple Stores in Bengaluru, Pune, and Noida, taking its total retail presence in India to five stores.

Financing options such as no-cost EMIs, cashbacks and bank schemes have made high-end phones more attainable to more consumers. Apple Inc clocked the highest value of exports from India in November, shipping iPhones worth \$2 billion, as per latest industry data.

Apple clocked the highest value of exports from India in November, shipping iPhones worth \$2 billion. In November, a company filing showed that Apple India posted a record high domestic sales of \$9 billion in FY25, and one in every five iPhones made globally in FY25 was manufactured/assembled in India.

The company's manufacturing in India contributed 12 per cent of Apple's global production value. The iPhone maker also began local assembly of high-end Pro and Pro Max models of iPhones in India for the first time.

The company filings showed that the Americas brought in \$178.4 billion in FY25 – nearly 43 per cent of Apple's global revenue – and a growing share of those iPhones were shipped from India..

India poised to become 3rd-largest economy with GDP of \$7.3 trillion by 2030



New Delhi, With GDP valued at \$4.18 trillion, India has surpassed Japan to become the world's fourth-largest economy and is poised to displace Germany from the third rank in the next 2.5 to 3 years with projected GDP of \$7.3 trillion by 2030, an official statement said on Monday.

The growth momentum further surprised on the upside, with GDP expanding to a six-quarter high in Q2 of 2025-26, reflecting India's resilience amid persistent global trade uncertainties.

Domestic drivers led by robust private consumption played a central role in supporting this expansion, according to the statement.

India's real GDP grew 8.2 per cent in Q2 FY2025-26, up from 7.8 per cent in the previous

quarter and 7.4 per cent in Q4 of 2024-25, led by resilient domestic demand amidst global trade and policy uncertainties. Real gross value added (GVA) expanded by 8.1 per cent, catalysed by buoyant industrial and services sectors.

High-frequency indicators point to sustained economic activity: inflation remains below the lower tolerance threshold,

unemployment is on a declining trajectory, and export performance continues to improve. Furthermore, financial conditions have stayed benign, with strong credit flows to the commercial sector, while demand conditions remain firm, supported by a further strengthening of urban consumption.

"India is among the world's fastest-growing major

economies and is well-positioned to sustain this momentum. With the ambition of attaining high middle-income status by 2047 – the centenary year of its independence – the country is building on strong foundations of economic growth, structural reforms, and social progress," according to the statement.

The RBI revised India's GDP growth forecast for FY 2025-26 upwards to 7.3 per cent from the earlier estimate of 6.8 per cent.

India's domestic growth is on an upward trajectory owing to multiple factors such as robust domestic demand, income tax and goods and services tax (GST) rationalisation, softer crude oil prices, frontloading of Government capital expenditure (CAPEX), along with facilitative monetary and financial con-

ditions, supported by benign inflation.

Looking ahead, domestic drivers like favourable agricultural prospects, the sustained effects of GST rationalisation, benign inflation, and the strong balance sheets of corporates and financial institutions – coupled with supportive monetary and financial conditions – are expected to continue bolstering the economic activity.

External factors such as services exports are projected to remain robust, while the swift conclusion of current trade and investment negotiations offers additional upside potential. Ongoing reforms are likely to further enable growth prospects. Present macro-economic situation presents a rare "goldilocks period" of high growth and low inflation, said the statement.

Trade pact with Australia anchors India's economic engagement in Indo-Pacific: Piyush Goyal

New Delhi, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Monday said that as the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) negotiations advance with other nations, India-Australia trade pact continues to anchor the country's economic engagement in the Indo-Pacific, aligned with 'Make in India' and the vision of 'Viksit Bharat 2047'. From January 1, 2026, 100 per cent Australian tariff lines will be zero-duty for Indian exports, unlocking fresh opportunities for labour-intensive sec-

tors, Goyal informed. On the third anniversary of the India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (Indo-Aus ECTA), the minister said that we are celebrating a partnership that has translated intent into impact. "Together, India and Australia are building a future of shared prosperity and trusted trade," Goyal posted on X social media platform. Over the past three years, the agreement has delivered sustained export growth, deeper market access, and stronger supply-chain resilience, benefiting Indian exporters, MSMEs,

farmers, and workers alike, according to Goyal. India's exports to Australia grew by 8 per cent in FY 2024-25, improving India's trade balance. Strong gains were witnessed across manufacturing, chemicals, textiles, plastics, pharmaceuticals, petroleum products, and gems and jewellery. "Agri-exports recorded broad-based growth, with sharp increases in fruits and vegetables, marine products, spices, and exceptional growth in coffee. Gems & Jewellery exports rose 16 per cent in April-November 2025," said the minister.

Lifestyle by PNG, appoints Sara Tendulkar as brand ambassador

Pune, Lifestyle by PNG, the contemporary lightweight fine jewellery brand from PNG Jewellers, has announced Sara Tendulkar as its brand ambassador, marking a key step in strengthening the brand's connection with India's future jewellery consumers. The association reinforces Lifestyle's role as a strategic bridge between PNG Jewellers' legacy customers and its future customers. While PNG has been a trusted name across generations for nearly two centuries, Lifestyle has been consciously created to remain relevant to the next generation through a modern retail format, contemporary design language, and an omnichannel experience. Speaking on the larger vision behind Lifestyle, Dr. Saurabh Gadgil, Chairman and Managing Director, PNG Jewellers, said, "Lifestyle by PNG is a conscious and long-term effort to bridge our existing customers with future customers. While PNG has earned trust across generations, it is equally important for us to stay relevant to the way younger consumers think, shop and express themselves today. Lifestyle has been created as a modern retail format with a strong omnichannel presence, designed around everyday moments rather than only traditional occasions. This is not a short-term style initiative, but a serious business vertical under the PNG umbrella, with dedicated focus on merchandising, planning, marketing and digital platforms. The encouraging response to our pilot stores has given us confidence to scale the brand in a structured manner across key markets."

