

OM NAMO VENKATESAYA

11-01-2026

Total pilgrims: 76,447

Tonsures: 21,708

Hundi kanakulu: 3.42 CR

Waiting Compartments.. 04

Approx. Darsan Time for Sarvadarshanam (with out SSD Tokens).. 04 H


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NATION | NEWS

Attack on Tamil culture: LoP Gandhi criticizes Centre over Vijay's 'Jana Nayagan' certification delay



WORLD | NEWS

Prosecutors seek death penalty for ex-South Korean president Yoon



CM Revanth Greet Telugu People on Sankranti

Hyderabad (TSIT): Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy extended warm greetings to Telugu people across the State and around the world on the auspicious occasion of Sankranti. In his message, the Chief Minister expressed hope that the festivities of Bhogi, Sankranti, and Kanuma would usher in prosperity, happiness, and well-being in everyone's lives. He wished that people celebrate the harvest festival with joy, unity, and renewed optimism.

INBRIF

Gold, silver prices ease amid profit booking at record levels

Mumbai (TSIT): Gold and silver prices eased on Tuesday amid profit booking, after they surged to record high levels over worries of the US Justice Department's action against the Federal Reserve Chair. MCX gold February futures eased 0.44 per cent to Rs 1,41,400 per 10 grams around 1.15 pm, while MCX silver March futures traded flat with a negative bias down 0.01 per cent at Rs 2,68,926 per kg. The price of 10 grams of 24-carat gold was at Rs 1,40,482 down from Rs 1,40,499 of previous day's close, according to data published by the India Bullion and Jewellers Association (IBJA).

‘Telangana Rising’ event planned at Davos

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy to Present State’s 2047 Vision at WEF 2026



Hyderabad (TSIT): Telangana is set to showcase its long-term growth vision, investor-friendly ecosystem, and transformative development agenda on the global stage at the World Economic Forum (WEF) 2026 in Davos. Under the leadership of Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, the State Government will host a special and exclusive ‘Telangana Rising’ event, engaging CEOs of leading global companies, industry leaders, and eminent personalities from across sectors.

Following the launch of the Telangana Rising 2047 Vision Document in December and the significant investments secured during the recent Global Summit, the State Government aims to further promote its development roadmap at WEF 2026, scheduled to be held from January 19

to 23. Telangana will highlight investment opportunities across key sectors including IT, life sciences, renewable energy, manufacturing, and innovation-driven industries.

The special event, to be held on the evening of January 20, is designed to position Telangana as a premier global investment destination. The delegation will present the State’s 2047 vision, along with the CURE, PURE, and RARE framework, and outline several game-changer projects such as Bharat Future City, Musi River Rejuvenation, Regional Ring Road (RRR), Regional Ring Railway, and the development of large-scale manufacturing zones.

**LIFE SCIENCES POLICY AND AI HUB LAUNCH**

During the event, the State Government will formally unveil the Telangana Life Sciences Policy 2026-2030 and announce the launch of the Telangana AI Hub, reinforcing the government’s commitment to innovation-led and future-ready growth aligned with the Telangana Rising 2047 vision.

The programme will also provide an overview of Hyderabad’s rapid emergence as a global hub for Global Capability Centers (GCCs), with major multinational companies such as Vanguard, Netflix, McDonald’s, and L’Oreal establishing or expanding their operations in the city.

Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy has directed officials to meticulously organise the event to effectively present Telangana’s rapid GSDP growth, progressive industrial policies, robust infrastructure, and the long-term development roadmap envisioned under Telangana Rising 2047, which outlines the State’s strategic plans for the next two decades.

States to pay heavy compensation for every stray dog-bite incident: SC

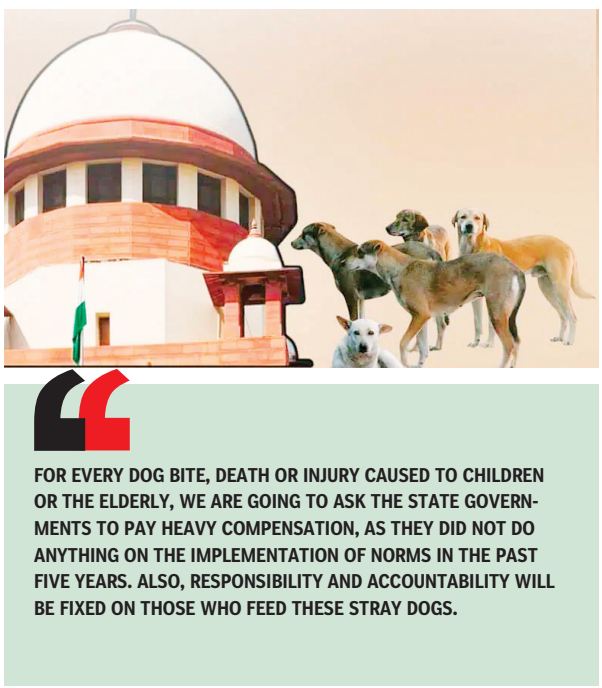
Senior advocate Arvind Datar argued that stray dogs have no legal right to occupy institutional premises or other public spaces to which people have access.

New Delhi (TSIT): The Supreme Court on Tuesday, January 13, said it will ask states to pay a “heavy compensation” for dog-bite incidents and hold dog feeders accountable as it flagged its concern over the lack of implementation of norms on stray animals for the past five years.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath, Sandeep Mehta, and NV Anjaria said that even dog lovers and feeders will be held “responsible” and “accountable” for dog-bite incidents.

“For every dog bite, death or injury caused to children or the elderly, we are going to ask the state governments to pay heavy compensation, as they did not do anything on the implementation of norms in the past five years. Also, responsibility and accountability will be fixed on those who feed these stray dogs. If you love these animals so much, then why don’t you take them to your house? Why should these dogs loiter around, bite and scare people?” Justice Nath said.

Justice Mehta concurred with the views of Justice Nath and said,



“Who should be held accountable when dogs attack a 9-year-old? The organisation that is feeding them? You want us to shut our eyes to the problem.” The top court was hearing several petitions seeking modification of its November 7, 2025, order directing the authorities to remove these stray animals from the institutional areas and roads.

The top court said the

worst part is that a lawyer from Gujarat was bitten in a park, and when civic authorities went to catch that animal, the lawyers, who claimed to be dog lovers, attacked the civic officials. MS Admissions 2026-27

The top court also lamented that for four days, it has been hearing arguments on the issue and was not allowed to proceed further in the matters

by activists and NGOs and was not able to hear the views of the Centre and the states. “Our request to all the lawyers is to allow us to take to task the union, the state authorities and other bodies...”

Allow us to pass an order. We need to spend half a day with the States and Union. To see whether they have a plan of action or not. The problem has multiplied a thousand times. We just want the implementation of the statutory provision. Allow us to do that. Allow us to work. Allow us to proceed further,” the top court observed during the hearing. At the outset, senior advocate Arvind Datar, appearing for an NGO, defended the apex court’s November 7, 2025, order dealing with institutional areas, arguing that it was fully justified and supported by statutory rules. He contended that there was no need to constitute any new expert committee since reports of the existing committees were already on record.

Justice Mehta remarked that Datar was “the first who has come to the rescue of the order.”

Chinese Communist Party, BJP meet same day Beijing restates Shaksgam valley claim

Opposition parties slammed the BJP, even as it defended meeting.

New Delhi (TSIT): A delegation from the Communist Party of China, led by its international department’s vice minister Sun Haiyan, visited the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) headquarters in Delhi on Monday, January 13, the same day Beijing reaffirmed its territorial claims over the contested Shaksgam valley.