Govt offers 50 new blocks to investors to step up hunt for oil & gas

New Delhi, Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on Monday that with the offering of 50 new blocks to investors for exploration and production of oil and gas, India's energy sector has reached "a transformative milestone".

The minister further stated that while 25 of these blocks are being offered under the 10th round of the oil exploration and licensing policy (OALP-X), another 55 fields across 9 contract blocks are being offered under the fourth



bidding round for discovered small fields (DSF-IV).

Besides, 16 blocks are being put on offer as part of Special CBM Bid Rounds 2025 and 2026. While 3 blocks are in the 2025 category, the other 13 blocks are for 2026.

"The quest to unlock the potential of India's sedimentary basins has gained a new thrust and momentum," the minister remarked in a post on X.

Puri said that India has now introduced a unified regulatory framework enabled by the Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Amendment

Act, 2025, which delinks petroleum operations from mining, and the PNG Rules 2025. The revenue-sharing contract model has been adopted to facilitate the ease of doing business.

He said that to make things easier for investors, a single license has been introduced for conventional and unconventional hydrocarbons. Exploration is allowed throughout the contract duration, while reduced royalty rates have been rolled out as an incentive. The norms also build in stabilisation for changes in law.

Sensex, Nifty extend losses for 4th day

Mumbai, Indian stock markets extended their losing streak for the fourth consecutive session on Monday, dragged down by heavy selling in information technology, realty, pharma and auto stocks.

The benchmark Sensex ended the day at 84,695.54, falling 345.91 points, or 0.41 per cent.

The Nifty also closed lower at 25,942.10, down 100.20 points, or 0.38 per cent, as selling pressure continued across key sectors. Analysts said that the Nifty slipped below the psychological 26,000 mark and its 20-day EMA, extending losses by nearly 100 points amid heightened volatility ahead of the monthly F&O expiry.

"The index formed bearish candlestick structures, reflecting near-term selling pressure, although it continues to hover around key short-term moving averages for now," they added.

A sustained break below the 25,900 zone could expose the index to further downside toward 25,800-25,700, as per experts. On the Sensex, stocks such as PowerGrid, Trent, HCL Tech and BEL were among the top losers, weighing on the index. However, some buying interest was seen in select counters, with Tata Steel, Asian Paints, Hindustan Unilever, Eternal, NTPC and Axis Bank ending the session with gains.

The broader market also remained under pressure. The Nifty Midcap 100 index declined 0.52 per cent, while the Nifty Smallcap 100 slipped 0.72 per cent.

India's industrial growth surges to 6.7 per cent in November

New Delhi, The growth rate of India's industrial production surged to 6.7 per cent in November this year compared to the same month of the previous year after having slowed to 0.4 per cent in October due to the long holiday season in the festive month, according to figures released by the Ministry of Statistics on Monday.

The strong industrial growth was driven by an 8 per cent surge in the manufacturing sector, led by a robust performance in basic metals and fabricated metal products, pharmaceuticals, and motor vehicles.

Growth in the mining sector at 5.4 per cent has also rebounded due to the closure of the monsoon season and strong growth in metallic minerals such as iron ore. However, the



electricity sector remained a laggard with a negative growth of (-)1.5 per cent during the month.

Within the manufacturing sector, 20 out of 23 industry groups have recorded a positive growth in November. The top three positive contributors for the month of November are "Manufacture of basic metals" (10.2 per cent), "Manufacture of pharmaceuticals, medicinal chemicals and botanical products" (10.5 per cent), and

"Manufacture of motor vehicles, trailers, and semi-trailers" (11.9 per cent).

In the industry group "Manufacture of basic metals", which includes steel, products have shown a significant contribution in growth.

The figures on use-based classification show that the production of capital goods, which comprise machines used in factories, shot up by a double-digit 10.4 per cent over the same month of

the previous year. This segment reflects the real investment taking place in the economy, which has a multiplier effect on the creation of jobs and incomes going ahead. The consumer durables sector, comprising white goods such as refrigerators, TV sets and washing machines, also recorded a strong growth of 10.3 per cent, while non-durable goods such as soaps, cosmetics and processed foods clocked a 7.3 per cent growth during the month.

The infrastructure and construction sector clocked a strong 12.1 per cent growth during the month compared to the same month of the previous year on the back of big-ticket government projects being implemented in the highways, railways and ports sectors.

India adds highest-ever 44.5 GW renewable energy in 2025: Govt

New Delhi, India saw highest-ever renewable energy capacity addition in 2025 at 44.51 GW (till November) which is nearly double as compared to the 24.72 GW during the same period last year, the government said on Monday.

The total renewable energy installed capacity reached 253.96 GW in November 2025, which is an increase of over 23 per cent as compared to the 205.52 GW in November 2024.

Solar capacity addition is 34.98 GW, compared to the 20.85 GW during the same period last year. Solar energy installed capacity crossed 100 GW mark in January, 2025. The solar energy installed capacity has reached



132.85 GW in November, 2025 which is an increase of over 41 per cent as compared to the 94.17 GW in November 2024, according to Ministry of New and Renewable Energy.

Wind capacity also registered a substantial growth with capacity addition of 5.82 GW compared to 3.2 GW during the same period last year.

Wind energy's installed

capacity crossed 50 GW mark in March 2025. The wind energy installed capacity has reached 53.99 GW in November, 2025 which is an increase of over 12.5 per cent as compared to the 47.96 GW in November 2024.

In line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision outlined at COP26, the government is working to reach 500 GW Non-fossil energy capacity by 2030.

IIT Bombay, NTPC complete drilling India's 1st CO2 storage well; second underway

Mumbai, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay and NTPC have successfully completed the drilling of India's first well for testing the viability of geological carbon dioxide (CO2) storage in sedimentary formations such as coal and sandstone, the institute said on Monday.

The collaboration, launched under the aegis of NITI Aayog in November 2022, brought together NETRA – the R&D wing of NTPC, and the Department of Earth Sciences, IIT Bombay, in building India's first geological storage atlas for coalbed methane-rich coalfields.

The atlas provided layer-by-layer simulation results with experimentally validated inputs for quantifying the potential for geological CO2 storage in four major coalfields.

The country achieved its first dedicated well, reaching a depth of 1200m in September, for potential CO2 storage. The drilling site in Pakri Barwadih, in the vicinity of a coal mining area in Jharkhand's Hazaribagh, was completed



on November 15.

Notably, a second well drilling was initiated on December 21. Both CO2 injection and plume monitoring using these wells will be implemented, the institute said.

"As India stands at the cusp of honouring net-zero commitments in line with the 'Panchamrit' climate goals announced by the Prime Minister, accelerating indigenous science and technology outcomes for commercialisation of Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage (CCUS) technologies will be crucial to the journey towards 'Atmanirbhar' and 'Viksit' Bharat commitments," said Dr. V.K. Saraswat, Member, NITI Aayog.

Kabul/New Delhi, India has delivered a consignment of six ambulances to Afghanistan, amid growing healthcare cooperation between the two countries, according to a media report.

The ambulances are equipped with advanced medical equipment and can aid in transporting emergency patients and provide emergency health services, Sharafat Zaman Amarkhel, the Taliban spokesman for the Health ministry, was quoted as saying by Afghan media outlet AMU TV.

India's assistance can improve health services, especially emergency responses in Afghanistan, Amarkhel added.

The consignment is part of a commitment made during high-level talks between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Afghan Foreign Minister Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi in New Delhi in October.

During the meeting, Jaishankar described the gift as "20 ambulances, a gesture of goodwill". "India will also provide MRI and CT scan machines to Afghan hospitals and deliver vaccines for immunisation and cancer medicines. We have also supplied drug rehabilitation materials through UNODC and are open to doing more," the foreign minister had said.

Earlier this month, Afghanistan's Minister of Public Health, Mawlawi Noor Jalal Jalali, held a meeting with Minister of Health and Family Welfare JP Nadda in the national capital and discussed ways to enhance bilateral cooperation in the healthcare sector.

Russia's losses in Ukraine rise faster than ever as US pushes for peace deal

Over the past 10 months, Russian losses in the war with Ukraine have been growing faster than any time since the start of the full-scale invasion in 2022, BBC analysis suggests. As peace efforts intensified in 2025 under pressure from US President Donald Trump's administration, 40% more obituaries of soldiers were published in Russian sources compared with the previous year. Overall, the BBC has confirmed the names of almost 160,000 people killed fighting on Russia's side in Ukraine. BBC News Russian has been counting Russian war losses together with independent outlet Mediazona and a group of volunteers since February 2022. We keep a list of named individuals whose deaths we were able to confirm using official reports, newspapers, social media, and new memorials and graves. The real death toll is believed to be much higher, and military experts we have consulted



believe our analysis of cemeteries, war memorials and obituaries might represent 45-65% of the total. That would put the number of Russian deaths at between 243,000 and 352,000. The number of obituaries for any given period is a preliminary estimate of the confirmed losses, as some need additional verification and will eventually be discarded. But it can indicate

how the intensity of fighting is changing over time. 2025 starts with a relatively low number of published obituaries in January, compared with the previous months. Then the number rises in February, when Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin talked directly for the first time about ending the war in Ukraine. The next peak in August coincides

with the two presidents meeting each other in Alaska, a diplomatic coup for Putin that was widely seen as an end to his international isolation. In October, when a planned second Russia-US summit was eventually shelved, and then in November, when the US presented a 28-point peace proposal, an average of 322 obituaries were published per day -

twice the average in 2024. It is difficult to put increased Russian losses down to any one factor, but the Kremlin sees territorial gains as a way of influencing negotiations with the US in its favour: Putin aide Yuri Ushakov stressed recently that "recent successes" had had a positive impact. Murat Mukashev was among those who gambled on a quick peace deal, and it cost him his life. Mukashev was an activist who had never supported Putin's policies. Over the years, he had taken part in demonstrations against police violence and torture, and joined rallies for LGBT rights and the release of Alexei Navalny, the Kremlin's main opponent who died in prison in 2024. He had repeatedly condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine on social media from 2022. Then, in early 2024, Mukashev was detained near his home in Moscow and charged with large-scale drug dealing. While his case was being tried he was offered a

contract with the defence ministry, according to his friends and family. They saw the heavy charges levelled against him as a typical ploy to get people to sign up. A 2024 law allows the accused a way out of a criminal conviction if they join up - an attractive option in a country with an acquittal rate of less than 1%. Mukashev refused the offer, and the court sentenced him to 10 years in a high-security penal colony. In prison in November 2024, he changed his mind. Friends said he was encouraged by Trump's promises to end the war quickly and decided he needed to sign up as soon as possible to secure his release before a peace deal was reached. "He saw this as a chance to be released instead of being imprisoned for 10 years of strict regime," reads a statement from his support group. There was no explanation of how he reconciled taking part in the war with his reluctance to kill.