During the meeting, a BJP delegation headed by party general secretary Arun Singh discussed at length “the means to advance inter-party communications between the BJP and the Communist Party of China”, BJP’s foreign affairs department in-charge Vijay Chauthaiwale said in a



post on X. The Chinese Ambassador to India, Xu Feihong, also joined the CPC delegation, he added. “A delegation from the Communist Party of China, under the leadership of Sun Haiyan, Vice Minister, IDCPC, visited the BJP head

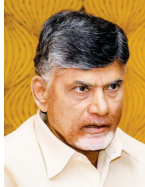
office today,” Chauthaiwale said. Later in the day, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Mao Ning, told a media briefing in Beijing that the Shaksgam valley “belongs to China.” She was reacting to India’s statement criticis-

ing China’s infrastructure development projects in the Shaksgam Valley, saying it reserves the right to take necessary measures to safeguard its interests as it is an Indian territory.

Pakistan illegally ceded 5,180 sq km of Indian territory in the Shaksgam Valley to China in 1963 from areas illegally occupied by it. “It’s fully justified for China to conduct infrastructure construction on its own territory. China and Pakistan in the 1960s signed a boundary agreement and delimited the boundary between the two countries, which is the right of China and Pakistan as sovereign countries,” Mao said.

Andhra CID gives clean chit for CM Naidu in skill development scam case

Amaravati (TSIT): The Andhra Pradesh Criminal Investigation Department (CID) has given a clean chit to Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu in the alleged skill development scam case. After a detailed investigation, the CID concluded that there was no evidence linking the Chief Minister to any wrongdoing in the implementation of the skill development project. According to officials, the probe examined financial transactions, administrative decisions, and project approvals related to the scheme.



BJP has weakened MGNREGA, says DCM DK Shivakumar

Will remove those party leaders who don't take part in the protest

Bengaluru (TSIT) Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Tuesday accused the BJP-led Centre of weakening the MGNREGA scheme, which he said played a crucial role in rural development. Addressing a preparatory meeting of the ‘MGNREGA Bachao Sangram’ at Palace Grounds in Bengaluru, the DCM said the employment scheme introduced during the UPA government under Sonia Gandhi had empowered panchayats and generated large-scale rural works.

He alleged that changes made by the Centre, including altering the funding ratio from 90:10 to 60:40 and limiting the decision-making powers of panchayats,



have put financial pressure on states and diluted the scheme’s intent. Shivakumar said even BJP-ruled states were finding it difficult to implement the new model.

Announcing statewide protests as per AICC directions, he warned that party

leaders who fail to participate would be removed from responsibilities. He also said padayatras, public meetings, and memoranda submissions would be organised across constituencies, while preparations should begin for upcoming local body elections.

We express gratitude towards nature: President Murmu on harvest festivals

NEW DELHI (TSIT): President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday extended greetings to the countrymen on the occasion of Lohri, Makar Sankranti, Pongal, and Magh Bihu, and expressed her gratitude towards the farmers. In a post on X, President Murmu said, “Heartfelt greetings to all Indians living in the country and abroad on the occasion of Lohri, Makar Sankranti, Pongal, and Magh Bihu. These festivals are symbols of India’s rich agricultural

traditions and national unity.”

“On this occasion, we also express our gratitude towards nature. Through these festivals, we convey our thanks to the farmer benefactors. My best wishes are that these festivals bring happiness and prosperity into everyone’s lives,” she added. Lohri, Makar Sankranti, Pongal, and Magh Bihu are the harvest festivals of India and showcase the richness of the traditions.

Through these festivals, people celebrate nature, cultural diversity and community harmony. These festivals are rooted in farming culture and also signify seasonal change. nion Home Minister Amit Shah also took to social media and extended Lohri greetings to the countrymen. “Heartfelt greetings on the festival of ‘Lohri’, a symbol of enthusiasm, zeal, and new energy.

=May this festival be a means of happiness and prosperity for all,” Shah posted on



In a post on X, President Murmu said, "Heartfelt greetings to all Indians living in the country and abroad on the occasion of Lohri, Makar Sankranti, Pongal, and Magh Bihu.

X. External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar, extending best wishes, said, “Festive greetings on the auspicious occasion of Lohri and Bhogi. May the festivals fill everyone’s lives with happiness, harmony and prosperity.” Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta also took to X and extended heartfelt greetings to the countrymen on the festival of Loh.

“Lohri is a symbol of our rich cultural tradition, which strengthens the spirit of coexistence, collective joy,

and mutual harmony. This auspicious sign of the Sun’s northward journey and the arrival of new harvests is a sacred opportunity to express gratitude to our farmers for their hard work and dedication,” she said. “In the witness of the sacred fire, let us renounce negativities and embrace the values of goodwill, harmony, and cooperation. May this sacred light illuminate every family in Delhi with happiness, prosperity, and good health,” CM Gupta added.











EDITORIAL

TRUMP'S NEW RULE FOR THE ROAD: MY WAY OR THE HIGHWAY

2026 has barely begun and US President Donald Trump is on a rampage. On Saturday, January 3, he shocked the world by ordering the military invasion of Venezuela and the kidnapping of its president Nicolas Maduro and his wife, and, thereafter, announcing the takeover of the oil-rich country.

On Monday, the dust had barely settled on that when White House adviser Stephen Miller said on TV that Greenland rightfully belonged to the US and that the Trump administration could seize Danish territory if it wanted. Asked whether the US would rule out the use of force, Miller said that "Nobody's going to fight the United States militarily over the future of Greenland."

On Thursday, Trump directed his government to withdraw the country from 66 international organisations, which he felt were contrary to the interests of the United States. The list included 35 non-UN organisations and 31 UN affiliated outfits, the most important of which is probably the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) of 1992, the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change, UN Women, UN Population Fund and the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

**'My Own Morality'**

A day earlier, on Wednesday, cool as a cucumber, he reached out to one of his principal media adversaries, The New York Times, which had criticised the Venezuela action as an "imperialist venture". In a wide-ranging, two-hour interview, he declared that his powers as Commander-in-Chief were constrained only by his "own morality" and international law and other checks had no effect on his ability to invade and coerce nations around the world. The morality bit was a bit rich, coming from a man who has been accused of sexual misconduct arising from his association with Jeffery Epstein. Trump said in the interview that the US would remain "in charge" of Venezuela for as long as he wanted, and that could be many years. He also confirmed plans to take and refine 30-50 million barrels of Venezuelan oil worth some \$2.8 billion, adding that he would control the money and use it for the people of Venezuela and the US. As for Greenland, it was true that the US already had a base there and could expand its facilities without any problem, but Trump is unlikely to be happy with anything short of ownership of the island - because he feels that physical possession of the territory "was psychologically needed for success", something that a lease or a treaty would not provide. On Saturday, he doubled down on this and declared "If it affects NATO, then it affects NATO," adding that "But you know, they need us much more than we need them." As for Iran, things are still on balance. But you never know if and when Trump will strike.

Trump's bottom line assessment seems to be that he alone could be the arbiter of any limits to his authority, and that he had the liberty to use any instrument to cement American supremacy military, economic or political. This tells us a great deal about his world view. At the core of his belief is that national strength, and not laws and treaties, were the deciding factors in global politics.

**The Tariffs Train**

All this comes after a year when he had liberally used his power to impose tariffs on most countries of the world. He has also joined Israel in making war against Iran and, by his own account, destroying its nuclear programme.

Many of the organisations that the US is leaving are mainly marginal or have been moribund for a long time. This was clear gunflection to the MAGA base, a substantial portion of which is annoyed by the January 3 US military intervention in Venezuela. Midterms are coming and Trump has recently said that big losses might lead to him being indicted. But many of the other organisations relating to environment, renewable energy, development, education and the promotion of human rights, democracy, counterterrorism, anti-piracy, social rights and trade are important in terms of global governance and even American soft power. But that is clearly not a concern for the President.