K-POP BAND MEMBER SUED FOR \$30M AFTER BITTER RECORD LABEL FEUD



Chart-topping K-pop band NewJeans' record label, Ador, is suing one of the band's members in what is yet another twist in their bitter year-long feud. Hybe, the record label's parent company, confirmed to the BBC that it is suing Danielle Marsh, one of her family members, and ex-boss Min Hee-jin for \$30m (£22m) in damages and as part of a contract break penalty. The band has been plunged into further turmoil as the return of Minji, another of its stars, remains uncertain, leaving the band with three members. Coming less than two months after reports that

NewJeans would return to the label as a band of five, this news dashes fans' hopes of a comeback. Many took to social media with the slogan: "NewJeans is five or nothing, while others questioned why Danielle was singled out. "Does this make any sense??? NewJeans without Danielle isn't NewJeans. Do you think you can just erase a member this easily? Give us back Danielle," one wrote in an X post. "It's not fair at all. Free NewJeans [all 5 members]," another wrote on Instagram. "All they wanted to do was to be [artists] and make their fans happy."

French right pushes for national tribute to film star Brigitte Bardot



French right-wing figure Éric Ciotti has called for a national tribute to honour film legend Brigitte Bardot, prompting objections from political opponents on the left. "France has a duty to honour its Marianne," said Ciotti, referring to the emblem of French liberty whose face Bardot was chosen to represent in the 1960s. Bardot died on Sunday aged 91. A petition launched by Ciotti since has attracted more than 23,000 signatures, and has the backing of some allies on the far right. But Socialist leader Olivier Faure has pointed out that national honours are for "exceptional services to the nation". Bardot was an iconic actress but she also "turned her back on republican values", Faure argued. Bardot has been hailed by President Emmanuel Macron as a "legend of the century" who embodied a life of freedom, and Ciotti, who leads the right-wing UDR party, has appealed to him to organise a national send-off. Ciotti said France should recognise

a woman who brought her country an extraordinary level of international recognition and actively helped in the fight for women's liberty and abortion rights. Meanwhile, the mayor of Nice, Christian Estrosi, has announced that his city will name an "iconic site" in Bardot's honour. But Bardot is destined to remain controversial in death as she was during her life. Faure pointed out that she had been convicted five times for inciting racial hatred. Bardot starred in some 50 films, after bursting on to the scene in And God Created Woman in 1956. She then left the world of cinema in 1973 for a life devoted to animal welfare, and lived for decades in Saint-Tropez on the French Riviera, at her home called La Madrague. But she became as well known for her far-right sympathies as she was for her love of animals. Some of her remarks targeted Muslims, and others insulted the people of the French Indian Ocean island of Réunion.

Great white sharks face extinction in Mediterranean, say researchers



Great white sharks in the Mediterranean Sea are in danger of disappearing, with illegal fishing contributing to their decline. This is according to research by US scientists, working in partnership with UK charity Blue Marine Foundation. They say some of the most threatened species - including

great white sharks - are being sold in North African fish markets. Great whites are one of more than 20 Mediterranean shark species protected under international law, meaning it is illegal to fish for them or to sell them. By monitoring fishing ports on the Mediterranean coast of North Africa.

Eurostar cancels all trains out of London as power outage hits Channel Tunnel

Eurostar has cancelled all trains out of London towards Paris, Amsterdam and Brussels until further notice after a power outage in the Channel Tunnel caused a Le Shuttle train to fail. Staff at London St Pancras International station have told Eurostar passengers to postpone their travel plans and re-book for a later date. By midday, at least a dozen Eurostar services between the UK, France, Belgium and the Netherlands had been cancelled - many more had also been delayed or altered. Train traffic will "gradually resume" this afternoon, according to the company which operates the Channel Tunnel. Elsewhere, Eurotunnel service Le Shuttle - which



carries road vehicles and passengers through the tunnel - has also suspended trains between Folkestone and Calais due to what it described as a "power supply issue" which occurred overnight. National Rail said the major disruption is expected to last until further notice. Eurostar said: "Services to and from London are suspended

until further notice due to overhead power supply issues in the Channel Tunnel, followed by a failed Le Shuttle train. "We advise our customers to re-book their journey for another day, with free exchanges available. "We apologise for the disruption and will continue to keep customers updated with the latest information."

According to Eurostar, passengers can rearrange their plans free of charge or can cancel their booking and get a refund or an e-voucher. The broken Le Shuttle train has been moved out of the Channel Tunnel and Eurotunnel expects to resume services around 15:00 CET (14:00 GMT). "Our teams are working to restore the situation as quickly as possible," Le Shuttle said in a statement. "Waiting times will be adjusted throughout the day. Eurotunnel apologises for the inconvenience and thanks its customers for their patience and understanding." On its website Le Shuttle says check-in and border control services are experiencing lengthy delays.

Saudi Arabia backs call for UAE to leave Yemen after strike on separatist-held port

Saudi Arabia has backed a demand from Yemen's presidential council for the United Arab Emirates to withdraw within 24 hours, after a Saudi-led coalition bombed what it said was a weapons shipment for UAE-backed separatists at the port of Mukalla. The Saudi foreign ministry accused the UAE of "pressuring" the Southern Transitional Council (STC), which seeks independence for southern Yemen, to launch recent offensives in the eastern provinces of Hadramawt and al-Mahra. The kingdom would take measures to confront what it considered such "highly dangerous" actions, it warned. The UAE's foreign ministry



denied that the shipment contained weapons and expressed "deep regret" at the Saudi statement. It strongly condemned "the allegations that it exerted pressure on, or directed, any Yemeni party to carry out military operations that would undermine the security of the sisterly king-

dom of Saudi Arabia or target its borders". The STC's leaders also said the ultimatum for the withdrawal of the UAE's forces had no legal basis, and insisted it would remain a "main partner" in the battle against the Iran-backed Houthi movement, which controls much of

north-western Yemen. Earlier on Monday, the head of the eight-member presidential council - which includes STC representatives - announced that he was cancelling a joint defence pact with the UAE and ordering its forces to leave "in the interest of safeguarding the security of all citizens, affirming commitment to Yemen's unity, sovereignty, stability, and territorial integrity". Rashad al-Alimi also declared a state of emergency for a period of 90 days, which he said was necessary to confront the Houthis and what he described as "the internal strife led by mutinous military elements that received orders from the United Arab Emirates".

Bangladesh's first female prime minister Khaleda Zia dies aged 80



Khaleda Zia, Bangladesh's first female prime minister and an arch-rival of ousted leader Sheikh Hasina, has died from a prolonged illness. She was 80 years old. Zia intended to run for parliament in February, when the country will vote for the first time since a popular revolution in late 2024 unseated Hasina. Thrust into the political limelight following the assassination of her husband, then-president Ziaur Rahman, she went on to become Bangladesh's first female PM in 1991. Her career, which included spells in prison and house arrest, was defined by a bitter feud with Hasina. She was acquitted of corruption and allowed to travel to London for treatment only after Hasina lost power. Physicians said on Monday that Zia's condition was "extremely critical". She was put on life support, but it was not possible to provide multiple treatments at the same

time given her age and overall poor health, they added. "Our favourite leader is no longer with us. She left us at 6am this morning," Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) announced on Facebook on Tuesday. When news of her death broke, crowds gathered outside Evercare Hospital in Dhaka where Zia had been admitted. As the wife of Bangladesh's former president Rahman, Zia was a reserved presence alongside her famous husband. When he was killed in a military coup in 1981, Zia entered politics and went on to lead the BNP in the country's first elections in 20 years. Known as an "uncompromising leader" after refusing to take part in a controversial election under military ruler General Hussain Muhammad Ershad in the 1980s, Zia broke through a male-dominated political landscape and transformed into one of Bangladesh's most formidable political leaders.

Trump hopes to reach phase two of Gaza ceasefire 'very quickly'

Donald Trump said he hoped to reach phase two of the Gaza peace plan "very quickly", as he warned Hamas would have "hell to pay" if it did not disarm soon. The US president, whose 20-point peace plan requires the militant group to disarm, made the comments as he met Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Florida for talks on Monday. During a press conference with Netanyahu after their meeting, Trump said Israel had "lived up to the plan 100%", despite continuing attacks by its military in Gaza. The US president also said his country could support another major strike on Iran were it to resume rebuilding its ballistic missile or nuclear weapons programmes. In response to

Trump's threat, Iran's supreme leader's top political adviser, Ali Shamkhani, said on X that any aggression towards Iran would be met with an "immediate harsh response". Asked how quickly Hamas and Israel should move to phase two of the peace plan, Trump said: "As quickly as we can. But there has to be disarmament." Speaking about Hamas, he said: "If they don't disarm as, as they agreed to do, they agreed to it, and then there will be hell to pay for them. "They have to disarm in a fairly short period of time". Trump also said reconstruction in Gaza could "begin pretty soon". The Gaza peace plan came into effect in October. Under the second phase, a technocratic government would be estab-



lished in the devastated territory, Hamas would disarm and Israeli troops would withdraw. The reconstruction of Gaza would then begin. But critics have suggested Netanyahu could seek to delay the process of the plan and instead push for Hamas to disarm before Israeli troops withdraw. The Israeli prime minister has been accused of not wanting to engage seriously

with the issue of a political future for Palestinians. Hamas officials have said a full disarmament should take place alongside progress towards an independent Palestinian state. Asked if he was concerned Israel was not moving fast enough to phase two of the plan, Trump said it had "lived up to the plan". "I'm not concerned about anything that Israel's doing, I'm

concerned about what other people are doing or maybe aren't doing," he added. Since the ceasefire came into effect, at least 414 Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli military in Gaza, according to the Hamas-run health ministry. The Israeli military, which controls more than half of Gaza, has said it has only opened fire in response to ceasefire violations. It has blamed Hamas for the killings of three Israeli soldiers over the same period. During the press briefing, Trump also warned that the US would launch further attacks on Iran if it was found to be using different sites to develop nuclear weapons. In June, Trump claimed US air and missile strikes "obliterated" Iran's nuclear

facilities. Iran has denied seeking to develop nuclear weapons. "I hope they're not trying to build up again, because if they are we're going to have no choice but to eradicate that build up," he said. Trump said he "had been reading" that the country was using "possibly different sites" to those targeted in summer. Iran, which fought a 12-day war with Israel in June, on Monday denounced the reports as a "psychological operation" against Tehran. It said it was fully prepared to defend itself, and warned renewed aggression would "result in harsher consequences" for Israel. Trump and Netanyahu's talks also focused on other regional tension points, including Syria and the Hezbollah militant group in Lebanon.