Makar Sankranti: Kite Flying, Joy, Culture and Consciousness

– Dr. Satyawan Saurabh

Makar Sankranti is not merely a festival with a date in the Indian culture, but it is a colorful manifestation of the change of the seasons, societal life, and folk culture. This is when the sun shifts to dockshinayan to Uttarayana and fresh energy is contributed to both nature and human existence. The centuries old kite flying tradition that comes with this festival has received its fair share of centuries. Throughout its history, it has not been confined to just providing entertainment and has added to it social, cultural and health aspects. Although kite flying is no longer the game of rooftop standing and tugging of the string, nowadays it is a sign of collective celebration, psychological joy, and physical exercise. Kite flying is regarded as a very ancient tradition in India. It is mentioned in history and folklore. It used to be an emblem of prowess and tact in the royal palaces but with the passage of time, it has turned into a daily necessity of life. The prevalent colorful kites in the sky during Makar Sankranti, Basant Panchami, and other celebrations are an indication of the general awareness and celebration of the Indian society. This festival is not only a tradition, but also a great social event in such states as Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, and Delhi. Kite flying is the social aspect of the sport that is the most beautiful. It takes individuals out of their homes and unites them with others. Rooftop conversations, children laughter, young people competitions and the elderly smile all these scenes make this festival alive. The echo of "Woh kata... Woh mara" is not only the intensity of the game, but the audible together. In the modern era where social interaction is declining, such festivals are an alternative that can be used to sustain human relations. The tradition has taken a new turn with kite festivals and mass events which are conducted during Makar Sankranti. Such events are organized in assorted places together by the local govern-

ments, social institutions, voluntary institutions, to achieve not only entertainment, but also cultural preservation, social coexistence. The elderly, women and children are equally involved in these events thus making this a festival of all the segments of the society and not just a part of society. Kite flying is a sport whose health advantages are many and is usually taken as a seasonal sport. Playing with kites exercises most of the body engaging the hands, shoulders, and eyes making the body active. Outing gives the body solar energy and helps in mental exhaustion. There is a belief among the doctors and psychologists that such group and fun activities can aid in alleviating stress. Kite flying is also very helpful in the mental health. The sight of colorful kites flying in the open sky is joyful and relaxing to the mind. It brings one to the present moment and offers some type of spontaneous meditation feel. Such experiences may also be significant in ensuring mental balance in the fast-paced and stressful life that people live today. It is not only entertainment, but also educational to children when they are playing with kite. It builds patience, equilibrium, coordination, and competition. Being aware of the direction of wind, the correct tension of strings, the ability to make the right decisions in time all these abilities can reinforce choices making in children. Moreover, this practice when carried out in a family context enhances social values and cultural affiliations of children. Nevertheless, kite flying can be discussed as a celebration of happiness and thrill, but it also represents safety issues. With time, Chinese manjha and nylon string have caused a number of severe accidents. This has not only been deadly to the human race, but birds and other animals have also perished. Road crashes, throat cuts, and deaths of birds all of it is evidence of the deformed character of this tradition. This has been done through regulations set by the government and administration which are not sufficient. It is imperative to ensure that people are aware of

it and develop a feeling of accountability. Kites can be made safe with the help of cotton string, safe and open areas, child supervision, and time attention all these measures can ensure the safety of kite flying. The most important thing is that the happiness of the festival does not turn into the reason of suffering to anyone. Kite flying also requires to be re-evaluated with the environmental eye. Kite wastes also get into trees, power lines and roads posing environmental challenges. The plastic and nylon kites cannot break down in the long term and they are hazardous to the wildlife. The use of eco-friendly kites and natural dyes, therefore, is what is required at the moment. These positive efforts are being made by most social organizations and volunteer groups. They are motivating children and young people towards safe and environmental sensitive kite flying. Sensitization is being spread in schools and social forums so that there is a balance between tradition and nature. The kite flying is also changing with the changing times. It is no longer restricted to rooftops. Digital and social media has provided it with international outreach. The videos and photos of kites festivals are going around the globe. The way, Indian communities residing overseas remain in touch with their native culture by also holding kite festivals on Makar Sankranti. This transformation shows that not all traditions remain the same but they change with the times. One such change is kite flying, where modernity, tradition, entertainment, and health fly. This festival makes us understand that there is no opposition between joy and responsibility but they complement each other. Finally, Makar Sankranti and kite flying which comes along with it is not merely a festival, but also a celebration of life. It is a lesson to us of the meaning of collectivity, balance and joy. Tradition when taken in the right way and with responsibility is not only a reminder of the past but also a source of inspiration to the present and the future.

Edit

What Trump May Be Getting Dangerously Wrong About Iran

The comment by India's Foreign Secretary, Vikram Misri, on Monday, that the government is watching the developments in Iran closely, appears to be an understatement. As the unrest threatens the 47-year-old Islamic regime's survival, it also has the potential of creating a regional crisis, one that could seriously harm India's economic and strategic interests.

The protests, which began two weeks ago in Tehran, have already spread to more than 100 cities in all of Iran's 31 provinces. Iran's regime, led by the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has done what it has done in the past, trying to crush the unrest with brutal force. More than 600 demonstrators have already been killed, according to human rights groups, which have warned that the actual death toll could be far higher because of a nationwide internet blackout.

Iran has seen many anti-government protests since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, which deposed Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi. But the latest protests appear to be the most significant challenge to the regime. They have already taken more lives than the last one in 2022, which followed the death in custody of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini over hijab enforcement, killing 550 people across the country. That was a feminist-centred protest. The latest one, which has spread more quickly nationwide, has attracted young men, women and even the elderly.

**Is This An Uprising?**

This protest is also significant due to the participation of traders, their first such involvement since the 1979 revolution. In fact, they started these demonstrations in Tehran on December 28, when the Iranian currency, the rial, collapsed against the dollar, and later attracted other sections of society. But it's still early to call it a mass uprising as there are no signs yet of a regime collapse, despite some reports of defections from the security forces.

After years of Western sanctions, ordinary Iranians' lives had already become miserable. Things worsened after the conflict last summer with Israel, when the US also joined and bombed Iran. Last month, the coun-



try's inflation exceeded 50%. So, there was enough ground for sparking unrest. Ayatollah Khamenei has accused foreign powers of orchestrating the unrest, primarily the United States and Israel, but the scale of unrest suggests the protesters' anger is directed against the government. Slogans have been heard against the Islamic regime, which is rare in Iran. The country's former crown prince, Reza Pahlavi, who is in exile in the United States, has been encouraging street protests for some time, but one can't dispute his Iranian heritage.

**US Military Action May Not Help**

Donald Trump is weighing his military options. Soon after the protests began, he warned Iranian authorities that he would take military action if they started killing demonstrators. He has repeated his threat several times in the past few days, but has yet to order any military strikes despite the deaths of hundreds of Iranians. For a leader who is known to opt for military solutions without hesitation and, only 10 days ago, raided Venezuela and seized its leader, Nicolas Madurai, this may look surprising. Even so, Trump has reasons to be careful. Iran is not Venezuela. It is nearly as big as Western Europe and remains a military power, despite being

degraded by the Israeli and the US military action last year. One must also remember that Iran's retaliatory strikes on Israel last year forced the Jewish state to agree to a ceasefire, something it wasn't used to in the case of its other enemies, like Hamas or Hezbollah. Also, the US military had been preparing to invade Venezuela and kidnap Maduro for months. Events in Iran have moved much faster for the US military to make similar preparations.

**Trump's Options**

Trump must also have been reminded by his advisors of America's ill-fated 1980 military operation Eagle Claw, in which the US attempted to rescue American diplomats held in Tehran after the Islamic revolution. This doesn't mean that Trump will not order military strikes. But he has to listen to his commanders and advisors about their timing, targets and fallout. Despite many people in Iran loathing the Islamic Regime, they would not like to be invaded by Israel or its main backer, the United States. Last summer's US strikes only inspired patriotic fervour in Iran. Ignoring Israel's request, Trump avoided extending military action to topple the regime. In this context, one should look at Monday's statement by the White House press

secretary, Karoline Leavitt, who said that airstrikes were "one of the many, many options that are on the table", but that "diplomacy is always the first option for the president". Around the same time, Trump warned that the US would impose a tariff of 25% on "any and all business" done with the United States by countries that are also engaged in commerce with Iran.

**The Power of the Revolutionary Guards**

Perhaps the most important factor that may save the Islamic regime is the all-powerful Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). It was formed by the regime's founder, Ayatollah Khomeini, soon after he returned home from exile in Paris in February 1979, although he had started recruiting its members in France earlier.

The IRGC's initial aim was to disarm the protesters who took part in the revolution and protect the regime against any potential US attack and coups. Under official patronage, this organisation gradually became the most powerful personal army of the Ayatollahs, parallel to Iran's military forces. They even have a unit dealing with foreign assignments called 'Quds Force', which helped create Iran's proxies: Hezbollah in Lebanon and Houthis in Yemen.

Art Of The Deal: As Trump Wavers, India Is Writing Its EU Playbook

When German Chancellor Friedrich Merz landed in Gujarat this week and called for concluding the EU-India free trade agreement (FTA) by the end of January 2026, it signalled more than routine diplomacy. In a world reshaped by sanctions, industrial policy, and supply-chain realignments, Europe's outreach to India is now as strategic as it is geoeconomic. The high-level visit once again highlights that as the United States wavers between protectionism and partnership, New Delhi is seeking to broaden its trade horizons, with Europe emerging as the key pivot.

**Why EU Deal Now Defines India's Trade Moment**

Europe's courtship of India is driven by mutual interests in economic partnerships. The EU-India FTA is in the final stages of negotiations, with both sides seeking to bridge differences on sustainability standards, digital trade, and labour mobility. For Europe, it is about de-risking supply chains away from China and securing access to a large democratic market. For India, the deal offers access to the EU's high-value consumer base, new technology partnerships, and credibility as a manufacturing and regulatory hub capable of meeting global standards. The stakes are immense: the EU is one of India's largest trading partners, accounting for nearly 12% of its total trade. Momentum has been built by earlier European deals. The India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), signed in July 2025, was New Delhi's first major trade pact with a



G7 economy in over a decade. It grants duty-free access for 99% of Indian exports to the UK. The India-EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) went further, coupling tariff cuts with a USD 100 billion investment commitment over 15 years from Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein - an unprecedented investment-linked model. It illustrates how India's trade policy has matured from defensive tariff management to an outward-facing investment narrative.

**Indo-Pacific, Gulf and the New Frontiers**

If Europe is India's most optimistic economic engagement at the moment, relations with the United States have been more complicated. Bilateral trade volumes continue to rise, yet there is still no formal India-US trade agreement despite years of dialogue. High tariffs and unresolved market-access disputes persist, and Washington's 2025 imposition of punitive duties on select

Indian exports rekindled friction. Both sides continue to work through various channels, but India's calculus is shifting. Rather than wait for a breakthrough with Washington, New Delhi is hedging its bets by retaining the US as a strategic partner while expanding ties with others to insulate its export base from the current unpredictability in American policy. That diversification is most visible in the Indo-Pacific. After India walked away from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) in 2019, its alternative architecture is taking shape through bilateral and minilateral pacts seven years later. The India-New Zealand FTA, concluded in December 2025 after a decade-long pause, opens duty-free corridors for Indian exports and enhances mobility for professionals. With Australia, India is deepening the interim Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) into a comprehensive CECA, targeting services, investment

protection, and critical-mineral supply chains. Meanwhile, an ongoing review of the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA) aims to fix imbalances that disadvantaged Indian manufacturers. Undoubtedly, India is rebuilding its regional competitiveness on its own terms, engaging selectively but assertively with the Indo-Pacific's trade architecture. West Asia is where India's trade diplomacy intersects most closely with its energy and strategic interests. The India-Oman Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), signed in December 2025, grants duty-free access to more than 98% of Indian exports, building on the success of the UAE CEPA, which has already lifted bilateral trade to more than USD 100 billion. The broader India-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) FTA has also been revived after years of dormancy, promising to bring India closer to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and other Gulf economies.







# Trump briefed on military and covert options for Iran, sources say

President Donald Trump has been briefed on a wide range of covert and military tools for use in Iran, two Department of Defense officials told the BBC's US partner, CBS News. Long-range missile strikes remain an option for a potential US intervention, but Pentagon officials have also presented cyber operations and psychological campaign responses, the sources said. Trump announced a 25% tariff on goods from countries with commercial ties to Iran on Monday, as rights groups say more than 600 protesters have been killed in three weeks of anti-government protests. Iran's foreign minister has said Tehran is open to talks with Washington, but remains "prepared for war". Trump's national security team is expected to hold a meeting at the White House on Tuesday to discuss options for Iran, the sources said, but it is unclear whether the



president himself will be in attendance. The US president had earlier said that his military was weighing "very strong options" to intervene if more protesters were killed. Trump said Iranian leaders had called him "to negotiate", but added that the US "may have to act before a meeting". Frustration over the collapse of the Iranian cur-

cy and economic mismanagement has expanded into a crisis of legitimacy for Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Fars, Iran's state-linked news agency, claimed that Monday night was the "calm after the storm" following weeks of protests, with a "night free from unrest" in many cities including the capital Tehran. However,



the BBC has received footage from people who claim protests took place in a number of locations across the country. Due to an ongoing internet blackout, it is difficult to verify when the videos were filmed. On Monday, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said an Iranian official had also contacted Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff,

adding that Tehran's public stance is "quite [different] from the messages the administration is receiving privately". However, she warned that the US president is "unafraid to use military options if and when he deems necessary". The two sources, who requested anonymity to discuss national security matters with CBS, said that any US military response in Iran will likely involve air power, but that planners are also considering options to disrupt Iranian command structures and communications. The US has urged its citizens in Iran to leave or have a plan to depart the country that does not require US government assistance. Khamenei accused the US of "deceit" and relying on "treacherous mercenaries", while praising state-organised pro-government rallies held in Iran on Monday. He said the "Iranian nation is a power-

ful one, is aware and knows its enemies and is present in every scene". State media said large crowds gathered in several cities following calls for pro-government demonstrations. BBC Persian has seen text messages inviting people inside the country to attend these demonstrations, while also warning them not to take part in anti-government protests. Separately on Monday, Trump said on his Truth Social platform he would impose a 25% tariff on goods from countries that are "doing business" with Tehran, without elaborating. "This order is final and conclusive," he added. Iran, already under severe US sanctions, faces a collapsing currency and inflation that has pushed food prices up by as much as 70%. Food makes up about one-third of Iran's imports, and further restrictions, caused by the tariffs, could worsen shortages and costs.

## COLD WEATHER AND DATA CENTRES DRIVE UP US GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS



## Le Pen hopeful appeal will allow her to run for French president



A high-stakes appeal by far-right French politician Marine Le Pen has begun in Paris against a ruling that banned her from running for public office for five years. Le Pen, 57, was found guilty last year of embezzling EU funds and, if the ban is upheld, she will not be able to stand in the 2027 presidential election. Ahead of her arrival in court, she said "hopeful" about the outcome. On Monday, the president of her National Rally party, Jordan Bardella, said barring her from the election would be "deeply worrying for democracy". Bardella said he would not stand for president but would instead seek the lower-ranking post of prime minister. The case at the Paris Court of Appeal will last until 12 February but a ruling is not expected before the summer, well ahead of next year's presidential vote. Last year's case centred on charges that Le Pen, along with more than 20 other senior party figures, hired

assistants who worked on her RN party affairs rather than for the European Parliament which paid them. The judge, Bénédicte de Perthuis, said Le Pen had been at the "heart of the system" that saw the embezzlement of 2.9m (£2.5m) worth of European funds. Le Pen was given a four-year prison sentence – with two years suspended and the remaining two to be served with an electronic tag rather than in custody. She was handed a 100,000 (£82,635) fine and banned from seeking public office "with immediate effect". More than 20 RN figures were also found guilty in last year's trial and the party was ordered to pay a 2m fine, with half the amount suspended. Eleven of Le Pen's colleagues are taking part in the Paris appeal, but 12 have decided not to challenge the original verdicts, including her sister Yann Le Pen who was given a one-year suspended prison term.