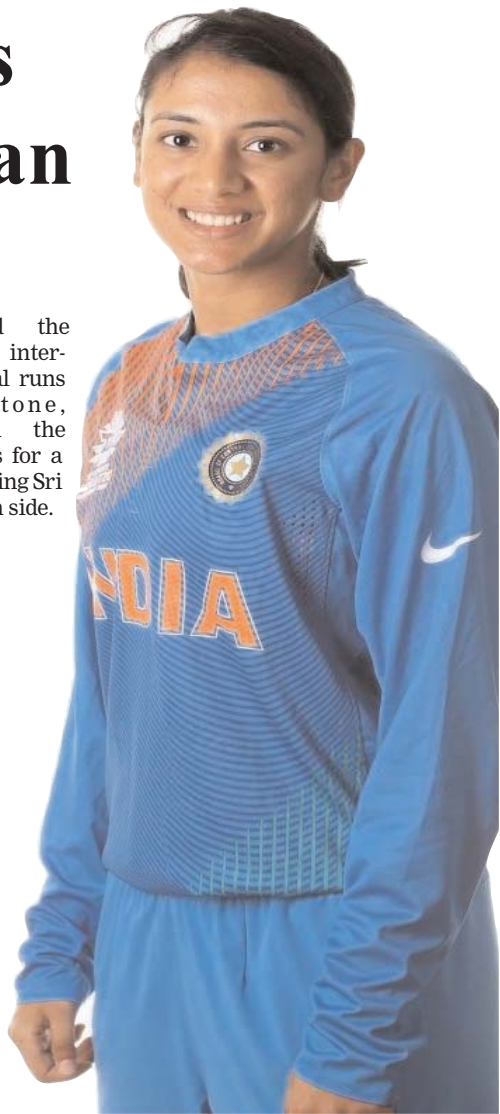
Smriti Mandhana Misses Chance To Surpass Shubman Gill's World Record

Smriti Mandhana needed 62 runs in the fifth T20I against Sri Lanka on Tuesday to surpass Shubman Gill for a momentous world record. It was not to be. The India opener had already amassed 1,703 runs across formats (ODIs + T20Is) this calendar year - the most by any woman in a single year. With just 62 more runs, Mandhana would have become the leading run-scorer of 2025 across both men's and women's international cricket, surpassing Shubman Gill's tally of 1,764 (Tests + ODIs + T20Is). Mandhana scored 1,362 runs in ODIs and 341 in T20Is in 2025. However, Mandhana was not included in the playing XI for the fifth T20I in Thiruvananthapuram, as the team management decided to rest the star batter. "Yeah, I mean, we were okay battling also, so yeah, it's an important match, so let's play well and win. Yeah, def-

initely. As I mentioned, it's an important match for us. How we started this series, that's how we wanted to finish. Hopefully, again, we'll continue the same momentum and give our best. Yes, we have two changes today, Smriti and Renuka are resting. Kamalini is going to debut and Sneha Rana is back," India captain Harmanpreet Kaur said. Sri Lanka captain Chamari Athapaththu won the toss and elected to field against India in the fifth and final women's T20I in Thiruvananthapuram on Tuesday. India hold a commanding 4-0 lead and are looking for a series white-wash. The hosts made two changes, bringing in G Kamalini, who is making her debut, and Sneha Rana in place of Smriti Mandhana and Renuka Singh Thakur. Sri Lanka also made a couple of changes, bringing back Inoka Ranaweera and

Malki Madara for Malsha Shehani and Kawya Kavindi. Teams: India: Shafali Verma, G Kamalini, Harleen Deol, Harmanpreet Kaur (c), Richa Ghosh (wk), Deepti Sharma, Amanjot Kaur, Sneha Rana, Arundhati Reddy, N Shree Charani, Vaishnavi Sharma. India will eye a clinical 5-0 white-wash as they face Sri Lanka in the fifth and final Women's T20I in Thiruvananthapuram this Tuesday. The Harmanpreet Kaur-led side maintained their vice-like grip on the visitors this past Sunday, securing an unassailable 4-0 lead with a 30-run victory. While India's bowlers were the early architects of this run, the batters stole the show in the fourth game, posting a record-shattering 221/2-India's highest-ever T20I total. Shafali Verma, having struck three consecutive fifties, and Smriti Mandhana, who recently

crossed the 10,000 international runs milestone, remain the hurdles for a struggling Sri Lankan side.