## RUBBISH LANDSLIDE DEATH TOLL IN PHILIPPINES RISES TO 11



## Prosecutors seek death penalty for ex-South Korean president Yoon



Prosecutors have asked for South Korea's former president Yoon Suk Yeol to be handed a death sentence if he is found guilty over his botched attempt to impose martial law. A court in Seoul heard closing arguments in Yoon's trial, in which he was accused of being the "ringleader of an insurrection". The charge stems from Yoon's attempt in December 2024 to impose military rule in South Korea - an act that lasted just hours but plunged the country into political turmoil. He was later impeached by parliament and detained to face trial. Yoon has denied the charges against him, arguing that martial law was a symbolic gesture to draw public attention to the

wrongdoings of the opposition party. Leading an insurrection - the most serious charge against Yoon - carries the death penalty or life imprisonment and under South Korean law prosecutors must ask the judge for one or the other for the crime of insurrection. South Korea has not executed anyone in nearly 30 years. In

1996, former military dictator Chun Doo-hwan was given the death penalty for seizing power in a military coup in 1979, though his sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment. The prosecutors in Yoon's case argue that although no one was killed in his martial law attempt, Yoon's intent was no less violent. They called

to the stand the military commander who testified that Yoon had ordered the arrest of lawmakers. They also presented as evidence the memo made by one of the planners of the martial law, a former military officer, containing the suggestion of "disposing" of hundreds of people including journalists, labour activists and lawmakers. Yoon's insurrection trial has been merged with those of two other senior figures in his administration, former defence minister Kim Yong-hyun and former police chief Cho Ji-ho. A verdict and sentencing for Yoon and the other defendants, if they are convicted, is expected at a later date - widely expected to be in February.

## WORLD CENTRAL BANK CHIEFS 'STAND IN SOLIDARITY' WITH US FED CHAIR POWELL

Central banks across the world have joined together to declare that they stand in "full solidarity" with the Federal Reserve's chair after the US launched a criminal investigation into Jerome Powell. The heads of the Bank of England, the European Central Bank and the Bank of Canada are among 11 senior bankers who have signed a statement highlighting the importance of independence in setting interest rates. "Chair Powell has served with integrity, focused on his mandate and an unwavering commitment to the public interest," they said. The Department of Justice is conducting the probe. President Donald



Trump has said he did not "know anything" about the investigation. The probe is linked to testimony Powell gave to a Senate committee about renovations to Federal Reserve buildings. It follows a year of relentless attacks on the Fed chair by Trump. As well as criticising

Powell's decisions on interest rates, Trump has made personal comments, calling the Fed chair a "major loser" and a "numbskull". Commenting on the Fed chair, the global central bankers said in their joint statement: "To us, he is a respected colleague who is

held in the highest regard by all who have worked with him." Until the weekend, Powell had stayed largely silent in the face of Trump's attacks but on Sunday, he publicly pushed back and warned that the independence of the US central bank was at stake. "This is about whether the Fed will be able to continue to set interest rates based on evidence and economic conditions, or whether instead monetary policy will be directed by political pressure or intimidation," Powell said. In their joint statement on Tuesday, the senior financial institutions said: "The independence of central banks is a cornerstone of price.

## 'We were tricked': How one woman lures foreign men to fight on Russia's front line



Flames lick around the edges of Omar's passport. "It's burning well," an unseen woman says in Russian in the video. Omar, a 26-year-old Syrian construction worker, had been deployed for about nine months on the front line of Russia's war in Ukraine when the clip arrived on his phone. He knew the woman's voice. It was Polina Alexandrovna Azarnykh, who he says had helped him sign up to fight for Russia, promising lucrative work and Russian citizenship. But now she was angry. In a series of voice notes from Ukraine, Omar, speaking under a pseudonym for his safety, describes how he ended up trapped and terrified in the war zone. He says Azarnykh had promised that if he paid her \$3,000 (£2,227), she would ensure he stayed in a non-combat role. But, he says, he was sent into battle with just 10 days of training, so he refused to pay and she eventually responded by

burning his passport. He says he tried refusing to take part in a mission, but his commanders threatened to kill or jail him. "We were tricked... this woman is a con artist and a liar," says Omar. A BBC Eye investigation has followed how Azarnykh, a 40-year-old former teacher, uses a Telegram channel to lure young men, often from poor countries, into joining Russia's military. The former teacher's smiling video messages and upbeat posts offer "one-year contracts" for "military service". The BBC World Service has identified nearly 500 cases where she has provided documents, referred to as invitations, which allow the recipient to enter Russia to join the military. These have been for men - mainly from Syria, Egypt and Yemen - who appear to have sent her their passport details in order to enlist. But recruits and their relatives have told the BBC that she misled men into believing they would avoid combat, failed to make clear they could not leave after a year and threatened those who challenged her. When contacted by the, she rejected the allegations. Twelve families told us of young men they say were recruited by her who are now dead or missing.

# 'THEY JUST KEPT KILLING': EYEWITNESSES DESCRIBE DEADLY CRACKDOWN IN IRAN

"I saw it with my own eyes - they fired directly into lines of protesters, and people fell where they stood." Omid's voice was shaking as he spoke, fearful of being traced. Breaking the wall of silence between Iran and the rest of the world takes immense courage, given the risk of reprisals by the authorities. Omid, in his early 40s and whose name we have changed for his safety, has been protesting on the streets of a small city in southern Iran over the past few days against worsening economic hardship. He said security forces had opened fire at unarmed protesters in his city with Kalashnikov-style assault rifles. "We are

fighting a brutal regime with empty hands," he said. The BBC has received similar accounts of the crackdown by security forces following the widespread protests across the country last week. Since then, internet access has been cut by the authorities, making reporting from Iran more difficult than ever. BBC Persian is banned from reporting inside Iran by the government. One of the largest nationwide anti-government protests took place on Thursday, the twelfth night of demonstrations. Many people appear to have joined the protests on Thursday and Friday after calls from Reza Pahlavi, the exiled son of the last shah of



Iran who was overthrown in the 1979 Islamic revolution. The following day, Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei said: "The Islamic Republic will not back down." It appears that the worst bloodshed occurred after that warning as security forces and the Islamic

Revolutionary Guard Corps take their orders from him. Iranian authorities accused the US and Israel of fomenting trouble and condemned "terrorist actions", state media reported. A young woman from Tehran said last Thursday felt like "the day of judgement". "Even

remote neighbourhoods of Tehran were packed with protesters - places you wouldn't believe," she said. "But on Friday, security forces only killed and killed and killed. Seeing it with my own eyes made me so unwell that I completely lost morale. Friday was a bloody day." She said that, after Friday's killings, people were afraid to go out and that many were now chanting from alleys and inside their homes. Tehran was a battlefield, she said, with protesters and security forces taking positions and cover on the streets. But she added: "In war, both sides have weapons. Here, people only chant and get killed. It is a

one-sided war." Eyewitnesses in Fardis, a city just to the west of Tehran, said that on Friday, members of the paramilitary Basij force under the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) suddenly attacked protesters after hours without a police presence on the streets. The forces, who were in uniform and riding motorcycles, fired live ammunition directly at protesters, according to the witnesses. Unmarked cars were also driven into alleys, with occupants shooting at residents who were not involved in the protests, they said. "Two or three people were killed in every alley," one witness alleged.



## Courtesy Khelo India Beach Games, local government efforts, how beach soccer developing in DNHDD

**Diu, January:** Beach soccer is steadily emerging as a significant avenue of opportunity and self-expression for young athletes in coastal and tribal-dominated Union Territories such as Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu. In recent years, focused initiatives by the Union Territory administration have played a key role in strengthening football development, with beach soccer gaining particular momentum. This progress has been possible by sustained investment in sports infrastructure and grassroots development. Khelo India Beach Games 2026 director-cum-joint secretary (Youth Affairs & Sports), Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu, Shri Arun Gupta, has highlighted that world-class sports infrastructure is being developed across all three districts of the Union Territory to create a structured ecosystem and long-term opportunities for emerging talent, ensuring that disciplines like beach soccer receive consistent institutional support. The DNHDD beach football team coach Preet Bhatt further



ther added that interest in the discipline has grown considerably over the past three years. He noted that national platforms such as the Khelo

India Beach Games have enabled local players to test themselves at a higher level. "Such exposure has increased players' confidence and con-

tributed to the overall growth of sporting culture in the region," Bhatt said. Explaining the selection process, Bhatt said players are first shortlisted through district-level trials before being invited to specialised training camps. "A group of around 20 to 22 players undergoes focused training, after which 12 to 15 are selected for the final squad. Regular practice sessions and preparatory matches are also conducted ahead of major tournaments," Bhatt added. According to Bhatt, the region's coastal geography offers a natural advantage. Many players regularly train on sandy beaches, allowing them to adapt instinctively to the physical and technical demands of beach soccer. This familiarity with playing conditions has been instrumental in improving performances at national competitions. Beyond the Khelo India Beach Games, the Department of Youth Affairs and Sports conducts multiple tournaments across senior, youth and junior categories. Bhatt added that school-level competitions, including

Under-10, Under-12, School Games Federation of India and Subroto Cup events, serve as important platforms for early talent identification and long-term development. With a substantial tribal population in the Union Territory, sports initiatives have also played a vital role in drawing youth from tribal areas into organised competitive sport. Several players from tribal backgrounds are now part of representative teams and are delivering consistent performances. Bhatt, who currently coaches the men's team, believes that a predominantly local coaching setup has further strengthened development efforts. "Local coaches have a better understanding of players' social and geographical contexts, which helps make training more effective and outcome-driven," he said. Bhatt added that the outlook for beach soccer in Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu remains positive, with structured selection systems, institutional training support and regular competition now firmly in place.

## "PEOPLE OUTSIDE THINK VIRAT KOHLI IS ARROGANT": AJINKYA RAHANE GIVES BLUNT VERDICT

Veteran Indian cricket team batter Ajinkya Rahane believes that Virat Kohli's attitude of learning and never giving up is sometimes mistaken for arrogance. Rahane offered insight into the star batter's pre-match routines and highlighted the amount of detail that goes into his preparations. Rahane spent several years in the dressing room with Virat, and both were part of the leadership group in the side. Over the years, Virat has been accused of being arrogant and overly aggressive on the field. However, Rahane believes it is his passion and intent for the sport. "However much we talk about Virat Kohli is never enough. But I have seen him very closely, how he goes about his batting. We talk about his passion and his intent each and every time. But I feel what stands out is his attitude - the attitude of learning, the attitude of never giving up. People outside



think Virat is arrogant, but he is not. He gets into the zone," Rahane said on Cricbuzz. Rahane also revealed that Virat used to stop talking to his teammates just ahead of the game and wear his AirPods to get into the zone. He added that it took the teammates some time to understand Virat's pre-game preparations. "I saw him two days before the game. He'll hardly talk to

people, even to his teammates. That's what actually gets him into the zone. He'll always wear his AirPods or try and listen to whatever he wants to and what he likes to get into the zone." "Initially, it took all the players a little bit of time - why is he doing that? But then I got to know that he's actually getting into the zone by not talking to the players or anyone," he added.

## Pakistan-Born USA Cricketer Ali Khan Denied Indian Visa Ahead Of T20 World Cup, Ex-KKR Star Claims On Instagram

The USA is one of the 20 teams that will compete in the 2026 T20 World Cup, which starts in India on February 7. In fact, the USA's first match is against the hosts at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai. Though the USA squad for the marquee event is yet to be officially announced, the team is expected to include several players from the Indian and Pakistani diaspora. Ali Khan is one such player. The right-arm pacer, who was part of the Kolkata Knight Riders squad in 2020, claimed his visa was rejected via an Instagram post. "Indian visa denied but KFC for the win," he wrote. Ali Khan was born and raised in Attock, Pakistan. At 19, his family moved to the United States. He has played



15 ODIs and 18 T20Is. Meanwhile, the T20 World Cup in Bangladesh is facing a major venue hurdle. Bangladesh has refused to travel to India, citing security threats. The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) raised its security concerns for the first time only after pacer Mustafizur Rahman's IPL contract was terminated. A

video conference between the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) and the International Cricket Council (ICC) was held on Tuesday afternoon to discuss the Bangladesh national cricket team's participation in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026. Representing the BCB were President Aminul Islam,

Vice Presidents Shakawat Hossain and Faruque Ahmed, Director and Chairman of the Cricket Operations Committee Nazmul Abedeen, and Chief Executive Officer Nizam Uddin Chowdhury. During the discussions, the BCB reaffirmed its decision not to travel to India, citing security concerns. The Board also reiterated its request for the ICC to consider relocating Bangladesh's matches outside India. While the ICC noted that the tournament itinerary has already been announced and requested that the BCB reconsider its stance, the Board's position remains unchanged. Both parties agreed that discussions will continue to explore possible solutions.

## Shreyas Iyer On Verge Of Surpassing Shikhar Dhawan, Virat Kohli To Achieve Mega First In Indian Cricket

Indian cricket team batter Shreyas Iyer is on the verge of surpassing Shikhar Dhawan and Virat Kohli to claim a sensational record ahead of the second ODI encounter against New Zealand on Wednesday. Iyer, who made his comeback to international cricket after a prolonged absence due to injury, has 2966 runs from 68 innings in ODI cricket at an average of 47.83. He needs just 34 runs to become the fastest Indian batter to reach the 3000-run milestone in the format. The record currently belongs to Dhawan who achieved the feat in 72 innings. Kohli completed 3000 ODI runs in 75 innings. Overall, if Iyer can achieve the feat on Wednesday, he will become the fourth-fastest player in the world along with Viv Richards. If Iyer achieves the feat on Wednesday, he will be the first Indian cricketer to reach 3000 ODI runs in under 70 innings. The world record belongs to South Africa legend Hashim Amla who scored 3000 runs in 57 innings. Earlier, Iyer lavished praise on Virat Kohli, saying the batting great has

been "walking the talk" for years, the latest being his masterclass in a successful run chase against New Zealand in the ODI series opener. Kohli struck a fluent 93 off 91 balls as India chased down a target of 301 to register a four-wicket win and take a 1-0 lead in the three-match rubber here on Sunday. During the innings, Kohli also became the fastest player to reach 28,000 international runs across formats and the second-highest run-scorer in international cricket, behind Sachin Tendulkar. "Whatever we talk about his innings, it would be less. We have been seeing it for so many years now he's been doing it consistently. The way he rotates the strike and he takes on the bowlers, he basically walks the talk," Iyer said in a video posted by BCCI. Iyer, who returned to international action after a long injury layoff following a spleen laceration with internal bleeding sustained during the third ODI against Australia in Sydney in October last year, said he was delighted to begin the series on a winning note.