D Gukesh Stunned By 12-Year-Old Prodigy After 'Fatal' Blunder

In a result that has sent shockwaves through the chess world, reigning world champion D Gukesh suffered a stunning defeat at the hands of 12-year-old Sergey Sklokin at the FIDE World Blitz Championship 2025. The high-stakes clash in Doha saw the teenage Indian grandmaster succumb to a costly blunder under severe time pressure, proving that in the lightning-fast world of blitz chess, even the greatest can falter. Despite his world title, Gukesh found himself outmanoeuvred by the young FIDE Master in a tense third-round encounter. The match reached its breaking point on move 70. Playing with the black pieces, Gukesh was down a pawn and racing against the clock with just eight seconds left. His opponent, the Russian prodigy Sklokin, offered a rook exchange, a move that likely would have steered the game toward a draw. However, Gukesh, known for his aggressive "play-to-win" spirit, declined the trade and moved his rook to f4. The



gamble backfired almost instantly. Within moves, Gukesh lost his bishop and his final pawn. Facing an impossible position, the world champion was forced to resign just ten moves later. Commentators described the move as the "blunder of the round." Grandmaster Maurice Ashley noted that while Gukesh's fighting spirit is his greatest strength in classical chess, his refusal to settle for a draw proved fatal in this format. He said: "This blunder, we can all agree,

was pretty bad," said Ashley before going on to explain: "We know Gukesh is a tremendous fighter and he hates draws. Literally hates them and will do crazy things to avoid them. But this was a little bit too much. Obviously it was time to trade rooks. He was the one who was down a pawn! He should be happy to trade rooks and go for the drawish position. It's perfect (for him) because he's not going to lose! But he's playing for what? Unbelievable! That was absolutely insane.

ICC Verdict Out On Eden Gardens Pitch Where India Failed To Chase 124 vs South Africa

The Eden Gardens pitch that hosted the first India vs South Africa Test from November 14-16 drew a lot of flak after the hosts failed to chase a 124-run target. South African spinner Simon Harmer scalped eight wickets in the match as the Gautam Gambhir-coached Indian cricket team slumped to a 30-run loss. While several experts criticised the pitch, Gambhir did not agree. "It was not an unplayable wicket, there were no demons," he said. "This is exactly the pitch we were looking for. The curator was very, very helpful and supportive. This is exactly what we wanted, and this is exactly what we got. When you don't play well, this is what happens." While most former players did not agree



with the comment, the ICC seemed happy with the pitch on offer. It rated the pitch as "satisfactory," according to a report by TOL. This came a few days after the ICC rated the Melbourne Cricket Ground pitch, which hosted the Australia vs England Boxing Day Test, "unsatisfactory." The venue was handed

one merit point as well. Coming back to Eden Gardens, Anil Kumble, a legendary spinner and former coach of the Indian team, expressed shock at some of Gambhir's remarks on the pitch. "If you look back at the legacy of Eden Gardens, there have been so many Test matches played here. I've

been coming here since I was an Under-19 kid, and I've never seen a pitch behave like this over three days in a Test match," Kumble said on JioHotstar after the match. "I did listen to what Gautam said; he mentioned that the team wanted something like this. Then I'm a bit confused because I know this is a young side." Dale Steyn, one of the finest South African pacers to have played the game, directly countered Gambhir's "no demons" statement. "He said there weren't demons in the pitch? I certainly saw quite a lot," Steyn, who was part of the same panel, said. "You know, as Anil was saying, some balls were spinning two feet past the bat, hitting the keeper on the shoulder.

SA20: Sunrisers Eastern Cape Thrill Home Crowd With Bonus Point Win Over Pretoria Capitals

Quinton de Kock treated "The Orange Army" to a batting masterclass in the Sunrisers' Eastern Cape's 48-run bonus point win over Pretoria Capitals at a rousing St George's Park on Monday evening. The victory propelled the Sunrisers to top of the Betway SA20 table with 10 points, while the Capitals remain winless after two matches. The Gqeberha locals came out in their thousands to deck South Africa's oldest Test venue in a sea of orange for the first home game of Season 4 with the iconic brass band getting everyone in the festive spirit to deliver yet another memorable Betway SA20 night. De



Kock certainly gave them plenty to cheer for with the left-hander blazing 77 off just 47 balls (5x4, 6x6). The left-hander struck the ball sweetly from the outset with a couple of rasping lofted cover drives interspersed with powerful pull shots. Matthew Breetzke (52 off 33 balls, 7x4, 1x6) was

the perfect partner for De Kock after the early demise of Jonny Bairstow with the pair putting together an electrifying 116-run partnership off just 70 balls. This laid the platform for the in-form Jordan Hermann (37 off 20 balls, 5x4, 1x6) to unleash a series of conventional and

reverse sweeps that pushed Sunrisers to an impressive 188/6. The four Player of the Match candidates were Matthew Breetzke, Quinton de Kock, Shai Hope and Adam Milne with the 'QDK' winning 69.3% of the fan vote. The total proved way beyond the reach of the Capitals with the Sunrisers unleashing their three-pronged pace arsenal of Marco Jansen, Adam Milne and Anrich Nortje. Jansen required just six balls to strike the first blow when he removed Capitals opener Bryce Parsons with a rasping delivery that the left-hander could only fend off to De Kock behind the stumps.