## RAIN DELAYS RADUCANU IN HOBART FIRST ROUND



Britain's Emma Raducanu will have to return to the court on Wednesday after her first-round match against Camila Osorio at the Hobart International was suspended because of rain. Raducanu, bidding for her first win of the 2026 season, led the Colombian 6-3 2-4 when play was suspended. It was a back-and-forth match, with both players battling the blustery conditions and Osorio struggling with a persistent cough. The first three games of the first set went against serve before Raducanu rallied, taking the opener in 45 minutes against her wildcard opponent. World number 82 Osorio found another gear in the second set, hitting four winners in the opening game and using her sliced backhand drop shots to break the Raducanu serve. After a 30-minute break, the players returned to court and managed just two points before the heavy rain returned. Raducanu, who had her off-season disrupted by a foot injury, is playing in her final tourna-

ment before the Australian Open begins on Sunday. World number 29 Raducanu showed some impressive ball-striking behind her forehand but she struggled against Osorio's drop shots. The Briton opted not to chase down three shorter balls played by Colombian in the first set and lost some of her intensity after the first rain delay. Raducanu's change of intent - opting to work Osorio around the court instead of overpowering her in the rallies - allowed the Colombian to claim three successive breaks of serve in the second set. The 23-year-old now faces a short turnaround before finishing off her first-round match tomorrow. Poland's Magdalena Frech, who was a comfortable 6-4 6-0 winner over France's Elsa Jacquemot, awaits either Raducanu or Osorio in the quarter-finals. Elsewhere, Britain's Harriet Dart progressed to the second qualifying round in Melbourne as she bids for a place in the Australian Open main draw.

## No Apology, Bangladesh Official Breaks Silence On Calling Tamim 'Indian Agent' Amid T20 World Cup Venue Row

Controversy erupted within the Bangladesh cricket community when M. Najmul Islam, a prominent member of the BCB Board of Directors, called former Bangladesh cricket team captain Tamim Iqbal an "Indian agent" in a social media post. The comment came amid rising political tensions between the two countries, resulting in the BCB requesting the International Cricket Council (ICC) to shift their T20 World Cup 2026 matches from India to Sri Lanka. Tamim questioned the long-term financial implications of such a request but was heavily criticised by the BCB official. While he faced significant backlash for his comments, M. Najmul Islam remained steadfast in his stance and doubled down on his remarks. "It was a private



post. I do not think it went viral. It was the screenshot of my post that was made viral by people, and I do not know what people ended up gaining from it," he told Sports24. "I just expressed my personal views. I think in a situation like this, we are thinking about money and not the country. I do not have anything against Tamim. I would have said this about

anyone else. Tamim's comments were in line with India's propaganda, and I did not like it," he concluded. Earlier, he took to social media to slam Tamim for his views and even wrote a controversial message: "Eibar aaro ekjon porikkhito Bharatiya dalaal er aaty-oprokash Banglar jonogon duchokh bhore dekhlo (This time, Bangladesh has wit-

nessed the self-expression of a proven Indian agent)," he posted. The post received immediate backlash from former and current cricketers, including Taskin Ahmed, Mominul Haque, and Taijul Islam. Even the Cricketers' Welfare Association of Bangladesh (CWAB) expressed shock at Najmul's comments. "A comment made by BCB director M. Najmul Islam regarding former national captain Tamim Iqbal has come to the attention of the Cricketers' Welfare Association of Bangladesh. We are stunned, shocked, and outraged by it. "Such a remark by a board official about the most successful opener in Bangladesh's history, who represented the country for 16 years, is utterly condemnable.

## Gautam Gambhir Brutally Slammed As Ayush Badoni's ODI Call-Up Leaves Internet Fuming

Ayush Badoni's inclusion in the Indian cricket team squad for the ODI series against New Zealand has not gone down well with a section of fans on social media. Badoni was handed his maiden ODI call-up as a replacement for Washington Sundar, who was ruled out due to injury. However, social media users were not happy with the choice, and some even accused head coach Gautam Gambhir of favouritism. Users were quick to cite Badoni's underwhelming numbers in List A cricket so far, as he has scored 693 runs in 22 innings and taken 22 wickets. He has had a disappointing run in the ongoing Vijay Hazare Trophy, managing just 16 runs from three innings at an average of 8.



However, he did produce notable numbers in the Indian Premier League (IPL), scoring 329 runs from 11 innings during the 2025 season. Gambhir worked with Badoni during his time with Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) in the IPL, and they also hail from the same domestic side in the Ranji

Trophy. Some social media users even namedropped Harshit Rana to claim that Gambhir has been biased towards certain players during selections. Badoni's coach, Sarandeep Singh, said that the all-rounder had received a much-awaited India call-up for the ongoing ODI series against

New Zealand, and revealed that the 26-year-old is ready to play international cricket 'right away' given his top form across all departments. Badoni received his maiden ODI call-up on Monday, named as a replacement for Washington Sundar after the latter was ruled out of the remainder of the ongoing three-game series against the BlackCaps upon sustaining a strain to his left lower rib area. Badoni had been practising at the BCCI Centre of Excellence (CoE) in Bengaluru on Monday morning for Delhi's upcoming Vijay Hazare Trophy match when he learned about the development and left his state team to join the national squad in Rajkot ahead of the second ODI on Wednesday.

## PRESCOD 'NOT TAKING DRUGS' FOR ENHANCED GAMES



Former Great Britain sprinter Reece Prescod says he will not take performance-enhancing drugs despite signing up for the controversial Enhanced Games. The competition, scheduled to take place in Las Vegas in May, will allow athletes to take substances, under medical supervision, that are banned in mainstream sport. The 29-year-old, who retired last year, is the fourth-fastest British man over 100m, with a personal best of 9.93 seconds. Speaking to BBC Radio 4's World at One programme, Prescod replied "no" when questioned on whether he had taken any substances so far. Asked "But will you?" he again replied: "No." "Obviously, medical-wise it's always confidential, but I think for me right now the biggest priority is getting back into that sub-10 shape," he added. The Enhanced Games has been criticised for endangering athletes' health and undermining fair play, with the World Anti-Doping Agency (Wada) describing it as a "dangerous and irresponsible project". Only substances approved by the United States' Food

and Drug Administration, (FDA) can be taken. That is a different list to the one the Wada allows for elite athletes. UK Athletics' chief executive Jack Buckner said he was "appalled" when it was revealed Prescod had signed up earlier in January. Prescod said participants - who also include former British Olympic swimmer Ben Proud - had a "personal choice" over what measures they adopt. Speaking in September, Proud said organisers "aren't asking me to take anything" and added he was unsure if he would use any substances. "People aren't necessarily aware that's actually a choice you have. Some athletes will be enhanced, some athletes will not be enhanced," said Prescod. "I've started my winter preparation like I normally would for an athletics season." "Exciting prospect When asked if he would be putting himself at a disadvantage, Prescod said he had "competed [for] 12 or 15 years completely clean with never any sort of violation" and had run below 10 seconds "on quite a few occasions".



# “Anaganaga Oka Raju will feel like the Sankranthi festival itself” – Star Entertainer Naveen Polishetty

“Anaganaga Oka Raju is a complete festival film packed with every element Telugu audiences love” – Producer Suryadevara Naga Vamsi Releasing this Sankranthi amid high expectations, Anaganaga Oka Raju is a true festive entertainer. The film stars star entertainer Naveen Polishetty, who has carved a special place in the hearts of audiences with three consecutive blockbusters. It is produced by Suryadevara Naga Vamsi and Sai Soujanya under the banners of Sithara Entertainments and Fortune Four Cinemas, and presented by Srikara Studios. The film is directed by debutant Mari, with Meenakshi Chaudhary as the female lead and music composed by Mickey J. Meyer. From the very beginning, the film’s promotional content stood out for its freshness and caught audience attention. Set to deliver a complete entertainment feast this Sankranthi, Anaganaga Oka Raju is releasing in theatres on January 14, 2026. The recently released trailer doubled expectations, and as the film gears up for its theatrical release, the team held a pre-release press meet. Speaking at the press meet, Naveen Polishetty said, “First of all, Sankranthi greetings to everyone. For us Telugu people, Sankranthi is a very special festival. No matter how many problems we



have, we forget them all, meet our loved ones, and spend time happily together. We put stress aside, enjoy festive food, laugh with everyone, and have a great time. That same energy is what you’ll see in Anaganaga Oka Raju. The film is designed to take away your stress and make you laugh freely. The amazing response you gave to the trailer doubled our confidence in the film. The jokes from the trailer went viral on social media. We received feedback from all sections saying it feels like a perfect festival film, a complete family entertainer, and that it’s very, very good. Bookings are already getting an excellent response. Especially overseas, the pre-sales alone have crossed the opening numbers of my previous films. Matching the interest you’re showing, the

film will definitely entertain you to the fullest.” Heroine Meenakshi Chaudhary said, “All of us have worked extremely hard and are coming before you with a good film. We’re eagerly waiting for your response. You will definitely enjoy the film and keep laughing throughout. Please watch it with your family and enjoy. Laugh freely and celebrate this Sankranthi happily.” Director Maari said, “The film has turned out really well. It’s a perfect festival entertainer. Sankranthi is a special festival for Telugu people. It’s an emotion for us. We’re very happy to release our film as a Sankranthi gift. This is a clean entertainer you can watch with your family and laugh freely. On January 14, go to the theatre with your family, forget all your worries, and

laugh wholeheartedly for two and a half hours. Celebrate this festival with Raju.” Producer Suryadevara Naga Vamsi said, “The film is based on a beautiful story set against the Godavari backdrop. In Naveen’s style, it’s filled with a lot of fun. There’s also a political satire episode set in a rural backdrop. While the film will make you laugh a lot, it also carries a strong emotional high towards the end. Comedy, emotion, action, songs – this is a festival film made with all the elements.” Child actor Revanth said, “Thanks to Sithara Entertainments and Naveen garu for giving me such a great opportunity.

## Icon Star Allu Arjun Takes Pushpa Madness to Japan: Pushpa 2 The Rule releasing in Japan on January 16th as Pushpa Kunrin



Icon Star Allu Arjun’s biggest blockbuster and Indian industry hit, Pushpa 2: The Rule, is now ready to rule Japan. The massively successful film created waves at the Indian box office and went on to become a cultural sensation. The film also features a Japanese reference, with Pushpa’s entry fight sequence set in Japan, where Allu Arjun fluently delivers Japanese dialogues. Ahead of the grand Japanese release on January 16, the superstar reached Tokyo to promote his action entertainer, accompanied by his family. Allu Arjun took to his official Instagram handle and greeted netizens with a lovely picture from Tokyo. The post, featuring the beautiful city skyline, was captioned simply with “Tokyo.” Distributors Geek Pictures

and Shochiku have partnered with Mythri Movie Makers and Sukumar Writings to bring the Pushpa madness to Japanese screens under the title Pushpa Kunrin. As Japanese audiences have shown great love for Indian cinema’s biggest blockbusters, the makers are confident about the film’s success in Japan. The record-shattering blockbuster, starring Icon Star Allu Arjun in the lead, will have Premieres in Japanese theatres on January 15, 2026, under the title Pushpa Kunrin. Directed by Sukumar, the film features music composed by Devi Sri Prasad. Fahadh Faasil plays a police officer, while Rashmika Mandanna stars as the female lead. The film is produced by Naveen Yerneni and Y. Ravi Shankar.

## Amardeep Chowdary’s Sumathi Shatakam releases first melody ‘Ekkade Ekkade’



Vision Movie Makers’ upcoming romantic entertainer Sumathi Shatakam has unveiled its first melody song titled ‘Ekkade Ekkade’, adding fresh musical buzz ahead of the film’s theatrical release on February 6. Produced by Sai Sudhakar Kommalapati and written and directed by M.M. Naidu, the film stars Amardeep Chowdary and Shaili Chowdary in the lead roles. The song, penned by Tirupati Javana and beautifully rendered by Dhanunjay Seepana, captures the soul of a heartfelt love story. Set to an evocative score by Subhash Anand, ‘Ekkade Ekkade’ stands out as a soothing melody with meaningful lyrics and rich emotional depth. The track has been released through Aditya Music on YouTube, where it is already drawing attention from music

lovers. With its gentle tune and romantic vibe, the song offers a glimpse into the film’s tender narrative and is expected to become a chartbuster, giving Sumathi Shatakam a strong musical push before its release. Apart from the lead pair, the film features Tasty Teja, Mahesh Vitta, JDV Prasad, Akella Gopi Krishna, Kiran Vijay, Mirchi Kiran, Nellore Neeraj, and Malakpet Shailaja in key roles. The technical crew includes S. Halesh as the cinematographer and Naheed Mohammed as the editor, ensuring high production values. Sumathi Shatakam has already generated positive buzz with its first look and teaser, both of which received encouraging responses from audiences. With the release of ‘Ekkade Ekkade’, the makers have further heightened expectations for this romantic musical drama.

## Hania Aamir breaks silence on her wedding, divorce in 2026 news

**Islamabad:** Ever since 2026 began, entertainment circles have been buzzing with rumours about Pakistani actress Hania Aamir’s wedding. Several Pakistani entertainment pages and show hosts have claimed that the actress is set to tie the knot with her rumoured beau, singer Asim Azhar, later this year. Amid these ongoing speculations, Hania found herself in the spotlight again after comments made by Pakistani astrologers about her personal life went viral. Recently, on Nadia Khan’s morning show Rise and Shine, astrologer Samia Khan predicted that Hania Aamir could face divorce if she chooses to get married in 2026. The astrologer advised the actress to focus on her career and avoid marriage for now, citing astro-

logical reasons. Hania Aamir’s reaction Hania Aamir has now reacted to the prediction. The actress shared a clip of Samia Khan’s statement on her Instagram and responded with humour, writing, “Ajeeb, pehle shadi to honay do,” leaving fans amused with her candid response. Wedding rumours with Asim Azhar The wedding

rumours initially gained traction after a discussion on Galaxy Lollywood’s show hosted by Momin Ali Munshi.



## NORA FATEHI AND ACHRAF HAKIMI’S AGE GAP BECOMES HOT TOPIC

**Mumbai:** The internet is abuzz with speculation about Bollywood actress and dancer Nora Fatehi’s personal life, with reports linking her to Moroccan football star and national team captain Achraf Hakimi. The rumours gained momentum after Nora was spotted cheering for the Morocco team during a recent match, prompting widespread chatter across social media platforms. As the rumours gained traction, one topic that has particularly caught the attention of fans and media circles is the duo’s age gap.

● **Nora Fatehi, Achraf Hakimi’s age gap**  
Achraf Hakimi, born on November 4, 1998, is 27 years old, while Nora Fatehi, born on February 6, 1992, is 33, making the actress 6 years older than the footballer.



● **How the rumours started**  
The buzz began after Nora’s recent trip to Morocco, where she was spotted attending a match during the Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON). Soon after, Nora shared celebratory Instagram stories, revealing

that the team she was supporting, Morocco, had emerged victorious. What appeared to be a simple show of support quickly turned into gossip fodder. Fans speculated that her presence at the match might be more personal than professional. The rumours

intensified when Reddit users noticed that Achraf Hakimi had liked one of Nora’s Instagram posts from the game, sparking theories of a possible connection. Neither Nora nor Achraf has publicly commented on the dating rumours so far.