How South Africa conquered Test cricket in 2025



From a certain vantage point, the health of Test cricket in South Africa appears terminal. For the first time since sporting isolation during apartheid, there will be no red-ball action in the country this summer. Instead, fans must make do watching Indian-owned T20 franchises compete in the SA20. The next time the Proteas take the field in whites on home soil will be October 2026, 21 months after hosting Pakistan in January this year. And yet the Test team itself has rarely looked in better shape, with 2025 proving a watershed year. Ryan Rickelton registered his country's first double century for nine years as Pakistan were swept 2-0. In June, a sublime fourth-innings 136 from Aiden Markram, allied to a nine-wicket match haul from Kagiso Rabada, carried South Africa to a five-wicket victory over Australia in the World Test Championship (WTC) final at Lord's. And with the choker's tag finally dislodged, and momentum behind them, South Africa are on track to qualify for another WTC final. Wiaan Mulder threatened Brian Lara's record for the

highest Test score when he declared himself on 367 against Zimbabwe in July. In October, Keshav Maharaj bagged a seven-for in Rawalpindi to square the series with Pakistan. A month later, Simon Harmer claimed 17 wickets in two Tests as South Africa beat India 2-0 in their own backyard, becoming the first South African team to win away in India since 2000. "It's been a remarkable period for us," says Sunuran Muthusamy, the spin-bowling all-rounder who scored his maiden century in the 408-run win in the second Test against India. "We're straight into the SA20 so it's hard to really take stock. But in the small moments when we've had a chance to reflect, we know that we've found a great formula. It feels like things are really clicking." How a 'winning machine' was built The year began with uncertainty but also hope. In the afterglow of a nerve-jangling two-wicket win against Pakistan in the 2024 Boxing Day Test - a result that secured South Africa's place in the WTC final - there was a sense the group had reached a crossroads.

"Suryakumar Yadav Used To Message Me A Lot": Bollywood Actress Drops Bombshell

Bollywood actress Khushi Mukherjee, who also appeared in the reality show MTV Splitsvilla, made a striking claim about Indian cricket team T20I captain Suryakumar Yadav. At a recent event, Khushi stated that Suryakumar used to message her frequently in the past, but they no longer communicate. When asked by a reporter whether she wanted to date any cricketer, Khushi replied that she does not like link-ups. "I don't want to date any cricketer. There are so many cricketers after me. Suryakumar Yadav used to message me a lot. Now we don't talk much, and I don't even want to be associated. I



don't like any link-ups involving me," she said in a video posted by Kiddaan Entertainment. Suryakumar has not yet responded to these claims. Meanwhile, Suryakumar Yadav and his

wife Devisha Shetty paid a visit to the Sri Venkateswara Swamy Temple, Tirumala, in Andhra Pradesh and offered their prayers on the occasion of Vaikuntha Ekadashi. They prayed to Lord Venkateswara

and passed through the Vaikuntha Dwaram (celestial gate) as the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) officials made arrangements for their darshan and facilitated their visit to the temple on the hill. Their visit received a warm reception from both devotees and temple staff. Wearing traditional clothing, they engaged in the rituals humbly, showcasing the strong cultural and spiritual bonds that many Indian athletes uphold despite their busy professional lives. This morning, they had darshan of the Lord. Following the darshan, the priests blessed them in the Ranganayakulavari Mandapam inside the temple.

'Home Has Been Broken': Ex-Pakistan Star's Wife Makes Explosive 'Divorce' Allegations

Former Pakistan cricketer Imad Wasim's wife, Sannia Ashfaq, took to social media to post an emotional message following the couple's divorce. Ashfaq alleged that there was "involvement of a third party" and said that "her home has been broken." The couple married on August 26, 2019, in Islamabad and have three children together. She stated that she remained committed to their relationship both as a wife and mother in order to preserve her family, but alleged that someone who wishes to marry Imad indirectly caused the breakdown of their marriage. "I am writing this from a place of deep pain. My home has been broken, and my children have been left without their father. I



am a mother of three, including a five-month-old infant who has yet to be held by his father. This is not a story I wished to share, but silence should never be mistaken for weakness," she wrote on Instagram. "Like many marriages, ours had diffi-

culties, yet it continued to exist. I remained committed as a wife and mother and made sincere efforts to preserve our family. What ultimately ended this marriage was the involvement of a third party, whose intention was to marry my husband. That became the

final blow to an already struggling union," she added. Imad Wasim also took to social media to announce their divorce, stating that it ended due to "repeated conflicts." "After much thought, and due to repeated conflicts that could not be resolved over the past few years, I have filed for divorce. Regarding the children, I remain their father and will continue to care for them fully and responsibly. Thank you for your understanding and respect. I request everyone not to engage in or believe any misleading narratives. Any attempt to defame or involve others in this personal matter will be addressed through the proper legal channels if necessary," he wrote on Instagram.

JOHNSON TO DECIDE FUTURE AFTER PALACE DEAL AGREED



Brennan Johnson is set to decide whether he wants to join Crystal Palace after the south London club agreed a £35m deal to sign the Tottenham attacker. BBC Sport revealed on 18 December that the Eagles were advanced in their efforts to land the Wales international but decided not to make a formal move until after the two clubs faced each other in the Premier League on Sunday. There is now an agreement between the clubs for Johnson to move across London. However, the 24-year-old is yet to agree to join the Selhurst Park club. Johnson is set for talks over his future in the next 48 hours, amid interest from other Premier League sides. Bournemouth are among the clubs who rate him highly and see him as a potential replacement for Antoine Semenyo, should the Ghanaian leave in January. Tottenham man-

ager Thomas Frank said the Wales international was available to face Brentford on New Year's Day. He said: "Brennan has been a top professional. He has trained well today and is ready in two days' time [for the game against Brentford]." Tottenham are in the market for a new attacker this January which would limit Johnson's opportunities even more. It is understood that they have an interest in RB Leipzig winger Yan Diomande, 19, and Manchester City attacker Savinho, 21. BBC Sport disclosed earlier this month that Tottenham were open to selling Johnson, who was the club's leading scorer last season with 18 goals. He etched his name in Spurs folklore by scoring the winner in their Europa League final over Manchester United in Bilbao in May, ending the club's 17-year wait for a trophy.

